TR The **Receptionist**

Back to Work in a Hybrid Environment

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic created a massive surge in remote work to help maintain social distancing and keep us all safe. However, technological advances have also played a significant role in increasing interest in full-time or partial remote work for years. Recent events have only accelerated increasing awareness of the advantages of remote work for both employees and companies. An astounding **77 percent of respondents** in an Owl Labs report agreed that post-COVID-19, being able to work from home would make them happier.

Now that many employees prefer to work from home, the need to work within an office environment lessens. Companies must consider what returning to the office will look like; Facebook, Twitter, Google, and many other major companies are considering a shift to hybrid models that combine the advantages of both in-office and remote work options. If your business is planning a hybrid model as well, here are several tips to consider so that you can design a plan that meets the needs of your business!

Adjust Your Headquarters and Office Space to Meet Your New Needs

Basing your operations on what your employees need moving forward rather than what you've done before is critical to creating a successful hybrid work model. Coworking spaces that provide options for companies that want to blend in-office and remote work have expanded from only serving freelancers and startups to being a viable model for various small and medium-sized businesses. Your current physical location may be a wasted resource if it is not needed at the capacity you once required.

Consider how your employees might benefit from a physical workplace and weigh this with the advantages of switching to a different type of work environment that better fits the go-forward needs of your business. Should you decide it's in your company's best interest to keep a physical location, try adding more common areas and making other adjustments to make it a better fit for a hybrid work model.

Set Clear Business Hours and Work Policies

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating a perfect hybrid work schedule for your business. To ensure the whole team is on the same page, you must first set clear expectations about when your employees are expected to be available for collaboration time and team events, especially if your employees live in multiple time zones. **A recent study** by the University of Chicago found that employees completed approximately 30 percent more of their tasks when working from home than they did in the office over the past year. Because of this, many companies adopting a hybrid work policy plan to focus less on "time in the seat" and more on employee work outcomes (i.e., work produced, deadlines met, projects completed, etc.). Consider that in a hybrid environment, many remote employees may desire to start and end their days at times that are a bit more flexible than your traditional office hours might allow. Be clear on what is and is not expected when it comes to their work performance.

Before implementing any new safety protocols, be sure to consult your employees first to avoid losing any team members who may be uncomfortable with the changes.

It is also helpful to consider your company culture and the types of people who work for your company when creating a hybrid work schedule. Be mindful of maintaining the most important elements of your company that still work if your employees are not all in the office simultaneously. It may take a bit of trial and error to create the perfect hybrid workplace and schedule for your business, and it's important to remember that no two companies or employees are exactly alike or have the exact hybrid work model needs.

Address Productivity and Proximity Bias

Switching to a hybrid work environment can present unique challenges, such as a perceived loss of control over how hard employees are working. Managers must pay special attention not to show preference towards in-office employees and their work simply because they are more accessible. Not having your employees physically present may affect your interactions and knowledge of their productivity during work hours. Ensure that any advancement opportunities can be reached in both environments so that every employee can work toward the same incentives.

Offering Zoom or other virtual ways to connect to your in-person meetings from a virtual work environment ensures everyone is included and stays in the loop. These adjustments provide alternative ways of knowing which employees are trying their hardest and who may be falling behind. Creating a hybrid work environment that works for everyone means considering the needs and preferences of employees who thrive in a traditional office setting and those interested in taking advantage of the flexibility remote work offers.

Maintain Inclusivity and Company Culture

Maintaining your company culture can be a challenge when your employees are not physically together in the same office, but it is still worthwhile to make an effort. Much like addressing proximity bias, these challenges are often based more on perception than actual truth. Taking the time to ensure that employees have access to the same opportunities, perks, and benefits, regardless of whether they are in the office or working remotely, can go a long way toward making sure everyone feels included. The time your employees spend together makes the difference between a genuinely cohesive hybrid work environment and simply hiring remote employees. Consider the budget you have to determine in-person events and give your employees plenty of advance notices to ensure these activities are successful.

Creating human connections is also a helpful tool for avoiding employee burnout—virtual coffee dates and conversations help your employees feel more connected even if they are working apart. According to Humu founder Laszlo Bock, "getting back to a predictable pattern of work will be a relief for many employees, but they need your compassion and support to do their best work." When designing a hybrid workplace model that fits your company culture and style, empathy, compassion, intention, and attention to detail are a must.

Manage Meeting Burnout

When it feels like your calendar is full of meetings just for the sake of having meetings, you end up with meeting burnout. Less is often more when it comes to scheduling meetings. Approximately **80 percent of employers and employees** agree that their most productive weeks include at least one day with no meetings scheduled to give everyone a break from the monotony and fatigue of frequent meetings.

Any meetings your workplace holds should be carefully planned, continually evaluated, and adjusted to minimize pain points and provide value to everyone involved. They should be scheduled at designated times to ensure your employees have enough time of uninterrupted focus to complete their other work. To plan effective hybrid meetings:

- Determine whether or not the meeting needs video cameras on.
- Decide if written posts and updates could take the place of specific video meetings.
- Agree on when meetings should or should not be scheduled to allow employees to work on other things.

Assess the Hiring Pool

With a record-high number of jobs currently available worldwide, many companies struggle to find enough workers to fill open positions. With this in mind, transitioning to a hybrid work model might allow you to consider applicants beyond your immediate locale to explore what potential new hires from other areas may have to offer. Applicants with different personalities, cultural backgrounds, and strengths from your current team members can positively influence the overall workplace culture. Address the expectations of your hybrid work environment during the interview process so that new hires understand what their job will look like and decide whether they are comfortable with your model before accepting a position.

Make sure to pay close attention to local laws surrounding interviewing and choosing new hires if you are expanding your applicant pool. See **Colorado's new law** that requires appropriate salaries to be listed upfront and the requirement to pay taxes in every state your remote workers live in.

Incorporate Employee and Leader Feedback

A manager's impression of what aspects of their company are going well and which ones could improve doesn't always align perfectly with their employees. Surveys or polls can offer a better idea of how things are going from every angle of your company and help you determine employee preferences for returning to the office, working entirely from home, or implementing a hybrid work environment.

Employee feedback can be anonymous if you choose, allowing individuals who may be hesitant to share their thoughts a more comfortable way to make their opinions matter. Regardless of the feedback you decide to incorporate into your work model, actually using that information to make positive workplace changes is even more valuable than simply asking for opinions.

Although these surveys are a vital tool in keeping track of your employees' thoughts about how your company is run, you must also maintain communication consistently. Your employees should feel comfortable enough to share feedback whenever needed, not just at set times.
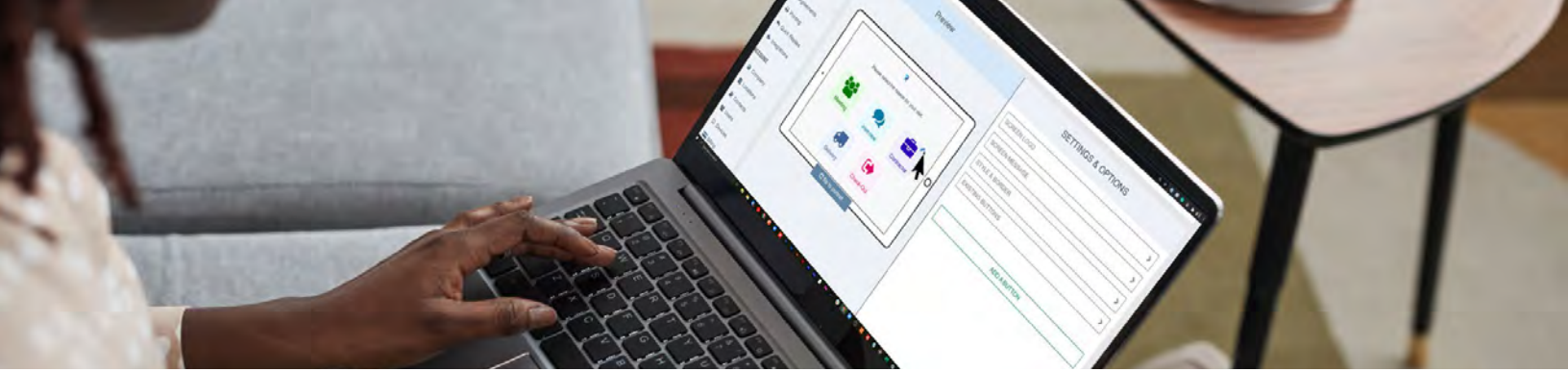
Bridge the Gap With Technology Solutions

Today's technology makes switching to a hybrid work environment easier than ever. However, your pre-COVID-19 technology set-up may not quite meet the demands of full-scale remote work or a potential permanent hybrid work environment if your company never offered these options before. Take a closer look at your technology's scalability and overall functionality to help you determine what will work for your new workplace model and what needs to be upgraded.

Your project management systems and business-specific tech solutions should function well across the many devices your employees may use, such as laptops and iPads. Be selective about which tech solutions you choose to implement and help ensure that your tech is helpful rather than an additional pain point.

[Hot-desking and room booking applications/software](#) are other examples of the benefits technology can provide for your new hybrid company.

In a hybrid work environment, [The Receptionist for iPad visitor management system](#) can help companies reduce the confusion of knowing which employees were in the office on a given day and what visitors or deliveries they received while in the building.

Conclusion

Although building a hybrid model that works well for your company can be challenging, a great starting point is seeking information and inspiration from other companies that have successfully done so. Borrow elements from other companies' hybrid work models to provide the basis for your plans and adjust your model on the fly as needed. No decisions need to be permanent, and a bit of trial and error is perfectly normal when figuring out what works best for everyone, employees and company alike. Reimagining your workplace with a clear strategy, considering feedback when making improvements, and implementing The Receptionist for iPad and other tech tools, your company can find success in a hybrid environment. **Contact us today** to learn more about how our program can benefit your company's hybrid workplace!

The Receptionist

The Receptionist for iPad is the most versatile, effective, and easy-to-use visitor management system available! From offices with just a few employees to others with more than 1,000, the check-in software is used by thousands of businesses around the globe.

Whether you are looking for a simple visitor logging system to track your visitor traffic, or require a fully customizable, SMS and email based, two-way communication system with badge printing, The Receptionist can solve your specific office needs.