



PHAROS

Supporting Your Hybrid Workforce as Remote Work Becomes the Standard



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Introduction

COVID-19 lockdowns turned the corporate world on its head, giving executive leaders a new perspective on what was possible with employees working from home. As workers adjusted to their new dining-room-turned-home-office, IT professionals scratched their heads, faced with a new set of challenges around cybersecurity, data management, and users' evolving hardware needs.

Adjusting to this "new normal" led many IT teams to rapidly rework policies and implement new technologies to make accessing work systems from home easy and secure. But not every new IT workaround was designed as a long-term solution.

Even as things are opening up, many employees are choosing flexible work arrangements where they can work

from home full-time or return to the physical office part-time versus full-time. Both employees and employers discovered that many roles could easily be performed from home, bringing hybrid work to the forefront. Now, 66% of employers are redesigning their offices and policies to accommodate hybrid work.¹

But what is a hybrid workforce? And what should you consider before offering hybrid work opportunities to your employees? Even if your workforce is already shifting into a hybrid working style, your team may be overlooking common IT concerns that could pose a substantial security risk for your organization.

Here's how your team can safely and effectively support a hybrid workforce.

What Is a Hybrid Workforce?

Throughout 2020 and 2021, companies spent hours deliberating when workers would return to physical office spaces. However, many leaders discovered that employees weren't nearly as eager to return to daily office work. As companies gathered employee feedback throughout the pandemic, they discovered that workers prefer the flexibility of hybrid work.

Response to:

"In 2022 +(after COVID) how often would you like to have paid work-days at home?"

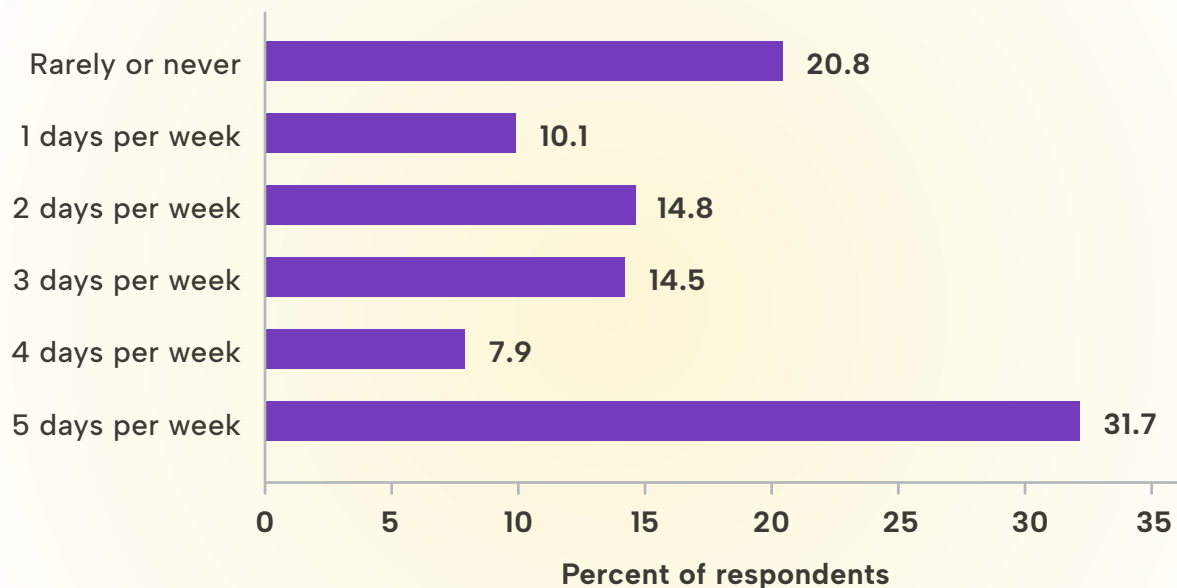


Image source: [Stanford.edu](https://stanford.edu)

Contrary to popular belief, a hybrid workforce doesn't only mean allowing everyone to work from home part-time and from an office part-time. In reality, a hybrid workforce means different things for different organizations. It can even look different for various teams across your organization.

For some teams, a hybrid workforce looks like the following:

- Some employees work exclusively from a central workspace while others work exclusively from home or the road, while some are in part-time
- Traditional employees working alongside contractors in an office
- On-site teams working with outsourced teams

While this may seem new, many organizations had a hybrid workforce long before COVID-19. For example, sales and business development teams often worked remotely or traveled between offices.



Before 2020, only 15% of employees had ever worked from home for a full day²

Many organizations used contractors and outsourced teams before COVID-19, too. Leveraging external talent can be a boon for your organization, but only if these workers are set up for success. These temporary workers still require similar permissions to employees to work effectively, but often enabling these workers becomes a highly manual process for IT teams.

Hybrid Work Is on the Rise

Even if hybrid work isn't new, COVID-19 has accelerated its popularity.

In 1980, 0.75% of employees worked outside an office full-time. That number jumped to 2.4% by 2010 and to 4% by 2018, which accounted for over 4 million workers. Then, as lockdowns sent workers home across the U.S. in spring 2020, over 37% of workers transitioned to working from home full-time, while 62% of American employees began working from home at least part-time by May 2020. Half of all American workers continued working from home through December 2020.³

Despite 70% of workers still wanting flexible remote options, 65% of those same employees want more in-person team contact following COVID-19⁴

Now, many companies are searching for a better way to support these workers moving forward. Balancing work and home commitments during the pandemic showed Americans that hybrid work could provide a better work/life balance than working exclusively in an office. That means offering hybrid work opportunities is becoming essential to attract and retain top talent, too.

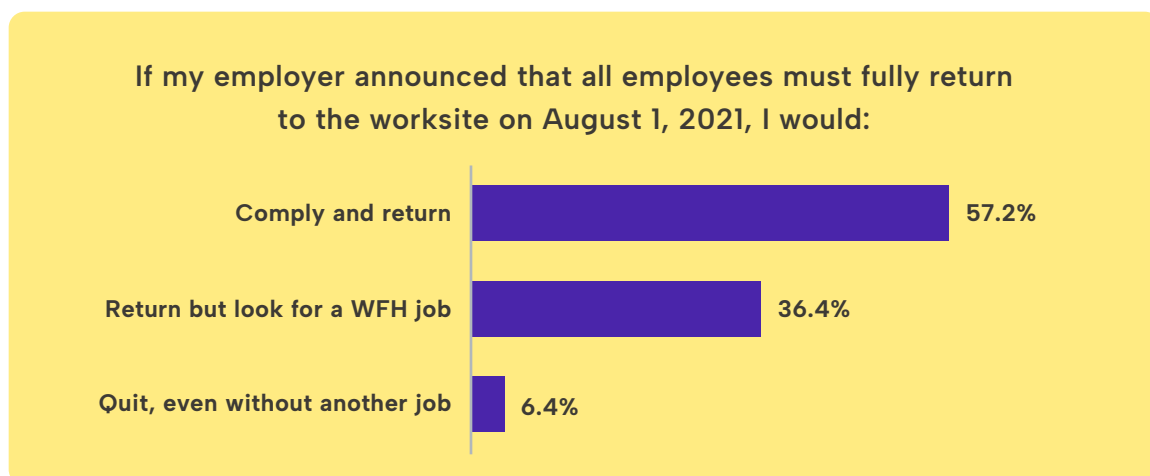


Image source: [HBR.org](https://hbr.org)



COVID-19 also revealed a strong correlation between technological enablement and remote work success. Many leaders worried that shifting to home-based work would cause productivity to plummet. But companies with robust technological support reaped powerful productivity benefits instead. The right digital tools enabled 39% of companies to increase productivity during COVID-19. Meanwhile, 20% of companies that saw less-than-stellar performance attributed productivity losses to not having the right technology and tools to support remote workers.⁵

"As we look at technologies put in place to support hybrid workers pre-pandemic like VPNs, a lot of these technologies no longer make sense with a fully hybrid workforce," says Kevin Pickhardt, Chief Executive Officer at Pharos. "We had to look at a rapid acceleration of technology trends already in place, including an increase in cloud technologies, a stronger focus on security amid more attack vectors, and a shift to employee retention and convenience."

Gone are the days of incentivizing in-office work with free lunches and ping pong tables. While organizations like Goldman Sachs are bringing employees back full-time to attract workers that align with their culture, others like Google, Salesforce, Zillow, and HubSpot are adopting flexible work arrangements to support their cultural values. For businesses lagging behind on technological innovation and bogged down by legacy systems, making a permanent shift to hybrid work calls for more preparation.

Hybrid Workforces Are Here to Stay

As hybrid workforces become the standard post-pandemic, the time for companies to prepare is now. Companies are realizing what's possible beyond eight hours in an office, and many are beginning to see the enormous benefits of hybrid work.

Even industries where remote work was previously unheard of are beginning to embrace the concept. Employees in construction, real estate, and mining are discovering that support staff can work from home, and experts predict that these industries will see more employees adopting a hybrid approach.¹⁹ Meanwhile, industries like education and healthcare discovered new ways to provide virtual services during COVID-19, leading to new hybrid work opportunities.

Shifting to a successful hybrid workforce won't happen overnight. Often, companies initially try to shift to hybrid work try to replicate an office experience. Instead, organizations need to take a human-centric approach, examining what resources and support workers need to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively from anywhere. For many, that means focusing less on productivity trackers and more on meaningful output, intentional collaboration, and a positive employee experience.

"Flexible work arrangements and working from home are here to stay," says Adrian Luh, Product Marketing Manager at Pharos. "As companies navigate the Great Resignation or the Big Quit, they're realizing one of the best ways to retain employees and differentiate themselves is to offer flexible work arrangements and make sure they can provide a frictionless hybrid work environment."



Considering the Needs of Your Evolving Hybrid Workforce

Creating a hybrid workforce goes beyond enabling the right permissions and protecting a larger attack surface. Hybrid work often calls for a digital transformation to accommodate ever-changing employee needs.

In a recent study, Gartner discovered that while 53% of employees valued flexibility in where they worked, there were many other factors that defined a true hybrid work style.⁶

Employees also want flexibility in:

- When they work
- How much they work
- Which teams they work with
- What projects they work on

By empowering employees to access work systems even as they work different hours, join new project teams, and require new software permissions temporarily or permanently, companies can offer the support necessary to make hybrid work a reality.

“Going forward, we must be prepared for uncertainty, but that doesn’t mean you don’t plan,” says Pickhardt. “We’re seeing this shift from an employer-centric world to an employee-centric world. Now, employers have to look at practices and policies to become an organization employees are flocking to, not fleeing from.”

70%

American and European companies will work to integrate hybrid work styles into their business practices.⁷

Even though the shift may seem purely cultural, it also requires a new perspective on IT monitoring. Defining the right security parameters and permissions is critical and demands a nuanced approach when adjusting existing IT processes, procedures, and policies. Dealing with these instances as one-off anomalies creates inconsistencies in how IT is managed for different users, leaving security loopholes open for attack.

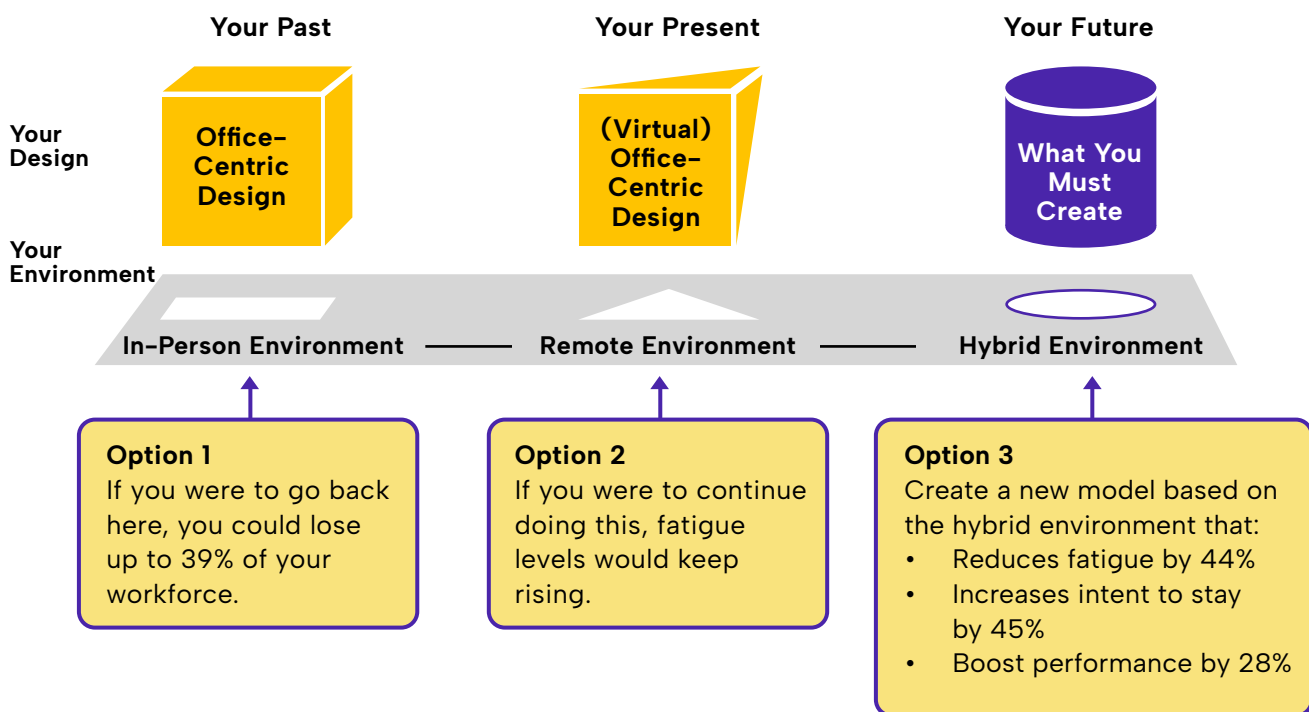


Image source: [Gartner.com](https://www.gartner.com)

Hybrid workspaces succeed when they enable all workers to operate as effectively wherever, whenever, and however they work. Part of that shift involves facilitating effective workspaces at home. That way, employees can access the systems they need without compromising security.



Facilitating Successful Home-Based Work

One of the primary benefits of a centralized office space is the ability to easily provide employees with everything they need to work effectively. In fact, many employers have dedicated millions of dollars to designing workspaces that promote collaboration and peak productivity.⁸ But as workers created makeshift home offices during the pandemic, many found themselves without the essential tools and hardware they needed to work.

In 2020, the average American employee spent over \$600 of their own money on equipment and infrastructure to outfit their home workspace.⁹ Yet even a year later, 42% of employees still say they don't have necessary office supplies. Plus, 10% don't have a strong enough internet connection to support home-based work. For over 46% of these workers, their employers haven't provided additional support for remote work expenses.¹⁰

For some organizations, enabling employees may mean providing benefits like a remote work stipend or allowance to buy the equipment they need. These stipends often cover expenses like:

- High-speed internet or cell phone bills
- Ergonomic furniture
- A dedicated work computer (if one is not provided by the company)
- Supplemental technology like printers, external monitors, webcams, headsets, keyboards, etc.
- Supplies like pens, notepads, printer paper, and printer ink

In 2021, 20-25% of employers offered a stipend for remote work equipment expenses.¹¹ Some states, like California, Illinois, Montana, and Iowa, legally require companies to reimburse employees for work-from-home costs.

Considering Changing Hardware Needs

During the pandemic, bring your own device (BYOD) practices among remote workers presented new security concerns. Encouraging employees to use their own devices while working from home meant security coverage was inconsistent across the workforce. While providing computers can be a large expense for organizations, it's often a safer cybersecurity option for disparate teams.

Even when companies provide computers, they may not consider whether that hardware is powerful enough to support their employees' work needs. For example, while some workers may be able to work from a Chromebook, it may not have the computing power to support the systems and software other employees need. Employers should also consider providing designated internet routers and mesh networks to standardize the tools employees use at home, provide better internet speeds, and simplify cybersecurity monitoring.

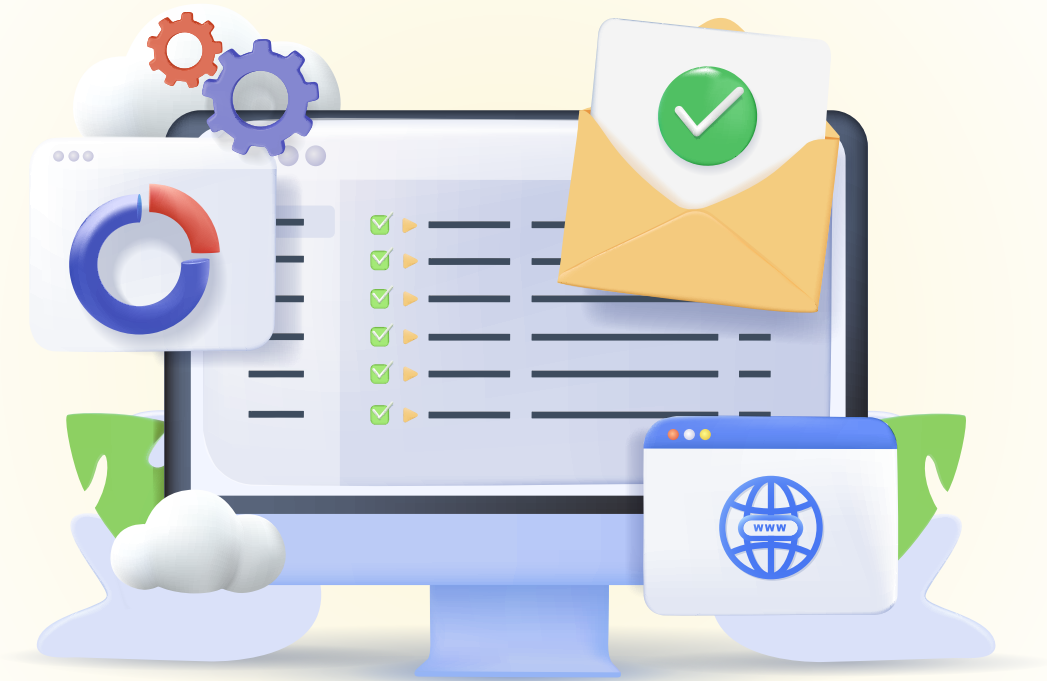
Many companies overlook printing when thinking about a hybrid workforce, too. Even though many remote workers cut down the number of pages they printed while working from home—leading to as much as a 66% reduction in printed pages at some companies, according to Carl Conley, Solutions Portfolio Director at Pharos—that number can easily rise as workers return to the office. Plus, home printers are often less secure, allowing attackers to gain access to less-protected home networks and posing security risks to your organization. Even if companies provide printers for home use and have printer monitoring capabilities, these printers can still present both data and security risks when used haphazardly.

\$11,000

Amount per worker that the average company can save every year when employees work remotely 20+ hours a week.

\$4,000

Amount the average employee saves per year working remotely 20+ hours a week.¹²



“Organizations that had pulled away from independent or individual personal printers now have to look at how they re-embrace the personal printer as a tool, both from a cost and security standpoint,” says Pickhardt. “Looking at the hybrid workforce evokes new questions to consider. Is the corporate printer now a corporate asset, or is it a BYOD asset? What regulations do I need to put in place to enable my workforce?”

Companies transitioning to hybrid work need to rethink their hardware policies and procedures for other office necessities. With fewer people coming to the office, assigned seats may become a thing of the past to save on real estate, equipment, and office expenses. That means IT teams will need to reconsider how they assign permissions and grant temporary access, looking beyond role-based access and shifting to user-centric practices. For some technology, like printing, temporary access through QR codes can reduce the expense of hardcoding badges while maintaining a strong security posture.

Empowering Hybrid Workers with the Right Tools and Support

Alongside hardware, effective hybrid work demands the right software to enable employee productivity and prevent breaches. Providing safe remote access to software can be challenging, especially without multi-factor authentication tools, virtual private networks (VPNs), or application gateways in place. Secure access depends on having visibility into how teams are using tools both at home and in the office to prevent data leaks and identify weak points in your IT infrastructure.

“You can’t control what you can’t see,” explains Conley. “Best practices start with getting the data so you can see what’s going on. Then, your company can start putting controls in place once you have defined and quantified what you need to control. Once you know what your usage volumes are, you know what you need to scale.”

That’s part of why IT teams need to reevaluate policies to accommodate both on-site and external workers. Cloud enablement will become even more critical as office sizes shrink, companies deprioritize on-prem data storage, and more users need remote access to crucial business data. Processes require a digital-first approach to support users moving between home networks, smaller satellite offices, and a centralized office.





AT LEAST

10–30%

Amount IT costs can drop by
implementing cloud technology.

94%

Companies that say the
cloud reduces setup and
maintenance costs.¹³

“While companies adjust to hybrid work, employees have enough disruption in their world. The last thing you want to do is go, ‘Hey, while you’re at it, could you change this one more thing?’” says Conley. “It’s crucial to stick with the familiar but offer it in a way that’s more inviting. Your adoption rate will be much higher if you meet users where they’re at. Plus, if you’re doing everything under the hood or behind the scenes, it doesn’t even matter to an end user that some data transitioned to the cloud.”

As processes change, employees may need more extensive support and training from IT to maintain security standards and learn new systems. With a hybrid workforce, companies may need extended support hours to assist workers across different locations, time zones, and work schedules.

Efficient use of office space will require central coordination.

Question: "If you got to work from home for two days per week which two days would you

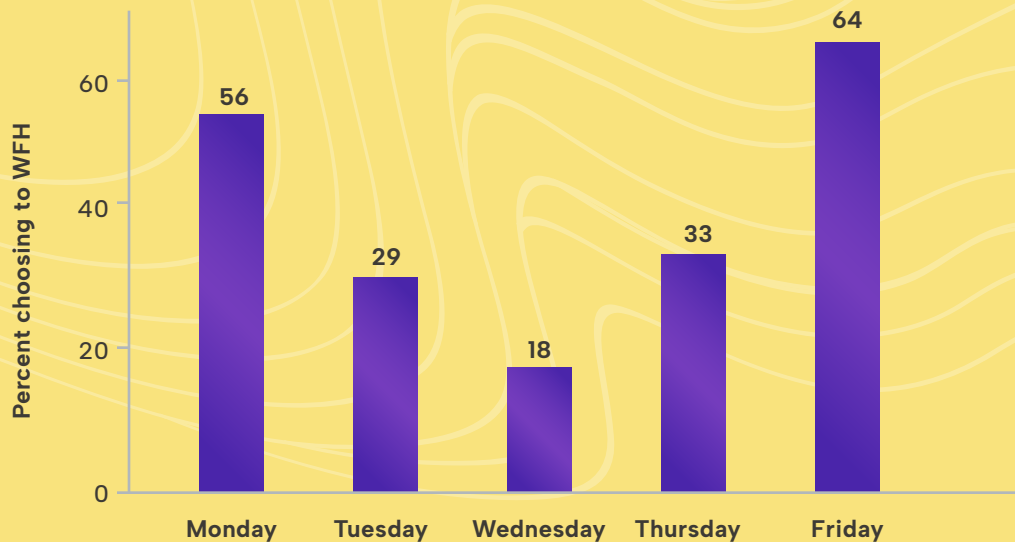


Image source: [Stanford.edu](https://stanford.edu)

Defining dedicated days each team comes into the office can allow teams to leverage their time in person for collaborative work and meetings. Staggering which teams come into the office on which days ensures space and office resources are effectively utilized and available when employees need them. Alternatively, closing larger office spaces and allowing employees to “rent” a desk in a satellite office reduces equipment and workspace costs, while still allowing workers the flexibility to collaborate in an office.

As of January 2021, HubSpot employees¹⁸ could choose between three hybrid work options:

- Working from an office three or more times a week and maintaining a dedicated desk
- Working primarily from home
- Being a “flex” worker

Flex workers rent a desk in a physical office 1–2 times a week, often alongside their team, to meet and collaborate. These workers are given the opportunity to change their work style once a year moving forward, so they can adjust their work schedule to fit their life. Meanwhile, this also gives HubSpot the information they need to make informed decisions about resource allocation.

Preparing for a Hybrid Future

Organizations are tasked with myriad decisions as they face the inevitable post-pandemic question on the tip of everyone's tongue—when are we returning to the office? As companies consider what the future of work looks like, many are discovering that a hybrid workforce presents too many advantages to pass up.

Amid the many changes that accompany hybrid work, visibility into every element of your IT infrastructure is essential to prevent cyberattacks. Secure use of company hardware can prevent bad actors from accessing your company's data, but without the proper insights and metrics, printers are often a risky attack vector on home networks. Limiting printer use to on-site employees often leads to risky workarounds, presenting even more opportunities for sensitive business data to fall into the wrong hands.

Preparing for hybrid work involves protecting your hardware and strengthening your security posture, both on-site and remotely. Pharos Beacon allows companies deep visibility into how employees in your organization use printing, putting powerful insights in your hands. With Beacon, companies can empower users and guests to access printing capabilities in a seamless and secure way, whether from home, from a mobile device, or within an office.

[Schedule a demo today](#) to see how Beacon can support your hybrid workforce.



- [1] <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work>
- [2] <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/flex2.html>
- [3] https://nbloom.people.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj4746/f/wfh_will_stick_v5.pdf
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