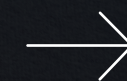# The balancing act:

Workforce collaboration strategies to keep your teams well, happy, and productive

# Maintaining balance isn't about remaining perfectly still; it's about recognizing when you're tilting too much – and correcting it.

Whatever industry you're in, optimizing your working model takes careful thought, planning, and the right technology. Here are some common challenges:

No matter where employees work day-to-day, the office is the heart of every business. It's where companies create and reinforce the culture and experience that are central to their relationship with employees. An experience that supports employee desires, such as achieving the right home life/work ratio, plays a valuable role in both retention and business results. But a culture that isn't authentically focused on employees increases turnover and slows growth, which no business can afford.

Meeting the demands of the modern workplace means creating experiences that benefit every employee with a focus on well-being, happiness, and productivity.

It's a tricky balancing act. Read on to learn collaboration strategies that can help IT and HR leaders get it right for employees. >

# What's hanging in the balance for employers?

Whatever industry you're in, optimizing your working model takes careful thought, planning, and the right technology. Here are some common challenges:

## Productivity: Keep your people happy and busy

Productivity is important. There's no point in pretending it's not. That's what keeps your business going. But this doesn't mean squeezing out as many tasks as possible in every available moment. All that achieves is burnout. Almost 9 in 10 workers experienced burnout due to the amount of video calls, messages, and tasks they had to deal with while working remotely.[1]

Despite good intentions, the wrong kind of push on productivity could end up encouraging your people to move on. The right kind of push will mean your people remain happy and busy, helping you retain the best talent.

## Experience: Create trust and balance

Investment in digitization has increased hugely over the last few years. Of course, this has made working outside the office much more viable. But with this came a new kind of discipline for managers – looking after teams remotely. And even with part of the team back in the office, managers are challenged with a lack of visibility into how employees are working, trusting employees they can't see, and learning how to support work policies that help employees balance work and life.

People have different needs and are affected by onsite and remote working in various ways. Understanding how best to engage each of them is a must to keep staff on board and avoid people working too much — or not enough.

## Equality: Ensure everyone can fully collaborate

It's worth getting meetings right, so everyone can participate equally. If all participants can be heard, seen, and represented — regardless of location — it makes a huge difference to the effectiveness of virtual meetings, and overall work environment; particularly as 15% of an organization's time is spent on meetings.[2]

Wherever your people work, they need to feel involved. This helps ensure they can uphold your organization's standards and business reputation to every client or stakeholder. But it's difficult to ensure this is happening without being present on every call. Virtual collaboration depends on setting the right norms, and providing the right technology, to give employees an equal experience across any kind of workspace.

1 Asana Inc., (2021) Anatomy of Work Index 2021: US Findings [infographic] https://blog.asana.com/2021/01/us-anatomy-of-work-infographic/#close
2 Otter.ai. "Shocking Meeting Statistics in 2021 That Will Take You By Surprise." Published 12.24.2020. Accessed 12.7.2021.

Almost 9 in 10 workers experienced burnout while working remotely[1]

15% of an organization's time is spent on meetings[2]

# What's hanging in the balance for employers?

Hybrid working is great in many ways. It offers the kind of flexibility some workers have been seeking for years. But many face unexpected challenges, like:

### Wellbeing: Resolving issues before they become problems

While up to 43% of full-time employees attribute their negative mental health to their jobs[3], most people ignore initial signs of burnout, until the point when things start to go wrong and physical health or behavior noticeably changes. For employees who work remotely most of the time, it can feel isolating, and they may feel awkward or overwhelmed about asking for help.

### Workspace: Create healthy environments

It's well known that bad posture, sitting for long hours, dim lighting, and making do with inadequate technology isn't good for employees — in the office or at home. Yet many workers will only ask for help with their onsite workspace or rectify their home office setup when they notice a problem. And by then, the damage might have already been done. Despite more freedom to move around the house, remote workers tend to stay stuck to their desks like they're in the office. Without regular environment and equipment checks, this attitude towards setting up a healthy workspace is a worrying trend.

### Work/life separation: Building balance into the day

We can all relate. It's been a long day — you check the clock and it's well past your working hours. Multiple coffee cups are crowding your desk and you haven't even started to think about dinner. When the daily home routines settle down, it's easy to pop back on your computer, or feel like work is still looming over you if your workspace is in your bedroom. Whether employees are in an office or at home, it's difficult to achieve a balance that maximizes your work time and your personal down-time.

### Human connections: Making conversations feel natural

Ask employees about remote working challenges and missing that human connection is always at the top of the list. Humans are social creatures, so it's natural to miss that passing chat in the corridor or the kitchen. Something that isn't possible when working remotely. It's one reason demand is increasing for employer and managerial support as employees try to fill the gap.

# 43%
of full-time employees attribute negative mental health to their jobs[3]

# 5 Considerations for success

It might seem like a tall order, but there are ways to maintain the balance between your employees' wellbeing, happiness, and productivity. Success will come from being aware of the challenges, putting your people first, and choosing technology that adapts to their workstyles.

## 56%
of employees expressed concern that noise levels in the office will make them less productive[4]

## 1. Distraction vs productivity

No matter the location, finding the peace and quiet to be able to work uninterrupted is often a luxury. Our research found that 56% of employees expressed concern that noise levels in the office will make them less productive. Comparatively, some are looking forward to returning to the office because of the noise at home (up to 34%).[4] Whether it's loud colleagues, barking dogs, or a bustling airport, noise distractions negatively affect productivity.

To tip the balance towards the most productive spaces, there's a wide selection of enterprise-grade audio and video solutions that can help hybrid workers stay connected, block out distracting background noise, and make sure employees can look and sound their professional best in every location. Providing the right devices for each employees' work environment is key.

- In the office, noise-canceling headsets help staff to focus, and conferencing solutions keep external noise out of meeting rooms.

- At home, noise-canceling headsets help employees to zone out the sounds of partners, children, roommates, and other distractions. For quieter homes, high-quality speakerphones can be another great option for audio and volume control.

- On the go, noise-canceling headsets and microphones keep the background noise out of meetings taken on the phone, when traveling, or switching between locations.

## 2. Fatigue vs collaboration

Call after call after call can create fatigue. Especially if your organization is prone to video calls. No one likes feeling as though they have to constantly perform, look, and sound their best. We're only human, after all.

According to research by a team of neuroscientists from the University of California, Berkeley, "it drains more brain power to stay alert and maintain attention during a video meeting (compared to its in-person equivalent)." [5]

Their advice?
- Limit meetings to 30 minutes to achieve the same outcome in less time.
- Hide or ignore "self" view, which eliminates unnecessary brain processing.
- Take a break every two hours to regain mental clarity.[4]

To overcome video meeting fatigue, you can:
- Consider a mix of audio-only and video calls.
- Encourage your people to ask at every meeting, "Does my camera need to be on?"
- Have everyone upload their photo so they have a human face in the meeting even when the camera is off.
- Use crisp, clear audio devices to keep the focus on participants' voices and bridge the gap between them and their colleagues and clients.

## 3. Remote vs corporate office

Distractions aside, your people may have gotten used to working from various locations. But it doesn't mean their meeting experience is equal. Microsoft found that 43% of remote employees say they don't feel included in meetings[6]. Sub-standard equipment gets in the way of effective communication, which can often lead to a lack of confidence to speak out. Similarly, a lack of mobile equipment can cause missed opportunities to collaborate. Whether your people are in the room or working remotely, it's important that everyone feels like they have an equal presence in the meeting.

- Create a culture where everyone feels like they're contributing. Investing in pro-grade audio and video equipment is a good start. The better your hybrid collaboration technology is, the more equally everyone can share ideas.

- Mobile audio and video solutions ensure that employees can be clearly seen and heard wherever they are, while allowing them to stand, stretch, and move around to stay comfortable.

- Keep morale high. Mobile and cordless solutions also enable informal communications that raise spirits, like team celebrations, remote walks with colleagues, virtual coffee breaks, or working outside on a nice day.

5 University of California, Berkeley, (2020), '30 is the new 60'
6 Microsoft Work Trends Index 2022

# 4. Work vs home life

The boundary between work and home life can get blurry, as we've mentioned. In many cases, this seems to have only increased with remote working. Your teams might be uncertain about what's expected of them. As a result, some employees may work well past their working hours to meet deadlines. Equally, others could be putting less effort in. This might explain why there's a growing movement around work being a part of life, not the definition of it.

- Let employees take more ownership of their work. In "13 Tips for Leading and Managing Remote Teams," Forbes calls focusing on outcome– not activity – "a best practice for increasing engagement and empowering employees".[7]

- Enable employees to set clear boundaries. Encourage them to sign off at a certain time every day, to not check emails outside of work hours, and define what constitutes emergencies that may require more hours.

- Show mutual trust and respect. Generally, employees who feel valued, respected, and able to use the flexibility of hybrid working for their own benefit accomplish more.

- Make employees feel comfortable taking breaks. This is vital for wellbeing, so add reminders in people's calendars or incentivize breaks, and make sure leadership leads by example, taking breaks and vacations themselves.

- Consult employees before making changes. Sending a survey to get a consensus is a good step to understanding their expectations before you act.

# 5. Attraction vs retention

It's not surprising that the persistent feeling of burnout played a part in the Great Resignation phenomenon. The rise of hybrid and remote working has led to many workers going for a job outside of their usual commute. Attracting and retaining talent requires a business to look at itself from the inside-out. And for those that don't yet have a hybrid working model in place — they'll need to get a move on.

- Keep employees engaged. Engaged employees feel motivated and do better work. Offer them the opportunity to make a difference and make sure they have the best-in-class technology to succeed.

- Show you care. Ensure you have open communication, regularly reward people for their dedication, and promote the perks of the job.

- Put your people first. Remember that if you look after them, they'll look after your business. You'll get the results you want and attract and retain the best people.

7 Forbes.com, (2020), 13 Tips For Leading And Managing Remote Teams
https://www.forbes.com/sites/brentgleeson/2020/08/26/13-tips-for-leading-and-managing-remote-teams/?sh=23816eb5577b

# How can Poly help?

At Poly, we bring 60 years of technical experience to high-quality, rock solid audio and video solutions. Your employees look and sound professional, connect and collaborate from everywhere, with individual comfort that helps them stay well, happy, and doing their best work.

Choose from our complete portfolio of headsets, cameras, speakerphones, and meeting room solutions to match workstyles and workspaces, so you can:

- Enable employees to focus with crystal-clear audio and smart noise-cancelation features to block distractions.
- Empower employees to look and feel confident with premium optics that adjust to lighting conditions.
- Set personal health and wellness settings in the Poly Lens app to remember to take breaks, keep hydrated, and stay energized all day.

- Make everyone feel like they're in the same room with features like speaker framing and tracking, wireless content sharing, digital whiteboarding, and AI-powered noise blocking.
- Keep everyone up and running with worldwide services and support when you need it.

Get the balance right for your teams. Help to keep them well, happy, and productive with our beautifully engineered communication devices.

For more information

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