

Hybrid working: starting in the workplace



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Introduction

In this course, you will discover the skills and behaviours required for joining the hybrid workforce, from finding a job, to your first day in post, to managing your wellbeing in the face of change.

In 2005 Halford defined hybrid working as:

‘Being employed to work both at home and also in an organisational setting, using ICTs to maintain workloads and relationships across both domestic and organisational spaces.’

(Halford, 2005, p. 20).

While the definition of hybrid work remains fairly similar in the 2020s, higher-speed broadband, better quality webcams and microphones, and more advanced communication and meeting platforms mean that hybrid working now has the potential to be a more streamlined and efficient experience.

However, hybrid work was still an uncommon practice, even into the late 2010s. It was only the COVID-19 pandemic which accelerated the numbers of hybrid workers, with lockdowns forcing many people to work from home if they could. Almost overnight, the UK remote working population rose from 5% to nearly 50% (Felsted and Reuschke, 2020). This was obviously a dramatic change for many workers and their households, and organisations had to rush to adapt to this new era of working. Weekly online meetings, ‘log-in’ checks, and rapid virtual messaging all became more commonplace, and within a few months the way we worked had changed forever.

This free course is part of the

[Supporting hybrid working and digital transformation collection](#).

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- prepare yourself for finding a job in the hybrid workforce
- prepare for your first day in the hybrid workplace
- understand what is expected from a cultural perspective
- recognise the digital skills you will need to work in the hybrid environment
- collaborate with others in the hybrid workplace
- manage your wellbeing and loneliness
- make a difference and contribute further in the hybrid workforce.

1 Changing priorities

As the way we work has changed, many organisations are redefining their culture and employee experience for a remote and hybrid-first world, and focusing on developing more inclusive workplaces and promoting social mobility. To understand what organisations are considering, and the skills they are focusing on, in the video below, Jessica Leigh Jones MBE, co-founder and Chief Executive of iungo Solutions, a company working at the intersection of business, education and government, discusses what employers can do to maximise diversity and enable social mobility, observing that 'learning and development plays an important role in levelling the playing field for socially diverse talent'.

Recruiting and retaining that socially diverse talent benefits both employers and employees but, as Gemma Hallett, Head of Skills at Fintech Wales and founder of Mifuture, comments in the video, matching skills to roles, particularly in remote rural areas of Wales, has sometimes been an issue. However, remote and hybrid working is bringing new opportunities to these communities – though this is not without its challenges.

Video content is not available in this format.



Clearly, the hybrid workplace is here to stay, meaning it is more important than ever to learn and develop the skills and behaviours required to succeed within this new environment.

If you are about to enter or return to the workplace, now is a good time to think about your expectations around hybrid working and to reflect on what your priorities are for personal and professional development in this next phase of your life. Activity 1 will help you to consider both of these things in relation to this course.

Activity 1 Definitions and priorities

 10 minutes

Reflecting on the video and those organisations that are still evolving as they redefine their cultures for hybrid ways of working, answer the following questions.

1. Examine Halford's (2005) definition of hybrid working in the [Introduction](#). Do you think this definition still applies today? What would you change about it?
2. Read the course [Learning outcomes](#) and rank them in order of importance for you personally in terms of what you need most help with, with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least. This should help you determine where to focus your time on this course.

Discussion

1. The term ICT (Information and Communications Technology) isn't used so much today, in the 2020s. However, the principle of using technology to work in an organisational setting and somewhere else is still valid. That said, in the 2020s, working remotely does not necessarily mean working from home, since the development of mobile technology enables people to work on the move, such as on a train. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has also been more of a focus on flexibility of working patterns, for example to allow employees to balance work responsibilities and caring responsibilities.
2. There are no right or wrong answers for this question. If you have limited time, you might want to concentrate first on the parts of the course that cover the learning outcomes you ranked as 1 or 2. Otherwise, work through the course in chronological order, as this is how the course has been designed.

1.1 Adapting to change

For many people, starting work or switching careers is a major change they need to adapt to. It can be exciting and lead to numerous opportunities. It can also require some planning to make the most of the new job, and changes it may have for your personal circumstances.

When joining the hybrid workforce, a number of specific skills and behaviours need to be learned in order to successfully manage the new expectations your employer may have. Change management has long been an area of discussion within the workforce, but it is only recently that change management and hybrid working have been discussed together (Power, 2021; Lenka, 2021). Traditional models can be used to show how significant change, such as moving into the hybrid workforce for the first time, can lead to increased anxiety, dissatisfaction, and a loss in productivity.

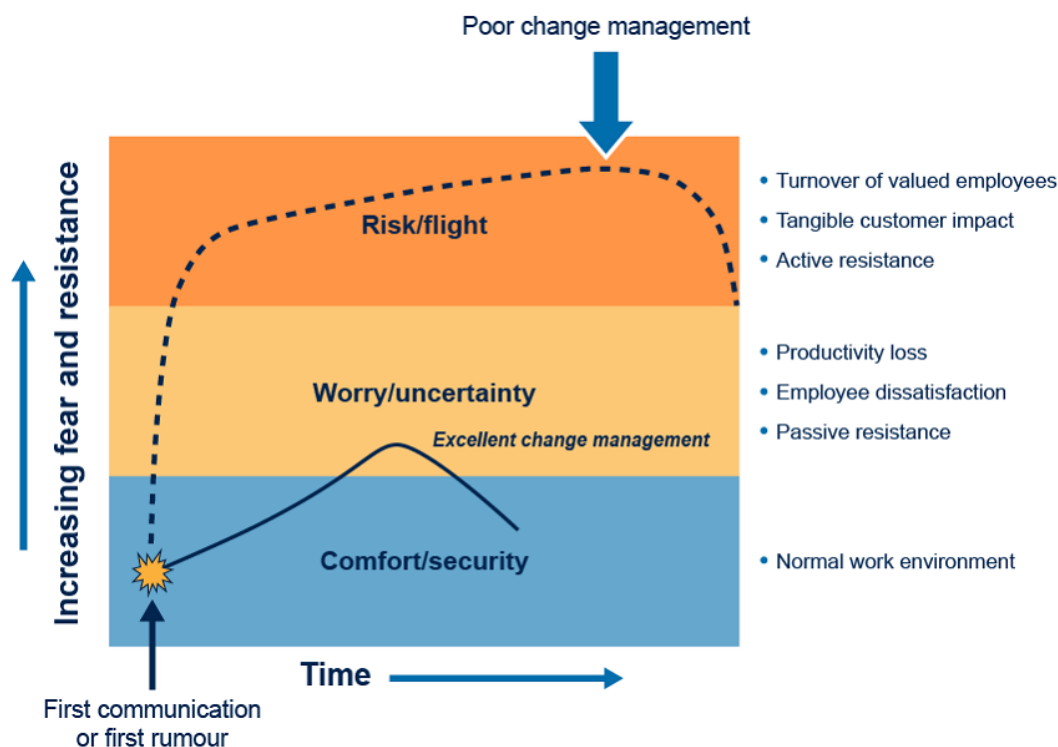


Figure 1: The Prosci Flight-Risk Model (Prosci, 2004)

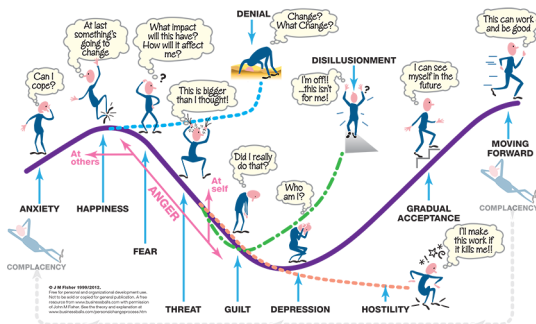


Figure 2: Fisher's Personal Transition Curve (Fisher, 2012)

Various change management models, such as those in Figures 1 and 2, depict similar issues, namely that without appropriately managing a change within the working environment, individuals can face fear, resistance, and depression, all of which significantly reduce their ability to work effectively (Fisher, 2012; Prosci, 2004). This is why it is so important to be prepared for change, to understand the difficulties you might face, and to improve any skills that may be needed to help manage this change.

Activity 2 Dealing with change

5 minutes

Look at the Fisher Curve (Figure 2) and think about a time when you have faced a significant change.

- Where did you find yourself on the curve?

- If it was in a negative part of the curve, how did you overcome those feelings?
 - If it was in a positive part of the curve, how did you make the most of those feelings?
-

Discussion

Everyone reacts differently to change, so there are no right or wrong answers. You may find yourself at different points on the curve at different stages within a single change. If feeling angry or afraid, some people find it helpful to talk to friends and colleagues. Help may be available through your organisation, or charities such as Mind provide information on their website that may be useful. It is also important to build on times when you feel happy and excited; perhaps you could share your ideas of how the change could benefit you and your colleagues, or make suggestions to make the change even better?

2 Applying for a job in the hybrid workplace

In many ways, applying for a job in the hybrid workplace should be no different to any other application. You will almost certainly need a CV, and it needs to cover the key basic points – suitability for the job, proactivity, skills, and evidence (UCAS, 2022).

Primarily, you need to match your CV to the job you are applying to, showing how fit you are for the role. If the job description mentions specific key skills, be sure to include them in your CV. Employers are looking for a mix of technical ability – e.g. the things that you can ‘do’, whether that’s developing databases, calculating coordinates, or writing reports – and ‘soft’ skills, such as teamwork, communication, leadership, and commercial awareness.

2.1 Developing and documenting your skills

While technical ability can be acquired through training courses, formal work experience or part-time jobs, soft skills can be developed through voluntary work, extracurricular activities, and personal projects. Be sure to document these, identifying detailed examples of when you have showcased each skill. If you can incorporate numeric information, like a budget you managed, or include statistics that illustrate the impact of your skills, this evidence will back up your claims.

In the video below, three contributors from iungo Solutions – Zainab (a recent graduate, now a technical content analyst), Ploy (an HR and recruitment executive); and Jessica (co-founder and chief executive) – talk about their experiences of looking for employment, skills development, the recruitment process, and the importance of being proactive.

Video content is not available in this format.



Your CV should demonstrate how you take action to develop new knowledge and skills, whether that is during your studies or in your spare time. Activities such as maintaining a specialist blog, doing voluntary work, and developing job-relevant hobbies will help to demonstrate your lifelong learning mindset.

Nick van Dam is an advisor, author, speaker and researcher on corporate learning and leadership development, with a keen interest in how individuals learn and develop within organisations. In a lecture he gave in 2016, he discussed six essential elements of a lifelong-learning mindset:

1. Focus on growth
2. Become a serial master
3. Stretch
4. Build a personal brand
5. Own your development
6. Do what you love and discover your [Ikigai](#) – your ‘reason for being’.

([The full lecture, ‘Learn or Lose’](#), is available on YouTube if you are interested in exploring this topic further.)

Over the decades, the skills required by employers have evolved, as client expectations, technology, and how people interact with their environments have also evolved. Many employers are looking for people who demonstrate lifelong-learning mindsets by moving from deep competency in one specialist area (sometimes described as a T-shaped skill set) to developing deep competency in several areas (sometimes described as an M-shaped skill set).

Your lifelong-learning mindset could be demonstrated by, for example, your engagement with social media accounts, small side-businesses, or part-time volunteering/charity work. You need to show how you meet employer requirements but also how you try to develop yourself.

Finally, don’t forget how things have changed in the hybrid workplace. In the video above, Jessica Leigh Jones gave advice about key skills for work-from-anywhere organisations. Mentioning key hybrid skills such as organisation, independent work, experience of working virtually, and key digital skills could all make a huge difference to your application.

Activity 3 Which skills do employers want?

 10 minutes

Read the UCAS webpage [What do employers look for in graduates?](#) (UCAS, 2022) and the Prospects article [How to write a CV](#) (Prospects, 2022).

Which aspects of your CV need to be updated to really showcase the skills that employers want? Consider how you can ensure that your CV is succinct. You do not have to describe your experience in detail, according to Indeed a CV should be around one to three pages, depending on your experience. The more experienced you are, the longer the CV. (Indeed, 2022).

2.2 Virtual CVs

The hybrid workplace has not only impacted the day-to-day activities involved in many jobs, but it has also significantly altered how people get jobs in the first place. From new skills required on applications, to the rise of virtual interviews, the way in which we apply for jobs has changed enormously in recent years.

The virtual CV has become a focal point, with sites such as LinkedIn or Indeed acting as a place where people can build their CV. If you don't have a LinkedIn (or similar) profile, we highly recommend you create one and start adding people to your network, as this will make you more visible to potential employers. Recruiters will search services like LinkedIn based on your current job position, so even if you don't have a job you should still put something into the 'current job title' box, such as 'Trainee Accountant' or whatever job you want to get. Then, in the 'company box' you should simply write 'looking for a new opportunity'. This will help show recruiters and companies that you are definitely looking for a role, and you will show on the algorithm more prominently.

Activity 4 Update (or set up) your virtual CV

 20–30 minutes

Read the article [Networking for Job Seekers: 10 LinkedIn Alternatives](#) to explore the different professional networking sites. Many professionals will now have a LinkedIn profile, but also profiles on sites that specialise on jobs within their chosen sector. Then, watch the YouTube video [5 Must-know LinkedIn Profile Tips for Job Seekers!](#) (Jeff Su 2022) on tips for creating a great LinkedIn profile, which can be applied to any networking site you choose.

Finally, create or update your profile based on the tips in Jeff Su's video and those stated above. If you don't have a LinkedIn profile, now is the time to make one!

Services like LinkedIn also have an 'about' section which should act as your main digital CV. When employers look at your profile, this is what they will search through to see if your experience is relevant. The 'about' section should therefore match your CV, with a few paragraphs explaining your main achievements, skills, and experience. Again, try to use numbers or evidence of impact to back up what you are saying. You should also try to add keywords here that recruiters may well be looking at for your specific role as this will help recruiters find you.

2.3 Online interviews

When applying for a job in a hybrid workplace, you will often be invited to an online interview. Some employers will have every interview online, while others may ask you to do online competency tests as part of the selection process, before holding the first round of interviews online and then invite you to the office. Either way, preparation is crucial.

- Make sure everything is looking neat and tidy in your virtual workspace.
- Find out which platform or application your online interview will use and familiarise yourself with it by downloading the app and testing your connection with a friend.
- If you are using browser-based software rather than an app, make sure your web browser is up to date and meets any compatibility requirements.
- Use a good quality webcam, so you are clearly visible, and make sure your microphone is working.
- Try to ensure that you are in a quiet location, with no distractions or interruptions. If you live with others, make them aware you are being interviewed. If you have pets, ensure they are in another part of your home, if possible.

By having a well-prepared virtual interview space, you will improve your chances of making a great first impression on the interviewer.

A really good idea is to research the company well and prepare for likely interview questions. In the following video, Zainab and Ploy from iungo Solutions describe their interview experiences, including tips for neurodivergent candidates.

Video content is not available in this format.



Were there any useful techniques that Zainab and Ploy mention in the video that could help you?

You should write down everything you think you would have to do in the job. The job description should help you to do this too. Prepare answers, showing how your skills and experience match every single aspect of the job. For example, if one of the parts of the job is 'communicating with clients', prepare an answer that explains how you have had experience in communicating with clients in the past, and how your communication skills make you a perfect candidate for this new job.

As well as preparing skills-based answers, you should prepare generic interview answers in case you are asked classic interview questions such as those shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Classic interview questions

'Why do you want this job?'	Your answer should demonstrate how you meet the job description, and why you want to work for that organisation.
'What is your biggest weakness?'	Your answer should demonstrate awareness of your weakness, how you mitigate the impact, and how it can be used as a strength.
'Which three words would you choose to describe yourself?'	Think about why you chose the words, and have examples as you may be asked to expand on these.

You will probably be asked at least one or two of these during the interview, and if you have a good answer prepared, you will have a much better chance of getting the job. You should practise with a friend or family member. Have them ask you different questions about the job, and practise answering in front of them. Sometimes you can have a brilliant answer written down, but when you try to say it out loud it sounds terrible. Only by practising answering questions out loud will you be able to properly prepare for a real interview.

2.4 Learning from each attempt

As with any job application, you need to get used to being unsuccessful. It is estimated that it can take up to 80 job applications before some people receive an offer (Zippia, 2022). There are thousands of experienced applicants out there, so the important thing is not to worry when you aren't successful, and instead try to learn from your experience.

Activity 5 Making rejection positive

 5 minutes

Think about a time when you faced rejection. What did you learn from it? How did you use this experience to help you improve in the longer term, or how could you use it in the future?

.....

Discussion

Rejection can be difficult, especially if you felt that an interview had gone well. Developing coping strategies and learning is an important part of building your resilience. Watch the video [Job Rejection: How to deal with Rejection](#) on YouTube, in which Cindy Makita-Dodd, co-founder and COO of PEMA, suggests a four-step approach to handling rejection:

- Recoup
- Reason
- Redirect
- Rise.

Sometimes you will receive feedback from the employer as to why you did not get the job. This can range from not having enough relevant experience on your CV, to the quality of answers you gave at interview, or simply that they had a very large and strong range of applicants. Hopefully they can give you some useful information (if not, you can always ask) which you can then take forward for other roles. Be sure to update your CV/cover letters with any new information, and try to improve on your interview technique based on any feedback you are given.

2.5 Before accepting a job

If you've made it through the interview process and been offered the job, congratulations! However, before accepting a job offer, it's important to take a good look at the organisation

and understand what exactly you are being asked to do. But perhaps most importantly, what is the hybrid working model like at the organisation?

You need to examine their employee value proposition (strategy) for hybrid working, and how organised they are in terms of days in/out of work (Sto, 2022). By understanding the schedule and their future plans, you'll be able to see how this works for you. It's also important because it demonstrates how much an organisation may care about their employees' wellbeing. If they don't have clear values and structure, you could end up being left with a working pattern that doesn't suit you: for example, in a fully remote role or a fully in-person environment.

You should also look at the organisation's culture, and see if it fits your personality. More than a third of employers struggle to maintain an appropriate company culture (Sto, 2022).

As Ploy and Zainab suggest in the video below, it is very important to make sure the culture aligns with your own beliefs and values. Is the working environment what you are looking for? Do the working hours suit you?

Video content is not available in this format.



You need to make sure the organisational culture is something you feel comfortable with, as it is hugely important, and cannot be underestimated when deciding whether or not to accept a job offer.

3 Preparing to start your new job

Preparing for your first day in any workplace can be daunting, and that is just as true for a hybrid workplace. Without knowing exactly what to expect, the best approach is to ensure you have done everything possible to ensure a smooth and stress-free transition.

In a major study from 29 European countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, the three major constraints of working remotely were found to be:

- home office constraints,
- work uncertainties, and
- inadequate tools.

(Ipsen et al., 2021).

These are all areas you should think about before you start your new role. In the following videos you will hear from Ploy and Zainab at iungo Solutions again, this time discussing important considerations around behaviour, culture, support and workspaces in remote or hybrid-first organisations.

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3.1 Your home office

As you heard in the videos in the previous section, having a dedicated space for your remote work is preferable, if possible. Home distractions are one of the major issues impacting productivity in the home workspace (Franken et al., 2021). Ideally you should pick a location that is only used for work, with space for everything you need to perform your role. Noise should also be kept to a minimum: research has shown factors such as having more children in the house can unsurprisingly negatively impact work productivity (Franken et al., 2021). Somewhere that other members of your household will not be wandering into unexpectedly is therefore going to be the optimum location for your home office.

You should also take care in setting up your webcam and microphone. Not only should these be of appropriate quality, but you should try to find a professional (or plain) background. Video calls are one of the most prominent features of the hybrid workplace, so having a professional background can help prevent any embarrassing moments when you first start. Ideally, you want your workstation positioned so that nobody (including any pets) can walk behind you and get on the camera.

However, this is the ideal approach, and one of the benefits to come from the COVID-19 pandemic is the shared experience of remote working. Most workplaces and colleagues understand that housemates, children and pets are part of our working life, and have evolved to adopt a more inclusive approach which accepts that sometimes our home lives and work collide.

Activity 6 Planning your home office

 5 minutes

Think about your own home. Based on the advice above, where would be the best place for your home office? Why?

3.2 Work uncertainties

Everyone faces work uncertainties before starting a new job. What will the role be like? What if I don't know what to do? When will I meet my work colleagues? These are all valid concerns, and the only thing you can do to help with these is to do your research. You may not have an exact idea about what you will be doing, but there are a few things you can do to prepare:

- Ask around – You should have the contact information for your manager or the recruiting team, so sending a quick email asking if there is anything you should familiarise yourself with could really make a difference when your first day arrives.
- The job description – Refamiliarise yourself with the job description, which should include a list of your basic responsibilities or tasks. If there is anything on there you do not understand, research it. You should be taught what to do anyway, but there is no harm in getting a head start.
- Visit the company website – It may seem obvious, but the company website should tell you all about what the organisation does, and it may even have information on your specific role. Understanding the company is crucial to success in any job!

Remember, you will never know everything about the job before you start. You will learn a lot in the first few weeks and months, once you arrive. However, it doesn't hurt to be prepared, and this can help alleviate any work uncertainties you may have before starting!

3.3 Tools of the trade

In the remote workplace, there are a number of tools you should be familiar with (from your studies, or perhaps you already use them at home), many of which have become a necessity in recent years. Figure 3 provides an overview of some of the tools available for organisations.

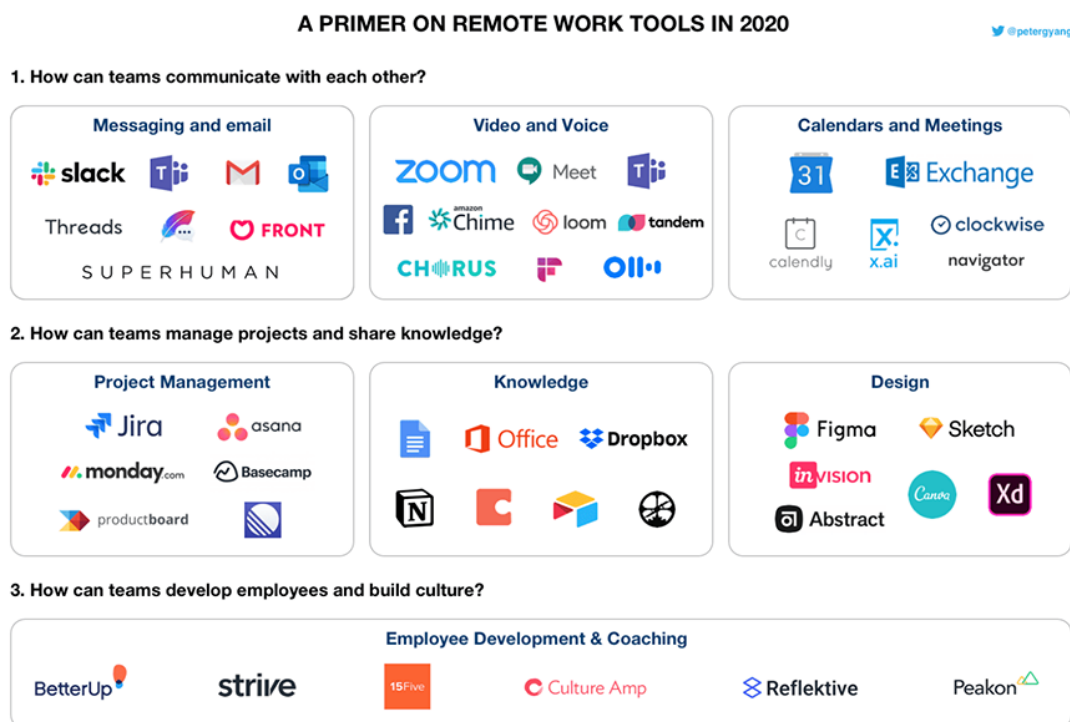


Figure 3: Remote work tools (Yang, 2020)

Don't be overwhelmed by the various programs and systems that help drive hybrid work, as you may be familiar with some of them already, and you are unlikely to need to use all of those shown in Figure 3. Many are fairly easy to get to grips with, so if you want to get a head start, many of the companies that developed them offer free access, user guides or tutorials on their websites; alternatively, you could search online for how-to videos.

However, it is important for you to understand the basic tools your new company uses. Do they have a workflow management system? How do they communicate? It could be useful to ask these questions before you start, as getting to grips with some of these programs could help you feel more comfortable in your new role.

Activity 7 Researching remote work tools

20 minutes

1. Examine the remote work tools figure above. How many of these do you know? Are any that you consider essential missing? Research some of the tools you may not have heard of.
2. Read this article:
[Top 22 work from home tools to make your remote work life easy](#) (Kashyap, no date). How many of these work-from-home tools would be useful for the career you want to go into?

4 Organisational culture

One of the most crucial parts of starting a new role, whether in a hybrid workplace or not, involves understanding exactly what is expected of you. Organisational culture can be defined as the way work is performed in an organisation (Atkinson, 1990). Culture can be seen as embodying the values of an organisation, particularly in the way it operates (Johnson, 2013). These definitions illustrate just how important culture can be to the underlying workings of a company, and therefore it is important to have a clear understanding of your organisation's culture.

Johnson and Scholes' (1992) Cultural Web Theory suggests that there are six interrelated factors which, when combined, produce the cultural paradigm of an organisation:

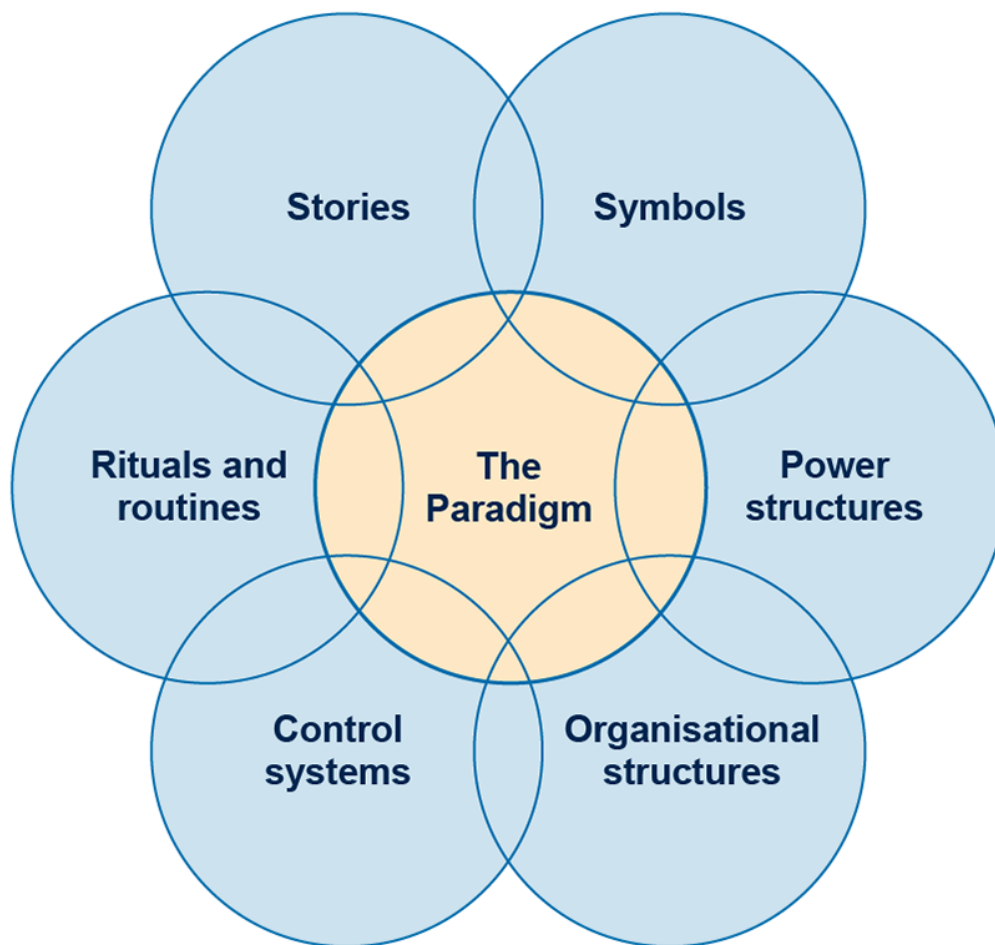


Figure 4: The cultural web, adapted from Johnson, 1992 (MindTools, 2018)

Whilst this is a fairly academic approach, it obviously has a number of practical implications, and using the Cultural Web as an example, it could perhaps be beneficial to try to and analyse the different aspects of your organisation during the early months of your employment:

- What are the common rituals and routines which need to be observed? (daily video calls, weekly team meetings, etc.)
- What are the power structures and where do you fit in? (managers, who you report to, the levels of delegation to each role, etc.)

- What are the stories or values of the organisation and how can you make sure you are navigating these 'unwritten' rules?

At iungo Solutions, Jessica Leigh Jones MBE talks about the pivot towards 'intrapreneurship' in a hybrid world. In the next video Jessica and Ploy explain how they are trying to increase the diversity of the talent pool and harness different perspectives to take the company to the next level.

Video content is not available in this format.



Your success in any role depends on your ability to understand the expectations of your organisation and integrate your authentic self with the organisational culture. There has been an increase, in recent years, in organisations making diversity and inclusion a priority, to nurture employee creativity and autonomy in how work gets done, so you're aiming for a mutually beneficial integration between what you have to offer and what the organisational culture has to offer you, rather than just assimilation. If you can do this, it will make your working experience much smoother, and can help you quickly fit into your new role.

Activity 8 Analysing an organisation's culture

 5 minutes

Reflect on the video and think about an organisation you have been a part of (society, university, school, job). Using the Cultural Web theory, briefly analyse this organisation. Consider, for example, what are the symbols, stories, power structures, and rituals common in this organisation? What was their approach to inclusion, and how can you learn from others with a different experience and perspective?

5 Achieving goals

As well as cultural expectations, you will also have productivity (your task) and results-based (your goals/objectives) expectations. This has arguably become even more important in the hybrid workplace. Without a constant office environment, it can be easy for productivity to slip, particularly if you are faced with distractions at home, or increase if you do not manage your time effectively, as it can be very easy to start to do a few more hours when you don't have to log off and leave an office. As a consequence, organisations are finding it crucial to set specific goals and results for you to reach.

If you are starting your very first job, having goals to reach can be a scary thought. What if I don't achieve them? How will I manage these new expectations? These are all valid concerns, but it is important not to get overwhelmed, as most managers will regularly review these with you. A useful trick is to write down your goals, and plan how you will achieve them, categorising them according to what is an immediate actionable task vs those that may take longer. This can help reduce the magnitude of what you are facing, and helps you find a more manageable solution to achieving goals. It can be helpful to set weekly targets, and rank the most important tasks of your week (based on how far they contribute to your goals), meaning you will have a weekly (and daily) plan that will help you keep on top of your tasks and results.

Activity 9 Making goals achievable

 Allow at least an hour for this activity

A useful and popular approach to making goals achievable is using the SMART acronym. The table below explains what each letter stands for.

Table 2 SMART

Specific	Be clear and precise about what you need to do and want to achieve.
Measurable	How will you know you have achieved the goal? What is the outcome?
Achievable	Is the goal realistic? Is it something you can deliver?
Relevant	Is the goal required? Why are you doing it and is it a priority?
Time limited	What is the deadline for the goal to be achieved?

1. Review your current goals to ensure that they are aligned with the SMART goals approach.
2. Now list the weekly tasks you need to complete in order to achieve these goals. Prioritise these in terms of importance.

Discussion

Breaking bigger, longer-term goals into smaller chunks or tasks can make them more achievable. For example, if your long-term goal is to become a line manager, you might have decided that some weekly goals are:

- speak to your current line manager about what it entails

- search on your workplace intranet for guidance to support line managers
- make a list of the relevant skills you already have and those you need to develop
- research courses or qualifications that may help you develop the skills you are missing.

However you manage your time, make sure your goals don't overwhelm you, and always remember you can ask for help if things are getting too much!

6 Digital skills

In the hybrid workplace, there are a number of basic digital skills which you will need to have in order to work effectively. This not only involves understanding the key programs used at your organisation, but also understanding the behaviour and expectations for using them, and the ability to adapt and learn on the job. Being adaptable and open to training and learning will be crucial (Prince, 2021). As with any technology, there is a learning curve, but if you put the effort in and carefully follow the instructions or training, there is no reason why you cannot learn new technologies quickly and efficiently.

Tools and systems

Most organisations will use a variety of different digital tools and systems, such as Microsoft Office 365 or Google Drive that all staff may use, for collaborating, communicating and sharing documents. Shared work technologies have never been more important, particularly in a hybrid workplace.

Depending on the nature of your work, you may be required to use digital work management software (WMS). Tools such as Zoho, Trello, or Monday are an increasingly popular way for hybrid workers to manage their daily tasks. With less time spent in the office, these programs are becoming more and more important for helping everyone stay organised and on-track within an office environment.

Video calls and messaging are an equally important aspect of hybrid working. The use of virtual communication tools are an essential part of hybrid working, and it is worth making sure you familiarise yourself with these tools, such as how to share a screen, record a meeting, quickly turn on/off your microphone/camera, and more. As mentioned in **Section 4**, it is also important to understand the culture of your organisation, including the 'rituals' and 'systems' (Johnson and Scholes, 1992). What is the dress code for virtual meetings? Does everyone keep their camera on? What is an appropriate background? It's crucial to understand these values quickly, in order to make a positive first impression and ensure you are meeting the 'norms' of the company you are working for.

Many large organisations also have their own in-house systems that have been developed, which will have specific requirements and require you to develop your skills for using these. Your employer should provide training in the tools and systems you have to use, but you could take the initiative and build your confidence, skills and understanding by finding online guidance (e.g. via the tool or system's website) or by asking your colleagues for tips.

Activity 10 Thinking about tools for communication in a hybrid workplace

 15 minutes

Attending remote and hybrid meetings will probably form part of your daily work routine. Feeling comfortable attending these and having the confidence to use the virtual conferencing tools requires not only digital skills, but also behavioural. Take some time to reflect on the following questions:

1. Think about a time you have been on a video call in the past six months. What additional features of the videoconferencing platform were used, e.g. chat, screensharing, meeting break-out rooms? Are you confident using each of these features?

2. How do you feel when participating in virtual meetings? Do you have your camera on/off? Do you fully participate? Does it depend on the type of meeting?

It can be useful to try to familiarise yourself with video conferencing tools, and a 'safe' way to do this is to arrange calls with trusted work colleagues or friends where you may be less worried about making mistakes and asking questions.

To develop your digital skills and behaviours, for working with tools and systems, and communicating and collaborating online, you may wish to study the following courses from the *Supporting hybrid working and digital transformation in Wales* collection.

- [Hybrid working: skills for digital transformation](#)
- [Hybrid working: digital communication and collaboration.](#)

7 Virtual collaboration in the workplace

Discussions about virtual collaboration in the workplace date back to the very beginnings of the internet (Cascio, 2000). However, recent years have seen a huge increase in remote/hybrid work, and the importance of virtual collaboration has since been redefined (Colbert et al., 2016; Ferreora-Lopes and Rompay-Bartels, 2020).

Virtual collaboration is no longer about simply communicating remotely. It involves shareable documents, collaborative tasks, and virtual content management. With the technology now available to us, we can now work on high-quality collaborative projects without the need for in-person meetings.

Collaboration is a key part of the workplace. For many people, the only way to effectively get work done is to partner with others. In a hybrid environment, it's important for collaboration not to be impacted. Even if you cannot physically talk to someone, it should not stop your ability to effectively communicate and collaborate on projects.

Activity 11 What makes virtual collaboration challenging?

 5 minutes

Think about a time you have collaborated virtually on a project.

What worked well, what were the major challenges you faced, and how did you overcome them?

What would you do differently on similar projects in future?

Without effective collaboration, hybrid work can become dysfunctional. It is therefore imperative that you engage regularly with your team(s) and line manager. Many teams will have daily updates or 'stand ups', weekly meetings, and/or monthly reviews. If there are no organised opportunities for collaboration, you could try to create something similar yourself, for example scheduling regular updates with your team or communicating with a co-worker about any concerns you may have, or to ask for help with a task. Most importantly, be sure you know how to get in touch with people, whether that is through your organisation's designated messaging systems, email catch-ups or weekly calls. In a traditional office, you would probably be having regular conversations – formal and informal – with others, so don't let it be any different in the hybrid world. Without these interactions, burnout and loneliness could become a serious issue.

How exactly should this be done? The next activity offers some suggestions.

Activity 12 What makes virtual collaboration effective?

 15 minutes

1. Read this Harvard Business Review article on [4 tips for effective virtual collaboration](#) (Saunders, 2020). Which of these do you think would be the most useful? Why?
2. Make your own top four list for virtual collaboration. What four key things do you think would most help you succeed in any virtual collaborative task?

There are many ways in which colleagues in the virtual workplace will collaborate. Whether that be on video call, editable shared docs, or other collaboration tools. Many of these skills have already been mentioned, but don't forget to stay up to date with the latest tools and programs. Not only will this help you be successful in your new role, but it can help you form relationships with a variety of different people.

One of the downsides of remote work, for many people, is that building new friendships or working relationships with your colleagues can be more difficult. However, if you are good at collaborative work, and you make an effort, then you will be able to navigate through these struggles and come out with some meaningful working relationships, as well as building up your network which could end up being extremely beneficial in your future career.

8 Managing your wellbeing when working remotely

There have been various studies on the implications of remote or hybrid work on mental health (Xiao et al., 2021). Without a clear schedule, the lines between work and personal time can get blurred and become stressful to manage, and social isolation can be a concern, if you are not regularly talking to others online, or finding opportunities to meet people in person. This can lead to a lack of motivation and also anxiety, and can take a toll on your mental health. It is therefore useful to take certain precautions in order to best protect yourself mentally. Here are four simple tips to avoid hybrid burnout and mental struggles from remote work:

1. Setting a clear routine can be one of the best ways to keep on top of things. Make sure you go to bed and wake up at a similar time each day, finish work at a similar time, and put everything away once you have finished to ensure your work environment fully 'stops' at the end of the day.
2. If you have the room in your home, creating a dedicated working space for work can leave you feeling more motivated for the working day ahead. It will also help you avoid distractions and ensure a productive day.
3. Arrange to talk to someone either virtually or meeting for a coffee, or going for a walk at least once a week. This does not have to be a work colleague.
4. Lastly, making time for breaks is important to help manage feelings of stress. Try to take lunch breaks and regular screen breaks and give yourself something else to concentrate on, even if it is only for five minutes. Hybrid/remote work involves much more screen time than a traditional office day, so be sure to take breaks as much as possible.

Activity 13 Your daily working timeline

 10 minutes

Use the text box below to note down a timeline for your average day working from home.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Are you including enough time for screen breaks, spending time outside, or communicating with other people? If not, try to make these activities part of your day.

8.1 Virtual meet-ups

When you start your new role, you are often introduced to numerous co-workers all at once and it can be difficult to remember who they are and what role they play. Virtual meet-ups with your team can help solidify relationships and ease you into your new role.

They can also be important for managing your wellbeing. Perhaps you could suggest a virtual meet-up to your manager, or they may already have one in place so you can get to know the people you will be working with most closely. As mentioned in **Section 7**, collaborative work is crucial for success in the hybrid workplace, and forming effective working relationships with your colleagues will really help to achieve this.

8.2 Recognising when you need support

Sometimes at work things can become overwhelming and you may feel like you're struggling to cope with work pressures, or perhaps it is simply the fact that you feel isolated working in an unfamiliar hybrid environment.

It's crucial to remember that you are not alone: many people will feel like this, and the most important thing is to understand that you can ask for help at any time. In your job you can always turn to your manager or team leader for advice and support; they may be able to talk things through with you to see how they can help.

Alternatively, there may be a wellbeing team within the organisation who can support you. Whatever the case, be sure to talk to your colleagues and manager about your feelings if things become difficult. No job is worth sacrificing your mental health over.

Activity 14 Taking care of your mental health

 15 minutes

1. Visit the [Student Minds website](#). This is a fantastic charity with lots of support for students and young people, as well as loads of great resources for anyone feeling lonely or needing additional help.
2. Watch the video [Working from home – taking care of your mental health](#) on YouTube (Trainer Bubble, 2020). Write down your top take-aways from the short clip.

For more guidance on managing your wellbeing whilst working in a hybrid or remote model, explore the [Hybrid working: wellbeing and inclusion](#) course that is part of this collection.

Conclusion

We hope you found this course useful. Hybrid work is still a relatively new phenomenon for the majority of the population, and we are still in the process of understanding the best practices and processes to help workers navigate through this new world.

Having read our advice, it's important to take things into your own hands now. Do your own research, read up on the organisation you are working for, or would like to work for in future, develop the skills you know you are lacking when it comes to digital and collaborative working, and make an extra effort to communicate with your new team. Starting a new job can be daunting, but with the appropriate preparation, you will be able to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

Activity 15 Revisiting your priorities

 5 minutes

Look back to Activity 1, where you ranked the learning outcomes in order of importance to you. Are your priorities still the same or have they changed? Which, if any, could you explore further in your new role?

Once you have settled into your new role, and the hybrid work environment is no longer so challenging, you can start to look for new ways to benefit your organisation and make a positive impression on your manager or employer.

The idea of 'transformational leadership', for example, suggests that managers should be looking to promote informal leadership processes and rapid decision making within teams (Uhl-bien et al., 2007). If you can start to display leadership qualities, and become an 'informal' leader in some team tasks, then this is something many organisations value highly, and could help you progress further in the coming years. This is just one example of something managers look for in their employees. You can find many more examples of leadership theories and value-add strategies online if you are interested.

The [Supporting hybrid working and digital transformation](#) collection has free courses and resources to help you navigate the world of work. Be sure to explore the site – you never know what new skills or information you might pick up that could support your career progress.

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