



WHITEPAPER

Hybrid Working

Employees want flexible and hybrid workplace models to continue the future.¹



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The trend away from traditional workplace models towards more flexible and mobile models has been an ongoing trend for quite some time now. Yet, once the pandemic hit in Spring 2020, existing concepts were turned upside down and the digital transformation has picked up speed. Just a little while ago, it would have been hard to imagine that such great numbers of the general workforce would work remotely from home.²

Digitization is paving the way towards more mobility & flexibility.

The working world is undergoing drastic changes, and this is also reflected in our linguistics, with trending new words being added to the vocabulary: **“hybrid work”, “smart working”, “anywhere workplace”, “mobile workforce”, “remote working”** are just a few examples to be named. These terms all have in common that they indicate the (temporary or permanent) relocation of the workplace to the home or to another, flexible location outside the office.

This white paper is dedicated to examining the challenges associated with hybrid working as well as factors to consider for succeeding with a hybrid concept.



Goodbye to Compulsory Presence at the Office

Even until the late 80s, one would have never questioned the physical presence at the office. Only once digitization advanced and once technology allowed for the integration of remote workplaces into the company infrastructure, telework even became an option. Without the evolution of the world wide web, Wi-Fi and more and more people owning personal computers or laptops, these fundamental changes could have never taken place.

Before the pandemic fully hit in March 2020, only a minority of employees in Europe usually worked remotely from home (EU average in 2019 at 5.4%).³ The numbers varied tremendously, depending on the state evaluated. In 2019 for example, the number of people working remotely either usually or sometimes varied between just under 5% in Italy and over 35% in the Netherlands. In 2020, the average of the employees usually working from home within the EU had risen to 12%⁴, with the numbers having more than doubled within one single year.

Covid has turned the established structures of the working world upside down and introduced a fundamental change into the business world. For the first time in history, compulsory attendance at the workplace was seriously questioned – not only with regard to temporary absence but for a permanent period.

When comparing the rate of people working from home in the various European countries, it shows that in some countries the upheaval was even more pronounced than in others. A survey of 2020 shows that almost 60% of the employees in Finland worked remotely from home. In other Scandinavian countries as well as Luxembourg and Belgium, the majority of the workforce also worked from home.⁵

Covid has turned the established structures of the working world upside down.

This reveals that in countries where business services account for a large percentage of jobs, the rate for remote work is very high. In contrast, countries where the industrial sector still plays a major role, the rate is inherently lower. After all, production and manufacturing jobs cannot simply be shifted to the home office.³

Irrespective of such structural circumstances, however, there are pronounced differences in corporate culture, as well as in general mentality: In countries such as Germany⁶, physical presence at the workplace has always been playing a big role while other European countries such as Finland or the Netherlands have been open to mobile working models from a much earlier stage onwards (representative survey from 2018⁷). Once the outbreak of the pandemic started, the situation changed drastically: By the autumn of 2020, Frankfurt ranked second in terms of working remotely from home compared to other European cities⁸. London made top of the list. This shows that in countries where physical presence at the office prevailed before the pandemic started, the trend has been reversed and businesses responded by providing remote workplaces.



Digital Workplaces: Is Hybrid Working the New Normal?

The term **hybrid working** refers to workplace models where employees switch between working at the office and another location. A remote workplace away from the company premises (**mobile work**), may for example be set up at home. There are no specifications as to how the working hours are to be divided between the office and the remote workplace. Various degrees are conceivable: from working predominantly on the business premises to working predominantly at home or at a different location.

Surveys conducted on this topic in recent months show that employees generally want flexible and hybrid workplace models in the future⁹.

According to the various studies, the results are surprisingly unanimous when asked about a preferred work model. A large number of the employees are in favor of a mixed model in which they would like to split up

the days as follows: 2 days a week remote working and three days a week working at the office. A recent survey of the American organizational consulting firm Korn Ferry even concludes that the thought of returning to compulsory presence at the office causes stress with 70% of the survey participants¹⁰. However, employees are very well aware of both, the advantages as well as the disadvantages of remote working. Therefore, it is exactly this hybrid model of working at the office and working remotely that seems to be the most feasible model for the future.

**2 days of remote work
3 days at the office
Is this the ideal hybrid model?**



At a Glance:

The Advantages & Disadvantages of Working Remotely

Personal responsibility

No commute

Flexible working hours

Follow your own biorhythm

Boost concentration levels

Easier recruitment

Save time



No personal meetings

Blurred boundaries

Negative effect on the team spirit

Technical issues

Cybersecurity & virtual threats

Advantages of Working Remotely from Home

No time lost commuting to work

Employees can get started with work straight away. Before the pandemic, the average commute time (one way) in Europe was at 25 minutes¹¹. Extrapolating this up to the entire commute, employees would have an average of approximately one hour more at free disposal – per day, that is.

Saving money and protecting the environment

If the commute to and from work is no longer necessary, respective costs for gas or public transportation are eliminated. Pollution through toxic emissions is lowered as well as the impact on the environment through automotive traffic.

Flexible hours

Not only parents of small children appreciate flexibility when scheduling the work hours. Appointments with handymen, doctor's follow-ups, sick pets or other obligations can sometimes be a challenge. Here, flexibility when working remotely will drastically reduce stress if something unpredictable pops up.

Follow your own biorhythm

The employee has the freedom to schedule the own work hours freely and according to own productivity peaks within the core hours of the business. As a result, effectiveness and job satisfaction will be increased.

Personal responsibility

Employers place a lot of trust in employees that work remotely and this generally has a positive effect on the morale of the employee since this trust wants to be rewarded with good achievements.

Boost your concentration levels

One prerequisite is a remote workplace that is free from hustle and bustle. When working remotely, you can work more concentrated on projects that need a lot of focus. As much as we like to socialize, sometimes it can be a distraction if colleagues want to share a coffee break with you, or schedule ad hoc meetings on the spot. Open-plan offices further have quite a different noise level and can negatively affect concentration levels.

Easier recruitment

Skilled workers can be recruited regardless of the location; they are not required to live in a certain radius of the business. Especially in times of a shortage of specialists and qualified staff, this has a major advantage. Depending on the company and the branch, the search for suitable prospects may even be expanded to a global level. A big plus: Employers that enable remote working are by far more popular than employers with compulsory office attendance.

Employers that enable remote working are much preferred to those insisting on compulsory presence.



Disadvantages of Working Remotely from Home

Blurred boundaries

One of the greatest advantages of working remotely from home is simultaneously also one of the biggest disadvantages. By not leaving the house and commuting to the office, work and private life take place in the same area. There is no spatial separation. Therefore, the best is to separate the working space as much from the living area as possible. However, many employees simply do not have the necessary space to set up a secluded office. Oftentimes, the spatial issue is accompanied by a temporal issue: How often do employees end up checking their mails or a project status in the evenings, way past the regular working hours? Easy access to all information and data via smartphone or laptop can make it challenging to separate work from free time.

Effect on the team spirit

One great disadvantage of remote work has become quite apparent during the pandemic. Employees are lacking team structure and do not feel as well integrated¹². Not only corporate culture may suffer from this: Business leaders consider this to be a reason for the decline in their company's ability to be innovative¹². Daily tasks and the workload are completed just as effectively or even more effectively, however, new ideas such as product development, work processes or services seem to thrive better when the teams do not only collaborate virtually.

Loss of information with virtual meetings

Conferencing solutions enable virtual meetings. The effectiveness of such online meetings is often rated as higher than with physical meetings. Yet, one negative aspect is the pronounced shortcoming of nonverbal signals and communication. Body language cannot be conveyed in the same extent as with real encounters. Further, not every employee feels equally comfortable in front of the camera. There will be a big gap between the quiet introverts and big talkers. An additional issue occurs when participants turn off the video camera: We are social beings depending on the signals of nonverbal communication as much as on the spoken word. If parts of our communication are missing, we may encounter misunderstandings and information will be lost.

Technical issues

Technical issues can become quite a challenge. If participants are fighting with technical problems, they can hardly concentrate on the virtual meeting, let alone provide valuable input. Problems with joining the meeting, poor sound quality, a bad connection, a failing camera: These obstacles let concentration levels of the participants dwindle and are issues we would not be encountering if we met in person.

Feeling of loneliness

Sitting in front of the screen all day will make you miss the occasional coffee break or quick chat in the hallway or elevator. Humans are social beings and small talk is a way to socialize. If these interactions fall away completely, a deficit arises that is difficult to compensate for. After all, many a friendship has already been established between work colleagues.

Cybersecurity

Once the world got turned upside down, work habits changed drastically, pushing towards a new normal. Since companies had to adapt quickly to the pandemic, a hasty shift to teleworking with remote access to the corporate networks took place wherever this was possible. 2021 then saw a sharp rise in cyberattacks because cyber criminals took advantage of the increased potential attack surface, with the most prominent form of attack being ransomware threats. This sharp rise happened on a global level and across different sectors and industries. The resulting damages on a global level in 2021 were predicted at approximately 6 trillion US dollars¹³.

Companies need to be aware that teleworking requires an increased level of cybersecurity.

What Makes Hybrid Work a Success?

The Right Equipment & Technology

Adequate technical equipment is the prerequisite for a successful mobile workplace. The digital tools available to the remote workforce need to provide all necessary functionalities to ensure successful virtual collaboration. Required is a solid conferencing solution, screensharing tools as well as presence applications, telephony functions (e.g. softphone), a secure messenger, CRM, Outlook integration and many more. All these software-based applications need to be accessible from one single interface. It further needs to be ensured that all the required hardware is also available (computer / notebook; if necessary, a 2nd monitor, a printer, headset, webcam, etc.). Mobile workstations further need a good VPN connection, ensuring availability and security.

Investing in Cybersecurity

The most critical aspect of moving large numbers of the workplaces from business sites to the home office is the factor "security". Cyberattacks have soared since the beginning of the pandemic, with so many companies hastily switching to remote working. The remote workplace outside the company network was oftentimes an easy target to lay hands on company data due to inadequate security mechanisms. Generally, employees should only be able to access the corporate network from their mobile workstations via a secure connection¹⁴.

A sound hybrid security concept includes secure passwords, regular software updates (patching vulnerabilities) as well as trainings for employees to raise awareness. Further, it is important to strictly separate the private workspace from the corporate network. It is indispensable for employees to be adequately aware and to have the proper knowledge on security when working remotely.

Being Present at the Office

One major disadvantage of hybrid working often mentioned is the feeling that the team spirit suffers. Fixed office days where the entire team will be working at the office are the most effective measure for the team to keep up team unity and continued cooperation among the employees. According to surveys, the favored model is 2 days of remote working / 3 days at the office. This model would allow for large meetings to take place during the office days while tasks and projects requiring a lot of concentration and less communication with colleagues could be scheduled for the days when working remotely from home.

For hybrid working to be a successful model, it is necessary to provide adequate hardware and software that allows for video conferencing, desktop sharing, telephony, chat etc...

What Makes Hybrid Work a Success?

Meeting in person is essential for an organic development of the company.

This leads to the next point:

Meeting Space for All Occasions

The office should provide the right space for various types of meetings such as one-on-one meetings, team meetings, BarCamps, workshops and company events. Employees should be able to flexibly book rooms via a digital tool. Further, adequate conferencing equipment (whiteboard, flipchart, video conferencing technologies for external participants, etc.) should be pre-installed and available in each room. Ad hoc meetings as well as scheduled meetings will profit from easy technologies that will not waste much of everybody's time to set up before getting started with the actual meeting.

Tools for Organizational Matters

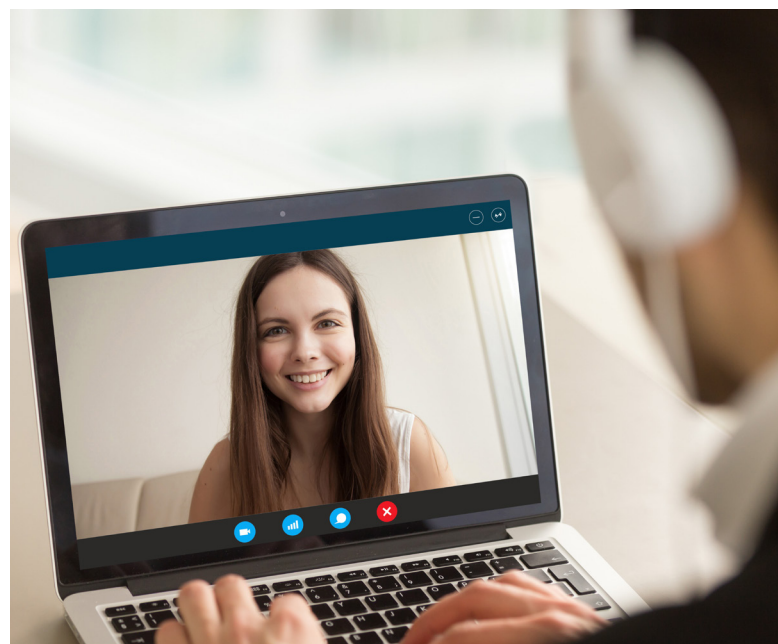
Many software development departments have already been relying on project management tools such as Scrum for years. These tools enable a better management of the various tasks and team processes are well documented. Applications that make the work processes of employees within a team or an organization visible allow for structured work processes, enabling collaborative work on complex projects. Especially when employees are not located at the same site, these tools are a great way to ensure project collaboration. Just as important is a social intranet tool to send messages affecting either individual departments or teams, or even the entire company.

Consistent Digital Workplace Environment

Collaborative work and communication solutions that can be installed on any device and that always have the same look and feel for users have a distinct advantage concerning productivity and effectivity. No matter where the employee works from, if access to the platform allows the employee to always work with the same interface and the available software-based tools, this will save a tremendous amount of time. This saved time can then be spent on other productive tasks. Missed calls, chat messages, contact information, etc.: If everything is always at the same spot, no time will be lost looking for the various apps and programs and handling will be intuitive and efficient.

Regular Appraisal Interviews

When you do not see each other on a regular basis, one-on-one conversations with the employees are highly important. Regularly scheduled feedback meetings are a good opportunity to build trust and to motivate. Such face-to-face discussions are essential for good team spirits and organic corporate development. It should also be possible to conduct employee appraisals when there is a need to discuss various matters. If the current situation allows it, it is best to see each other in person at the office.



The innovaphone myApps Solution Enables Hybrid Working

What is innovaphone myApps?

myApps is a collaborative work and communication platform for the digital workplace. It integrates all apps and tools for working, communication and administration within one single unified interface. No matter what end device (computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone) is being used, the user interface always looks the same. The home screen can be customized: The respective icons of the apps frequently used in everyday work are simply added. All software solutions such as a secure chat messenger, contacts, project management tools, web conferencing solutions, call lists and many more are available in one unified interface and can be launched with one single click.

Why is myApps so Ideal for Remote Working?

Sending a quick chat message to a colleague, inviting to an ad hoc video conference, sharing the own desktop with peers, checking voicemails and the presence status of a colleague you would like to contact – myApps provides the perfect digital workplace to quickly get in touch with colleagues and to enhance work processes. With myApps, a virtual workplace is set up in no time and on any device. All that is needed is an internet connection and a telephone (either a softphone or an IP desk phone).

Is it a Hassle to Switch between the Office and Remote Work with myApps?

With myApps, it is absolutely no problem to switch back and forth. myApps is a platform that always provides the same interface. Since you can also sign up on different devices (two-factor authentication), you can move from one workplace to another. Your digital workplace will always be exactly the same since the arrangement of the apps with the corresponding icons is adopted on the currently used device. Check your missed calls, chat history, projects, CRM application or conference with one single click and continue to work without.

“Overnight, more than 90% of our staff members began working from home – and everything is running smoothly! Just like that, a totally smooth process, thanks to Home Office by innovaphone ”.¹⁵

Michael Heinrich, Head of IT Infrastructure at RZH Rechenzentrum Hartmann



The innovaphone myApps Solution Enables Hybrid Working

How are my Data Secured when Working with myApps?

myApps runs on a self-developed innovaphone operating system. All data is displayed on the end devices but not stored locally. This means your data remains where it is supposed to be and is protected against external access: With on-premises installations as well as in the cloud. Unlike many other cloud solutions, innovaphone myApps Cloud is hosted in Europe and is therefore not subject to the controversial CLOUD Act. myApps features an integrated security concept that includes indispensable basic features (virus protection programs, password protected login, secure VPN tunnel, update management) as well as two-factor authentication, brute-force protection, innovaphone Reverse Proxy, a variety of security protocols and the RCC app to connect external devices to reliably shield the company network from external attacks.

I Want to Arrange a Virtual Conference – How does that Work with myApps?

Use the innovaphone Conference app to easily initiate an audio or video conference and to participate in virtual conferences while sitting at your desk and without requiring expensive equipment or additional servers. The Conference app will let you manage digital conference rooms and you will have access to certain monitoring options. Communicate across different sites, locations or countries with multiple people via web meetings. You will just talk to the others on the phone but you will also be able to see them via webcam.



The innovaphone myApps Solution Enables Hybrid Working

Working Together at the Same Document from Different Locations

Desktop sharing or application sharing in combination with collaboration tools are essential when teams are distributed over different locations. With myApps, you can share your screen with just one single click – no reinstallation, configuration, dial-up and authentication required. This has already taken place via the telephone connection. Colleagues will see the contents of your screen that you make available and everybody can follow easily what is being talked about. Misunderstandings due to spatial barriers are ruled out.

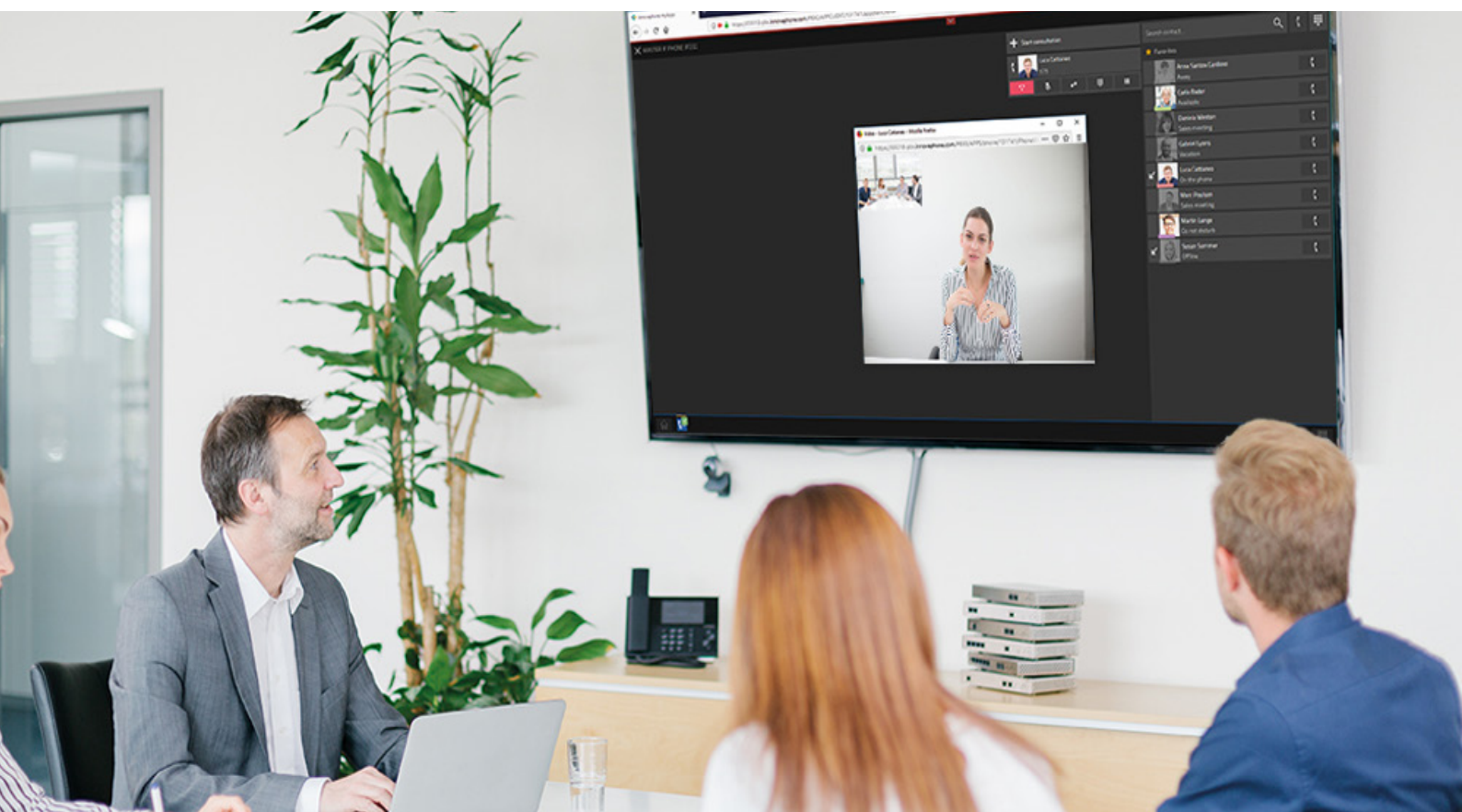
How can Virtual Events be Hosted with myApps?

myApps is a platform ideal for events and meetings. Various communications formats such as themed sessions, live streams, live surveys, discussion rounds, support chats or phone calls can be bundled with the digital event solution. myApps can further be used as a training platform for educational purposes. Trainings can easily be set up

and take place via the Internet while participants can be sitting on opposing sides of the globe – all data secured with the innovaphone myApps security concept.

Are Self-Developed Tools in myApps also Available with a Hybrid Model?

myApps is an open platform that can be complemented with already existing apps or newly developed apps at any time. Whether your existing time and attendance tool is to be integrated into the myApps environment, or whether you want to develop a new specific app for your industry - the completely open and expandable myApps platform architecture provides all the resources you need to program your app. Access to all interfaces and protocols is included. The hybrid concept of myApps eliminates the hassle of installing tools when you want to work on the go or remotely at home: The user interface of myApps is always the same, no matter what device is being used or where you are located.



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INNOVAPHONE

innovaphone AG is a leading European provider of IP Telephony and Unified Communications solutions. The latest addition to the product range is innovaphone myApps, an open platform for efficient virtual team collaboration that has undergone many years of development. The entire product portfolio is based on a modular concept and the full range of features is available on premises or from the cloud - without limitations. Ever since the company founding in 1997, innovaphone has been a driving force with the digital transformation, equipping companies of all sizes with enterprise communication solutions.

All innovaphone hardware and software solutions are developed in-house by engineers and software specialists and produced in Europe. innovaphone currently employs more than 100 people at its headquarters in Sindelfingen, at other locations in Germany and at three foreign subsidiaries in France, Austria and Italy. Ever since its founding, innovaphone has always been owner-managed and financed to 100 % by private funds.

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