

4 tips for a smooth "couch to cubicle" transition

Across industries people are gradually returning to work. For many the work from home novelty, necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, has worn off, while in other instances employers are urging workers to return to the building to resume a pre-March 2020 "normal".



David Seinker, founder and CEO of The Business Exchange

And while the imminent rollout of the vaccine is set to make it safer to do so, simply returning to the office in the traditional 9-to-5 sense is unlikely – and undesirable – for thousands of employees... and employers.

Enter the hybrid model, the widely accepted name for a system whereby employees can work from home some of the time and from the office the rest of the time. "A hybrid model is finally allowing for the flexibility that we all crave when it comes to working hours, while still making room for the interactions and other benefits of being in the same workspace as colleagues," says David Seinker, founder and CEO of The Business Exchange.

He has long been a proponent of a hybrid model. In fact, his serviced office business is built around exactly this – offering an office space solution that allows for the hybrid work to happen in a flexible, yet dynamic way.

As such, Seinker has extensive experience in how to ensure the hybrid model is one that works for both employers and employees. He shares some of the key points.

How to hybrid 1: Mix it up

A hybrid approach, by its very nature, means that not everyone will be in the office at the same time. To adhere to social distancing best practices, it's a good idea to vary the days people come into the office, so that different people have the opportunity to interact and touch base.

Seinker is a firm believer in the benefits of the chance encounter, or what he calls “serendipity”, where collaboration and problem solving results from merely being in the same space.

“Management in particular should vary their days in office to ensure they are able to interact with all members of staff in person,” Sienker believes.



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How to hybrid 2: Accommodate all

Remember that some people still might not feel comfortable being in an office (until such time that we’re all vaccinated), so it is important to consider ways to ensure they are still included in any activities or meetings that happen in the office.

“With the communication tools at our disposal today, and which many of us use as second nature, it is easy enough to create an inclusive work environment. Make sure to still offer the option of dialling in to a meeting or even an informal discussion,” Seinker recommends.

Professional communication and interaction today is seamless. It doesn’t matter how you participate, be it via video or in-person, the important thing is that participation is open to all, and that the company culture is one that values participation and contribution over merely being in the room.



Source: Edmond Dantès from [Pexels](#)

How to hybrid 3: Enhance the experience

If the past year has proved anything to the managers of people, it is that most employees do not need to be “watched” in order to deliver the work that is required of them. And while we’ve missed out on some of the very real benefits associated with in-person interaction, we’ve come to understand that employees need a very compelling reason to endure the inflexibility of the traditional 9-to-5, and the inconvenience and cost of a commute when they’ve been doing just fine, working from home.

Seinker believes the success of a hybrid model relies on a compelling reason to return, beyond being forced to do so.

“Now that we know everything can be done virtually, employers need to ensure that the experience of going to the office is a pleasant and productive one, and about more than just offering a place where the work is done,” he says.



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He goes on to explain that companies can look at inviting speakers to address employees on a relevant topic, hosting training workshops or simply having monthly team brainstorming sessions as some of the means to demonstrate the value of office as a concept, and not just a physical space.

How to hybrid 4: Embrace and enjoy

The point of a hybrid model is to offer the teams the best of both worlds – the flexibility that working from home allows for and the collaborative energy and support that being in an office offers.

“A hybrid model, when approached with structure and thoughtfulness, can be very successful. It’s a progressive way of working, and should be embraced and enjoyed. In my experience, when people feel comfortable and understood, they deliver some of their best work,” Seinker says.

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