

Hybrid Model

A Literature Review

Family Services of Peel (2021)

INTRODUCTION

We are coming to a new year, and how hurt humanity is standing together in the wake of mutually experiencing 2021. Individuals, families, peoples, groups, nations, countries, and continents were impacted and forced into unimaginable change. Every sector from health to law enforcement, education to politics, religion to science, and the economy has been hit hard and tasked with addressing the myriad of complex challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. We find ourselves now groaning under the weight of severe social polarities, racial disparities, and the underlying threat of global warming. Our shared traumas are not without familiar disproportionate gaps which have grown wider. Black and Indigenous peoples, particularly women of color (BIP[W]OC) in Canada and abroad experience disproportionately more instances of COVID, have triple the amount of virus-related deaths and suffer more racism, discrimination, and police brutality than non-BIPOC folks (Maxwell & Solomon, 2021).

At this time, we need to have an adaptable and functional leadership approach that has been utilized in a variety of geographical and professional settings- a leadership approach that rectifies issues for individuals, groups, and institutions seeking culturally sustaining approaches and problem solving for an increasingly jeopardized diverse society. We need to talk about inclusionary, anti-racist, liberatory, compassionate, respectful, socially just, and equitable leadership theory and practice for change for the greater good, (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012; 2015). We need to look at a departure from patriarchal leadership and management paradigms void of reference to cultural, linguistic, gender, or socio-economic diversity theorized and written to reflect a time and social climate when homogeneity, oppression, and segregation are normalized.

Putting a priority on the safety-first principle during the COVID-19 pandemics, a vast majority of companies enabled flexible working environments, reducing the number of employees on the premises (Radonic et al., 2021). The traditional ways of working required employees' physical presence on-site and the utilization of the workplace as the official place where work is done. With the COVID-19 global pandemic, organizations were faced with a challenge to start reshaping their existing models as well as adopt newer business models. The COVID-19 crisis took world leaders, economic markets, healthcare systems, and societies by

complete surprise in its rapid escalation and impact on every single aspect of life. Its aftermath at this point is just speculative and obscure.

As more and more countries start to pull away from the coronavirus, companies across the world are beginning to look to the future. Although we are still amidst a raging pandemic, we are at least at a stage where we can prepare and plan for the next chapter in our shared professional journeys. It is important to remember that the way we work, collaborate, and communicate has fundamentally changed during the course of the pandemic. In March 2020, though the sudden shift to remote work brought its struggles, we learned so many valuable lessons about what employees can achieve when given more control over their work environments. Now, we're more assured and composed before entering the era of hybrid work where a number of employees will blend working from home, in the office, and on the go. We're hoping to start this next chapter with much more stability, and much more optimism, than when we were rushed into the unknowns of remote work. With that being said, the transition to hybrid work presents its own unique challenges, and in many ways, these challenges are just as complex as the obstacles we faced while transitioning to remote work. Organizations must once again adapt, evolve, and innovate in order to meet these new challenges head-on.

METHODOLOGY

This review scanned existing literature, including academic publications, government reports, and other grey literature using PsycINFO, UTM Library, Google Scholar, Social Policy and Practice, and Social Science Database to review the implementation and evaluation of hybrid models in various sectors.

Various studies related to remote work were also considered as working remote, virtual, or in the hybrid model were a few terms that had been used interchangeably throughout the literature. Keywords guided the search for articles and a selection was made based on the articles' relevance to the research questions and keywords.

The following keywords, as well as inclusion and exclusion criteria, were applied to the literature search:

Publication Date	Articles published between the year 2005-2021
Accessibility	Full text accessible
Broad relevance	Hybrid work model, and its implementation
Specificity	Components of hybrid framework- HR, training, leadership, technology, legal. in non-profit sector, challenges and strategies for successful implementation
Geography	All over the world, with special focus on Canadian studies
Language	English
Empirical Data	Peer-reviewed research articles published in academic journals and grey literature
Keywords	Hybrid model framework, hybrid model challenges, hybrid model in non-profit/ social sector, hybrid model implementation and evaluation, hybrid model leadership, remote employees training, remote employees' health
Data Sources	PsychINFO, UTM Library, Google Scholar, Social Policy and Practice, Social Science Database

AN EMERGING TREND: HYBRID MODEL OF WORK

Pandemics and their inadvertent consequences are expected to stay with human societies for an unspecified time to come. The concept of what was considered normal is evolving into a 'new normal' as the pandemic progresses to match with the complexities of modern life. According to Ravetz (2020), given the constant evolution of what the 'new normal' may look like, it is advisable to initiate a conversation about resilience in the face of these emerging standards, that should be supplemented by an extended awareness of evolving problems and solutions. Currently, the world is witnessing one of the biggest challenges to socio-economic development in recent history. The capacity of our response to a shock is called resilience. The COVID-19 crisis has pointed that many systems like financial, social, and health systems, need resilience to

avoid disruption and collapse due to unforeseen circumstances. At the same time, we should not forget that, although COVID-19 presents a significant threat in our lives, it won't be the last shock of this kind. Consequently, it becomes crucial to maximize our learning curve at this time to prepare for upcoming future challenges (Hanaei et.al, 2020).

As the world was pushed into lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of us had to experiment with a completely new work arrangement. On one hand, remote working and work from home policies took effect, on the other hand, the nature of some organizations' work just doesn't allow for a 100% remote work policy, which resulted in a lot of challenges. The answer to this was a compromise that was placed between these two extremes- what we have come to know as the hybrid workplace model (Jacobs, 2021). In this arrangement, workers are allowed to perform their tasks from the office, while occasionally doing a few of their tasks from outside the office (mostly their homes). This new work style triggered the redesigning of office spaces, based on the number of people that would be in the office at any given time, as well as keeping in check the capacity of the office space under social distancing policies. This resulted in readjusted, more flexible work schedules which help in accommodating both remote workers and those stationed at the office (Jacobs, 2021).

Hybrid work has made headlines in every major publication over the past year, and for a good reason. In an international survey conducted by Genesis Integration (2021), it was found that 48% of employees the world over wants the flexibility of hybrid work moving forward. Now, companies are grappling with some key questions like- should they or should they not adopt this model of work? Hybrid work models when managed effectively allow organizations to define a future of work that is not just flexible, but is more digitalized and rewarding for their employees. This can result in a huge number of business benefits like better access to top talent, happier employees, and enhanced innovation. Here are some statistics shared by Genesis Integration (2021), an Edmonton based company that demonstrate the rising interest in hybrid work models:

- 55% of US workforce wants a combination of home and office working- *Stanford's Institute for Economic Policy Research*
- More than 42% of working adults (i.e. two in every five) are willing to go without a percentage of their salaries for more flexibility at work- *Mom Corps*

- Generation Z (born between 1997-2012), which is soon going to be the largest segment of the workforce, is interested in a hybrid approach to work. 74% of Gen Z prefer either working from home or an option to split time at home and work- *Salesforce*
- 82% of company leaders plan to start allowing their employees to work remotely some of the time- *Gartner*

UNDERSTANDING HYBRID WORK MODEL

In simple words, the hybrid workplace can be defined as a business model that combines a mixture of both remote work and office work. Rather than structuring a typical workday around a desk in a physical office space, this model creates a flexible work schedule in which employees are provided the freedom to divide their time between working at home and coming into their physical offices (Genesis Integration, 2021). It's similar to a remote workforce as employees mostly work from home, but the difference is that it's not entirely remote. When an organization chooses to go hybrid, it usually still retains its physical office space but uses it in a different manner from the traditional model of working.

Another type of hybrid model is the hybrid work from home (WFH) model- where some employees work remotely, while others work on-premises. In this structure, some teams or departments can be divided between working remotely and working in-house. For example- IT, finance, marketing research teams can be off-site, while service delivery-related teams like counseling or sales show up at the office every morning. Certain positions or leadership roles can also be designated as fully-remote or in-house across all departments. One important thing is that in this type of hybrid WFH model, employees are not supposed to split their time working remotely and at the office during the week. Once an employee is classified as WFH, they'll spend most workdays remote (with the potential for occasional office visits). Similarly, teams designated to work on-premises will do just the opposite. Which type of hybrid model is better- that would depend upon the type of organization, services that it provides, and vision of its leadership.

Genesis Integration (2021), discussed a more prevalent type of hybrid model, where physical office spaces are reserved for in-person meetings and collaboration between team members, while the majority of the days of the week are allocated specifically for working from

home. Time in the office is used for collaborative initiatives, which can include anything from presentations, team building exercises, introducing new projects, or any other tasks where employees need to be together for face-to-face communication. Meanwhile, remote working days allow individual team members to focus on the work they need to perform individually, without any outside interference. The result is that the employees will have access to all of the aspects that make remote work desired, but none of the challenges that lead to reduced communication or loneliness. They can work from home, yet still come into the office each week to collaborate and socially interact with their peers. There is usually no set/ideal, number of days that an employee must be in an office. It could be anything from just one day a week working in a physical office to three or four days or perhaps even a monthly schedule where the entire team is onsite for certain days to collaborate.

Reviewing the existing literature, it was found that there is a dearth of data in regards to the hybrid model of working in the not-for-profit sector. There were a few industries like technology and digital marketing, which had been offering flexible hours and remote work options to their employees even pre-2020. Since the outbreak of the ongoing global pandemic, hybrid workplace models have become widely adopted. Flexible working could get enabled due to information technology advancement, which allows employees to choose their work location as the majority of their activities can be performed beyond the confines of traditional offices (Chung and Lippe, 2018). Many industries have seen both positive and negative outcomes of teleworking or flexible working hours. Raišienė et al. (2020) infer that the biggest advantage of tele/remote work is that companies are enabled to hire professionals regardless of their geographical location and time zone, making a greater potential for human capital creation.

Some authors argue that work intensification is a latent outcome of flexible working practices (Kelliher and Anderson, 2009). Chen and McDonald (2014) mentioned longer working hours which are oftentimes unpaid to be another potential result. Putting focus on the management challenges, De Menezes and Kelliher (2017) opined that flexible work practices are considered somewhat challenging in the sense of employee management. However, the current body of knowledge has shown many positive aspects as well. Talking about another common outcome of such a working arrangement, which is usually known as a ‘win-win’ situation for employees and employers, Wheatley (2016) stated that healthier and satisfied employees drive

business results through increased performance. Moen et al. (2016) observed that employees' well-being and psychological health can be improved by this organizational intervention by providing them with greater work time control. In an observed group of high-tech employees, the researchers were able to find a significant positive effect of workplace flexibility initiative on the reduction of stress levels, feelings of burnout, and an overall increase in job satisfaction.

A growing body of literature points out that teleworking, remote working, or flexible working hours will probably remain the preferred working practice even after the COVID-19 pandemic diminishes (Contreras et al. 2020). On the other hand, the effects of hybrid workplace models on the intangible assets segments remain an unexplored area. There are four key segments in intangible assets- human, relational, structural, and innovation capital (Wang and Chang, 2005). The vast majority of research has proven the importance of intangible assets from different perspectives – effects on financial performance, effects on company value, and effects on the overall success of the company (Radonić et al., 2021).

At the beginning of 2020, almost every team was talking about remote work. How to do it in an effective manner, what the challenges were, and whether it was a good fit for their company or not. In 2021, the conversation has now shifted to a discussion about the hybrid work model. Griffis (2021) opined that as workplaces start to reopen, employers find that their employees are not keen to give up remote work. People were initially pushed to start working remotely due to COVID-19, and now surprisingly an overwhelming number of employees support it and want to continue doing so. At this point, even organizations are no longer in a position to say that they can't operate remotely, which was the most commonly cited reason to avoid remote work pre-2020). With an ongoing global pandemic, employers can't even ask employees to come back to the office full-time. Amidst all this chaos, the most popular solution is that every organization seems to be grappling with is the hybrid model.

POPULAR FRAMEWORKS

Although the majority of the workplaces are gearing towards implementing a hybrid work structure, there isn't exactly one clearly defined concept of the hybrid work model. Ultimately, it is considered to be a combination of working remotely and from an office. So far, it has been understood that the hybrid model can look different for every organization, but at the same time

there are a few clear themes. It is important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all concept in the hybrid models. Each company should develop a hybrid model which is keeping in account the needs of the company as well as the needs of its employees. Fowell (2021) opined that the hybrid work is a drastic departure from the traditional work model. It has many variations, some companies might permit all employees the flexibility to work on-site and remotely part of the week; while others might mandate a few employees working either full-time remote or full-time in-office; and some companies might allow a combination of the two. Notably, there are three major frameworks for the hybrid work model (Griffis, 2021), explained below:

1. **Remote-first:** As the restrictions are easing and the world is slowly re-opening, many leaders are choosing to go remote-first. This framework means that an organization's operations will closely mirror those of a fully remote company, with minimal exceptions. They will keep their offices as space for employees to work from. But usually this flexibility is not extended to every employee, meaning that few employees may be mandated to continue coming to the office if their duties require their physical presence. This remote-first model will look slightly different for everyone, with the only principle of the company acting majorly like a fully remote company that has employees spread out across time zones and defaulting to online communication. There are many examples nowadays where businesses have shifted to this structure. Some recent instances were major websites like Quora and Dropbox moving to the remote-first model. This approach provides an advantage to the employees who want to relocate away from the office. At the same time, the company will keep its office space for

those employees who value it and want to use it. Unlike completely remote companies, remote-first does not mean that teammates never see each other. Companies following this model, often organize some type of annual retreat, where employees not only get a chance to get away from the monotony of remote work but also to socialize and collaborate with other team members over some work assignment.

2. **Office-occasional:** There are a few companies that are eager to get back to the office, probably because they don't want to lose money on unused office space, or they still aren't fully sold on the idea of remote work. Such businesses can set up a hybrid model which is described as office-occasional. The idea here is that all employees would come into the office at least a few times a week. Unlike Dropbox's remote-first setup, in which office spaces are supposed to be used purely for collaboration purposes, this model uses the office space to blend in-person collaboration and provide flexibility for the solo work. Depending on the organizational structure and needs, this can be quite a loose policy. For example- employees can be instructed to come on-site two days a week of their choice, or there could be more firm guidelines where employees are expected to work on-site every Monday. The main thing is that the company isn't going fully remote-first like the first example. Instead, there would be an office and employees would be required to spend some time in it. It also provides the option to work fully from the office, if any employee prefers it. It means that such models will incorporate mostly local workforce, as employees will have to come into the office occasionally. Although this model looks very lucrative as it ideally sits in the middle of remote-first and office-first, it comes with many challenges and can get easily pulled in either direction without clear guidelines. To mitigate this, it's important for the leadership to establish clear guidelines and policies quite early on in the implementation process.
3. **Office-first, remote allowed:** The third option is to keep both options of in-person and remote open, but designate the office as the primary place for working. This is not a new setup and was quite prevalent even prior to COVID-19, especially in the IT sector. Usually, the company would allow a small percentage of their employees to work remotely and the rest would work from one main office space. This approach is particularly common where the majority of the leadership team works primarily in the office. The downside of this model is that in the long run, the rest of the company would also likely become office-centered by default. Because the leadership team generally prefers to have in-person conversations and

collaborations, which will make remote workers feel excluded. In this model, the company offers this remote work policy as an added benefit, which allows some employees to relocate to faraway places. But those who work in-office and those remotely are easily differentiated by the connections and opportunities they encounter in comparison to the folks who work primarily in-office closely with the leadership team. For example, if most of the accounting team works in-office but a few workers choose to remain remote, there's a high probability that the rest of the accounting team will continue to have conversations, make decisions, and form closer relationships without any involvement of these remote employees. The biggest pitfall is that this can enhance discrimination with few vulnerable groups like people of color or women, as their voices, in general, are unheard in major decision-making processes. So, if employees from such groups choose to work remotely, they might end up feeling like second-class citizens with fewer career growth opportunities coming their way. In general, this combination is bad for employee engagement, productivity, and retention.

ADVANTAGES OF HYBRID MODEL

- **Redefined measurement of performance:** In hybrid models, there is emphasis on productivity, and not on efficiency. Traditionally, employers focus on maximizing efficiency, by guaranteeing the number of hours worked, thus wanting to have as much of the workforce present at the office as possible to keep a tab on 'hours inputted' for completion of a project. But when employees started working remotely, it became important to assign specific tasks, duties and responsibilities, which led to putting focus on the task completion and not on the number of hours someone worked upon it (Jacobs, 2021). This resulted in improving productivity across teams as projects are scoped with a clearer understanding now by keeping in mind the supports or resources required for a smooth workflow.
- **Reduction in operation costs:** With a reduced number of employees working on sites, employers are in need of lesser office space. This not only leads to rental cost savings but also in lesser expenses on office supplies and other demands like refilling snacks and water dispensers and others. When AT&T initially launched its telework program, it helped the company save USD30 million in annual real estate costs (Bednarz, 2005). The other cost-effectiveness is at the employees' end where they spend less time and money on

commuting, and also can move to affordable locations far away from their offices which are usually set up costlier commercial areas.

- **New patterns of collaboration:** With hybrid models trending across the globe, employees no longer need to be in the same room to brainstorm or collaborate. With technological advancements, employers are adopting asynchronous communication styles. With video call software and internal communication systems, meetings have become location-independent, leading to better, faster and effective collaborations.
- **Enhanced work-life balance:** With greater work-life integration due to the hybrid work models, employees feel more prioritized and appreciated by their employers. Working away from the office often demands flexibility and trust from the management, which make employees feel valued and trusted for the choices that they make. Some employers also provide their employees portable or customized work fittings like standing desks, orthopedic furniture, and others, to break the monotony and routine of working from home. In return, employees are able to perform better at their tasks, as well as attend to other demands in their homes.

DISADVANTAGES OF HYBRID MODEL

- **Diminished client experience:** In many businesses, there's a certain level of specialization required for client management. If there are few to none of customer-facing employees stationed at the office, there can be sharp decline in client satisfaction, or a general neglect in attending to serious/urgent cases. While technology can prove to be a great help in mitigating this, it might take time for companies to transition to new standardized procedures smoothly.
- **Risk of employee isolation:** The relationship and camaraderie usually built through physically being present at the office may get weakened over time if employees continue to work off-site primarily. It can result in some employees feeling demotivated and lonely, especially when inside jokes, stories, and company outings are no longer available during the work day (Jacobs, 2021). Marginalized groups like women and people of color in the workplace may find it even harder for their opinions to be heard. At the same time, with minimal input from colleagues in organic interactions, teams might lead to poor decision-making.

- **Cyber security risks:** Cyber-attacks and data loss are more likely to happen when employees are working and communicating from changing locations. Companies need to secure their digital footprint by constant software updates, maintaining a robust password management, and multi-factor authentication to mitigate the risk of data breach. Employers also have the added duty to get their workers retrained on things like connecting to company infrastructure securely, on securely backing up their data, and implementing recovery plans (Fowell, 2021).
- **Over-politicized workplace:** Another common challenge for leadership is to stay both democratic and effective. Since the office is typically the center of information and operations, chances are higher that with time, power may start to get skewed towards those who are spending more time on-site (Jacobs, 2021). This can deteriorate into a situation where management unconsciously starts measuring an employee's loyalty and devotion towards the organization on the basis of their presence in-office, which can further translate into favoring them while creating schedules and location charts.

IMPORTANT COMPONENTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **Technology:** With the benefits discussed above in mind, organizations must ensure they have the right technological tools in place to ensure their employees are equally productive working from home as in the office. It is essential that employees are able to collaborate with their peers, communicate with clients, use company software that they need to complete tasks, and access files that they or their team has previously saved; irrespective to where they are working from. Any successful hybrid work model needs to be strategically thought out, with technological solution-focused components at its core. Genesis Integration (2021) highlighted the key technologies that a business must consider when transitioning to a hybrid model to be: communication tools, project management tools, unified communications, and physical hardware. It is also essential to provide training to all employees about timely updates, and there should be clear policies in place to deal with cyber-attacks.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Physical and mental well-being are intertwined and are strongly correlated to high productivity at workplace. The world has witnessed many shifting paradigms in the way modern life was presumed since the COVID-19 outbreak in December 2019. This has caused a major impact on daily functioning and mental well-being for everyone. Long-term home confinement can have negative consequences upon physical and

mental health (Ammar et al., 2020), which in turn can reduce productivity among those working remotely (World Health Organization, 2020). Employee well-being and safety first have been regulated by law in many economies and have even been set as the corporate goals for many organizations (Liu, 2019). However, nowadays, in the paradigm of the global pandemic, safety first has received another connotation and has become a default principle worldwide (Radonic et al., 2021).

- **Equity:** Creating a more equitable workplace is an ongoing, iterative process (Fowell, 2021). It's important that companies recognize that adopting a hybrid work model is a move toward more equity for all and not an outright equalizer. To provide support for employees across your organization, Fowell (2021) recommends to follow these four practices- (a) give employees the resources to create great remote work setups; (b) Don't let any one team or department claim the 'good' days; (c) design your space with diversity in mind; (d) let employees weigh in on changes that will impact their day-to-day life. This will result in all employees feeling more resourced and supported to do their best work. Leadership also needs to make sure that each employee has equal access to management and clients. Equity should also be maintained while designing processes for the coordination of services and communication channels. For not-for-profit sectors, where clients and employees come from all walks of life, all policies should also be framed using gender an anti-racism lens.
- **Leadership:** In a hybrid model, it becomes even more important for the leadership to ensure that workplace communications, technologies, space management, and experience all operate smoothly. Adamovic (2018) provided the following eight factors to be crucial for management to understand in their effort to improve employee wellbeing while implementing a hybrid model: (a) development of human capacities; (b) growth and security; (c) social integration; (d) social relevance of work; (e) rights and representation; (f) adequate and fair compensation; (g) consideration of total living space; and (h) safe and healthy working environment.
- **Training:** Payne (2021) suggested that despite executing tasks from different locations, remote employees can play a major role in the success of any company. Hence, training them is as important as training regular employees, as remote employees are also an integral part of making businesses operate and thrive. One thing all remote employers have in common is that they rely on digital resources to execute their work. Most of the time, they use generic digital

resources and other times specific software programs according to the professional field. But usually companies get some specific adaptations made in their software, so it is important to teach and update their digital skills (Payne, 2021). Trainings can also be arranged to foster a sense of community, and a sense of belonging to the group. Every business has a culture that employers need to share to fit in. When remote employers get training opportunities, they also get a chance to explore and learn about organizational culture.

- **Cyber security:** Organizations that shift to the hybrid model way of working must implement new strategies that secure their digital assets, protect their remote employees and shield their business from cyber threats. Genesis Integration (2021) stated that in the hybrid work plan, organizations are increasingly adopting cloud services, transferring files across different networks, have less control over employee security measures and a range of other challenges. This is leaving them open to cyber security issues such as unsecured WiFi, phishing scams, spyware, viruses, data loss and hackers. According to a CNBC flash survey, in fact, more than one-third (36 percent) of executives on the CNBC Technology Executive Council say that cyber threats have increased as a majority of their employees work from home (Caminiti, 2021). It's for this reason that companies must develop long-term plans a strategic approach that protects the company's entire IT infrastructure.
- **Human Resources:** The combination of in-person and virtual teams has increased in recent years, not just due to a pandemic, but also due to globalization of business, improved information & communication technology, and higher innovation needs. However, members of such hybrid teams often suffer from interpersonal problems, stress, and misunderstandings based on cultural, time, and spatial differences (Adamovic, 2018). It is therefore important that the HRM function intervenes in the functioning of such teams. Unfortunately, HR managers often lack experience with hybrid teams, requiring academic research to provide recommendations and to develop best practices for the management of such teams (Adamovic, 2018). HR leaders if working collaboratively with IT departments, can be a great asset in improving the productivity of remote workers, upgrading workforce management, utilizing recruiting and learning platforms to meet changing needs, and deploying digital tools such as apps or videos to help employees manage mental health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Zielinski, 2021).

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND STRATEGIES

To master anything requires practice, whether someone wants to excel at a sport, become a better manager, or perfect an art form, there's almost always a learning curve. The same is true for adopting a hybrid work model. This flexible model of work has many benefits—improved employee productivity, real estate cost savings, and workplace satisfaction to name a few. But if careful planning is not involved, like in any major organizational change, adopting hybrid work can lead to a decline in workplace experience, retention, and productivity. To reap the benefits of this flexible model of work, it is advisable to think about creating a workplace that employees want to keep coming back to. Fowell (2021), recommended following these best-practices which can be incorporated to make the best out of this work model:

I. Equity

- **Maintaining equity:** One of the biggest drawbacks of hybrid model can be a feeling that certain employees are treated better than others. That's it's important for a business to reconfigure the benefits it offers. The goal is to create separate but equal employee perks to show all team members that they're appreciated no matter where they work. If in-house team gets catered lunches, free snacks in the break room, or birthday parties and others, it's imperative to give remote crew a similar experience. For example, by adding a monthly lunch budget to their pay, sending gift cards for popular lunch destinations, mailing over the occasional happy hour gift basket or birthday treat etc. These can help the remote team feel that they're getting access to the same company perks which on-site team receives. By encouraging in-house and WFH teams to engage virtually, everyone can feel like they're part of a bigger, more connected community. Another equitable measure would be to giving each team member weekly one-on-one time with their managers, so that they feel their career is moving forward rather than staying stagnant (We Work Remotely, 2021). Creating time and room in the departmental budget for these benefits will lead to employees thriving at an equitable pace.
- ***Paying attention to where leadership works:*** A big part of successfully running a hybrid model is determined by where the leadership spends their time. If the company leadership works primarily from the office, people will inadvertently start working from the office too. This arrangement could unintentionally shift things to primarily office-first culture, even if the

implemented framework was a different one. Griffis (2021) cited the major reason behind this mindset to be an unbalanced culture in which leadership is primarily in the office, which has high chances of leading to inequalities around getting recognition. Employees who choose to work alongside leaders in the office space will be more visible and may attract more attention to their work achievements. This setup ultimately disincentivizes remote workers and creates a feeling of being discriminated.

II. Infrastructure

- ***Building the infrastructure that supports hybrid work-style:*** At its best, hybrid work styles are imagined to be a bridge that enables the co-existence and smooth functioning of remote and on-site environments. It's imperative to invest in technologies that ease this process, such as communication tools, on-site video conferencing equipment, project management software etc. It's not always necessary to invest in new tools, especially if existing ones can be leveraged in new ways. Fowell (2021) suggested that establishing company-wide communication best practices and encouraging team leads to set clear expectations with their employees is also important. For example, adopting an asynchronous style of communication to accommodate employees working in different time zones, or creating office schedules to manage workplace traffic and ensure employees' flexibility.
- ***Creative space solutions:*** One of the biggest challenges companies face with hybrid work is making the most of their physical space. A poorly managed space can lead to empty-feeling work environment, which can de-motivate employees to work on-site. This can be solved by introducing the right and creative space solutions. Fowell (2021) provided three examples of space types that can be introduced for hybrid workplace: (a) Assigned spaces – these are individual and personal spaces, such as desks, cubicles, and offices; (b) Hot desk areas – these are spaces with desks that employees can book for the day; (c) Informal meeting areas – this is where employees can meet casually and take breaks. Important thing to remember here is keeping employee safety in mind as these spaces are planned, ensuring proper social distancing protocols like spacing desks out and enforcing capacity limits and others.
- ***Designing a great workplace experience:*** In an effort to implement hybrid model, companies spend too many resources in designing solutions for the remote teams, but often end up neglecting the physical workplace experience. While it's true that all employees may not come on-site every single day, it's important to ensure they don't lose interest in coming to

physical office when required. If they don't enjoy their experience on-site, it could lead to more no-shows and a duller on-site experience for those who do show up. This would also be a waste of on-site resources and investments along with going against the spirit of a hybrid work model.

- ***Building a Virtual Community:*** Nowadays, teams can use virtual project management and communication tools to stay in touch, which makes checking-in easy and efficient. But instead of only relying on these tools to track work tasks, these can also be used to build a digital community within the organization. This virtual community will be a great asset in bridging the gap between in-house team members and remote workers. This way the remote crew won't feel isolated and will feel just as much a part of the team as the on-site employees. Plus, in-house employees won't feel as if their remote counterparts are getting a special treatment. All of this equates to happier employees, less turnover, and more productivity, which is a win/win for everyone (We Work Remotely, 2021).

III. Communication

- ***Conducting employee surveys:*** To build a hybrid model that works, there should be communication with the workforce to learn their needs. By involving employees, a work model that keeps people motivated to do their best work can be designed. First step should be to send out a survey to help gauge employee sentiment around hybrid work. It is also recommended to include examples while framing questions about the working setup they'd thrive most in. After analyzing the results of the survey, there would be a clearer picture highlighting the demands and expectations from the hybrid work at a particular organization. There should be a special emphasis to see what flexible working arrangements appeal most to employees and suggested changes should be implemented in designing the work model accordingly.
- ***Creating employee personas:*** Employee surveys are a great way to keep a finger on the pulse of how a hybrid workforce can feel in real-time. But realistically speaking, there won't always be time to survey all people at different stages in the implementation process. In those scenarios, to keep teams moving fast, developing a set of employee personas is a great strategy. Fowell (2021) defined personas as a set of semi-fictional characters that represent a set of employees—their needs, behaviors, and preferences. Personas help leadership to remain

agile as things change. They are a great guiding source in the process of creating new experiences and managing a workspace to suit employees' evolving needs.

- ***Designing a process to gather feedback:*** In the process of building a hybrid work environment, it's important to gather continuous employee feedback to ensure all decisions are ideal for the organization as well as its staff. It is recommended to provide more than one way for employees to share their thoughts. Sending out quarterly feedback surveys to entire workforce is one such example. Listening to employees is critical to making hybrid work a success. Another option is to consider creating a cross-functional workplace committee that includes employee representatives. This way, when it comes to making decisions, there would be multiple employee perspectives.
- ***Keeping communication channels open:*** To succeed with a hybrid work model implementation, communication is the key. Yet 60% of companies don't have a long-term internal communications strategy (Fowell, 2021). This could be the reason why many companies found it challenging to switch from a traditional work model to remote work during the onset of this pandemic. Adopting a hybrid work model will no doubt require decision-making that will impact the entire workforce. So, it's a major responsibility of the leadership to ensure people know what's going on with the workplace in the midst of broader organizational changes. Who will be impacted by these changes, and how and when they should be communicated about these changes should be pre-planned. A good communication strategy would cover: (a) Defining the audience; (b) The message to convey; (c) Channels of communication. It's also helpful to do a pre-mortem with workplace stakeholders to plan for any challenges that may arise once any communications are sent out (Fowell, 2021).

IV. Operations

- ***Collaborating HR and IT for seamless operations:*** A company's tech is crucial to providing employees a seamless workplace experience in a hybrid work model. According to Gartner, IT spending in companies is forecasted to grow by 6.2% in 2021 alone. To ensure an organization is making the right investments, leadership should collaborate closely with your company's HR and IT teams (Fowell, 2021). HR should have insight into the kinds of tools that employees need to be productive while on-site. IT needs to make sure people's infrastructures can support the networking connections necessary for hybrid work. A collaborative approach between these processes would also help right-size company's

investments to avoid accumulating tech debt in the process of finessing hybrid work model. It is very easy to over-invest in workplace tech trends during such adaptive phases, but by partnering with IT and HR, a right balance can be achieved between adopting tools which employees would be excited about and avoiding over-investment in unnecessary technologies that no one wants or needs (Fowell, 2021).

- ***Investing in company culture:*** Higher leadership should be intentional about reinforcing organizational culture in the implementation process. It is crucial in a hybrid work model, as it's not possible to swing by someone's desk or have a water cooler chat in such format. Investing in opportunities that delight both remote and on-site employees equally by offering a consistent experience across the board are few parameters to keep in mind. There should be similar experiences and guidelines while redefining policies, trainings, recruitment, promotions, and on-boarding processes. It's important to keep revisiting company's core values while creating these experiences for the hybrid work landscape.
- ***Switching to asynchronous communication style:*** Essentially, asynchronous communication means team members will communicate within their teams without expecting them to respond right away. For example- a manager will leave team members with all the information that they need to complete a task, and they'll run with it on their own time. Employees can then send questions back or provide status updates later on without everyone having to be connected 24/7. Managers can encourage their teams to send over daily updates when they finish their day. We Work Remotely (2021) promoted it to be an extremely helpful adjustment for both remote workers and in-house team members as it allows people to work uninterrupted without the stress/anxiety of having to stay connected all the time. Managers then score higher employee output and fewer surprises/hiccups along the way. And they don't have to micromanage to stay on top of project milestones. This can be achieved by using project management tools wisely by adding notes, resources, and other supporting pieces of information to assignments. This way team members will have everything they need to get started and finish projects without waiting for someone to get back to them.
- ***Redefining and redesigning the meetings:*** If a company switches to the asynchronous communication style mentioned earlier, there won't be a need to hold meetings every day to discuss project updates or touch base with team members. These tasks can all be accomplished using project management software. At the same time, it affords the flexibility

to schedule meetings in advance when there is a requirement for everyone to be together for a brainstorming or pivot meeting. To avoid meeting overload, which are much more taxing on virtual employees (Nexthink, 2021), only hold scheduled, focused meetings with a specific agenda like for kickoffs, mid-project check-ins, project post-mortems, and other crucial times when everyone needs to be present to discuss issues as a team. It is also important to send out an agenda ahead of time so remote and in-house employees can prepare thoughtful responses and questions to bring up to these meetings. Finally, the last step would be to document these meetings meticulously, so that those who are unable participate still stay in the loop (Nexthink, 2021).

CONCLUSION

During this literature review, it was found that there is a dearth of data and studies in regards to implementing hybrid work model in not-for-profit sector. So, by taking cues from various industries, a lot of the components were explored which will further guide us during the implementation process. Apart from producing a product of knowledge, this literature review also highlights the wealth of initiative undertaken by FSP in exploring the scope of this hybrid work models in non-profits. Especially by putting the spotlight on issues faced by racialized communities, accommodating people from all walks of life, bringing the issue of income disparity, poverty and diverse impact of pandemic on people of color. Just like any other major structural or strategic change, the challenges of hybrid work are bound to crop up in the workplace. So, it's important for the leadership to diagnose the issues first and take an agile approach to solve it. Only when different solutions to problems are tested, we can move closer to optimizing the workplace for all employees.

As noted in the literature review section (Radonic et al., 2021), hybrid working models are not a novel topic, and it might be an inevitable arrangement for many organizations in the future. After having a clearer picture of probable pros and cons, challenges, and important components, next step would be to make customized decisions at each level in the implementation process to ensure meeting each organization's unique requirements. For a successful implementation of hybrid model, leadership needs to do a lot of planning and strategic thinking, or it can lead to inefficiencies, inequity and the deterioration of organizational culture.

In fact, a common pitfall in implementing hybrid work is to over-simplify, or under-appreciate the depth of thinking that must be part of the planning (Brower, 2021). In addition, there is a need to create a balance between individual needs with the team and organizational needs, with clear guidelines that the organization is balancing choice and flexibility in exchange for firm expectations of high-performance standards. Leadership should also aim to implement approaches which maintain equity in all processes and programs of the organization.

Brower (2021) rightly stated that “in a macro sense, a shift to hybrid work models will be the most significant reinvention of work in our lifetimes. It is a moment for all of us to deeply consider and reconsider the value our companies deliver and how we innovate and compete, as well as how we create the conditions for people to be happy, fulfilled and bring their best to their work”. It’s probable that finding this right balance won’t be easy, but it also represents an opportunity to find brilliant new solutions that serve people and organizations.

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