

More than a third of UK office workers have no dedicated workspace at home

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Over a third of UK office workers have no dedicated workspace at home, and only 6 percent have been trained for hybrid meetings, reveals a new report from Leeds University Business School.

The report is an interactive tool and suggests practical measures based on evaluation of stakeholders and employee interviews, industry workshops, cross-industry surveys of UK office workers, employee diaries and case study corporations.

The report is based on research led by Dr Matthew Davis, Associate Professor in Organisational Psychology, and six of his colleagues at Leeds University Business School and the wider University, which shows that UK businesses have a long way to go to formalise the arrangements that grew organically from the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the authors, staff in charge of designing or updating hybrid working schemes should avoid trying to force a “one size fits all” policy and include employees in the creation process if they want it to be successful.

This is because the availability, or lack, of dedicated workspaces at home and familiarity with technology means workers can have starkly different experiences of hybrid working.

Analysis of in-depth employee data shows that working from home without access to a specific desk or separate room (e.g., having to use a kitchen table or the sofa) is associated with lower performance, job satisfaction and engagement, say the researchers. The office remains core for most workers (72% wish to work from the office at least once a week). This is good news as there is evidence that spending time working from the office is beneficial, being related to greater employee job satisfaction, engagement and concentration.

The report addresses tensions that can be caused by organisations implementing hybrid working schemes, such as employees feeling disconnected from colleagues and managers, and offers managers solutions to tackle the main key challenges caused by hybrid working.

“An effective hybrid workplace is more than a HR policy or office design issue. It is a socio-technical problem, essentially affecting all aspects of work and requiring knock-on changes to IT, work processes, organisational goals and culture to be successful. The key to successful hybrid working is good management – clear and demonstrable objectives and outputs, active communication and feedback whether remote or in-person working.” say says Dr Matthew Davis, lead author of the report and Associate Professor in Organisational Psychology at Leeds.

Other tensions stemming from hybrid working addressed in the report include the development of an “us versus them” mentality among employees and excessive supervision from managers.

The researchers recommend where possible implementing principles of work rather than strict rules which

reduce working flexibility, undermining the key benefit many employees say they value from hybrid working. Managers can use this interactive tool effectively, in order to ensure hybrid working is as successful and efficient as possible in their organisations.

The report can be accessed here:

https://futureworkplace.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/86/2022/05/UoL_Adapting_Offices_Interactive_Report-Where_is

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