omnipresent | REMOTE SOCIAL

How managers are investing in **remote and hybrid team success**

Table of Contents

01

01.
Introduction

Managers across all industries are rethinking how they want to develop their workplace cultures in the future. While COVID-19 was a catalyst for remote work options, the move to remote or hybrid work models is the future for many companies and teams. For our respondents, the question is no longer whether to go remote or hybrid, but how to invest in and build a thriving remote or hybrid workplace culture.

Omnipresent, a holistic global employment services provider, and Remote Social, an interactive platform bringing remote and hybrid teams together online, have teamed up to find out **how much managers are investing in hybrid and remote workplace culture and what exactly they're investing in.**

We surveyed **1192 HR managers and company leaders based in Australia, the UK, the US, and Canada.** Our report focuses on the 1000 (84%) leaders planning to work either fully remote, or hybrid, in the long term, and those still considering their options. Those respondents that are planning to return to the office have not been considered in our overall findings (16%).

Key Findings:

01.
Fully remote and hybrid work models are almost equally popular.

02.
The majority of managers (53%) are budgeting more for workplace culture compared to before the pandemic.

03.
61% of managers said communication is the top challenge of remote and hybrid work.

04.
Engagement is more of a concern for hybrid team managers (57%) than for remote team managers (48%).

05.
Remote and hybrid work are **helping** teams build connections and belonging. 41% said COVID-19 **positively** impacted their employees' ability to connect on a personal level.

Our findings show that while having the right budget is important, managers need to pay more attention to *how* they spend their money on building workplace culture for their distributed teams.

The findings also highlight that remote and hybrid teams have different needs. Hybrid team managers in particular need to plan how to build an inclusive workplace for their on and off-site staff.

Remote and hybrid team managers need to **avoid replicating on-site work practices** and **focus on inclusivity for all employees,** regardless of where they're based.

WHAT DOES WORKPLACE CULTURE INCLUDE?

For the purposes of this report, we focused on the following areas as being part of workplace culture:

|			
1. Learning and development (L&D)	2. Benefits and wellbeing support	3. Team socials (online and offline)	4. Team retreats
5. Tools for communication	6. Tools for collaboration	7. Task management tools	

SURVEY AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHIC

BEFORE DISQUALIFICATION:
1192 TOTAL

39%
Fully remote

39%
Hybrid

16%
On-site
(disqualified)

6%
Not sure
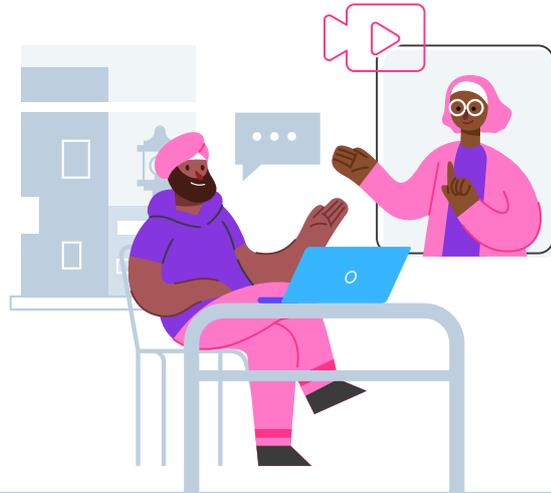
AFTER DISQUALIFICATION:
1000 TOTAL
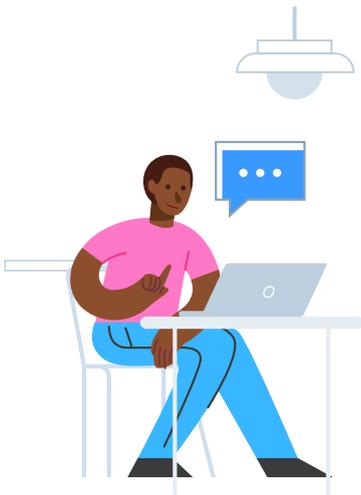
47%
Fully remote

46%
Hybrid

7%
Not sure

COMPANY SIZE:

23%	12%	12%	23%	14%	16%
51-100	101-250	251-500	501-1000	1001-5000	>5000

GENDER:

50% MALE

50% FEMALE

JOB ROLE:

President/CEO/Chairperson **19%**

C-Level Executive **22%**
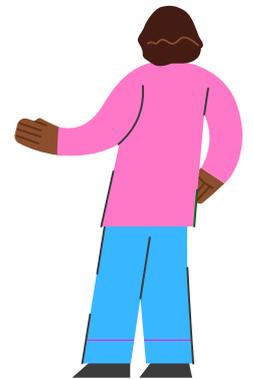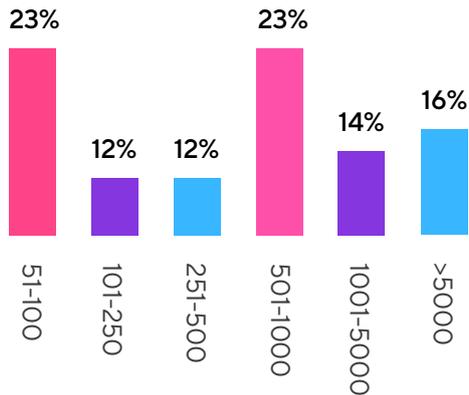
Owner/Partner **39%**
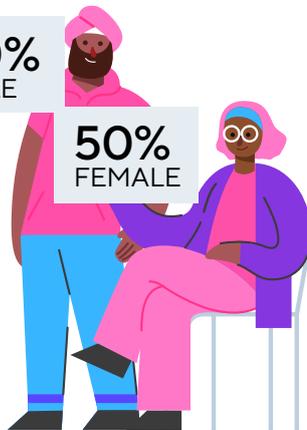
HR Manager **20%**

COUNTRY:

25% Canada

25% UK

25% US

25% Australia

AGE: **26%** 18-24 **24%** 25-34 **32%** 35-44 **12%** 45-54 **6%** >54

**TEAMS ARE
INCREASINGLY REMOTE**

02

02.
Teams are increasingly remote

Businesses are now experiencing a pivotal moment in time as they decide how they want their teams to work going forward. Our respondents are managers who are planning on incorporating remote work into their strategies.

We found that **remote working** and **hybrid working** are **equally popular.**

HOW WILL YOUR ORGANIZATION CONTINUE WORKING AFTER COVID-19?

7%
We're not sure yet.

47%
Fully remote - all employees are working off-site, whether within or outside of the jurisdiction where our business is based.

46%
Hybrid model - our business is working in some combination of off-site and on-site work.
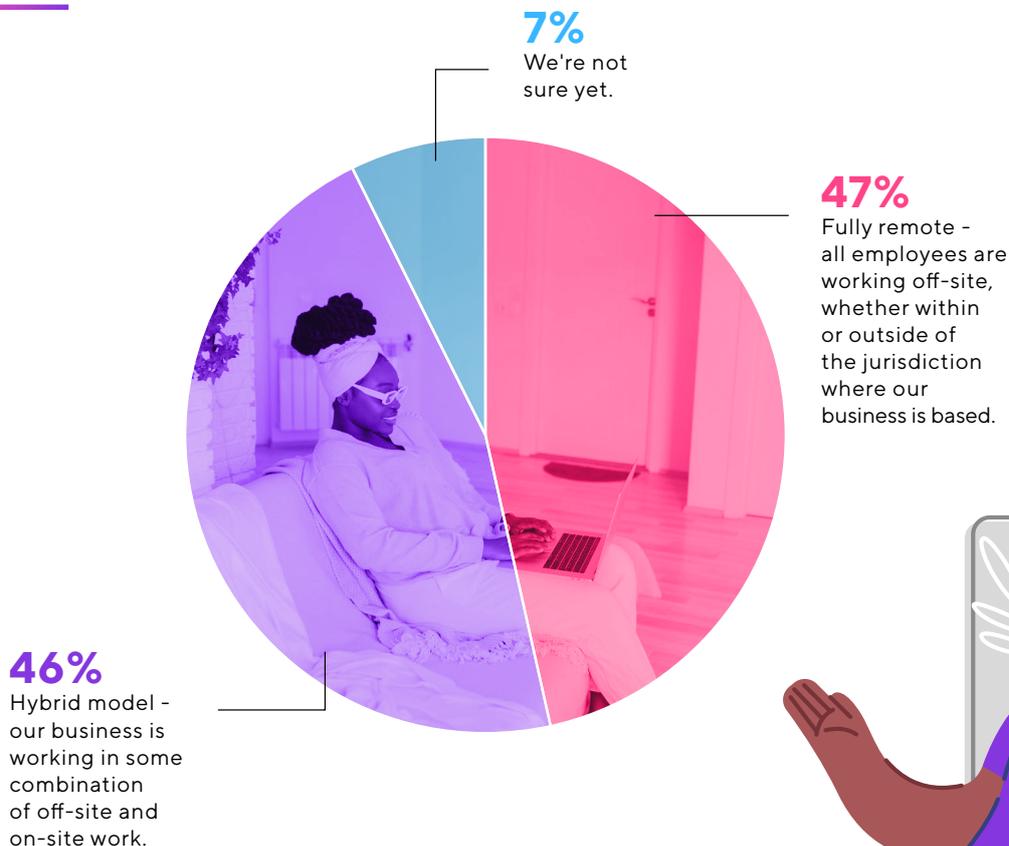
Remote work is particularly popular amongst managers in the US (65%). Australian managers are more evenly split but are also leaning towards fully remote work (48%).

But the trend is reversed in the UK and Canada, where hybrid work models were most popular.

HOW WILL YOUR ORGANIZATION CONTINUE WORKING AFTER COVID-19?

US | REMOTE WORK	**65%**
UK | HYBRID WORK	**59%**
CANADA | HYBRID WORK	**52%**
AUSTRALIA | REMOTE WORK	**48%**
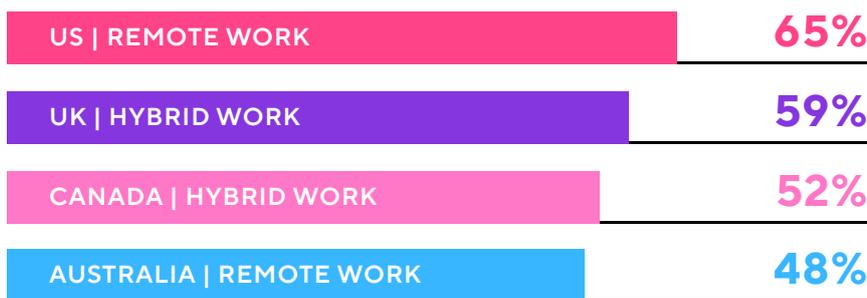
While the majority of managers know how they want to work, 7% have not yet decided. As this report shows, this isn't because managers in this group don't believe in hybrid or remote work, but because they're unsure how to make it happen successfully for their businesses.

As more organizations consider remote and hybrid work options moving forward, asking employees what their needs are and upskilling people leaders on how to manage distributed teams needs to be a priority. Having the right leaders with the right skills will have a direct impact on employee experience and retention.

Organizations should be asking themselves:

01.
What kind of workplace culture are our employees looking for?

02.
Do our managers need additional training to lead a distributed team?

03

03.
What managers are budgeting for culture

Having a budget in place is a critical starting point for developing a successful workplace culture for distributed teams. While spending money alone isn't enough, our results show that defining a budget dedicated to developing workplace culture is more likely to lead to successful remote or hybrid work models.

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS:

"Intentionality is key for organizations going remote or hybrid-remote. Companies that want to attract and retain top talent will have to be intentional about the way they listen and collect feedback from employees, intentional about how they upskill their staff, and intentional about how they offer opportunities and tools for informal communication. All these directly impact company culture."

- Betsy Bula, All-remote Evangelist at GitLab

80% of respondents said their companies have an **allocated budget to build workplace culture for their teams.**

This signals the recognized importance of a defined culture budget for supporting a distributed team. In contrast, only 9% said they don't have a budget for workplace culture.

DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE A BUDGET TO HELP BUILD AND SUSTAIN WORKPLACE CULTURE?

9%
No.

1%
Other.

10%
I'm not sure.

80%
Yes.
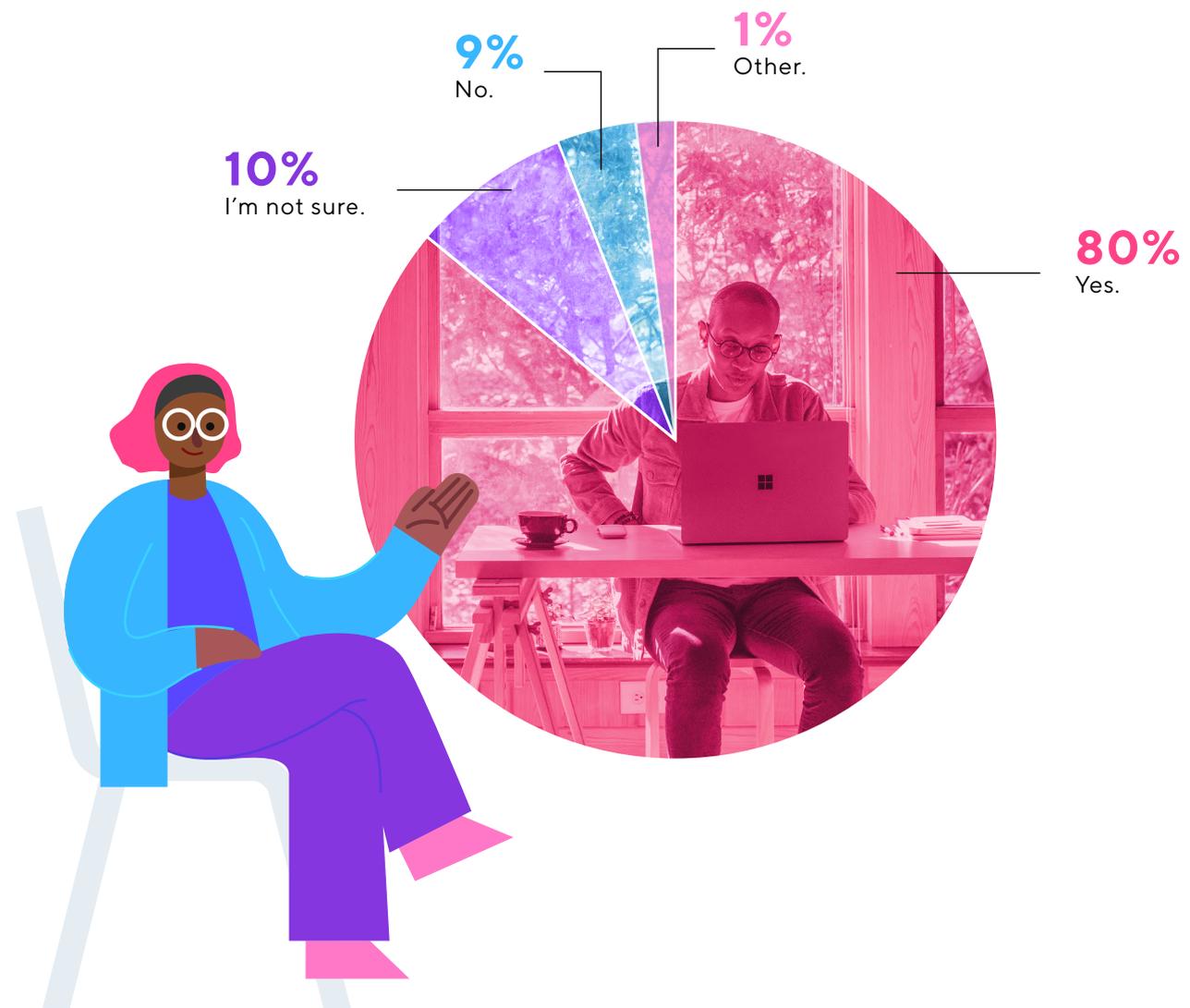
We wanted to know how much respondents are budgeting to support their culture in remote and hybrid teams.

We found that **US$51 - $100 per employee, per month** is the most common workplace culture budget (42%).

AS A ESTIMATE, HOW MUCH DOES YOUR COMPANY PLAN TO INVEST PER PERSON, PER MONTH, IN SUSTAINING OR BUILDING YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE?

USD $0 - $15 per person, per month.	5%
USD $16 - $30 per person, per month.	13%
USD $31 - $50 per person, per month.	16%
USD $51 - $70 per person, per month.	21%
USD $71 - $100 per person, per month.	21%
USD > $100 per person, per month.	18%
I'm not sure.	6%
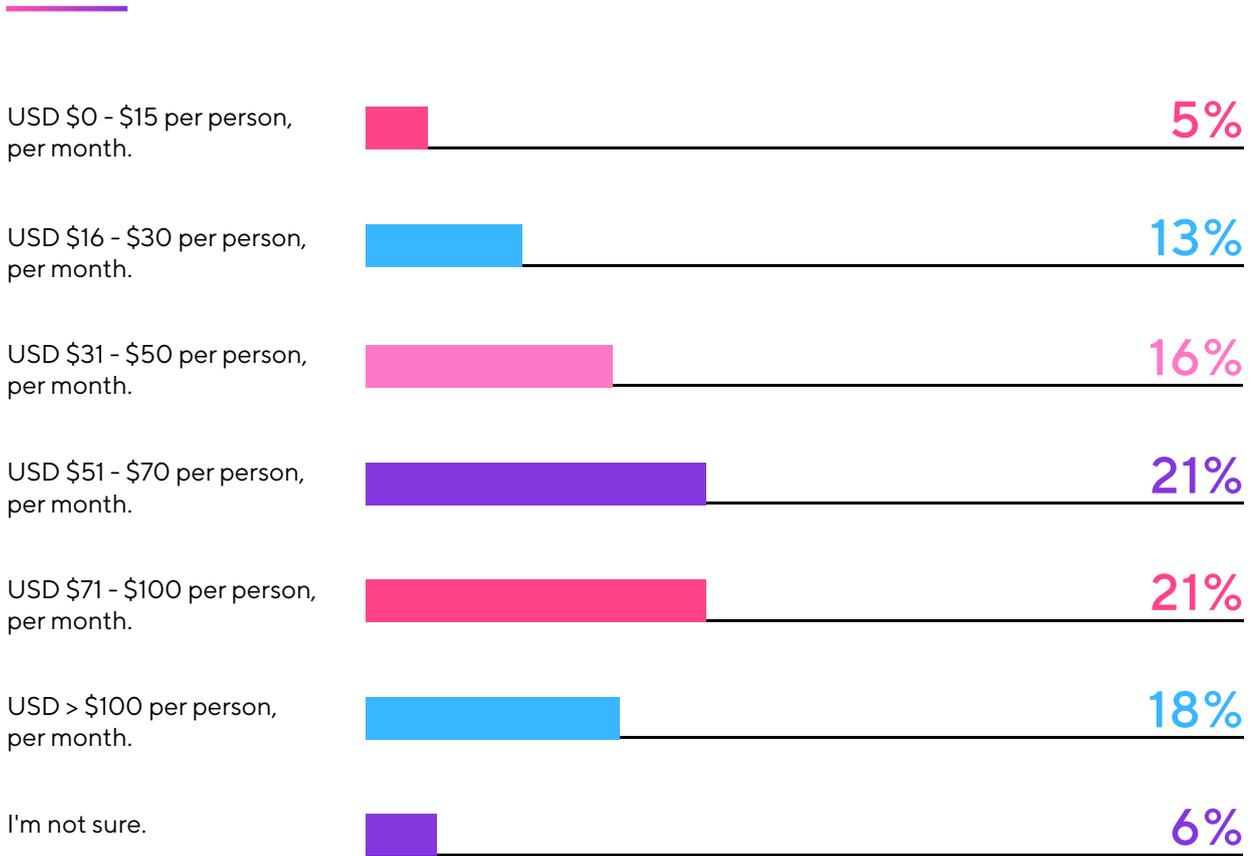
The COVID-19 pandemic has led managers to invest more in workplace culture.

Our results show that the majority of managers are investing more in workplace culture now compared to pre-pandemic. The fact that they're making the budget available for this suggests that managers are rethinking what their companies need to succeed in a remote or hybrid work environment, rather than assuming that they can simply repeat what they were doing on-site.

53% said they're **spending more** on workplace culture than **before the pandemic. Only 11%** said they're spending **less than they were pre-pandemic.**

IS YOUR CURRENT BUDGET FOR WORKPLACE CULTURE THE SAME AS BEFORE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

Our current budget is higher than our pre-pandemic budget. **53%**

Our current budget is about the same compared to our pre-pandemic budget. **33%**

Our current budget is less than our pre-pandemic budget. **11%**

I'm not sure. **3%**
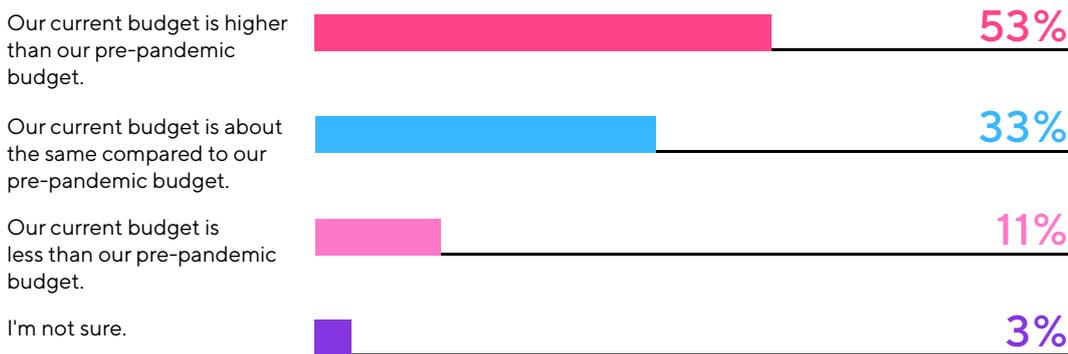
Managers are getting tangible benefits for their investment.

Our respondents are clear about the advantages of investing in remote or hybrid workplace culture.

Productivity, work-life balance, and communication are all pain points for managers of remote and hybrid teams. Rather than accepting these as necessary side-effects of remote or hybrid work models, the best managers are investing to make new ways of working work for their teams.

62% of managers said **productivity and profitability** are the most important benefits of investing in workplace culture.

52% say investing in culture **improves work-life balance.**

50% say budgeting for workplace culture improves **team communication.**

IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF INVESTING IN STRONG WORKPLACE CULTURE (NOT NECESSARILY SPECIFIC TO YOUR CURRENT COMPANY)?

Advantage	Percentage
Increased productivity and profitability.	62%
Team members experience a good work-life balance.	52%
Improved internal communication.	50%
Team members are motivated and engaged.	47%
Team members know how to complete their tasks.	43%
Low employee turnover.	31%
Recruiting top talent is easier.	30%
Positive ratings / conversations on employer review sites & social media.	28%
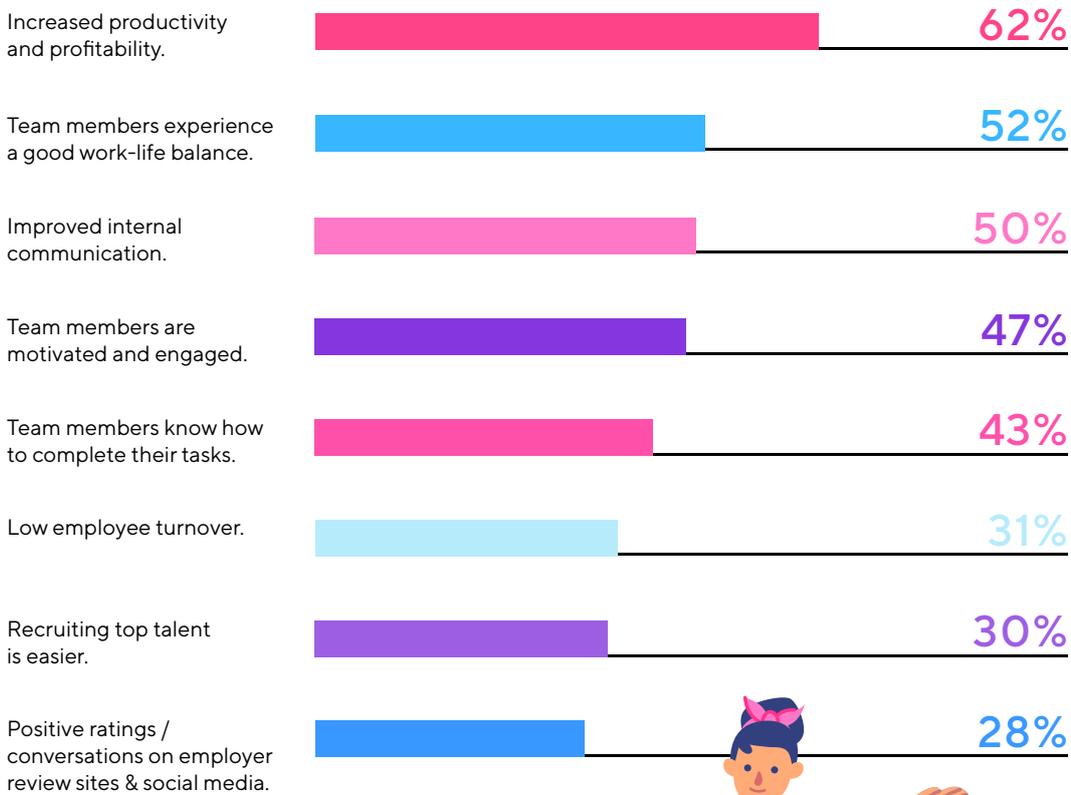
Respondents were asked to choose multiple options.
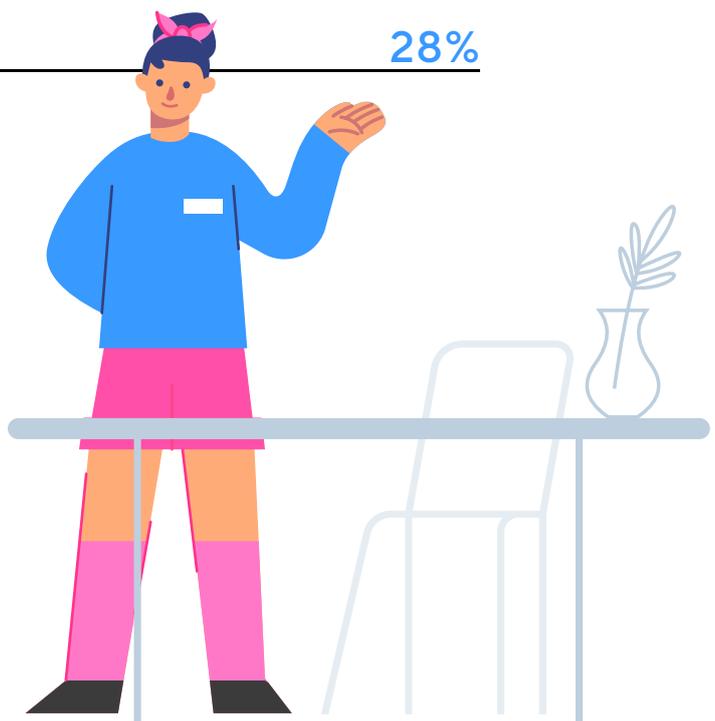
Budget matters, but what's more important is how you allocate it.

58% of managers who said they were investing less in workplace culture compared to pre-pandemic acknowledged that a **higher culture budget increases productivity and profitability.**

This shows that managers aren't willingly investing less in workplace culture, but are doing so due to their current circumstances.

Organizations should be asking themselves:

01.
Are we making the necessary budget available to support our distributed team?

02.
Are we investing in a workplace culture that our team actually needs?

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS:

"Culture's role in driving organisational performance has been increasing over the years but as a result of COVID-19 it has genuinely become a company's number one differentiator. With people choosing flexibility over fancy offices, travel and lavish team offsites, culture has become the number one factor for top talent in deciding where to work. As the war for talent heats up again, the businesses that grow and succeed will be those who can attract the best talent based on their amazing cultures."

- Zane Harris, CEO/Managing Partner at NeuroPower Group

NEURO™ POWER

04
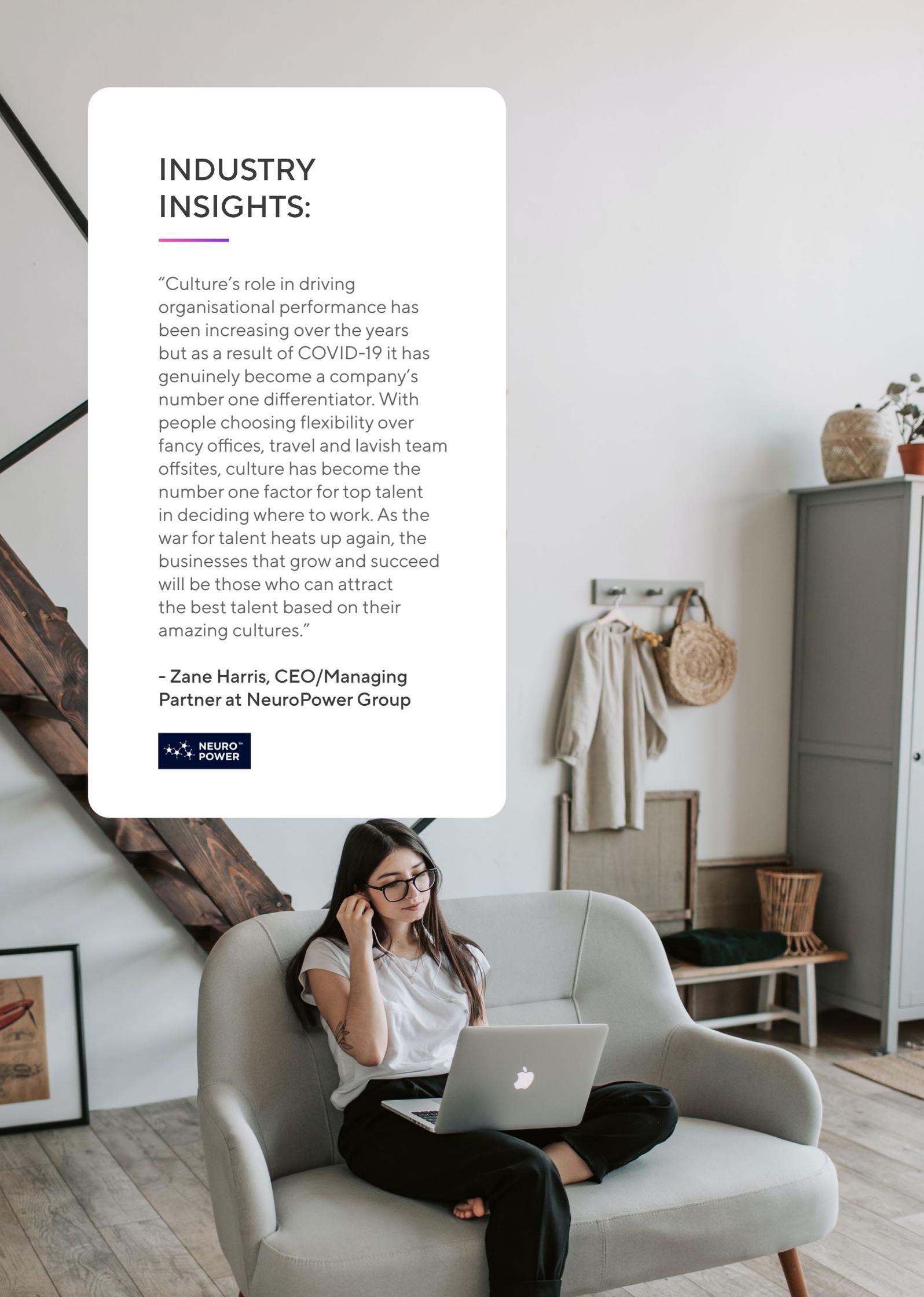
04.
Prioritizing communication

Communication and collaboration are the most commonly cited challenges of remote work. This is why managers are also investing their workplace budget in the right communication tools for their teams.

60% identified **communication and collaboration** as a significant **challenge** of remote and hybrid work.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOUR COMPANY IS FACING AS PART OF A DISTRIBUTED TEAM?

Employees lack work communication & collaboration opportunities / tools. **60%**

Employees struggle to stay motivated / engaged. **52%**

Employees feel isolated / not part of a team. **50%**

Employees find it difficult to unplug. **41%**

Employees lack social time with their colleagues. **41%**

Managing different time zones is difficult. **33%**

Some members of our team are currently on furlough. **18%**
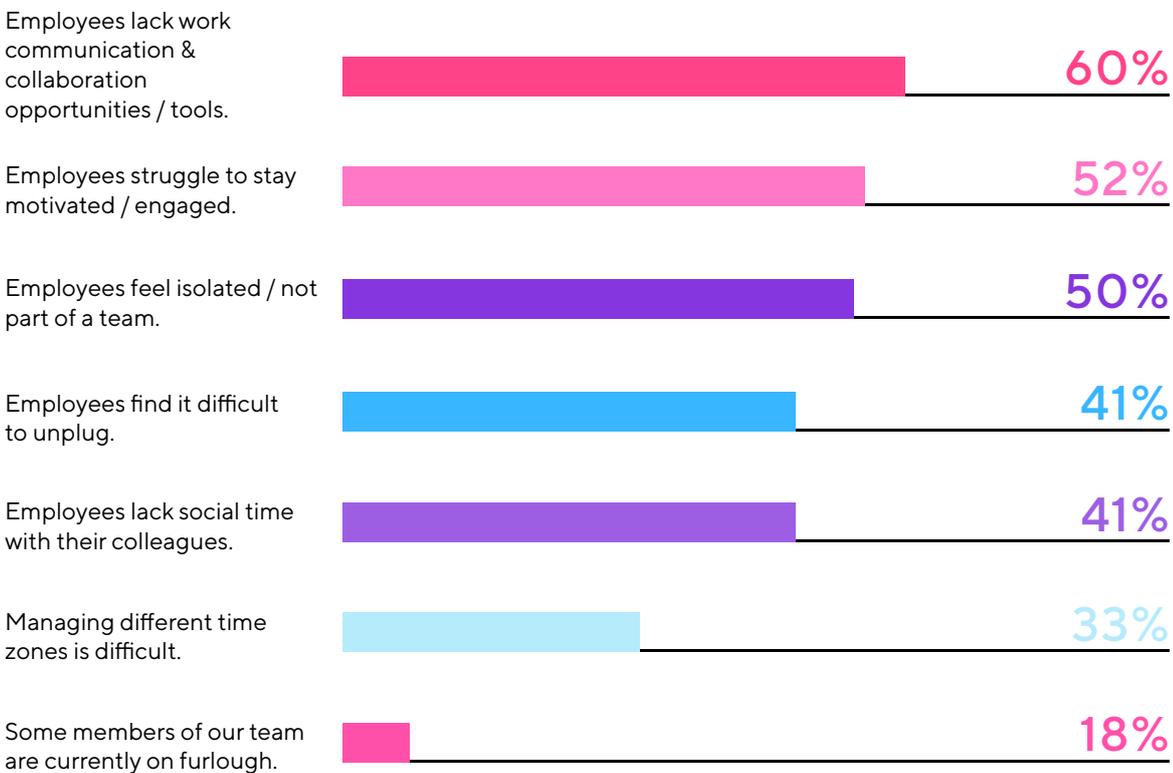
Respondents were asked to choose multiple options.

Managers in all countries cited communication as a challenge, but it's of particular concern to managers in the **US (78%) and Australia (60%).**

Communication is more of a concern for remote team managers than their hybrid counterparts.

For managers planning on working fully remotely post-pandemic, communication and collaboration is by far the most cited challenge.

60% of managers who are planning to work fully remotely said communication and collaboration are the main challenges for distributed teams.

In comparison, only **52% of managers planning for hybrid work have similar concerns.**

This indicates a belief that the physical office facilitates good communication. But this isn't always the case. Communication and collaboration can be just as much of a problem for teams working on-site, too. The question isn't so much where your team members work but whether they've got the appropriate tools and communication opportunities at their disposal.

Workplace communication requires consistent and strategic development.

The results show that the COVID-19 pandemic had only a slightly negative impact on workplace communication. This may indicate that workplace communication was a concern before the pandemic, and that the rapid transition to remote and hybrid work has highlighted a pre-existing issue in some organizations.

41% said COVID-19 had a **negative impact on communication.**

40% said COVID-19 had a **positive impact on communication.**

HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE?

Statements	Extreme negative impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact	Extreme positive impact	N\A
Overall communication	20%	21%	17%	20%	20%	2%

Budgeting accurately will help you develop an effective remote or hybrid communication strategy.

Reduced spending on culture is highly correlated with a negative impact on communication. 43% of managers who have reduced culture budgets report that COVID-19 has had a negative, or extremely negative impact on communication. Only 24% of managers who have reduced their culture budget said the impact was positive.

In comparison, **46% of managers who are investing more in workplace culture compared to pre-pandemic said COVID-19 had a positive impact on communication.**

In addition, 49% of managers investing more in workplace culture said COVID-19 had a positive impact on collaboration.

Managers investing more in workplace culture are more intentional in their approach to workplace culture as a whole. This is leading to better overall team communication and collaboration in remote and hybrid teams.

Managers are planning their communications strategy for the long term, not just the immediate future.

The main focus for managers when transitioning to remote and hybrid work is communication and working hours. In particular, managers continue to be concerned about the feasibility of asynchronous working hours for their teams. While asynchronous working is a concern, it can actually provide your team with flexibility and a better work-life balance, and help you reach a wider customer base.

62% said they're **including communication guidelines** in their **remote or hybrid transition plans.**

62% said they're **including working hour provisions** in their **remote or hybrid transition plans.**

Organizations should be asking themselves:

01.
Do our employees know exactly how we expect them to communicate internally?

02.
Are we offering our employees a working hour policy that suits their needs?

05

05.

How location impacts engagement

52% of all managers said a top challenge for remote and hybrid work is employee engagement and motivation. The focus now needs to be on avoiding replicating the physical office online and, instead, engaging your employees equally, regardless where they are based.

While US and Australian managers were most concerned about communication, Canadian (55%) and UK (59%) managers felt engagement was the top challenge of remote and hybrid work environments.

Managers in fully remote teams are less worried about engagement than their hybrid counterparts.

More specifically, fully remote managers are more comfortable with finding new engagement strategies for their teams compared to managers working in hybrid teams. **57% of managers planning to work under a hybrid model said motivation and engagement are the main challenge for distributed teams.**
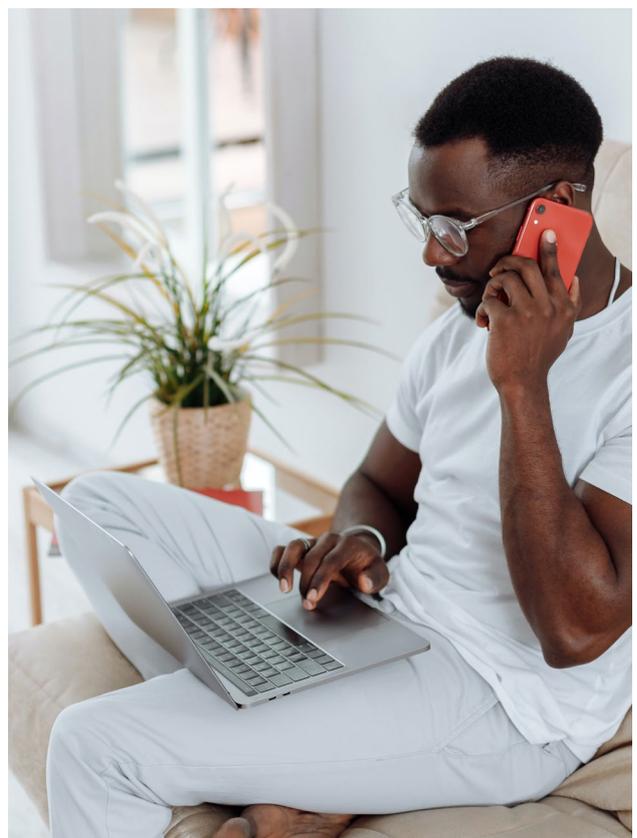
HYBRID TEAM MANAGERS: WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOUR COMPANY IS FACING AS A DISTRIBUTED TEAM?

57%
Employees struggle to stay motivated/ engaged.

52%
Employees lack work communication & collaboration opportunities/ tools.

51%
Employees feel isolated/ not part of a team.

48%
Employees lack social time with their colleagues.

38%
Employees find it difficult to unplug.

33%
Managing different time zones is difficult.

16%
Some members of our team are currently on furlough.

1%
Other.
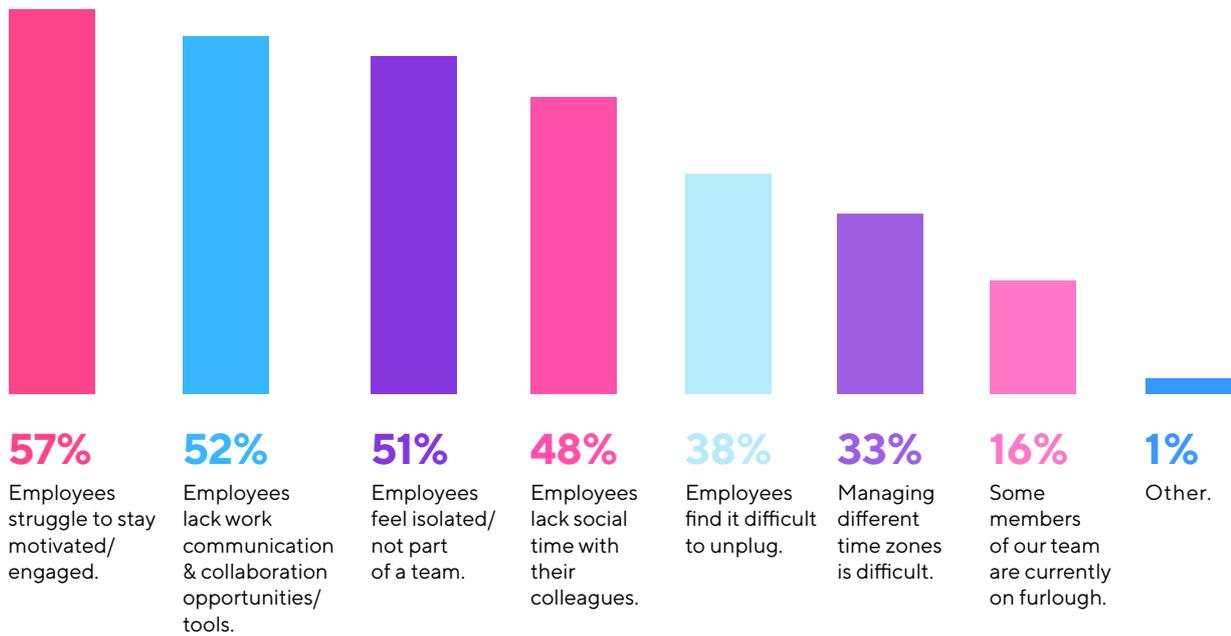
Respondents were asked to choose multiple options.

In contrast, **less than half of managers planning to work fully remotely** said motivation and engagement is a challenge (47%).

FULLY REMOTE TEAM MANAGERS: WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOUR COMPANY IS FACING AS A DISTRIBUTED TEAM?

70%
Employees lack work communication & collaboration opportunities/ tools.

50%
Employees feel isolated / not part of a team.

47%
Employees struggle to stay motivated/ engaged.

45%
Employees find it difficult to unplug.

35%
Employees lack social time with their colleagues.

31%
Managing different time zones is difficult.

16%
Some members of our team are currently on furlough.

1%
Other.
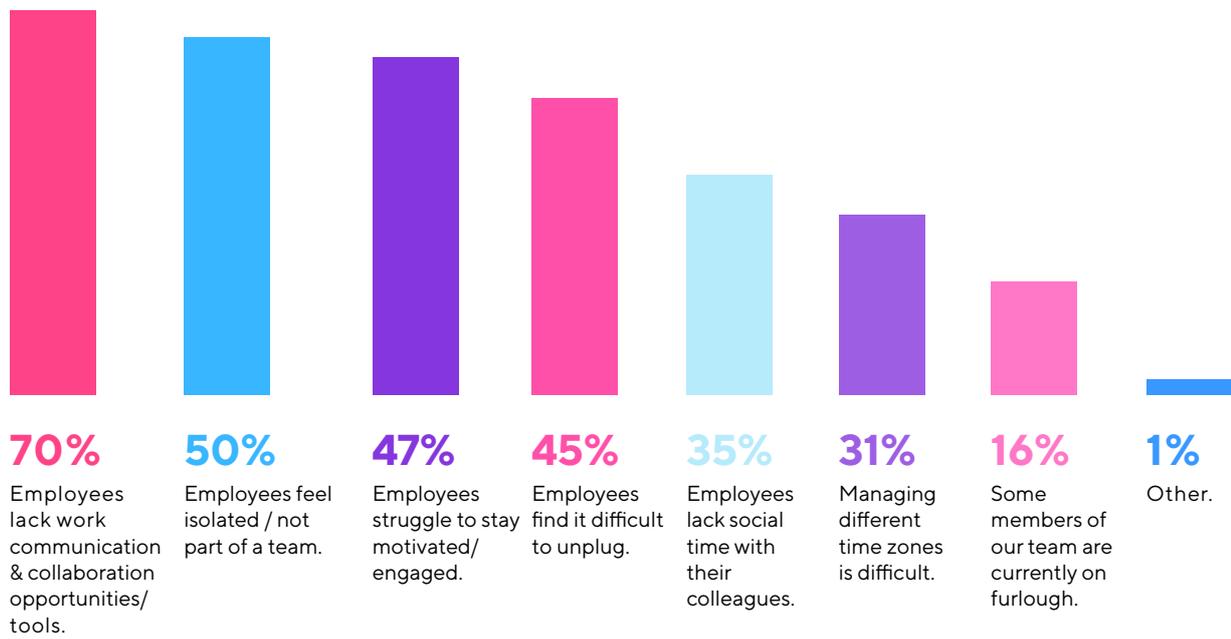
Respondents were asked to choose multiple options.
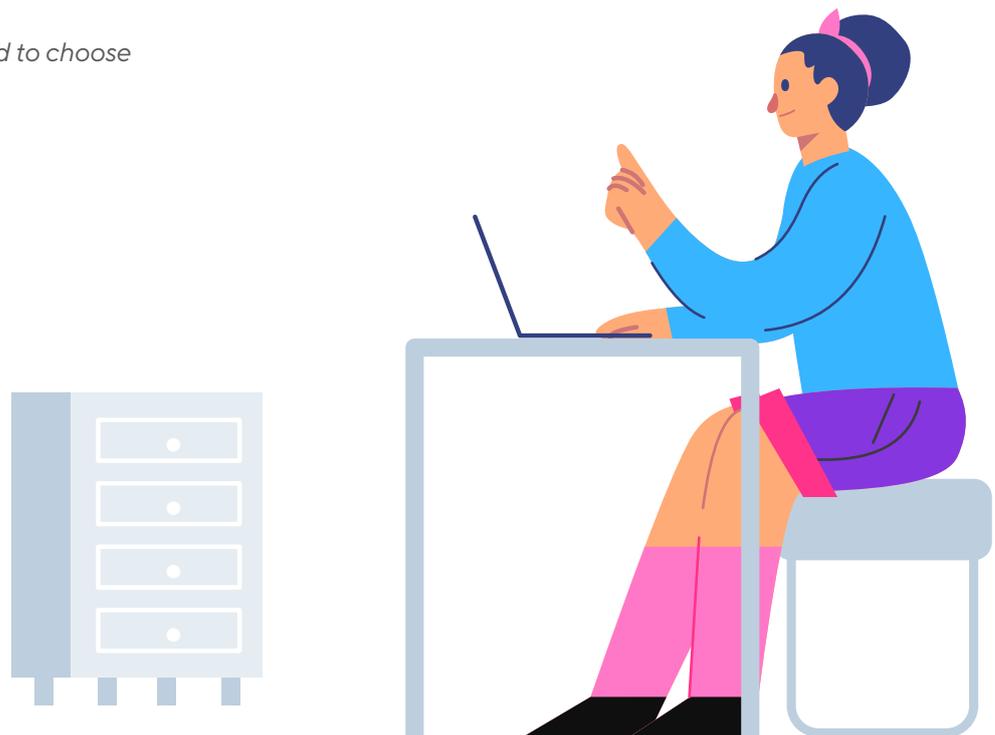
We also asked our respondents how they felt about the impact of COVID-19 on employee engagement, and the results may surprise you. **51% of all managers said COVID-19 had a positive impact on employee engagement, while only 26% said it had a negative impact.** This signals that, while managers find engagement to be a challenge, their focus on workplace culture has helped them to promote employee engagement during the pandemic.

HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE?

Statements	Extreme negative impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact	Extreme positive impact	N\A
Overall team engagement	9%	17%	22%	32%	19%	1%

Interestingly, fully remote managers felt even more positive about the impact of COVID-19 on employee engagement compared to hybrid managers.

58% of fully remote managers said **COVID-19 had a positive impact on employee engagement.** Just **23%** said the **effect was negative.**

FULLY REMOTE MANAGERS: HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE?

Statements	Extreme negative impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact	Extreme positive impact	N\A
Overall team engagement	11%	12%	18%	32%	26%	1%

46% of hybrid managers said COVID-19 had a **positive impact on employee engagement,** while **27%** said it had a **negative effect.**

Remote team members are generally more likely to feel excluded compared to on-site workers. The real challenge, then, is how do you ensure you're being inclusive of all your team members, whether they are working remotely or in person?

HYBRID TEAM MANAGERS: HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE?

Statements	Extreme negative impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact	Extreme positive impact	N\A
Overall team engagement	6%	21%	26%	33%	13%	1%

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS:

Griffin, a UK-based FinTech company, are working with Omnipresent to ensure both their on-site and off-site teams are getting the support they need.

"At Griffin, we have operated as a hybrid-distributed company since day one. We have an office in London, but our team live and work across the UK and the EU. We believe that trust and autonomy are fundamental to a healthy culture, so we give our team members the flexibility to work when and where makes sense for them. The biggest challenge of distributed, asynchronous working is making sure that each of us has equitable access to information and involvement in decision-making. We do this by being transparent by default and by obsessively documenting and sharing everything we do in writing - this is a fundamental part of the job for everyone who works at Griffin."

**- Maria Campbell,
VP of People at Griffin**

Griffin

Managers who have spent more on workplace culture have more engaged employees.

Our results show that investing the right amount in workplace culture has positive effects on remote and hybrid team engagement. We found that managers who are investing more in workplace culture compared to pre-pandemic are also finding team engagement and employee wellbeing to be better since the pandemic began.

57% said COVID-19 had a **positive impact on team engagement.**

56% said COVID-19 had a **positive impact on work-life balance.**

51% said COVID-19 had a **positive impact on the alignment of business-wide and individual goals.**

But there's more to building engagement than simply spending more money.

Our results show that despite managers being concerned about engagement and motivation, many of them aren't optimizing their engagement strategy in the right way.

Only **49%** said they'd **provide objective assessments** of where their **employees work best in their transition plans.**

This implies that many companies aren't communicating with their employees and assessing their needs as well as they could be. The best place to start is by requesting your employees' input regularly.

We also found that few managers are providing their remote and hybrid teams with additional benefits, such as healthcare or more vacation days **(only 37%)**. Additional or different benefits are an important part of building a culture that demonstrates how much you value your employees. This, in turn, supports their engagement in the long term.

Only **14%** said they'd include **education on different countries' work practices.**

Given 35% of managers felt that COVID-19 had negatively impacted their team's ability to connect on a personal level with one another, this is an obvious area to prioritize. This is especially true if your hybrid or remote teams are working in different countries.

By building awareness of each other's work habits and practices, you can set organizational standards that are inclusive of all employees around the world. For example, using clear and simple language to communicate internally, and respecting public holidays in different countries.
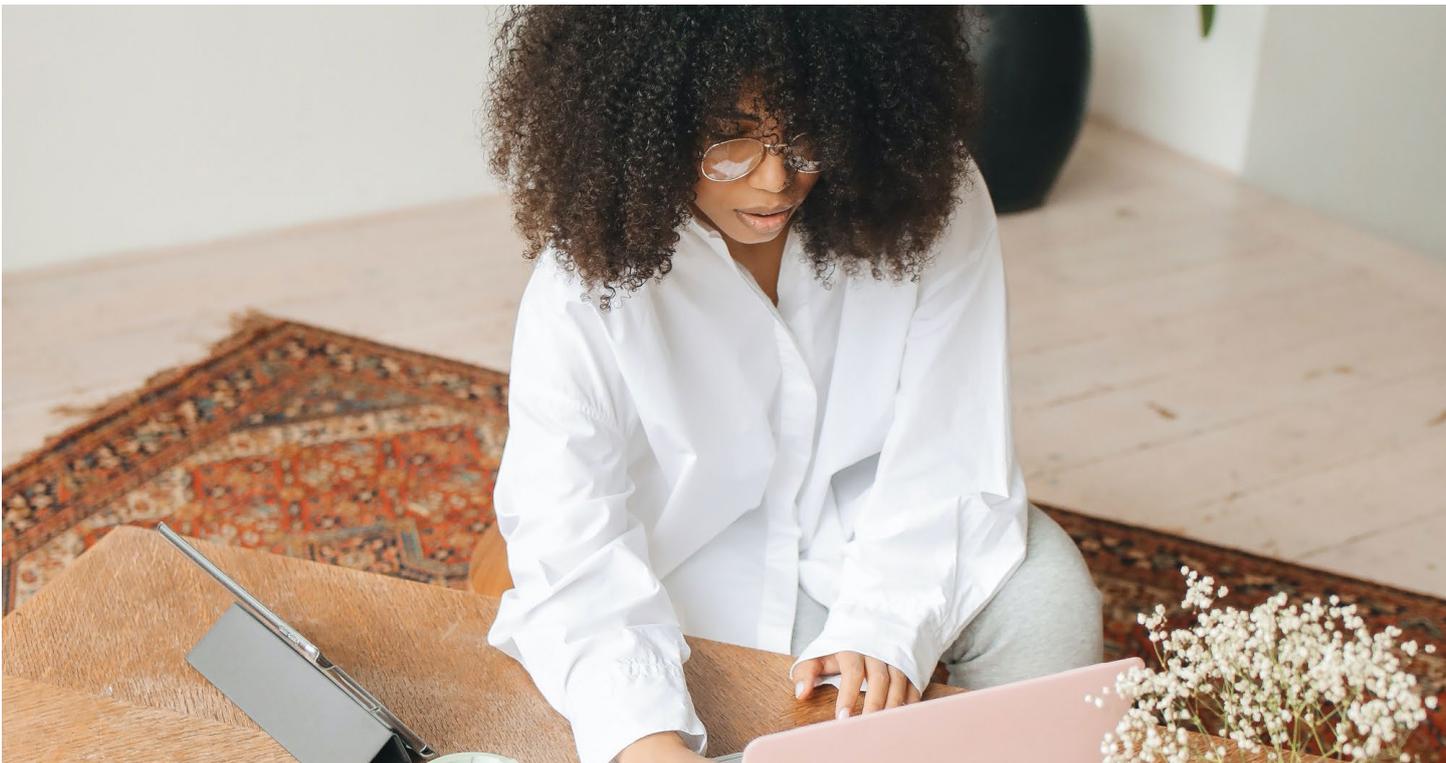
WHAT'S INCLUDED IN YOUR COMPANY'S PLAN TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES THROUGH THE TRANSITION TO HYBRID OR REMOTE WORK?

Communication guidelines — **62%**

Working hours e.g. flexible, asynchronous — **62%**

Objective assessment of where employees work best, considering their role and personal preferences — **49%**

Team social events and activities — **45%**

Online learning and development opportunities — **44%**

Integrating more collaboration and communication tools — **39%**

Adapted benefits e.g. home office allowances — **36%**

Education on different countries' work practices / social practices — **14%**

Respondents were asked to choose multiple options.
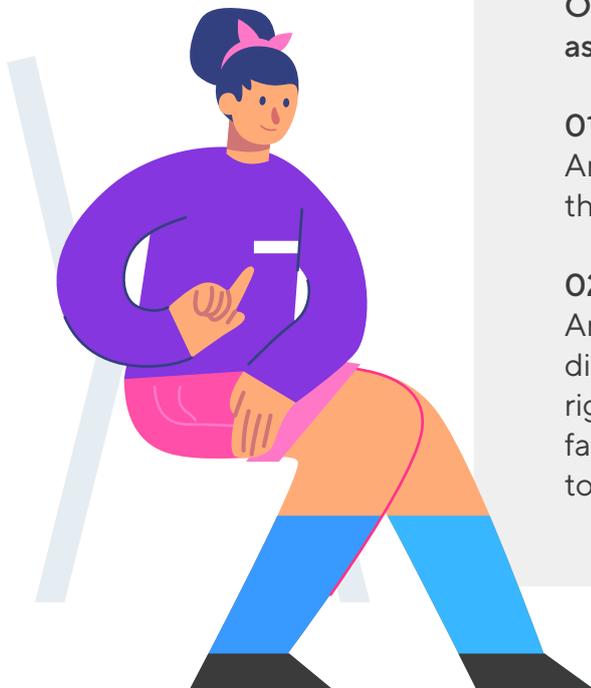
Organizations should be asking themselves:

01.
Are we still trying to replicate the physical office online?

02.
Are we providing our distributed team with the right training, benefits, and fair workplace assessments to help them succeed?

BUILDING GLOBAL
TEAM CONNECTIVITY

06

06.
Building global team connectivity

Many managers fear that remote and hybrid work don't allow for the camaraderie that a seasoned on-site team benefits from. But this doesn't have to be the case.

Our findings show that remote and hybrid working doesn't automatically lead to a breakdown in personal connections between team members. In fact, both can be conducive to fostering better interpersonal connections in the workplace.

40% of all managers said **COVID-19 had a positive impact on employees' ability to connect on a personal level,** while only **36%** felt the **impact was negative.**

HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE?

Statements	Extreme negative impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact	Extreme positive impact	N\A
Ability to connect on a personal level with others	13%	23%	22%	25%	15%	2%

Again, the responses show that it's important to invest enough in order to build a strong workplace culture.

45% of managers who are investing less in workplace culture compared to pre-pandemic said COVID-19 had a negative impact on employees' ability to connect personally. Only 28% said the impact was positive.

MANAGERS WHO ARE INVESTING LESS IN WORKPLACE CULTURE COMPARED TO PRE-PANDEMIC: HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED YOUR EMPLOYEES' ABILITY TO CONNECT ON A PERSONAL LEVEL WITH OTHERS?

Statements	Extreme negative impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact	Extreme positive impact	N\A
Ability to connect on a personal level with others	19%	26%	21%	17%	12%	5%

In comparison, 49% of managers who are investing more in workplace culture compared to pre-pandemic said COVID-19 had a positive impact on their employees' ability to form personal connections.
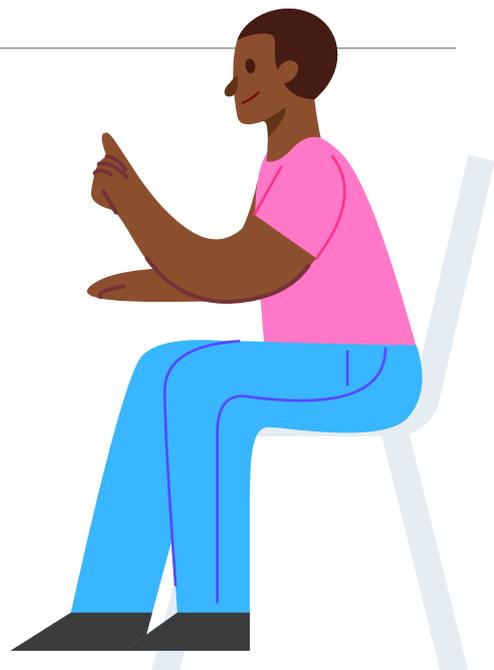
MANAGERS WHO ARE INVESTING MORE IN WORKPLACE CULTURE COMPARED TO PRE-PANDEMIC: HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED YOUR EMPLOYEES' ABILITY TO CONNECT ON A PERSONAL LEVEL WITH OTHERS?

Statements	Extreme negative impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact	Extreme positive impact	N\A
Ability to connect on a personal level with others	14%	19%	17%	26%	23%	1%

Just because remote or hybrid work means your teams aren't physically together doesn't mean that they won't connect. But it's also not simply a case of spending money on generic workplace culture strategies.

To foster belonging, managers are planning for **regular team socials (65%)** by being intentional and ritualizing social moments, and providing employees with the right asynchronous tools to self-organize social events.

They are also providing **physical, emotional, and mental health support (54%)** to ensure all their employees feel their well-being is cared for, no matter where they are based. Asynchronous well-being platforms, like <u>Plumm</u> or <u>Spill</u>, are providing remote and hybrid teams with a choice of support to choose from.

Managers are also organizing **regular team challenges (48%)** online to build camaraderie across their distributed teams.

Hybrid team managers in particular need to be thinking about team challenges that are inclusive of both their on-site and off-site employees.

HOW ARE YOU CONTINUING TO BUILD AND SUSTAIN WORKPLACE CULTURE?

Respondents were asked to choose multiple options.

By setting regular team catch-ups to socialize (weekly, fortnightly, monthly). **65%**

By providing support for physical, emotional, and mental health. **54%**

By setting team challenges to build camaraderie. **48%**

By investing in digital tools to help people better connect and interact with each other. **44%**

By increasing the communication cadence between managers and team members. **38%**

By being more clear when communicating mission and goals. **33%**

By running regular company-wide meetings to keep everyone informed (weekly, fortnightly, monthly). **33%**

By sharing regular internal newsletters. **26%**

By providing training to managers. **24%**

Through ad-hoc announcements or meetings. **22%**

Other. **1%**

Organizations need to be asking themselves:

01.
Are we being intentional in prioritizing and ritualizing social moments?

02.
Are we investing in the right asynchronous tools for team socials, challenges, and well-being support?

07

07.
The goal is to build an inclusive workplace

Managers are already investing in their remote and hybrid teams - the key now is to build a workplace that serves all employees equally.

Our findings show that many managers have taken the first step to make the necessary budget available to support their remote and hybrid teams. But a budget alone isn't enough to create the best workplace culture.

Fostering effective communication, engagement, and social interaction are key to building a successful and productive team culture. The challenge remains in creating a culture that's inclusive in how it supports both on-site and remote staff. Managers now need to be conscious of creating a workplace environment that doesn't simply emulate the physical office.

For example, rather than adopting a number of tools that you think your employees might need, ask them directly what they would find most useful and build your strategy from there. You'll also want to provide opportunities to help your hybrid and remote staff socialize and connect beyond work collaborations.

Remote and on-site workplaces are different biomes, but they're part of the same ecosystem - your company. By intentionally supporting your employees regardless of their location, your business will benefit from a truly innovative and thriving workplace culture.

08

08.
About Omnipresent and Remote Social

Omnipresent makes it easy to hire, pay, and provide support for **global teams** across 160 countries and regions.

As your internationalization partner, Omnipresent makes it possible for you to hire talent anywhere with ease. By providing real-time support for businesses and their remote workers, Omnipresent offers:

01.
A strategic approach to international expansion.

02.
A comprehensive end-to-end experience from onboarding to offboarding.

03.
Reliable global support covering all timezones.

If you'd like to know more about **Omnipresent's** bespoke solutions, **book a call** today.

Remote Social is where remote and hybrid teams come together to build connection and culture. Supporting over 250 teams across 35 countries, Remote Social's all-in-one platform provides an evolving offering of tools and activities designed to strengthen culture, wellbeing, and connection.

You can join **Remote Social** and create your account **here** for free.

This report draws on anonymous survey data gathered in July 2021, amongst 1000 HR managers and C-level executives. Our respondents work across industries in Australia, Canada, the US, and the UK. All survey data was collected using Pollfish.

omnipresent | REMOTE SOCIAL