



Flexible working and the rise of the **OFFICE VALUE PROPOSITION**

Remote working is not new. For those of us with multi-site, multi-country teams it has long been a way of life, but in 2023, fortunately it no longer means carrying your office around with you in a bag.

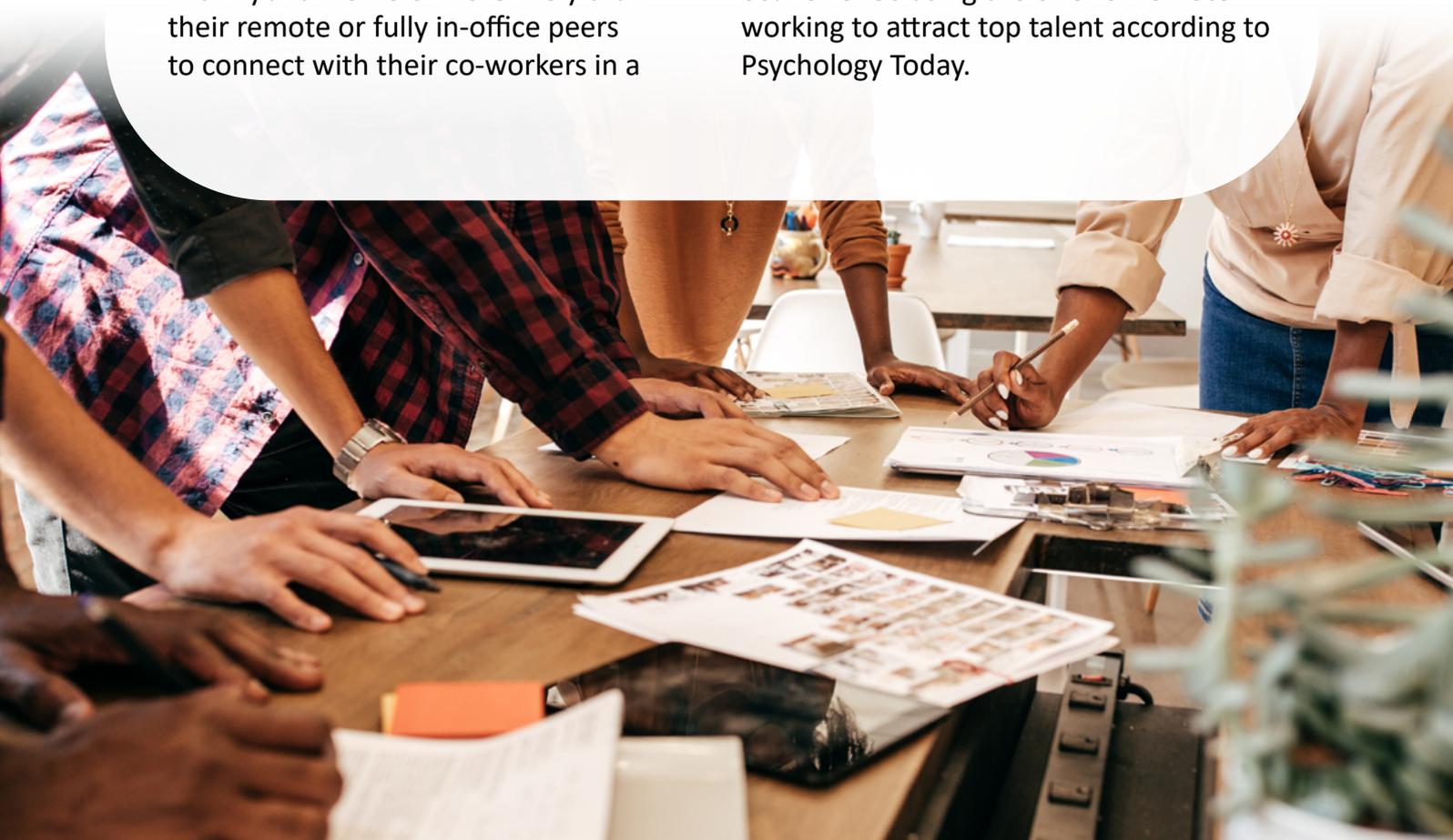
How we define 'standard working' has been entirely transformed, permanently is the general view, but the forces that accelerated this transformation continue to shift, and further change will lie ahead.

The first UK lockdown forced employers to instigate remote working and there is now a sizeable body of evidence that suggests it has led to equal, if not greater employee productivity. Recent research by the University of Birmingham found that 75% of line managers reported that flexible working increases productivity, and 62.5% believe it increases motivation. Another study by Citrix found not only increased productivity from flexible working, but also increased well-being, with hybrid workers 'more likely than their remote or fully in-office peers to connect with their co-workers in a

manner that made them happier and more productive.' These findings are changing the attitudes of many CEOs (but by no means all) towards remote work and removing some of the stigma of mistrust.

Flexible working has become a priority for both existing and potential employees. In Spring of 2022 McKinsey reported that in the US, 87% of those offered the chance of flexible working, took it. For many the option for at least some remote working is non-negotiable and the difference between going and staying with their employer, across all age groups.

Organisations have recognised the need to offer flexible working to retain and attract top talent. As we begin 2023, HR News report that the software sector is the most flexible, with over 28% of jobs advertised as fully remote, and PR is reported as the best for hybrid working. However, SMEs are leading the way with 60% of CEOs using the offer of remote working to attract top talent according to Psychology Today.



Despite this evidence, there is increasing demand from employers to remove, or at least reduce the option for hybrid and remote working. A recent report in the US by LinkedIn showed that only 1 in 7 job posts in October 2022 offer remote or hybrid working (although they received more than half of all applications) and recent estimates from Canada expect 40% of employers to attempt the removal of work from anywhere policies.

mutually advantageous?

Over 75% of respondents described their workplace policy as 'variable remote' with a further 15.4% stating 'fixed remote'. Only 4% had either fully on-site or fully remote policies. This is leaving arrangements to a local agreement between the line manager and employee either at job offer or in one-to-one discussion. This is a shrewd approach,

This problem looks set to *shape* talent acquisition and retention in 2023. If many employees are prepared to leave rather than give up flexibility, how are organisations shaping their office value proposition (OVP) to *balance* the benefits of on-site working with the convenience of remote working to create a compelling narrative which employees will see as *mutually advantageous*?

The results of the TALiNT Partners Benchmark report in 2022 tell the same story; despite 60% of employers seeing flexible working as integral to their employer brand, only 40% offered some home working and only 20% had fully remote options.

TALiNT Partners surveyed employers across the UK to uncover just how flexible their OVP really is and justifying any on-site, in-office requirement to their workforce.

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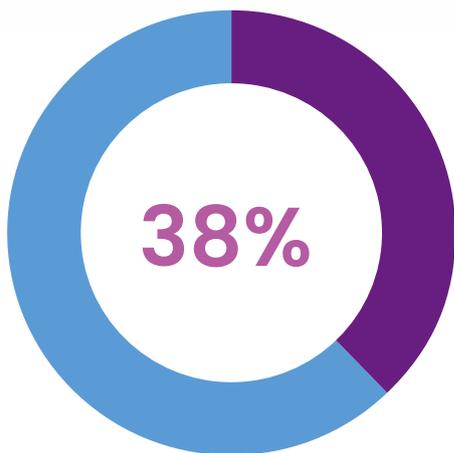
accommodating individual needs and, provided this is supported by a narrative in attraction messaging, will be seen positively by both external and internal talent.

'Variable remote' makes any form of shift management extremely challenging without technology to support it, but, with the right tools, can broaden access to talent with more creative working patterns. Opportunities for remote or hybrid working are increasing for blue-collar, front-line roles with more flexible working options being used, such as compressed weeks, and more autonomy in shift allocation.

We asked employers how they are justifying their return to office demands. Ninety-eight percent saw collaborative working as a primary reason for returning to the office, with 65% also referencing



face-to-face meetings. These majorities align well with employee expectations and, with clear messaging around frequency, can emphasise contribution and inclusion as employer priorities, increasing connectivity and a sense of value for individuals.



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Over a third of respondents (38%) felt that working from the office was important for effective team management.

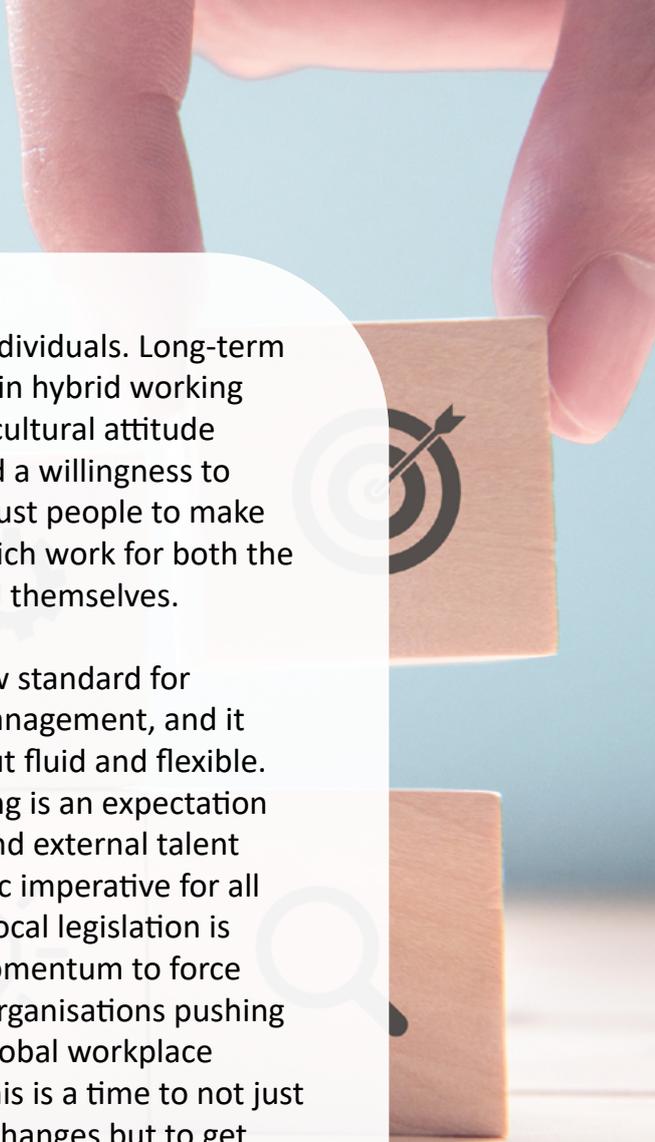
This may be the nub of the problem. A report in January 2023 by HRD Australia shows a ‘falling back into old habits’ by leaders, which we see repeated across the globe. Resistance to managing remote

teams can be tied to productivity and quality of output, but there are other factors at play; fear of change, poor line management skills, bias and personal confidence all contribute.

Employers digging their heels in about on-site working risk not only deterring potential candidates but also losing the talent they have. Ironically ‘the biggest resistance against the return-to-work order comes from managers, directors, and even at the VP rank, who steadfastly refuse to head back to an office’ according to a recent Forbes report in the US.

As we go into 2023, employees still have the upper hand. With many skills still in short supply, other opportunities are available, giving candidates confidence in saying ‘no thanks’ to terms that do not suit, and for employees to refuse to comply with dictated workplace policies.

According to our survey, the majority have implemented a hybrid working model, with over a third (35%) requiring two or three days in the office per week, but recent research by the Harvard Business School throws doubt on the idea that approximately three days is the ideal, suggesting, in fact, that it may be as few as one. Almost a quarter of respondents agreed, 23% reported a requirement of only one to two days a week. A minority, 11%, are mandating three to four days on-



site, a stance which may be costing them talent without a strong and employee-supported justification.

The remaining organisations, 31% of responses, have completely open policies on workplace management. This approach centres on trust, of both line management and employees. Empowering the workforce to get the work done, in whatever way works best at a local and personal level sends a powerful message about company culture and management attitudes. Those reporting positive impact through this strategy also highlighted the infrastructure necessary for success; namely the right tools to work effectively from anywhere, management reskilling, and proactive strategies to create connectivity and support wellbeing.

What is clear is that there is no one solution to suit all organisations,

teams, and individuals. Long-term effectiveness in hybrid working is built upon cultural attitude to change and a willingness to enable and trust people to make decisions, which work for both the company, and themselves.

There is a new standard for workplace management, and it is not fixed but fluid and flexible. Hybrid working is an expectation for internal and external talent and a strategic imperative for all EVP design. Local legislation is increasing momentum to force the hand of organisations pushing against this global workplace revolution. This is a time to not just roll with the changes but to get ahead of them if talent is core to organisation success.

To find out more about TALiNT Partners Insights as part of our membership benefits [contact us here](#).



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Connecting the talent ecosystem: we bring together a global network of leading employers and solution providers to make better talent and technology decisions.