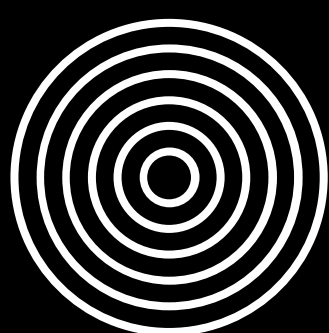


marco

MOVING PLACE
CULTURE



THE
FUTURE
OF



In our inaugural state of workplace culture report, we take a **deep dive** into the challenges and opportunities of building culture in a distributed world.

In following return-to-work trends, surveying our customers, and interviewing a number of People leaders and Chief People Officers at companies across industries and sizes—from Starbucks to Strava—we discovered common themes and best practices among new challenges regarding the new way of work. This ebook is organized in a way that you can either read it all the way through, or pick and choose the parts relevant to you.

We learned a tremendous amount about the direction workplace culture is moving while putting this together—we hope you do too!

"If 2021 was about preparing for a post-vaccine work environment, 2022 and beyond will require leading-edge companies to think deeply about why employees want to stay engaged in the organization – and how to create a work atmosphere where employees don't want to leave."¹

¹ Forbes

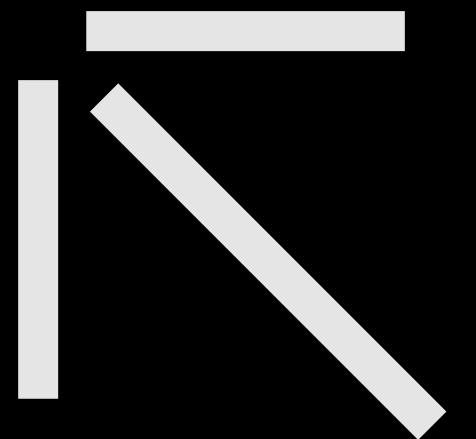


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1. THE CHALLENGE



A new way of work

It's no secret—the way we work has changed. At this point, it's become clear to most that the traditional in-office 9-5 simply isn't necessary.

The evolution of where & how we work

Physical
HQs



Distributed
Workforce

82% of leaders planning for a remote-flexible future¹

Conference
Rooms



New Tools &
Solutions

 slack   monday.com

Constant,
Rigid



Flexible,
Accommodating

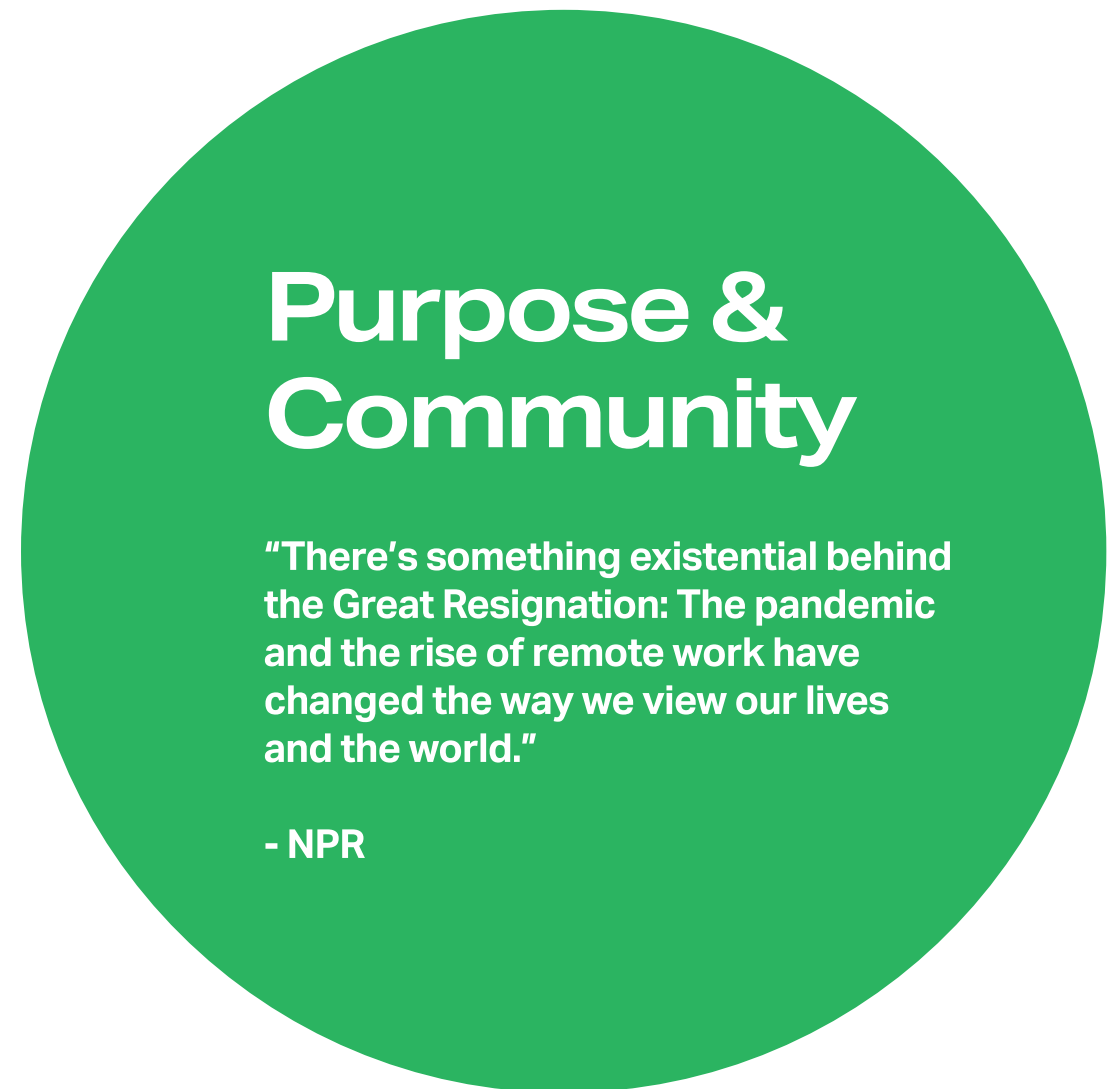
73% of employees want flexible work options post-Pandemic²

Among some of the companies that are opting for a different style of working are **Cameo**, Twitter, Slack, and Microsoft. But it isn't just the usual suspects of startups and tech companies that are disrupting the traditional way of work — it's also established giants, like Ford, JP Morgan Chase, and Capital One, who are opting for something different than everyone working in an office, all of the time.

Why?

Because employees are leaving comfortable jobs to find meaning.

The evolution of why we work



The pandemic gave us all a moment to think about what we're doing, why we're doing it, and truly consider that work—where we spend more than one third of our waking hours—should be something we draw meaning from and enjoy, rather than something we just tolerate. And this great realization has led to a great resignation, which has made it very apparent that business leaders need to act, and they need to act now.

The great resignation continues

>19 million

US workers have quit their jobs since April 2021

41%

of employees are considering quitting

4 million

workers quit in September 2021 alone

48%

of employees are actively searching for new opportunities

Source: Inc.

Culture is harder to build without togetherness

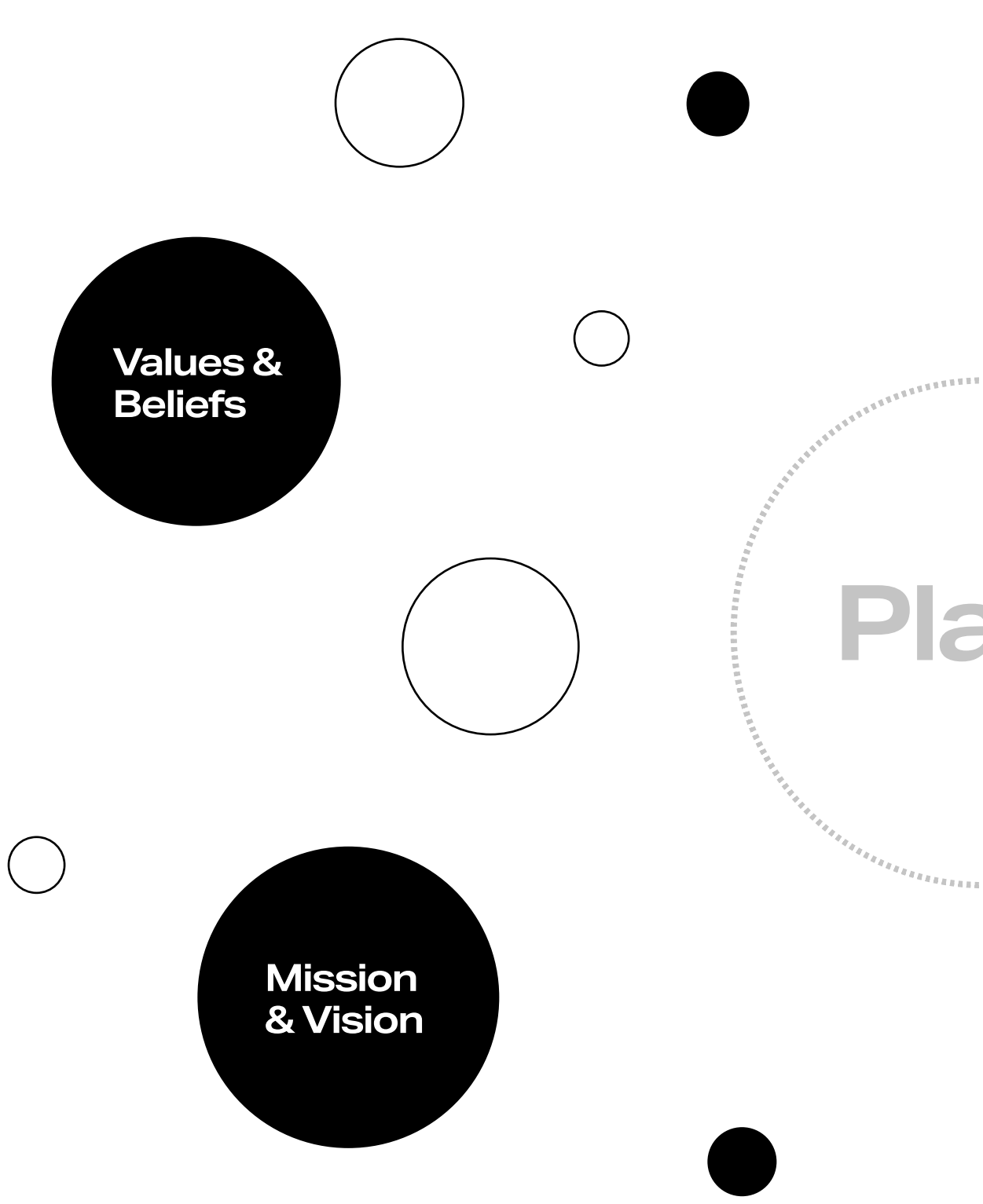
As companies navigate the shift from in-person to remote-first, trudging through a sea of new buzzwords like “distributed,” “remote-friendly,” and “hybrid,” there are seemingly endless questions.

Beyond the physical space-related questions, like: Should there be an unequivocal return to office or should teams stay remote or hybrid? Should companies downsize their offices, or maybe get rid of offices all together?

The primary question on our mind—regardless of how companies choose to work—is:



How do we continue to build culture, human connection, and strong relationships in this new working environment?

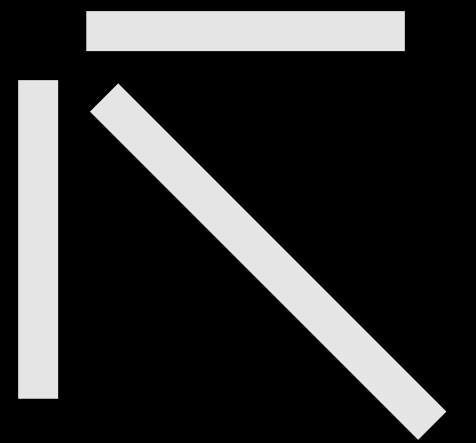


Company culture consists of different things—a company's mission, its vision, its values, its people. The place—the physical building where people gathered—used to be a natural unifier, a culture builder we took for granted. But as more companies become distributed, there's a gap in how to bring people together.

While it's an exceedingly tricky and nuanced problem, it's not not an impossible one to solve. So we set out to find some answers. We started with people, because people are the very core of the concern.



2. UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE



Conversations with people leaders

We dove into the strategy behind companies large and small, tech-forward and more analog, to understand the landscape. And while each people leader and organization has a unique take, one key theme surfaced: **Hybrid work is emerging as the path of choice for most companies.**

A minority of companies are choosing one side of the spectrum—either fully remote, or fully back in the office 9-5. Most are opting for many different approaches to something in the middle.

Company Case Studies

There's no right answer, but there is a right for your organization. By beginning to understand how companies of similar size, stage, industry, or mission are approaching this new way of work, we can start to unpack trends and best practices that can help inform your own strategy. Feel free to pick and choose from the below case studies that are most relevant, or skim through them all to get an idea of what all kinds of companies are doing.



Starbucks | May Jensen, VP, Partner Resources

43

Number of employees: 300,000+ | Headquarters: Seattle, WA | Stores in all 50 US states and 80+ countries
Return to work status: Hybrid, HQ to reopen Q1 2022.

Key Takeaway: With their new distributed approach, Starbucks corporate employees can more deeply understand the markets that they support and are more aligned than ever to their globally distributed retail spaces.



Ritual | Jenn Cornelius, Chief People officer

46

Number of employees: 150+ | Headquarters: Los Angeles, CA
Return to work status: Hybrid, focus on employee choice.

Key Takeaway: Fluidity is key during this transition. Ritual is adopting a mindset of continual growth—observing, listening, and adjusting along the way.



| **splash**

Splash | Camille White-Stern, Communications Leader 49

Number of employees: 150+ | Headquarters: New York, NY
Return to work status: Hybrid, eliminating 1 physical office.

Key Takeaway: Splash took this as an opportunity to grow—and even redefine—the company's culture.



| **STRAVA**

Strava | Michele Bousquet, Chief People Officer 52

Number of employees: 300+ | Headquarters: San Francisco, CA
Return to work status: Hybrid, 40-50% of people will remain remote

Key Takeaway: Having a culture isn't a choice. Even if culture isn't something that you're choosing to focus on and define, it's going to happen regardless.



People Leader Accelerator | Andrew Bartlow, Co-founder 55

PLA is an executive development program designed to help top People, Talent, and HR leaders propel their organizations forward. Andrew advises hundreds of people leaders at rapidly growing companies, keeping him at the forefront of the future of company culture.

Key Takeaway: There's no such thing as a best practice. There isn't a "right" for everyone, there's only what works for your organization in its unique situation.



|  **BainCapital**

Bain Capital Ventures | Leslie Crowe, Partner 58

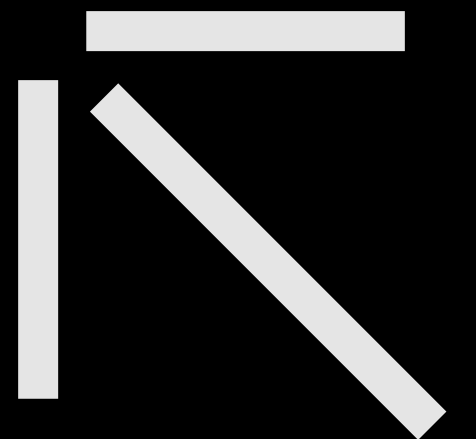
Leslie leads all things People and Talent for BCA's portfolio of 200+ high growth companies, such as DocuSign, Jet.com, Lime, LinkedIn, Rent the Runway, Rubrik, SendGrid, and SurveyMonkey.

Key Takeaway: With more teams moving to hybrid models, in-person experiences can provide even more value than before as a dedicated time to connect.



3.

THE
STATE
OF THE
WORK
PLACE



The future of work is hybrid

A key theme throughout all of these conversations is that hybrid work is emerging as the preferred option for companies of all sizes, stages, and industries. A survey by McKinsey found that as the pandemic eases, a majority of employers (nine out of 10) say they will allow some hybrid scheduling in the future.¹

But if the future of work is hybrid, what does that actually mean? The future of work comes with a whole new vernacular, and understandably, everyone may have their own definition.

- **Does everyone have to go into the office on the same days?**
- **Are some people allowed to work remotely the entire time and are others allowed to work in the office every day?**
- **Do employees need to stay within close time zones, or can they really work from anywhere in the world?**
- **Do people need to be online during certain hours of the day?**
- **What will be the primary collaboration tools used?**
- **How and when do distributed organizations get everyone together in-person, if at all?**

To start understanding the right flavor of hybrid work for your company, take a look at what companies are doing in your space—what policies have they started adopting? How has it been received? What feedback are they looking for? Even if you're a tiny startup, looking at what big organizations are doing can offer inspiration, since many solutions are scalable.

¹ Flexjobs

Hybrid benefits and challenges

Benefits

It's understandable that hybrid work often comes out on top: it's the best of both worlds—the flexibility of working from home, with the connection and socialization that's easier found in-office.

For many employees, benefits include:

- Increased flexibility, equity, and agency
- Optimization of wellbeing
- Less time spent commuting

And for employers:

- Opportunity to hire a more diverse workforce — talent exists outside of wherever HQ is, and hybrid work models can empower leaders to access it
- Increased employee happiness reducing risk of turnover
- Potential savings and re-investing opportunities from money that would otherwise be spent on office space

It's also being demanded. According to a Robert Half survey, the majority of adults (51%) want to work a hybrid schedule after the pandemic ends, and 33% are willing to quit their current job if they are not allowed to work remotely at least some of the time.¹

¹Flexjobs

Challenges

Hybrid work comes with its own unique set of challenges. For employers, there are plenty of logistical decisions which impact both how smoothly the transition happens, and how well employees are able to work in the future:

- How coordination with teams should work
- How to provide equitable experiences
- How to manage office capacity and attendance
- How to manage performance remotely
- How and when to bring people together and ensure they feel connected

And for employees, the impact tends to be quite psychological. In a Buffer survey, respondents reported that over a quarter find working remotely makes it difficult to unplug, while 16% reported feeling lonely.

And then there's the ultimate challenge—when stats contradict themselves: According to a Microsoft survey, though 73% of all employees want flexible work options to continue beyond the pandemic, 67% also want more in-person time with their teams.

Companies thoughtfully approaching hybrid work

Tackling the biggest challenges first

Beyond logistics, the key challenge that keeps surfacing is that **culture and connectedness is simply harder to build remotely**. Teams need to consider how to re-create water-cooler moments, impromptu collaboration, and a sense of community and unity around a product or service and team.

The key here is to see these challenges as opportunities. With any change comes a renewed sense of possibility to do things even better than before.

Each company is in a unique situation, and how companies will choose to address the challenges and potential pitfalls of hybrid work will greatly vary depending on company size, culture, goals, and more. While some companies are struggling to stay afloat, others are thriving. Instead of becoming overwhelmed by the complexities, they're using it as an opportunity to grow.

Small Companies

scoop

Ride-sharing

Co-founder Jon Sadow told us they're moving to a distributed model.

Hiring for roles that can be done remotely while keeping offices.

cameo

Video-sharing

Moving to a fully-distributed model.

"Our whole company is about connection. We realized we don't need to be in an office to do that," Mel Steinbach, CPO at Cameo, told us.

Medium-sized Companies

HubSpot

Marketing Automation

Announced allowing employees to choose how often they want to go into the office

Increasing remote roles & introducing benefits that can be enjoyed remotely.

Spotify

Music-streaming

Announced employees can choose between remote, in-office, or hybrid—a decision made between employee and manager.

Introducing more flexibility on location.

Large Companies

a

E-Commerce & Cloud

Announced that "there is no one-size-fits-all approach for how every team works best," and is now leaving the decision up to individual teams.



Creative Software

Announced moving to a hybrid model.

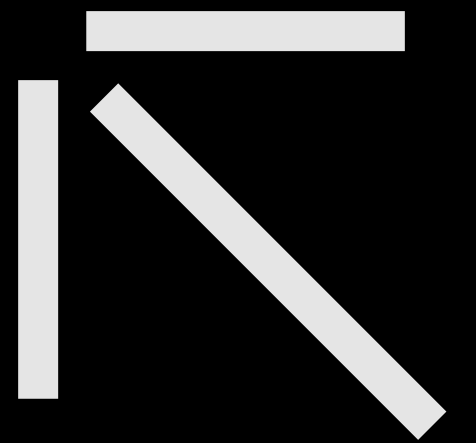
Focusing on prioritizing digital tools and workflows, and in-person gatherings will feature to connect teams.

The key to any successful hybrid strategy? Being intentional. No matter which model or style of work that you choose, be clear and transparent with your employees about the expectations and processes.



4.

HYBRID CULTURE



Building culture in a hybrid workplace

Workplace 2.0 demands a new approach to building and sustaining employee connection.

While different than building culture in-office— it's entirely possible to build a strong, engaging culture of connectedness in a remote or hybrid workplace.

It's essential to create a sense of unity for all employees, no matter where they're located. As in-office can often feel like a superior experience and there might be a tendency for remote workers to feel excluded, make it a priority to ensure that everyone feels like they're at headquarters—a remote headquarters.

"If the past 18 months have taught us anything, it's that employees crave investment in the human aspects of work... Employees want social and interpersonal connections with their colleagues and managers. They want to feel a sense of shared identity. Yes, they want pay, benefits, and perks, but more than that they want to feel valued by their organizations and managers. They want meaningful— though not necessarily in-person—interactions, not just transactions."¹

¹ 'Great Attrition' or 'Great Attraction'? The choice is yours, Sept 2021 McKinsey Report

The future of culture is shared experiences

Harder

Creative,
Inclusive,
Thoughtful
Experiences

Natural
togetherness
via being in the
same place

Easier

Then

Now

The future of bringing corporate teams together and building culture is through shared experiences—events that create connection, drive inspiration, and foster collaboration.

Teams can host in-person experiences, entirely virtual experiences, or hybrid experiences that include both remote and in-office employees. We recommend creatively and intentionally building structures, processes, and expectations to allow people on the screen to feel as included as people who are in-person.

Why Shared Experiences?

The initial results are in, and they are crystal clear.

At Marco, we've delivered experiences to hundreds of teams and seen the following:

85% shared a moment that brought them closer together¹
95% finished the experience feeling less stressed²
80% learned something new from the experience³

^{1 2 3} post-experience survey responses from Marco Experience attendees

And the use cases and opportunities to bring experiences to your employees are endless.



Culture-building moments to consider

- Bring geographic hubs together on a regular cadence
- Create a sense of community with new employee onboarding cohorts
- Celebrate cultural moments, such as work anniversaries, birthdays, and milestones
- Bring the entire company together for a holiday party, company anniversary, or fundraiser
- Kick off the year with a memorable Sales Kick-Off (or any team kick-off, for that matter)
- Get the executive team together for a retreat or offsite

Who



Exec Teams



Geographic Hubs



Functional Teams



Entire Company



ERG Groups



Celebrations



New Employee Onboarding



Professional Development



Education (e.g. D&I)

When

YOUR HYBRID CULTURE PLAYBOOK

Pick the hypothetical workplace situation most relevant to yours, and we'll provide a set of recommendations to make work feel human.



Create experiences that meet your employees where they are

Choose your own adventure

From the below, choose the workplace situation most relevant to your organization, and we'll provide recommendations for bringing your people together.

Fully Distributed

You have no physical offices, and your team is 100% remote. You have employees all over the country—perhaps the globe.

Remote-first with Hubs

You have a few offices in hub cities, but employees are distributed and going in is 100% optional. Hiring pool is open beyond office-based geographies.

Consolidated Hubs

You have HQs and satellite offices in hub cities, most employees live in one of these cities, and hiring is done locally. In-office expectations are flexible and variable, but there may be some requirements.
















Full-time in-office

You have a setup similar to the traditional 9-5 we saw before the pandemic. In-office expectations are 4+ days / week for all employees.

In a distributed world, fair doesn't mean equal

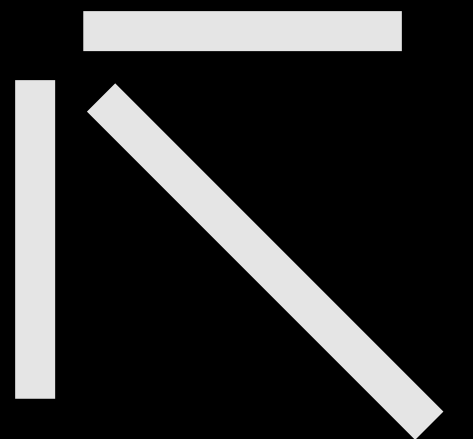
It's impossible to offer every employee the exact same experience when they're all in different places. If you have centralized hubs, but some of your employees live outside of driving distance from the hubs, they are choosing to trade off in-hub perks for the flexibility to live where they want to live.

The key is transparency and communication. For example, say you've given each hub budget for a quarterly hub-wide experience. Perhaps you give your out-of-hub employees the opportunity to fly in and stay at a hotel for a night once every 2-3 quarters to join. It's not a set formula—each team will take a different approach—but the idea here is setting the expectation upfront that employees might be treated differently given their location and unique situation.

	Fully Distributed	Remote-First with Hubs	Consolidated Hubs	Full-time In-Office
In-office 4-5 days / week Traditional in-office 9-5				
Flexible in-office Consider a weekly team-wide office day or a monthly in-office all-hands				
Monthly team or hub-wide virtual or in-person experience Allocate hubs or teams with monthly budget based on headcount and let them book experiences of their choice for culture building opportunities relevant to their people (eg. anniversaries, new hire welcomes, hackathons, etc.)				
Quarterly hub-wide day retreat Get the hub together in-person every 2-4 months for a day of collaboration and celebration. Face-to-face time builds trust and connection.				
Bi-annual team (eg. marketing) or level-wide (eg. execs) retreat Identify the right groups to bring together in-person off-site.				
Annual company-wide in-person retreat It's vital to encourage and enable strong cross-functional, cross-geographic relationships.				

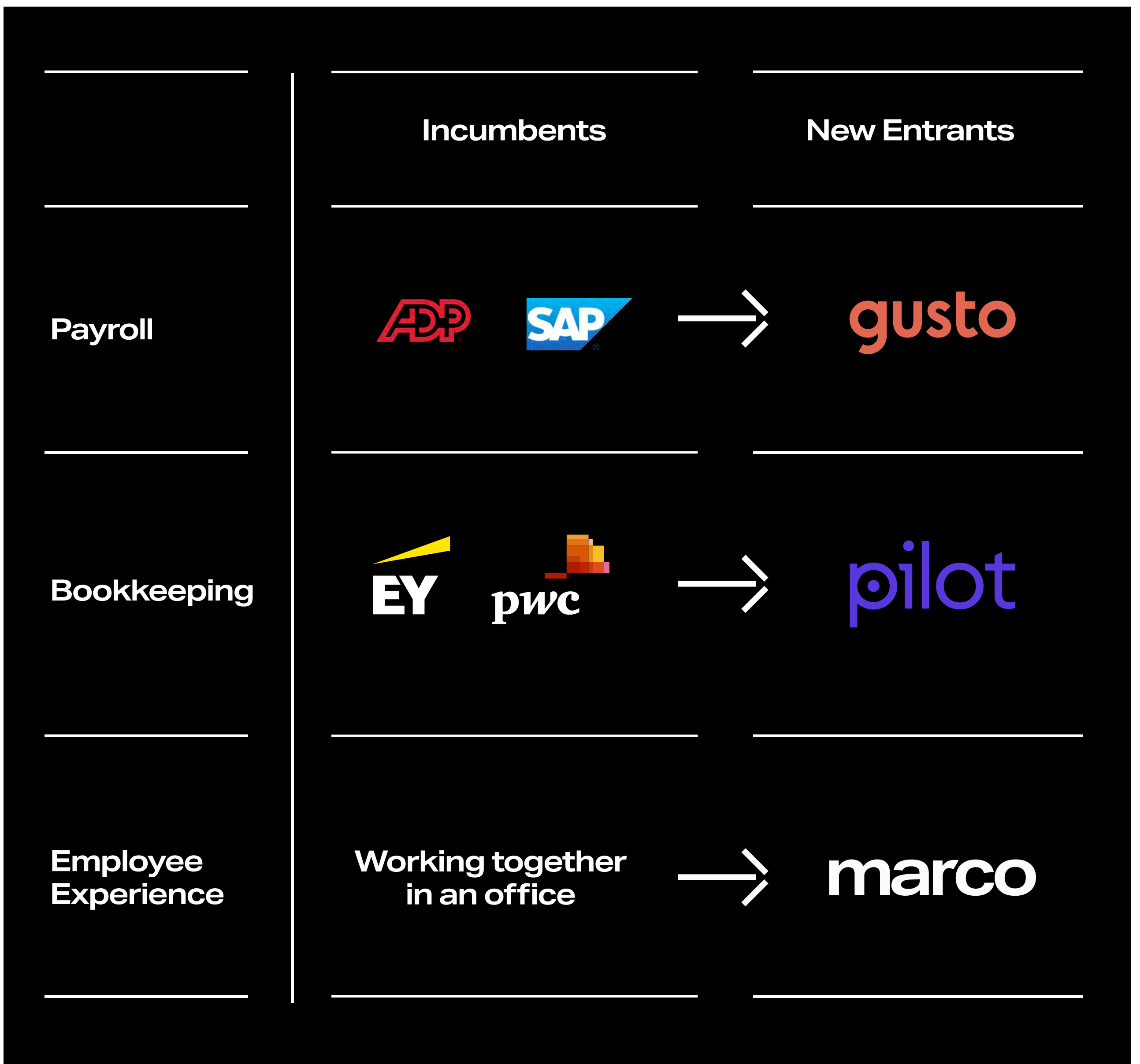


5. NEW SOLUTIONS



Identifying new solutions for your organization

A new way of work requires new solutions. New companies are emerging to help ease all your new hybrid challenges.





ENTER MARCO EXPERI ENCES



The Experiences Marketplace

Marco is a marketplace for extraordinary experiences to keep teams connected and employees engaged. Our main focus is to curate and deliver experiences that evolve modern workplaces into thriving cultures.

Marco curates the most elevated experiences by partnering with world-class hosts, brands, and venues. Experiences are delivered in all ways to suit every teams' needs:

Virtual



In-person



Retreat



In the playbook in the previous section, we recommend a combination of in-person experiences, virtual experiences, and retreats—regardless of your workplace configuration.

Why? There are pros and cons to each, and each has a different impact on both individuals and teams.



Virtual Experiences

PRO:

Virtual experiences are accessible from anywhere in the world. This solves the main problem of democratizing access to meaningful team experiences — you can experience an **ice cream tasting**, an **oyster shucking lesson**, or an **escape room** whether you're in New York, Denver, or Wichita. With supplies delivered directly to employee's doorsteps, it's easier than ever to have an immersive experience that's virtual.

CON:

Be mindful of zoom fatigue and potential tech issues — we all know the frustrating feeling of trying to have a conversation with a spotty WiFi connection. Test out any software that you'll be using before the event itself to minimize any potential issues. And limit the virtual experiences to hours that folks would already be using their computers to avoid Zoom fatigue (ie: working hours). No one wants to stay online for another hour after an 8-hour day in front of a screen.



In-person Experiences

PRO:

Face-to-face time is essential to building trust, and trust is essential for people to work together effectively.¹ For teams that are remote or hybrid, getting together in-person at least occasionally is crucial to long-term success. In addition, in-person experience can help team members feel more connected and engaged with the rest of their team.

CON:

For team members with commitments outside of work—whether that's taking care of kids or something else—in-person experiences may be difficult to attend. To help make things easy, consider providing childcare and giving your team plenty of time to plan and organize their schedule ahead of time.

¹ hbr.org



Retreats

PRO:

Re-energize the team, encourage cross-departmental collaboration and strengthen internal bonds. Company retreats are an opportunity for your team to get to know each other, do some big-picture thinking in-person, galvanize toward a shared goal, and have a little fun together.

CON:

Retreats can be a significant travel expense, particularly if your team needs to fly in. Since retreats are often a multi-day experience, it can also put team members with children or other outside-of-work commitments in a challenging situation. The best way to help avoid any issues is to plan well in advance, communicate with your team, and encourage them to come forward with any concerns.

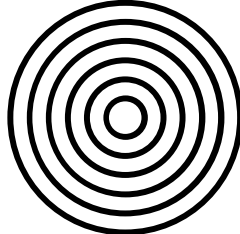














Your Embedded Culture Partner

The go-to marketplace for team experiences, yes. But Marco also supercharges your team's ability to build & measure culture.

Here's a look at how Marco is helping cutting-edge, distributed companies build thriving, cohesive cultures:



Meet Sam. Sam is a sales executive. He used to commute to work each day. He recently joined a distributed team that builds its culture creatively.

<p>PLANNING</p>	 <p>Marco works with the people team of Sam's company to curate a set of intentional experiences to bring Sam's team together</p>	 <p>An annual culture calendar is built to accommodate each unique team and individual's needs.</p>	
<p>EXPERIENCES</p>	<p>NYC HUB</p>  <p>Sam goes to the hub office 1-2x per week to collaborate with coworkers</p>	 <p>Sam's hub gets together once a month</p>	 <p>This month's experience is at Jeni's Meditation Studio</p>
<p>EXEC TEAM</p>	 <p>Sam's exec team gathers bi-annually</p>	 <p>Strategy planning</p>	 <p>D&I Training</p>  <p>Leadership Training</p>
<p>FULL TEAM</p>	 <p>Sam's full team gathers both virtually and in-person</p>	 <p>Virtual comedy show by Second City</p>	 <p>Company-wide retreat in the Redwoods</p>
<p>REPORTING</p>	 <p>Sam feels 85% connected and like he is making high impact!</p>	 <p>Sam made 50 new connections this year through Marco Experiences</p>	 <p>Marco collects data and works with the People Team to iterate on his company's engagement strategy</p>

But don't take it from us...



INSIGHT

— PARTNERS —

“Marco’s attention to detail and frequent communication solidified the epic times we had at our two most recent experiences.”

- Ashleigh Charlson, Director, Human Capital, Insight Partners

07/21

Met Marco: 25-person team-building experience

Rest of the year

+ 10 experiences, from team-building to recruiting

Moving forward

Additional experiences, enterprise pilot participant



melio

“Marco is exactly the partner we needed; a partner that could really listen to us, understand what we need, find the right solutions, and make it happen.

- Michal Vilenchuk, Head of People, Melio

10/21

Met Marco: Hundreds met at NYC office day retreat for the first time

Rest of the year

+ Exec retreats, Holiday Parties, and more

Moving forward

Additional experiences, enterprise pilot participant

The new workplace has arrived

“By not understanding what their employees are running from, and what they might gravitate to, company leaders are putting their very businesses at risk.”

‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The choice is yours, Sept 2021 McKinsey Report

Recommended Reading & Listening

- **‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The choice is yours | 2021 McKinsey Report**
- **How To Win The Startup War For Talent | Forbes**
- **WFH Is Corroding Our Trust in Each Other | HBR**
- **Marco Labs Podcast | Hear thoughts, stories, and best practices from all types of members of the Marco Community: Experience Hosts & People Leaders.**

By denying it, you’ll simply be left behind. Workplace 2.0 demands a new approach to building and maintaining employee connection and strong culture. If we could leave you with three key takeaways from this entire ebook, they would be the following:

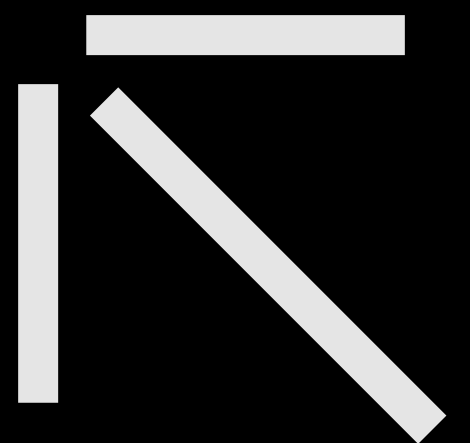
1. **Be creative and intentional** about bringing your people together, no matter where they are.
2. In a distributed world, **fair doesn’t necessarily mean equal.** It’s impossible to offer every employee the exact same experience, but be cognizant of every employee’s experience.
3. **Fluidity is key during this transitional time.** Adopt a mindset of observation, iteration, and continual growth to find the best solutions for your organization.

And the healthiest and most productive way to face this transition is to see it as an opportunity to grow—and even redefine—your company’s culture.



6. CASE STUD IES

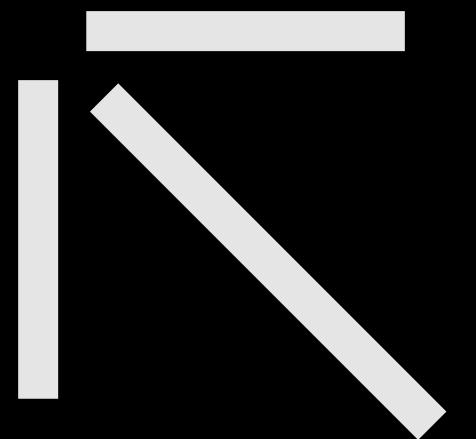
A deep dive into the opportunities and challenges of building company culture in a new, distributed world —as told by Chief People Officers and People Leaders at companies across industries, sizes, and workplace approaches.



STARBUCKS CASE STUDY: HOW STARBUCKS— A GLOBAL ORGANIZATION WITH PHYSICAL STOREFRONTS— IS APPROACHING A HYBRID FUTURE



Interview with May Jensen, VP, Partner Resources,
US Retail at Starbucks



Return-to-work status

While the original plan was to go back in October 2021, Starbucks Corporate recently pushed this date to January 2022. However, their notion of "return to work" has changed drastically from their original October plans.

The New Workspace at Starbucks is defined by four categories

OFFICE DEPENDENT

- Frequency in office:
4-5 days a week
- Use case example:
R&D, in a physical lab

MAINLY DIGITAL

- Frequency in office:
2 days or less a week
- Use case example:
Treating the office as a meeting place and social hub

MAINLY OFFICE

- Frequency in office:
3 days a week
- Use case example:
For those whose home work environment might not be as productive as in an office (big family, small space, etc)

FULLY DIGITAL

- Frequency in office:
0 days a week
- Use case example:
Travel to headquarters as necessary throughout the year

Advantages of a hybrid workplace according to May and the Starbucks team

A diversified talent pool:

Starbucks is beginning to open fully virtual positions and encourage hybrid teams, beyond just the greater Seattle area, helping to diversify their talent pool in ways they'd never seen.

Corporate is now feeling more aligned than ever to its globally distributed retail spaces:

"We're really leaning into this distributed world, and it's actually amazing. From what I've seen on the marketing team, some people met for the first time in August at the offsite we did, but had already been working together for two years, and felt like they were friends already."

Corporate employees now have the opportunity to more deeply understand the markets that they support:

By living in, being in, and interfacing with the frontline in the markets they lead, corporate teams now have a stronger idea of what's actually happening. "They go out and get a coffee and interact with their store managers. Think of the benefit of that versus driving to a corporate office and going to your desk. That's not a real example of what's happening in markets across the US."

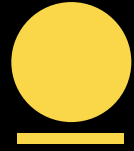
As Starbucks grows out of its physical space, technology is allowing them to lead more inclusively.

"We're educating ourselves on new technologies to make meetings more inclusive for everyone—chat, hands raise—making sure that we're being more thoughtful about who's getting heard. It's created an even more collaborative space than 50 people in a meeting room. It's leveling the playing field."

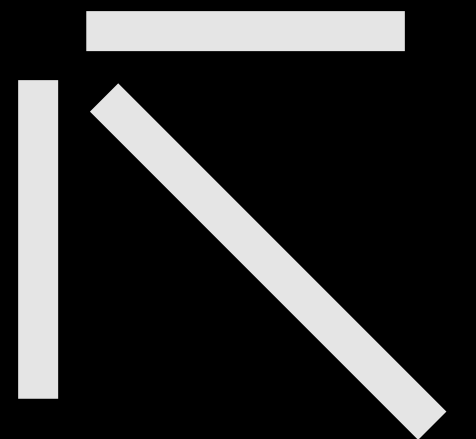
Pro hybrid tip

May recommends assigning a "Virtual Advocate" for hybrid meetings. This person is responsible for ensuring the technology is working correctly—that participants can see virtual attendees, hear them, and truly interact with them. That person is watching for them to raise their hand, both physically, or with a hand raise tool, watching the chat for their comments.

RITUAL CASE STUDY: HOW A FAST- GROWING DIRECT-TO- CONSUMER VITAMIN BRAND IS KEEPING CULTURE FLUID



Interviews Jenn Cornelius,
Chief People Officer at Ritual



Return-to-work status

Ritual has put the focus on employee choice during return-to-work, allowing each member on their team to choose a combination of in-person and remote that's best for them. While some of their teams (such as product development) have roles that inherently require them to work in-office, they've given their employees the option of choosing how often (if at all) they'd like to be in-person.

To approach return-to-work, the team took a look at Ritual's existing values, and examined how they could incorporate these same values in the way that they work. For Ritual, this looked like a focus on transparency, empowering and trusting employees to choose how they wanted to work, and fostering connection.

The modern workplace at Ritual: Employee choice

As a growing direct-to-consumer brand, the team is adopting a mindset of continual growth — observing, learning, and adjusting along the way. The team has found that many employees are happy to continue doing much of their work at home, and coming back into the office when they're looking to socialize and collaborate in-person.

Based out of Los Angeles, Ritual is a fast-growing company, with around 110 employees as of fall 2021. As a growing company with shifting processes, they're staying fluid — listening to feedback and making changes as needed. As Chief People Officer, the way that the Ritual team works is always top-of-mind for Jenn, and she's shared some learnings and takeaways.

People bring their whole selves to work.

Whether or not this is something that management wants to acknowledge, people's lives will inherently impact the way that they work. "It's really important to me that organizations value the people that they are, and allow humans to be humans. And that we find ways to create a safe space, ideally, a brave space if I'm quoting Brené Brown, that tells those people to show up and be their whole self."

Best-in-class should permeate everything that you do.

We so often think of a company as being best-in-class because of their revenue, their valuation, and quantitative metrics like this. "It's in everything you do, you're seeking to continuously improve and be incredible in your space."

Culture is everyone's job.

As Chief People Officer, Jenn believes that culture should be something that's on every employee's mind, since everyone contributes to it, together. "I think everybody in an organization has a responsibility to contribute to the culture in some way. They're actively engaging with each other day to day and it can be a positive force for change and for outcomes with every decision that we make. Culture is, in my mind, going to be the thing that makes or breaks a company."

Pro hybrid tip

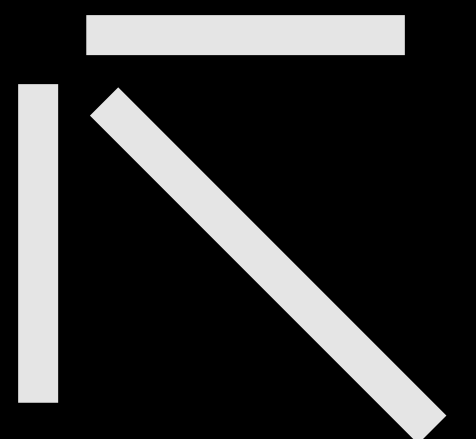
Creating and fostering culture is something that's inherently challenging in any organization. People are complex, unpredictable, and always changing — so it makes sense that culture will, too. For Jenn at Ritual, a way to approach this challenge has been through active experimentation, continually checking-in on culture, and monitoring sentiment, and above all knowing that it's something that can always be strengthened and improved.

STRAVA CASE STUDY: BUILDING PEOPLE-FIRST CULTURE IN A HYBRID TEAM



STRAVA

Interview with Michele Bousquet,
Chief People Officer at Strava,
during Marco Labs Podcast



Return-to-work status

Strava has its headquarters in San Francisco, with smaller outposts in Denver, Bristol, and most recently, a subsidiary in Dublin. The team is currently very distributed, and an estimated 40-50% of people will remain remote post-pandemic.

Culture at Strava: Putting people first

As Michelle shared, people and culture aren't after-thoughts at Strava — they're key elements that define decision-making across the leadership team and beyond.

As a talented and recognized people leader, Michelle had a few learnings and takeaways that she often has top-of-mind when it comes to culture at Strava.

Having a culture isn't a choice.

Even if culture isn't something that you're choosing to focus on and define, it's going to still happen at your company regardless.

Culture isn't something that can be ignored, and it's something that's important to be deliberate about.

"Culture is the day-to-day experience that each person within the company lives. What is the actual lived experience of being here?"

"When culture is right, it's very tied to the values and the stated intentions. And when it goes off the rails, it's like this other thing with a life of its own, that actually has nothing to do with what people are saying."

Speaking openly, even if it's scary, is valuable.

Strava has made a commitment to do the work to become an anti-racist company and has chosen to promote discussion rather than shying away from conversations.

"People are one integrated being." It's impossible for people to truly separate their work and the rest of their lives, and things that happen in the news and in their daily experiences have an impact on how they work.

"Despite fear and insecurity, we really believe in the concept of holding space, which is to say, we have no script for this. I'm going to set up time, and our leaders are going to attend, listen, and share our own views and hold space deliberately, outside of the normal responsibilities of work."

Always go back to your values.

If your team is trying to navigate a new situation and decide what to do, consider what your company stands for and make decisions accordingly.

"It's very liberating. When we go back to our values, then we don't have to only look at benchmark data and what other people are doing. We can do what feels true to ourselves."

Pro hybrid tip

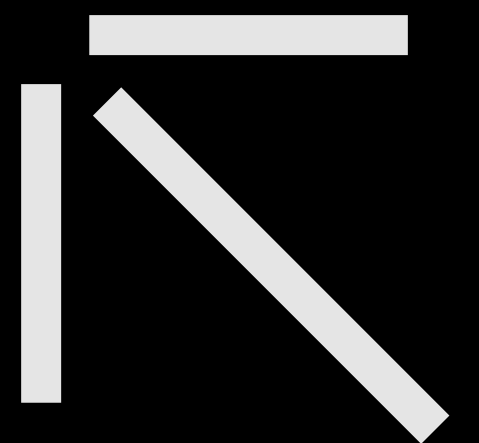
In a distributed or hybrid team, stay open to how you can provide opportunities to support connections. Whether it's opening up bespoke locations, or supporting people in organizing their own local get-togethers, have an open mind about the myriad of ways that remote and hybrid teams can foster a sense of connection.

SPLASH CASE STUDY: HOW AN EVENTS MARKETING COMPANY IS BUILDING A HYBRID WORK CULTURE



splash

Interview with Camille White-Stern,
Communications Leader



Return-to-work status

Splash, like many companies, moved to a remote-first model of work during the pandemic. With companies considering what “back to office” should look like, Splash has decided to remain remote-first, largely hybrid.

The modern workspace at Splash: Optimizing for happiness

Back-to-office has happened in phases at Splash, but one thing has remained consistent: Employee choice is the priority. Employees can largely choose where they want to work from, and offices operate on an opt-in basis. According to Camille White-Stern, “It’s optimizing for designing a life that makes people happy, and that’s the bottom line we’re focused on.”

Splash employees have already felt the benefits of choosing a location that’s best for their lifestyle during the early phases of the pandemic. While previously most employees worked full-time from Splash’s New York office, now, approximately half of employees have permanently moved away from the city. Camille shared some learnings and top-of-mind thoughts as Splash has transitioned to this new way of working.

As an events marketing company, retaining some sort of physical space has a lot of value.

The team decided to permanently close a few of their physical offices during the pandemic, but retain two offices for in-person work—one in the iconic Woolworth building in New York, and one in Phoenix, AZ.

“[The office in New York] is the 20th floor of the Woolworth building. So it’s iconic, and it doubles as an events space for us, which was really helpful.”

This is an opportunity to grow, and even redefine, the company’s culture.

Similar to an employee handbook, the team at Splash is creating a culture handbook. Through an inclusive process, this handbook will define and shape culture at Splash.

“It’s everything from the vision and mission at Splash to our core values and how we bring those to life. It’s how we meet, how we gather, how we celebrate, how we handle rewards and recognition, and so much more.”

Events are a powerful way for teams to regroup and reconnect.

Splash hosts a combination of big, infrequent events, alongside smaller, easy-to-organize events that their team can choose to attend and find a sense of human connection.

"You can't have an in-person event experience and expect it to be the exact same as a virtual event or meeting experience. But what you can do is think of ways to give each group of attendees something special, and find ways for their experiences to still feel valuable to them and honor their decision to either attend in-person or attend virtually."

Intention can play a strong role in helping both remote, hybrid, and in-office team members feel valued and engaged in events. "You have to invest the same amount of effort, energy, and sometimes resources into both types of experiences. I think that's where equity comes into play, even though of course it's not going to be the same experience. Essentially, we want attendees to feel really good about their decision, whether it's to attend virtually or in-person."

Connections can still grow while working remotely.

"We're really leaning into this distributed world, and it's actually amazing. From what I've seen on the marketing team, some people met for the first time in August at the offsite we did, but had already been working together for two years, and felt like they were friends already."

Pro hybrid tip

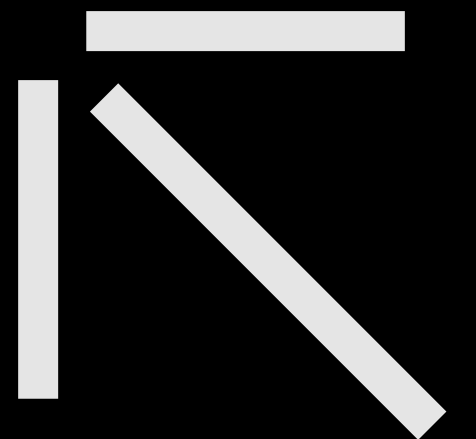
When everyone is working more independently, don't underestimate the power of gathering together. Whether it's a totally remote, hybrid, or in-person event, taking the time to get together in a meaningful way can have immeasurable value for a team. For in-person events, it's important to do so safely and to make it clear to employees that these are optional.

PEOPLE ACCELERATOR CASE STUDY: BUILDING CULTURE IN HIGH-GROWTH TEAMS WITH ANDREW BARTLOW



People Leader
 Accelerator

Interview with People Leader Accelerator - Andrew Bartlow,
during Marco Labs Podcast



Return-to-work status

Andrew Bartlow is a human resources professional with over 25 years of experience, and recent author of *Scaling for Success: People Priorities for High-Growth Organizations*. As the founder of People Leader Accelerator, Andrew works to support people and human resources leaders from high-growth companies to move their own careers and organizations forward.

An established thought leader, Andrew has shared a few key takeaways for organizations to keep in mind during a work era that's moving towards hybrid and distributed work.

There's no such thing as a best practice.

There isn't a "right" for everyone, there's only what works for your organization in its unique situation.

"What is best in class? It depends on what you're trying to accomplish. Some jobs will have to keep showing up to work in a physical location because that's where the work is done. For other jobs, the future is distributed."

The access to a much broader talent pool is game-changing.

Hiring the right people for your organization is an enormous challenge and something that gets even harder when you can only hire within a particular geographic area.

"When you think of the struggles of a high growth early-stage company, finding the right talent is so hard. So, why constrain yourself?"

The role and potential of human resource leaders is growing.

In a changing era with more distributed and hybrid teams, there's even more of a spotlight on employee happiness and team culture.

"The legacy of people leaders is rooted in great service and great employee experience. Now more than ever, HR has an opportunity to be even more valuable and impactful. I'd argue that there's more we can elevate, and think bigger about how a business operates."

Pro hybrid tip

Culture isn't just about things like ping-pong tables and succulent plants. It's about how a company operates and treats its people, on a day-to-day basis. It's how decisions are made, what's recognized and rewarded, what people are promoted for and fired for. Culture is also something that isn't the same at each company. Be true to know what your company's strengths are, own what you are, and work to align people around it.

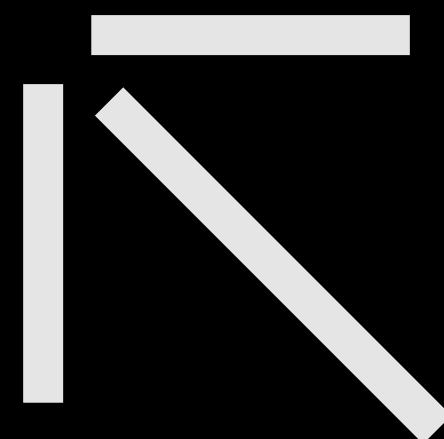
BAIN CAPITAL VENTURES

CASE STUDY: HOW EARLY-STAGE STARTUPS ARE ADAPTING TO THE FUTURE OF WORK



 **BainCapital**

Interview with Leslie Crowe,
Talent Partner at Bain Capital Leaders
during Marco Labs Podcast



Return-to-work status

A venture capital firm with over 200+ portfolio companies, Leslie has seen relevant trends at Bain Capital Ventures when it comes to the future of work.

The most common approach across the portfolio at Bain Ventures Capital has been establishing geographical hubs — locations where there's a substantial amount of talent that live within commutable distance. Instead of using these hubs as a location to work in-office, five days a week, instead these hubs are often being used as a space to work a few days per week and as a gathering place. There's also still a good amount of distributed talent across these hubs, with strategies dedicated to connecting hybrid and remote workers.

The modern workplace at Bain Capital Ventures:

As Talent Partner at Bain Capital Ventures, the future of work and how to build culture in a meaningful way for startups is top-of-mind for Leslie. Below are a few takeaways to consider as companies think about culture in the hybrid and distributed teams.

In-person experiences are growing in importance.

With more teams moving to a remote or hybrid model, in-person experiences can provide even more value than before as a dedicated time to connect. "Companies will have, in a way that they didn't before, really aggressive yet thoughtful planning around in-person experiences."

The companies that win will lean into flexibility.

Flexible work has so many opportunities that comes with it, and the companies best poised to succeed are those that lean into these trends, instead of reacting in fear. That being said, it's important to understand that a distributed company isn't for everyone. "Don't build a company you're not going to like. It's really up to the founder."

Culture can be used as a catch-all term.

Culture can sound like a nebulous term, and can be used to exclude others without understanding why. It's important to clearly understand what you mean by culture, so you can make sure you're using the term with the right intent. "If you're using blanket statements like 'you're not a culture fit,' that can be the death of culture if you aren't spending time to unwind them."

Pro hybrid tip

Even in a remote and hybrid environment, personal connections make the experience and result of working much stronger. Companies that set a high bar for managers and don't underestimate the importance of this role here have even more potential to succeed. When people feel personally connected to whoever is managing them, they're more likely to feel connected to their team and do good work.

**THANK
YOU!**

marco

