The Spotlight Series features best practices and key learnings from progressive organizations, as they re-imagine the workplace and the employee experience.

WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE

HubSpot: Hybrid Work & Remote Inclusion

A conversation with **Eimear Marrinan**, Director of Culture at HubSpot

Beginning January 2021, HubSpot adopted a hybrid work model where employees could opt for one of three work preferences: @home @office @flex. Please describe how you developed this approach and any key learnings from your first several months of implementation.

We want to build a company where people can do their best work. Some people work best in an office, while others work best from a home office. And we heard this feedback from our employees. In April 2020, we sent a pulse out to our employees to get a sense of what they were thinking and feeling. The data showed that 61% of HubSpot employees are more likely to work remotely after COVID-19, and around 16% are interested in working remotely full-time. They want flexibility and the ability to choose how they do their best work. That's what helped guide this new vision. In 2021, 39% of our employees prefer to work from home, 18% in the office, and 43% selected the @flex option. With an increasingly distributed workforce, we like to say that our values live in our hearts, not in our hallways.

As of now, not all of our offices are open globally due to COVID-19, so we aren't operating as a fully hybrid company just yet. But, we've done a lot over the last year to ensure our culture and how we communicate reflects our commitment to a hybrid working world. What we are learning is in order for hybrid to work, it needs to be an equal playing field - and that takes a lot of intentionality. For example, every meeting, culture program, and team event should be accessible regardless of what option folks choose. Asynchronous communication is another hot topic that companies are talking about, but haven't fully adopted yet. You need to provide employees a guide with expectations of how to communicate and collaborate and make it really clear at the beginning.

Three Flexible Work Options:

@home
You work the majority of your time from home, and while you may visit a HubSpot office 1-2 times per quarter, home is your headquarters. HubSpot supports you in making sure your work-from-home setup is safe, sound, and sets you up for success.

@office
You come into one of HubSpot's global offices 3 or more days per week. You have a dedicated desk for your laptop, monitor, plants, and anything else that makes your workspace truly yours. For that reason, employees who choose @office don't get an at-home desk set-up.

@flex
You come into a HubSpot office 2 or fewer days per week. When you come to the office, you'll be allocated a "hotel desk." Because you opted-out of dedicated desk space in an office, HubSpot will help support your work-from-home set-up.

Pie chart: 18% @office, 43% @flex, 39% @home
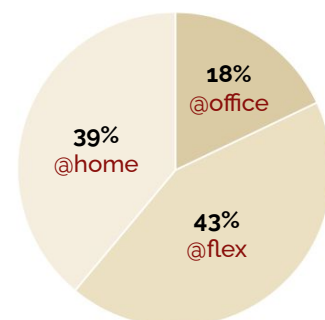
What people want from the companies they work for has dramatically changed...

THE OLD WORLD	THE NEW WORLD
Work to make a **living**.	Work to make a **difference**.
Follow explicit directions.	**Chart** the course.
Juggle work and life.	**Harmonize** work and life.
Commute to work.	**Connect** to work from anywhere.
Value amazing **perks**.	Value amazing **people**.

How have you been preparing managers and employees for this new way of working? What are the key challenges and opportunities associated with a more distributed workforce?

First and foremost, we've leaned into our core value of empathy. While this shift to more flexibility is a welcomed change for employees, change can still be hard. So we're really focused on helping managers lead with empathy, empowering them to share information transparently with their teams, and creating resources for them to build psychological safety remotely through inclusive meetings, communications, and events. For example, you can't just put Zoom cameras in a conference room and say you're remote-inclusive. It requires intentionality in everything you do. Building a hybrid company is an ongoing journey that will face new challenges based on employee needs and company growth. And so our focus right now is on truly enabling managers with the right tools, techniques and resources so they can build a remarkable and equitable team culture in a hybrid environment.

Something that we are always clear about at HubSpot is we certainly don't have all the answers and so part of our journey is listening to our managers and employees on what they need more of, and acting on that in an empathetic and inclusive way.

HubSpot's Culture Code states that work isn't a place we go, it is a thing we do. One of the key tenets of your code is transparency and measuring everything with data, including "employee happiness." How do you measure employee happiness and productivity in the new workplace? Do you have specific goals for these metrics?

A key part of our culture is to lead with data and seek feedback from our employees. And it's important to do more than just seek feedback, but to truly listen and act on the feedback. We send out a quarterly eNPS survey to all HubSpot employees to get a pulse on our culture, employee "happiness" and areas where we can improve. We take this so seriously that, as a company, we track eNPS as a core business metric. In terms of productivity, the metrics and KPIs each team and department utilized in the past remain the same. Autonomy is key at HubSpot, and so we encourage all of our employees to focus on delivery and output versus hours worked. And, we work with our managers to ensure they set the right expectations with their teams and employees in this regard.

In your new vision for work, you are committing to a culture that is wholly inclusive of remote workers. What are some ways that you are adapting or expanding your culture to make it more inclusive that are resonating with employees?

You can't copy-paste your office culture into a remote world. Companies make the mistake of trying to take their office experience and make it virtual. It doesn't work that way. The first piece is creating a level-playing field. There should be no incentive for coming into the office. That's why we're not introducing any new office-based perks in 2021 or 2022. You won't need to come to a HubSpot office to experience culture. True remote inclusion doesn't mean making it possible for everyone to have the same experiences at the exact same time. It's about creating new traditions and norms. HubSpot is remarkably transparent; we share everything and we default to overcommunication. You don't need water cooler conversations to know what's happening or to be part of decisions. Transparency is a key part of a remote operating system.

HubSpot's Culture Code Tenets

1 We solve for the customer.

2 We work to be remarkably transparent.

3 We favor autonomy & accountability.

4 We believe our best perk is amazing peers.

5 We lean towards long-term impact.

" The most important principle is to lean into inclusion in everything we do — and that includes how we collaborate. No matter where or how you work, your ability to contribute to a project, speak up in a meeting, or brainstorm with a co-worker should be the same. "

Given your hybrid approach, what is/will be the role of in-person collaboration at HubSpot?

We know for employees that chose the @office work option in particular, in-person collaboration is important to them. So, to create a culture that's equitable for everyone, there are a number of guiding principles we are asking all managers and employees to consider. The most important principle is to lean into inclusion in everything we do - and that includes how we collaborate. No matter where or how you work, your ability to contribute to a project, speak up in a meeting, or brainstorm with a co-worker should be the same. We need to lead from the front and ensure everyone feels a sense of belonging, regardless of time zones, work preference or personal situation.

The mental health of employees has been a prominent focus for HubSpot. How does that influence your vision for the future workplace?

The mental health of our employees is critical, and is something that keeps me up at night. We know from eNPS data, focus groups, and conversations, that employees are burnt out and need a break. In fact,

we are back from HubSpot's Global Week of Rest that took place July 5-9 where we gave all HubSpotters the opportunity to truly unplug for the week.

Mental health has been and will continue to be a strong focus for HubSpot in the future. Through our Healthy@HubSpot resource group, we will continue to offer fully accessible, and inclusive mental health programming including meditation classes, Q&As with experts on the topic, and more. We recently launched a new global platform Modern Health which is accessible to all employees regardless of location, and gives them access to coaching and therapy sessions virtually. We will continue to equip and enable managers with the resources they need to normalize mental health in the workplace and with their teams. This is especially important knowing as we transition to fully hybrid we have to keep a pulse on all of our @home and @flex employees to ensure that they feel like they belong, feel included, and we don't have any gaps as it relates to employees we may not necessarily see every day in an office.

Do you have any predictions (or hopes) for what the workplace will look like in a year for HubSpot employees?

We really are in a transition phase at the moment, with offices beginning to open up, and of course some remaining closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. My first hope is that a year from now the pandemic is behind us and our employees and their families are all safe — and that we are operating in a fully hybrid world.

Outside of that, something I would love to see is a shift in some of the technologies available to us today that will really help enable hybrid. For example, technologies that enable true serendipitous socializing. Today, you can have a Zoom screen in the cafeteria and remote workers can decide to join, but that's not only awkward, it tends to also be office-centric. We've even experimented with robots that "zoom around" the office with cameras to recreate the experience of bumping into co-workers in the office for remote workers. There's a lot of opportunity here, and I don't believe we've nailed it yet. So I'd love to see more innovative technologies in this space and HubSpot adopting some of them.

Key Takeaways

- Listen to and act on feedback from managers and employees about how and where they do their best work and what they need more of.

- Enable managers to lead with empathy and equity with the right tools, techniques and resources.

- Do not try to replicate the office experience for remote workers. Create new norms and traditions that promote true remote inclusion,

- Autonomy, transparency and overcommunication are critical in a remote operating system.

Useful Resources

- Hybrid at HubSpot
- The HubSpot Culture Code
- HubSpot Unplugged Initiative: Helping Employees with Burnout
- 10 Tips for Managing Remote Teams