



CSPS's Hybrid Workplace Series

in partnership with the
2022 National Managers' Community

Symposium

Managing in our Changing Work Reality



Canada School
of Public Service

École de la fonction
publique du Canada

Canada



VUCA





The future of work – including hybrid arrangements – is still a moving target

- Hybrid work uptake is very different within each organization
- Hybrid work is the hardest of all of the options.
- Consider hybrid plans to be a living document, not a commandment.



The hybrid future: Challenges and promise

Saying your organization is a *hybrid workplace* is much easier than creating an effective one.

Hybrid work will be more challenging for managers than their old ways of working.

- Flexibility for workers makes coordination difficult.
- Remote workers can feel neglected.
- Technology requirements must change.
- And hybrid work raises questions of trust, accountability and measuring productivity -- even equity and access to hybrid opportunities.

"Hybrid" is not just a work schedule or employee perk -- it's an entirely new way of working together.



The “Ps” lens – People, Purpose & Process, Place

People: *We are not the same people who went home to work in 2020.*

Purpose & Processes: *It's not about what you do, but how you work.*

Place: *Hybrid work is more than a location decision.*





The New Complexities

Think People first, location second.

People Factors: Leadership skills will be more important than ever

Managers feel wedged between leadership and employee expectations.

- Understand People's Emotions
- Keep People Informed and Engaged
- Individual skill gaps are widening.
- Assess Readiness
- Provide Skills Training
- Employees have a new "worth it" equation.



Employee new *“worth it equation”*

BCW's International Workforce Insights Study, top five employee workplace demands are:

1. Meaningful work
2. Feeling supported and valued by their line manager
3. Feeling supported and valued by their immediate team
4. Workplace benefits and perks
5. Effective leadership

Managers: *“Congratulations. You are the new amenity.”*





Managing In Hybrid Teams: 2 modes

Virtual coordination mode

Face-to-face collaboration mode

4 dimensions:

- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Acculturation
- Dedication



Hybrid Manager Roles

1. Conductor
2. Catalyst
3. Coach
4. Champion

Central Theme in all roles: Trust



Create Guardrails

Create guardrails, not just boundaries

Boundaries are personal. They are the responsibility of the individual.

Guardrails are policies that everyone in an organization buys into—like not emailing on weekends — so they become part of the culture. They protect everyone.



Re-entry Causes Friction

It's not the landing that's most dangerous

The teams will probably not come back fully intact.

Hybrid work will mean changes in how we behave.

Individuals have developed new routines and habits.

We haven't had to deal with people we didn't want to deal with for a while. That's going to get interesting.





For better or worse

While we want the best of home and work, often we end up with the worst of both.

- Employees show up at the office for a scheduled number of days only to find a ghost town.
- They commute long distances to spend their time alone and on Zoom calls.
- Likewise, work-from-home days can feel robotic and blur the lines between work and life.
- Without clear guardrails, work takes over home, and high-performing employees can burn out.





The Office isn't dead. It just needs to be completely re-imagined.

The purpose of the office has changed

The office feels different – and there's a big adjustment period

- It's not quite as simple as just going back to the way things always were
- Re-learning Behaviours



It's not about the office, it's about belonging

Acknowledge the impact on work-life.

Treat it as engagement, not communication.

Pick up the phone

Motivate more than mandate





Inclusion: The key to success

Proximity bias may create inequities and could entrench deeper structural inequality along racial and gender lines

Exclusion kills hybrid





Proximity Bias

What creates feelings of inequity?

- Poor delegation of tasks
 - Poor hybrid meeting set-up
 - Missing out on celebrations
 - Delays in communicating important team news
-
- Treating remote workers equally doesn't mean treating them the same



Hybrid work has different emotional impacts

It's the psychological shift – the change of setting every day – that's so tiring; this constant feeling of never being settled, stressed and my productive home-working always being disrupted.



Lost in the familiar

- Psychological demands – transition, culture shift, change management
- Not the same place – re-entry issues – safety (masks?) space, someone sneezes?
- In office work, once a daily routine – feels foreign and more difficult for some
- Interpersonal relationships have changed
- Not everyone comes back, teams are not intact
- People have developed new routines and habits
- We are going to be dealing with people we didn't want to deal with for a while
- Rebuilding social capital different in hybrid



Normalizing reactions

The employee response we're seeing is a normal response to the VUCA world.

Make clear to employees that the confusion they might be experiencing is perfectly normal.

The things we're all feeling now are part of a normal process.

It may take you time.

You may not be able to process all of this.

That's OK.





The return to abnormal: Will we fall back into the same old toxic workplace habits?

The list of toxic options is extensive:

- Face time – making sure everyone knows you’re the last to leave.
- Presenteeism – popping cold-and-flu medicine like candy so you can show up instead of convalescing at home.
- 24-7 work culture - pretending you don’t have a life outside of work that puts demands on your time.



LARPing your job

How we try to show evidence that

“LOOK, OVER HERE, I AM WORKING”.

LARPing is all about prioritizing the most visible parts of your job:

- in person
- digitally

It's not creating any kind of productivity. It's the performance of presence.

Rooted in anxiety.





Work Social Infrastructure

- Earlier this year, Microsoft released this big study of over 30,000 remote workers from something like 31 countries
- 55 percent of hybrid employees and 50 percent of remote employees feel lonelier at work than before going hybrid or remote.
- The fundamental issue predates the pandemic, and that work had become the primary source of interaction, of comfort, of friendship, of relationships for so many people.
- Need to invest in social infrastructure

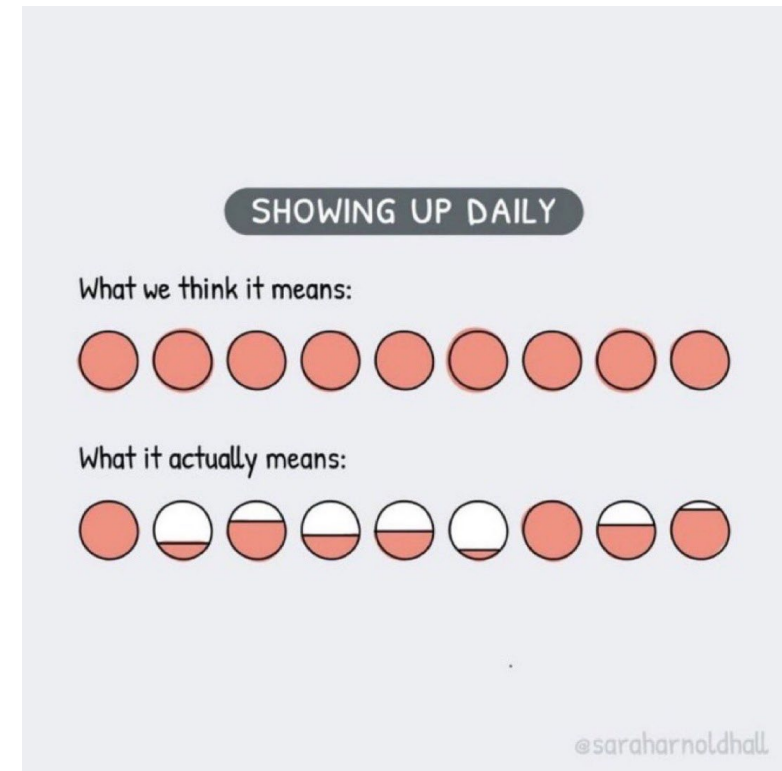




Hybrid work doesn't have to mean “always on.”

Meetings, chat, workday span, and after-hours and weekend work continue to rise.

Work is more flexible, but overload is still a risk.





Making hybrid work sustainable

Microsoft researchers with decades of experience studying productivity, focus and wellbeing

Faultlines: Address fault lines that emerge

- Too many meetings
- Waning energy or focus due to back-to-back meetings
- Chats or emails from colleagues outside of working hours or during meetings
- Working in different time zones





A few tips

Cadence: establish the rhythm by which people can expect to work.
(Group meetings, one-on-one)

Make Expectations Clearer: the why, the what, the how

Delegate: Think about your entire team, not just the first person you see.

Recognition: Help your team know about the successes of your remote team members and those in the office



Microsoft Data on Workload

- Microsoft study on the use of Teams, found that the average workday has expanded by 13 % (about 45 minutes) since March 2020
- The average Microsoft Teams user saw an average of an over 250 % increase in their weekly meeting time.
- The automatic setup put either a half an hour or an hour on someone's calendar, but many meetings require five minutes, 10 minutes, 40 minutes.



The Hybrid Meetings – avoid the poison pill

Remember a meeting is like any other tool or piece of technology,

Meetings are neither good nor bad. It's all in how you use them.

- If the sole output of a meeting is to have more meetings, then you are probably not meeting productively.
- The research shows that the individuals who called for the most meetings were newly minted managers – more specifically, men –
keen to be visible, but also send a signal that they were in control.





Leading More Useful Hybrid Meetings

Start with the basics: What is the purpose of the meeting? Who needs to be there? And who decides?

Every gathering is a social contract.

Understand the psychology of Fear Of Missing Out

In hybrid meetings, don't let the people in the office dominate the conversation.



Collaboration on hybrid teams

- Does everyone understand what we're trying to do?
- What order of solution are we looking for?
- Start with asynchronous solutions so you can make the best use of your meeting time.
- Use more Brainwriting
- Make your meeting time count.
- Not everything needs to be done in one meeting.
- Evaluate brainstorm ideas fairly, no matter where they come from.



Research Proves Your Brain Needs Breaks

Microsoft labs

1. Back-to-back meetings can decrease your ability to focus and engage.

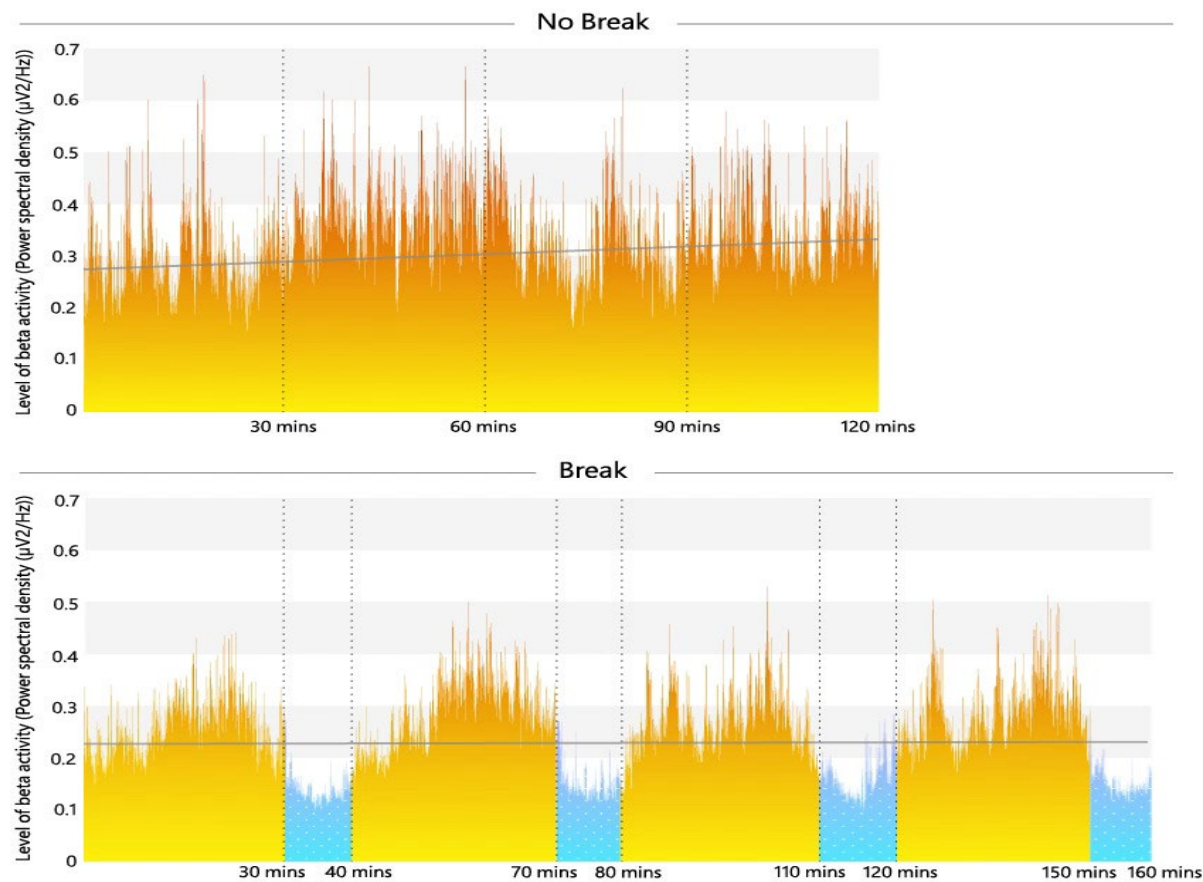
Taking breaks helps you engage better

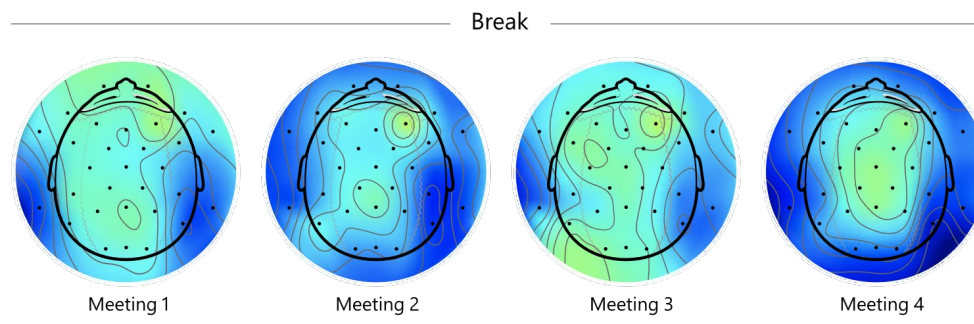
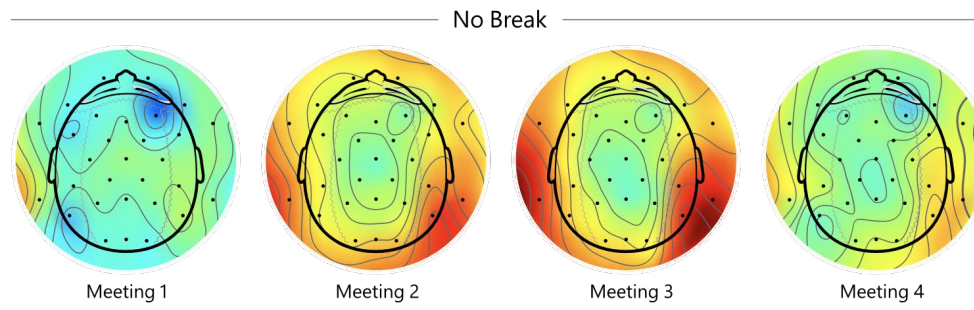
2. Transitioning between meetings can be a source of high stress.
3. Breaks between meetings allow the brain to “reset,” reducing a cumulative buildup of stress across meetings.



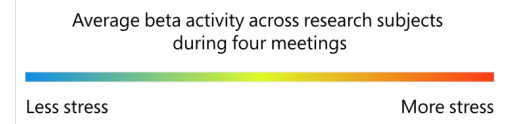
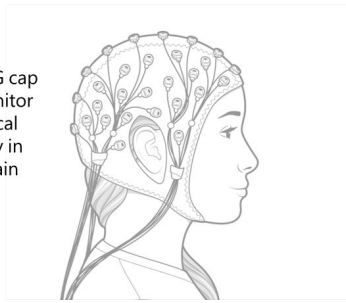


● Stress level during meetings ● Stress level during breaks





An EEG cap to monitor electrical activity in the brain





Burnout & Recovery

- Burnout is increasing
- From managers & leaders not knowing how to lead in hybrid environment – too many meetings, too many emails

Insufficient recovery time

- Long workdays are driven by organizational culture and administrative processes or tasks
- Who is more stretched for time? (50% of managers, 20% of staff)





Focus on Wellbeing

Six Principles for Hybrid Work Wellbeing

1. Make Objectives and Key Results (OKR) your friend
2. Get comfortable with imperfection
3. Own your boundaries
4. Plan meetings with purpose
5. Follow the science
6. Lead with empathy





Know that You're Not Alone

The transition to whatever the “next normal” is will be laden with unknown bumps and possibilities.

Much of that is out of our control.

Further, the transition will feel different for each of us.

Our highs and lows won't always match those of others.

What we *can* manage is our responses to our transition and how we support others through theirs.

