

The 2024 Workplace Flexibility Trends Report

Balancing employer & employee preferences





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The pandemic permanently transformed where people work. Less than 5% of employees had the option to work remotely in 2019. Now, more than half of office-based workers do so at least some of the time. But are they working as effectively as they could? This reports indicates there's plenty of room for improvement. The problem is that while a majority of employers have embraced a change in the “where” of work, many have not adopted new practices and processes to support it. This mismatch lies at the heart of many of the problems organizations and their people are struggling with today.

If we had a Wayback Machine and used it to observe how the pioneers of flexible workplace strategies blazed the trail, we would discover that more than anything else, they did it with intention. They asked their people what they wanted, observed how they worked, and involved them in the change process. Importantly, they realized the “how” of work had to change too. They reimagined their offices, adopted new technologies, and rethought their practices and processes to best support how people would actually work in the future.

The organizations that were forced to suddenly change the “where” of work when the pandemic hit, had little time for rethinking the “how.” Nearly four years later, many still haven't.

According to the survey on which this paper is based, less than a quarter of employers have:

- Established team norms or meeting norms
- Trained their managers in managing people they can not see
- Trained their people on best practices for distributed teams
- Rethought their collaboration practices to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and equity

People were already working remotely before the pandemic, many organizations just hadn't acknowledged it. **In reality, whether workers are nine floors, nine miles, or nine time zones away, they rely on remote practices and tools to collaborate, communicate, and more.** Organizations that focus on empowering their people to do their best work wherever they are will enjoy a competitive advantage over those who do not. This paper offers practical advice for making work, work better regardless of where people work.

Based on a survey of nearly a thousand US heads of IT, Product, HR, and Real Estate, this paper is divided into three sections (*see Appendix 1—Methodology*). In **Section 1** we share what survey respondents told us about where, when, and how they are working today. In **Section 2**, we look at the state of synchronous and asynchronous collaboration and their potential alternatives. And in **Section 3**, we share “best practices” for making work, work better.



Hybrid Health

1/4 of employees feel their employer has adequately supported them in changing how they work.

3/4 of companies have not established team norms or meeting norms, trained their managers in managing a distributed team, or adopted best practices for how they work across distances.

44% of managers are fully in-office compared to less than 27% of all others. They are far more tethered to an office than senior leaders or individual contributors.

Sync vs Async

10% more time is spent by employees working in real time rather than asynchronously.

7/10 employees believe email could replace over a quarter of their real-time meetings.

7/10 respondents use video messaging sometimes or often. Another 22% are interested in trying it.

50% of respondents favor emails containing images or videos over plain text.

Meetings

24% of respondents consider decision making meetings of high value (*making these the most highly valued meeting type*).

7% of respondents consider ad hoc and unwanted meetings of high value (*giving them the lowest value scores*).

Equal % of attendance of in-person and virtual meetings, but given a choice, employees would prefer a slightly higher percentage of meetings virtually.

6/10 respondents indicated that, given a choice, they would prefer to virtually attend a meeting that required air travel or ground travel of more than two hours round-trip.

Interruptions

1/2 of respondents indicated that unwanted interruptions reduced their productivity or increased their stress more than six times a day.

2x In-office employees are twice as likely to be interrupted more than 25 times a day than hybrid workers.

6 unwanted interruptions a day costs a company with 1,000 employees **over \$1M/year in lost productivity**.



The battle for flexibility in where and when people work is far from over but neither side has gained much ground for over a year. The “how” of work has been slower to change. In this section we will look at:

- Where organizations are in the evolution of their work policies and practices and how that differs by company size, and
- Where employees are on the journey and how that differs across generations, work styles, and their role in the organization.

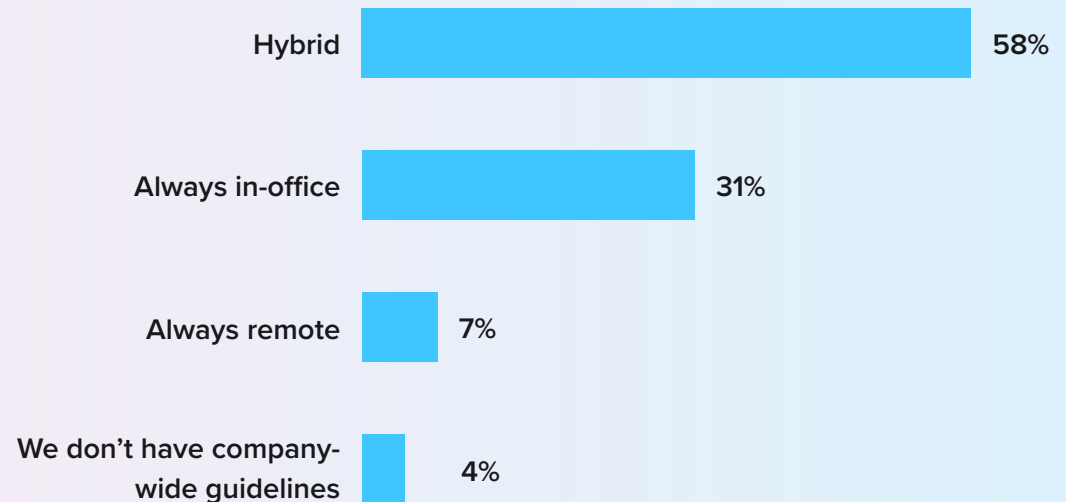
These differences make clear that one-size-fits-none.

The *Where* of Work

The survey asked respondents to select what best represents their organizational guidelines about where people work (see *Figure 1—State of Guidelines Around Where People Work*).

Nearly a third of respondents indicated their organization required them to be in the office full time. Nearly two-thirds indicated they were able to work a blended schedule that included some in-office time and some work from home or elsewhere (hybrid). Seven percent said they were allowed to be fully remote, and four percent indicated their organization didn't have any guidelines.

FIGURE 1 — STATE OF GUIDELINES AROUND WHERE PEOPLE WORK



The most significant differences based on company and employee characteristics included the following:

Generation

As has long been the case, older employees have the highest choice around where they work. Nearly three quarters of Boomers can choose where they work (74%) compared to just 63% of Gen Z.

Level in the Organization

Managers are far more tethered to an office than senior leaders or individual contributors. A full 44% are fully in-office compared to less than 27% of all others.

Company Size

The smallest companies, those with between one and nine employees, are far more likely to allow employees to be **fully remote** than larger ones (23% versus between 4% and 9%).

Companies with >1,000 employees are **more likely to allow hybrid work** than smaller companies

(over 60% as compared to under 50% for companies with <100 employees).

Potential reasons large organizations are more inclined to offer hybrid work to employees than smaller companies:

- **Resource Availability:** Larger companies have more resources.
- **Attraction and Retention:** Flexibility is a highly sought-after benefit
- **Disaster Preparedness:** Hybrid experience prepares workers to work wherever they can.
 - **Role Clarity:** Employee roles are more structured.
- **Global Presence:** Employees are accustomed to working across distances.
- **Innovation:** Distributed work enhances diversity, a key ingredient in innovation.
 - **Cost Savings:** Office space reductions yield significant savings.
 - **ESG Goals:** Distributed work aligns with sustainability objectives.

Flexibility for All!

Not everyone can, should, or even wants flexibility in where they work, but policies that favor some over others can cause conflict. **Organizations should offer a palette of flexible options so there is something for everyone.** Here are some other flexibility options to consider for them.

- Compressed workweeks
- Four-day workweek
- Part time work options
- Flexible break times
- Job sharing
- Time off in lieu
- Work on demand
- Fractional sick days
- Unlimited paid time off
- Floating holidays
- Summer/seasonal hours
- Shift swapping or self-rostering
- Well-being days
- Gradual retirement



The *When* of Work

Research, both before and during the pandemic, showed **employees want flexibility in when they work as much or even more than where they work.**¹ It's good for employers too and they seem to be paying attention. Forty-six percent of respondents say they have either flexibility around core hours or can work whenever they choose compared to thirty-eight percent who are required to work traditional hours (see *Figure 2—State of Policies Around When People Work*).

The most significant differences based on company and employee characteristics included the following.

Generation

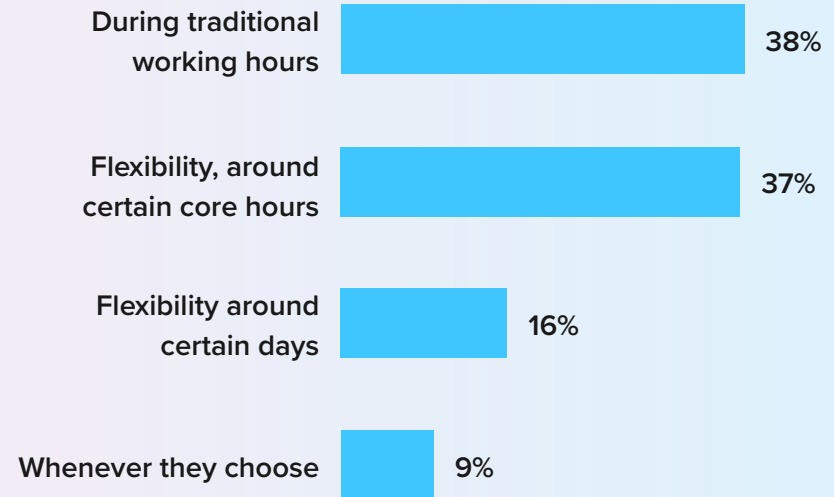
Gen X and Gen Z are far more likely to be required to work traditional hours (45% and 42%) than Boomers and Millennials (37% and 34%).

Baby Boomers have far more flexibility around core hours than younger employees (49% of Boomers compared to only 30% of Gen Z).

Usual Place of Work

Employees with flexibility in where they work also have more flexibility in when they work. **Compared to fully in-office employees, hybrid workers have over four times more access to flexibility around core hours, three times more access to flexibility in the days they work, and over 70% more access to full-choice in when they work.**

FIGURE 2 — STATE OF POLICIES AROUND WHEN PEOPLE WORK



SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY	HYBRID	FULLY IN-OFFICE
FULL CHOICE	55%	32%
AROUND CORE HOURS	71%	18%
AROUND CERTAIN DAYS	70%	21%

Numbers do not add to 100% because fully remote category is not included in this graphic.

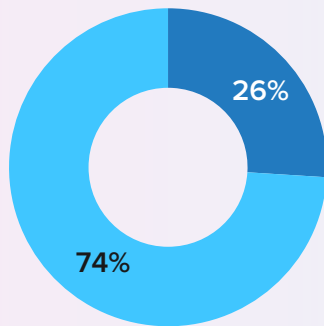
¹Future Forum Pulse, Wave 5, 2021, 10k+ respondents

The *How* of Work

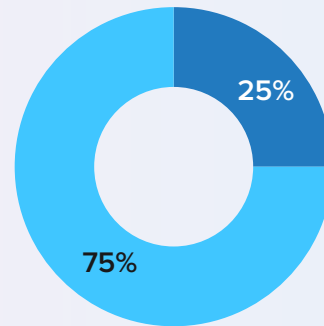
More than two-thirds have adopted a new *where* and/or *when* of work, but only about a quarter of employees feel their employer has adequately supported them in changing *how* they work (see Figure 3—Prevalence of Hybrid Norms and Training). According to our survey, nearly three-quarters of companies have not established team norms or meeting norms, they have not trained their managers in managing a distributed team, and they have not adopted best practices for how they work across distances.

FIGURE 3 — PREVALENCE OF HYBRID NORMS AND TRAINING

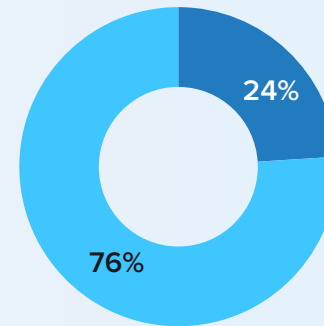
Our teams have established norms to provide clarity on how they will work as a team.



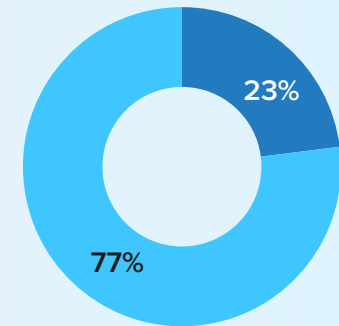
Our managers are effective at managing distributed teams.



Our organization has established norms to ensure that meetings are effective and inclusive.



Our employees receive good training on “best-practices” for remote/hybrid work.



● YES ● NO

The need for a change in how people work is irrespective of where they work.

The reality is that whether people are nine floors, nine miles, or nine time zones away from one another, **they are connecting virtually.**

Unless everyone receives the same training in how to work across distances, communications and collaboration will suffer, inequality will rise, and the digital divide will widen.

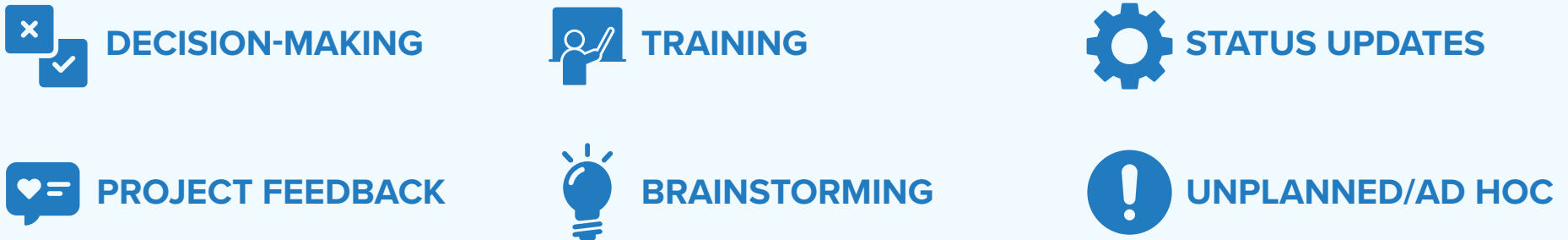
According to our survey, employees spend slightly more time collaborating synchronously (in real time) than asynchronously (55% and 45%, respectively), but the large majority believe much of their synchronous work could be replaced with asynchronous alternatives (e.g. emails, instant messaging, pre recorded video messaging, collaboration on shared documents, virtual whiteboards etc).

This section focuses on how employees feel about different types of meetings and the extent to which they feel meetings could be replaced with asynchronous tools.

Meetings

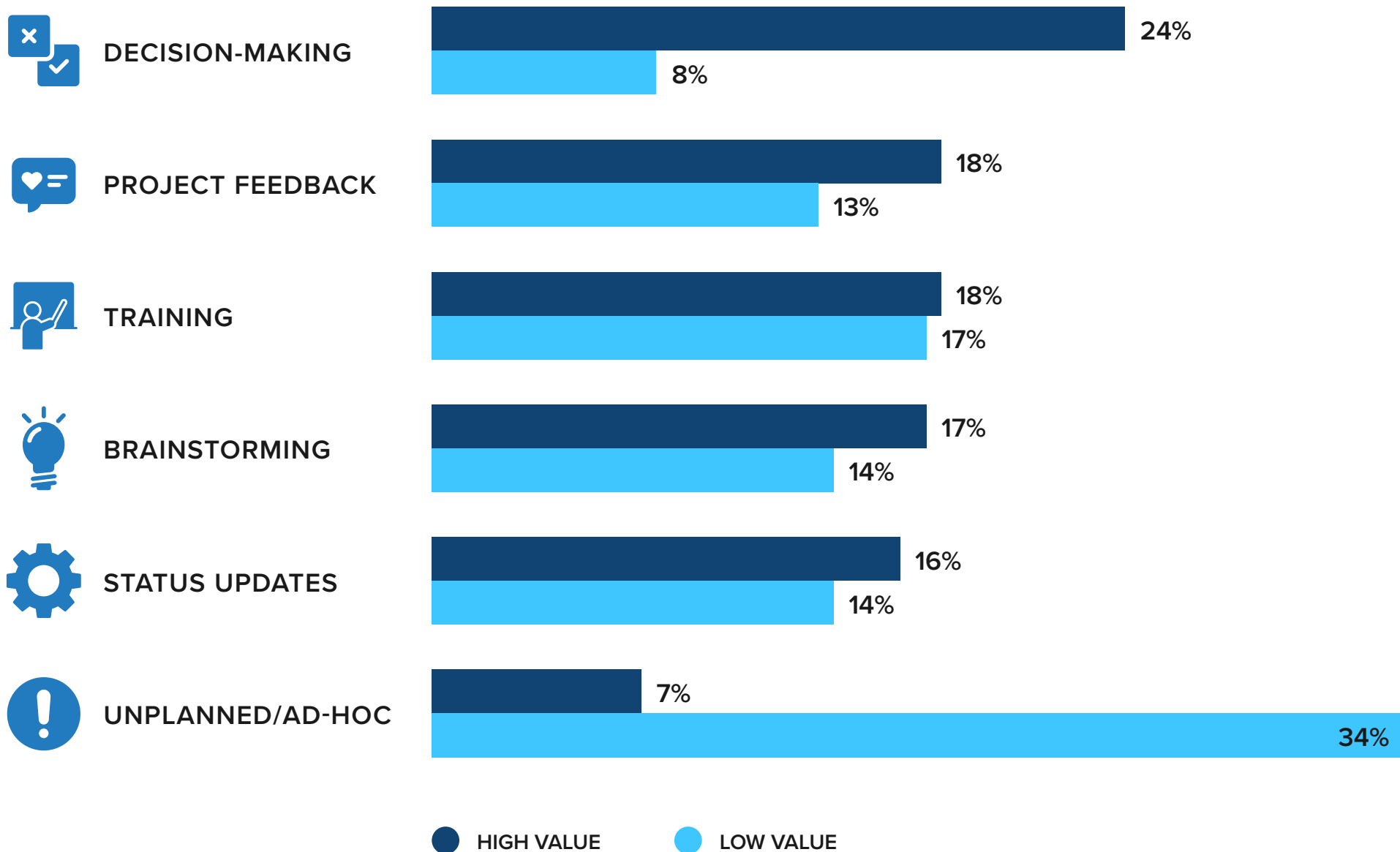
The survey showed an almost even split between *in-person* versus *virtual* meeting attendance (51% vs 49%). Given a choice, employees would prefer a slightly higher percentage of virtual meetings (55%). This is true for all the demographic groups the survey tested. Even the heads of HR, who presumably have a higher focus on people than others, wanted to attend more meetings virtually.

To better understand the value of meetings, we asked respondents to rate the following six types of meetings:



A summary of their responses is shown in *Figure 4—Percent of Respondents Who Rated the Following Type of Meeting as Having High or Low Value.*

FIGURE 4 — PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WHO RATED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF MEETING AS HAVING HIGH OR LOW VALUE



Value of Meetings by Type

Even the top-rated meeting type was considered a “high” value by less than a quarter of overall respondents, but there is significant variation based on personal and organizational characteristics. **By rethinking meeting design, attendance, engagement, productivity, and employee experience can be significantly improved, while unnecessary meetings and stress can be reduced.**

For example, individual contributors, remote and hybrid workers, and Gen Z value brainstorming meetings more than other groups. If you want creative input from other generations, managers, or in-office workers, you may want to connect with them in a different way such as individual conversations, participation in collaborative documents, or a quick video message with a specific ask for their input.

The following is a summary of each type of meeting and the influence of individual and company differences on their perceived value.



DECISION-MAKING MEETINGS

Decision-making meetings were considered of high value significantly more than any other type of meeting. A quarter (24%) of total respondents highly valued this type of meeting. The most significant differences based on company and employee characteristics included the following.

Generation

The percentage of respondents who rated decision making meetings a “high” value range from a low of 35%—the value assigned by Boomers, to a high of 40%—the value assigned by Gen Z.

Level in the Organization

62% of C-suite executives rated decision-making meetings as having high value, compared to a range of 44% to 50% for less senior roles.

Where They Work

57% of hybrid workers rated these meetings as having high value compared to 49% to 51% of on-site and remote employees.

Company Size

Ratings for the value of decision-making meetings were especially high for companies with between 1,000 and 5,000 employees—59% versus a range of between 46% and 49% across the other company size groups.



PROJECT FEEDBACK

Project Feedback and every other type of meeting scored a distant second to decision-making meetings in terms of perceived value. The significant differences within the demographic subgroups are indicated below.

Role

Project Feedback meetings are most highly valued by Heads of Product (44%) and least valued by Heads of CRE (31%).

Level in the Organization

C-suite executives and Individual Contributors place the highest value on these meetings (rated as having high value by 37% and 36%, respectively). Executive Leadership finds them less beneficial (26%).

Where They Work

Hybrid and in-office workers value project feedback meetings about equally (38% and 37%, respectively) but only 25% of remote workers consider project feedback meetings of high value.

Company Size

47% of employees of companies with between 100 and 5,000 people rate them as valuable compared to 41% for companies with more than 5,000 employees.



TRAINING

Training meetings are valued about the same as Project Feedback meetings, but the range of ratings, lowest to highest, is greater for this type of meeting than any other. In other words, some really like them, and some really don't. It's important to understand which is which.

Generation

About four in ten Millennials and Gen Z employees place a 'high' value on training meetings (45% and 41%, respectively) compared to just three in ten Boomers (29%).

Level in the Organization

Over four in ten people managers find training meetings valuable (44%), but less than 30% of individual contributors give them high scores (28%).

Where They Work

About four in ten on-site and hybrid workers place a high value on training meetings (43% and 42%, respectively); fully remote workers are not as engaged (35%).

Company Size

Almost half of employees at companies with between 100 and 1,000 employees consider training meetings to be of 'high' value (49%), compared to just a quarter of employees at companies with less than 10 employees (26%).



BRAINSTORMING MEETINGS

About 17% of respondents assigned a high value to brainstorming meetings; just short of the value ratings for project feedback and training meetings. There were large differences between the value rating based on generation, level in the organization, the usual place of work, and company size.

Generation

More than half of Gen Z placed a high value on brainstorming meetings (53%) compared to a little more than a third of those in other Generation groups (35% to 37%).

Level in the Organization

Almost half of individual contributors consider these meetings of high value (49%) compared to 31% of managers.

Where They Work

Four in ten hybrid or remote workers consider these meetings to be of high value (41% compared to just 32% of in-office workers).

Company Size

Employees at companies with between 1,000 and 5,000 people place the highest value on brainstorming meetings (44%), compared to just a third of those with between 11 and 100 people (33%).





STATUS UPDATES

The value of status update meetings were slightly lower than the other mid-range types of meetings, but still significantly higher than the least valued meeting type. Here are some significant nuances within the demographic subgroups regarding the value they placed on status updates:

Generation

The value assigned to status updates declines with Generation. 40% of Gen Z considered these meetings to be of 'high' value. Boomers were less than half as enthusiastic (17% rating them high value). Boomers also rated them of "low" value at more than twice the frequency of all the younger generations (35% and 15% respectively). In other words, Boomers really dislike status update meetings and Gen Z really likes them.

Level in the Organization

Individual contributors and C-Suite executives consider status update meetings of high value significantly more than executive leaders (37% versus 26% respectively).

Company Size

The value of status updates increases with company size until it reaches 5,000 employees. Then it drops off significantly. More than 4 in 10 employees of companies with between 1,000 and 5,000 people consider these meetings to be of high value (42%), compared to only about 30% of employees with 2-9 employees (31%).

Status update meetings are not considered of high value to most, but Gen Z and individual contributors generally feel they are more important than others. To accommodate others, make them optional and give an async alternative such as email, project management tracking reports, or video messaging.

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR STATUS UPDATE MEETINGS

- **Regular Schedule:** Hold status meetings at a regular interval (daily, weekly, etc.) so that everyone knows when to expect them.
- **Time Limit:** Set a specific time limit for each person's update to keep the meeting on track.
- **Focus on Key Points:** Encourage team members to share only the most important updates, avoiding unnecessary details.
- **Document Progress:** Keep a record of the updates for tracking progress and accountability.
- **Address Roadblocks:** Use these meetings to identify and discuss any obstacles or challenges hindering progress.
- **Pre-Meeting Updates:** Consider asking team members to send their updates before the meeting. This can make the actual meeting more about addressing issues rather than just reporting.
- **Have a Parking Lot/Bike Rack:** Keep record or log of any other tangential discussion that emerges from the meeting to follow up on after the meeting.



AD HOC/UNPLANNED MEETINGS

Ad Hoc meetings are the least valued across all demographic groups. Only 7% of respondents considered them high value meetings. Here are some significant nuances within the individual and company subgroups:

Generation

Ad hoc meetings are the least liked across all Generation groups ages, but particularly disliked by Gen X (42% ranked them as “low” value). Gen Z likes them better than any other Generation group, but still only 21% consider them of ‘high’ value.

Level in the Organization

Ad hoc meetings are least valued by individual contributors (5%).

Where They Work

Ad hoc meetings are most valued by hybrid workers (18%), and least valued by remote workers (10%).

Company Size

Ad hoc meetings are the least valued across all size companies. Forty-three percent of employees at companies with between 10 and 100 employees indicated they were of low value; the highest percentage of low value scores across all types of meetings and all subgroups.

Clearly, something needs to be done about ad hoc and unplanned meetings. Try discouraging ad hoc meetings by:

TIPS FOR MANAGING THE AD-HOC MEETING OCCURRENCES

- **Building awareness** around how disruptive and stressful these unwelcome interruptions can be
- **Adopting company-wide or team-wide norms** for designated time for heads-down work or designated heads-down work spaces (focus neighborhoods)
- **Adopting some visual signal** to indicate when people do not want to be disturbed. This may be especially useful when employees cannot see each other.
- **Providing plenty of private spaces** within the office
- **Allowing employees to do work that requires concentration at home**
- **Encouraging the use of asynchronous methods of communication**



Unwanted Interruptions

Nearly half of employees (46%) say unwanted interruptions reduce their productivity or increase their stress more than six times a day. One in ten are interrupted eleven to twenty times a day and an unlucky 2% suffer even more than that.

Compared to hybrid employees, in-office workers are nearly twice as likely to be interrupted more than 25 times a day (83% higher) and over three times more likely than those who are fully-remote.

Individual contributors receive 20% more interruptions than executive leaders, and 16% more than c-suite executives. This is likely due to legacy design standards that allocates more space and more privacy for senior executives.

Of course, not all workday interruptions are bad. They can lead to quick solutions to problems, provide mentorship opportunities, remove roadblocks that would otherwise lead to delays, and more. But *unwanted* interruptions reduce productivity, add to employee stress, disrupt the state of flow essential to the creative process, and more.

Research shows that following every interruption, it takes 15 to 20 minutes to get back on track. Assuming just six interruptions a day, based on an average U.S. salary, over a period of a year, that adds up to lost productivity worth \$1.3M for every thousand employees (see sidebar: *The Cost of Unwanted Interruptions*).



BACK OF THE ENVELOPE COST OF UNWANTED INTERRUPTIONS²

Here is the math on the cost of just six interruptions a day for every 1,000 employees

6 unwanted interruptions/day

x 15 minutes each

= 90 minutes/day

= 20% of day

x \$65,000 salary & benefits

= \$13,000/year

**= \$1.3M LOSS per
1,000 employees/year**

Video Messaging

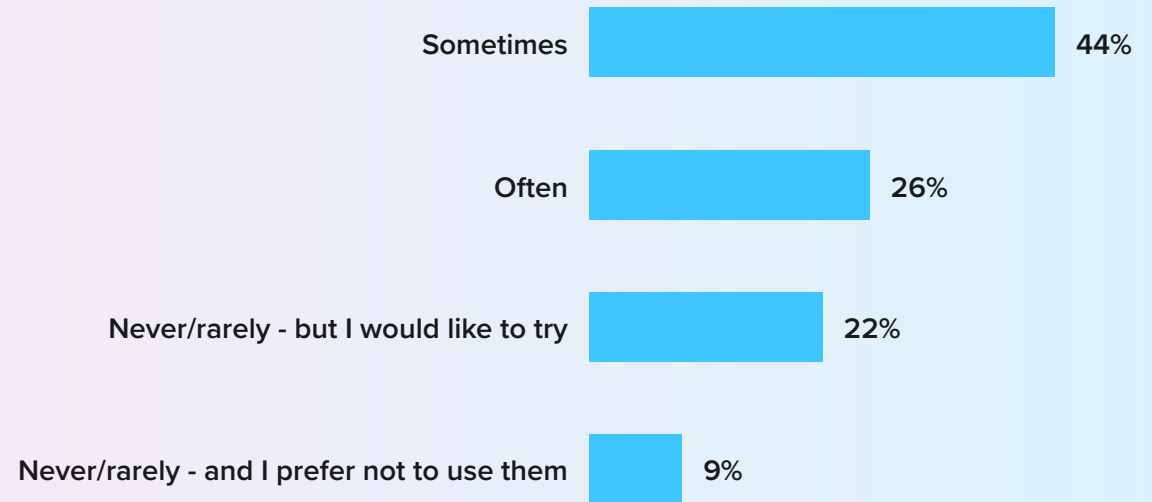
Video messaging is an async tool that has been around for some time. About a quarter of employees use it often, 44% use it sometimes, and 22% indicate they would like to try it (see *Figure 5— Respondent's Use of Video Messaging*).

The biggest reasons given for not using video messaging were not having access to the technology and it seeming too complicated (both indicated by 80% of the respondents who said they did not use it). Other top reasons, indicated by over 60% of respondents, include:

- It doesn't occur to me
- It will take too long
- I don't want to embarrass myself
- I don't like making videos

Ironically, while some are hesitant to make video messages, when asked what type of email they would prefer to receive, respondents chose ones with video or images 75% more than those with just text. The image preference was particularly strong among Boomers. The video preference was particularly strong among Gen X and Millennials. Surprisingly, Gen Z showed the strongest preference for plain old emails.

FIGURE 5 — RESPONDENT'S USE OF VIDEO MESSAGING

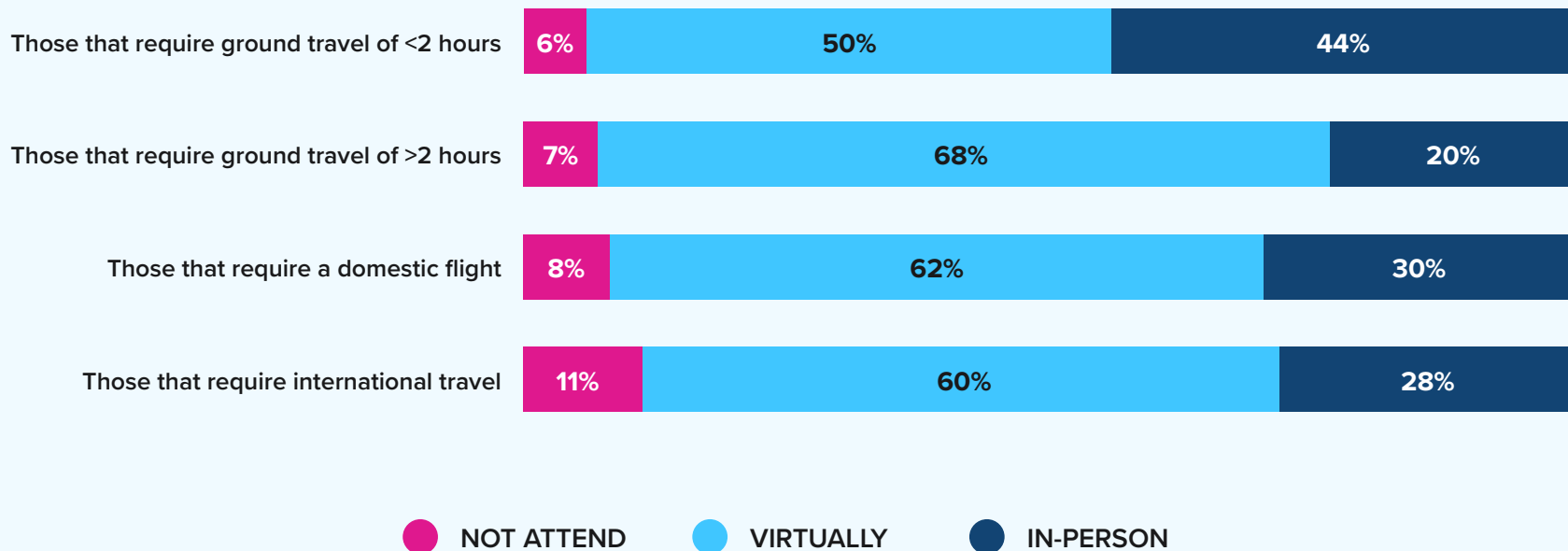


In-Person Versus Virtual Collaboration

The extensive use of video meetings in the past several years demonstrated for many, that while they may not be as sensory or emotionally rich as in-person meetings, in many cases they are good enough.

Organizations are being brought to task around sustainability. Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) disclosures are adding to the transparency around how organizations treat their people, the environment, and societal stakeholders. Worries about the economy have already tightened travel budgets. And political unrest is giving cause for concern about international flights.

FIGURE 6 — EMPLOYEE PREFERENCE FOR MEETING ATTENDANCE BY TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS



If a meeting involves a ground commute of less than an hour each way, 44% of employees say they would choose to attend in-person. If it requires a longer commute, only 23% would do so. If it requires a domestic flight, 30% would attend in-person. And if it requires international travel, only 28% would pack their bags (see Figure 6—Employee Preference for Meeting Attendance by Travel Requirements).

Not surprisingly, travel preferences vary across demographics. The biggest difference is generational (see Figure 7—Generational Difference in Preference for In-Person vs Virtual Meeting by Type of Travel Required).

FIGURE 7 — GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCE IN PREFERENCE FOR IN-PERSON VS VIRTUAL MEETING BY TYPE OF TRAVEL REQUIRED

For example, 48% of Gen X would prefer to attend a meeting in-person if it required less than a two hour commute.

GENERATION	COMMUTE <2 HOURS	COMMUTE >2 HOURS	DOMESTIC FLIGHT	INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT
BOOMER	50%	19%	27%	27%
GEN X	48%	23%	26%	23%
MILLENNIALS	43%	28%	33%	34%
GEN Z	39%	30%	29%	37%

Across the board, every generation would prefer a virtual meeting over an in-person one regardless of the type or length of travel involved (see Figure 8—Percent Who Would Prefer to Attend In-Person Meetings By Usual Place of Work).

Among Gen Z, 30% prefer to attend in-person compared to 28% of Millennials, 23% of Gen X, and only 19% of Boomers. If a meeting requires domestic air travel, a third of Millennials would choose to attend in-person, compared to 29% of Gen Z, 27% of Boomers, and 26% of Gen Z.

If it requires international travel, more than a third of Gen Z would attend in-person (37%), compared to 34% of Millennials, 27% of Boomers, and 23% of Gen X. Perhaps the youngest generation has the fewest attachments and may see international travel as more of an adventure than their travel-weary colleagues.

FIGURE 8 — % WHO WOULD PREFER TO ATTEND IN-PERSON MEETINGS BY USUAL PLACE OF WORK

For example, 49% of in-office employees would choose to attend a meeting in-person if it required less than two hours of round-trip ground travel.

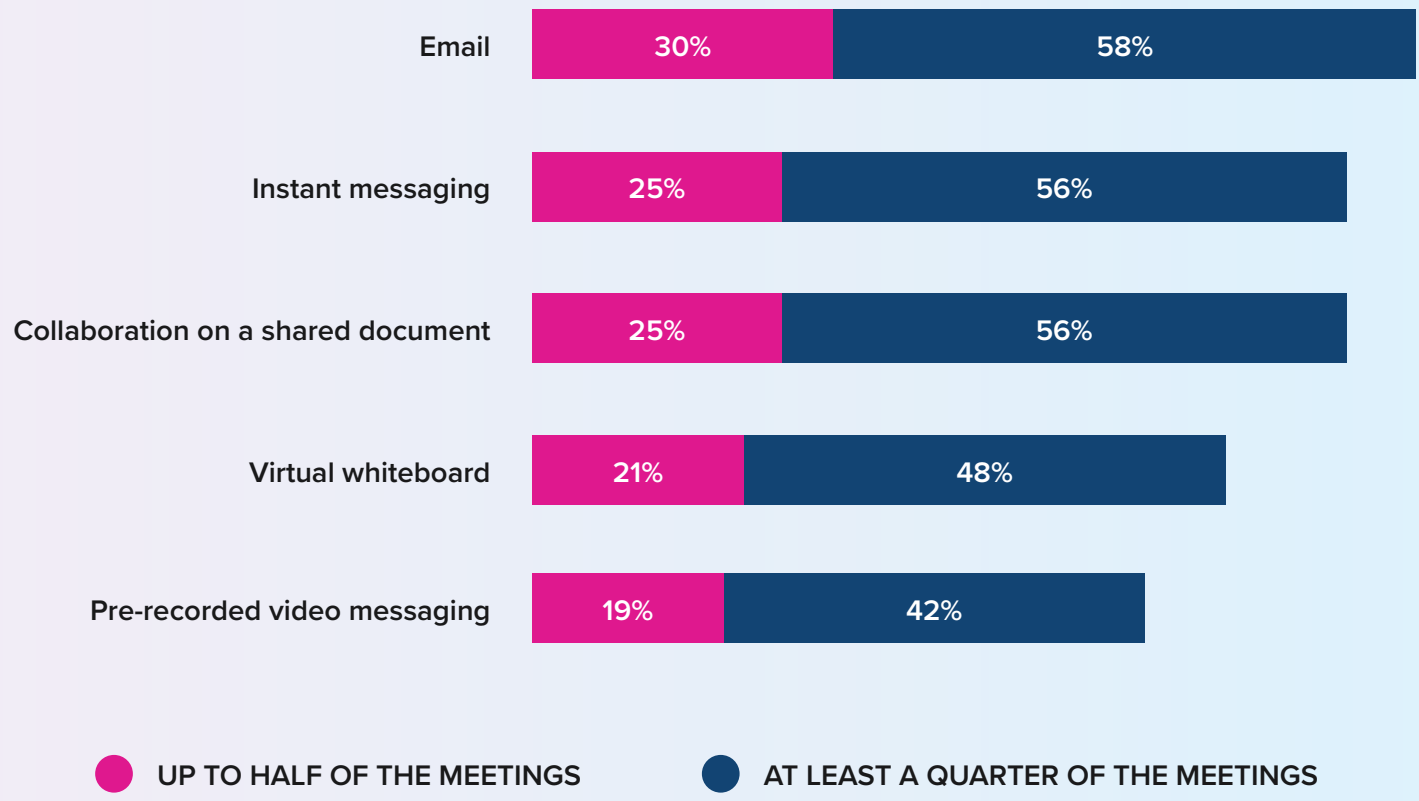
ROUND-TRIP TRAVEL	<2 HOURS GROUND TRAVEL	>2 HOURS GROUND TRAVEL	DOMESTIC AIR TRAVEL	INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL
IN-OFFICE	49%	30%	37%	34%
HYBRID	43%	21%	26%	25%
ALL REMOTE	30%	21%	29%	33%

Travel preference also varied significantly based on where the employee usually works (see Figure 7—Percent Who Would Prefer To Attend In-Person Meetings by Usual Place of Work). While 49% of in-office employees would choose to attend a meeting in-person if it required less than two hours of round-trip ground travel, only 30% of all-remote workers do so. Only 21% of hybrid and all-remote workers would prefer to attend in-person if it required ground travel of more than two hours, compared to 30% of those usually in the office. When it comes to international air travel, about a third of all-remote and in-office employees would choose to attend in-person compared to just a quarter of hybrid workers.

Potential For Replacing Sync Collaboration with Async Tools

Thirty percent of respondents said email could replace over half the time they spend in meetings. Each of the other alternatives—including instant messaging, collaboration on shared documents, virtual whiteboarding, and pre-recorded video messaging—were seen as potential replacements for more than half of meetings by between 19% and 25% of respondents. And between 42% and 58% felt these async alternatives could replace at least a quarter of meetings (see *Figure 9—Perceptions of Percent of Meetings That Could Be Replaced by Async Alternatives*).

FIGURE 9 — PERCEPTIONS OF % OF MEETINGS THAT COULD BE REPLACED WITH ASYNC ALTERNATIVES



There are significant generational differences regarding which tools they feel would work best, and the percentage of meetings they could replace.

In general, the younger generations have a higher appetite for replacing meetings with async alternatives than the two oldest generations. But it's Millennials, not Gen Z that has the highest inclination toward every tool except Instant Messaging (see Figure 10—Percent of Each Generation That Feels These Tools Could Replace at Least 50% of Meetings).

Boomers are least likely to think any async tool could replace half of meetings and are significantly less inclined toward newer technologies (shared documents, virtual white boards, and pre-recorded video messaging) than the other generations.

FIGURE 10 — % OF EACH GENERATION THAT FEELS THESE TOOLS COULD REPLACE AT LEAST 50% OF MEETINGS

ASYNC METHODS	FIRST CHOICE	SECOND CHOICE	THIRD CHOICE	FOURTH CHOICE
EMAIL	Millennials 38%	Gen Z 28%	Gen X 25%	Boomers 14%
INSTANT MESSAGING	Gen Z 38%	Millennials 26%	Gen X 22%	Boomers 11%
SHARED DOCUMENT	Millennials 29%	Gen Z 24%	Gen X 17%	Boomers 5%
VIRTUAL WHITEBOARD	Millennials 22%	Gen Z 19%	Gen X 14%	Boomers 1%
PRE-RECORDED VIDEO MESSAGING	Millennials 22%	Gen Z 19%	Gen X 14%	Boomers 8%

Hybrid Meeting Best Practices

Ensuring a level playing field is more challenging in hybrid meetings than either having everyone in the room or having everyone attend virtually. Below are some tips and tricks for making hybrid meetings more productive, equitable, and even enjoyable.

BEFORE THE MEETING

- Consider async alternative
- Use technology that ensures everyone can see and hear one another clearly
- Ensure everyone is familiar with the technology
- Record the meeting for those who could not attend
- Only invite who needs to be there
- Make invitations opt-in vs. out
- Avoid back-to-back meetings by starting just after the hour or limiting the length of the meetings (20, 40, 50)
- Assign pre-reading if needed
- Agree on video on/off, acceptable backgrounds and noise
- Have a dress policy (which may differ by team and depending on who the meeting includes)

DURING THE MEETING

- Start/end on time
- Do not start over if someone arrives late
- Include social time
- Come prepared
- Alternate time zones so the same person isn't always inconvenienced
- Use chat and polls to engage new voices in the conversation
- Make closed-captioning available
- Be sure documents being shared are legible or send them in advance
- Assign someone to monitor for equal participation
- Stick to the agenda
- Alternate between in-person and virtual hosts
- Document next steps

AFTER THE MEETING

- Have everyone rate the meeting and make changes as needed
- Solicit anonymous feedback
- Distribute video, transcription, polls, chat, and ratings
- Follow-up on assignments
- Continue the conversation on collaborative documents
- Follow up on parking lot items

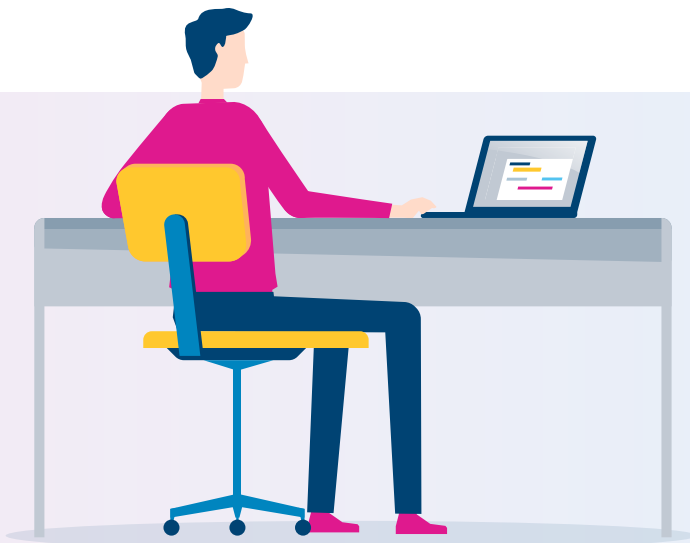


Best Practices for Sync and Async

There is no hard and fast rule about when to prefer async over sync or visa-versa, but below are some suggestions for deciding which one to use based on the nature of work, the people involved, and the desired outcomes.

PREFER SYNCHRONOUS COLLABORATION WHEN:

- Building team rapport and culture is a priority
- For quick brainstorming
- For project kick-offs
- When the topic or problem is complex
- When the topic is likely to stir emotions



PREFER ASYNCHRONOUS COLLABORATION WHEN:

- It is difficult to get everyone in the same place at the same time
- People need time to think deeply about a problem
- Team members are doing work that requires deep focus and concentration
- You want to engage team members who don't like to speak up in meetings
- You want to prevent one or two voices from dominating the collaboration
- The task requires creativity
- You are gathering data from a group
- You are making an announcement
- You are offering a simple status update
- One person is likely to be doing all the talking

WHEN USED APPROPRIATELY, ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION PRACTICES CAN:

Video messages are particularly useful when used to:

- Explain complex information
- Increase the richness of communications by adding both auditory and visual dimensions
- Avoid misunderstandings that can stem from written messages
- Reduce the time spent explaining the same thing to different people
- Avoid the back and forth that often occurs with email and instant messaging
- Accommodate differences in learning styles, culture, hearing, thought processes, and more
- Enhance human connection and empathy
- As an alternative to trying to get everyone in the same place at the same time; the biggest impediment to synchronous meetings
- Avoid the technical glitches that often occur during synchronous meetings

- Better accommodate people working across distances
- Bring new voices into meeting and collaboration activities
- Reduce the number and length of meetings
- Increase the efficiency of meetings
- Improve knowledge capture
- Level the playing field around hierarchy, personality type, communications styles, cultural and language differences, physical and mental challenges, and more
- Increase autonomy and accountability
- Reduce unwanted interruptions
- Decrease stress



CONCLUSION

Leaders are wringing their hands over the wrong questions. Rather than fretting over whether their people should work in an office, remotely, or some combination of the two, or whether it's better to collaborate in real time or asynchronously, they should be asking themselves, "How can we empower our people to do their best work?"

One thing we know for sure, the "how" of work must continually evolve to reflect the needs of the business, its people, its investors, and society. The right mix of tools, technologies, practices, and processes can enhance employee wellbeing and performance, ensure equity and inclusion, bolster innovation, and improve alignment with organizational goals. But clearly, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions.

As we have shown in this paper, every company, division, team, and individual is unique. To excel in the years ahead, agility will be key. The most successful organizations will abandon rigid attitudes that tether them to practices, processes, and technologies that are past their sell-by date. Flexibility will be at the core of everything they do. They will foresee change, rather than forestall it. And they will make it happen, rather than letting it happen.

We hope this paper will help organizations embrace the need for change in "how" people work regardless of "where" and "when" they do it.

METHODOLOGY

TechSmith collaborated with its research partners, Global Workplace Analytics and Caryatid, to design the survey questions.

An anonymous pool of 900 respondents was provided by Qualtrics based on the following criteria:

- Full-time U.S. employees
- Companies with more than two employees (no upper threshold)
- Respondents were limited to those senior leaders of Human Resources, Product/Research, Corporate Real Estate, or Technology

The survey responses were gathered between November 28 and December 8, 2023.

The sample was re-weighted to be representative of the U.S. workforce based on generation (using Pew Research Center data) and company size (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

ABOUT

This survey was conducted by independent consulting firms, Global Workplace Analytics and Caryatid, on behalf of TechSmith.



[Snagit](#) is an award-winning asynchronous workplace communication tool for capturing, sharing, and collaborating around video and images that has been empowering users for over 30 years to have fewer, more effective meetings. With a radically simple approach, Snagit allows users to capture images or videos of their screen, annotate content for clear instruction, and share within any preferred platform for viewing and/or team collaboration. Developed by [TechSmith](#), a market leader in workplace communication solutions since 1987, Snagit is used by all Fortune 500 companies and more than 39 million people across more than 190 countries. Connect with Snagit on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#). For more information, visit www.techsmith.com/snagit-workplace-communication.html.



[Global Workplace Analytics](#), is a research-based consulting firm that has been helping organizations optimize flexible and distributed work for nearly two decades. Kate Lister, president of Global Workplace Analytics is a recognized thought leader on the future of work. She is frequently quoted by news outlets including *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, and dozens of others. She was one of only three witnesses invited to testify before a U.S. Senate committee regarding the potential for remote work in government.



[Caryatid](#) is boutique consultancy specializing in guiding organizations through the complexities of distributed and remote work transitions. With a focus on innovative strategies and tailored solutions, the company helps organizations enhance efficiency, collaboration, and employee engagement in a digital-first world. Whether it's navigating distributed work, implementing hybrid/remote models, or harnessing the power of sync and async collaboration, Caryatid can help you drive meaningful workplace transformation.

ASYNCHRONOUS

Asynchronous communication and collaboration are methods of interacting and working together that do not require immediate or real-time responses.

SYNCHRONOUS

Synchronous communication and collaboration are methods of interacting and working together that require immediate or real-time responses.

HYBRID WORKERS

Hybrid workers split their work between the office and home or other non-office locations.

DISTRIBUTED WORKERS

Distributed workers is a generic term for employees who work separately from their colleagues. It includes remote workers, hybrid workers, mobile workers, and those who work in other company offices.

VIDEO MESSAGING

Video messaging refers to the practice of sending and receiving short video clips or recorded video messages through digital communication platforms.

GENERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The Silent Generation: Also known as “Traditionalists,” this group includes individuals born between 1928 and 1945.

Baby Boomers: Born between 1946 and 1964

Generation X (Gen X): Individuals born between 1965 and 1980 fall into this category.

Millennials (Gen Y): Born between 1981 and 1996

Generation Z (Gen Z): This group includes those born from 1997 to 2012.

ROLE DEFINITIONS

C-Suite: This term refers to the highest-ranking executive positions within an organization, with titles that typically start with “Chief,” hence the “C” in C-Suite.

Executive/Functional Leadership: These individuals are a level below the C-Suite and are responsible for leading specific departments or functions within the organization.

People Manager: People Managers, also known as line managers or supervisors, are responsible for overseeing the work of a team or group within the organization.

Individual Contributors: Individual Contributors are employees who do not have any direct reports or management responsibilities.

MODES OF INTERACTION

Virtual: This term refers to interactions or activities that take place over digital platforms without physical presence.

In-Person: In contrast, in-person interactions require the physical presence of individuals in the same location.

UNWANTED INTERRUPTIONS

Unwanted interruptions refer to any unscheduled or unexpected disturbances that break the continuity of work, focus, or attention during an individual’s personal or professional activities.

AD-HOC MEETINGS

Ad-hoc meetings are impromptu gatherings that are not scheduled in advance and are often convened to address immediate concerns, urgent issues, or unexpected opportunities that arise.