

Press release
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The future is hybrid, according to 4 in 5 Australian business leaders

- 79% of Australian business leaders say a mix of employees working remotely and in-office are now a permanent fixture of the employment market.
- Top three benefits of hybrid working cited by business leaders include maintaining productivity (28%), remaining agile in the pandemic (27%), and supporting a better work-life balance (27%).

Sydney, 23 February 2021 – The lockdowns imposed in early 2020 marked the start of a steep learning curve which has seen many business leaders and their workforces pull together to jump the hurdles and come out stronger, and successfully maintain business functions and productivity under remote work conditions.

One year on, an independent survey of Australian hiring managers commissioned by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) reveals almost four-in-five (79%) say hybrid workforces – a mix of employees working remotely and in-office – are now a permanent part of the employment market, indicating the hybrid model is here to stay.

Top 3 reasons for adopting hybrid working arrangements

In 2020, pivoting to a remote working model required companies of every size and stage of digital transformation to introduce new methods of internal communication, collaboration, production, and external service provision in order to sustain efficiency and engagement throughout the crisis.

The biggest benefits of remote working cited by businesses include maintaining productivity (28%), remaining agile in the pandemic (27%), and supporting a better work-life balance (27%). One-quarter (25%) of hiring managers say retaining key staff is also a top benefit of using hybrid teams.

“For employees, a key benefit is the ability to manage their professional and personal commitments more easily. For employers, hybrid arrangements gives them agility in a shifting marketplace and access to a wider pool of candidates, removing geographical constraints and engaging with talent for whom a traditional office arrangement wasn’t feasible, for instance parents and care takers. This is vital in a skills-short market and for creating a more diverse workplace,” said **Nicole Gorton, Director of Robert Half Australia** in announcing Robert Half’s latest survey results.

“Employees have experienced and demonstrated that they can maintain productivity working from home while enjoying greater work-life balance and so they will continue to prioritise a flex-first approach in their job searches. This makes the integration of hybrid working arrangements a recruitment topic as employers who reverse their workforce to a traditional office environment are unlikely to be considered employers of choice and will likely fall behind in the fight for top talent.”

The 3 biggest challenges for hybrid teams

According to the survey, about one in five (21%) managers don’t agree that hybrid workforces will be a permanent part of the employment landscape. The three biggest challenges for businesses using hybrid teams, according to the Australian managers surveyed, include complications with the hiring and onboarding process (36%), the ability to monitor workloads (36%), and supporting employee wellbeing (33%).

Even for those that recognise the benefits and attraction of remote work, there are some industries and functions which cannot adapt to a remote work environment as easily as others. More CFOs (23%) than CIOs (17%) did not agree that hybrid workforces are the future, indicating that digital-native roles reliant on technology are innately easier to conduct through remote or hybrid working arrangements. By contrast, roles that deal with sensitive or private information, rely on centralised infrastructure, or predominantly involve front-facing tasks can be more challenging to adapt.

Managing a successful hybrid workforce

With flexibility now an in-demand benefit, companies must adapt to hybrid work models or risk losing their competitive edge when attracting and retaining top talent. A successful hybrid model is not simply about where staff are working from, but how they are managed and resourced to create a seamless workflow.

“The crux of a strong hybrid working arrangement is the flexibility to tailor structure to the individual and business needs. Even for those who cannot work remotely by nature of their job, managers should work with individual employees to align on the potential scope for flexibility in their role,” adds **Gorton**.

“The technology stack a team relies on will be indicative of how effective employees can be when working remotely. Cloud-based storage and quality communications channels are crucial for a successful hybrid work environment while quality upskilling and training opportunities for new and existing employees to better utilise available tools will create greater efficiencies across the team.”

“Finally, it’s critical for managers to take steps to support an inclusive and positive culture across hybrid working models – balancing greater autonomy and flexibility with the need to drive productivity, collaboration, and innovation. This is important to uphold for all team members at all times, but particularly during the (remote) onboarding process. Always keeping communication lines open – virtually and in-person – prioritising mental health and wellbeing, and encouraging team building are important tactics for successfully leading hybrid teams,” **Gorton** says.

Here are 3 tips for business leaders to effectively manage a hybrid workforce:

1. **Make communication a top priority** - Clarity of direction and understanding drives a unified and productive team so ensure pertinent information is easily — and frequently — communicated. Establishing expectations; setting up processes for documenting and sharing; and making sure staff feel confident with their technology, tools and resources are all key for a seamless transition to the home office.
2. **Maintain visibility** - Without the option to pop-by or hold spontaneous check-ins in the office, set regular times for virtual meetings and one-on-one check ins. As well as email or messages, speaking with someone by phone or video call to discuss the details of a project or convey an important message is often more effective — and efficient — than typing out the words and builds personal rapport.
3. **Emphasise balance** - Without the clear boundaries of leaving the office or computer, it’s easy for dedicated professionals to become workaholics when they embrace the telecommuter lifestyle. Encourage remote employees to practice good time management by establishing your own start and stop times, and have them do the same. Refrain from contacting workers outside of office hours, when possible, and make it clear you don’t expect a response while they’re offline.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The annual study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online in November 2020 by an independent research company, surveying 300 hiring managers, including 100 CFOs and 100 CIOs, from companies across Australia. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management, and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialised recruitment consultancy and member of the S&P 500. Founded in 1948, the company has more than 300 offices worldwide providing contract, interim management, and permanent recruitment solutions for accounting and finance, financial services, technology, and business support professionals. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Mount Waverley, Perth and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com.au.

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