



Choice is Critical in the Future of Work

A study of Cisco's People through the Pandemic

Powered by People Intelligence
For questions, contact peopleresearch@cisco.com

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The iconic company that helped build the internet makes **hybrid work possible**



With nearly 40 years of networking experience, Cisco has helped build the internet and the solutions that make hybrid work a reality. Customers are looking for help in ensuring an inclusive experience where everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute and advance, **no matter where they work.**

Our customers and partners trust us to enable their success in the Future of Work and to lead them to places they don't know they need to go yet.

Understanding what's changed in the world of work



The pandemic **accelerated** the Future of Work.

To understand how we can support this new way of working, we studied how the pandemic:



Changed employee behavior



Impacted collaboration



Affected employee engagement and well-being

How we explored changes in the world of work

When



With specific emphasis on the pandemic period of **March 2020 to March 2022**.

Who

A representative sample of Cisconians



130 employee interviews during spring of 2023

How



Multi-source & mixed methods approach

The research looked at data on meetings, badge-ins, PTO, well-being, & engagement.

Flexibility & choice are critical, especially during times of change

There is no **one-size-fits-all** solution.

Our people are all different and so are their needs.



Offering employees flexibility & choice in their work **increases engagement.**

Make the office a magnet, not a mandate



We observed a **fundamental shift** in how we come together



Leader attention, not location, is the **most important predictor** of engagement



Employees appreciate remote working but also **crave in-person touchpoints**





Innovation requires **focused time**, not a specific location





External research shows that broad office mandates **negatively impact engagement****


Best Practices for Hybrid Collaboration

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Understand what work is best done in-person and what can be done virtually
- 

Bring people together with **intention and purpose** vs. mandates
- 

Encourage weekly check-ins between leader and team members
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Be more **intentional and budget for** in-person collaboration and moments of connection
- 

Provide **focused opportunities** for innovation



Flexible work schedules **drive** **engagement**

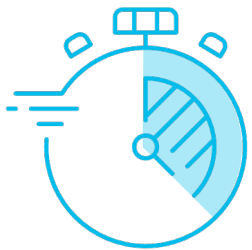
Flexible work
schedules predict
**greater
engagement &
increased trust**
among team
members.

Virtual collaboration
practices have
**superseded in-person
collaboration** in
influencing engagement.

Healthy virtual collaboration
behaviors also **boost
engagement and
well-being.**

Providing employees **more** autonomy

- Let employees create their own schedules to meet their needs.
- Avoid work-hour mandates, instead providing autonomy and meaningful work.
- Establish standards for virtual collaboration (meeting punctuality, freedom to choose video usage, etc.).



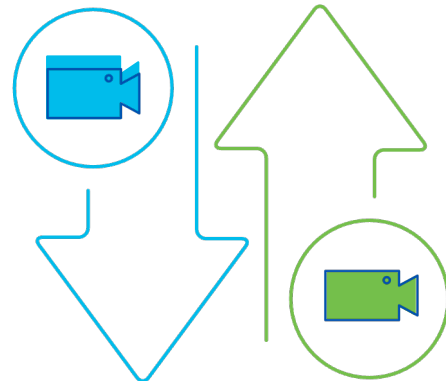
31%
report working a
“standard” workday.
(8 am–6 pm local time)

Having autonomy over one’s work and finding work meaningful may be more important drivers of engagement than a standardized work schedule for all.

Choice is **imperative** in how employees do their work

Choose video collaboration with intention.

Excessive video usage **lowers engagement & well-being.**



More video usage **boosts trust, recognition, & inclusion.**

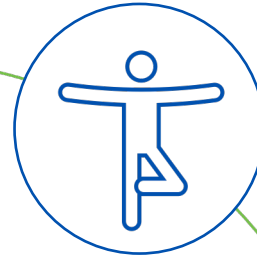


Virtual meeting tips

- Promote a welcoming, trusting environment to invite video participation, which is better for teaming.
- Inclusion and well-being require video flexibility.
- Virtual 1:1 meetings should be scheduled with intention and in moderation.
- Use alternate modes of collaboration like walking 1:1s, asynchronous Webex messaging, email, etc. when possible.
- Discuss preferred meeting times especially when coordinating across the time zones, as the standard workday varies for everyone.

So... what can we all do to create a
thriving workplace?

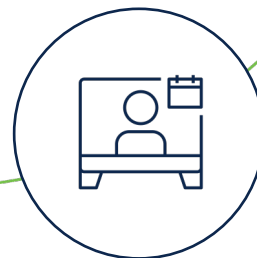
Find what works **best**



Be flexible with video usage & **find the balance that** supports your personal well-being and team engagement.



Ask others about their **collaboration preferences.**



Make sure all virtual 1:1 meetings are **necessary and use other modes of collaboration** when possible.

Leaders hold the keys to unlocking employee engagement



Creating work policies that **enable choice & flexibility** to support talent attraction and retention.



Rethinking **how we come together** in person and virtually to increase engagement.



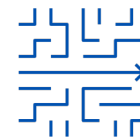
Giving individuals **autonomy over where & when they work** to increase engagement and innovation.



Being more **intentional about in-person** collaboration.



Encouraging autonomy with video usage to regulate well-being and improve engagement.



Clearly articulating the **desired outcomes** from time spent in the office.

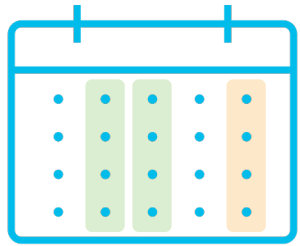


Giving **flexibility to take time off** and encouraging people to take 5+ days off at a time to improve well-being.



Providing **consistent 1:1 attention** to team members in the form of weekly conversations.

Leaders must prioritize their own well-being



Set boundaries on their meeting load to increase well-being and engagement.

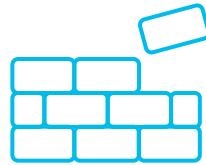


Role model self-care to help themselves and their team members.

Creating healthy, high-performing hybrid teams



Team members must share their preferences & **participate in the creation** of hybrid team work norms.



Create a **strong foundation of team building** for a healthy virtual environment & acceleration of team engagement for recent hires.



Focus on providing **intentional opportunities for team connection** while respecting the flexibility & balance individuals desire.

Our Key Findings & Recommendations



People may be choosing to work from home, but in-person touchpoints are still essential.

Recommendation

Look for opportunities to bring teams together.



Effective collaboration is a balancing act.

Recommendation

Each team should collectively develop their own collaboration practices that work best for them.



Flexibility and choice positively influence engagement.

Recommendation

As much as possible, empower team members to decide where, when, & how they do their work.



Leaders are at the center of our organization and might be struggling the most.

Recommendation

Determine how best to support leaders with the unique demands of today's world of work.



Leader attention is the #1 predictor of engagement.

Recommendation

Focus on regular touchpoints with individual team members.



CISCO

The bridge to possible