

Under-investment in hybrid working threatens successful return to the office for UK and Irish workers

3 years ago



New research released today shows a lack of planning and investment in hybrid working is threatening to derail a widespread successful return to the office.

The research, conducted by Opinium for [Ricoh Europe](#), polled 500 office workers in the UK and Ireland. It found they remain cautious about returning to the office full time, highlighting the importance of flexible hybrid working for organisations.

Just one in four (24%) say their workplace has a hybrid working policy in place. At the same time, inadequate technology and collaborative working environments are holding back the realisation of more accommodating and agile ways of working. Less than half (44%) have seen an increase in meeting room communication technology to aid hybrid working, while one-in-five (21%) say the amount of collaboration space in their office has decreased.

In addition, less than a third (28%) believe there has been an increase in safe access to equipment, such as lockers for picking up IT equipment, without having to meet a colleague face-to-face. This could cause significant friction for employees seeking to return to the office, discouraging them from being present on a regular basis. If left unaddressed, workplace productivity could decline while top talent seeks more flexible employment.

At a time when demand for talent is at an all-time high, more than a third of workers (35%) feel pressured to return to the office by their employer – an increase of 25% from a similar study conducted in 2020. Over

two-thirds (68%) believe it should be the individual's choice to return to the office in 2022, reinforcing the requirement for senior leaders to balance employee preference with business need as they shape hybrid working policies.

David Mills, CEO, Ricoh Europe, says: "Providing the right collaboration tools to create a positive working experience for everyone, no matter where they are, is vital for employers as restrictions ease. Failure to do so risks creating an experience gap between those in the office and those working remotely."

Importantly, trust between businesses and their workforce has improved throughout the course of the pandemic. Almost three-quarters (73%) of employees think their employers are more confident in their ability to stay motivated and productive when working remotely – a 26% increase compared to a similar study in 2021.

Mills adds: "After two years of on again, off again restrictions, the world of work continues to evolve. Employees are rightfully looking to their employers to lead this change at work. The research shows that employers have come a long way in building trust with their workforce. Creating a workplace that truly embraces hybrid working is the next vital step in the journey. While there are many benefits of having people work together in the same room, hybrid working will be here for the foreseeable future. Investing in hybrid working now is an investment in the future – it will improve productivity and help with talent retention."

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