



## IMPACT OF HYBRID WORKFORCE ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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### Abstract

*Changes in the labour market and boom in the diversity of non-standard working preparations have heightened the activity of policy makers and entrepreneurship researchers in “hybrid entrepreneurship”, which is an aggregate of employment and entrepreneurship his shape of entrepreneurship is especially popular among exceedingly educated professionals in the high-technology and R&D sectors. With the goal of improving our understanding and defining a lookup agenda for this phenomenon, I examined the relevant literature to clarify definitions and I undertook a research study to have a look at first-hand, via a longitudinal case study, the experiences of two hybrid entrepreneurs, one who supposed to become a full-time entrepreneur and one who desire to be hybrid entrepreneur. The key result emphasizes that hybrid entrepreneurs ought to now not be viewed as a homogeneous group: some hybrid entrepreneurs can also continually stay at their waged jobs and others may tend to emerge as full-time entrepreneurs. The effects have implications for policy makers wishing to encourage hybrid entrepreneurship and for researchers wishing to undertake further research into this phenomenon.*

### Introduction

Nearly two years since the early days of the pandemic, companies worldwide have had to adapt digitally to navigate a rapidly evolving world – and this was no exception for the APJ region (Asia, Pacific & Japan). There is no doubt that digital transformation has been a game-changer in the way we work, as we shifted away from the traditional office model to remote, and now hybrid work. While companies are generally doing well in adapting to hybrid work from an IT perspective, the cultural aspect is still very much a work-in-progress. The uncharted waters of hybrid work mean that employers are still learning how to navigate this next phase to design a model that is sustainable, without compromising elements like teamwork, innovation, peer-to-peer learning and more. The approach will differ across markets in APJ, as our new way of working has changed our lifestyles, habits, and preferences. In Australia, a trend called “The Great Migration” has been observed – with more employees moving to the outer edges of cities to live. With the reduced frequency of having to work in the office, one no longer needs to stay as close to the city centre as before. By staying about an hour’s journey away, people are also starting to appreciate the change of scenery and may be reluctant to return to the office – especially if they can be equally, if not more evident, carrying out their jobs from home. Meanwhile, remote work adoption continues to vary across the region. Compared to other markets, Japan still focuses heavily on manual paperwork and the importance of ‘face time’ in the office. The level of readiness was also different depending on the size of firms – while larger companies had the resources to quickly pivot to more digital systems, smaller firms were more traditional in their ways of working and struggled with the changes. This means that the gap to close in Japan is larger and will require fundamental shifts in work culture across the nation, before hybrid work becomes the norm. As for Singapore and Malaysia, companies were generally more prepared to embrace the technical requirements of remote work due to the higher adoption of technology even prior to the pandemic. Now, the question lies in whether organizations in these countries will be able to shift their focus to addressing the social and cultural factors that have emerged as a result.

### Literature

**1. Flexibility Reddened:** Giving employees the flexibility to work from home and the freedom to enter the office for important social interactions is key to maintaining social bonds among colleagues. But ending a sustainable balance is not an easy task, and each company would have to determine what works best for their organization.

**2. Trust and Engagement:** Organizations will need to keep millennials and Generation Z engaged as they begin their first jobs. Since the onset of the pandemic, majority of this group have started their work life onboarding remotely. Some may never know what it is like to work in a physical workspace, and some might even start and



leave jobs during the pandemic without meeting their colleagues in real life at all. How might this impact their work social interactions, mentor and mentee relationships, as well as learning and growth?

**3. Virtually Returning:** Several studies have shown that most employees no longer wish to return to the physical workplace every day. As countries in APJ slowly re-open, is the return to office necessary for everyone? Organizations must consider why they are asking employees to return, and how that impacts companies and individuals alike.

## **Imperatives**

### **Imperative # 1: Leadership**

In today's world of hybrid work, the call for organizations to lead with empathy and intent is more important than ever. Leaders have a denying role to play in shaping and guiding an organization to move forward in a hybrid work future. From the mindsets they hold to the decisions they make, every aspect can determine whether a company thrives or merely survives in the long-term. Employees will be looking to their leaders to set direction, establish healthy foundations, and demonstrate compassion. Step back, but don't snap back Now is a good time for organizations to step back and evaluate the successes and lessons from their hybrid work journey so far. While companies have taken steps to adapt to remote work, they must avoid a 'snap back' mentality and expect things to return to the pre-pandemic days. Instead, leaders should demonstrate intent to make fundamental changes to their organizations and chart a clear direction for long-term hybrid work. For countries like Japan, these changes can be as simple as introducing clearly defined job descriptions to set distinct roles – especially within a workforce culture where many positions do not even have titles, and job duties are seldom clearly specified. Japan-based management consultant Rochelle Kopp believes that this is one of the key reasons why many Japanese companies are still not making the shift to hybrid work

### **Establish a Foundation of Trust**

It is one thing to provide employees with the technology and HR resources they need to work remotely, but organizations also need to ensure that the non-technical elements of hybrid work are carefully considered – from culture and morale to productivity and wellbeing. In planning for a shift to long-term hybrid work, leaders must go beyond the hygiene factors to establish healthy cultural foundations such as employer-employee trust. Trust is a key component of a successful hybrid work arrangement. With the lack of 'facetime' and in-person collaboration, leaders may fall into the trap of micromanagement and create a culture of distrust within their workforce. In fact, Fortune reported that globally, the use of employee surveillance software jumped 50% last year during lockdown and has continued to increase since March 2021.

### **Demonstrate Care and Compassion**

While employees in APJ feel that their employers are doing everything they can to provide the necessary tech (50%) and HR resources (40%) for effective remote work, the reality is that workers are still grappling with challenges such as a lack of in-person communication as well as blurred boundaries between their professional and personal lives. These findings from the Dell Technologies Remote Work Readiness Index are a reminder that first and foremost, leaders must be empathetic towards their employees and create strategies to address their needs in a hybrid work model. According to Mallory Loone, co-founder of learning and engagement firm Work Inspires in Malaysia, organizations can take a leaf out of the start-up world's book when it comes to demonstrating empathy and care for workers. Given the structures and smaller teams in start-ups, managerial cultures in such organizations often allow for more one-on-one time between leaders and workers. This creates an avenue for leaders to connect directly with employees and other personalized support and guidance to address challenges of working from home.

### **Imperative # 2: Structure**

#### **Customize your Hybrid Work Model**

Determining a suitable structure for hybrid work comes down to paying attention to nuances. If anything, the past two years of working from home have shown that not all job roles and individual personalities are suited for long-



term remote work. For example, an employee working as a call centre operator or software engineer is likely to be equally - if not more - productive working from home with less distractions. In comparison, those working in sales may require more human interaction and team collaboration to perform their jobs more effectively. On a personal level, a range of factors could affect an employee's ability to thrive in a hybrid work arrangement. Lifestyle considerations, such as those with young children at home; preferred working styles; as well as personality traits – introverts versus extroverts, or conscientiousness – all contribute to an employee's productivity and comfort with working from home

### **Find Balance between Flexibility and Regularity**

The word 'flexibility' comes up often in conversations around hybrid work. Employees today want to be given the choice to decide whether they work on-site and remotely, with 52% of global employees indicating a preference for a more flexible working model in the future (according to McKinsey's Reimagine Work: Employee Survey in January 2021). At the same time, factors such as working hours and personal time were the top considerations for employees in APJ who work remotely, according to the Dell Technologies Remote Work Readiness Index. These factors can even influence talent attraction and retention going forward.

### **Redirect budget towards enhancing your post-pandemic workplace**

To enable a successful hybrid work environment and empower employees to thrive, organizations must rethink the structure of the post-pandemic workplace – both physical and digital. This starts by paying close attention to the needs of the business, the needs of employees and investing in the necessary digital tools to enable efficient hybrid work in the long term

### **Imperative # 3: Culture**

#### **Culture Building Activities are no Longer an Optional Sport - We need to Rethink Employee Engagement**

If leadership is the brain and structure is the body, culture is the soul and spirit of an organization. It gives a company character and personality, and helps employees feel excited about coming to and/or doing their work and engaging with one another. A key downside to remote working is the reduction of real-life and opportunities for social interaction. More than simply allowing colleagues to form closer bonds and therefore work together with great chemistry, the physical workplace is also a space where meetings and idea exchanges could take place spontaneously. Such opportunities can hardly be engineered in a remote work setting, where there is little chance for unplanned interaction outside of the deliberate scheduling of online meetings. In the long term, creativity, innovation, and collaboration will suffer. Steps must therefore be taken to allow such discussions to occur organically again – especially in a hybrid work arrangement.

#### **Rethink Learning and Growth**

One important aspect of culture is learning and development (L&D) – a crucial element for all working professionals, no matter the stage of their career. L&D can take place as part of the corporate curriculum, but it can also happen informally through interaction and observation at the workplace. In a remote work environment, the lack of in-person interaction has compromised opportunities for employees to "watch and learn". For anyone starting a job for the first time or transitioning into a new role, the ability to learn through observation is limited and instead, new hires are limited to scheduled virtual trainings to learn from their colleagues and supervisors

#### **Prevent Split Cultures**

In a hybrid work environment, your employees may fall into two key groups – those who work regularly in the office, and those who prefer working remotely. Dr. Julian Waters-Lynch cautions against the risk of split cultures emerging between home-based employees and those in the office.

#### **Make Culture-Building Deliberate**

Ultimately, culture-building cannot be an afterthought in a hybrid work world – it must be a conscious and deliberate part of employers' agendas. With the lack of real-time conversations, unplanned idea exchanges and



richer communication, it will threaten employee creativity and innovation in the long term. Leaders therefore need to facilitate and engineer opportunities for ideation, creative brainstorming, and cultural bonding.

## Results & Discussions

In today's world of hybrid work, the call for organizations to lead with empathy and intent is more important than ever

### Leadership

- **Think Big, but Start Small with near Term Wins:** Make incremental changes to help workers adapt within shorter time frames. Ensure that quarterly reviews are in place to keep your hybrid work strategy closely aligned with your business, people, and culture.
- **Focus on Output, not Input:** Focus on results and motivate employees to constantly deliver their best work – no matter where or when they do it. Facilitate open communication and build trust by designing a system where managers and employees can work closely together to optimize their productivity and tasks
- **Learn from Start-Ups:** Maintain a start-up managerial style to stay close to the ground, encourage open conversation, and express care for employee needs. Get out into the trenches to listen to and engage with employees no matter where they are.

### Structure

- **Understand your Employees:** Partner with your employees to help them discern their individual characteristics, job scope and personal circumstances, in order to determine the type of work arrangement that best suits them.
- **Give Workers a Platform to Weigh In:** Conduct open ideation sessions on an ongoing basis to allow employees to suggest changes they want to see in the post-pandemic workplace. Allow the younger generation to contribute fresh perspectives and new ideas.
- **Channel Budget towards New Tools and Devices:** Money saved on real estate can be redirected towards improving the hybrid work experience. Explore innovative technologies, productivity tools and ensure that senior workers can keep up.

**Culture:** Culture building activities are no longer an optional sport – we need to rethink employee engagement.

- **Make Learning Part of Engagement:** Explore the use of creative formats and platforms, and take the time to help employees understand how training in these new skills can help them do their jobs better.
- **Level the Playing Field:** Redesign the method of promotion evaluation and introduce exceed processes to ensure that all employees get regular facetime with their bosses and a platform to ex their skills. Plan budget for selective team engagement and ideationInvest in dedicated and regular activities for social engagement, such as a team lunch or even an interactive training session. Create opportunities for a free owes exchange of ideas to take place organically, and to build trust and stronger working relationships between employees.

### Why Hybrid is here to Stay

The flexibility to either work from home or in an office is one of the reasons why a hybrid work model is here to stay. According to a survey of 3,480 remote workers at Slack, the company found that 63% of their employees desired a hybrid working model, where 20% wanted to work remotely full time, and 12% wanted to return to permanent in-office work. This desire to work within a hybrid work model was even more pronounced among workers aged 25-34, who predominantly expressed a preference for hybrid work. While working remotely, many employees discovered that the flexibility afforded by remote work actually allowed them to be more productive while enjoying a better work-life balance. However, there are merits to in-office work; the office is still an ideal place for collaboration, creating professional relationships, accessing mentorship, and building out your organization's culture.



As a result of this inherent need for freedom, flexibility, and face-to-face communication, a hybrid work model is one that offers the best solution for businesses looking to adapt to a post-pandemic world. As we discussed earlier, a hybrid work model offers a range of benefits that includes increased productivity and employee satisfaction, more opportunities for continuous learning, stronger collaborative dynamics and work relationships, and improved mental health outcomes for employees. The flexibility offered by hybrid work is unparalleled because it gives employees what they've been demanding for years and years a healthier work-life balance and an improved work-life fit. Things have undoubtedly changed, and many would argue for the better. However, creating a successful hybrid workplace that fosters collaboration, productivity, and growth will require some careful preparation and planning as businesses continue to evolve and adapt to the uncertainties of today and tomorrow.

### **Conclusion**

How We Move Forward in a Hybrid Work World. The onset of the global pandemic brought on a transformation that shook the very idea of how we work to its core. Successful hybrid work therefore requires intentional and empathetic leadership to steer the organization in the right direction; a thoughtful structure to hybrid work that allows employees to work effectively and efficiently; as well as the deliberate direction of resources towards building culture and preserving learning, development, and innovation