

June 2021

Gearing up for remote work

A guide to transforming the way teams work remotely

The world goes hybrid

The workplace is no longer a building—it's an entire ecosystem of people working at home, in the office and on the go. As you embrace hybrid work, it's more important than ever to make the home office an extension of the headquarters.

As teams fluctuate between the office and the home, video conferencing becomes the connective tissue that drives collaboration and company culture.



How can you create the best collaboration experience for the remote workforce?

Gearing up for remote work takes a combination of software and collaboration devices to support every workstyle. The remote workforce needs access to collaboration tools that minimize distractions and provide features to ensure everyone in the meeting feels like an active participant—no matter where they are joining from.

Leverage this guide for strategies on how to improve the experience for your remote workforce, including collaborators, communicators, and concentrators.

Get the answers to your key questions:

- What are the top challenges of remote work?
- What are the benefits of a video-first culture?
- How can I provide the right tools for different workstyles?
- How can I ensure teams can successfully co-create and brainstorm with distributed colleagues?
- How can I ensure remote participants are included and engaged when they are joining a meeting with in-office participants?
- How can I ensure people can easily transition from the home to the office?



What are the top challenges of remote work?

Answer: Feelings of isolation, collaboration woes, audio anxiety, and plenty of distractions.

As employees are immersed in remote work, it's crucial for them to experience natural and authentic interactions, as though they were meeting in person. People feel happier, less isolated, more productive, and engaged when they are comfortable joining with video.

Every remote worker is in a different environment, experiencing different ebbs and flows to their daily, and weekly, routine. Some employees might have a dedicated home office space, which allows them to work in a relatively distraction-free environment. Others may be working from their bedroom, kitchen or living room—or migrating in between. Just as spaces can differ, so too can potential disruptions—from pets, kids, and roommates to landscaping and construction work. Whatever the situation, their comfort level with video meetings can vary.

To meet this challenge, your collaboration solution needs to make everyone feel comfortable and included. A cornerstone of the hybrid workplace is connecting people through video. Seeing your colleagues virtually, smiling and laughing together, can help build meaningful relationships and trust.

Top personal challenges

- Feeling isolated
- Working more hours
- More distractions

Top collaboration challenges

- Difficult to connect with colleagues
- Harder to collaborate
- Less participation from people in meetings

Top requested capabilities

- Background noise removal
- Video quality that adjusts to bandwidth conditions
- A digital meeting assistant

Look for solutions and devices with the following capabilities:



Noise removal

When people collaborate from their phone, laptop, or a dedicated video conferencing device, they should feel confident that common household interruptions won't disrupt the rest of the team.



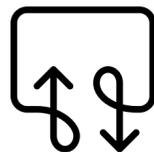
Virtual and blurred backgrounds

Privacy matters! With virtual or blurred backgrounds, an in-progress home redecoration or those morning messes from the kids are no longer something to worry about.



Digital whiteboarding and content annotation

In-person and remote teams need to simultaneously ideate, iterate, and collaborate on content and whiteboards when not in the same room together.



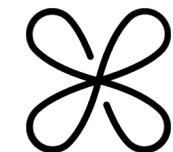
Built-in video processing

Many solutions use your laptop to process video meetings. This can cause problems like overheating, freezing or crashing. Ensure the best possible meeting experience with devices that have dedicated video processing built-in.



High-quality video and audio

Devices for the home office are a must for employees who spend a lot of time in meetings. By replacing the low-angle laptop view and providing high-definition video and audio, people can experience more natural face-to-face collaboration and feel less fatigued throughout the day.



Consistent user experience

Whether working from home or in the office, the experience needs to be consistent to remove friction.

What are the benefits of a video-first culture?

Answer: Video meetings improve collaboration and make it easier to build relationships.

Virtually every meeting going forward will include remote participants. How can you ensure that every participant is engaged, included, seen, and heard? It starts with video. Video is a powerful and efficient method for breaking down barriers in remote teams and solving the personal challenges of remote work.

According to a survey of remote workers, video use significantly impacted work experience:

Frequently use video

2.6x

more likely to say they've experienced increased empathy from colleagues

2.4x

more likely to say it's easier to collaborate

Rarely use video

3.2x

more likely to say they are unhappy with their current company

2.7x

less likely to feel connected to the company strategy



Authentic interactions and connection to peers are integral to building good working relationships. A video-first culture makes connecting face-to-face with friends and colleagues easy.

Body language and facial expressions matter. Yet these levels of communication are imperceptible on traditional conference calls. Research shows that 60 to 80% of communication¹ is nonverbal. Video reveals nonverbal cues which can help increase productivity and provide a better experience over other forms of communication. It can also help prevent people talking over each other as visual cues often indicate when someone is about to speak or ask a question—making the meeting more efficient.

Video conferencing gives remote, home-based, and traveling coworkers an engaging and easy way to communicate on a day-to-day basis. It is this everyday interaction—the face-time with our colleagues—that helps form real, meaningful bonds.

¹The Definitive Book of Body Language by Barbara Pease, 2006

Today, only 58% of the workforce regularly turns on video when they join meetings from home. While this may indicate a growing sense of video fatigue, it also, in turn, shows that a core segment of workers do want to engage through video on a regular basis. It's about finding the right solutions to make those workers who don't always feel up for video comfortable with their meeting options.

90%
of remote workers who join meetings from a laptop say they experience collaboration challenges

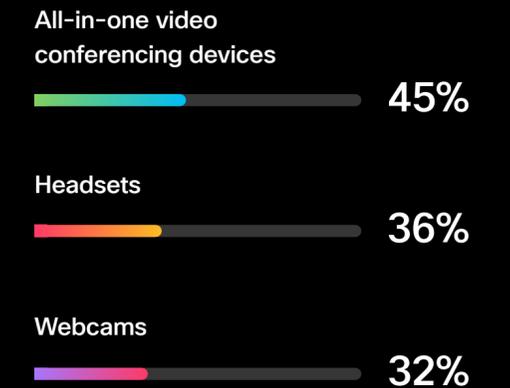
73%
believe their experience can be improved with collaboration devices

Employees who say their company provided them with adequate devices to work from home are 2x as likely to turn on video. As the data shows, this video use can lead to happier employees, increased empathy, and better collaboration.

Look for a solution with the following capabilities:

- Offers all-in-one devices for the home office that provide high-quality collaboration capabilities and serve as a primary monitor so people can easily switch between focus work and collaboration.
- Intelligent features that can help reduce fatigue, such as directional audio, noise removal, and intelligent camera framing.
- Collaboration displays that are designed to reduce eyestrain by optimizing brightness and contrast.
- Naturally positioned cameras so easily talking face-to-face and seeing eye-to-eye replace the distorted low-angle laptop video.

The top three most desired devices, according to respondents, are:



How can I provide the right tools for different workstyles?

Answer: Identify the needs of your workforce and provide them with the device that will increase productivity while removing distractions.

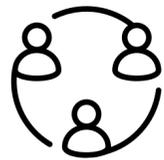
Equipping remote workers with the right tools means understanding their needs and unique workstyle. Outfitting every home office with high-end collaboration solutions can be an unnecessary expense if they go unused.

To get started, determine which groups require virtual capabilities that are similar to in-office meeting room experiences. Does the individual's role require creative collaboration and functionality like whiteboarding, annotation, and visual collaboration? Give those employees devices that allow them to easily co-create, share ideas, and enjoy a high-quality video experience throughout their day. And if an individual contributor has just a few meetings per day or is more likely to connect to their colleagues and customers on audio-only meetings, supply them with a device that will be cost-effective while meeting their needs for distraction-free conferencing.

From phones and headsets to all-in-one collaboration displays, devices improve collaboration, remove frustration, and help teams get work done.



Look to provide the following devices that are tailored to every workstyle:



Collaborators

Provide collaborators with all-in-one home office collaboration devices so they can seamlessly switch between video conferencing, co-creation, and focus work.



Communicators

Supply communicators with IP phones and headsets so they can experience crystal-clear calling with devices designed to remove background noise.



Concentrators

Equip the occasional meeting joiner with cost-effective webcams and headsets so they can stay connected and play their favorite focus work playlist when not in meetings.

How can I ensure teams can successfully co-create and brainstorm with distributed colleagues?

Answer: Provide a flexible solution that easily enables participation, ideation, and real-time creativity.

One of the top reasons people say they will return to the office is for creative collaboration. There's a reason: It's difficult to replace the energy and engagement when people collaborate in-person. A successful hybrid work strategy hinges on your ability to create robust virtual environments. Groups need tools designed to facilitate creativity, where ideas can be shared so you can harness the collective power of teams.

Your collaboration solution needs to ensure teams can bring ideas to life, even when they're apart. When other meeting participants can't follow along or participate, they can't offer their best ideas.

Look for a solution that allows employees to:

- Participate on any device whether a personal laptop, tablet or a mobile phone so people can contribute whenever inspiration strikes.
 - Save, store, and share every session so you never lose an idea and work can continue across time zones.
 - Maintain a high-quality video experience while working on content or whiteboards so people feel connected as if they were working in the same room.
- Easily understand who is contributing to the content or whiteboard with real-time profile picture visuals that tracks additions.
 - Access whiteboards and content at any time so every session becomes evergreen and ever-inspirational.
 - Break into smaller groups within the meeting so they can brainstorm and co-create before going back to the larger group.
 - Easily access their most used apps directly on a collaboration device (like a Kanban board), and share and co-create on the content while in a meeting.

As you decide what software you'll use to optimize collaboration, it's critical to supply your workforce with devices for the office and home office. You'll want to explore hardware that provides an easy and consistent experience for content sharing, annotation, and whiteboarding on interactive touch displays.

Read the Digital Whiteboarding for Remote Teams brochure.

[Learn more](#)

How can I ensure remote participants are included and engaged when they are joining a meeting with in-office participants?

Answer: Equip meeting rooms and home offices with video devices, and verify that your video software includes features that make it easy for every remote participant to engage in meetings.

For hybrid work to be successful, everyone, no matter where they are, needs to feel like they are included and can be an active participant in the meeting. All the tools and strategies mentioned thus far will help your team collaborate with ease, whether they are at home or in the office.

However, it's worth diving a bit deeper into some of the best practices for meetings that include both remote and in-office participants. We've all seen it happen—meetings where those in the office seem to forget that those joining remotely are even there.

The remote participants may be hard to hear or rendered nearly invisible if they call in without video. Those in the office may struggle with weak or poorly placed mics, leaving their remote colleagues straining to follow the conversation.

Encouraging the use of video and equipping both home offices and conference rooms with quality video and audio technology goes a long way to avoiding these pitfalls. People are hungry for better experiences and the tools to make it happen—90% reported their home meeting experience could be improved with better solutions. Instead of being a faint voice in the corner or a tiny, grainy image on a screen, remote participants need to be fully included and heard, which is why it's so important to equip both home offices and conference rooms with quality video and audio technology. Culture and technology go a long way in meeting the challenges that hybrid work environments present.

To create an inclusive environment for remote attendees, look for solution that provides:

- Roundtable templates so everyone in the meeting gets a chance to speak whether they are in the meeting room or remote.
- Digital whiteboarding and content annotation that allows everyone in the meeting to participate, wherever they are.
- Multiple ways to engage, including polling, chat, and Q&A.
- Features that remove distractions, so everyone feels comfortable participating no matter the environment they are in.
- The ability to virtually raise hands so people can easily enter the conversation.
- Real-time transcription and translation so you can remove language barriers and everyone can follow the meeting.

People are hungry for better experiences and the tools to make it happen

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reported their home meeting experience could be improved with better solutions

How can I ensure people can easily transition from the home to the office?

Answer: Ensure a consistent collaboration experience between the home and the office. Provide technology-driven wayfinding and office navigation while providing the safety measures that makes everyone feel comfortable.

In addition to ensuring people have what they need to thrive in their home office, it's also critical to make their transition to the main office seamless on the days they do come in, whether that's a couple times per week or just once a quarter.

As more and more companies embrace the hybrid work model, many are reimagining their office spaces, moving away from personal desks and leaning toward flexible hotdesking. While this shift has potential to improve workspace use, it also requires careful planning to avoid massive headaches and traffic jams. And with 86% of employees planning to work from the office at least one day per month, creating an effortless experience is especially vital.

Here are a few elements you should have in place:

- Clear, simple check-in process when a team member arrives at the office.
 - Wayfinding system for efficiently locating and reserving open workstations.
 - Hotdesking stations that allow people to easily log-on and replicate their normal digital work environment.
 - High-quality devices (webcams, collaboration displays, etc.) and software solutions to enable an excellent video conferencing experience when collaborating with remote colleagues.
 - Effective process for discovering and booking meeting rooms.
- Easy visual indicators outside of rooms that show which rooms are available and which are occupied.
 - Zero-touch experiences that allow for room booking and meeting controls using a digital assistant.
 - Digital signage on displays to keep employees informed about office guidelines.
 - Sensors that monitor room capacity and send a notification with directions to the closest available room if it becomes overcrowded.
 - Cleaning notification that informs employees of when a desk or room was last cleaned.
 - Systems and technology to create a safe, healthy work environment that adheres to all local COVID-19 guidelines.

Hybrid work isn't just the future of work—it's the here and now of work.

To be successful, enable teams with tools to work together seamlessly, even when they're apart. Empowering every employee with a full-featured, intuitive collaboration experience that allows them to connect and co-create from anywhere is a foundational requirement for the hybrid workplace.

So, how can you empower your remote and hybrid workforce to work smarter and collaborate better?

Answer: It starts with Webex.

With Webex, you can reimagine collaboration with devices for every remote and hybrid workstyle. From headsets and webcams to all-in-one collaboration displays, you can improve communication and collaboration while removing distractions, so everyone is included. Because it's not about simply getting work done.

It's about working smarter and sparking a new kind of collaboration, where innovative ideas take shape no matter where your teams are.

[Learn more about Webex devices](#)



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