REPORT:

Workplace trends & insights 2022 report: Building a hybrid future that works for everyone

SAPPSPACE Beezy

Beezy powers the modern intranet that's part of the Appspace workplace experience platform.



INTRODUCTION

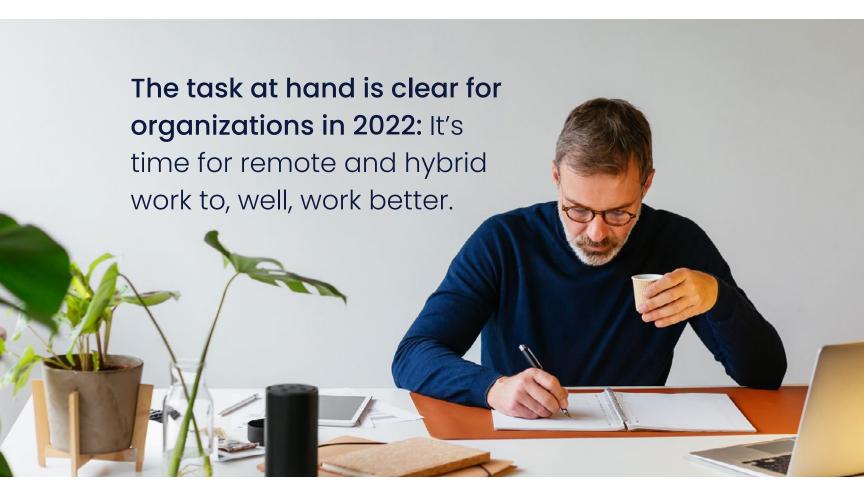
Before diving into our 2022 report on workplace trends & insights, take a look at your surroundings. What do you see?

Maybe you're reading this report from your office. Or your home. A nearby coffee shop or at the airport heading out for vacation. Or somewhere else entirely. The point is, many of us now have endless options when it comes to where we complete our work — and that's great news for all of us.

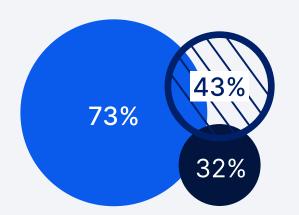
It's a significant shift for businesses, too. Increased flexibility around worker location opens doors to new talent pools, gains in employee retention and countless other organizational opportunities. However, despite this ongoing evolution in employees' work styles and larger conversations around the Great Resignation, many organizations still struggle to keep staffers near and far happy and engaged. In one way or another, we all feel the friction stemming from new and varied work environments. It's likely we each see the exciting possibilities within this evolution as well.

To understand how decision-makers can better meet workers' needs in 2022 and lean into new workplace opportunities, Beezy followed up its 2021 workplace trends & insights report by surveying 800 full-time U.S. employees at large organizations, including 150 IT managers. We asked about their top struggles, goals, and motivators — both in terms of completing work and forming connections with peers.

As was the case last year, employees' expectations outpace organizational standards, and in many areas frustrations have intensified since 2021. In particular, employee happiness levels aren't growing as quickly as leadership hopes. While many companies have made significant investments in workplace technology solutions, findings from this year indicate implementation and rollouts are either incomplete or not being leveraged to their full potential.



KEY FINDINGS



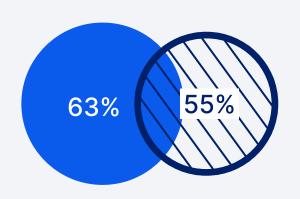
Remote, long-term

73% of employees now work in either a hybrid or fully remote setting, with nearly half (43%) working remotely full-time. What's more, a third of workers (32%) hope to stay fully remote long-term — an 11 point increase from last year.









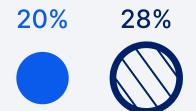
Flexibility required

63% of employees are now much more willing to work with a company offering flexibility in terms of working location, compared to only **55%** in 2021.





2021: **55%**



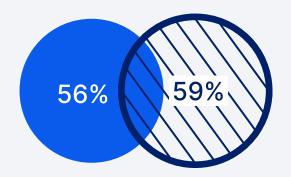
Happiness declining

Just **20**% of workers say they're happy at work and getting happier — declining from **28**% in 2021.

2022: **20%**



2021: **28%**



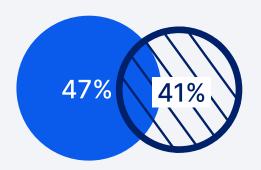
Time wasted

56% of employees have been unable to locate digital documents while working remotely this year, an ongoing frustration, down slightly from **59%** in 2021.

2022: **56%**



2021: 59%



KEY FINDINGS

Social struggles

47% of employees shared that lacking a sense of camaraderie with their coworkers is a top struggle when working remotely this year, up from **41%** in 2021.

2022: **47%**



2021: 41%

28% 26%

Reservation issues

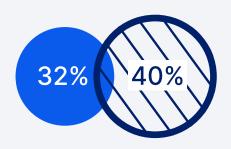
Among organizations with active investments in return-to-work solutions, only **28**% of companies have added the ability to help with room/desk reservations. Even fewer (**26**%) have added the power to manage contactless check-in processes.



Room/desk reservations: 28%



Contactless check-in: 26%



Shadow IT

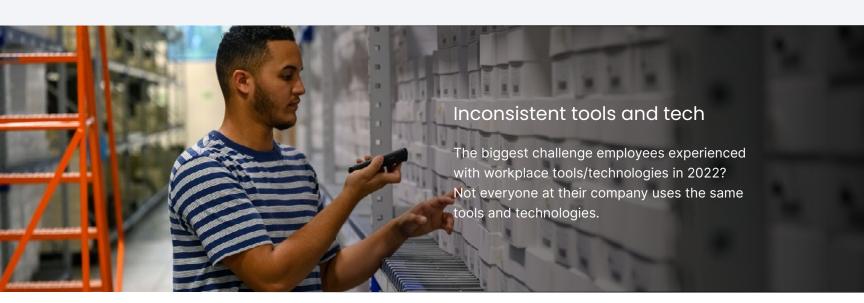
A significant number of employees continue to use shadow IT at work — **32**% of workers use unapproved communication and collaboration tools in 2022, dropping only slightly from **40**% in 2021.



2022: **32**%



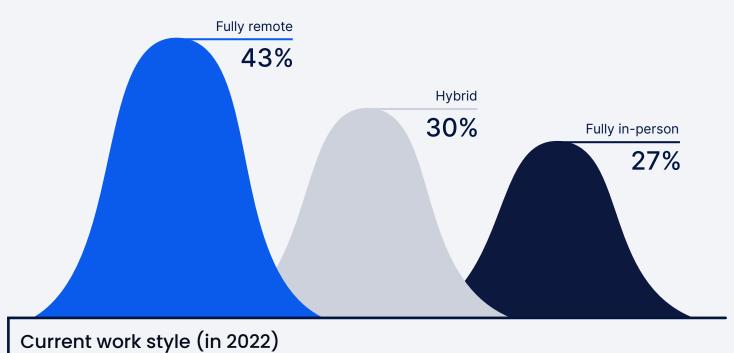
2021: **40**%



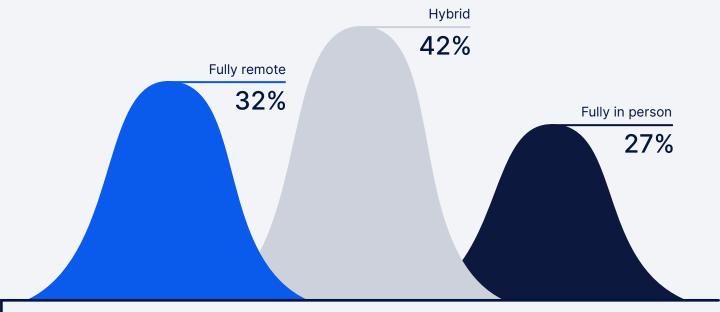


Current/future work situations



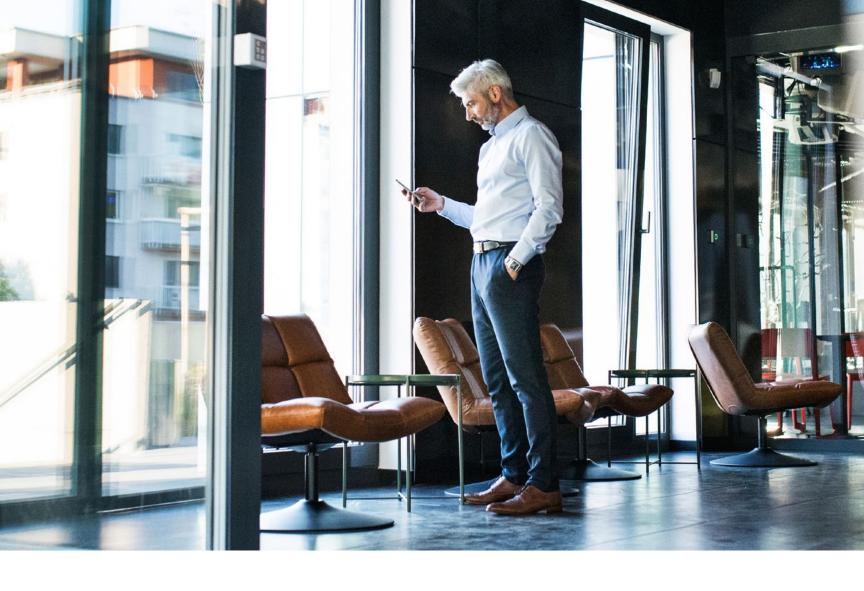


How people are working today



Post-pandemic work style desire

How people want to work moving forward



Does your company act its size?

How big is your organization? When it comes to where employees want to complete work, company size plays a role.

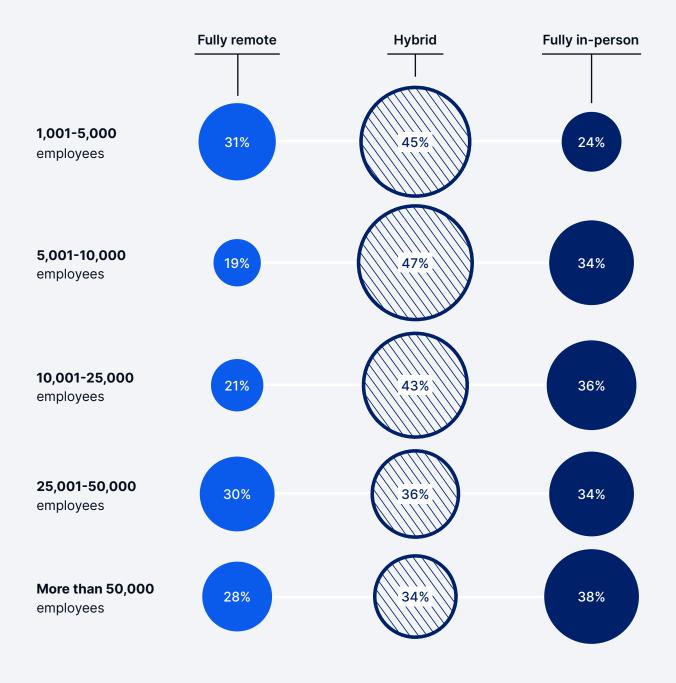


O) I work for a company with > 25,000 employees — Prepare for a future with any and every work arrangement. Employees at large organizations show a slight preference for fully remote work, but even that feeling isn't incredibly strong: Fully remote is almost evenly tied with in-person and hybrid options. Moving forward, your company must learn how to accommodate all workplace preferences. You have the resources to meet this employee expectation, so workers are not going to let you off of the hook.



I work for a company with < 25,000 employees — Get on board with hybrid, and fast. Nearly half of employees at companies with 25,000 people or fewer report a preference for hybrid work arrangements. Your company should center decisionmaking around hybrid workers and develop new opportunities to consistently elicit feedback from those employees bridging home and office.

Employees' post-pandemic work style desire, by company size



Why is this so important? Because workstyle preferences now play a major role in determining whether employers are successful with recruitment and hiring efforts. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of employees are much more willing to work with a company offering flexibility in terms of working location, compared to just 55% of employees in 2021.

There's no use pretending hybrid and remote work are just a fad — and why would you want to? Work beyond the office is now mainstream and comes with many benefits (for employees, customers, and leadership). Companies that aren't on board with hybrid work will lose access to top talent, and maybe already are. Employer flexibility has a meaningful impact on employee perception, and decision-makers need to deliver in this area given today's tight hiring market.



Likewise, with so few employees going into the office on a regular basis, employers need to ensure that when staff do make the trek, they're greeted with the most engaging, positive, and productive in-office experience possible. While organizations must adapt to the high level of flexibility employees are now accustomed to, there's equal urgency to provide better and more informed physical

work environments. Improvements here incentivize and encourage employees to return to the workplace, and more often.

Larger companies should strive extra hard for excellent in-person workspaces because these organizations dedicate more resources to rent, maintenance fees, and other facilities-related overheads.



Don't take our word for it — What I'd like to see from my company's leadership most is:

Understanding, acceptance and compassion for the impact our new world has had on our employee well-being.

- hybrid HR director

Letting us choose to be fully at-home workers if we want to be, as long as work is consistent and there's no difference in quality, there should be that option.

- fully in-person sales employee

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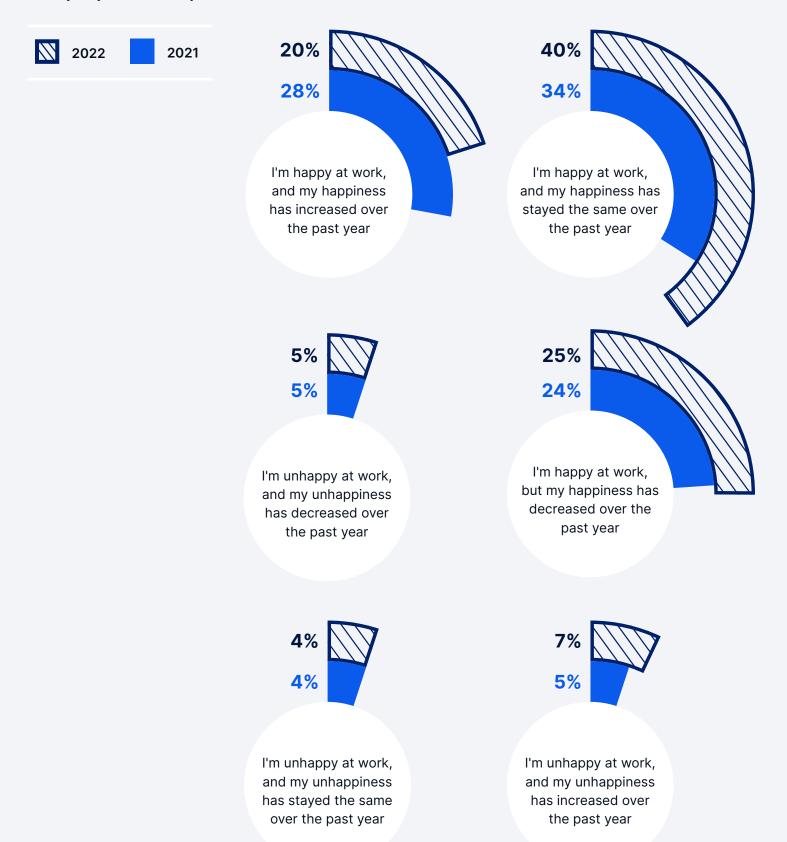
Companies haven't mastered employee happiness, engagement, or worklife balance — even after years of remote and hybrid work.

Employee happiness levels remain roughly the same year-over-year — 85% of employees report some level of happiness at work in 2022, compared to 86% in 2021.

However, employers should be alarmed by the fact that happiness levels aren't growing over time.



How happy are employees today?



What's behind stagnating levels of employee happiness? Let's explore common factors preventing employees from feeling happier and more engaged at work.

1. Productivity problems

85%

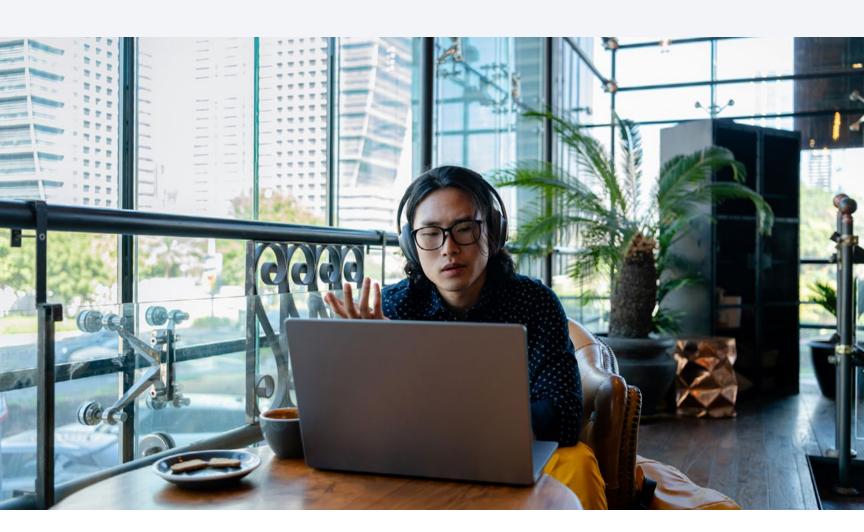
Too many meetings on their plates — 85% of employees report they'd be able to successfully complete their jobs with fewer virtual meetings/calls, the same number as in 2021.

54%

An abundance of distractions — 54% of employees in 2022 find frequent notifications decrease productivity, improving only slightly from the 58% of employees who shared this feeling in 2021.

45%

Working a high number of hours per week — Nearly half of employees (45%) are still trending upward in weekly work time.



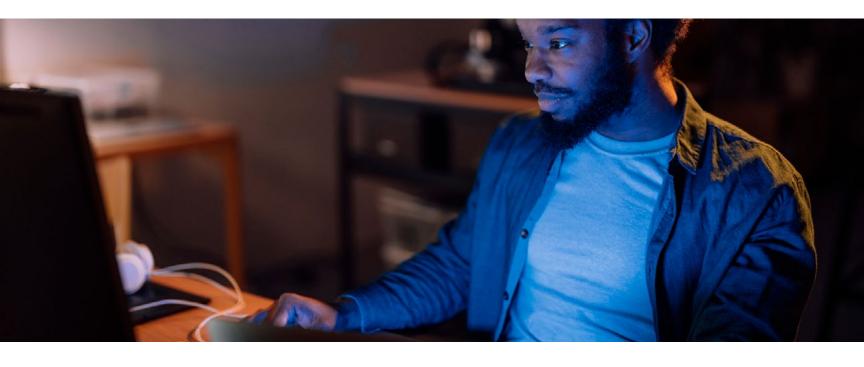
The fact that employees' work hours are increasing should be a big red flag for employers, as this metric has gotten worse year-over-year. Consider an employee who worked 45 hours a week in 2020, and then started working far more hours in 2021 (now up to 55 hours weekly on average). In 2022, that 55-hour threshold is our employee's new hour benchmark — meaning if that same employee reports working far more hours again in 2022, their workweek could now flex up to 60-65 hours this year.

IT managers are bearing the brunt of this damaging trend. This year, **63% of IT managers** report working more hours now than before the pandemic, compared to only **42% of general employees** who shared similar increases. With IT managers dedicating extra time, lackluster gains made up to this point indicate that either current solutions are not hitting the mark or there's poor guidance from leadership around investments. Or worse — both.

General employees
42%

Reported increased hours

Increased working hours need to stop for all employees, and fast. There's a high likelihood IT managers are experiencing burnout working at this pace, too.



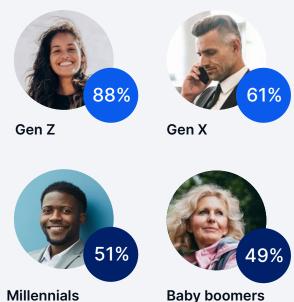


An inability to find the information they need to do their jobs — 56% of employees have been unable to find digital documents when needed while working remotely, compared to 59% in 2021.

Looking at this stat, you may wonder just how much time your organization has wasted before the work even starts. Across the board, employees far too often spin their wheels tracking down information that should always be at their fingertips, and not every generation is equally adept at finding required resources. The age groups struggling the most in 2022 may surprise you, too.

Despite a reputation for being incredibly tech savvy, Gen Z employees stand out in reporting difficulties finding the right digital documents during periods of remote work. Here's how each generation feels:

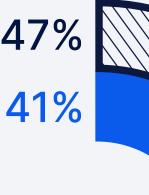
Challenges finding digital documents



2022

2021





3. Social struggles

Lacking a sense of camaraderie with their coworkers — 47% of employees shared this was a top struggle when working remotely this year, compared to 41% in 2021.

Among all generations, employees call out concerns around relationship building when working remotely. The same is true regardless of where employees clock in.

This lack of personal connections can present itself in two ways:

01

An absence of close relationships with coworkers that results in feelings of isolation.

02

Disengagement from the work itself.

On the surface, the second outcome may feel less symptomatic of weak interpersonal relationships. However, we all know how much easier and more exciting it is to perform good work when it will drive results for a team of peers that you know well and care for.

The relative uniformity of employees' opinions about relationship building and maintenance is good news for companies — it signals the effectiveness of a standardized approach across the organization to address social gaps and the shortcomings they create.



Biggest remote work struggle, by age:



Gen Z Finding a sense of belonging and culture at the company (50%)



Gen X Feeling a sense of camaraderie with coworkers (49%)



Millennials Feeling connected and engaged with work (54%)



Boomers Feeling a sense of camaraderie with coworkers (58%)

Biggest remote work struggle, by work style:

52%

Fully remote Feeling a sense of camaraderie with coworkers

49% 51%

Hybrid Feeling connected and engaged with work

In person Feeling connected and engaged with work

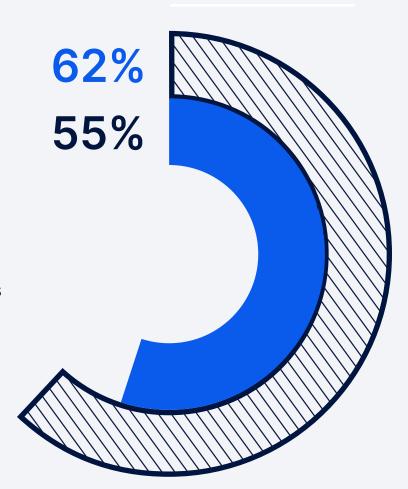
Another big trend across companies:

When it comes to a disconnect with coworkers and culture, IT is feeling the tension. Chances are it's causing problems for your company.

This year, 42% of IT managers reported feelings of not belonging and a lack of culture at their company, compared to 35% of general employees. They were also more likely to report not feeling connected and engaged (59% IT/46% general) and not feeling included in virtual meetings, email and messaging conversations (38% IT/21% general).

If you're tasking IT alone with solving problems and developing solutions that work for everyone at your organization, buckle up for an uphill battle. There are likely gaps between your IT team (those in control of technology) and other employees (those also using the same technology daily). Bridge this divide and find common ground across departments through technology investments that take everyone's voices and needs into consideration.





4. Lackluster events

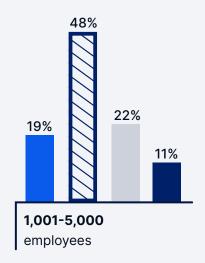
Ineffective culture-building events still limit relationship potential — 62% of employees say their employers are good at this responsibility in 2022, compared to just 55% in 2021.

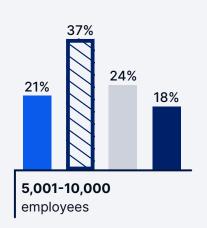
While things are looking up in 2022, culture-building events designed to connect those in different places remain a thorn in the side of employees and businesses alike.

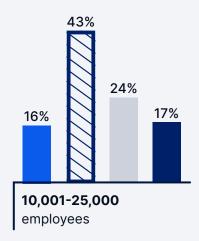
If you're part of a larger company, chances are your organization hasn't found the exact right equation when it comes to planning and hosting virtual culture-building events either. Sound familiar? Despite having more resources to dedicate to solutions in this area, larger organizations also have more factors to contend with (including time zones, languages, and different tools that don't work together).

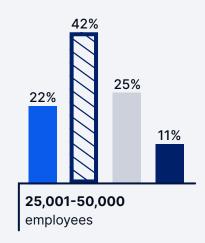
How effective organizations have been at transitioning culture-building events online, by company size

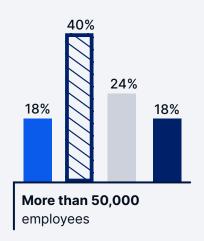


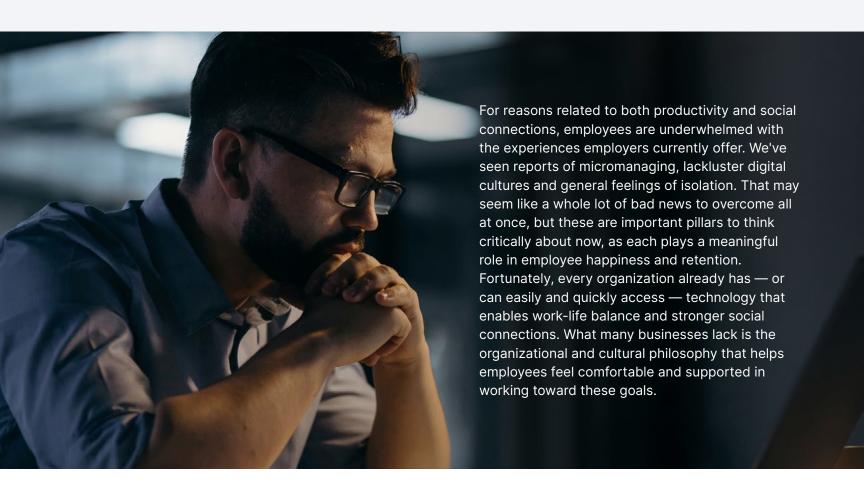












Consider these three questions to evaluate the effectiveness of your current mindset:

1. What do we communicate to employees?

With employees spread across offices, locations and time zones, camaraderie doesn't happen naturally or overnight. In an office setting, employees make deep connections between meetings, over lunch or on the commute home. Now, it's no surprise that employees who may never have met one another in person (remote hires, for example) feel disconnected.

Despite distance, the opportunity to build relationships still exists, and don't underestimate the power of leading by example. As a leader in your organization, it's crucial that you reiterate to employees the importance of taking time off and spending part of each week getting to know your colleagues — model that behavior yourself. What are you doing to demonstrate how technology investments are not designed solely for productivity gains?

2. How do we approach events?

Stop thinking of culture-building events as one-off experiences. Instead, create a virtual environment where all employees feel comfortable participating in culture every day.

As a start, offer a digital environment filled with both work and non-work related culture-building engagements and activities. Culture-building events aren't a point in time. Rather, the "event" should be an opportunity for all workers to engage in their own time zone and language, and in the capacity that works best for them.

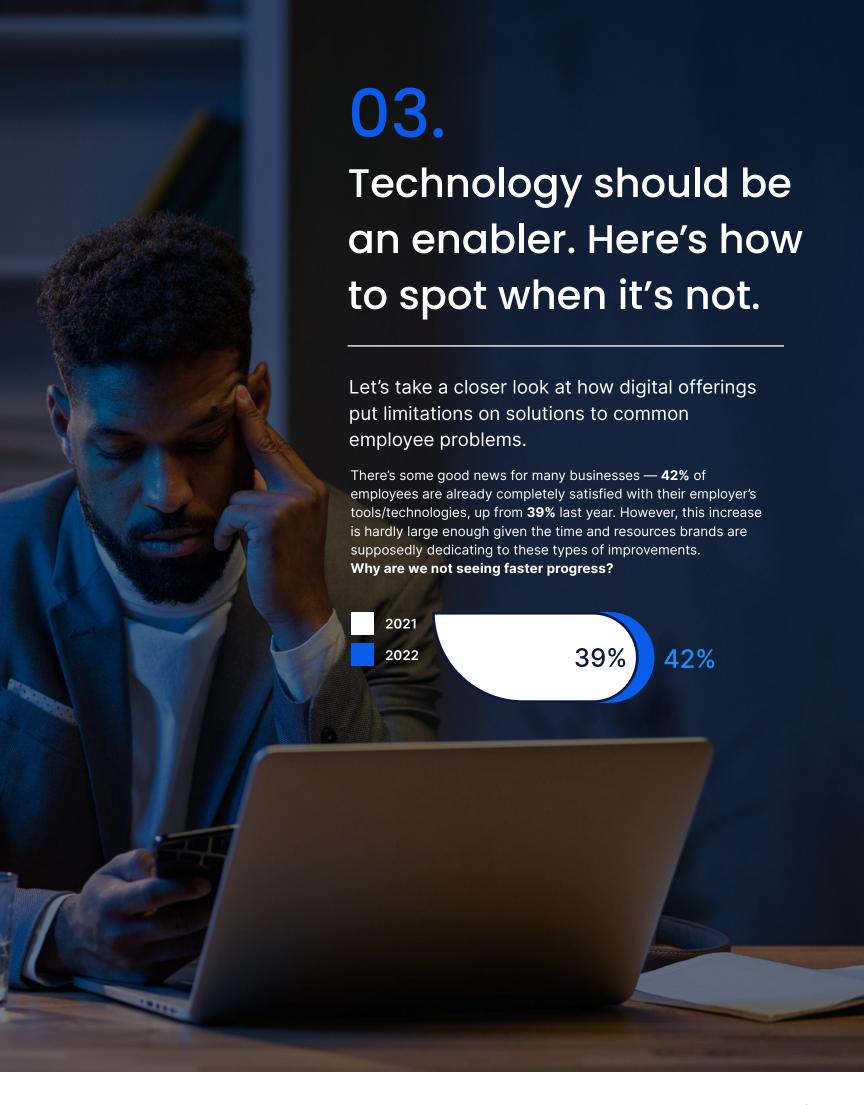
This is a major value proposition for a modern intranet, in fact. As people come online and have their morning coffee, the first thing they should do is head into their digital workplace and read the company newsfeed, see what business closed in the past 24 hours, what the CEO blogged about recently, who was praised and more. What each employee sees will be unique to them, but their ongoing participation — and in turn others reacting to their comments, posts and activity — builds engagement and momentum over time.

3. Are we acting fast enough?

If you have to think hard about this question, you're probably already behind the curve. Act now. If employees continue to struggle to build connections and feel happier at work, these factors will push staffers toward new opportunities —

and will keep top talent from knocking on your door in the first place. There are no excuses for lingering connectivity gaps three years into our new normal of remote and hybrid work.







Technology concerns run deepest among younger employees

While baby boomers are most likely to report satisfaction with solutions currently available to them (52%), millennials felt much less positive (37%). Likewise, 40% of millennials and **63% of Gen Zers report that their workplace tools are buggy and unreliable**, difficult to navigate or don't integrate well with other technologies — while just 23% of boomers share the same concerns.

It's not surprising younger generations bring higher technology expectations to the workplace, similar to their lives outside of work. If anything, lean on younger employees to guide faster technology innovation and champion buy-in across the organization. What is cause for alarm, however, is the fact that the sentiment gap between age groups is growing year-over-year. Compared to 2021, where 44% of boomers and 33% of millennials reported being satisfied with available technologies, agreement is even harder to come by now.

Rather than dedicating resources to strategies and technology investments that bring employees together, organizations' actions up to this point seem to be driving a wedge between generations. To refocus, funnel more investments toward resources that train employees and build governance programs around the consistent use of organizationally approved technologies. Often, technology adoption hurdles point to cultural and governance issues just as much as technological problems.

When it comes to tools/technologies used in 2022, employees' biggest challenges remain the same as in 2021.

Interestingly, 2022's top challenge is that not everyone in the company is using the same tools and technologies, replacing bugginess/unreliability from last year. When organizations haven't centralized key tools related to communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing, issues follow. Key information is not stored in the same place, and employees end up jumping from application to application and experiencing headache after headache. Don't underestimate how challenging it can be when, for instance, one of your offices uses Microsoft Teams and another Slack — no technology disconnect is too small to cause major problems and push staffers out the door.

Employees' biggest challenges with workplace tools/technologies

	2022	2021
No. 1	Not everyone in the company uses the same tools and technologies	They're buggy or unreliable
No. 2	They're buggy or unreliable	Not everyone in the company uses the same tools and technologies
No. 3	They don't integrate well with other tools and technologies	They don't integrate well with other tools and technologies

Connectivity and collaboration hurdles are amplified when employees are working from somewhere different every day.

Employees don't know where to find anything, or even each other, anymore. Information and people remain scattered across too many different potential places, exacerbating any disconnects that already exist across organizations. Last year, employees identified their intranets as their biggest pain point when working remotely. This year, employees are calling out a similar problem — but rather than naming intranet specifically, they're narrowing in on lingering communication and collaboration issues the right intranet would solve.

When the perceived level of effort and change management required to fix broken intranets is too high, teams reactively shift to more simplified communication tools. It's like renovating your bathroom — slapping on a new coat of paint is a Band-Aid when what you really want to do is relocate your sink and shower, but that requires more complicated plumbing updates. Your fix may prove bright and shiny in the short term, but it's never going to lead to the long-term resolution you're after.

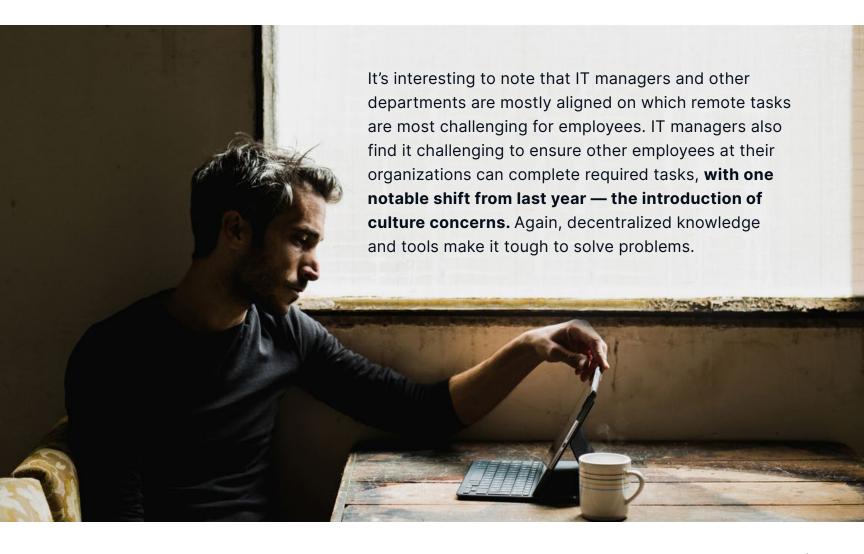
Addressing pain points is a timely matter because there's a direct correlation between these problems and employees' most common challenges. When staffers don't use the same tools and technologies, we expect communication, knowledge-sharing and information-finding issues to follow not far behind.

Employees' top pain points when working remotely



Most challenging tasks to complete remotely, according to employees (based on "extremely challenging")

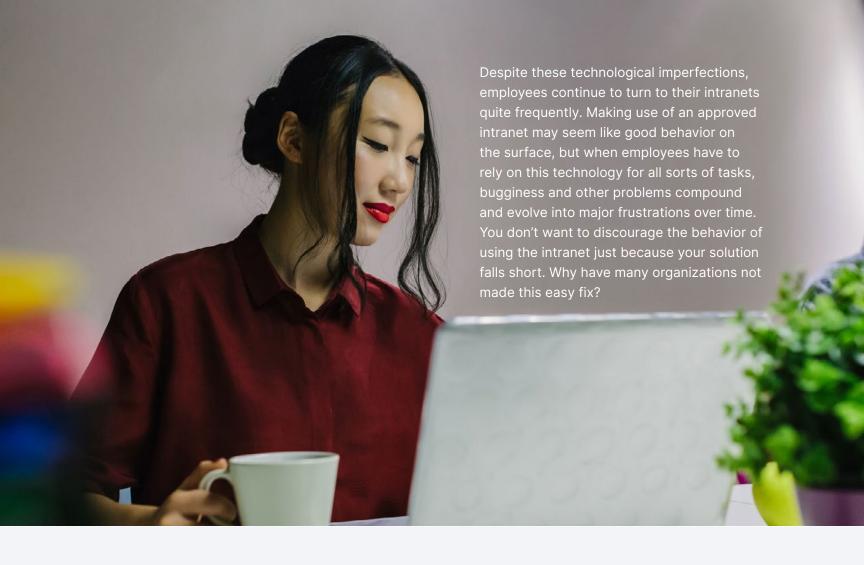
2022 2021 Solve technical/ 24% Solve technical/ Participate in corporate cult 24% Participate in corporate culture corporate culture Locate specific Communicate quickly No. 3 15% 14% files or people with and seamlessly across specific expertise platforms and devices

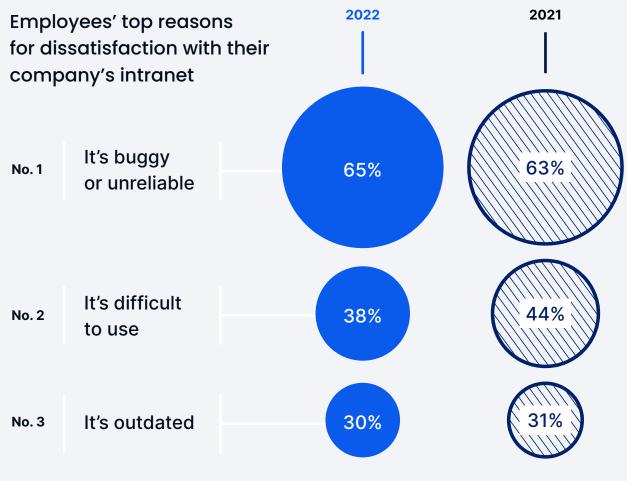




Most challenging tasks for employees to complete remotely, according to IT managers (based on "extremely challenging")

	2022		2021	
No. 1	35%	Participate in corporate culture	39%	Solve technical/ IT issues
No.2	30%	Solve technical/ IT issues	28%	Collaborate across teams, departments and/or locations
No. 3	23%	Locate specific files or people with specific expertise	27%	Communicate quickly and seamlessly across platforms and devices



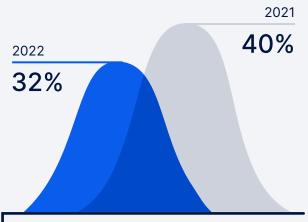




How often employees use their company intranet

	2022	2021
Multiple times per day	58%	61%
At least once per day	24%	22%
A few times a week	11%	12%
A few times per month (2022)*	5%	3%*
Once per month	1%	1%
Never	1%	1%

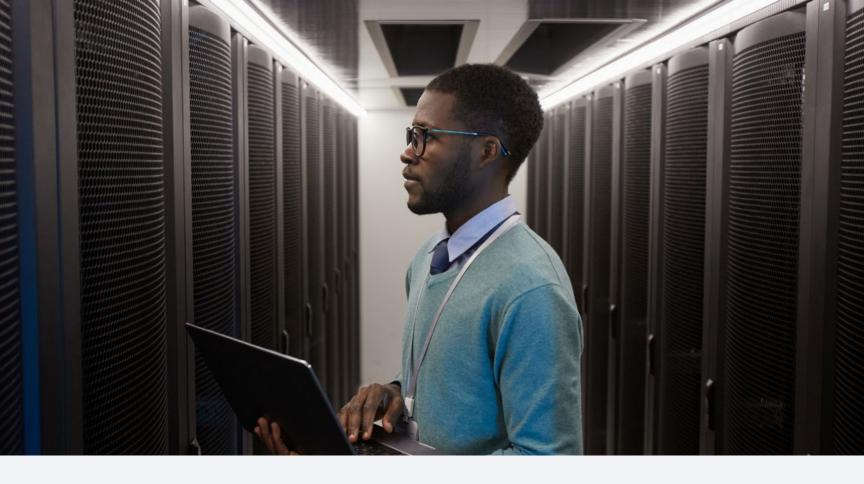
^{*}At least once per week (2021)



Shadow IT at work

Making intranet improvements is important, given that when employees dislike the tools/ technologies at their disposal — or lack them altogether — they quickly seek workarounds.

About the same number of employees continue to use shadow IT at work — 32% of workers use unapproved communication and collaboration tools in 2022, compared to 40% in 2021. This behavior happens despite employees remaining highly aware of the fact that their companies monitor their actions on company-owned devices — 53% of employees believe their employers do this in 2022, holding steady from 54% in 2021.



IT departments aren't safeguarded from IT problems

IT managers are shadow IT power users. A majority (58%) used unapproved communication and collaboration tools this year, compared to only 28% of general employees. What's more, IT managers also report stronger suspicions of their employers monitoring this behavior — 70% of IT managers say employers do, compared to just 50% of general employees.

Despite a greater awareness of how technology works at their organizations, IT managers nonetheless contribute to technology problems and the presence of non-sanctioned tools and the security risks these tools present. If this is happening at your company, have you thought about the reasons why? **Ask yourself and your team:**

Do our IT teams have the tools they need to succeed?

Can our IT teams access tools and do their jobs effectively from both the office and while working at home?

How can we ensure our IT teams are on board with technology investments and decisions, and therefore help other departments see the long-term value of these solutions?

Across the board, common technology challenges that surfaced in our 2021 report stuck around in 2022 — and some got worse.

Employers must refocus around both the quantity and quality of tools offered to their teams, as well as nailing basic technology capabilities that continue to cause friction among workers near and far. In particular, many businesses must quickly shift priorities from tools that just work well to tools that also work well with others. If organizations can't achieve this technology standard, employees won't hesitate to find workarounds that lead to unwanted security and productivity risks (or new jobs altogether).

Employees feel zero hesitation to bypass technology limitations, even when it runs counter to the way their employer wants them to behave. Now is the time to standardize solutions and offer employees the right tools with the right user experience.

66

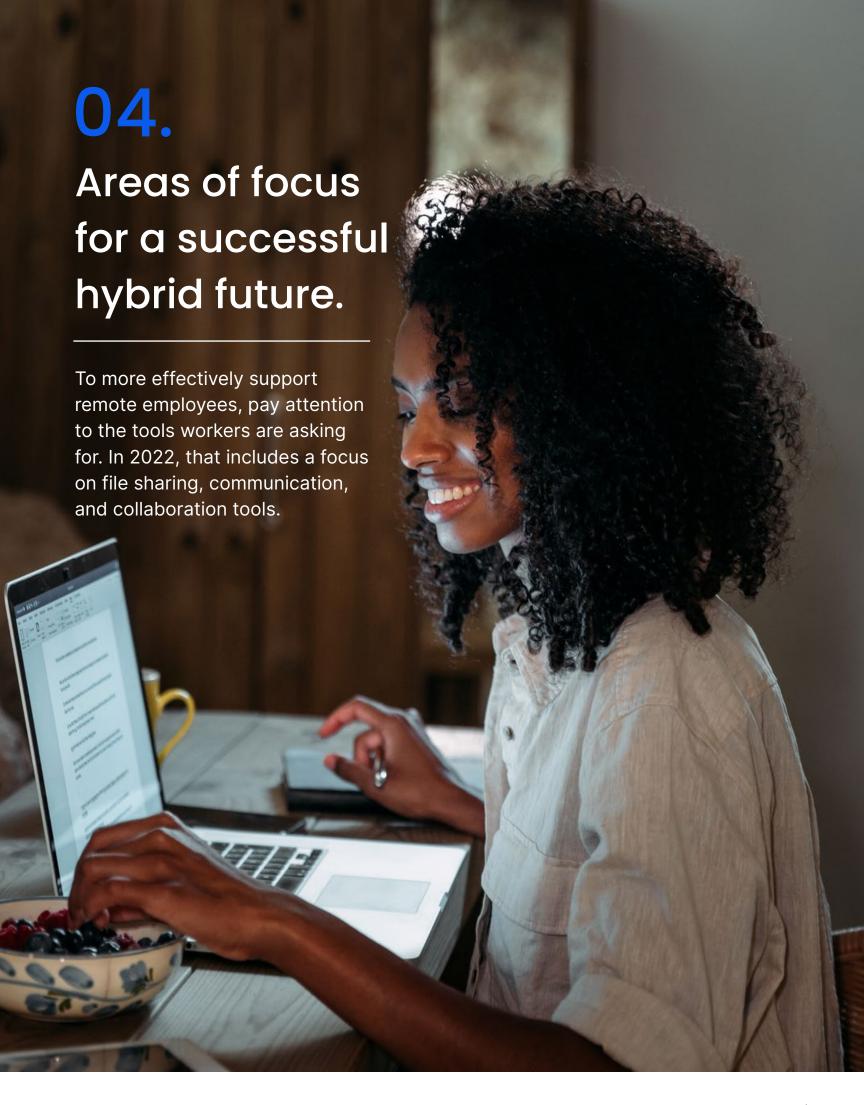
Don't just take our word for it —

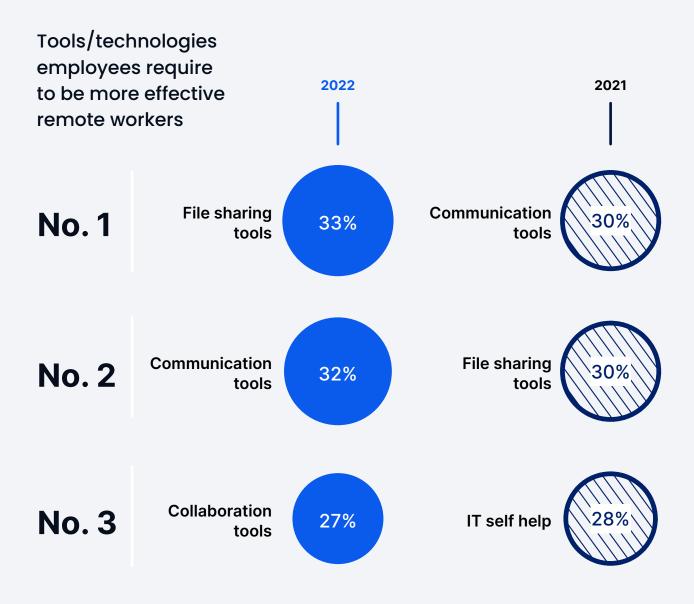
Streamline the systems we use and combine them so that we only use one or two rather than four or five.

— hybrid associate/analyst

We need to work on file sharing abilities that don't require emailing files back and forth.

- in-person operations associate/analyst

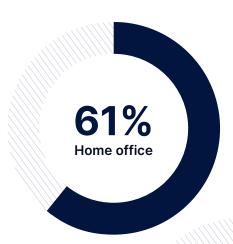




To facilitate a smooth transition back to the office for employees who are interested, some organizations have already made investments in capabilities like contactless check-in (26%) and room/desk reservations (28%). And these tools work — 77% of employees working at organizations that have invested in return-to-workplace systems say those tools make them feel **more comfortable** returning to their workplace.

However, adoption rates are much too low, leaving an opportunity for businesses that can perfect these capabilities fastest. Likewise, organizations should explore deeper and more effective communication tools this year. 83% of respondents believe their organizations currently deliver consistent communications across all channels, and that their employers are good at providing a consistent employee experience and company culture among all employees, regardless of location (75% yes). But when employees are left out, alienation occurs most often with workers beyond the office. There's a major gap between who is feeling left out and who is not.

Which employees miss out on a full experience/company culture?



54% Frontline

18%
Corporate office

Looking ahead, organizations have a new element to contend with — even more employees returning to the workplace, partially or fully. In either case, technology can help, both in terms of making employees feel more comfortable working in person, and also in connecting employees no matter where they choose to work from. Now is the time to ensure collaboration is front and center.



A word of advice from your hybrid employees

Are you turning to hybrid employees for feedback directly and often? If not, you're missing out on key insights among this group.

Because they work across multiple locations, hybrid employees provide a unique and helpful lens into how operations are going both in the office and at home. In many cases, hybrid workers can serve as the "voice" of all types of workers, so it's important to seek out and action their feedback when making decisions.

79%

For example, hybrid employees are most likely to report a consistent employee/culture experience (79%), compared to their in-person and at-home counterparts.

What's driving these feelings? What do hybrid employees enjoy most about each work environment, and how can you translate those preferences into improvements for all staffers regardless of location?

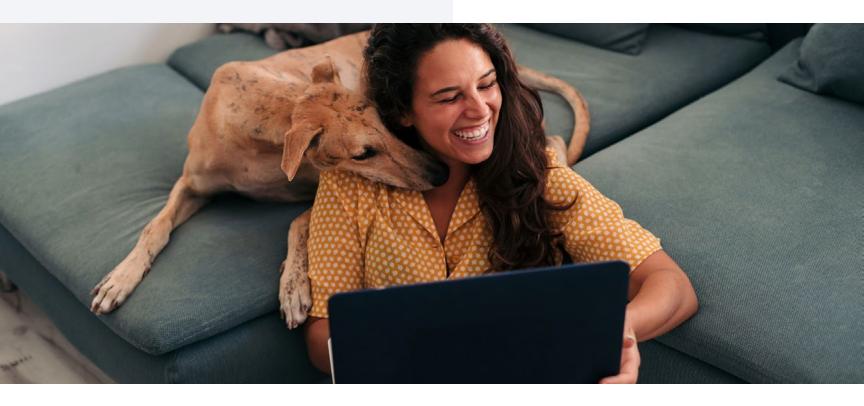


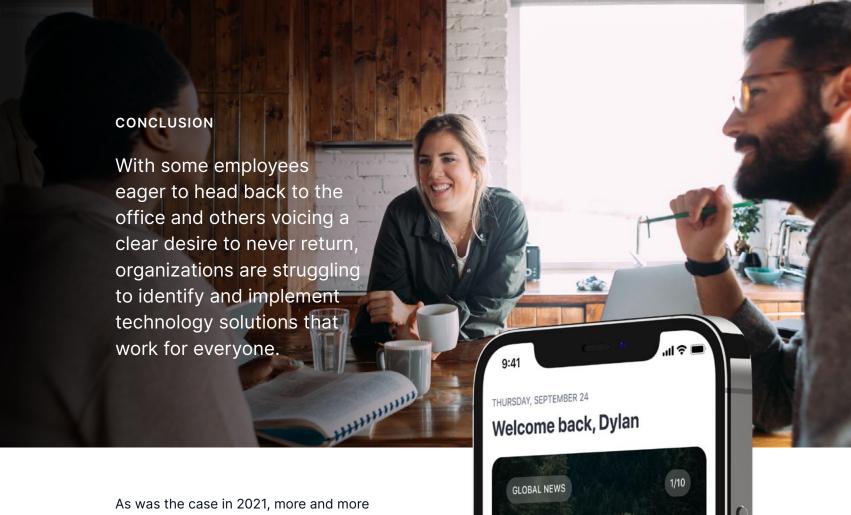
Include remote staff on decisions and progress, not just letting us know afterwards. When we were in the office we were part of the conversation.

- fully remote associate/analyst

Working on consistent communication to staff regarding significant changes rather than getting 10 different messages from 10 different people.

- fully remote operations associate/analyst



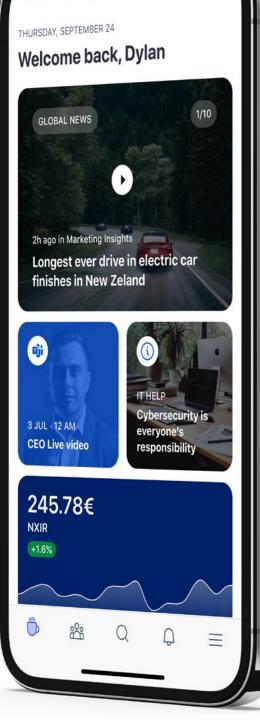


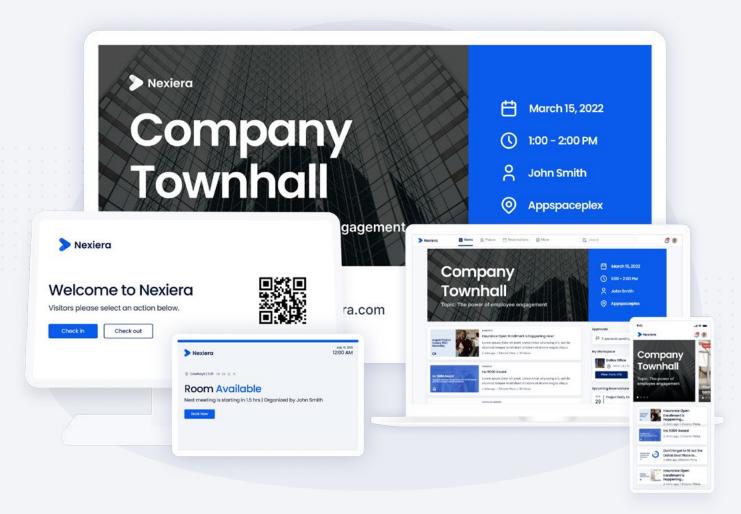
As was the case in 2021, more and more employees are clamoring for permanent changes to the ways they work, and there's growing impatience toward organizations unable to deliver on that expectation. In response, decision-makers must continue to evaluate areas where their companies' existing technologies fall short, with the goal of making informed decisions about how to better connect staffers and empower teams to communicate, collaborate, and ultimately enjoy their work.

Last year we saw improvements in organizations' willingness to implement new solutions that cater more directly to the needs of remote and hybrid workers. But decision-makers must now push their investments one step further. This year, encourage your employees to lean on technology for deeper, more effective and more diverse productivity and social gains.

When positioned correctly, technology plays a meaningful role in supporting workers and meeting their needs within 2022's ongoing work-type evolution.

Can your technology do that?





METHODOLOGY

We surveyed 800 employees across job levels and departments — including 150 IT managers — in the U.S. in February 2022. All respondents were full-time employees who worked at organizations with more than 1,000 employees and shifted to partial or fully remote work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. All IT respondents worked at the manager level or above.

ABOUT US

Beezy is the award-winning modern intranet that's part of the Appspace platform.

Appspace is the workplace experience platform for communications and workplace management. It's the first to combine a modern intranet (powered by Beezy), space reservation, digital signage, and more - all in a single, easy-to-use platform. Now organizations can replace siloed products that are costly to integrate and unite their physical and digital workplace. More than 150 Fortune 500 companies, and 10 million on-site, remote, and frontline employees, are using Appspace to make work a more connected and engaging experience.

Learn more at appspace.com



