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RICOH

# GOING TO WORK IN THE NEXT NORMAL

Research survey reveals the need for inherent  
adaptability in workplace technology



# HYBRID WORKING FOR SMES

Change was the watchword for business in 2020. Regardless of size or sector, companies had to find new ways to keep their people connected and make any space a workspace, as offices, hubs and meeting rooms became off limits for over a year.

Some were well prepared, with their people already used to remote working and offered the right tools to make the most of it. Others, found their businesses caught out due to a heavy reliance on office-based tools, and so were in a world of workarounds and quick fixes – some of which remain to this day.

To understand how businesses are approaching hybrid working, and what they need to make a success of it, Logitech commissioned a peer-based research study. We asked businesses how they're approaching the transition from office to hybrid, how they managed the lockdown period, and their views about the viability of the office.

Now, we're looking at our findings in tandem with Ricoh's research into how businesses operated during the pandemic to gain a full understanding of business pain points, what they mean for their operations, and what technologies will be most beneficial as they become hybrid businesses for the long term.

## WHAT IS HYBRID WORKING?

Moving forward, the likelihood for most is a partial return to the office, alongside continued remote working. This hybrid approach to workplaces will mean a greater reliance on technology and tools to keep teams connected and collaborative in the long term.

# CHANGE FACTORS

The sudden nature of the need for remote working in Spring 2020 meant a lot of businesses had to react very quickly to ensure that their operations could continue without reliance on a central location. And while the response on the whole from the business community was hugely impressive, there's little doubt that the pandemic highlighted some technological weak spots – and created a gap between what employees thought they needed to work effectively, and what businesses were able to offer.

According to Ricoh's findings, this technology shortfall impacts businesses on numerous fronts. Many businesses are concerned about the ability of employees to perform at their best when 24% of them on average can't collaborate due to inadequate tech, and the security problems that inevitably come

about as a result of 48% of them relying on their own technology. However, they're also mindful of the impact on customers when 24% of people say they haven't got the tools to deliver the best results.

It's vital that businesses quickly address these pain points where any impact on inter team work and customer dissatisfaction has a more a direct impact on the bottom line.

Clearly, there's an issue in giving people what they need to be their best selves at work. And Logitech's findings reveal that it comes from the mixed approach to workplace technology, and what businesses provide their employees – with almost half not including home office or mobile solutions.

Does asset management now include home office/mobile solutions for each employee?



■ No - 42%

■ Yes - 58%

## What your peers said about home working technology:

“A lot of people have taken their desk setups home to use in the meantime. I am unsure how this will change going forward.”

“Employees have what they need to work from home. Lessons learned will be assessed to determine improvement opportunities or gaps.”

“Depends upon circumstance, bringing home a laptop is acceptable, purchasing equipment for home use is not acceptable.”

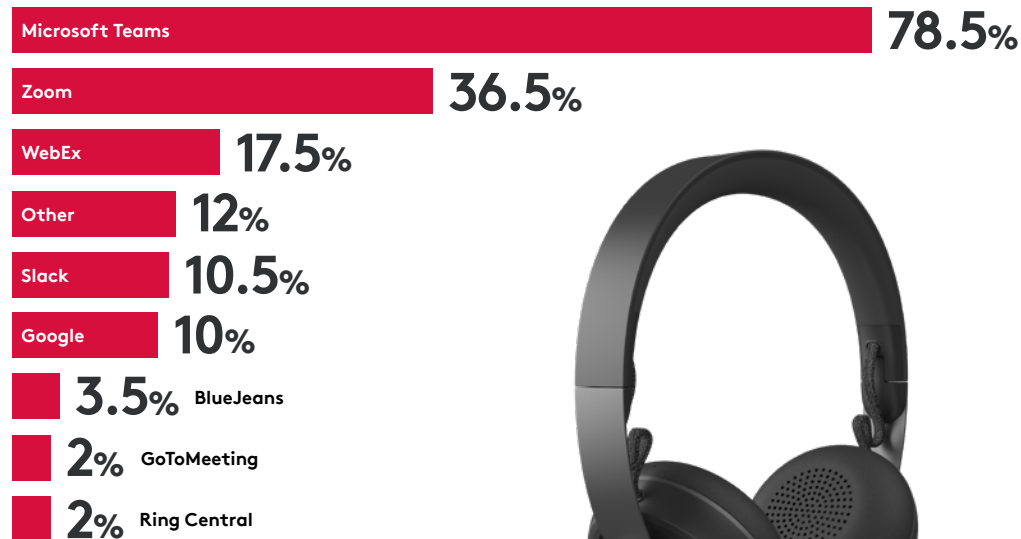


## Investment focus

Despite the mixed approach to technology, businesses have made other significant moves to make remote and hybrid working better. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack and other tools have all seen an uptick in usage. Pointing to a determination among businesses to find ways to replicate the office experience virtually.

Now, it's important that businesses find ways to really make the most of video conferencing and cross location collaboration, by investing in tools like headsets and cameras that make video calls valuable, useful experiences rather than a replacement for in person interaction. Particularly as the permanent state of hybrid working means dispersed teams for the long term.

What tools have you invested in/rely heavily on to help with maintaining business continuity?





## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Many businesses are already in place to make the next normal work, providing remote working technology to their employees. Others still have room to grow and improve how they foster collaboration in a hybrid working model.
2. For small businesses, technology gaps can have a huge impact – in many cases directly impacting staff ability to serve customers in the way they'd expect.
3. Video conferencing technology has seen heavy investment. The next step is to ensure the investment is up to the task. Technology like headphones and webcams will be crucial. With hybrid working here to stay, it's important that the technology experience at home is as good as it is in the office.



# THE NEW WORKPLACE ERA

In spite of the move towards – and in some cases affinity for – remote working, there's also a general recognition that workers will return to the office in some capacity (with many still preferring the office environment). 41% of peers surveyed intend to keep 100% of their office locations over the coming two years<sup>1</sup>.

What this return looks like, however, differs for almost every business, with varying plans among peers on when to get back to a safe working environment – always taking the evolving government guidance into account. Meaning that changing circumstances are to be expected for perhaps another year.

**Logitech research says:**

**"Over three quarters favor a gradual return to the office, beginning with **25%** capacity and going from there."**

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Data from spring 2020

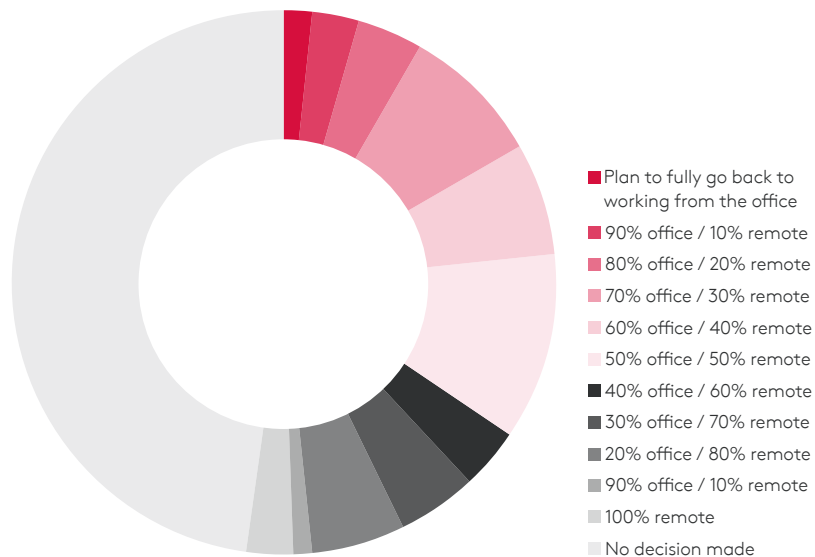


## WFH here to stay

As well as the retention of offices, the thing that's immediately clear from the research is that working from home in some capacity is here to stay. In fact, **98%** of the businesses we surveyed are currently reviewing their office environments and investigating the introduction of video-enabled pods and silos, which will inevitably reduce real estate for desks.

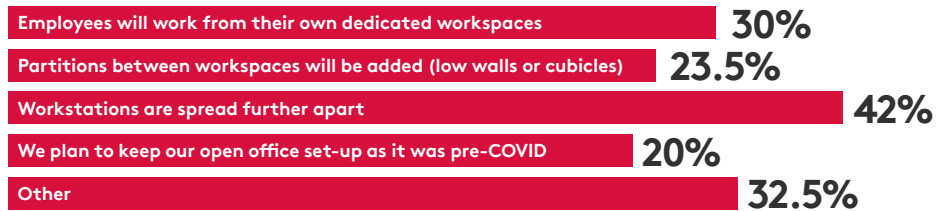


Will remote work become a more accepted option in your organization post-COVID-19? And if so, what does that ratio look like?





Does your office space look different? How?



### What this means in practice:

- **The next normal means hybrid working as a matter of course. Almost no employee will be either solely office-based or solely remote.**
- **To make this work and ensure continued collaboration, businesses will require technology that supports employees, regardless of their environment.**
- **Offices will change to become COVID-19 safe spaces, where people can work together without compromising their safety.**

The complexity this adds for SMEs is that people will have to rely more on their own technological ability to use new tools, with lower access to IT professionals and dedicated helpdesks. And this isn't always simple. Ricoh research finds that 27% struggle to contact their IT teams for support, while other SMEs just won't have an IT team; and 31% find motivation an issue when tech issues impact their work.

It means that plug and play, user friendly tools that work right out of the box are all the more important to keep workers connected and effective. Without that, the hybrid working world could end up being as stilted and complex as it was in the early months of the pandemic.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Hybrid working will require new technology at the office and at home. Companies are realizing that investment in business solutions for personal workspaces that can keep up with in-office tools is on the rise, and that this technology will empower employees to seamlessly flow between the two workspaces with ease.
2. Business quality webcams reduce the strain and improve interaction in a video call that is otherwise plagued with blurry images or poor lighting. As companies shift to adopt a more permanent remote work model, these tools tremendously improve collaboration and remove meeting fatigue.
3. Not every meeting needs to be a video call in this new hybrid model of remote work. In fact, it's perfectly acceptable to take a break, and turn off your video camera. High quality audio is still critical to productive meetings – but sometimes that's all you need and that's okay.

# THE BALANCED BUSINESS



As well as revealing some gaps and improvements in businesses as they prepare for the next normal, Logitech's research also highlights some balanced workplaces that offer best practice guidance. These businesses generally have been working with video conferencing technology (both platforms and hardware) for some time, and have an engrained, accepted remote working culture.

Achieving this balance has meant they are collaborative, efficient and creative places. Here's what others can learn from them.

## The balanced business at home

Businesses that have embraced hybrid working tend to equip staff with dedicated solutions and technologies that are fit for remote working on a permanent basis, providing them with **headsets, webcams, mice** and **keyboards** that mean video meetings feel just like they would in person.

Yet many in our research sample have stated that their employees sometimes lack the business-grade equipment that's needed to effectively collaborate to the best of their ability for a sustained amount of time at home. Instead, they're using personal products they already own – most likely consumer-grade solutions, not intended for the demands of a full-time job, or ineffective workarounds (how many calls have you seen where someone is using their smartphone headphones?)

The reason for this may be that many businesses saw their reliance on video conferencing rapidly increase after COVID-19, with one respondent experiencing 'a rush to get employees webcams and headsets for virtual meetings'. Their next step is to match this increased reliance with improved tech. If they don't, retention will be hit – over a quarter (27%) say they would move to another company if they're better set up for remote working.

## The balanced business in the office

The next normal will mean an increase in meeting rooms for most businesses, as offices change shape for a world where teams and departments will rarely be together.

Naturally, this means more conference cameras will be required to turn huddle or break out areas into dedicated multi-purpose spaces. And in many cases businesses will need this hardware to be specifically set up to work with their conferencing platform of choice – be it **Zoom**, **Microsoft Teams**, **Google Meet** or another.

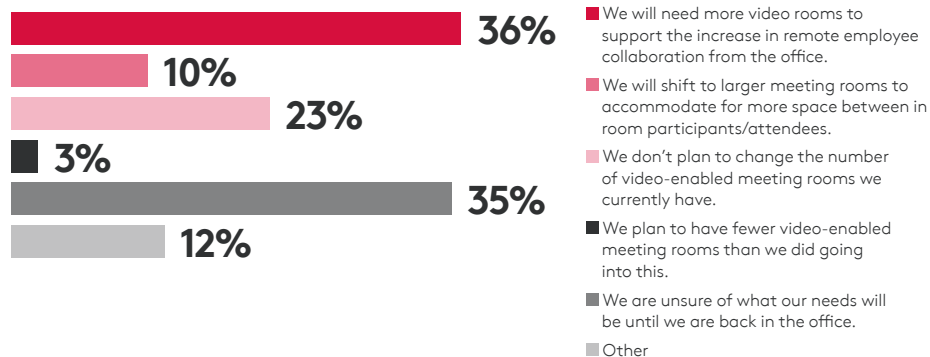
But it goes beyond pure tech for collaboration. Businesses also need to take health and safety into consideration. Ricoh finds that 40% would not feel comfortable unless their organisation brings in solutions like touchless technology. Installing meeting room solutions that meet this requirement will be vital as the great return to the office gets underway.



Please prioritize your needs when it comes to video conferencing hardware selection.



Do you anticipate an increase in the number of video-enabled meeting rooms in your office locations?





## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Balanced businesses will increase their procurement of video meeting technology as well as personal headsets and cameras in order to adapt to the demands of their workforce, making work and meetings productive and engaging, wherever they take place.
2. Conferences can be safer by reducing the number of touches required for setting up and running a meeting. **Contactless tools** that work with other technologies like **Alexa** and **Zoom** can enable employees to start a conference using voice command, reducing their physical interaction with their space.
3. Ease of use is going to be important for remote workers. With significantly reduced (or possibly zero) time with IT specialists for support, they're going to need plug and play, user friendly technology that requires little set up time or expertise to use.



# INHERENT ADAPTABILITY FOR THE NEXT NORMAL

While some of the changes the next normal requires might seem far reaching, many leading businesses are already well on their way to making them happen. Remember, while 42% of remote workers don't have their home or mobile solutions under asset management, 58% do. And with almost all businesses experiencing a greater need for video meetings, plans are underway to bring in the technology that will get the best out of them.

These future-facing businesses won't only be better suited to navigating the complexities of the post-pandemic era, they'll bring their teams closer together, regardless of location; they'll ensure that hybrid working is collaborative, rather than disruptive; and they'll adapt to whatever the future of business life is, safely and successfully.



Speak to your Ricoh representative  
to see how Logitech's tools can  
prepare you for the next normal.



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