



**Less is more?
Probably not with your
hybrid work policies!**

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1 The problem with one-size-fits-all regulations for hybrid work

Is three days in the office and two days working from home what your hybrid teams want? What if that's not the case? At least, that's what the results of the latest State of Hybrid Work Reports from Owl Labs suggest.

The report shows that employees have different **preferences** regarding the number of office days. 59% of respondents want two or fewer office days per week, while 10% want to work four or five days on-site in the office.



If companies prescribe 2.5 or 3 days in the office or only design their office for this model (i.e., desk sharing for everyone with a home zone), this does not meet the wishes of 69% of their workforce.

— Prof. Johanna Bath, hybrid work expert, author, speaker & LinkedIn Top Voice.

Having a single standardized hybrid work arrangement does not meet the different needs of employees. Instead, it leads to employees feeling less connected to the company and distancing themselves more. Companies need a **flexible approach that combines different regulations**.

This article examines why workforce diversity requires a nuanced approach to creating hybrid work arrangements, the additional challenges that generational and mobility factors bring, and how a multi-policy framework can increase employee satisfaction and operational efficiency.

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Diversity of the workforce: understanding the hybrid preferences of employees

Based on the observations and empirical values of Prof. Johanna Bath and our own experience at deskbird from working with real customers, the employees of a workforce can be divided into **three large groups**:

- **Employees who mainly work in the office prefer to work on-site**, which allows for more structure and personal collaboration.
- **Employees who work remotely or hybrid**: They benefit from a lot of flexibility and occasional visits to the office, which creates a balance between concentrated work and personal interaction with colleagues.
- **Mobile employees who do not work from home** include field staff, managers at branch offices, and service employees who work a lot from the road but occasionally use the central office.

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Typical challenges when creating a hybrid work policy

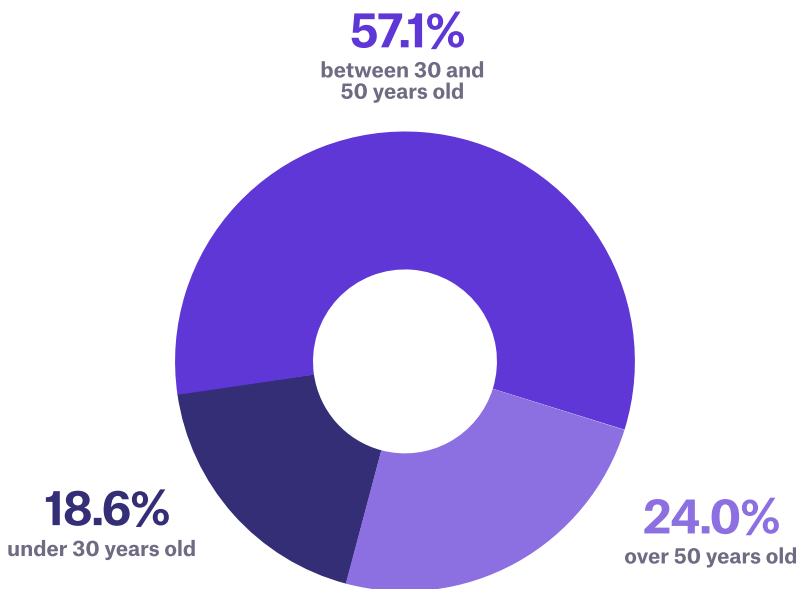
The employees in these **three groups differ significantly in their workplace requirements** and needs regarding flexibility, working hours, and more. This makes it necessary for companies to develop nuanced regulations for hybrid working. However, this poses various challenges.



Different preferences between the generations

The **workforce of companies in the DACH region** currently consists of four, sometimes even five generations: from the older traditionalists and baby boomers to Generation X and the younger millennials and Gen Z.¹

Studies show that the **30 to 50 age group** represents the **majority of the workforce** in German-speaking countries, with a share of 57.1%.² The current age distribution of the workforce in the DAX 40, SMI, and ATX companies is as follows:



"In most long-established German companies, the average age is over 40. I would assume that more people in the older generation have a 'clear' profile in one direction or another. In contrast, **younger generations like the 'full hybrid' best**, as it combines flexibility with community best," says Prof. Bath about the preferred working models of the different generations.

Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Gen Z have very different preferences regarding work location, personal interaction, communication, flexibility, structure, and other work-related factors, and thus also have **different attitudes toward hybrid work**.

For example, around 53% of boomers would like to be able to work remotely. This figure is already 65% among Generation X, and it is even 71% among millennials. Surprisingly, only 52% of Gen Z want to **work from home**.³

¹ People-17-70-eBook

² 20240528_2024_Study_Part_1_final.pdf

³ Hybrid-Work-Transformation: Ansätze, Beispiele, Dimensionen | Personal | Haufe

Meanwhile, the desire for flexible working hours is even greater. On average, over 80% of Generation X and millennials **want to work flexibly**.⁴ In a Deloitte survey, 21% of German millennials and Gen Z cited flexible working hours as one of the top three reasons they chose their current employer. The other two main reasons for choosing an employer were a **good work-life balance** (for 20% of Gen Z and 26% of Millennials) and the **meaningfulness of their work** (for 19% of Gen Z and 25% of Millennials).⁵

And what about the preferred communication styles of the different generations?

Although the younger generations are said to be more tech-savvy and prefer digital means of communication, personal interaction with colleagues also plays a vital role for millennials and Gen Z. **73% of Gen Z and 72% of baby boomers want strong face-to-face interaction in the workplace**, compared to 62% of millennials and 57% of Generation X.⁶

To summarize, we can therefore say:

- **Younger generations** (Millennials and Generation Z) **favor** flexible working hours and location, a good work-life balance, meaningful work, and **hybrid working models**.
- **Older generations** (baby boomers and Generation X) **emphasize stability**, fixed structures and working hours, clear hierarchies, and personal interaction in the office.



Read more about the communication style of Gen Z and the factors that motivate Generation Z in the workplace.

⁴ [Verbreitung hybrides Arbeiten: Entwicklung und Perspektiven | Personal | Haufe](#)

⁵ [Deloitte Gen Z & Millennial Survey 2024 | Deloitte Deutschland](#)

⁶ [Hybrid-Work-Transformation: Ansätze, Beispiele, Dimensionen | Personal | Haufe](#)

Different mobility concepts

In a hybrid work model, employees can work from **home, the office, or a third location**, depending on their mobility. For example, employees can attend appointments on-site with customers, work in **coworking spaces**, or even work for their employer on **trips abroad** (called workation).

The challenge for companies: these **hypermobile employees also occasionally come into the office** and must be seamlessly integrated into the processes and workflows on site. Above all, they must have a workplace that meets their needs.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. The situation is even more complex if we consider that employees are not stationary on-site in the office. Even if they primarily work from a fixed location in the office, they are **not always at their fixed workplace**. Instead, depending on the activity, they move back and forth between their desks and the available collaborative areas.

Recent observations by Prof. Bath also show this:

It's not how much I work from home, but how mobile I work. After all, many employees are present in the office but not at their desks because they are more or less constantly in collaborative situations. The classic home office or shared desk layout in the home zone is not suitable for this group either.

— Prof. Bath

Unreliable data on employee preferences

A third challenge companies face when they want to introduce hybrid work arrangements is obtaining reliable information about their **employees' preferences**.

On the one hand, surveys such as the State of Hybrid Work Report often reflect **a distorted truth**, as the survey participants' answers are influenced by the way the questions are asked (so-called **priming bias**). Secondly, respondents often tend to answer what they perceive as positive or favorable.

Employees may state that they want to work in the office more often than is the case to appear more committed.

Prof. Bath says:

The desire to work from home is no longer 'neutral.' Employees know that home office is associated with a lack of motivation. This raises the question of whether people also report more days in the office because it is the 'socially desirable' response.

— Prof. Bath

If companies rely on this 'biased' data, their hybrid work arrangements will not reflect the actual preferences of their workforce. The consequence is **a gap between the formal regulations** (and the office's design) **and the employees' needs**.

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Why four hybrid work rules are better than one

Employees can be divided into three groups based on their work preferences, making it clear that a single, standardized hybrid work policy that sets the same rules for everyone is not enough to meet the different requirements.

Hybrid work generally increases the risk of employees feeling emotionally distant, isolated, or lonely. A hybrid work arrangement that does not meet employees' needs increases this risk even more.

Prof. Bath explains:

We need a more complex approach and a lot more individualization. Acceptance increases significantly because employees feel their employer is trying to understand and reflect their situation.

— Prof. Bath

Based on a workforce whose work preferences can be grouped into the three categories presented above, a successful **hybrid work approach** should include four different arrangements:

- ✓ A regulation for employees who mainly work in the office
- ✓ A regulation for employees who work remote-hybrid
- ✓ A regulation for employees who are mobile but do not work from home
- ✓ A regulation for employees who switch between different working methods as part of their professional activities

Let's examine these regulations in detail and consider how they can be implemented.

Mainly in the office: fixed workstations and collaboration tools

Employees who work primarily in the office need **fixed desks** and additional **tools for collaboration** with colleagues who are not on site.

In addition, companies should set up different work areas suitable for other activities (e.g., separate individual cubicles for concentrated work or huddle rooms for short face-to-face meetings).

Office layout: for the office layout, this means that in addition to zones with fixed individual workstations, there should also be meeting rooms, quiet zones, and areas for collaboration.



Remote-hybrid: easy remote access and targeted personal interaction

A hybrid work arrangement for employees who primarily work from home should focus on easy **remote access to tools and resources**, create opportunities for targeted personal interaction, and limit office presence requirements. To accommodate employees with these work preferences, companies should arrange a **minimum number of office days** and **occasionally organize office events** and other events that allow employees to meet in person.

Office layout: shared desks and shared areas for targeted interaction with colleagues on office days play a central role in the design of the office space.

Mobile working outside the home office: flexibility and plug & play

Remotely employees need a hybrid work policy prioritizing **an immediately usable, flexible working environment**, minimal office presence requirements, and secure remote access to resources. For companies, the task is to create flexible access to the office and achieve seamless integration into on-site processes and systems for highly mobile employees.



Due to their different work and deployment locations, these employees need **maximum flexibility** with minimum on-site days for important team meetings. Fundamentally, this model requires secure remote access and advanced digital tools to ensure cyber security and productivity.

Office layout: to enable these employees to make a smooth transition between fieldwork and office work, they need plug-and-play stations where they can be productive without any significant effort. Relaxation areas provide short breaks when switching from the field to office work, while brainstorming zones facilitate selective collaboration with colleagues.

Switch between different working models: needs-oriented and personalized

By combining the three arrangements described above, companies can create an individual, needs-oriented hybrid approach for employees who regularly switch between the office, home office ,and other locations due to their work. The proportions of the respective regulation **should roughly correspond to the time split between the different working models.**

Office layout: this type of hybrid work requires maximum flexibility in office design. Modular rooms are ideal for this, as they can be adapted to different needs and combine individual workstations, areas for collaboration, and secure storage space.



Examples from practice: how companies in the DACH region are implementing hybrid working with individual regulations

The following examples from leading companies in the DACH region show that a differentiated approach that combines several hybrid work arrangements can also be implemented in practice.

Allianz

Allianz pursues a hybrid working model based on flexibility, trust, and personal responsibility. Depending on their jobs, **employees can choose their place of work**. A global standard stipulates that at least **40 % of working time can be spent working from home**. Allianz Germany and the Group headquarters prescribe only four monthly office days.

Working up to 25 days per year from abroad or up to three months in a foreign Allianz company is also possible. The company relies on modern office environments with open spaces, desk sharing, telephone booths, versatile meeting rooms, and quiet areas for concentrated work.

You can read more about [Allianz's hybrid working model](#) here.



Viessmann

Viessmann is a perfect example of how companies can develop different solutions for hybrid work based on their workforce's different profiles or job groups. The heating, cooling, and ventilation solution provider has developed three different working models to meet the various needs of its 13,000 or so employees: **"workplace enthusiasts"** work almost exclusively on-site, **"hybrid pros"** spend two to three days a week on the move or in the office, and **"digital nomads"** mainly work remotely.

You can read more about the hybrid working model at Viessmann in the interview with Chief People Officer Frauke von Polier in [issue 04/2022 of Haufe Personalmagazin](#).



DATEV

At DATEV, **employees can decide how much time they want to spend in the office** without fixed quotas. Teams organize their presence according to the needs of their work. In addition, they also have access to a **"third place"** besides home office and office, with coworking spaces in the Nuremberg metropolitan region as flexible working options. The software provider also provides workstations in Germany.

You can read more about the [hybrid working model at DATEV](#) here.



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How deskbird makes it easy to create and manage customized hybrid work policies

Creating and managing different approaches and regulations for hybrid working in the company and adapting the office layout accordingly can be a real challenge without the right tools—but not with deskbird!

deskbird combines various features that make it easier to create and manage customized hybrid work policies and the corresponding adjustments to your office layout.

Analyze office use and office presence

deskbird offers powerful Analytics that provide detailed insights into office usage (e.g., days with the highest and lowest utilization and least used areas) and identify patterns and **trends in your employees' office presence**. These insights allow you to customize your hybrid work policy for specific teams and employees.

Discover more about our [Analytics](#).

Optimize office space with data support

Based on the data analyses, you can take appropriate measures to adapt your **office space to your team's needs**. Are the meeting rooms always fully booked on popular office days? Then, you should consider setting up additional zones for personal collaboration in your office. Do many individual workstations remain empty even on busy office days? Then, a sub-area can be converted, and costs can be saved.



Define and specifically assign hybrid work policies

With deskbird's hybrid work policy feature, you can create individual regulations that apply to the entire company, specific teams, or individual employees. Simply set the desired number of home office or office days directly via the app, assign the rule to particular users, and you're done! This guarantees maximum flexibility combined with simple administration. By evaluating rules compliance, workplace managers and supervisors can efficiently assess whether the current guidelines are effective or require adjustments.

Learn more about deskbird's [hybrid work policies](#) and how you can manage office attendance with ease.



Increase employee satisfaction

With deskbird, employees have more control over their weekly and office-day planning. It gives them maximum flexibility while ensuring they have all the resources they need for the days they work in the office, from the right workplace to the perfect room for a team meeting to their favorite parking space.

Ready to create a hybrid working model that suits your entire team?

Start a free trial of the deskbird app today and effortlessly set customized hybrid work rules that cater to each team member's needs.

Start for free

