



What you need to do **6, 12, and 24 months** after introducing a hybrid work policy

Actionable insights for a successful, long-term, hybrid work strategy

by Prof. Johanna Bath



Hybrid work isn't a 'problem' to solve but a transformative approach requiring active, data-driven management.

— Prof. Bath

At deskbird, we are firmly convinced that hybrid work is more than a simple policy: it's a strategic opportunity to drive performance, engagement, and innovation. But success doesn't happen automatically (and overnight).

A hybrid work policy must be actively managed, continually refined, and aligned with your organization's evolving goals.

That's why we partnered with Prof. Johanna Bath, a successful business school professor and strategy consultant who has guided corporations through the entire hybrid work journey — from setting policies to ensuring effective, sustainable implementation.

In this strategic guide, Prof. Bath outlines what companies need to do **at 6 months, 12 months, and 24 months** to ensure their hybrid work approach doesn't just work — it thrives. With deskbird's expertise in hybrid workplace management and Prof. Bath's actionable insights, you will have a step-by-step plan for mastering the hybrid work journey.

A performant hybrid workplace needs active and data-driven management to really work.

Wait a minute: should you implement a hybrid work policy in the first place?

Even though the pandemic is approaching its fifth anniversary, companies still operate in a hybrid work model without a centralized hybrid work policy.

Why is that?

✕ **Fear of over-complication:**

Many companies worry that formalizing a hybrid work policy will lead to rigid structures or unrealistic expectations. They mistakenly believe that leaving hybrid work unstructured gives employees and teams the flexibility they desire. However, the opposite is often true: lacking clarity creates inconsistencies and confusion, leading to frustration and inefficiencies.

✕ **Perceived success without a policy:**

Some organizations have seen hybrid work "work" organically and assume a formal policy isn't necessary. But this often leads to informal or shadow policies, where managers and teams create their own rules. This can result in unequal treatment of employees, unclear expectations, and missed opportunities to align hybrid work with broader business goals.

✕ **Leadership resistance:**

Introducing a hybrid work policy requires a cultural shift, which some leaders may resist. Concerns about productivity, accountability, or difficulty managing remote teams can create hesitation. Without training and support, these fears can stall progress and keep policies on the back burner.

✕ **Lack of data:**

Many organizations lack the insights to craft an effective policy. Without data on employee preferences, office utilization, and productivity metrics, leaders may feel unprepared to formalize a policy that balances flexibility with business needs.

✕ **Underestimating long-term impact:**

Some companies view hybrid work as a temporary adjustment rather than a long-term strategy. This mindset leads to reactive decisions rather than proactive planning, delaying the implementation of a structured policy. It is also important not to underestimate the crucial role of hybrid work in recruiting, as most candidates now want to know about their work flexibility in advance.

Why the national context has a key role in hybrid work

When creating hybrid work policies, it's important to recognize that labor laws, organizational norms, and employee preferences differ widely between countries.

For instance:

The legal framework

Countries like Germany have rigid labor regulations that influence how hybrid work agreements are structured. These regulations may dictate flexible working hours, employer responsibilities for home office setups, or employee rights to request remote work.



Cultural factors

Employee preferences for flexibility or in-office collaboration often align with cultural norms. For example, German workplaces tend to emphasize efficiency and clear frameworks, which explains the higher prevalence of formal hybrid agreements compared to other countries.

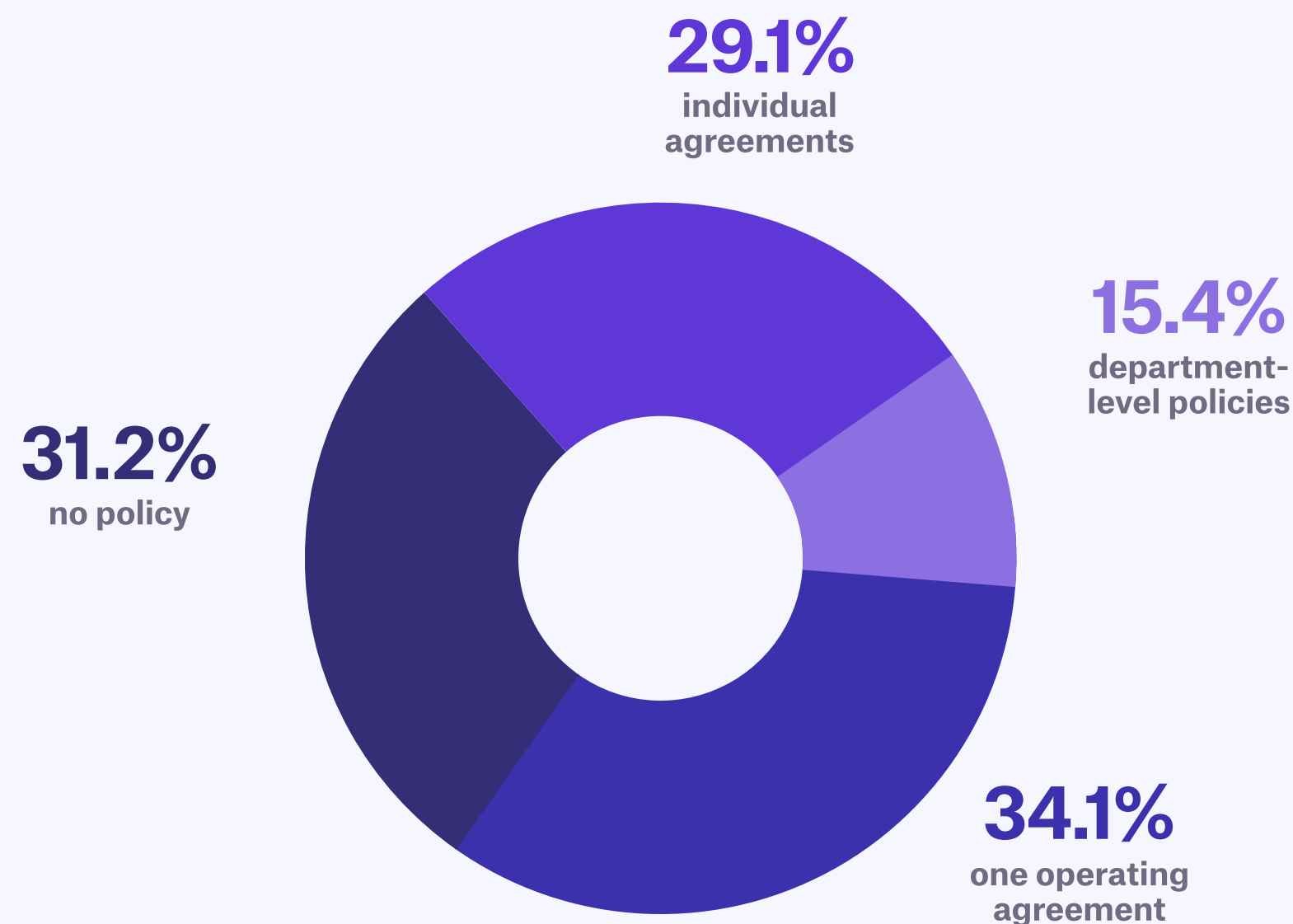
Technology infrastructure

Countries with robust internet and digital collaboration tools naturally transition smoothly to hybrid work.



This backdrop brings us to how Germany has responded to the hybrid work policy phenomenon.

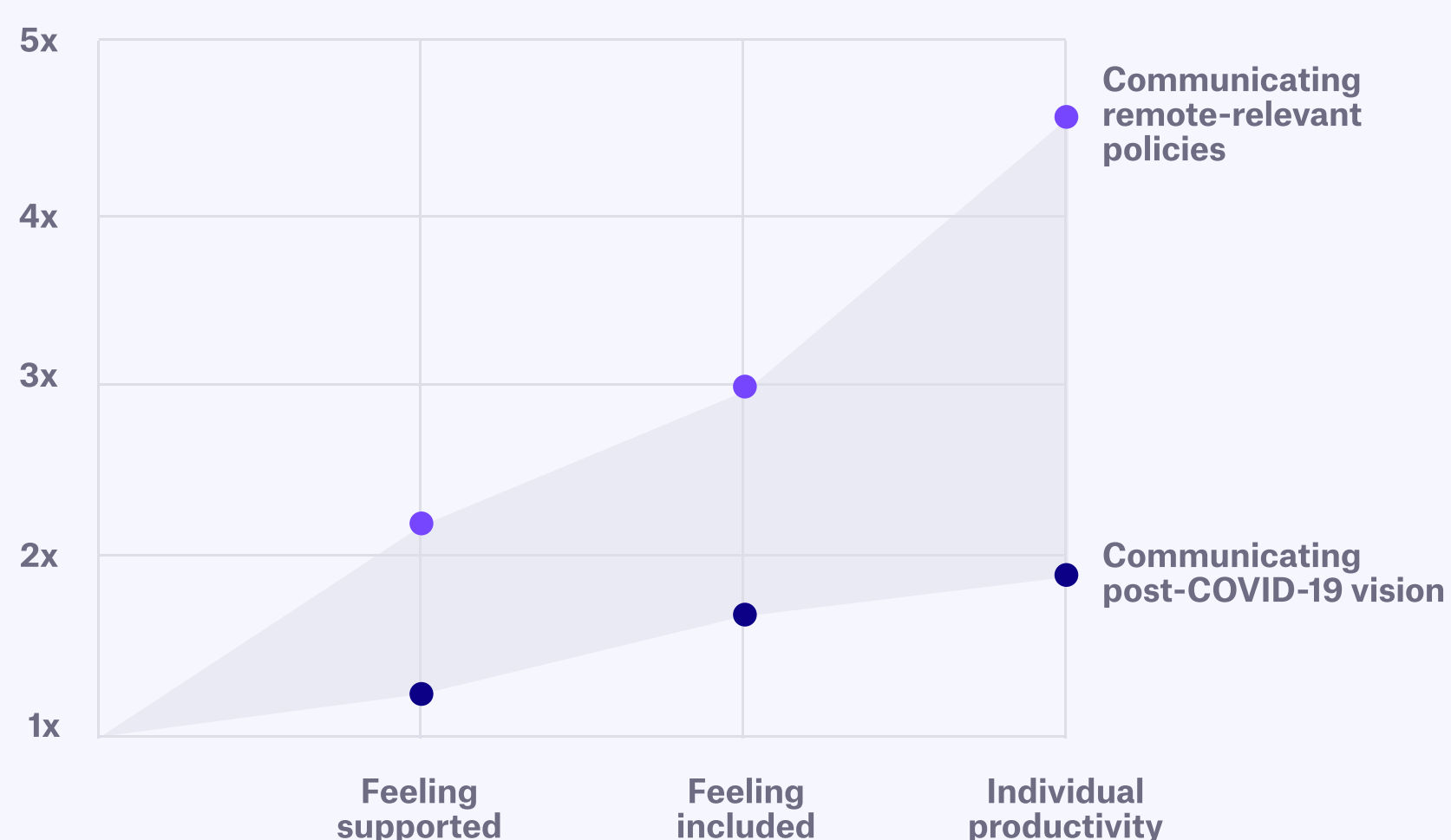
How German companies use hybrid work policies



However, no matter where the company is located, one key element has transpired — especially regarding how hybrid work policies have been implemented.

A **McKinsey study** released shortly after the pandemic showed that transparently communicating hybrid policies helped employees' performance and engagement.

Organizations with clever communication are seeing benefits to employee well-being and productivity



Importance of communicating vision and policies on productivity, support, and inclusion, impact multiples

Source: [McKinsey & Company](#)

What does this mean for your organization? Does it still make sense to have a hybrid work policy?

First of all, it makes sense to formulate a centralized hybrid work policy – this must not be confused with defining fixed days on which people must work in the office!

The larger your organization and the more diverse the job characteristics, the less likely there is an effective "one size fits all" approach to in-office work.

But what should your policy contain (if not the number of office days?)

Your centralized policy ideally answers the following questions:



What is the goal of our work model? (How does our (hybrid) work model support the goals we want to reach as an organization?)



What are the values that drive our work ethic as well as collaboration behavior?



What is the flexibility frame (place and time) that can be applied?



What factors influence the level of flexibility of a specific job profile?



At what leadership level does the decision-making process for place and time flexibility use happen?



Who are the most important stakeholders (customers? On-site colleagues? Suppliers?) that need to be considered?



At what intervals do we revisit the agreement to adapt?

This structure provides enough of a frame of reference for employees, especially leaders, to understand what a good day-to-day usage of hybrid work in your company should look like.

Now, let's discuss the timeline and actions.



The first 6 months: laying the groundwork

During the initial six months, focus on establishing a solid foundation:

1. Leadership enablement

Your leaders play a key role in successfully implementing your policy. Our studies (and the Microsoft Work Trend index agrees) show that there is usually a perception gap between leaders and employees regarding hybrid work. Typical scenarios are mistrust in employee performance when working from home or a lack of feedback and structure for employees from their manager.

Perception Gap:

As leaders, we trust our own judgment — but are at risk of missing the mark.

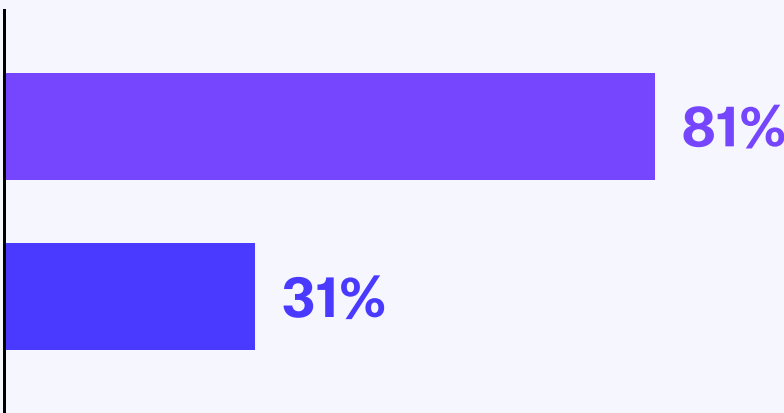


Most employees feel they are as productive than pre-pandemic. And collaboration tools prove them right. 85% of leaders say they have little trust in their employee's performance.

Source: [Microsoft Work Trend index](#)

Perception Gap:

Employees say they need more guidance to structure their work — but not many receive this crucial support.



Many employees say they need support to prioritize and structure their workload. Less than a third receive this support from their leadership team.

Source: [Microsoft Work Trend index](#)

These are topics that need to be addressed through communication and training formats. The following action steps help to reduce these challenges:

1

Allow your leadership team to share their struggles and answer questions about your hybrid work policy. Open discussion and critical feedback must be addressed; otherwise, managers will not implement the policy in their teams, and there will be a “shadow policy” in place, which can be dangerous since it fosters unfairness within your organization.

2

Help leaders practice typical “difficult” conversations in a safe setting and allow for open feedback. Studies show that many leaders avoid hard conversations or lead critical feedback conversations in a way that does not positively influence employee behavior. This leads to a lack of consequences for employees who ignore your hybrid work policy and, in turn, frustrates most of your employees who play by the rules but have to shoulder more of the workload.

3

Train your managers to lead in a hybrid setting. Do not expect them to just “know” how hybrid leadership works. Ideally, this is done through a coaching approach that lets leaders apply what they have learned and be mentored.

2. Communication with your employees

So, you posted your hybrid work policy on the intranet. Congratulations! But your job does not end here! You should plan for a communication road show to address the following points:

1
Your employees should clearly understand (see the red thread) WHY this hybrid work policy and, specifically, this flexibility frame support your overall corporate strategy (often, this means you also have to explain your strategic goals first).

2
Your employees must have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions, ideally to company management on a strategic level and to HR or their manager on an operational level.

3
Employees should receive a practical introduction to the policy and how it would be applied in “grey zone situations” (sick kids, handyman visits, you name it).

4
Rinse and repeat: Just because you communicated all of the above once does not mean that you have reached 100% of your employees. So think about different formats to continuously speak about the day-to-day usage of hybrid work in your company (e.g., through “a day in the life of” videos or “learning lunch” formats).

Do not overlook your future employees! Consider how you can introduce candidates to your policy in your hiring process and communicate it in your job postings.



The 12-month mark: adjusting and adapting the infrastructure

By the 12-month point, your policy has been in action long enough to reveal what works and doesn't. This stage is all about auditing and adjusting:

1. Measure your success

- ✓ Collect data on office utilization, employee satisfaction, and productivity trends.
- ✓ Evaluate whether the policy supports the strategic goals you initially outlined.
- ✓ Top management should incorporate these KPIs in their strategic data reviews and address them as they would any other KPIs (e.g., sales, production quantity, etc.)—this is where workplace performance management becomes an integral part of corporate management.

2. Engage in open feedback loops

- ✓ At this stage, primarily qualitative employee feedback can unlock new potential for improvement.
- ✓ Conduct surveys, focus groups, or 1:1 interviews to understand pain points.
- ✓ Now, employees have gained confidence in working in an established hybrid setting; this is the point at which more advanced bottom-up co-creation processes will work, and employees will be able to participate in more creative development processes.
- ✓ Product management gives us suitable methods and tools, e.g., design thinking or user journey mapping.

3. Adapt your infrastructure where necessary

- ✓ At this point, you will have established a “New Normal” in your organization, and it makes sense to invest in new infrastructure at this point (if necessary). Employees and leaders usually now know how their day-to-day works and can define their needs regarding office hardware, space, IT, and processes. Here, you can use the above-mentioned tools to define those requirements.
- ✓ Typical infrastructure adaptations usually include office infrastructure (towards a more activity—and connection-based usage of your office space), processes (towards simplified and digitalized collaboration and HR processes), and IT infrastructure (towards more flexible hardware as well as software that supports collaboration and work management in new ways).

The hybrid work assessment model is a circular, clockwise process in which infrastructure adaptations, such as introducing a new office layout or shared desks, are the final steps.



source: [Talentista](#)

In many organizations, an office rebuilding project (and its accompanying switch to a more activity-based seating and shared desk principle) reveals that hybrid work implementation is not yet ingrained in the organization.

Oftentimes, this comes to the surface when architects want to discuss “activity-based working,” and employees have a hard time imagining new ways of working (e.g., choosing their most important collaboration partner for the day instead of sitting with their team by default). So yes, having practiced hybrid working with leadership support and clear structures helps employees to gain a practical understanding of how a new normal might look like and what changes are yet to come into the future.

However, sometimes you must move out of your building, or a new office infrastructure is already being built. In these cases, you obviously must parallelize the rollout of the policy/structure, training, and communication parts with the infrastructure initiative. It can be done but requires more focused change management efforts and expertise.”

— Johanna’s insights

 **The goal by month 12:**

A hybrid policy that is more efficient, data-informed, and better aligned with employee needs and organizational objectives. An infrastructure that supports employees and leaders in working in the hybrid environment as effectively as possible.



The 24-month mark: sustaining and evolving

At 24 months, your organization should be able to maintain a sophisticated, highly effective hybrid work environment. Here's how to keep the momentum:

1. Long-term strategic alignment

✓ Revisit your organization's changing goals and ensure the hybrid model still fits. (To give a practical example: Maybe you want to enter a new international market and add remote employees in this country. This would make it necessary to define how hybrid collaboration with this remote hub will look.)

✓ Expand or contract flexibility based on evolving business or market conditions.

2. Advanced data analytics

✓ Move beyond basic usage metrics. Track collaboration quality, innovation rates, and long-term retention tied to hybrid flexibility.

✓ Leverage these insights to fine-tune office setups, virtual collaboration tools, and talent strategies.

3. Continuous leadership growth

✓ Let's be honest: a high-performance hybrid work environment depends highly on leadership discipline! It is not "sexy" to ensure in-person meetings are held every week or to devise new engaging formats for hybrid team meetings to foster relationship growth. Be aware of this challenge and incentivize discipline.

✓ Evolve leadership training to focus on advanced areas like remote team culture, global collaboration, and cross-functional synergy.

✓ Mentor high-potential managers to become champions of hybrid best practices.

✓ Make role models visible and encourage best practice sharing, especially on a leadership level.

✓ Give your leaders a safe space to discuss what is not working yet, how they handle difficult feedback conversations, etc.

4. Culture of adaptability

✓ Encourage a mindset that views hybrid work as a living, evolving framework.

✓ Foster regular, structured check-ins with teams and management to capture feedback early.



The goal by month 24:

A mature hybrid ecosystem that drives sustained engagement, innovation, and competitiveness — where employees and leaders view hybrid work as an integral part of your company culture.

Final **key takeaways**



You need a centralized policy

Without a formal framework, there will be confusion, unfairness, and missed opportunities for alignment.



Leaders and managers require support

Provide ongoing training to bridge perception gaps, ensure fairness, and handle tough conversations effectively.



Data is your compass

Collect metrics on office usage, employee satisfaction, and productivity to make informed adjustments at each milestone.



Communication must be ongoing

Intranet announcements aren't enough. Reinforce and clarify your policy through diverse channels and repeated messaging.



Adapt over time

What works at 6 months may need a revamp by 12 months and an overhaul by 24 months. Regularly review and evolve your policy to stay ahead.

deskbird

At deskbird, we're here to help you manage these stages effectively with our expertise in hybrid workplace management.

By combining Prof. Johanna Bath's strategic insights with deskbird's dynamic tools, your organization can turn a hybrid work policy into a powerful competitive advantage that boosts productivity, fosters collaboration, and engages your workforce for the long haul.

Take action now

Get in touch and [request a free demo today](#) to learn more about our solutions.

