

Eurest

# The Return to Work & Hybrid Harmony

How can socialisation complement the hybrid  
working environment?

Whitepaper 1





# **The push for employees to return to physical workplaces is one of the defining workplace tensions of our time. Employers cite productivity, culture and connectivity as reasons to bring people back. Employees, having reshaped their working lives around flexibility, are pushing back.**

The data is unambiguous: forcing the issue rarely works. Hybrid workers report higher happiness, stronger career optimism and greater loyalty than their fully office-based counterparts. Any approach that disrupts this balance risks not just resistance, but attrition.

The more productive question is not how to mandate the return to the office, but how to make the office genuinely worth returning to. This paper argues that socialisation, done thoughtfully and authentically, is one of the most powerful tools available to do exactly that. When the workplace becomes a place where people feel genuinely connected, the pull to be there becomes self-sustaining.

This is the first paper in Eures's Power of Socialisation series. It explores the hybrid working landscape, what employees actually value, and how organisations can use social connection as an incentive rather than an imposition.





# The Return to Work Conflict.

<25%

of full time office workers want to spend five days a week at their employer's location.

~8%

of annual salary employees are willing to forgo in exchange for remote working flexibility.

These figures do not suggest employees are disengaged from their work or their organisations. They suggest that the workplace, as it has traditionally been designed and managed, is not offering enough to justify the trade-off. That is the challenge, and the opportunity, for organisations to address.



## The pressure on hybrid and remote workers to return to physical offices has become one of the most contested issues in modern working life.

Employers, citing improvements in productivity, connectivity and culture, are pushing for a greater in-office presence. Employees, who have spent years redefining the boundaries between work and life, are largely reluctant to give ground.

The scale of hybrid and remote working makes this more than a niche debate. Almost a third of global employees work hybrid, and 7% are fully remote. In business specifically, the proportion rises to half compared to just 28% across all industries. These are not marginal figures; hybrid working is now the dominant model in large parts of the workforce.

The shift was not just practical. The pandemic fundamentally changed how people think about work. Reduced commutes, lower costs, less stress and greater autonomy became the new baseline – not perks, but expectations. For many employees, the idea of returning to a five-day office week does not feel like a return to normal. It feels like a step backward.





# Why Hybrid Workers Are Thriving.

## Happiness and career development.

Hybrid working is not simply a compromise between home and office, for many employees it is actively better. Hybrid workers consistently report higher levels of happiness at work than their fully office-based counterparts, and that happiness has a measurable knock-on effect on ambition and development.

**58%** of hybrid workers see growth opportunities at their current employer, compared to just 41% of fully site-based workers.

This gap matters. Employees who see a future with their current organisation are more likely to invest in their work, build relationships and stay. Hybrid working, it turns out, is not just a lifestyle preference but a catalyst for the kind of forward-looking engagement that organisations need.



## Connection, not disconnection.

A common concern about hybrid working is that it weakens social bonds and erodes a sense of belonging. The data does not support this. Hybrid employees actually report a stronger sense of connection to their colleagues than those based fully in the workplace.

This may seem counterintuitive, but it makes sense on reflection. Hybrid workers get the best of both: the focused, uninterrupted deep work that home enables, and the face-to-face collaboration and informal interaction that the office provides. The result is a richer, more balanced experience of connection, not a diluted one.

## Loyalty and organisational alignment.

The relationship between hybrid working and organisational loyalty is striking. Only 22% of hybrid workers are detractors (employees who would not recommend their organisation as a place to work) compared to 34% of those working fully on-site. That 12-percentage-point difference represents a significant shift in how people feel about the organisations they work for.

Hybrid workers also feel just as connected to their organisation's goals and direction as fully office-based colleagues. The assumption that being in the office equates to being aligned with the organisation is not borne out by the evidence.



# Incentivisation, Not Imposition.

**Given how strongly hybrid workers value their current arrangements, any move to increase mandatory in-office time carries real risk.**

Hybrid workers are happiest with the balance they have found. Disrupting that balance without a compelling reason is unlikely to be received well and the evidence suggests it is more likely to push people toward the exit than toward the office.

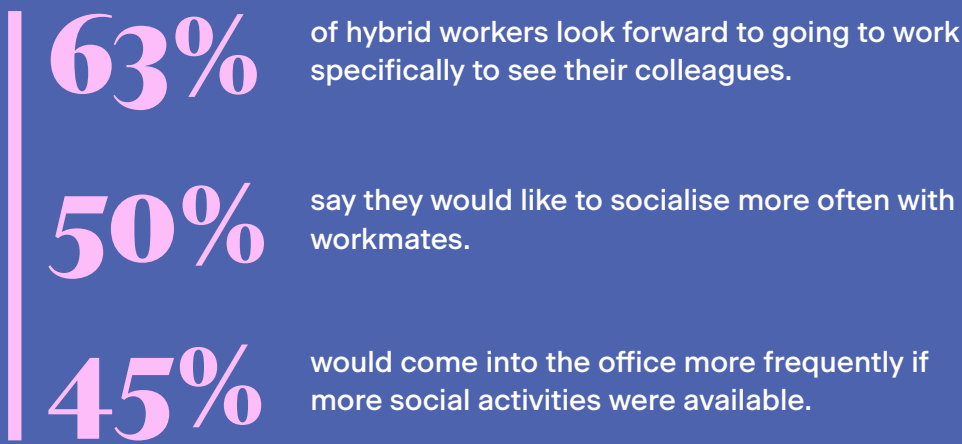
The more effective approach is to make the office genuinely attractive. Not through mandate, but through design, experience and opportunity. The question is not ‘how do we get employees back?’ but ‘what would make employees want to come back?’

That reframe changes everything about how organisations invest in the workplace experience. It shifts the focus from enforcement to value creation, and that is where facilities and workplace teams have a meaningful role to play.



## Socialisation as a Pull Factor.

Of all the reasons hybrid workers might choose to come into the office more often, social connection is one of the most compelling.



These numbers point to a clear opportunity. Social activities are not a peripheral consideration; they are a meaningful driver of in-office attendance. When employees know that coming in means genuine connection, not just the option of sitting at a different desk, the calculus changes.

The critical caveat, however, is authenticity. Employees are not simply looking for more events, they are looking for connection that feels natural and genuine. Socialisation that feels contrived, tokenistic or obligatory tends to create the opposite effect: it reinforces the sense that the office is something to be endured rather than enjoyed.

The goal is to build environments where social connection is woven into the everyday experience of being at work and not just bolted on as an incentive. When that balance is achieved, the workplace becomes not just a place to work, but a place people genuinely want to be.

The practical question of how to create those environments, through both organic, informal moments of connection and structured, organised social experiences, is explored in depth in the next paper in this series.



## Key Takeaways:

The push for employees to return to physical offices is creating real tension. Employees have built meaningful lives around flexibility, and will resist efforts to roll it back without compelling reason.

Hybrid working is associated with higher happiness, greater career optimism and stronger organisational loyalty, outcomes most employers actively want to cultivate.

Hybrid workers feel as connected to organisational goals as fully office-based colleagues, undermining the assumption that presence drives alignment.

The return to the office is most effective when framed as an invitation, not a mandate. Making the in-office experience genuinely valuable is the more sustainable strategy.

Social connection is a significant pull factor for hybrid workers. 45% say they would attend the office more frequently if more social activities were available, but those activities must feel authentic, not forced.

## Conclusion.

The hybrid working debate is, at its core, a question of value. Employees who have experienced the benefits of flexibility are asking a reasonable question: what does the office offer that I cannot get at home? For organisations to answer that question convincingly, they need to think carefully about what they are actually providing.

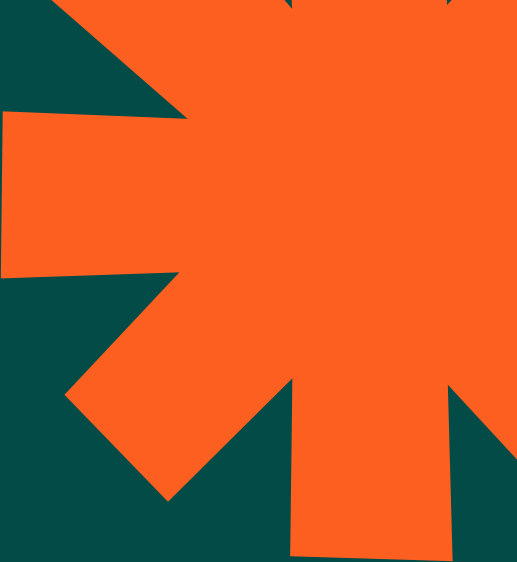
The data in this paper suggests that connection – genuine, social, human connection – is one of the most compelling answers available. It is something the office can offer that a home setup cannot fully replicate. And it is something employees, particularly hybrid workers, actively want more of.

But connection does not happen simply because people are in the same building. It requires the right spaces, the right culture and the right moments. It requires an environment where socialisation feels like a natural, enjoyable part of the working day and not a directive from above.

Organisations that invest in that experience, through thoughtful workplace design, welcoming hospitality environments and a genuine social offer, will find that the office sells itself. The employees who come in will be more engaged, more connected and more loyal. And those who are weighing up whether it is worth the commute will find themselves with a better reason to say yes.

At Eures, we believe that the workplace hospitality experience sits at the heart of that proposition. Great food, welcoming spaces and the social moments that naturally form around them are among the most practical tools available to make the office a place people genuinely choose to be.

In the next paper in this series, we explore exactly how to design those social moments, both the organic, informal connections that happen naturally and the organised experiences that bring teams together with purpose.



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## References:

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