

## 14.2 Why Hybrid Workplaces are Inclusive Workplaces



Organizations that are inclusive and equitable see many benefits, one of which is a stronger financial bottom line. A report issued in 2018 by Accenture<sup>1</sup> called Getting to Equal found that organizations that focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), have 30% higher profitability and are four times as likely to outperform those organizations that do not prioritize EDI.

Creating a hybrid workplan not only benefits employees, it also benefits the organization and ultimately helps it achieve its goals.

### The Benefits of Flexible Workplaces

A key element of inclusive and equitable organizations is this: flexible workplaces that accommodate the needs of a variety of employees, notably those with disabilities who often face marginalization and exclusion in the world of work.

#### Here are some benefits of implementing a hybrid workplace model:

- Increased flexibility for employees which can translate to higher employee engagement.
- More hybrid workplaces will increase the number of employment opportunities for skilled people with disabilities who otherwise have faced barriers within traditional workplaces.
- An expanded and largely untapped skilled labor pool for employers when they attract candidates with disabilities and those that live outside of the geographic location of your office.
- An opportunity to be more creative and innovative in how work gets done. When you work in new ways you begin to see things in new ways, too.

### An Individualized Approach to Hybrid Work (One Size Does Not Fit All)

It's important to recognize that a flexible workplace alone does not always equal an inclusive workplace. What works for some employees might not work for others or those with disabilities. Applying an equity and inclusion lens to your hybrid workplans will help to reduce the chance that you may be unintentionally excluding your employees with disabilities.

Equity means that to ensure equal participation within the workplace, accommodations need to be made for those who may require an adjustment to how they work and perhaps to the tools and technology needed to do the work.

## How to Ensure That Your Hybrid Workplace Is Accessible

When creating a hybrid workplan your goal should be to ensure that all employees are able to participate equally and that the plan does not present invisible, unintended barriers to inclusion.

### 1. Ask your employees with disabilities

Perhaps the most important thing to include in your hybrid workplace planning process is your employees with disabilities – engage them in your consultation process and invite them to co-create the plan so that it is a good blend of the business requirements and the needs of the employee.

### 2. Ask for help from service providers

If you need additional support from a subject matter expert in workplace accommodations, reach out to a local service provider. They often provide free supports to employers seeking to accommodate employees with disabilities.

## Inclusive Hybrid Workplace Practices

Other things to keep in mind when designing an inclusive, accessible, and equitable hybrid workplan that includes employees when working both remotely and in person are:

### Design for people who aren't in the room:

- Reimagine how meetings are conducted with a focus on inclusion for those both in the room and those who are joining remotely. When using the chat feature during a meeting, assign a moderator (who is not the meeting leader) to follow the chat and bring these comments into the meeting. Ask in-person participants to also join by laptop (if they can) to allow for remote participants to better see everyone.
- Consider how you will create informal opportunities for connection between employees working remotely and in person. This could be employees who are in-office logging into an online meeting a few minutes early to chat informally with those who are joining remotely to mirror the casual conversations that often happen just before (and just after) in-person meetings.
- Think about how you will create those “water cooler” moments virtually. Ask your employees how this could work.

### Design for people who are in the room:

- If an employee requires assistive technology, will they have access to that both when working remotely and when they are in the office?
- If your office shifts from dedicated desks and office space to hotel desks, are these accessible for people with mobility challenges or adaptive technology? Will some spaces still be dedicated to employees who have specific accommodations or needs such as quieter or brighter workspaces?
- Using coworking spaces? Ensure that these are accessible for people with mobility challenges. Are they easy to access with public transit and is there nearby parking?

**Source:**

<sup>1</sup>Accenture. (2018). *Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage*. Retrieve from [Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage | Accenture](#)

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