



O₂ business

The future of work: There's something wrong with "remote working"

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Part 1 (2 minute read)

"Remote working" has become a cliché. The instant impact of COVID-19 made this particular term a part of everyday conversation. Bizarrely, the circumstances quickly told us the term was no longer actually needed.

"Remote working" is redundant. More specifically, the word 'remote' is redundant. It suggests an alternative to office working. As though the office is still the main place that work is done.

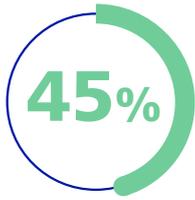
Yet 2020 has proved (certainly for office-based workers) that many of us can work from anywhere.

In this example, employee expectations of how and where work should be done have changed. Digital workspace programmes – previously

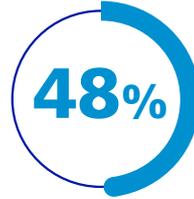
scheduled to take months (even years) to plan and rollout – have been deployed within weeks. And many other roles traditionally associated with physical workspaces have adapted to the virtual realm too.

So it's no longer about framing work in the context of where it is conducted. It's about working. Full stop. Working productively, efficiently and creatively, yes. But working. Pure and simple.

Many organisations have had to embrace working away from the office. Yet an O2 study of employees shows people have adapted well. And this has strengthened their argument that they should be allowed to continue working flexibly.



want to work flexibly to support their work/life balance



feel they need to be close to or live in a city to get a good job



ranked flexible working as one of the top five workplace benefits

Source: O2 Business – The Flexible Future of Work [Research 2020]

Debates still rage over whether working in the office is more productive than at home. Such single-minded debates miss the point. There are fundamental changes underway. And these socio-economic factors influence more than just how we work but also how we all live.

As this tectonic shift continues, there will be no going back. So businesses must respond by looking ahead. Instead of resilience planning, a longer-term re-imagining must take place. City centres may

be deserted because employees choose to work from home. But the businesses that once packed big workplaces with rows of desks don't need to return to the same way of doing things. They have the opportunity to put workplaces to better use as brand hubs or experience centres.

Now is the time to reshape our businesses and equip them for better ways of working in a more unpredictable world. It will demand more flexibility and a reassessment of the entire spectrum of work.

In this series, we explore three crucial areas in which big changes are required to have a positive impact on how we all work in the future:



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