

**Great
Place
To
Work®**



Flexible working in an uncertain world



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How managers at Europe's Best Workplaces™ are embracing hybrid work arrangements

■ Introduction: the state of work in 2021

In the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, we wondered when things would go “back to normal”. Now, as we wrap up the second year of the pandemic, it's becoming clear that there's no going back to anything – we can only move forward.

The pandemic lessons learned about employee productivity and well-being will inform policies for years to come. In 2022 and beyond, some people will continue to work remotely, while others never worked from home at all, and many will work in a hybrid way.

“Remote work is wonderful. But remote work in the lockdown is terrible,” says Michael C. Bush, Global CEO of Great Place To Work®. “2020 is nothing that any of us want to experience again.”

Managing remote and hybrid teams presents a unique set of challenges. The latest survey of employees by Great Place to Work® showed that managers who excelled during the last year made their expectations clear, recognised great work and focused on employees' needs.

“The crisis made people more flexible in adapting to new ways of working,” says Mr Bush. “Hybrid work is about caring for people and offering flexibility.”

As lockdowns made working from home vital, companies' digitalisation plans were pushed forward by months or even years. The World Economic Forum calls this a “double disruption” of automation and Covid-19¹. KPMG found that 67% of global organisations have accelerated their digital transformation strategy because of the pandemic².

The crisis also gave us a new understanding of which jobs are essential, as well as a deeper appreciation of the power of purpose. In this paper, executives from some of Europe's Best Workplaces™ share their challenges and successes in an uncertain time.



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**Remote work is wonderful.
But remote work in the
lockdown is terrible.**



Michael C. Bush,
Global CEO of Great Place To Work®

**At great workplaces
in Europe:**

92%

**of employees say
management keeps them
informed about important
issues and changes.**

96%

**of employees say
management makes its
expectations clear.**

■ Challenges of working in the pandemic

When countries and cities shut down for weeks or months at the start of the pandemic, many of us considered for the first time which jobs are essential. Health-care workers and first responders are obviously crucial, but it also became clear just how vital grocery store, food service and public transit workers are.

“Essential workers kept the world spinning,” says Mr Bush. “People who are really on the ground working, doing things that are hard and still need to be done – they need to continue to be seen as essential workers.”

Technology and connectivity were big issues at the start of the pandemic, as companies rushed to shift to remote work practically overnight. The tax and legal considerations of paying employees working in different locations, plus the many changes to local and national tax, stimulus and recovery schemes, were big stressors on payroll and HR teams.



“ We were all in the same storm,
but in very different boats.

● **Tania Garrett,**
VP, international employee experience at Adobe

Some pandemic workloads, especially in sectors hard hit by the recession, are leading to burnout for employees. After a year of largely working remotely, meeting volumes have increased by nearly 150%, and 40% of employees report feeling overworked and/or exhausted, BCG found³.

**At great workplaces
in Europe:**

93%

**of employees say people
quickly adapt to changes
needed for the organization's
success.**

Attempts at team building during the pandemic sometimes proved off-key. Zoom “happy hours” and pub quizzes might be amusing for some, but many employees resent mandatory social activities that eat into their downtime.

In the pandemic, “we were all in the same storm, but in very different boats,” says Tania Garrett, vice-president, international employee experience at Adobe. The software company expanded its well-being offerings for employees, such as free access to wellness apps, reimbursements and a 24/7 employee assistance programme (EAP) hotline. In client-facing businesses, much training and networking traditionally happens face-to-face. New managers also have had a hard time since being removed from the office.

“Young leaders had a really tough time during the pandemic,” says Mr Bush. “A lot of the way we learn to lead is watching other people – what to do or what not to do. You can’t observe a one-on-one conversation or see how people greet each other.”

■ Benefits of remote working

When the home became the new workplace, colleagues began to connect in new ways. Seeing a child or a pet in the background wasn't an interruption; it was a reminder that the co-worker in front of you was a multi-dimensional person. And leaders who were willing to share their own challenges and fears during the pandemic received huge support from their teams.

“If you're being human, people want to listen and get behind you when there's a change. People change when leaders change,” says Mr Bush.

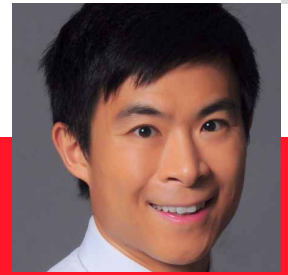
Remote working arrangements have enabled companies to expand their potential talent pool without relocation expenditures. Organisations are able to find people who were previously hard to recruit and hence secure a more diverse workforce. “If you think the best people only work in San Francisco, that's delusional,” says Mr Bush. “You open your mind, you drop your costs, and the level of talent goes up. You can really hire based on skills – it's a breakthrough opportunity.”

Remote working has led to better work-life balance as employees save time they previously spent commuting. That also cuts down their carbon footprint, as does the dramatic drop in business travel.

Despite concerns at the onset of the pandemic, productivity has actually increased in many sectors. Research from Unisys and IDC found that 79% of managers and 75% of employees say that remote work is just as productive or even more productive than working at the office⁴.

“Historically, if people were in the office, you could make them work because you were there to supervise them. Now there's more trust that they will get work done even without oversight,” says Alex Edmans, professor of finance at London Business School and author of “Grow the Pie: How Great Companies Deliver Both Purpose and Profit”.

Alberto Nobis, CEO of DHL Express Europe, was surprised by the productivity his staff exhibited during the pandemic. “When you have a very committed and very engaged workforce like we have, people perform perfectly,” he says. “We didn't have any parameter, from individual contributions, that didn't improve.”



“

Historically, if people were in the office, you could make them work because you were there to supervise them. Now there's more trust that they will get work done even without oversight.



Alex Edmans,

Professor of finance at London Business School and author of “Grow the Pie: How Great Companies Deliver Both Purpose and Profit”

At great workplaces in Europe:

89%

of employees say I can be myself here.

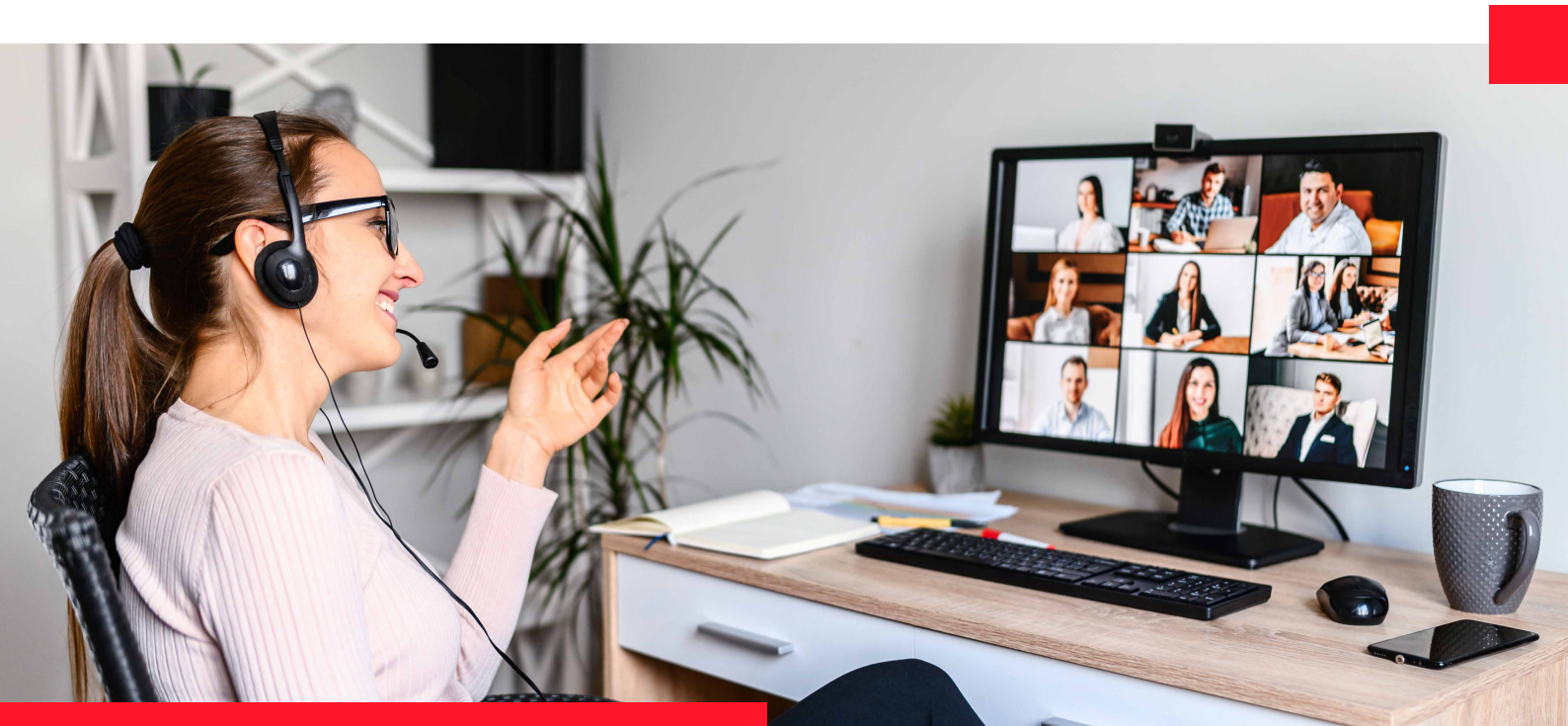
90%

of employees say people care about each other here.

Adobe pivoted to remote working for its 75 global offices in a matter of days, developing new digital workflows and tools. “Productivity now is all about intentionality,” says Ms Garrett. Rather than simply counting completed emails, meetings or deliverables, “it’s about thinking before you dive in”.

Although proximity bias remains an issue for remote workforces, many companies have managed to advance their equity, diversity and inclusion efforts during the pandemic. People of colour and women have experienced a democratising effect from remote work, Harvard Business Review reports, and discontinuing it would be likely to have a disproportionately negative effect on those segments⁵.

■ Hybrid working: the best of both worlds



Whereas companies previously considered remote working a black-or-white issue, hybrid models come in many shades of grey. Most organisations will continue to determine work location based on a person’s function, and, within a single team, some people may always work on site, while others alternate shifts, have set days to work from home, or come into the office only periodically.

The essential point in developing hybrid working policies is to meet employees where they are.

“Ask a cross-section of people who have children, pets, elderly parents, a long commute, a studio apartment, differently abled: ‘What would make it work for you?’ The answers will be so crystal clear. That’s being people-first, because it’s the right thing to do,” says Mr Bush.

Stryker, which makes medical devices, implemented an EAP and created a task-force to collect well-being improvement ideas. “Our DNA is our relationships,” says Sabine Krummel Mihajlovic, vice-president of HR for Europe. During the pandemic, Stryker made its onboarding process virtual and has more mentoring and networking in place for new employees. “Before the pandemic, we never had our cameras on, but now we always have them on, and I feel like we’re closer than ever before.”

In many cases, companies with hybrid work models are allowing for better work-life balance. In the future, when we meet in person, it will be with purpose.

“There are times we need to get together. It creates the magic of collaboration, and when we meet people, we care for them. A high sense of care leads to high performance,” says Mr Bush.

**At great workplaces
in Europe:**

86%

**of employees say they
can take time off from
work when necessary.**

92%

**of employees say they
are encouraged to balance
their work life and their
personal life.**

Some companies are saving money by re-evaluating their corporate footprint as workers remain at least partly remote. Although 69% of global CEOs surveyed by KPMG in August 2020 thought that they would downsize their company's physical footprint, in the first quarter of 2021 just 17% said they would do so⁶.

BCG estimates that the post-pandemic transition period will last six to nine months after the majority of a country's population has been vaccinated⁷. Virus mutations and new outbreaks of infection will require organisations to continue to take precautions in the future. Hybrid and flexible working arrangements can allow for better social distancing and accommodate employees who are especially at risk.



“

Our DNA is our relationships.



Sabine Krummel Mihajlovic,
VP of HR for Europe

■ What great workplaces are doing

The Best Workplaces quickly made decisions based on what was best for their people and did not overanalyse these. Great workplaces put their employees' physical, mental and financial health above profits, having conversations with the people who work for them about what they need, and following through.

“The past year has given us an opportunity to more deeply explore the employee experience,” says Ms Garrett. “We know one size doesn't fit all – the pandemic has shown the diversity of work experiences across teams and individuals.”

The best companies are focusing on retention as well as recruitment, reimbursing home internet expenses across the board, sending care packages of personal protective equipment, food and even toilet paper, and offering online counselling services. “That's what I love about our list – these companies are doing well because they put their people first,” says Mr Bush.

As BCG notes, replacing an employee is extremely expensive. Hiring and training a new employee costs 50% to 75% of their annual salary – for highly trained individuals, the figure can be as much as 200%⁸.

Having a sense of purpose at work is one of the most important indicators of employee satisfaction. Scores across the board rose for pharmaceutical companies and healthcare organisations this year, as well as for any company connected to the vaccine supply chain. “All those businesses did well financially, but it’s not why they did it. They were working on a team to make the world a better place,” says Mr Bush. “All industries should learn about the power of purpose.”

One example is DHL Express Europe, which played a key role in vaccine distribution. “The strategic role that DHL played for the entire community became internally a very clear illustration of our mission,” says Mr Nobis. “We exist because we connect people and improve their lives. This statement has never been more tangible and relevant for our people. We were in the middle of the effort for humankind, and we feel very proud.”

Stryker pivoted its manufacturing to develop an emergency bed kit that could be distributed quickly and affordably to medical centres during the pandemic. “A crisis shows how strong a culture is,” Ms Krummel Mihajlovic says.

This is the core of what makes an organisation a great place to work. “Profit is a by-product of creating value for wider society,” says Mr Edmans. His study of companies with the highest rates of employee satisfaction from 1984 to 2009 found that their financial results beat their peers on average by 3.5% annually⁹.

Although executives are tempted to set hard dates, Mr Bush warns against pursuing arbitrary reopening timelines.

“Some leaders want to go back to 2019 and pretend 2020 never happened,” he says. “When a leader says, ‘I want everybody back in the office September 1,’ I’d ask him why five times in a row. It mostly comes down to control or to trust. If you understood 2020, you wouldn’t demand we be in the office. People want to work for companies that understand that the pandemic is still going on, and that we’re still working through it.”

One executive Mr Bush spoke to this year was hoping for employees to come back to the office as soon as possible but faced pushback from many who weren’t ready. In the end, he came up with a bigger, more flexible plan that included healthcare professionals on site, and more employees came back to the office than expected.



**At great workplaces
in Europe:**

97%

**of employees say everyone
has an opportunity to get
special recognition.**

91%

**of employees say they are
treated as a full member
regardless of position.**

**At great workplaces,
91% of employees
surveyed say their
work has special
meaning: this
is not "just a job".**

■ Predictions for the future

Will things ever be “normal” again? Global CEOs surveyed by KPMG were split – 31% expect a return to normality in 2021, and 45% expect it next year. But 24% say that their business is forever changed¹⁰. As virus variants and vaccination drives continue to play out around the world, organisations should focus on their new normal. It appears that hybrid working is here to stay.

“ People are still healing, and we’re not out of the woods yet,” says Mr Bush.

Having learned many lessons over the past two years, “smart businesspeople will see the way forward, with less burnout, a higher sense of wellness, and more ability to focus on customers,” says Mr Bush. He adds: “Where a person works shouldn’t affect a person’s promotion ability or ability to get good assignments. That’s what makes a great place to work for all.”

Great workplaces reflected on their purpose during the pandemic and determined how to better care for their people, society and the environment. “When work is not everything, you can look at a larger purpose for society and why the organisation exists,” says Mr Bush. “These companies were all great when the world needed them to be great the most.”

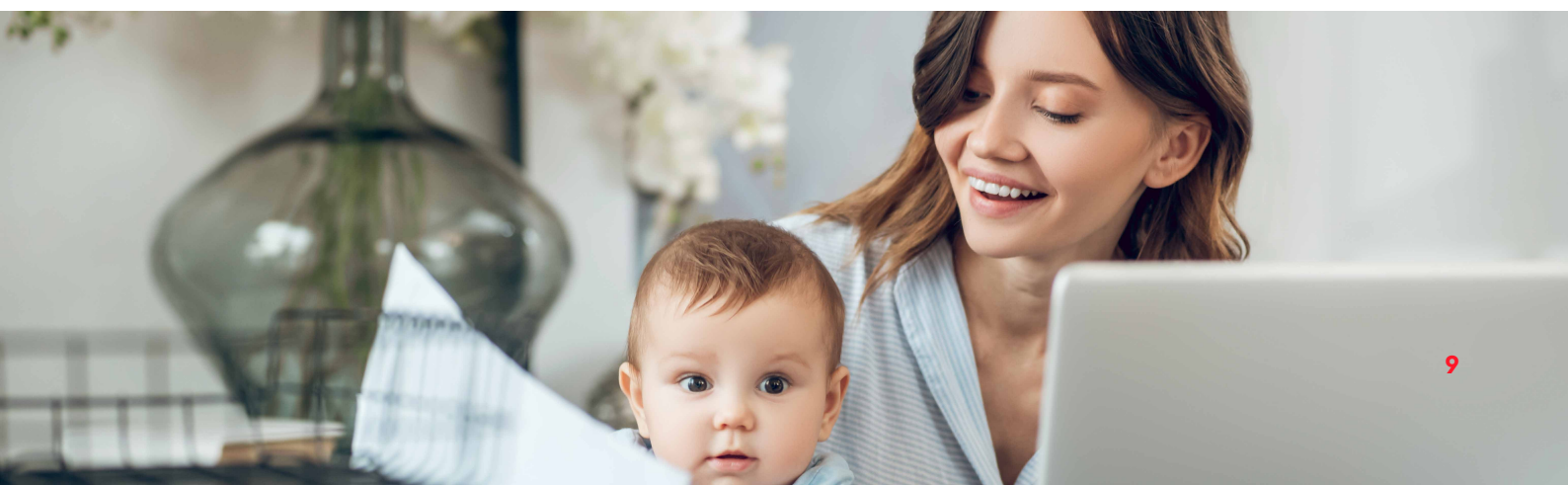
**At great workplaces
in Europe:**

87%

**of employees say they feel a
sense of pride when they look
at what their team has
accomplished**

■ Best hybrid working practices from Great Places To Work

- **Take care of employees whose jobs can only be done on site**
- **Be open about pandemic challenges**
- **Give employees a sense of purpose**
- **Ask your people what they need**
- **Meet your people where they are**
- **Hire based on skills, not on location**
- **Don’t pursue an arbitrary office reopening date**



25 Best Multinational Workplaces



1	DHL Express
2	AbbVie
3	Cisco
4	Salesforce
5	Hilton
6	Hilti
7	Amgen
8	SAS Institute
9	The Adecco Group
10	Sopra Steria
11	Specsavers
12	Grohe
13	Roche
14	SC Johnson
15	Stryker
16	Cadence
17	Admiral Group
18	Novo Nordisk
19	Adobe
20	Volkswagen Financial Services
21	Bristol-Myers Squibb
22	Accuracy
23	LGT Group
24	Homeserve
25	Teleperformance

1



2

abbvie

3



50 Best Large Workplaces



1	Kuveyt Türk
2	Sii Polska
3	Regeneron Ireland
4	ACCENT Jobs
5	REALE SEGUROS
6	Metafinanz Informationssysteme GmbH
7	Sparekassen Kronjylland
8	Sensirion AG
9	Kaizen Gaming
10	The Sovini Group
11	OCTO TECHNOLOGY
12	OMICRON electronics GmbH
13	DC Klinieken
14	illimity
15	B3 Consulting group
16	Olivia
17	Mandatum Life
18	Het Poetsbureau
19	Albaraka Türk
20	Banca March
21	Norgeshus
22	Jugend am Werk Steiermark GmbH
23	leboncoin Groupe
24	Beierholm
25	V. Kafkas SA

1



KUVEYTTÜRK
SAĞLAM BANKACILIK

2



3

REGENERON
science to medicine®

50 Best Large Workplaces



26	Insight Technology Solutions United Kingdom
27	Grupa ANG S.A.
28	SBAB
29	Elettronica
30	Laya Healthcare
31	MaibornWolff GmbH
32	Reusspark, Zentrum für Pflege und Betreuung
33	Savonia-ammattikorkeakoulu Oy
34	NEXITY
35	Diamantis Masoutis SA
36	NEUCA S.A.
37	Penti
38	Home Group Limited
39	Vector Informatik GmbH
40	VERBUND AG
41	BDO
42	EXTIA
43	Woodie's
44	Cembra
45	Talenom Oyj
46	Hijos de Rivera SAU
47	sahibinden.com
48	Baringa Partners United Kingdom
49	3
50	DELA

50 Best Medium Workplaces



- 1 AFAS Software
- 2 Workhuman
- 3 LR TECHNOLOGIES GROUPE
- 4 EASI
- 5 GittiGidiyor
- 6 Willhaben internet service GmbH & Co KG
- 7 Centiro
- 8 CCP Games
- 9 Dialectica
- 10 Gentofte Kommune
- 11 Software DELSOL
- 12 HELP
- 13 PASCOE Naturmedizin
- 14 Tümaş Mermer
- 15 Bostads AB Mimer
- 16 CTG IT Solutions
- 17 Biogen Italia S.r.l.
- 18 Bisnode D&B Schweiz AG
- 19 TalentCare
- 20 IG&H
- 21 Tulchan Communications LLP
- 22 PARIMATCH
- 23 Paytrail Oyj
- 24 MeltOne Advisory
- 25 System Solutions Luxembourg SA



50 Best Medium Workplaces



26	Campaigning Bureau Kampagnenberatungs GmbH
27	ALSID
28	Aktoy
29	Idego Group
30	Exterion Media
31	Epsilon Net
32	SoftServe Poland
33	Vassos Eliades Ltd
34	Zeta Service
35	Incentro The Netherlands
36	mnemonic
37	Mind Source
38	Natilik
39	Protime Belgium
40	Poppulo
41	Doğuş Holding
42	Smarter Ecommerce GmbH
43	QAware GmbH
44	RASTREATOR.COM
45	Dfind Consulting
46	Profiam Sosiaalipalvelut
47	Insight Technology Solutions Italy
48	Werkmandejong
49	Precis Digital
50	SkyCell AG

50 Best Small Workplaces



- 1 Viisi Hypotheken
- 2 UTOPIES
- 3 Holle baby food AG
- 4 CONVERT GROUP
- 5 PEN Partnership
- 6 ImmoScout24
- 7 Nexxie Group Ltd
- 8 INSPARK
- 9 capSpire Ltd
- 10 Fotoware
- 11 Sahara Marketing
- 12 Baringa Partners Germany
- 13 REAZN
- 14 Centros de Formação Talento
- 15 Seurana Oy
- 16 Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan Halland
- 17 BASE Erhverv
- 18 Camasia srl
- 19 Auntie Solutions Oy
- 20 Covenant.dev S.A.
- 21 Sundbom & Partners AB
- 22 Pylones Hellas
- 23 Farmazon
- 24 GSK Stockmann
- 25 Billund Vand & Energi



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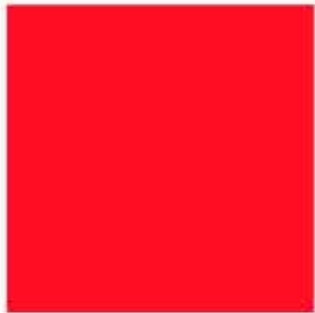
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Place
To
Work®**

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to becoming recognised as
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