



# HYBRID WORKING

THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY COVID REQUIRES  
A BIGGER SHIFT THAN YOU THINK

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The Industrial Revolution gave birth to offices to enable the bureaucracy required to manage factories. Blue-collar workers had to be in the factory to work with their machines and, in a similar mental model, bureaucrats made their way to the office every day. Although since the year 2000, more and more office workers are enabled with tools to work anywhere and anytime and offices became paperless, the concept of an office that forms the center of gravity in an organization has not changed. Until 2020 that is...

Covid-19 changed this in a matter of weeks when driven by lock-down all office work continued in the virtual. A new level playing field emerged by virtual collaboration from home using technology. Although office attendance became an anomaly, it also highlighted the importance of having an office; a place where people socialize, build trusted relationships, co-create and/ or work on complex matters. The office is also a place where people can belong and feel connected to the company's purpose. This is what people missed most.

On balance, though, people are positive about homeworking and as a society, it is important to recognize the opportunity:

1. **Less travel**, improving work-life balance, reducing carbon footprint, costs and congestion as well as pressure on the housing market as people may choose to live farther away from the office.
2. **Improved efficiency** as people can concentrate better, virtual meetings aiming to inform people, structure work and take decisions are more effective.
3. **Diversity** as people with a physical distance can more easily take part, being home and benefitting from less commuting time, partners can better share duties in the household and family and the weaker context of virtual interaction allows different people to contribute more equally.
4. **Lower illness** rates as work-life balance is improved and the threshold to decide to work is reduced if people with mild complaints are not required to leave their house.

The optimal balance between virtual working and physical office attendance, however, will not be reached automatically. It requires:

1. **Focus on securing a level playing field for people participating in meetings;** as a rule: virtual *or* face-to-face but not part of the team in a room and another part on the screen.
2. **Planning;** to distribute office attendance across the week it will be necessary to pay attention to planning office space in order to prevent that offices are overcrowded on Mondays and Tuesdays but hardly used on Wednesdays and Fridays.
3. **Designing meetings based on its purpose;** the purpose of the meeting is the driving parameter for the way the meeting is held (virtual or face to face). For example, a recurring team meeting to inform about upcoming activities can easily be done virtually but a brainstorm requires face to face dynamics.



This in itself will be a transformation. It will be a learning experience, as it has not been done before, anywhere. It requires a shift in the way we plan, lead and think about work. If that shift requires conscious action and sincere effort. Lack of that will allow the center of gravity of work will quickly rediscover itself in the office the way it once was.

The flexible working philosophy as we know it from the last two decades is all centered around the individual; you work when, where and how is most effective for *you*. The biggest shift with hybrid working may very well be that it becomes about you as a member of your team(s); you work together when, where and how is most effective for you together.

We encourage HR and Business Leaders to think about hybrid working along the following questions:

- What are your hopes and fears for hybrid working and the transformation? These are the design principles for your policy.
- What are the starting points? Is working from home voluntary? What are the things you typically want to do virtually, what are the things to do face-to-face and what is the minimum office attendance to build and maintain the company's informal social structure?
- How do you make the shift practically? What is required in terms of governance and scheduling, leadership capability and culture, wellbeing and office facilities?

We ourselves followed these questions to design our framework in the summer of 2020 and agreed an approach with our works council that you can find below. Based on this we started having conversations with our 8000 employees in our +500 teams to plan the transformation to a post-COVID hybrid way of working.



# VODAFONEZIGGO POLICY

## 1. PRINCIPLES

### 1.1 OFFICE ATTENDANCE

VodafoneZiggo offers its office-based employees - who can work virtually - the option to work from home for 2 to 3 days per week and 2 to 3 days per week from the office. For part-timers 2 days per week in the office is considered the minimum.

### 1.2 CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENT

Although participation is voluntary, we contractually agree that working from home is not an entitlement and people need to have a decent and healthy place to work. The office location does not change and working from home is subjected to good performance. Furthermore, the days on which attendance in the office is required are determined by people leader or scheduler and is not based on individual preference only.

It is stressed that all people who wish to work in the office every day or more days than required by their schedule are free to do so, without further explanation.

## 2. THE SHIFT

Post-Covid, the expression "flattening the curve" will get a different meaning. How to distribute office attendance evenly across the week? Without clear guidance the center of gravity in the organization may easily shift back from the virtual to the office. Furthermore, how to ensure that a level playing field is maintained in interactions between teams by meeting either face-to-face or virtually, avoiding hybrid meetings where half of the team is in the room and half the room is dialing in? Clear guidelines need to be in place to prevent people feeling left out because they are not in the room. So as a rule, hybrid meetings are highly discouraged.

### 2.1 FACE-TO-FACE VERSUS VIRTUAL

As a principle we work virtually to share information.

This means we work virtually when we have our regular (bi-) weekly meetings in which we share information, structure our work and take decisions. We perform routine, transactional activities such as email, administration, individual work that requires focus and concentration, producing reports, making analyses, regular/recurring meetings with colleagues/externals etc. preferably from home.



As a principle we work in the office for creativity and social contacts. This means we spend days in the office to allow for social interaction and building trusted relations. This can happen in planned meetings as well as in coincidental encounters. Furthermore, we plan meetings face-to-face if they require creativity, if matters are highly complex and/or if emotion is involved, such as in personal feedback conversations.

## 2.2 GOVERNANCE & SCHEDULING

As we plan our activities and interactions more consciously and we move to a world in which working in the office comes on an equal footing as working from home, some 'traffic' coordination in the office is required to enable and support in-office activities better. We want to avoid everyone coming in on the same day and hinder the flow or purpose of coming to the office. We also want to ensure a level playing field within teams and support virtual meetings if needed.

To avoid bureaucracy and implement a culture and leadership driven practical approach to plan office attendance evenly throughout the week, we have come up with the following personas and scheduling:

### 1 Service and Desk Based Sales

Customer facing people who work on a centrally led schedule are planned to work either from office or from home.

### 2 Retail and Technicians

Other than regular team meetings, Retail colleagues and Technicians cannot perform their activities virtually.

### 3 Agile Teams

Two Agile Teams will share one Agile Studio and attend on either a Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday in the office as a team. All teams should be welcome on a Friday.

### 4 Office Teams, Static

Teams with people performing >70% of their activities desk-based and individually make a schedule as a team to facilitate rotating office attendance (i.e., avoiding fixed office days limiting social interaction).

### 5 Office Teams, Dynamic, senior leaders

People working <30% individually and desk based ensure that all regular meetings take place virtually. Quarterly evaluations and/ or strategic planning sessions can take place face to face. Teams choose one day per week to meet in the office for face-to-face meetings and social interactions and allow team members to choose a second day to work from the office based on their individual schedule.

Virtual first! We iterate that if regular meetings are unnecessarily planned face-to-face this will attract (senior) management to the office. In turn this will create a center of gravity attracting more people to be present, driven by fear of not being part of group processes.



## 2.3 LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

Going through any change requires effort, agility and an open mindset. It requires your leaders to lead by example and to support their teams in successfully embracing the change. Leading and managing in the virtual adds another dimension and shifts the focus on new/other leadership skills than the ones used in a traditional, more physical work environment. Virtual leadership focuses more heavily on improving collaboration through communication, accountability, and transparency. Remote working may take away the casual check-ins and conversations at the coffee machine or in the hallways but that does not mean it takes away the human connection. It just requires a change in how you maintain and strengthen that connection.

Connected Working 2.0, an internal VodafoneZiggo program, supports our people leaders to invest more in staying connected with their teams, in making themselves accessible, in leading with empathy and in fostering trust. It is all about creating an element of humanity in an otherwise detached virtual environment.

With more room for flexibility in how and when people do their work, it is important to set clear expectations and goals, to check in on the progress regularly, to coach and empower team members and to hold people to account. It is a more frequent and ongoing dialogue, not just between people leaders and individuals but also between team members. Giving and receiving feedback in those dialogues becomes equally important and – contrary to in-office ways of working – it requires us to be more aware of which communication methods are best suited for what kind of conversation.

We will incorporate these shifts and focus areas in our leadership development programs, as well as in our culture activation plans.

## 2.4 WELLBEING

Remote working increases the relevance of wellbeing. As working environments are less 'controlled' by the employer, and boundaries between work and personal life are fading, we need to support and facilitate our employees to take their responsibility in taking care of themselves and actively work on being mentally and physically fit.

We developed a wellbeing program to support Connected Working 2.0. This program aims to maintain and improve wellbeing on four dimensions:



	<b>MIND</b> <i>Optimal control through mental resilience</i>	<b>BODY</b> <i>The strongest connection is between body &amp; mind</i>	<b>FINANCIAL</b> <i>Get and stay financially fit!</i>	<b>SOCIAL</b> <i>Grow through connection</i>
<b>WHY</b>	Mental strength is the key to reaching your greatest potential. You need it to develop healthier self-talk, to manage your emotions and to perform at your peak. It helps you become the best version of yourself. It's important to provide support, knowing 1 in 10 young people experience a period of depression.	Physical and mental wellbeing go hand in hand; it improves your state of mind, boosts your energy levels, improves the quality of your sleep and is a great opportunity to socialize.  Being physically healthy means our bodies are better equipped to fight an illness.	Financial wellbeing influences our physical, mental and social health. Therefore it's important to stay financial fit. 32% of Dutch households have payment arrears. This can cause stress and can result in reduced ability to concentrate, lower productivity and absenteeism (twice as high).	Social connection brings enjoyment, leads to higher self-esteem and empathy, it helps us regulate our emotions, can lower anxiety and depression, and improves our immune systems. We live busy lives. Often, our social connections fall by the wayside. This can put our health at risk. #Stayconnected

We are currently loading the pillars with new initiatives, aimed at being successful in the new Connected Way of Working 2.0 and making sure that our purpose of enjoyment and progress with every connection will become an even bigger day-to-day reality for our employees than it is today.

## 2.5 OFFICE ENVIRONMENT & FACILITIES

This new way of working obviously has an impact on our office environment. Apart from affecting the number of people in buildings, as we shift to a different type of activity designed to take place in the office, we will also need to cater to those facilities in the best possible way.

Based on the designated activities and the personas described in paragraph 2.2, we are now exploring the following changes to our office spaces:

1. More informal areas required, especially in contact centers
2. More larger meeting rooms required
3. More facilities required to attend virtual meetings in the office
4. Redefine BU Home Base/ Landing zone
5. Fewer desks required in COPS/ Desk Based Sales locations
6. Fewer "landing desks" required in CO and Tech locations

## 2.6 MEETING RULES & PLANNING GUIDELINES

Better connections drive enjoyment and progress. Therefore, we provide best practice guidance as well as a set of simple rules to ensure a minimum level of effectiveness, wellbeing and engagement. These rules and guidance may be further enhanced by teams based on their challenges and preferences, in order to:

- Performance / Efficiency: ensure our time and effort is used as best as possible, so we can deliver the best results.
- Wellbeing: ensure we can free up time to connect, recharge and relax, so we feel good mentally, physically & socially.

### Meeting Rules:

1. All meetings need to have a clear agenda and purpose shared in advance.



2. People are invited or attend only if it is essential for decision making or to obtain information firsthand, for example to act on the decisions taken. People can also be invited to minimize unnecessary follow-up meetings and coordination to implement complex decisions. In principle, no more than 3 organization layers in one reporting line participate in one meeting.
3. Any materials/documents should be shared online in advance.
4. Participants in virtual meetings keep their camera on and participate with undivided attention.
5. Minutes are documented and shared online, actions are logged to ensure follow up is automated and managed with clear ownership.
6. Meetings are recorded or transcripts shared (where appropriate and only available in Teams) for follow up or for those who did not attend.

#### Planning Guidelines:

We ensure to have time between meetings to catch-up on urgent messages and either make our way from one meeting room to another or allow stretching our legs when working from home. We start meetings with our full attention and on time. Therefore, we always aim not to schedule meetings back-to-back. To that end, we work with the following recommendations:

- After a >45 meeting, plan a 10-minute break.
- Meetings lasting >90 minutes include a comfort break.
- We do not plan meetings around lunchtime to have lunch away from the screen, re-energize, do household chores, reconnect with colleagues when in the office and/ or catch-up on messages.
- We plan meetings in the office between 0930 and 1630 hours, allowing colleagues from other locations to arrive and leave on time unless teams collectively decide otherwise.

We work flexibly, however only in extenuating circumstances we hold meetings before 0830 and after 1800. In addition, outside of these hours people should not feel obliged to respond to messages not critical for business continuity.

