


Chapter 16


The Role of AI in Shaping the Future of Remote and Hybrid Work Models

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ABSTRACT

Abstract The transformation of work into remote and hybrid has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic, compelling organizations to explore new mechanisms for enhancing productivity, collaboration, and employee happiness. This chapter investigates how technology is influencing these models of work and how AI helps in enhancing productivity and job satisfaction. Through surveys and interviews of employees, HR professionals, and IT personnel, the study examines the impact of AI tools on workday experience. The findings show that companies using AI have improved performance, engagement, and overall well-being. The research also highlights, however, that proper AI adoption, sufficient training, and effective communication on data privacy and ethics are essential. In order to maximize AI in remote and hybrid environments, companies must invest in employee wellness, skill building, and constant assessment of the impact of AI. Through this, AI can assist in fostering a more productive, balanced, and engaging work environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Before diving into the detailed subsections, here is a concise overview of what this introduction will cover. First, we'll trace how the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to remote and hybrid work, fundamentally altering organizational norms. Next, we'll explain why AI has become indispensable for firms seeking to thrive under these new models—boosting productivity, enabling seamless collaboration, and safeguarding employee well-being. Finally, we'll articulate the precise purpose and scope of this chapter: to map the intersection of AI and distributed work, identify critical success factors, and set the stage for our deeper analysis in subsequent sections.

CONTEXT: RISE OF REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK POST-COVID-19

Since early 2020, organizations worldwide were compelled to adopt remote work almost overnight to maintain operations amid lockdowns and social-distancing mandates (Pabilonia & Redmond, 2024). What had been a growing but marginal trend—roughly 5% of U.S. private-sector employees working from home in 2019—jumped to nearly 20% by mid-2020, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Pabilonia & Redmond, 2024). This seismic shift was not merely a stopgap; by 2023, roughly one-third of full-time employees continued to work remotely at least part-time, even as offices reopened (Luh, 2024).

Hybrid work—where employees split time between home and office—emerged as the dominant model. Surveys indicate more than 60% of knowledge-workers now prefer hybrid arrangements, valuing both flexibility and periodic in-person collaboration (Barrero et al., 2021). As a result, companies have had to rethink real estate, technology infrastructure, and management practices to support a distributed workforce at scale.

However, this transition has not been without challenges. Organizations report struggles with maintaining team cohesion, monitoring performance, and ensuring equitable access to resources across locations (Bloom et al., 2023). These pain points have driven interest in leveraging advanced technologies—especially AI—to bridge gaps and create a new “digital HQ” that combines the best of remote and in-office work.

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