Smarter Workspaces Guide

Driving business transformation and resilience
with hybrid work environments

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Introduction

In 2020, many organisations were forced to adopt new ways of working as the COVID-19 pandemic had an unimaginable impact on the workplace. By the end of the first half of the year, an estimated 93 percent of global workers lived in countries with workplace closures in place, according to the International Labour Organisation. Research from Gartner predicts that at least 48 percent of employees will continue to work remotely in some capacity after the pandemic.

With many workforces split between the office and home, hybrid workspaces solutions have evolved to cater to employees who now work at any time and from any place. Organisations that evolve with this rapidly changing workplace will see the most benefit both now and in years to come, especially as there is continued uncertainty worldwide around the pandemic and economic pressure.

"Hybrid workspace solutions have evolved to cater to employees who now work at any time and from any place."

Invest in hybrid workspaces now

Hybrid workspaces present numerous advantages in both the short and long-term. They provide organisations with the flexibility and agility to respond to the constantly changing business environment and allow business operations to continue through economic and social disruption. Furthermore, they provide employees with benefits such as a better work-life balance, reduced commute time and the opportunity to live away from major city hubs.

From a long-term perspective, hybrid workspaces provide increased resilience and scalability in a rapidly changing world, as well as improved employee experience.
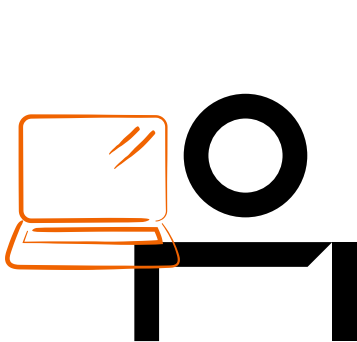
While many companies were forced to adapt on the fly when COVID-19 first impacted their country, there is an opportunity now for organisations to set up their hybrid

work environments in a way that will benefit employees, while also future-proofing against other high-impact events and enabling rapid scalability of the workforce as required.

To make that happen, business leaders need to take a strategic approach to implementing their hybrid work environment, identifying the new technology and services they need to foster productivity, connectivity and security in this new way of working.

> "Hybrid workspaces provide increased resilience and scalability in a rapidly changing world."

This ebook will help organisations to implement a hybrid workspace strategy based on three stages:
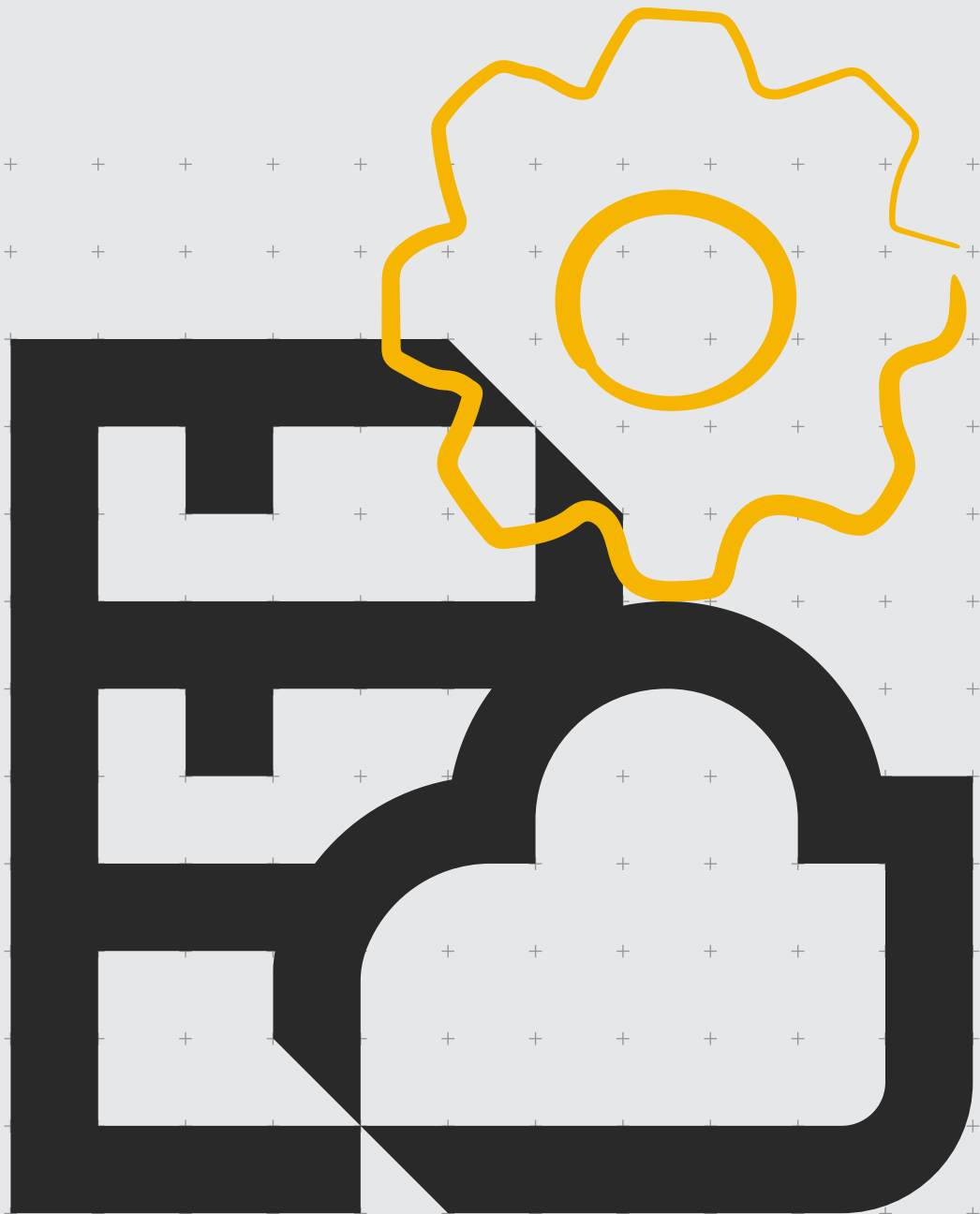

**1.
Equip your
team**

**2.
Connect your
people**

**3.
Optimise your
processes**

The role of digital transformation in hybrid workspaces

The role of digital transformation in hybrid workspaces

Before we address the strategic implementation of a hybrid working environment, it's worth noting that one of the key drivers of a successful hybrid workspace is digital transformation. Hybrid workforces rely on digital solutions and processes to succeed, so aligning your digital transformation initiatives with your hybrid workspace strategy will ensure that each supports the other.
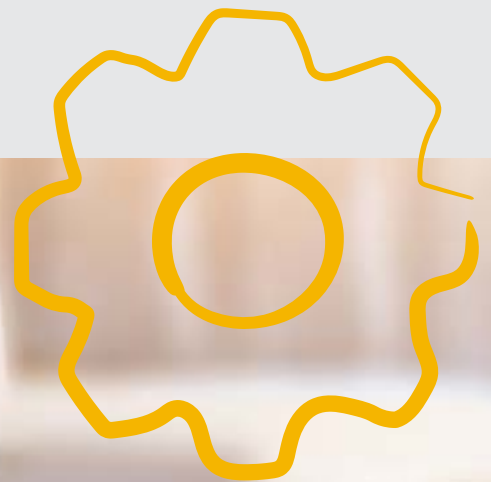
Here are some of the ways that digital transformation can help enable your hybrid work environment.

Digitisation of the office environment

In a hybrid workspace, paper becomes largely redundant as the workforce are working in a decentralised environment, independently and not in physical proximity with each other. As a result, paper or any physical medium is usually not an effective method for sharing or processing of information.

Organisations can overcome these challenges by shifting towards a digital strategy. The benefits of digitising documents include reduced business costs, instant access to data, increased efficiency, improved data security and a positive environmental impact. In a hybrid work environment, it also simplifies collaboration and sharing of documents.

Managed print and document services

As digital transformation increases, managed print services (MPS) is no longer simply about managing an organisation's printer fleet and consumables. Document management is evolving to include MPS and a greater focus on the business as a whole, allowing service providers to take a more holistic approach to helping business' reduce costs and improve processes across the entire document lifecycle.
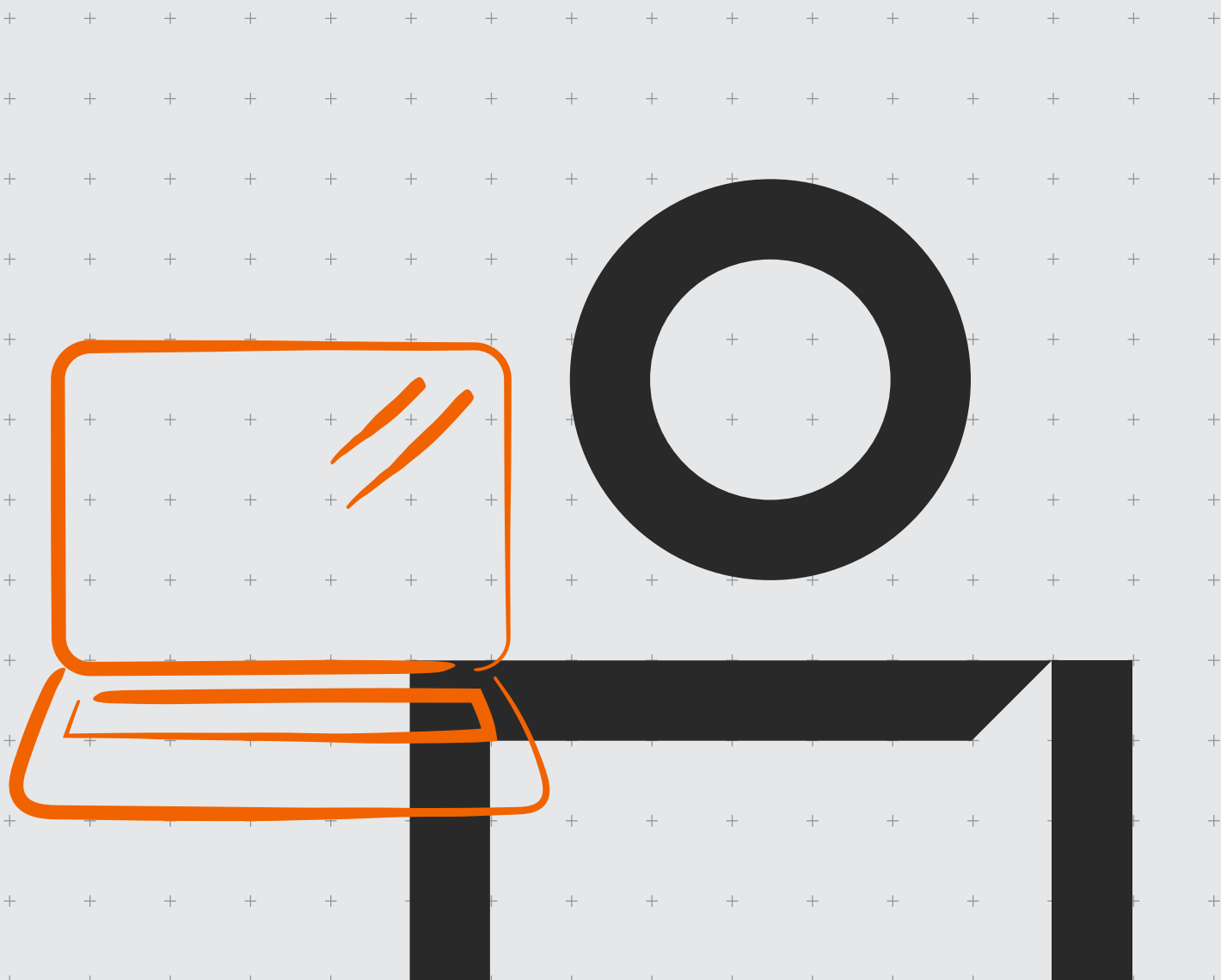
MPS or managed document services (MDS) providers can help set up the infrastructure and workflows you need to create an efficient and effective hybrid workspace, while also taking some of the load off IT departments. Additionally, their holistic approach, considering the entire document lifecycle, will create a more efficient and streamlined work environment for your organisation.

Digital skills training

Digital skills amongst employees are essential for the success of digital transformation initiatives and, by extension, an effective hybrid workforce. One of the major reasons for this is that it's no longer sufficient for a company's technology skills to rest in the IT department. Instead, every department and position is impacted by new digital platforms and ways of doing things, meaning each employee needs a particular digital skill set to support and thrive through these initiatives.

This is never more true than in the changes we're seeing to the current work environment. With a rapid shift in

the way workplaces function, digital transformation has been fast-tracked to better support remote and hybrid workforces. Workplace leaders unable to stay on top of their organisation's talent and skills needs will watch their employees struggle to adapt and thrive in the new work environment.

As you implement your strategy, it's important to assess how and where digital transformation should be fast-tracked to support your hybrid workforce and enable your organisation to quickly take advantage of new market opportunities.

Equip your team

Equip your team

The first step to implementing a hybrid workspace is ensuring that you equip your people with the hardware and solutions they need to work from any location. While this can include a large variety of equipment depending on your employees' needs, the most critical are computers, printers and collaboration tools.

Computers

It probably goes without saying that a laptop is a better choice for hybrid workers than a desktop computer. For workers spending half the week at home and half the week in the office, the portability of a laptop is essential. But even for full-time remote or on-site workers, the flexibility of a laptop will vastly improve their work experience. However, keep in mind that you will need to buy a monitor, keyboard and mouse for each employee as well to improve their ergonomic set-up and avoid any workplace health and safety issues.

The other feature that is essential for a hybrid work environment is a webcam. Most laptops will offer a 720p resolution integrated webcam, which is sufficient for video conference apps such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)

Company-wide flexible working had been a goal for the future, now organisations have accelerated their strategies. The subsequent massive upturn in the use of tools such as G-Suite and Microsoft Teams, as companies sought quick ways to keep their people working, and their customers happy.

As more teams work remotely, increasing amounts of data, including sensitive information, are being uploaded and shared to SaaS platforms. Most businesses naturally assume that this data is being backed up natively, by the platform provider or Microsoft and Google. The reality, however, is the responsibility sits firmly with you, the user.

Solutions such as Kyocera Protect, a fully managed service has been designed to back up and restore data within SaaS platforms. Protecting your users' Microsoft 365 or G-Suite data against unintentional or malicious data loss, including ransomware. As an example; if someone accidentally deletes a critical section of a document, it's not a problem, all data is securely backed up and easily restored by Kyocera, so you and your users don't have to worry about a thing.

Microsoft Teams with telephony controls

Switching to Microsoft Teams during the lockdowns made perfect sense for many organisations, the challenge has been providing consistent user and customer experience at home and in the office. By integrating traditional telephony and unified communications systems with Microsoft Teams, organisations can optimise their costs, remain compliant and create a unified collaboration platform.

Managed services like Kyocera Direct Connect make sure your team and customers can connect, whenever and however they need to, using traditional PBX, UC, and Microsoft Teams. Users can make and receive calls from existing PBX using the Microsoft Teams app or desk phone. They also maintain the same call controls your team will be used to, for example re-route calls if they are in a meeting or on holiday.

Printers

Printers still have an important role to play in a hybrid workspace. It is crucial to choose a printer with the right features and capabilities that can boost productivity to support a digital environment. Traditionally, IT departments managed a limited number of printing and multifunction printers in a centralised office location. Now, they manage as many printers as they have remote workers and office locations. For remote workers, organisations need to be careful in choosing printers that offer an appropriate level of security, functionality, cost-effectiveness and scalability. This eliminates most consumer-level printers as these pose a significant security risk, while also being less cost-efficient and productive than specialised devices.

When choosing home office printers for your hybrid workforce, consider the following features:

Security

Security vulnerabilities are one of the biggest threats facing hybrid workspaces, especially in the aftermath of the rapid transition to remote working as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. More locations, more networks and more devices open up more opportunities for hackers to target your business, unless necessary precautions are taken.

Printers pose a security threat in two ways: hackers can use them as a network entry point, allowing them access to other devices on the same network, or they can steal data from the printer itself, giving them access to any documents that were processed by the device.

To mitigate these risks, you should choose printers that come with strong security features such as local and network authentication, data encryption, overwrite-erase, password access and chips to counteract network intrusion. The average consumer printer doesn't have these features, but there are specialised devices that come in a variety of sizes to suit home or office environments.

Functionality

Firstly, in terms of functionality, any printer that you choose for remote workers must be able to handle high volume workloads without constantly needing to replace consumables. Specialised devices can print up to hundreds of documents per week and also print as many as ten times the number of documents per cartridge compared to a consumer device. Under a high workload, consumer devices are likely to break down faster as they're not designed to cope with heavy use, nor are they as efficient in their use of consumables.

Secondly, hybrid workspace printers need to be multifunction printers (MFPs) that allow workers to print,

scan, copy or fax as needed. Another feature to consider is an automatic paper feeder. For workers who are scanning multi-page documents, this basic addition can save significant time when compared to manually scanning each page separately.

Lastly, connectivity is a key area of functionality. In a hybrid workspace, every printing device should be web-enabled in order to connect to the cloud. Investing in devices without cloud connectivity severely limits both the scalability and effectiveness of your hybrid workspace over the long-term.

Scalability

Scalability should be considered at every stage of implementing a hybrid workspace strategy. As previously noted, cloud connectivity is one of the key factors influencing scalability when establishing a network of printers. Cloud print platforms enable a number of functions that can benefit hybrid working environments, including:

- Set up of new devices on-demand in remote locations, without the need for an IT worker to visit the new employee's home

- Management of all workplace devices from a central location, including status and connection details

- Removal of the need for specific drivers and software whenever an employee accesses a new device at home or the office

- Ability for workers to send print jobs to specific printers in the company fleet, regardless of their location

Running costs

The average retail printer typically has a low toner or ink yield, in general giving a maximum of 500 prints per cartridge. With a specialised device, the output ranges from 1000-5000 prints before the cartridge needs to be replaced.

While a specialised device may cost more than a retail printer initially, the running costs will be lower, leading to greater productivity. And when the additional security, functionality and scalability benefits are also considered, it makes them the only logical choice when equipping a hybrid workforce.

Business Scenario

Employees who work remotely have compact, cost-effective and secure home office multifunction printers. The central office also has a number of MFPs spread throughout the office at strategic locations to avoid overcrowding. All printers, whether located remotely or in the office, are managed through a cloud interface, allowing workers to easily send print jobs to whichever device they are working near. The printers can also be used touch-free with a cloud printing mobile app, allowing employees to manage print jobs efficiently and securely, without needing to interact directly with the printer panel.

As the printers are all cloud-connected, the IT department can set them up quickly without needing to visit the physical location, such as an employee's home. Onboarding is also simplified as the new worker only has to learn one platform to manage all printers. Devices can be added or removed from the network easily, allowing the team to scale up or down as needed. Security is also managed through the company network, providing additional assurance that data is secure, while also allowing the printers to be monitored for threats.

How Kyocera can help

No matter where you are working, Kyocera offers a device to help you work smarter. With our extensive range of durable, cost-efficient and environmentally responsible devices, you will find the perfect printer or MFP for the busiest of offices or the most productive remote workspaces. Our incredibly durable long-life internal components, highly economical running costs and significantly less waste during their lifetime.

Connect your people

Connect your people

While traditional workplaces enable collaboration through proximity in a centralised office, hybrid workspaces challenge this as employees attempt to work together from multiple locations. To enable effective collaboration you need the right solutions or tools to connect your people and infrastructure across different locations. This includes sharing documents or accessing files remotely, and providing communication tools for both formal and informal interactions.

As with the physical infrastructure, it's important to set yourself up for future growth when investing in software and services that connect your team. Ensure that any new services can be scaled up (and down) quickly and easily, while also integrating with the infrastructure, processes and software you already have in place.

With that said, here are the tools you need to connect to your hybrid workforce.

Document management system

While a multifunctional printer allows your employees to easily print, scan, copy and fax documents, it's only one half of the document equation. You also need to manage how they access, work on and share digital files. This is where a document management system (DMS) comes in. A DMS stores files in a central location, facilitating and streamlining how digital documents are created, shared, organised, secured, accessed and archived on a company-wide scale. The benefits of a DMS for a hybrid workspace include:

- A centralised file repository that can be accessed by employees anytime and anywhere

- Version control, meaning everyone has access to the most up-to-date file and older versions are easily recoverable

- Automated workflows, such as assigning documents to the right employee to action once processed

- Improved compliance due to advanced security measures, and workflows that follow record-keeping protocols

- Increased data security through access control, version history and system back-ups

- Reduced reliance on printing and scanning as employees can share files digitally, lowering device running costs

Communication tools

Communication in hybrid workspaces almost requires a strategy in and of itself. When do you hold a video call and when will an email suffice? How often should teams meet in-person instead of virtually? What expectations are placed on employees in different time zones to the rest of the team?

These are just some of the questions you may have to answer when choosing communication tools and establishing best practices. We recommend that organisations invest in a number of communication methods to support different types of communication.

This could include email, instant message, video calls and to-do list/project management apps. Some platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, offer an integrated communications tool that includes a number of different collaboration methods.

If your organisation normally has a receptionist to manage incoming calls, you will also need to find a solution for routing calls to remote workers, such as a cloud phone system. Having a strategic partner such as Kyocera to assist during your transition to a hybrid workspace can be incredibly beneficial to ensure your organisation is thinking of everything when it comes to equipping your workforce to perform from any location.

Business Connectivity

Business grade connectivity is essential for any organisation and network resiliency has become increasingly important, fuelled partly by the growth in automation. It is fundamental you have high speed, secure and reliable connectivity, to ensure your organisation is efficient and operates without disruption.

Organisations are also now looking into SD-WAN, to reduce connectivity costs and gain more control over their network.

Two-factor Authentication

Two-factor authentication (2FA) adds an additional layer of security, 'double checking' that you really are the person you are claiming to be when you're using online services.

Authentication factors usually rely on a PIN alongside something a user has like a mobile phone or smartphone app. However biometric factors such as fingerprints or facial and voice recognition are also used as well as location and time factors.

Software features

When choosing software and services to support your hybrid workforce, remember to prioritise the following features:

Cloud

Cloud-based services are the obvious solution for hybrid working environments for a number of reasons, foremost among them being their accessibility and scalability. Cloud solutions allow your employees to easily access required resources from any location, and organisations can add or remove users and services without the need for additional servers and infrastructure, creating flexibility to scale up or down as required.

Automation and artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionising how we work through intelligent data management and automation. Investing in tools that make use of this technology will not only future-proof your organisation, but also save you time and increase productivity. Some of the ways that AI is being used in document management include:

- Automating tasks through Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

- Advanced data capture and indexing

- Content Platforms that integrate all diverse information silos

- Advanced search capabilities

- Intelligent redaction to protect data

- Unlocking historical data and deriving new insights

Security

Security is of the utmost importance when choosing and setting up platforms. A good system will have features such as access control, automatic software and security updates, system redundancy, two-factor authentication, data back-up and encryption. If set-up correctly, the system will significantly reduce the risk of a cybersecurity incident occurring.

One of the benefits of choosing a cloud platform or software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution is that the vendor may share responsibility for managing the technical and security issues associated with it, leaving IT staff to focus on other issues, such as securing endpoints, staff cybersecurity training and incident response plans.

Business Scenario

The organisation uses Content Services (which includes DMS functionality) to control their files and set-up document workflows. The Content Services solution is cloud-based, so the IT department can quickly set up the system without the need for deployment of additional infrastructure.

Employees' MFPs integrate with the solution so that new paper documents are automatically filed when scanned. Printing costs and data errors have been reduced and employees now have immediate access to the latest version of a document for easy collaboration. There have also been productivity and efficiency gains as the need to email documents back and forth between team members has been removed.

The use of artificial intelligence to automate classification and processing of documents, as well as for data extraction and topic clustering, has freed staff to pursue other higher value tasks. Employees are excited by the prospect of using the solutions Robotic Process Automation (RPA) capabilities to automate many of the time-consuming manual tasks they perform in the near future.

The organisation has also introduced communication tools, such as Slack and Microsoft Teams, to enable staff to message, call and share information with other team members. This has had a positive impact on workplace culture as employees feel more connected to one another, despite working in a large variety of locations. Workers are encouraged to use the tools for social team building purposes as well, such as virtual team lunches, after-work drinks and chat groups.

How Kyocera can help

At Kyocera, when we engage with a new client, our first step is to understand their current system and where there are bottlenecks. We then provide an appropriate solution that is tailored to their needs. We don't try to squeeze all our customers' requirements into one service, but provide a holistic solution, which could include a package of products or services that are integrated to provide the best possible outcome for the organisation.

Kyocera offers Managed Print Services (MPS) and Content Services, like Content Platforms that integrate with printers and multifunction printers, as well as other software and platforms that may be used in your hybrid workforce. The solutions are designed to enable future growth and scalability. As a cloud SaaS provider, we can offer an efficient, on-demand service using high-quality technology and the very best in cybersecurity protection and disaster recovery. We can also help you set up cloud networks and other infrastructure to support a comprehensive hybrid working solution that considers all the products you will need.
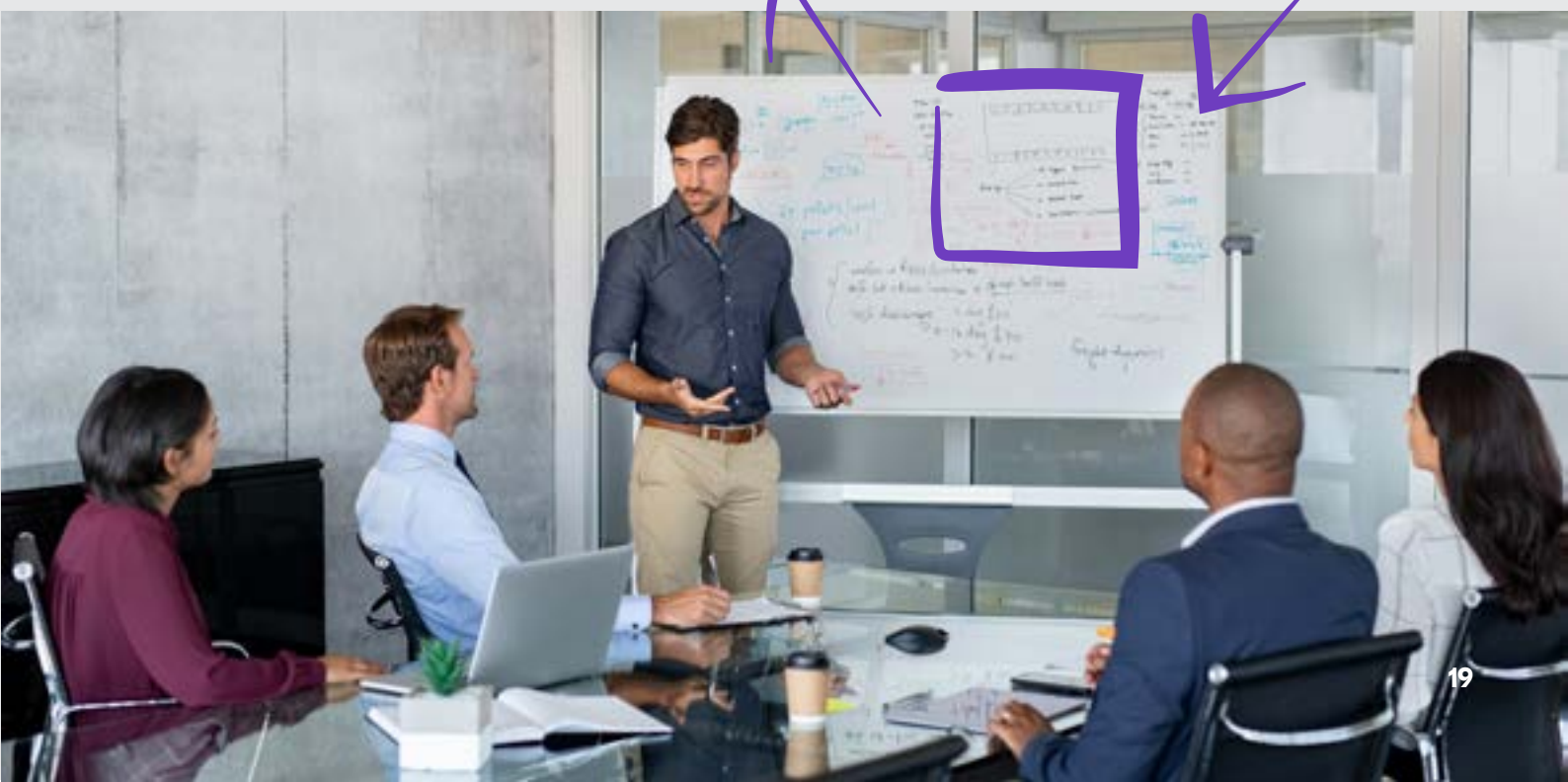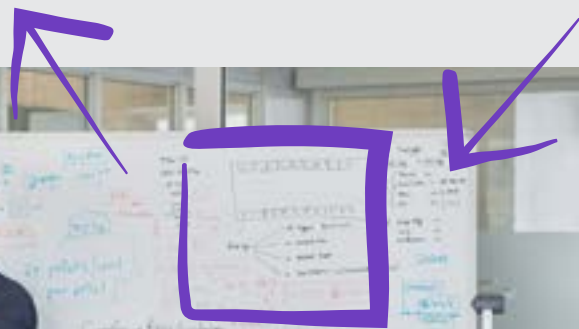
Optimise your processes

Optimise your processes

You have the right infrastructure in place and you've connected your team through the right platforms and services, now how do you ensure that your hybrid workforce operates smoothly and efficiently?

Train staff

One of the first steps will be to up-skill staff in areas where your organisation faces a skills gap. While the COVID-19 pandemic prioritised skills that enabled remote working, long-term training plans should be more holistic in their approach. The demand for technological, social and emotional skills is expected to grow, while jobs that require predominantly physical, manual or basic cognitive skills will decline.

Start by addressing the immediate needs of your organisation, including staff training in the new hardware and software you've invested in, and core skills that will build your hybrid workforce, such as online collaboration and cybersecurity awareness training. However, keep a long-term focus as well—a culture of continuous up skilling will help create a more agile workforce, which is the key to responding effectively to the fast-changing business environment of today and tomorrow.

Streamline processes

One of the risks of a decentralised workforce is that processes which relied on physical interactions become inefficient and frustrating. For example, getting a manager's signature on a document - a process that was relatively simple in the office - can become time-consuming and labour-intensive when employees no longer work in the same location. The document will be printed, scanned and emailed back and forth, costing the organisation more and lowering productivity.

In an optimised hybrid workspace, employees use tools such as automated workflows and e-signatures to achieve tasks and streamline processes. In the example we've given, this would involve enrolling the document in an approvals workflow in Content Services. An automated notification would be sent to the manager asking for their signature, with a tool to provide it electronically and a task added to their to-do list. As the manager logs into the system, their credentials are authenticated upon providing the e-signature. The employee is also automatically notified as soon as the signature is received. There is no printing, scanning or email attachments, nor multiple versions of the same document floating around, and wait time and workload are both reduced.

The other major benefit is security. With the workflow option, risk is minimised as the document is not attached to an email, printed or scanned, but remains secure in the document management system, where it can only be accessed with the appropriate credentials. Additionally, if an audit is required, the signature is time and date-stamped, and there are system records of each user's activity.

Identifying areas where processes can be streamlined, often with the help of automation, will allow your workforce to achieve their goals efficiently and avoid bottlenecks.
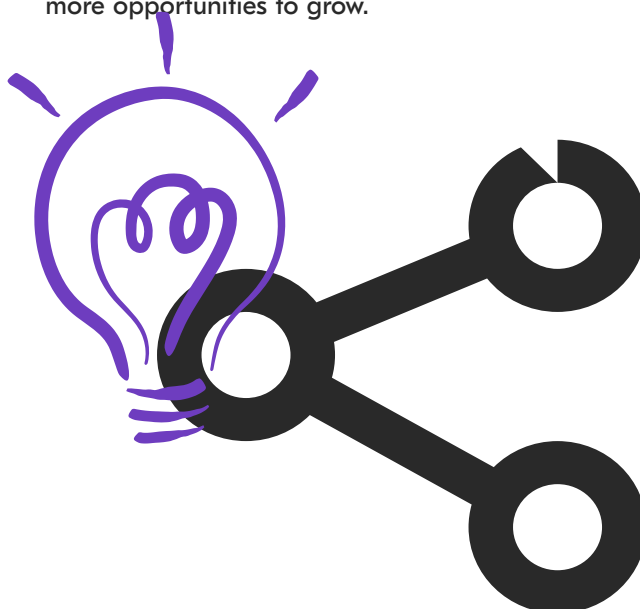
Automation

Optimising your hybrid work environment also includes the opportunity to augment your content through automation solutions such as robotic process automation (RPA), Content Services, and data capture and extraction. These tools can allow you to automate tasks such as:

- Identifying or organising documents based on their internal content

- Approval workflows, such as asking for an e-signature

- Extracting information from one document and matching it to another

In a hybrid work environment, a business case scenario could be an employee who receives an invoice from a client: the worker uploads the document to the content management solution and lets bots extract the data and send it to the accounting software, before filing it in the correct place. Some automation tools like RPA also learn over time, so depending on the invoice, the bots could learn to push it to the right manager for internal approval.

Not only does automation save time and eliminate errors, but it also frees employees to focus on higher value work that will have a greater return on investment (ROI) for the business, providing organisations with more opportunities to grow.

How Kyocera can help

Understanding where your organisation is today and getting a clear view on internal processes and information structure is key to determine what are your problem areas and where you need to invest. That's why organisations are increasingly turning to Content Services. These solutions capture, store, analyse, and automate content that was previously unstructured and difficult to access.

A Discovery Workshop will help your organisation to unleash the power of your data. The consultative methodology starts with a critical 'discovery' stage, where experienced business analysts identify and define the information, workflows and processes that lie behind your operations.

Kyocera would discuss the findings and make suggestions for each key process. Organisations find the key benefits are improved efficiency and accuracy with custom reporting dashboards and time savings from manual tasks by discovering what processes could be automated.

Engaging an Comprehensive Service provider, such as Kyocera, gives organisations the opportunity to benefit from the experience and knowledge of experts in designing and implementing workflows and business intelligence that support a hybrid workforce.

Kyocera takes a holistic approach, considering the needs of the whole company, across multiple departments, and how optimisation of the platforms and hardware available can enhance the ways staff work. Data security is also a significant part of this, as particularly in times of rapid change, it is not uncommon to see that businesses have set up new platforms in an insecure manner.

Conclusion

Hybrid workspace represent both the 'new normal' that we're adjusting to, and the future of the workplace—even after the pandemic. For organisations that have rapidly adapted during COVID-19 to a decentralised workforce, now is the time to strategically establish your hybrid work environment for the long-term using the three steps.

Hardware, software and ICT service providers play a significant role in providing products, strategic advice and support in creating an efficient, effective and secure work environment throughout these steps. Organisations that leverage the expertise available to them will see the most success from their hybrid workplace strategy and reap long-term rewards such as efficiencies and cost savings.

At Kyocera, we pride ourselves on our customer-first approach. We partner with our clients to deliver the best value possible by understanding their specific needs and challenges, and delivering a holistic and tailored solution. Our experience across the full document lifecycle and ICT services uniquely equips us to provide support and strategic advice in the implementation of hybrid workspaces, from hardware and software to optimising your work processes.

To understand how to transform your organisation into a hybrid workspace, or to see how you could improve your current hybrid setup, speak to an expert at Kyocera. We work with organisations in verticals from universities, law firms, healthcare, retail, manufacturing, SMBs and more to implement effective hybrid working environments.

Kyocera Document Solutions has championed innovative technology since 1934. We enable our customers to turn information into knowledge, excel at learning and surpass others. With professional expertise and a culture of empathetic partnership, we help organisations put knowledge to work to drive change.

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