People keep talking about how remote work is part of the future of work.

Well, I have news: that future is here.

Remote and hybrid work are the new reality.

And now we have to figure out how to make them work for all of us.

[The Way We Work]

In March 2020, when the COVID pandemic hit, remote work went into hyperspeed.

Work routines that were tied to commutes and buildings where people shared time and space went away.

Many people wondered what would become of teamwork, collaboration and productivity?

They soon found that they could accomplish more at home and find the best work-life flexibility of

their careers.

Today, the verdict is in.

Using surveys, polls and meta analyses, I found that over 70 percent of employees in most global

surveys want a mix of in-person and remote formats moving forward.

This makes us multimodal workers.

What does this mean?

It means we have to be awesome in person.

We have to be awesome remotely.

And we have to be awesome when we’re in hybrid mode.

While that might sound like a lot, with some new thinking and new skills, we can use the office as one

of our many work tools.

I've been doing research and advisory work on distributed work for over 20 years and have spoken

with over 300 companies around the world.

Here are four things we know work well.

First, coordinate anchor days.

When we go to the office, let's make sure we overlap with our colleagues and collaborators.

That’s why we call these “anchor” days.

Otherwise, we'll find ourselves in the office with no one around.

No use in gathering at the water cooler if we're the only ones there.

Second, plan spontaneity.

In my work, I've heard over and over again that while people prize the flexibility of hybrid work,

they long for informal and spontaneous interactions with their colleagues.

This is a classic paradox, but it's quite solvable through what we call structuring unstructured time.

One thing to try is to set aside the initial six to seven minutes of an hour-long meeting for informal

Chat about non-work matters, just to talk or even complain.

You can also ask people the one word that describes how they're doing, verbally or in chat.

You can have informal contact by scheduling virtual or in-person lunches with your colleagues,

breaks for coffee, tea or a snack, and even happy hour trivia challenge.

If you're a leader, you should demonstrate the value of informal talk by initiating it yourself.

Third, use the right tools to communicate.

The key here is to match our digital tools with our communication objectives, which means we have

to mix it up.

If we have to solve a really complicated problem, the best digital tool to use is one that allows real-

time discussion.

If we need to process complex information, sending an email might be the best option, giving people

time to review and absorb the content.

Video can be great when we need our communication to include emotional cues.

It helps to see someone’s face when discussing tricky topics.

It also increases immediacy and intimacy. But it can be exhausting.

Many people reporting tech exhaustion, but it doesn't have to be that way.

We need to know when to take a break.

For one-on-ones, try audio and keep the cameras off.

This last takeaway is for management, but it affects all of us.

Commit to the new culture.

Top leaders have to avoid sending mixed messages.

Too many are saying they're all for hybrid

while signaling that they prefer everyone to be in the office

or saying, "This conversation is so important, we should have it in person."

Leaders need to make sure that their words, actions and attitudes are aligned with the hybrid

arrangements that they've chosen.

Consistency between hybrid policies and attitudes is the only way to build an inclusive hybrid culture

for everyone.