

TB Insights #3

From full remote to full flexibility

How tech companies are
shaping the future of work



With the participation of



Barcelona, 2023

What does it mean to be a flexible organization, and how does the technology sector implement and manage it? Organizations are transitioning. The pandemic accelerated changes in the way we work and in the internal organization of corporations. Technology and flexibility have become two fundamental pillars to explain the future of work, and many companies have adopted a hybrid approach in the last three years. Although there is still no defined model, there is a lack of data to make decisions and many internal policies are based on trial and error: there is no going back.

Today, the conversation no longer revolves around “how many days you go to the office” but “how do you manage flexibility or hybrid work”. Some talk about organized presentiality, others about a new paradigm shift. As part of the **Tech Barcelona’s Working Group** on the Future of Work, headed by technology company **Ocado Technology** and freelance marketplace **Outvise**, leading technology companies from Barcelona’s digital and tech ecosystem shared successful internal policies, the keys to adopting a flexible framework and the challenges ahead.

But first: what is flexibility?

To face today's workforce challenges, it is and will be necessary to rethink traditional models and seek innovative solutions to establish a framework of trust and flexibility that is optimal for companies and talent. In this regard, flexibility is understood by the technology sector as a way to improve efficiency and employee satisfaction. When we talk about flexibility, we talk about it from three points of view: remote work options, flexible working hours and the decentralization of physical space. However, the increasing demand for freelancers and project-based work has opened up new opportunities. And while traditional models are still anchored in a discourse of distrust, the technology sector is advocating a change of approach that involves rethinking the physical space and the relationship with working time.

Which is the best model, then?

There is no standard number of working models in the tech sector. The way work is organized and performed in technology varies from company to company and can be influenced by a number of factors, such as the nature of the product or service being offered, the size of the company or the corporate culture. However, there is consensus on the following five models:



1

On-site office work

This traditional model involves employees working from a central office during established hours.



2

Remote work

This model allows employees to work from anywhere, usually from their homes or any other location with an Internet connection.



3

Hybrid work

This model combines office-based and remote work, allowing employees to work from both the office and home.



4

Project-based work

This model involves employees working on specific projects with a temporary team, rather than having a fixed position with the company.



5

Flexible work

This model allows employees to work flexible hours and locations, often combining office, remote and project work.

Paradigm shift

According to the Harvard Review of Business, “real flexibility, the kind that works, requires new ways of thinking. Likewise, in the article *The Future of Flexibility at Work (2021)*, they conclude that “it is both a top-down and bottom-up process. An organization’s leaders listen, set goals, and provide resources to enable flexibility; while talent is more demanding of working conditions and their personal and productive time.” Here are the five drivers identified by **Tech Barcelona’s Working Group** to effectively implement this paradigm shift.

Clear policies

It is important to establish clear policies on working hours, availability times and productivity expectations in order to be able to work from home. In that sense, there is consensus on the need to communicate effectively, create new roles within the office specifically to manage flexible work and avoid misunderstandings.

Technological tools

It is important to provide employees with the necessary tools and technologies to work effectively, including communication and collaboration software, office equipment and a good internet connection.

Open communication

It is important to encourage open and regular communication with remote employees to ensure that they are connected to the team and the company as a whole. In other words, create new communication forums away from emails and video call meetings. From a face-to-face week in the office, to a regular meeting point with the clear objective of addressing this issue.

Productivity evaluation and new metrics

What metrics can we use to calculate productivity? It is important to find ways to evaluate and measure remote employee productivity in a fair and objective manner.

Corporate culture and personalization

This is perhaps the most relevant point and the pending challenge for many companies. It is important to ensure that the corporate culture and team dynamics are not negatively affected by the implementation of a flexible work framework. Customization of internal policies for each team is essential to achieve this.

Final thoughts

The future of work will be increasingly linked to technology and it is important to prepare for this. This is one of the main conclusions of the **Working Group - Future of Work of Tech Barcelona**. Automation and artificial intelligence will play an increasingly important role and will transform the way many tasks and jobs are done, leading to the creation of new roles. That is why it will be fundamental for people to learn and update their skills in order to adapt to changing scenarios, and for companies to anticipate and facilitate access to new tools.

On the other hand, the development of emerging technologies such as virtual reality, blockchain, and cloud computing will drive the creation of new jobs and sectors, as well as the demand for specialized skills. Overall, it will be necessary for dialogue and cooperation among all actors, both in the private and public sectors, to promote innovation, training, and the creation of policies that favor the development of the technology sector and its positive impact on society.