

CONNECTING ERAS: THE STRATEGIC PATH FROM HYBRID TO HOLISTIC WORKPLACES

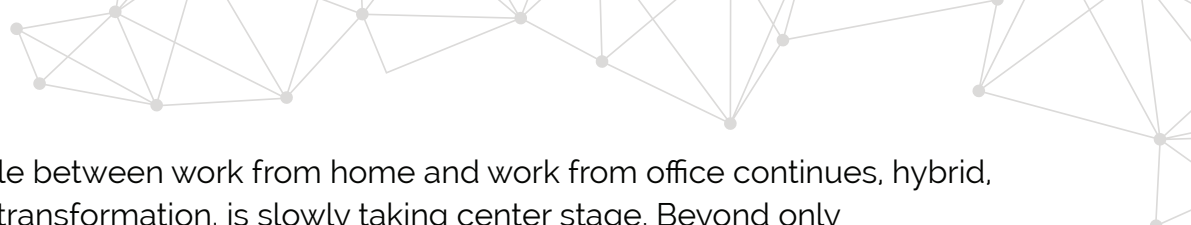


A Roundtable Organized by



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As the silent battle between work from home and work from office continues, hybrid, fueled by digital transformation, is slowly taking center stage. Beyond only accommodating a once-remote workforce, the hybrid work model represents a proactive strategy. It ensures seamless technological integration and holistic preparation for the future of work. However, the contemporary paradigm shift underscores a pressing need: harmonizing remote connectivity and the collaborative essence of physical proximity.

Amidst the 'back to work' transition, leaders find themselves at a crossroads, seeking to uphold the digital efficiencies cultivated during the remote era. Though digital transformation and service management have transcended their roles as tools for supporting dispersed teams, many questions remain. How can service management adapt to the diversity of a modern workforce? And how do we balance the stability of traditional work environments with the swift evolution of technology? In this transformative period, organizational leaders are challenged to craft a blueprint. The blueprint should embrace the latest technology and align with the changing needs and experiences of the workforce.

On October 10, 2023, in partnership with Zones, CTN hosted a virtual roundtable on 'Connecting Eras: The Strategic Path from Hybrid to Holistic Workplaces.' The interactive and thought-provoking event brought together top business, digital, and IT leaders to discuss the critical aspects of the hybrid work model, evolving digital transformation, and the related growth potential. The participants shared their insights on space utilization, remote work, employee integration, talent acquisition, communication strategy, community building, and more. The participating delegates were:

- ✓ **Alan Zhang** MD RISK ANALYTICS & INFRASTRUCTURE **CIBC US**
- ✓ **Andy Goodfellow** CTO **Zoro.com**
- ✓ **David LaRue** CIO **KEH**
- ✓ **David Martin** DIGITAL WORKPLACE PORTFOLIO LEADER **Zones**
- ✓ **Ryan Shull** GLOBAL IT DIRECTOR –IT OPERATIONS, MANUFACTURING & SOLUTION ENGINEERING **Dyno Nobel**
- ✓ **Ebenezer Arumai** CHIEF INFORMATION SECURITY DIRECTOR **Oldcastle Building Envelope**
- ✓ **Priya Almelkar** SVP, CIO **Wolfspeed**
- ✓ **Ralph Santitoro** DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT LINE MANAGEMENT – MULTICLOUD NETWORKING & SECURITY SOLUTIONS **Ciena**
- ✓ **Ronald Blahnik** EVP, CIO & SVP STRATEGY, INNOVATION, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND RETAIL ANALYTICS **Hibbett Retail**

The roundtable commenced with a moderator-led inventory to pinpoint challenges hindering a seamless user experience in various work environments. The emphasis was placed on effective service management, operational efficiency, user satisfaction, and technological advancements in the contemporary hybrid work culture, focusing on finding solutions. The participants agreed that attracting and retaining talent in a competitive market, especially for technical roles, and integrating new hires effectively, especially in remote work settings, remain top concerns for management. However, most fail to maintain clear and consistent communication channels across various organizational levels, creating a rift. They also emphasized the need to foster a sense of community and belonging among remote employees while managing office space effectively during a transition to hybrid work models.

Over the next few minutes, the participants discussed several other crucial issues. Besides monetary benefits, participants stressed the importance of considering the overall compensation package, including work-life balance, flexibility, and additional perks like discounts, in attracting and retaining employees. Attendees also discussed the importance of investing in leadership training programs, encouraging leaders to be more human-centric in their skills, and fostering an open culture where leaders are approachable and supportive.

Some other top challenges discussed during the roundtable include:

- ✓ **Talent Acquisition:** Difficulty hiring specialized talent like security engineers due to rising market salaries.
- ✓ **Recruitment Challenges:** Dealing with heightened talent competition due to remote work, impacting hiring and salaries.
- ✓ **Hybrid Work Setup:** Managing productivity and collaboration with remote and in-office employees in hybrid teams.
- ✓ **Remote Work Integration:** Enhancing remote employee engagement and facilitating key interactions and growth within company culture.

Key Viewpoints:

Alan Zhang, MD

Risk Analytics & Infrastructure
CIBC US

Engaging remote team members is challenging due to the absence of spontaneous interactions in physical offices. Remote employees fear being overlooked, hindering their career growth, especially for newcomers who miss the supportive workplace community of traditional offices.

Andy Goodfellow

CTO
Zoro.com

Integrating remote team members, some hired during the pandemic and others relocating, into a cohesive team is challenging. Balancing the needs of in-office and remote workers, all part of the same team, requires careful navigation.

David LaRue

CIO
KEH

Rigid in-person schedules contradict spontaneous collaboration. Embracing an open culture transcends physical presence, challenging traditional functions like accounting and legal.

David Martin

Digital Workplace Portfolio Leader
Zones

Cultivating a supportive culture is paramount, complementing technology solutions. Each company must strike a balance tailored to diverse work functions. Flexibility in team dynamics and meeting frequencies is vital. Proactive initiatives like community events and mentorship programs help foster cohesion.

- ✓ **Leadership and Culture:** Managing cohesive culture and leadership challenges in remote and in-person teams.
- ✓ **Space Utilization:** Managing office space for a growing team with limited capacity.

While the participants pointed out the challenges, they also offered opportunities and solutions to optimize the workspace, nurture talent, enhance communication, build community, integrate employees, and foster collaboration, ensuring a dynamic and productive work environment.

Opportunities:

- ✓ **Virtual Collaboration Tools:** Exploring advanced tools for improved remote collaboration.
- ✓ **Flexibility and Work-Life Balance:** Incorporating hybrid work to improve work-life balance boosts efficiency and job satisfaction.
- ✓ **Global Talent Pool:** Leveraging remote work to break geographical barriers for global talent access.
- ✓ **Community Building:** Connecting and collaborating, in person or virtually, to strengthen organizational bonds.
- ✓ **Employee Engagement:** Boosting remote employee engagement through mentorship programs and virtual events.
- ✓ **University Partnerships:** Bridging skill gaps and nurturing talent pipelines through university collaborations.

Solutions and Recommendations:

Flexible Work Policies:

- ✓ Balancing remote and in-office work to ensure productivity and work-life balance.

Talent Acquisition:

- ✓ Focusing on organic talent growth and skill development.
- ✓ Diversifying the workforce with candidates from varied backgrounds.
- ✓ Utilizing intern programs and university partnerships.
- ✓ Aligning salaries with skillsets and budget constraints.

Ryan Shull

Global IT Director – IT Operations,
Manufacturing & Solution Engineering
Dyno Nobel

Rigid in-person schedules contradict spontaneous collaboration. Embracing an open culture transcends physical presence, challenging traditional functions like accounting and legal.

Ebenezer Arumai

Chief Information Security Director
Oldcastle Building Envelope

Adapting to remote work demands and diverse salaries is crucial. Creating an inclusive environment is vital. Recruitment strategies must align with flexible work arrangements to attract and retain talent effectively.

Priya Almelkar

SVP, CIO
Wolfspeed

Integrating new hires into diverse teams demands careful planning. Flexibility, collaboration, and fostering a sense of belonging are essential to effectively bridging this gap.

Ralph Santitoro

Director of Product Line Management –
Multicloud Networking & Security
Solutions
Ciena

Meaningful surveys are valuable if they are met with actionable responses. Promptly addressing survey items and demonstrating progress builds trust. Continuous communication and transparency enhance engagement and satisfaction.

Communication Strategies:

- ✓ Conducting regular surveys and all-hands meetings.
- ✓ Ensuring transparency and actionable plans based on survey feedback.

Community Building:

- ✓ Establishing social channels for employee connections.
- ✓ Encouraging cross-functional interactions and recognition

Office Space Management:

- ✓ Implementing user-friendly hoteling systems.
- ✓ Utilizing technological tools like Waldo and Robin for optimization.

Employee Integration:

- ✓ Implementing buddy systems and occasional on-site visits.
- ✓ Fostering an open culture that encourages peer collaboration.

Enhanced Collaboration:

- ✓ Promoting virtual collaboration tools like Metaverse and daily stand-up meetings.
- ✓ Organizing diverse team-building activities for remote and in-office teams.

Ronald Blahnik

EVP, CIO & SVP Strategy, Innovation, Customer Experience and Retail Analytics

Hibbett Retail

Transitioning to outcome-based leadership fosters innovation. Trusting employees to deliver results without constant oversight, targeted training, and planning skills development is essential. Adapting to virtual dynamics and sharing remote work strategies enriches our collective expertise.

The roundtable participants agreed that an effective hybrid work model requires practical decisions and immediate solutions, benefiting the organization and its employees in the long term. Leveraging growth opportunities within the organization to attract and retain talent and building a more integrated and conducive community, especially for remote employees, through innovative strategies is critical.

The discussion concluded by emphasizing the importance of purpose-driven initiatives and proactive leadership in every organization's community. Emphasizing the value of meaningful surveys, participants underscored the necessity of promptly addressing survey feedback and turning it into actionable results. They highlighted that such an approach ensures transparency, demonstrates visible progress, and reinforces their commitment to continuous improvement.

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