



What will the workplace look like in 2025?

Embracing Flexibility, Technology, and Well-being in the Modern Work Environment

Back in 2019, a fully remote workplace wasn't considered feasible by the majority of companies due to concerns about security and productivity if an employee wasn't working in the office. In fact, just one-third of employees surveyed by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)¹ were working remotely either part- or full-time in November of 2019.

That changed in March of 2020, when companies had to shut down their physical offices and send all of their employees to work remotely full-time from home, while figuring out the technology to make that work. Video conferencing software and collaboration tools became essential instead of tools that were nice to have.

Fast forward to 2023, and the workplace has undergone a significant transformation. Remote and hybrid work models have become the norm, with companies investing heavily in technology to support these flexible arrangements. The focus has shifted towards creating seamless and secure remote work environments, ensuring productivity and collaboration regardless of location.

Looking ahead to 2025, we anticipate the continued evolution of the workplace. The concept of the "touchless hybrid workplace" will be fully realized, where employees can choose to work from home full-time, in the office, or a combination of both. Workspaces will be designed to be primarily touchless, leveraging advanced technologies such as AI, IoT, and automation to enhance safety and efficiency. This new era will prioritize employee well-being, sustainability, and seamless integration of digital tools to support a dynamic and flexible work environment.

Future enabled technology will help define the touchless hybrid workplace in the following areas:

- Fully remote work
- Hardware to hardware integrations
- Software to hardware integrations
- Hybrid work
- The right technology

Fully remote work

In the last year, while employees worked from home, chief executives and managers alike wondered about their teams' productivity levels. For many companies, employee productivity actually increased during the work from home mandate. FlexJobs surveyed employees in September of 2020 and found that 51% of survey respondents have been more productive working from home during COVID-19, and 95% of respondents say productivity has been higher or the same while working remotely.

Higher ups at these companies have noticed the increase in productivity, and a PricewaterhouseCoopers survey³ found in June of 2020 that 54% of CFOs plan to make remote work a permanent option.

Thanks to technology, even positions that were once thought to be strictly office-centric, like a customer service representative in a call center or an executive assistant, can now be done from home.

To assist in employees being fully remote, companies need to provide the same technology (in the form of hardware and software), tools, and access to documents, networks, and drives that employees would have if they were in the office.

Hardware to hardware integrations

For remote workers that need to be on calls or meetings, having the right hardware, like headsets, is crucial for remote workplace productivity and success. Think about a current remote work situation where the employee has their laptop, and possibly an extra display monitor, set up on their desk. If that employee is frequently on video calls or giving presentations, they could have a separate webcam/video camera attached to their laptop through a USB port for the highest quality, and possibly even a light as well for a better look on camera. However, this means taking the time to turn on each one, disconnect them from the limited USB ports on a laptop to free up space when not in use, and fiddle with

each device separately through its own console. on each one, disconnect them from the limited USB ports on a laptop to free up space when not in use, and fiddle with each device separately through its own console.

When these devices work together through hardware to hardware integration, they will be set up as one plug and play device that is accessed through one set of buttons. Consider the increase in productivity by managing all of those pieces of hardware through one console or device instead of separately fidgeting with a headset volume, turning on or adjusting the location of a webcam, and turning on lighting so you don't show up as a shadow on your video conference or presentation.

The future of headsets goes further than device management. According to Sanjay Rao, Principal Product Manager for Microsoft Teams, with a Microsoft Teams-certified headset, you can quickly mute your conversation by flipping the microphone (otherwise known as a boom arm) up on your headset. This is a strong benefit if you're in a meeting and need to quickly get your child a snack or lunch while you're working from home. If you are asked a question, simply push the headset back down and you're back in the conversation to answer. This will be a game-changer when it expands in the future to all headsets.

Headsets can also help improve productivity for workers who get pulled into a project and could forget about a meeting that's coming up. Think of the benefits of a headset that pulses when your meeting starts and all you have to do is press a button on your headset to quickly join that meeting. This technology will help future remote workers (and even ones physically in an office) stay on top of meetings.

Software to hardware integrations

Hardware should work with hardware in fully remote or hybrid touchless workplaces, but it's equally critical that software integrates with hardware. For example, consider the software that's included in your webcam (piece of hardware). If you want to blur or replace your background, you have to select it through your video conferencing system.

In the future touchless workplace, your webcam will be an intelligent camera with a more powerful chipset that allows you to blur and replace your background right from the camera itself to work with any video conferencing technology that you choose.

At the same time, for your microphone, be it the one in your laptop or your webcam, future audio software for your devices will include acoustic fencing. This technology will help to block out, for example, the sound of a dog barking or lawnwork happening outside.

Hybrid work

Along with call control and quickly accessing meetings, future software and hardware technology will be a boon in the future hybrid touchless workplace. One potential format for a hybrid touchless workplace is the "hoteling" concept, where instead of assigned seating, employees use and reserve space that's available for their needs on the days that they're in the office.

Be advised, though, that hoteling is much different than an open office format. In open offices, which have been found to cost \$3 to \$5 billion annually in lost productivity through a study performed by Harvard Business School and Harvard University, there aren't designated work or quiet areas. Hoteling designates each spot in the office — cubicles, offices, and meeting rooms — as separate spaces to be reserved.

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Future workspaces should have flexible furnishings to create quiet work areas, including desks that can be easily moved and adjustable privacy panels.

Worried about touching shared services when you're visiting the office on a hybrid basis? Future headsets, phones, and the Internet of Things (IoT) will work together to help employees control smart touchless spaces when they're in the office. Through their headset or smartphone, employees will be able to:

- Start meetings
- Maintain social distancing in the office through proximity sensors included in future headsets
- Control elevators without having to touch a button or shared surface

The right technology

Whether you're planning for a change to a hybrid touchless workplace or a fully remote work environment, either now or in a few years, you need the right technology for your workers across the board to help them be their most productive and least distracted wherever they are working from. Jabra offers a wide range of audio and video devices to help your employees succeed wherever they are working.



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