The Ultimate Guide to Dynamic Work
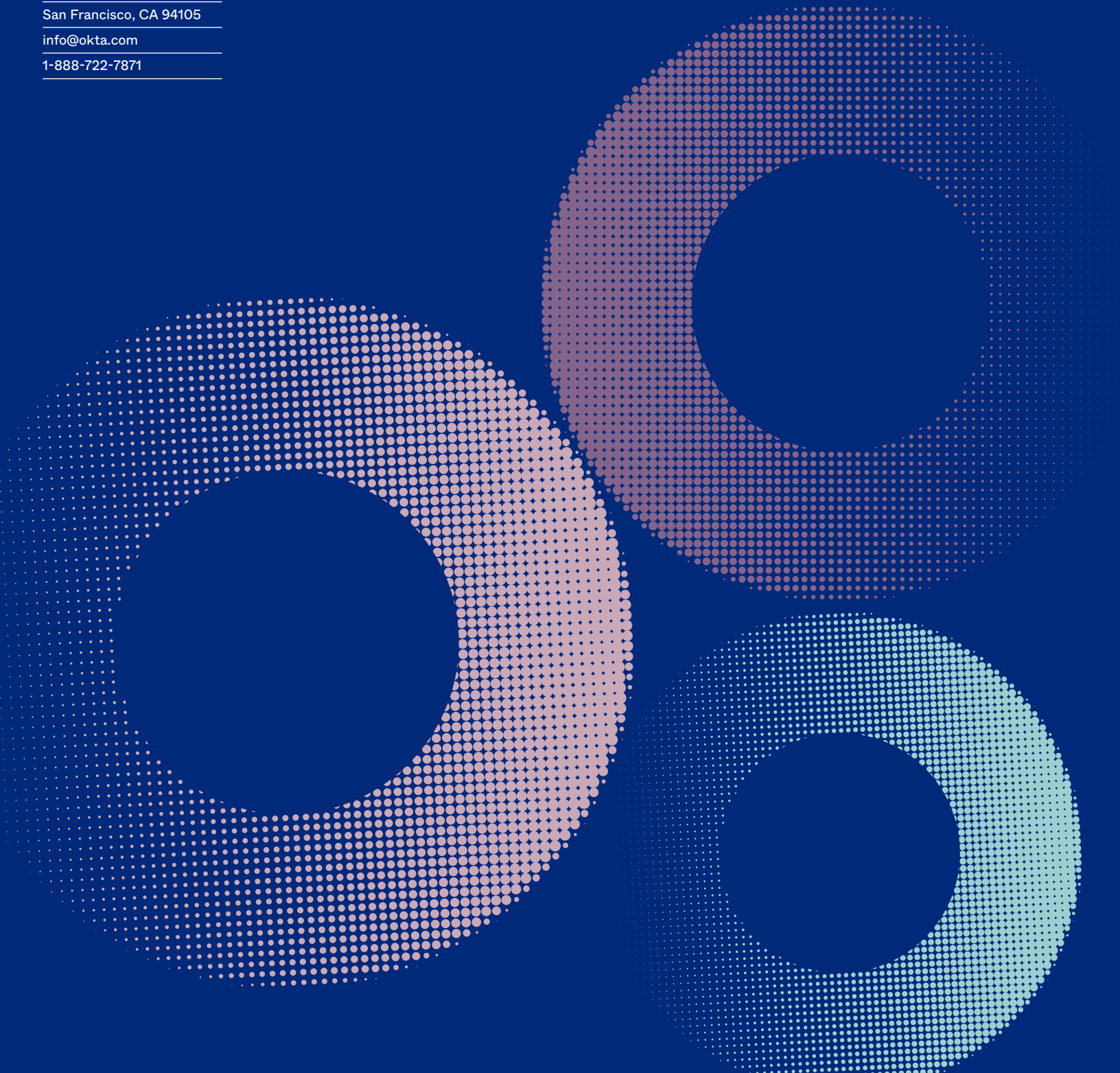
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Contents

The Future of Work is Dynamic

We'd been anticipating a major change in the way people work for a long time—but no one predicted it would happen like this. Organizations had started to gradually cultivate more flexible workplace environments. Then, overnight, it became an urgent necessity to enable remote work.

But the shift the pandemic accelerated was inevitable, set in progress by a multitude of factors.

- Digital transformation—such as advances in cloud technology

- Changing demographics—including urban affordability and expectations around work-life balance

- Preferences in the workplace—especially the rising influence of Millennials and Generation Z

- Broader macroeconomic trends—including global competition for talent

These interrupt old ideas about how business works and propel the search for modern alternatives.

Here at Okta, more than 30% of our workforce worked primarily remotely before COVID-19 sent us all home from the office. We'd already been exploring new possibilities for connecting, communicating, and collaborating across distances well before much of the world began working from home. We challenged ourselves to understand the changing utility of office environments in a world where freedom and flexibility are top priorities for employees. The result was a new framework that we call Dynamic Work.

The principle behind Dynamic Work is simple: overhaul the concept of the office.

- Deconstruct: As our business scales and grows to bring together a global workforce, it's less critical to maintain large, centralized headquarters for everyday work.

- Decentralize: Instead, we're moving towards a more distributed collection of smaller creative hubs dedicated to in-person touchpoints and experiences.

- Get dynamic: Provide spaces for employees, partners, and customers who are co-located geographically to work in person, access resources, test products, and gather for company events.

Gone are the days when we were all required to be in an office, even for only a few days out of a week or month. Not only does this model grant our employees the flexibility they need to do their best work, but it enables us to build a more diverse hiring pool and bring on amazing candidates outside of our regional offices.

Dynamic Work is going to be the standard for Okta today, tomorrow, and beyond, and we want to share this model with other organizations as they adapt to a global, decentralized workforce. We're firm in our belief that the workplace is far from obsolete—but its design and purpose have changed on a fundamental level, and will continue to do so in our fast-paced world.

We're looking forward to helping pave the way toward a more productive, flexible, sustainable, inclusive, and cloud-based future of work.

Dynamic Work Defined

A <u>Dynamic Work</u> model enables employees to work wherever, whenever, and however makes most sense for them. We launched Dynamic Work as a pilot program in early 2019. We were investigating how to achieve two goals.

1. Increase employee empowerment and engagement, satisfaction, productivity, and flexibility.

2. Broaden and diversify the talent pool we can hire from and reduce our carbon footprint.

At the onset, Dynamic Work gave employees more freedom to set their own hours, make their own decisions, and work from wherever they wanted—and we saw a marked uptick in our team members' sense of wellbeing and work-life balance. Contrary to popular belief, their productivity, punctuality, and collaboration didn't suffer in the least. In short, Dynamic Work, worked.

It's important to note that Dynamic Work is different—and so much more—than simply working remote or having a distributed workforce. We often hear the terms "remote work" and "distributed work" used interchangeably to talk about organizations operating outside a unified office space. But in fact, they are distinct concepts, as is Dynamic Work.

Remote Work

Employees have the option to work from anywhere, but the business model, expectations, benefits offerings, and overall ethos of the organization remain traditionally focused around offices and with a HQ centric lens to offerings, programs, and services.

Distributed Work

Employees are encouraged to work wherever in the world they live, and the organization is technologically equipped and optimized to support their everyday operations. Employee experience offerings are still from an HQ centric lens.

Dynamic Work

Employees are empowered to work where, when, and how they want, with opportunities, local office environments, and benefits amenable to their needs and local geography.

80%
of Okta employees want more WFH flexibility than they had prior to COVID-19

81%
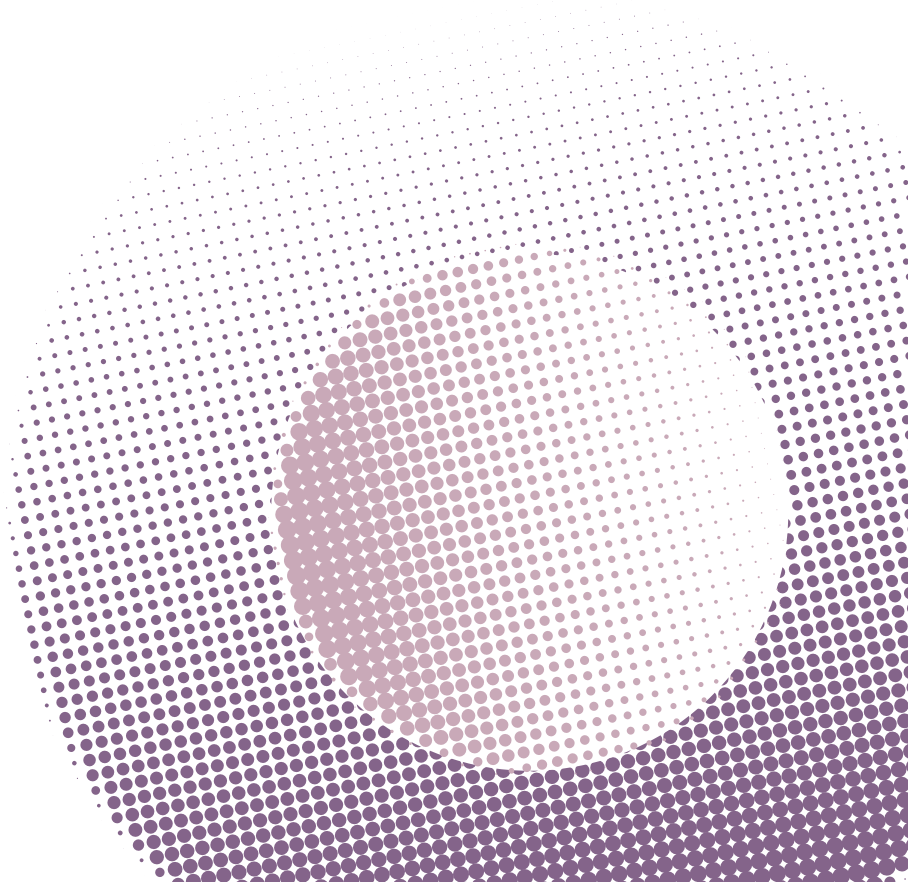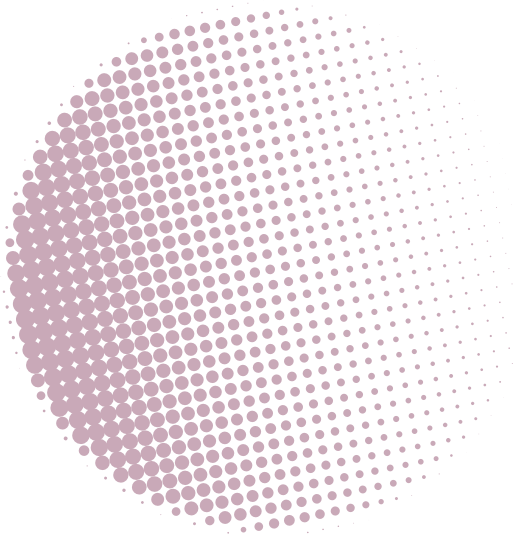of Okta employees feel as or more productive working remotely

Remote work simply describes the process of working in some location other than the office, whether it's the home, a coffee shop, or a hotel in a foreign country. Following a remote work model, organizations don't invest, or invest to a materially lesser degree, in physical premises where team members, partners, and customers around the world can interact face-to-face.

Several large enterprises take a "remote-first" approach—but offering flexibility in terms of location should only be the first step. Even if employers embrace remote work, that doesn't mean they'll implement the major changes their team members need in terms of scheduling, compensation, and technology enablement.

Distributed work is a business model in which all aspects of the company are designed to support a dispersed workforce—from the platforms and apps that employees depend on to the expectations around engagement and culture. Sometimes these companies have headquarters or regional offices to provide localized support, but others may be 100% distributed in that they have no physical place to call "home".

A distributed work model embraces long-distance co-working and matches it with employee engagement opportunities, company culture initiatives, and team-building activities geared toward a widespread workforce. But there's not necessarily flexibility in benefits, nor is there any guarantee that all members of the global team have dedicated company spaces where they can gather and work.

Dynamic Work is all about empowering employees across the globe with flexibility and choice—working from anywhere, with benefits, and opportunities customized to their needs, and the knowledge that the office is also a place they can go to connect, create, and engage as needed. At Okta, we envision our offices as an experience—like an Apple store, where partners and customers can try our products and talk to our experts, and employees can collaborate on their own time, in their own space. A Dynamic Work model levels the playing field across employee work environments, ensuring equitability in benefits, programs, opportunities, and culture experiences.

4 Trends Driving Dynamic Work

Let's look at the macroeconomic trends driving the transition to Dynamic Work across all industries and sectors:

The **cost of living** has increased more rapidly than average salaries, and many people would rather live outside of larger markets. But arduous commutes, or a lack of transit infrastructure, makes that impractical—and takes a heavy toll on quality of life—not to mention the environment.

Every company is a technology company. With more organizations migrating to **cloud-based infrastructure**, adopting apps for productivity and collaboration, and implementing secure Bring Your Own Device policies, there's no excuse for them to try and micromanage employees in an office environment.

The **demographic makeup of the workforce** is changing, with Millennials on-track to become the majority by 2025, and Generation Z entering the workforce in greater numbers. Both these groups are digital natives that expect freedom and choice, flexibility, and technological enablement.

The **COVID-19** pandemic forced organizations to rethink how their spaces are used, and how they support employees outside of offices. Global health, security, or weather related events can disrupt entire economies and societies with little to no advance warning, and a Dynamic Work model enables organizations to build in much-needed resilience.

Urban unaffordability

Technology trends

Generational shifts

Distributed workforce

Dynamic Work takes each of these trends into account to create an environment that's as productive and engaging as it is secure, sustainable, and maintainable. How can organizations achieve this? A true Dynamic Work model is supported by three essential pillars:

1. Redesign offices to be versatile, needs-based, more sustainable, and flexible, with the ability to support a variety of working environments that allow for physical distancing.

2. Adopt cloud-based architecture and best-of-breed apps and tools, allowing collaboration and productivity from anywhere.

3. Reinvest in employees and hire the world's best talent, offering flexibility in terms of location and available benefits.

Here's how we've embraced these core concepts at Okta, along with steps that any organization can take to create a flexible, Dynamic Work environment for their own teams.
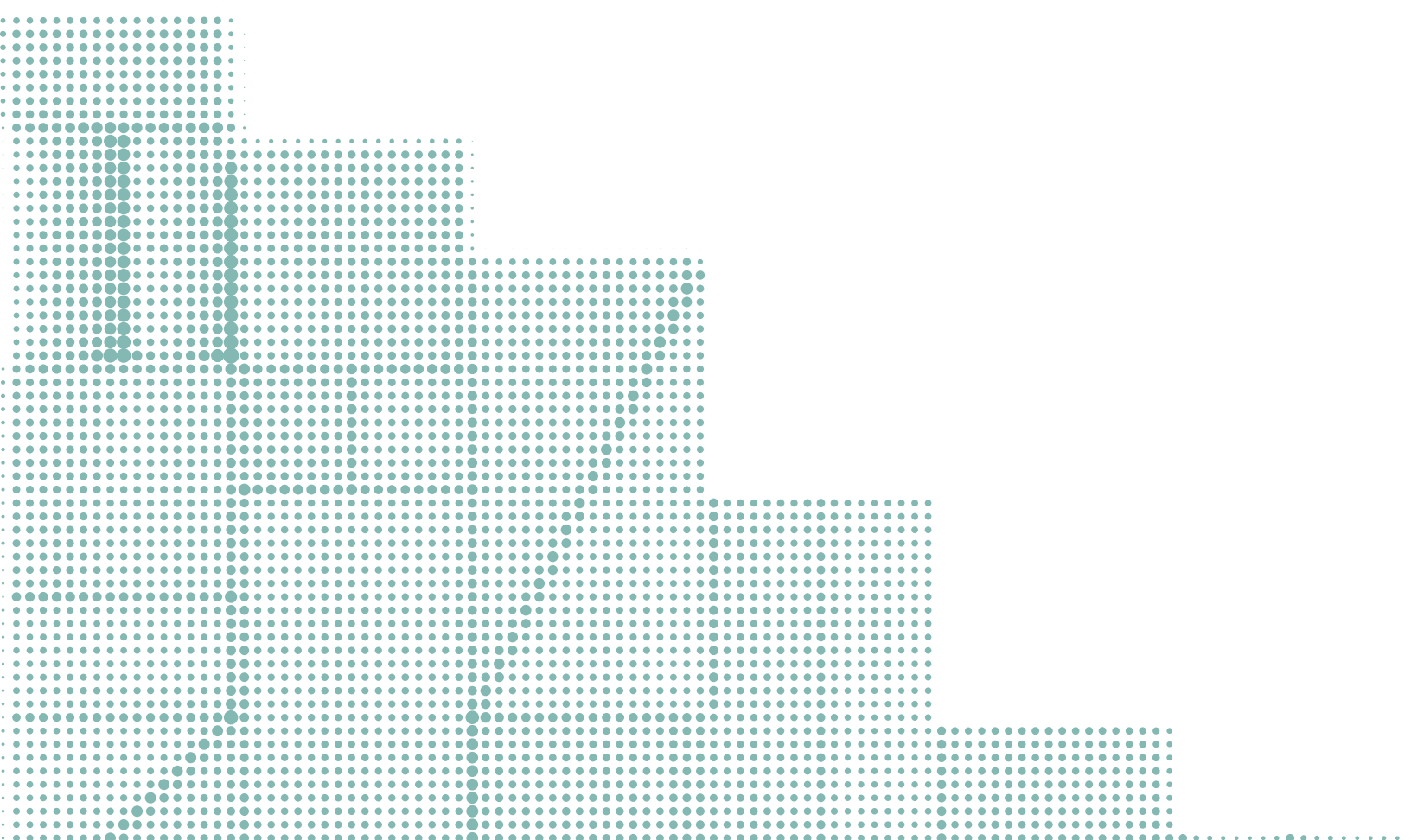
Redesigning and rethinking the traditional workplace

Getting technology infrastructure right

Cultivating a great company culture

Pillar 1: Redesigning And Rethinking The Traditional Workspace

Companies have been experimenting with office design for decades. We've seen everything from cubicles, to open-concept floor plans, to co-working spaces, yet nothing has proven to be a unanimous, uncontroversial, long-term success. It was long overdue for organizations to let their employees choose their own preferred setups—and now, that's exactly what people all over the world are doing. Once more, organizations need to redefine what it means to be at "the office."

Naturally, there are several challenges they need to navigate—not just in terms of managing their facilities, but changing their mindsets:
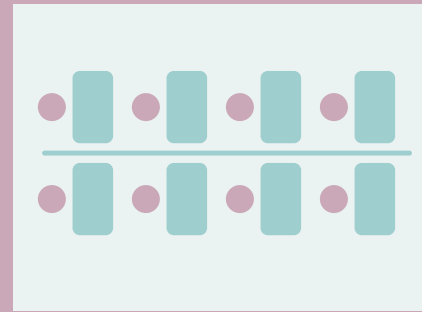
- Organizations have to rethink their outdated, traditional norms and expectations around employees being physically present for predetermined working hours.

- Headquarters and real estate are not only large investments, but also serve as important symbols embedded in the organization's operations, culture, identity, and public perception.
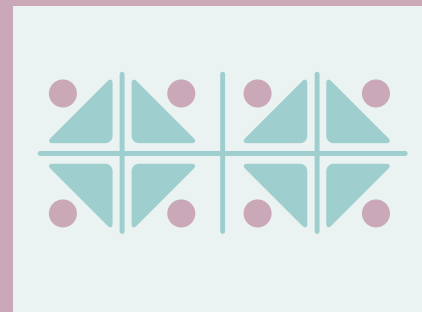
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The office space of the future should be an optional value-add for employees, rather than a requirement. It should be available on an as-needed basis, allowing them to enjoy flexible schedules and environments in experiential workplaces, regardless of their location in the world.

Armen Vartanian,
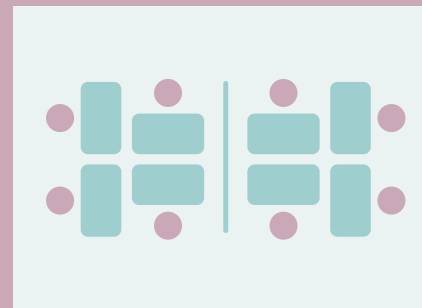Senior Vice President of Global Workplace Services
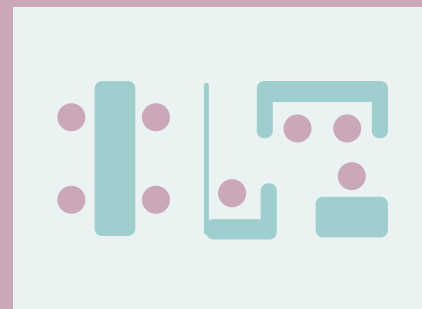
1950s | Open seating

1970s | Cubicles

2000s | Open seating V2

2020 | Flexible workplace

The Dynamic Work approach

Today calls for a new set of success indicators for office spaces and facilities management, so throw traditional metrics out the window. Instead of using old-fashioned square footage and employee headcounts, organizations should leverage technology to measure when, where, and how team members are interacting with the space, and be responsive to those needs. For the foreseeable future, the number of people allowed to be physically present in the office at once could unexpectedly change, requiring organizations to develop new seat-to-employee ratios.

This also presents an opportunity for organizations to redesign spaces, rethink utilization, and invest in programs for employees that support a lower carbon footprint.

Dynamic Work can have a positive impact on our carbon footprint. Okta conducted the Dynamic Work Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Study, a study designed to measure the environmental impact of today's hybrid workforce, and found that in a Dynamic Work environment, per employee emissions are estimated to be 21% lower than they were prior to Dynamic Work due to reduced employee commuting and reduced workplace square footage per person, even when accounting for incremental increases in home energy use.

The shift away from traditional office settings has been accompanied by strong rhetoric and bold proposals, with major players such as Adobe, Amazon, and Deloitte announcing plans to make remote work a permanent option. While this may signal to some that physical offices are a thing of the past, there are plenty of compelling reasons why we should keep them around.

When a workforce is 100% remote or distributed, with no or limited possibilities for in-person touchpoints, it can lead to reduced efficiency and morale, and fewer opportunities to build culture. Citing a large study published in Harvard Business Review (HBR), McKinsey reports that 43% of remote workers felt that more face time would help them develop deeper relationships with team members, 80% said they would have better relationships with colleagues if they had more frequent team communications, and 84% said that with a remote workforce, team challenges typically dragged on for more than a few days.
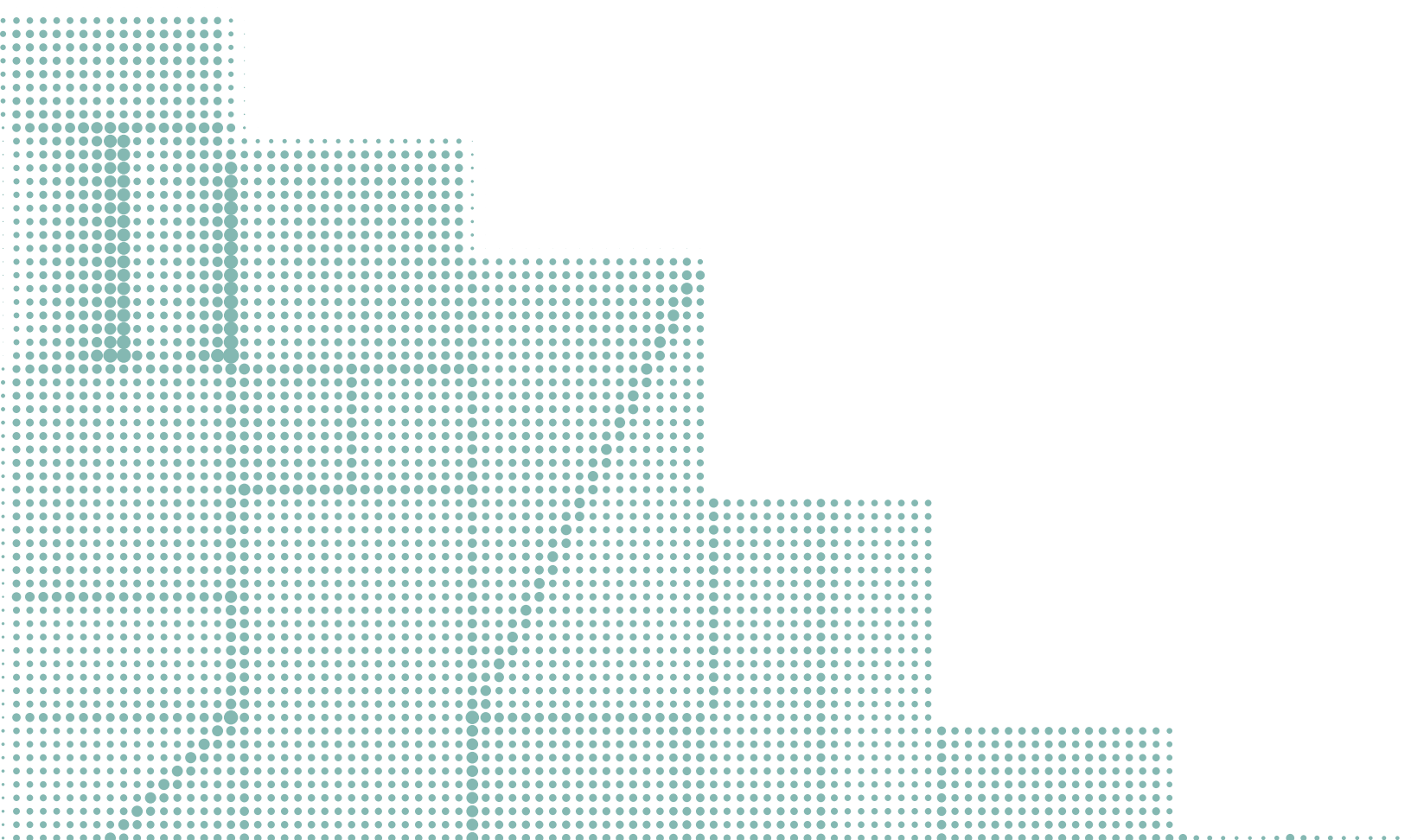
30%

of Okta employees want more WFH flexibility than they had prior to COVID-19

Dynamic Work, in which the company ensures that employees have physical spaces where they can collaborate, even if it's only occasionally, provides a solution to these problems. That's why in a different Harvard Business Review article, researchers recommend that employers let their global teams "work from anywhere," but take advantage of geographic clusters to build culture and collaboration.

Likewise, in analyzing the future of the workplace, Bain & Company posts that organizations will need to be able to scale up or down on an as-needed basis, and that "executives should get used to thinking about it dynamically." Leaders need to think critically and creatively about how physical premises can serve their workforce, their customers, and their brand in an age of physical distancing. When done properly, it builds a varied and visionary environment where employees can be inspired, and external stakeholders can experience products and services in person.

Tips for effective Dynamic Work in the office environment

- Change expectations on how many people come into the office

- Provide various work environments

- Gain insights through technology into how employees, customers, and vendors interact with the space

- Create multi-use spaces to reduce footprint

- Evaluate programs and services through a layered approach, ensuring support at local, regional, and global levels

- Offer face-to-face interactions and the opportunity to build relationships

- Host regular events across all offices, in all regions

- Incorporate sustainable travel practices and remote options

- Invest in learning and development

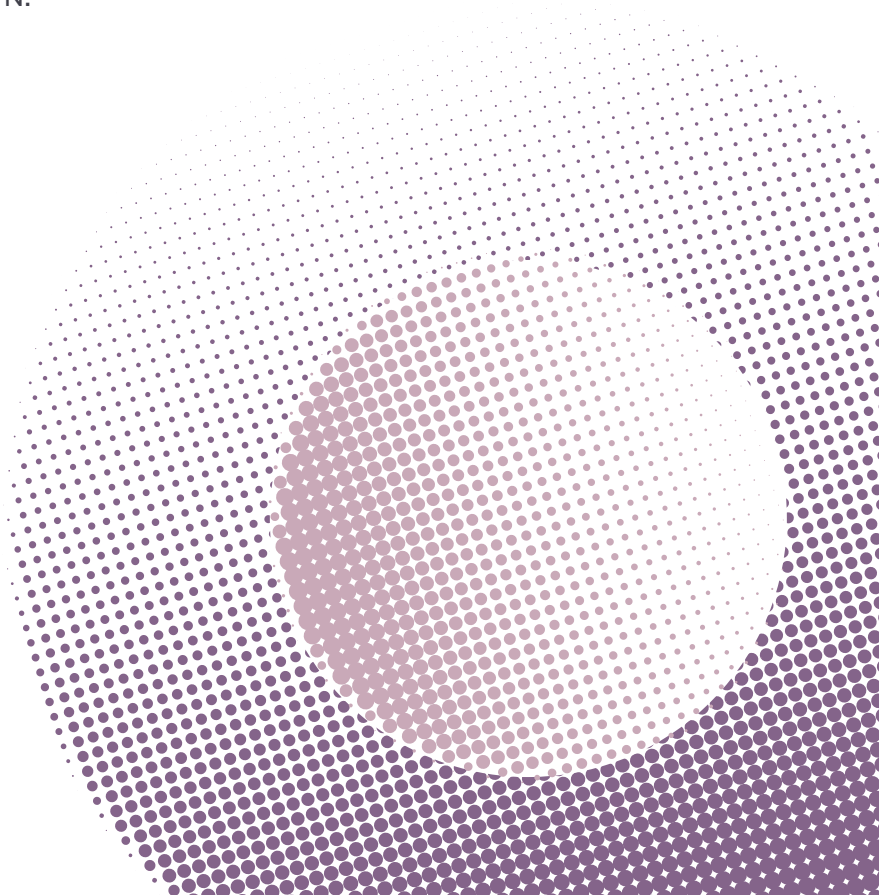# **Pillar 2:** Getting Technology Infrastructure Right

For companies that had a good handle on their digital transformation initiatives, the recent shift to worldwide distributed work has proven surprisingly seamless. With the right technology in place, business has been able to carry on normally, with no impact on productivity. But it's not always so simple. For some organizations—such as government agencies, healthcare providers, and others that operate legacy, on-premises architecture—simply supporting a remote workforce poses significant challenges:

- To be effective, workforces need numerous apps to enable employees to collaborate from anywhere. These need to be integrated into the IT stack, and each user needs to be provisioned to an account with seamless access.

- Legacy and on-premises infrastructure, including custom apps, are difficult for distributed teams to access remotely— and expensive to maintain.

- A distributed workforce means a distributed network, which can no longer be secured by a traditional perimeter or VPN. To be secure, all users must be untrusted.

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> To design an experience that puts people first, employers need to view working remotely as an opportunity to grow and scale. To be successful, provide them with a seamless overall experience to access corporate applications, hardware, services, and resources.
>
> **Alfred Tsai,**
> VP Business Technology Infrastructure and Operations

The Dynamic Work approach

To ensure your workforce has everything it needs to succeed, invest in a scalable, hybrid IT environment that lets you adopt the cloud-based tools your team expects, and integrate them easily into your existing architecture. Video conferencing, messaging, and document collaboration apps empower your employees, partners, and vendors to do their best work, wherever they're located.

Apps can also provide a pillar of critical support to the people who support your workforce—your HR, IT, and developer teams. Human capital software can drive efficiencies and enhance employee engagement, while cloud identity solutions can automate time-consuming IT tasks such as provisioning and deprovisioning across the employee lifecycle. They're also a core component of implementing a Zero Trust security model, in which every access request to come through your system is immediately assessed at the level of individual and device.

99%

of Okta employees report that they have the software they need to be productive while working from home

Leaders should be paying attention to which platforms and applications are the most critical for their teams to do their best work from anywhere. It's a trend that we've been watching here at Okta; as organizations moved towards more remote work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it painted a clear picture of the top tools that modern workforces require—a picture that we captured in our 2021 Businesses @ Work report, and which continues to evolve with new tools and processes.

- Adoption of communication, collaboration and conferencing apps continues to climb with companies such as Lattice, Monday, and Figma becoming fast growing software solutions for remote workers in North America.

- As remote employees seek to create functional home office spaces, Amazon Business became the fastest growing app on our radar, and the first shopping app to ever make the list.

- Network security and performance tools also saw a notable surge with 1Password and Fortinet moving to the top of the leaderboard, proving security is crucial in today's digital workforce.

Third-party collaborators such as partners, vendors, suppliers, and contractors can extend a company's workforce by up to **20%**

By adopting a Dynamic Work model, organizations can provide these external users with more seamless and secure access to applications.

But it's important to remember that in a Dynamic Work setting, your infrastructure isn't restricted to software; rather, hardware and on-site digital and electronic resources are required for a truly technology-enabled workspace. Sketchboard and Miro provide digital whiteboards that allow effective conferencing and collaboration, while tools such as conductive charging provide convenience and utilization sensors and smart lockers enhance security. Everything should be accessible via mobile—for example, mobile badging for authorization to various on-site spaces and assets, and workforce apps available anytime, anywhere, through the cloud.

On top of that, wayfinding tools are a smart investment for organizations. Employees will want to book resources online before they come to the office, as well as learn who else is working onsite at that time and where they will be located. In a post-pandemic era, this level of foresight will be essential for workforces, as will the freedom to work flexibly and remotely. To this end, having the right hardware and software in place is paramount.

All of these tools need to be aggregated in a way that enables all employees to find the right information, at the right time so that they can collaborate in real time or work asynchronously.

Tips for effective Dynamic Work using technology infrastructure

- Plan for hybrid, in and out of the office

- Invest in cloud-based collaboration tools (e.g. Slack, Okta, Confluence, Zoom, Github)

- Rethink hardware

- Make everything mobile accessible

- Invest in technology-first workplace resources

- Create an effective ecosystem for asynchronous work with single sources of truth for authentication and data, federated search, and integrated collaboration tools

> Organizations need to be able to support teams that can work from anywhere, but they cannot compromise security in the process. In the past, this may have presented a challenge, but with modern solutions and a Zero Trust approach, it's more than possible.

David Bradbury,
Chief Security Officer

Pillar 3: Cultivating A Great Company Culture

People should be at the center of how organizations modernize their technology stacks and redesign their office environments. But truly championing your employees requires more than just state-of-the-art offices and best-in-class technology.

From the company events and opportunities that keep them engaged, to the perks and benefits that will keep them healthy, happy, and safe, leaders need to think carefully about how they'll retain their talent. And you not only need to think about the talent you have today; in a world where you can recruit from anywhere, you need to consider the talent you hope to attract in the near future, and the offerings that will compel them to choose you over your competitors.
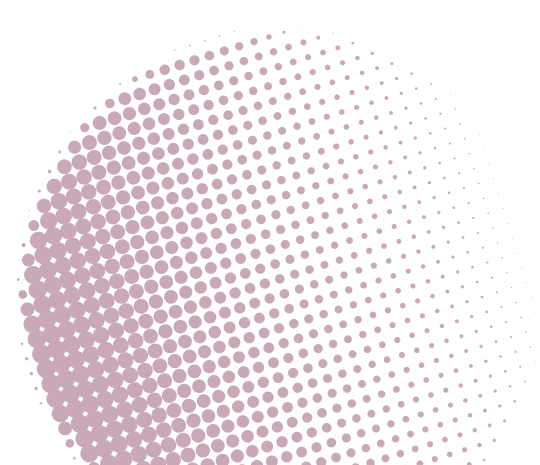
All of these factors are determined by a company's culture. And as anyone in leadership knows, changing the cultural foundations of an organization is no small feat.

- Modern benefits and incentives haven't kept up with the needs of the new workforce, but changing these across the entire employee base is a significant undertaking.

- Likewise, employees have new expectations from the companies they work for, such as environmental accountability. Nearly 90% of individuals who work at companies with a focus on corporate responsibility feel more inspired, motivated, and loyal to their employer.

- Team-building activities that would normally take place onsite will not be possible to the same extent, and virtual formats will be needed to reach more employees in more places.

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> In today's changing workplaces, employee expectations are rapidly evolving. It's time for people leaders to critically reevaluate the perks, benefits, engagement opportunities, and cultural experiences they provide if they're going to attract and retain top global talent
>
> Kristina Johnson,
> Chief People Officer

The Dynamic Work approach

There are few things the modern workforce values more than flexibility and choice, and that's what a Dynamic Work model provides. And not just in terms of location. Employees need autonomy to determine the best times to work, as well as a variety of options for additional benefits, such as fitness and wellness coverage, or volunteer opportunities.

Providing an aggregated or "buffet" of perks and benefits enables employees to pick the packages that work best for them and their families. Investing in virtual learning and development opportunities, speakers and sessions, happy hours, and other workplace activities also keeps engagement and cohesion high among the entire team.

The future of the workforce also needs to be diverse, and this is another core focus of Dynamic Work. By making the world your talent pool, and enabling employees to live and work wherever it makes the most sense for them, modern organizations have a huge opportunity to move the needle on diversity and inclusion—improving decision making, driving innovation, and bringing together groups of people that can speak authentically on behalf of their global customers.

Okta's core values

- Love our customers
- Never stop innovating
- Act with integrity
- Be transparent
- Empower our people

Just how important is it for modern organizations to be flexible? It's mission-critical. Maintaining a flexible approach to operations, processes, and people management is one of the few things that can provide organizations with the much-needed resilience to withstand major disruptions. Employees likewise demand flexibility in order to remain healthy and productive. In terms of recruitment, top global talent is going to expect flexibility from top global employers.

In 2021, Microsoft research showed that 66% of leaders are thinking of switching to the hybrid model post-pandemic to better accommodate employee needs. Additionally, a 2021 survey commissioned by GoodHire indicates that 85% of employees will only accept positions with organizations that offer remote flexibility, with 46% of workers stating that having both in-office and remote positions enables them to move and live more freely in their everyday lives.

As mentioned previously, flexibility is not only great for workforces but for organizations as a whole—and when they don't embrace it, there can be consequences. A 2019 study by Gartner found that 55% of organizational redesigns were focused solely on optimizing efficiencies and streamlining operations, and this rigidity resulted in fragility; when sudden disruptions took place, the systems couldn't respond, pivot, or adapt effectively.

And while it's critical to continue enabling employees to work from anywhere, don't forget to provide gathering spaces for team members and external stakeholders who are geographically co-located. Research from Gallup shows that those who work either 100% remote or 100% in-office are less engaged than their colleagues— the most engaged employees are those who work three or four days out-of-the-office, per week.

Finally, building flexibility into policies and culture means playing a bigger role in supporting employees with their financial, physical, and mental wellbeing, and offering benefits that have been customized to their needs—based on their input. With unaffordability, income inequality, and other stress factors trending upwards in recent years, organizations are increasingly functioning as social and public services for their teams. We all care deeply about our people. With a Dynamic Work model, we have a chance to show them just how much.

Tips for effective Dynamic Work to build company culture

- Allow for flexible schedules

- Create work environments and experiences, regardless of location

- Support with necessary tech and infrastructure

- Offer customizable benefits (e.g. wellness and fitness coverage, volunteer opps)

- Provide personalized and inclusive perks for all

- Invest in L+D to help individuals, teams, and leaders navigate operating, managing, and leading in a global dynamic work environment

Workforces As Dynamic As The Future

Disruption—whether social or technological, economic or ecological—is going to continue to impact workforces across the globe in the years to come. To solve these challenges and discover new opportunities, we need workforces as dynamic as the future that awaits them. We can't predict what will happen a year, five years, or ten years from now, but through thoughtful innovation and decisive transformation, we can be prepared and forge a path toward better ways of working together.

Remote Work Toolkit

To improve the experience for remote workers, we've deployed a number of tools across our customer base. From video/audio conferencing solutions to VPNs, discover the most popular apps for Dynamic Work—and start your free trials today.

Additional Resources

For more information about Dynamic Work, and how Okta can help support distributed teams, check out the following:

- The Future of Work is Dynamic
- The Future of Work is Dynamic: Going Beyond Distributed and Remote Work (Blog post)
- Businesses @ Work (from Home) 2020
- Enabling Secure Access for a Remote Workforce
- Quick Wins and Long-Term Strategies for Remote Work (Webinar)
- The Integrated Solution You Need to Securely Enable Remote Work at Scale (Datasheet)
- Securing Remote Work Any Time, Anywhere, at Scale (Blog post)

About Okta

Okta is the leading independent identity provider. The Okta Identity Cloud enables organizations to securely connect the right people to the right technologies at the right time. With more than 7,000 pre-built integrations to applications and infrastructure providers, Okta provides simple and secure access to people and organizations everywhere, giving them the confidence to reach their full potential. More than 14,000 organizations, including JetBlue, Nordstrom, Siemens, Slack, Takeda, Teach for America, and Twilio, trust Okta to help protect the identities of their workforces and customers.

Learn more at Okta.com

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