



GBTA Global Business
Travel Association

Many Voices. One Purpose.

What is Today's Work Culture and What Does it Mean for Business Travel?

The changing world of work

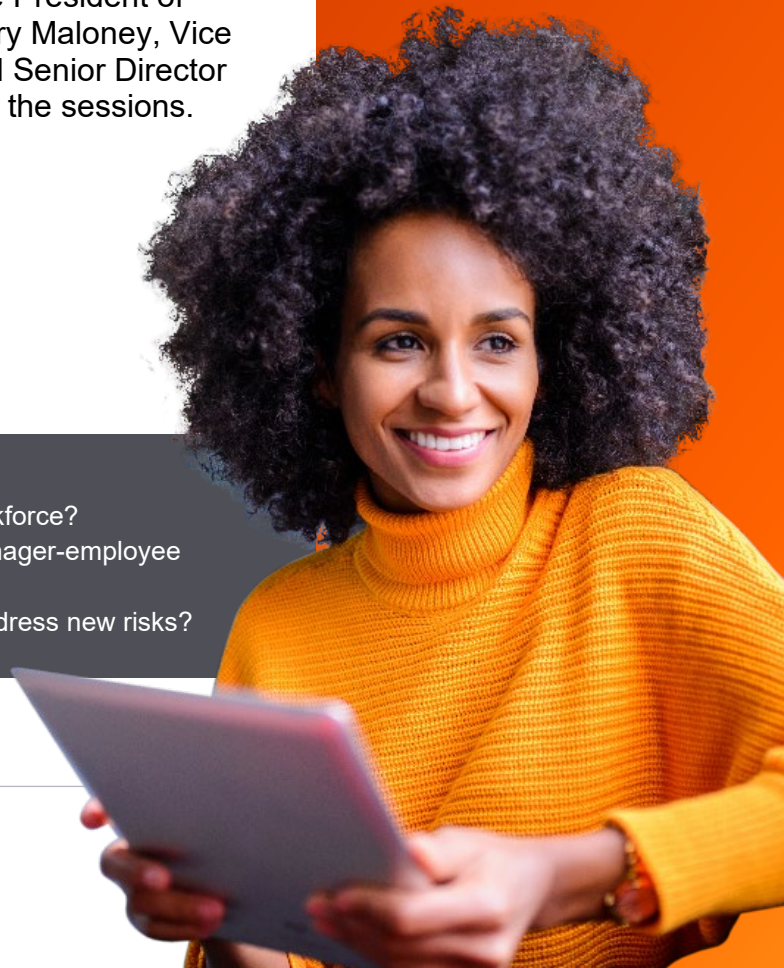
The world of work has been transformed by flexible work arrangements. Accelerated by global events and evolving expectations, traditional office setups shifted swiftly to remote, hybrid, and work-from-anywhere arrangements. The Big Idea Sessions at the GBTA Europe and APAC conferences examined some implications of flexible work models for business travel. Christian Dahl, Executive Vice President of People & Culture at BCD Travel, and Rosemary Maloney, Vice President for the GBTA Board of Directors and Senior Director of Corporate Travel at Freeman Company, led the sessions. Chris Elmitt, CEO of Livve, moderated.

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The discussions explored:

- How do you manage travel for a dispersed workforce?
- How will remote work reshape recruitment, manager-employee dynamics, and business relationships?
- What changes are needed in duty of care to address new risks?



Remote work: It's a standard, not a trend.

Most Big Idea session participants responded favorably to the opportunities that remote work models present. Generally, they felt remote work models would soon be firmly ensconced as a standard and not a trend. Most agreed travel managers had a critical role to play in supporting the workplace of the future. Dissent emerged in discussions around manager-employee dynamics, company culture and sales effectiveness.



“The last few years have reshaped how we think about work. BCD leaned into the change a lot faster than much of the industry so that we could make sure our people keep thriving regardless of where they worked. We’ve been a leader in remote work for some time and we’re doing really well. **Adapting is strengthening our culture** as a TMC, and it’s driving the innovation and performance that benefit our people and our clients.”

– Christian Dahl, EVP of People & Culture, BCD Travel

Four workforce models

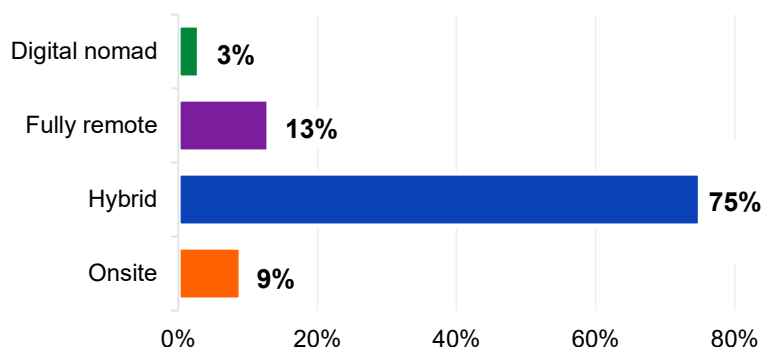
Onsite	Hybrid	Fully remote	Digital nomad
Full-time at a physical office or location, sometimes as implant staff at client site.	Time is split between onsite and remote work.	Work is done entirely offsite, from a home office or another chosen location.	A work from anywhere lifestyle, while traveling or living in various locations or countries.

The modern workforce is represented by a mix of models – with remote roles and hybrid work on the rise. Advanced collaboration and communication tools make these models viable – and benefits exist for companies and employees. Employees experience greater productivity from fewer distractions, better work-life balance, and decreased personal risk from commuting. Employers benefit from reduced overhead, lower carbon footprints, increased employee satisfaction and less turnover and attrition.

What the workforce looks like

Only 9% of pollees work onsite or are embedded with a client.

Source: Poll results of 361 participants, GBTA Europe Conference 2024, The Big Idea, Nov. 5, 2024



Remote work and the role of the travel manager

Modern travel managers aren't just experts in travel logistics – they manage diverse responsibilities, and their scope will only keep growing. Travel managers should expect to support flexible workplace strategies by advising on collaborative meeting options, group travel, and travel policies that accommodate blended work and leisure trips. New ticket types and categories might emerge as employees mix private and professional journeys.



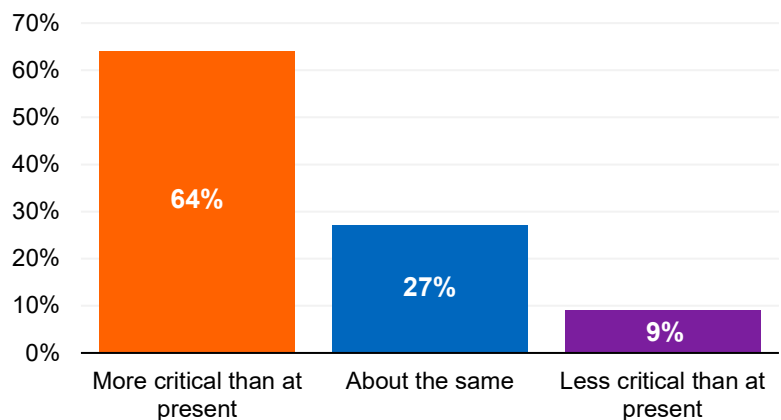
“The role of the travel manager is constantly changing with the evolving workplace, from tickets handwritten by on-site agents to AI driven itineraries: these **hybrid and remote environments give us the opportunity to create greater solutions** for teams to meet in person.”

– Rosemary Maloney, VP for GBTA Board of Directors and Sr. Director of Corporate Travel at Freeman Company

The role of the travel manager in supporting the workplace of the future

Growing responsibility for travel managers

Source: Poll results from 172 votes, GBTA Europe Conference 2024, The Big Idea, Nov. 5, 2024



Creating meaningful experiences for corporate travelers not only enhances their work at a company, but helps to build organizational culture.

– Rosemary Maloney



Duty of care in remote work models

The ISO 31030 Travel Risk Management guidelines define duty of care as "the moral responsibility or legal requirement of an organization to protect the traveler from hazards and threats." These guidelines emphasize the critical role organizations play in safeguarding the health, safety, and well-being of their employees – no matter where they work or travel.



"The last few years have changed the perspective on remote working and mobility; work from home has become work from anywhere. This can attract and retain talent, but it also provides additional challenges for organizations. That is why **forward-thinking organizations are moving from travel risk management into people risk management.**"

– Jorge Mesa, GBTA Europe Advisory Board member and Senior Director of Travel Risk Management at BCD Travel.

The shift to people risk management

People risk management (PRM) involves identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks related to an organization's workforce. Key areas include employee behavior, health and safety, talent management, compliance with laws, workplace culture, cybersecurity, and adaptability to change. It helps ensure business continuity, protect reputation, maintain financial stability, and improve workforce engagement. Tools include risk assessments, training programs, clear policies, employee well-being initiatives, and HR analytics. Managing these risks creates a resilient, productive, and compliant organization.

PRM provides the broader framework for managing risks to employees, while travel risk management (TRM) focuses on a specific subset of risks associated with travel. Together, they ensure organizations meet their duty of care, protect their workforce, and maintain operational continuity.



While before the focus was about keeping traveling employees safe, now **the focus will be to keep all people safe no matter where they are.** It's about ensuring employee safety during business trips, addressing risks in remote work settings, and planning for emergency responses in unfamiliar environments.

– Jorge Mesa

Considerations for people risk management and remote work models



Compliance with local laws: Employers must stay informed about labor laws, tax requirements, and occupational health and safety regulations in different regions where their employees are based.



Employee health and safety: This involves providing guidelines for safe workspaces and offering support with necessary equipment, like ergonomic chairs or desks.



Risk management, emergency response and location awareness: It's important that companies know where their people are to fulfill duty of care. When incidents happen, being able to quickly locate and assist employees ensures their safety and demonstrates the organization's commitment to their safety and well-being.



Mental and emotional well-being: Remote work may feel isolating for some employees. Employers can integrate resources like counseling services and promote work-life balance to support the emotional well-being of remote workers.

Remote work models and company culture

Fewer in-person interactions make it harder to maintain a sense of connection, belonging, and shared purpose. In the Big Idea session, 143 out of 333 participants expressed concern that company culture often gets lost in fully remote workplaces. To address this, leaders must focus on building meaningful connections through authentic and intentional strategies.



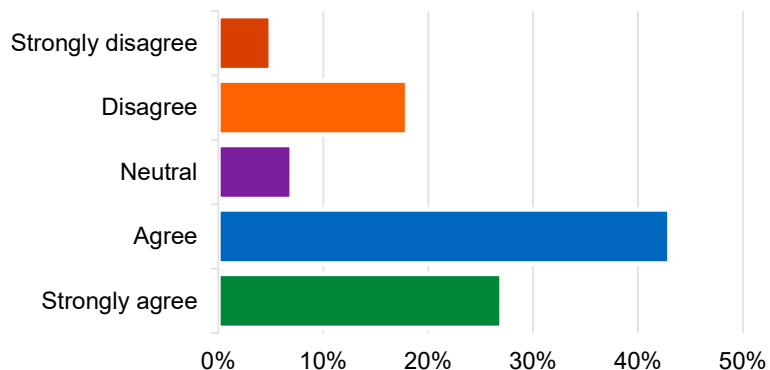
Engagement scores among BCD virtual workers are slightly lower than with office workers. That's likely not a surprise. What is interesting is that wellbeing scores for our virtual employees aren't as high as you might expect. Out of all virtual workers, Travel Consultants show a lower level of engagement. The same effect isn't apparent among BCD Travel Consultants who work in an office.

– Christian Dahl

Company culture gets lost in a fully remote workplace

Will remote work kill the water cooler culture?

Source: Poll results from 333 participants, GBTA Europe Conference 2024, The Big Idea, Nov. 5, 2024



The challenges of managing an “everywhere” workforce

Today’s workforce isn’t confined to traditional offices. Seventy-five percent of Big Idea participants reported working in hybrid roles; 13% said they’re fully remote and 3% work as nomads. Only 9% work onsite.



BCD today is made up of 58% virtual employees, 37% office employees and 5% implants. But, **does it matter how or where you work, if the work gets done?** Flexible work models empower employees to focus on results, but they also challenge organizations to rethink how they support productivity, including policies for business travel. Adapting to these shifts means we can comfortably meet employee expectations without compromising outcomes.

– Christian Dahl

BCD’s retention rate is 6% higher with virtual employees than office employees. BCD collects monthly feedback and scoring through monthly engagement surveys. So, what could this mean for business travel? Managing trips for remote and hybrid workers raises challenges around cost, sustainability, and equitable access. To adapt, stakeholders – like Human Resources, Risk, Legal, Procurement, Communications, and the C-suite – will need to address some key challenges:



Travel policy compliance: Communicating and enforcing travel policies is more complex when employees are spread across various regions. Customizing policies to suit local requirements lends complexity.



Cost control and budgets: With employees traveling from diverse locations, tracking expenses and maintaining cost efficiency can be difficult. Variances in point-of-origin itineraries and decentralized booking can inflate travel costs and complicate budgeting.



Safety and risk management: Employers must prioritize the well-being of employees wherever they work or travel. Managing risks associated with political instability, natural disasters, or health crises requires comprehensive safety protocols and systems.



Technology: A scattered workforce often relies on different booking platforms or devices, leading to fragmented data. Integrating these tools into a unified system is critical for streamlined travel management.



Compliance with tax and immigration laws: Employees traveling from multiple home bases can create tax and immigration challenges. Organizations must ensure compliance with diverse regulatory requirements to avoid penalties and disruptions.



Traveler wellbeing and experience: Meeting the individual travel preferences of a geographically diverse team can be tricky. Providing consistent support while ensuring productivity during travel is essential for employee satisfaction.



Sustainability: Balancing responsible sustainability practices adds another layer of challenge. Companies must carefully plan travel to align with both corporate goals and employee needs.



“Operating as a fully remote, global organization, GBTA has embraced this new way of working, focusing on purposeful, value-driven face-to-face interactions supported by more frequent virtual catch ups and a strict protocol around 1:1, team and All Hands meetings. This intentional meetings structure is a critical part of our strategy enabling us **to foster collaboration and achieve ambitious objectives while maintaining the flexibility and inclusivity of remote work.**”

– Catherine Logan, Regional Senior Vice President - EMEA & APAC

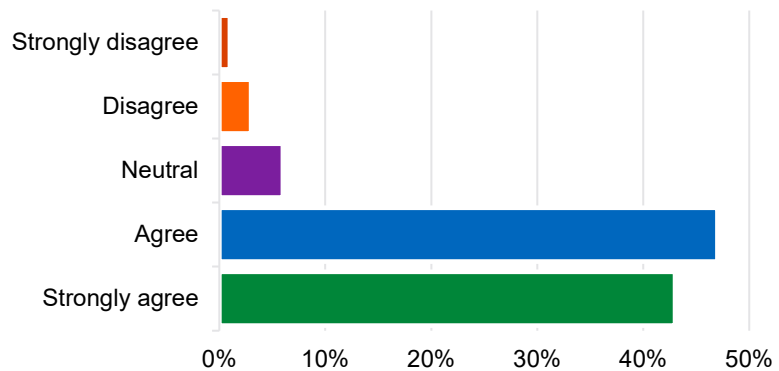
The talent pool

A combined 90% of participants felt remote working widens opportunities for a segment of the workforce that otherwise might be excluded. Remote models are a boon for companies looking to cast a broader net for unique skills and underrepresented groups. For candidates, remote work offerings signal that the employer values work-life balance and flexibility.

Remote work widens the talent pool

Remote work expands recruiting.

Source: Poll results from 326 participants, GBTA Europe Conference 2024, The Big Idea, Nov. 5, 2024

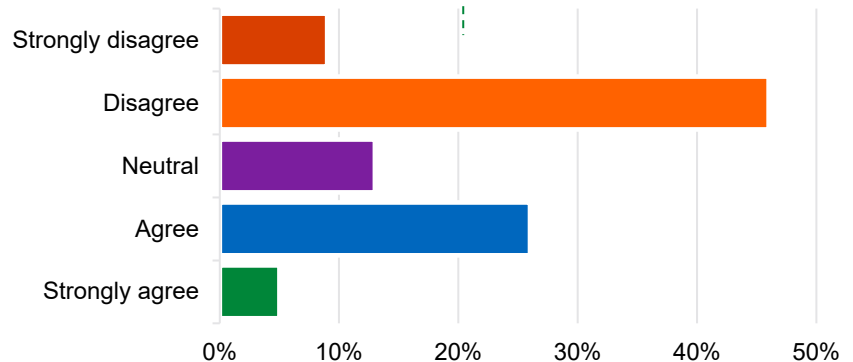


The pitfalls of managing employees remotely

The manager-employee dynamic is just as effective remotely

Managers must learn to lead from a distance.

Source: Poll results from 329 participants, GBTA Europe Conference 2024, The Big Idea, Nov. 5, 2024



Fifty-five percent of respondents don't think manager-employee dynamics will work remotely. Rapport between managers and employees could suffer in remote teams when those involved aren't prepared to manage the dynamic at a distance. Some areas where tensions may rise are communication, building trust, and maintaining visibility into work progress.



Maintaining a manager-employee dynamic at the same level remotely as virtually, may not be possible, but in our experience it is possible to maintain a high level of manager-employee dynamic. It requires an increased management focus on communication and approachability to instill the mutual trust necessary.

– *Christian Dahl*

Remote work isn't for everybody all of the time

Remote work can't be a one-size-fits-all solution – especially for companies exploring hybrid models. Many new workforce entrants are drawn to the flexibility of "work from anywhere" programs but may lack the readiness to thrive in such environments. Without the close support provided in a physical workplace, they could struggle to adapt to their roles effectively.

In fact, 85% of Big Idea respondents agreed or strongly agreed that early-career employees benefit from the structure of an office setting to learn and grow. They highlighted the importance of having junior team members and new hires spend more time in the office during their first months of employment to build critical skills and establish professional networks.



In-person connections remain irreplaceable. They provide a unique opportunity to network, engage with rich educational content, collaborate and gain valuable insights from peers, customers, and suppliers – **making them a vital investment for meaningful business and personal growth.**

– *Catherine Logan*



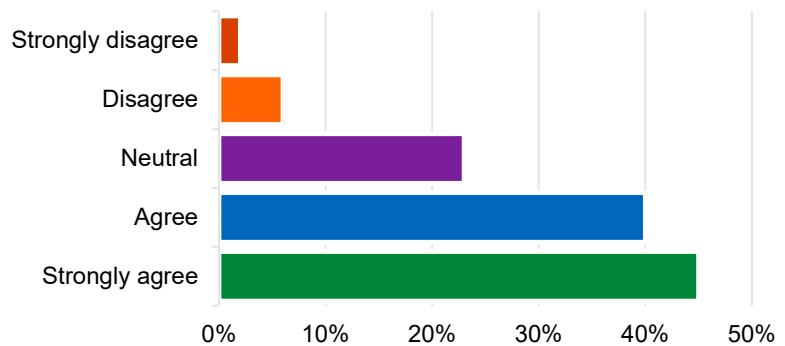
One possible approach is to gradually increase remote work flexibility as employees gain experience and demonstrate proficiency. This isn't about rewarding employees but rather **addressing their preferences while meeting employer needs**. It recognizes that successful remote work requires a strong grasp of job responsibilities to maximize the benefits of a flexible, virtual setting, supported by a reliable structure.

– Christian Dahl

Remote work may not be best for new hires

Do new employees need more time in the office?

Source: Poll results from 321 participants, GBTA Europe Conference 2024, The Big Idea, Nov. 5, 2024



Considerations must be given to new hires to optimize their introduction to the company and possibly to work itself. Onboarding in a hybrid world requires deliberate planning. Employers should consider structured approaches and enhanced digital experiences that help new employees feel supported and integrated. Some options might be:

- A global virtual onboarding program for all employees
- Frequent virtual check-ins with the manager and team
- Assigned new-hire buddies and mentor-mentee matching
- Online community groups and networking
- Virtual town halls or “meet and greets” with senior leaders; department heads or representatives; emerging leaders; and Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), Diversity, Equity & Inclusion teams, cultural celebration committees, sustainability teams, or innovation teams

Remote work: trending today, gone tomorrow?

Working from home and remote culture won't ever go away but it will look different. Out of 301 voters, only five strongly believed that working from anywhere will fade as a trend, reflecting its deep-rooted appeal. Employees increasingly see remote work as a standard in modern employment, valuing the flexibility it provides to balance their professional and personal lives.

Remote work is already shifting toward more structured hybrid models, combining the best of in-office and remote work to promote collaboration while maintaining flexibility. Investments in virtual collaboration tools, home office resources and other technology advancements will help secure remote work as a fixture.

TAKEAWAYS

For organizations:

- **Leverage data:** Use data to evaluate your organization's readiness and suitability for remote work models. Employee Net Promoter Scores (eNPS) can provide insights. Regularly monitor and measure team engagement and adapt strategies accordingly.
- **Develop leadership training:** Effective leadership in remote settings goes beyond basic management skills. Equip managers with skills to build trust, communicate clearly, and foster team engagement without the benefit of face-to-face interactions.
- **Create mentorship opportunities:** Foster environments where new hires can find mentors, boosting retention and career development. Consider approaches that build upon flexible work offerings as new hires advance in their roles.
- **Measure wellbeing and productivity to assess if a model is working or needs adjustment:** Traditional metrics may not suffice in hybrid setups. Organizations should explore new tools and techniques to monitor employee satisfaction, engagement, and output in a way that respects privacy while providing actionable insights.
- **Don't overlook employment and tax laws:** As flexible work models gain traction, they pose significant challenges for legal and regulatory frameworks that were designed around traditional office-based work.

For travel managers:

- **Optimize onboarding:** Present the managed travel program and its policies to new employees as soon as possible during the onboarding process. Making the travel program a part of the orientation or onboarding experience helps mark its significance and conveys to business travelers how their engagement with the travel program aligns with broader company goals.
- **Promote multi-purpose travel:** Encourage team gatherings at events or conferences to maintain connections without over-reliance on offices. Creating a sense of belonging is key to satisfaction, no matter the working model.

For business travel providers:

- **Innovate policies:** Adapt travel programs to accommodate hybrid workers, including flexible ticket types and combined leisure-business travel options.
- **Reinforce human connections:** Recognize that in-person interactions remain essential for building strong relationships.

More reports from GBTA and BCD Travel

[The Big Idea: Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) & What it Means for Business Travel Management \(2023\)](#)

[The Big Idea: Travel and the Law of Attraction \(2022\)](#)

The Big Idea is a hallmark of the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) conferences in Europe and APAC. These interactive workshops provide a collaborative platform to tackle challenges and explore opportunities in the business travel industry. The combined feedback, from 700+ event attendees, is compiled into *The Big Idea Report*. BCD Travel has co-published the report since November 2022.

The Big Idea: What is Today's Work Culture and What Does it Mean for Business Travel? (2024)

Moderator: Chris Elmitt, CEO, LIVVE

Speakers: Christian Dahl, Executive Vice President, People & Culture, BCD Travel
Rosemary Maloney, Vice President of the Global Business Travel Association Board of Directors, and Senior Director of Corporate Travel at Freeman Company

The poll results referenced in this report were collected during The Big Idea session at the GBTA Europe Conference 2024, held in Copenhagen on November 5, 2024. The data was captured live using the Slido polling tool, with responses from approximately 300 participants.