# SMART HYBRID WORKPLACE SERVICES

Enabling the future of workplace organization

January 2022

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The Power of Possibility

# INTRODUCTION

**The world of work is fundamentally changing. Organizational models that were built for the previous century are being transformed by technology. Yet, the pressure for change is not just coming from the market, but from workers themselves.**

Today's employees demand flexibility in where they work, when they work and how they work. For business owners, this requires a shake-up of the workplace priorities of old. Processes must be redesigned so they are not tied to a single location but can be completed anywhere, anytime. There is also now a much greater emphasis on creating workspaces that employees want to spend time in, that add value to their roles.

Organizations reluctant to embrace these new working models are realizing that they have no choice if they want to recruit and retain the best talent. Early adopters, meanwhile, are already enjoying the benefits that wide-ranging digitalization and greater flexibility bring in terms of productivity, resilience and sustainability.

But this does not mean companies have to scrap their existing structures and start again. It will be an ongoing process of innovation and improvement. At SPS we call these Smart Hybrid Workplace Services. They are smart because they create a connected, flexible operating environment that fits the changing needs of both employees and companies. They are hybrid because they combine both the digital and physical worlds, whether that is scanning and sending mail electronically, or using digital technologies to optimize the sorting and delivery of packages or other manual processes.

This white paper looks at the benefits of a Smart Hybrid approach and the key solutions needed to build the future workplace.

# THE ADVANTAGES OF SMART HYBRID WORKPLACE SERVICES

Smart Hybrid Services enable a seamless combination of on-site and off-site working, whether that is from a satellite office, an employee's home or another location. It has two main parts. The first involves the technology and processes required to enable digital collaboration and distributed working. The second involves making centralized office spaces more attractive, convenient and fit for purpose. This is because in the future, offices will be somewhere employees go to for certain reason, such as a meeting or a team-building session, rather than the default location where they complete their core tasks.

An effective Smart Workplace can have many benefits:

## Employee Satisfaction

While most employees do not want to work remotely on a full-time basis, they do want the option to do it part of the time. Concepts such as '4 and 1' in which workers spend four days in the office and one at a different location, or even '3 and 2', could become the norm. A study from the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR) showed that 55% of US workers want a mixture of both office and home working.[1] A survey of IT workers found that 70% were more satisfied with their job after work-from-home models were introduced. This type of flexibility is especially popular with working women who have children, as it allows them to manage competing demands. Mothers are 32% less likely to leave their job if they have remote working options.[2] Flexible working can also help workforce diversity, as employees from a variety of different locations can be targeted, while it can also be helpful for workers with disabilities or those with caring responsibilities.

**55%**
of US workers want a mixture of both office and home working[1]

## Worker Productivity

The fear that large segments of the population working from home would result in a collapse in productivity has been shown to be largely unfounded. In reality, the opposite has often happened. Research from BCG shows that optimized remote models result in a 10-40% increase in productivity, while absenteeism falls by 40%.[3] Partly this is because people don't have to commute, which takes up time and is tiring. Flexible work models are also more efficient. Instead of having to travel an hour into the office for a 20 minute meeting, it can be done at home over a video conference call. In addition, working hours are not as rigidly set, employees can set schedules that fit with their preferred ways of working, allowing them to better manage and optimize their time. One multinational engineering company is allowing workers to spread their core working week over seven days, which is proving popular. Though not every company will follow this approach, treating workers more as individuals, rather than automatons, will likely benefit both employer and employee in the long term. Importantly, companies will be able to access a much larger pool of workers, getting access to talent that they would not necessarily have been able to before, as there are less rigid rules on where they have to be located.

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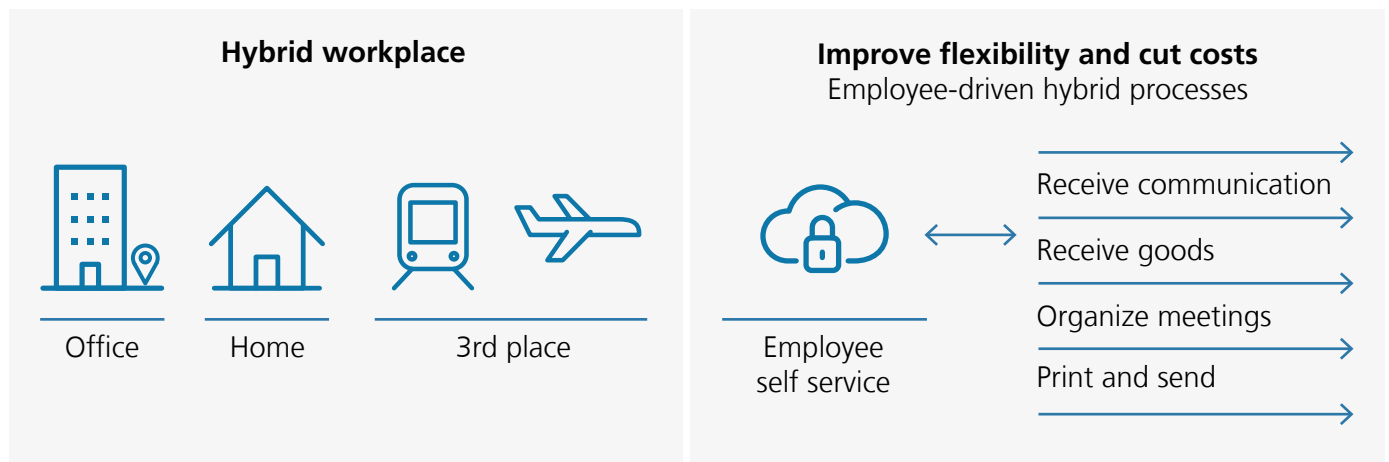
# Resilience

Smart Workplaces also offer many advantages in terms of resilience. While there may not necessarily be another global pandemic, there will certainly be further disruption down the line, even if only on a local level. Whether it is a natural disaster, a terrorist incident or a cyberattack, disruption is being seen as the norm for global businesses, rather than the exception.

In previous years, if 50% of workers could not get to the office for some reason, it was considered an operational disaster. Now, companies would simply invoke their disaster recovery and business continuity plans, and switch to home working. The recent crisis has meant that many of the structures to enable these rapid shifts are already in place, both from a technological and legal standpoint, although there is room for further refinement.

**Building Resilience with Smart Hybrid Services**

| Hybrid workplace | | | Improve flexibility and cut costs<br>Employee-driven hybrid processes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Office | Home | 3rd place | Employee<br>self service | Receive communication<br>Receive goods<br>Organize meetings<br>Print and send |

# Cost

According to BCG, more than 40% of managers expect remote working models to cut overhead costs.[4] Primarily this will be through reductions in office space. Across different industries, remote working could deliver up to 32% in real estate savings.[5] Workers can also benefit. Research from FlexLab shows that an average employee can save more than $4,000 annually by working from home, through savings on commuting, eating out and even clothing.[6] The premium is so significant that some companies, including Google, Facebook and Slack, are considering reducing pay for employees that work remotely.[7]

# Sustainability

Reduced commute volumes can also have an environmental benefit. If a company has 20,000 employees and they commute 30% or even 50% less that can have a sizeable impact on emissions. Digitizing information such as hard documents or incoming mail will also play a role.

Employees can receive documents straight to their emails, without the need to deliver them. This reduces paper consumption. In 2020, as more people worked from home, printed page volumes fell by 13.7%.[8] Paper and pulp production are major consumers of both energy and water resources, so this has a positive environmental impact. With the digital delivery of mail, information can be received automatically, anyplace, anytime. As a result, there is also less demand for delivery vans and other postal services, meaning $CO_2$ emissions can also be cut.

# THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING SMART HYBRID WORKPLACE SERVICES

One of the initial challenges when implementing a Smart Workplace is making sure that remote workers, whether at home or in a office, can access mail and key documents. Although companies are accelerating their digitization processes, this is still far from complete. In the UK it is estimated that the average employee goes through 10,000 sheets of paper in a year.[9] Companies have to conduct a careful balancing act, digitizing as much mail as they can while ensuring that physical logistics are as efficient as possible and can distribute items to a dispersed workforce. After all, a parcel can't be scanned and emailed to the recipient. Still, there is much room to leverage digital technologies to also make physical mail and document handling as streamlined and flexible possible.
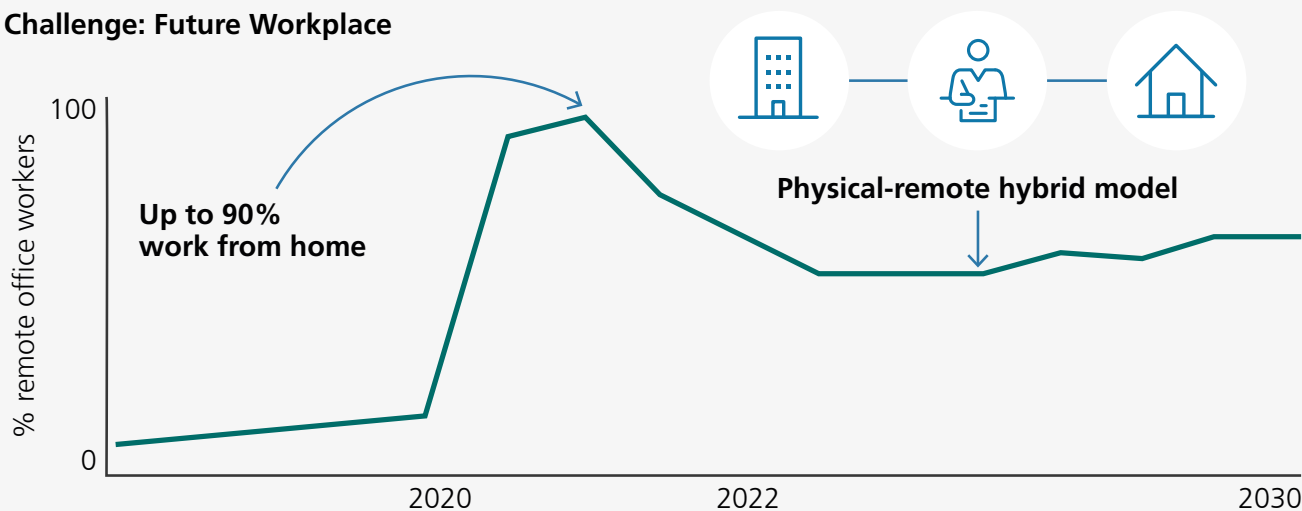
## Digitalizing Processes

Many back-office processes still rely on manual input, and regulations can even demand it in some industries. Contracts, for instance, or other complex documents may need to be hand signed and delivered. When it comes to wider digitalization efforts then companies need to take a platform approach. A centralized cloud-based system can enable complex tasks to be broken down and completed digitally. However, many companies may not have the process knowledge or in-house tech skills to complete this level of digital transformation.

## Physical and Digital Spaces – Getting the Mix Right

Managing remote workers on a day-to-day basis also requires a new set of tools and approaches. Workers have to be monitored to make sure that they complete tasks correctly and on time, while team projects have to be carefully managed and organized virtually. This requires new ways of working and management, which will be a key challenge for the smart office.



**Challenge: Future Workplace**

% remote office workers

**Up to 90% work from home**

**Physical-remote hybrid model**

100

0

2020    2022    2030

Creative tasks that have no fixed outcomes, usually require intensive communication, and can be more challenging to complete with remote teams.[10] Also established workers may be able to perform well in a hybrid environment, but new employees could be cut off from the support and networks they need to thrive in a new role.[11] The future of working will require a blending of physical and digital spaces in order to maximize outcomes across a range of tasks. For example, offices may become 'workplace ecosystems', where people go to learn, collaborate, mentor each other and socialize,[12] rather than places where people complete their core work.

## Security Concerns

Finally, having masses of workers connecting online from home offices with unsecured internet connections can come with serious security risks. Hybrid working involves a re-thinking of how companies can ensure high levels of security. The starting point should be clear guidelines on remote working but must also include company-wide approaches such as laptops and compliant processes. Who can access data? Who is working on it and where? All of this has to be carefully refined and managed, so companies do not breach regulations such as GDPR.

# SPS' SMART HYBRID WORKPLACE SERVICES

Workplace flexibility will be the key to success for global companies, but this will require operational transformation. SPS' solutions can help at every stage of the process, from digitalizing in-bound documents, to creating streamlined digital workflows, to leveraging technology to upgrade front-of-house services and create more attractive office environments.

## Smart Processes

In order to improve workplace efficiency and maximize resilience, SPS leverages best-in-class process expertise and digitalization capabilities. We work closely with companies to understand their document logisitics and then implement digital solutions. For example, for one European company we scan and digitalize all incoming invoices and patents across 21 countries, in one high-tech campus. But we can also go further and help companies build entire end-to-end digital workflows. These take the manual steps out of core back-office tasks and enable them to be completed anytime, anywhere. Documents are digitalized, with next actions, such as signatures or amendments, all completed electronically. Documents can be closely tracked as they go through the relevant stages of approval, before being digitally archived. One example is employee or customer onboarding, which can now be done entirely online, with no need to print large amounts of paper and post documents to the relevant people. Another area is insurance claims, where implementing a fully digital lifecycle can cut down processing costs and improve response times for customers.

# Smart Document Logistics

The heart of our conception of a Smart Workplace is having efficient, connected document logisitics. SPS' approach is based on digitalizing as much of the in-bound document process as possible and then combining it with a centralized mail hub. All physical mail and packages are sent to the SPS center where they undergo x-ray screening. Any suspicious packages, or those being delivered to executives, receive full chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high yield explosives (CBRNE) evaluation.

Sorting is automated to improve efficiency, including the use of voice-based technology and augmented reality smart glasses to aid the process. Smart Label Solutions (SLS), tracking gateways and RFID tags are used to closely track each item, providing full visibility and enabling better planning. If a large amount of mail items are due, then resources can be organized to make sure they are processed quickly.

Finally, the items are delivered to the right location, whether that is an office, a satellite location or even a home office. We use software solutions to optimize delivery routes and ensure maximum speed and convenience, while we have a fully electric vehicle fleet to minimize environmental impact.

SPS is also a pioneer in smart lockers, where mail and packages are left in dedicated lockers that can be accessed by employees at their own convenience, even if buildings are unstaffed. The lockers are integrated with iTrak, a cloud-based system that uses GPS to track mail items. The key to our approach is flexibility and self-service. Employees can receive an SMS or email when they have a parcel or incoming mail in the office. They can then choose to have that left item in a smart locker, or have it sent to their home address.

## Smart Document Logistics: Benefits

**Workforce productivity =** 100% of parcels available for employees at any time

**Employee satisfaction =** Simplification of business and private life

**Resilience =** Security checks for all incoming goods/parcels

# Smart Workplaces

The new work paradigm will not just transform back-office processes and document logisitics. Many of the core functions of office environments will have to be brought online. As offices become less central to a company's organization, SPS is implementing virtual reception kiosks that can be used to check-in employees or clients. This includes a secure, cloud-based visitor management platform to allow visitors to be registered, verified and approved, with automatic badge printing. Each building can have its own localized app, so that visitors can get all the information they need on their device.

In the future, many workers may only come to central offices to conduct vital meetings or other set activities. SPS provides virtual platforms that can be used to remotely book conference rooms and other resources such as desk space. In addition, we provide on-demand print services. Work-from-home employees can send any documents to SPS, and we print it out, put it in an envelope and hand it over to a distribution partner.

# Conclusion

Whatever stage you are at in your transformation journey, SPS is your partner for process improvement and digital optimization. Our solutions lie at the heart of the shift towards a more connected and flexible workplace and will be foundational as companies adapt to new ways of working and seek to unlock unprecedented levels of efficiency and productivity.

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# For further information

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