



The illustration features two stylized figures working on laptops. The figure on the left is a man with curly hair, wearing a white shirt, pointing at his green laptop which has a star icon. The figure on the right is a woman with blonde hair, wearing an orange dress with black polka dots, pointing at her laptop which has a green triangle icon. A pink lightbulb is connected by a line to the woman's laptop. A purple paper airplane is flying towards the man. In the background, there are two clouds, a purple bar chart, and a grey line graph. The text 'Oyster' is written in a large, bold, black font, and 'Hybrid' is written in a similar font with a star icon. 'Handbook' is written in a similar font with a magnifying glass icon over the 'o' and a pink arrow pointing to the 'd'. A small star icon is also present at the bottom left of the word 'Handbook'.

Oyster Hybrid Handbook

Oyster

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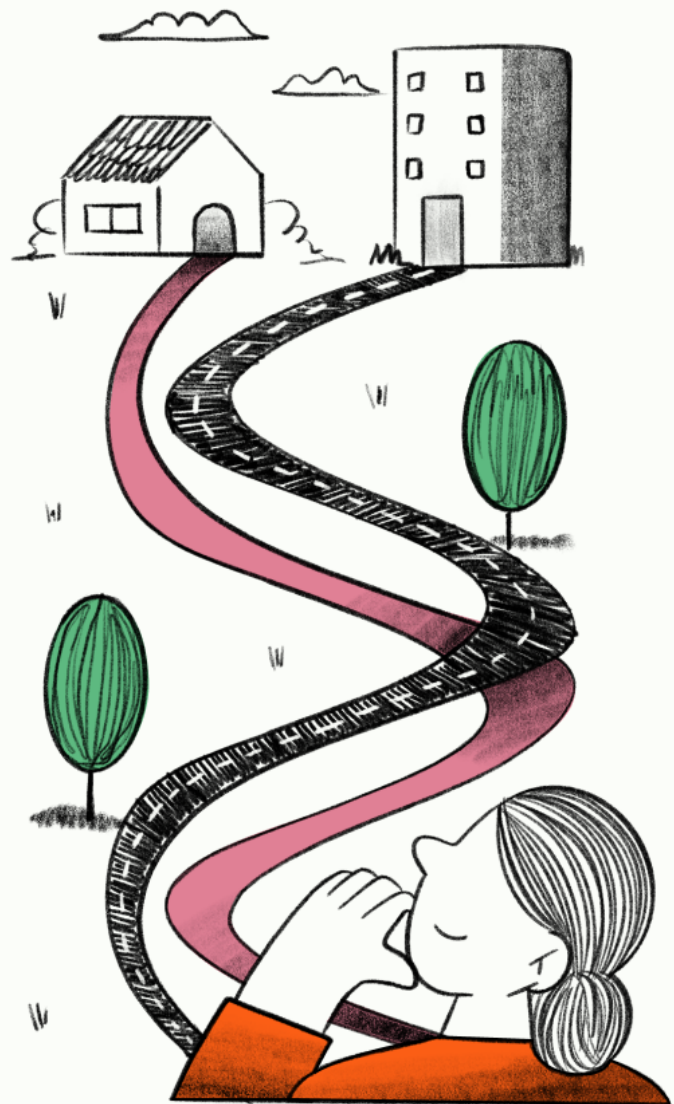
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Understanding hybrid work

A few years on from the sudden onset of remote work occasioned by COVID-19, we are currently in the midst of a hybrid evolution. [More than half](#) (54%) of U.S. workers are now hybrid, with a [Gallup survey](#) indicating that six in 10 employees want to work on a hybrid basis.

However, there's a debate brewing between those extolling the benefits of this new landscape and those mourning the pre-pandemic days. Many [high-profile brands](#) have made it clear that their preference is for workers to come into the office five days a week. According to the [KPMG 2023 CEO Outlook](#), 64% of CEOs believe there will be a full return to office by 2026. Meanwhile, [younger tech companies](#) have taken a softer stance and continue to lean toward a hybrid schedule.

As a manager, you're likely still dealing with the aftereffects of this transformation and navigating the intricacies of hybrid work. That's why it's important to understand it fully in order to develop an effective hybrid work policy for your company.



What is hybrid work?

Hybrid work is a mixture of in-office and remote work. Employees work from home or another location some days, and the rest of the week they join their colleagues in an office. Hybrid work can incorporate a few different models:

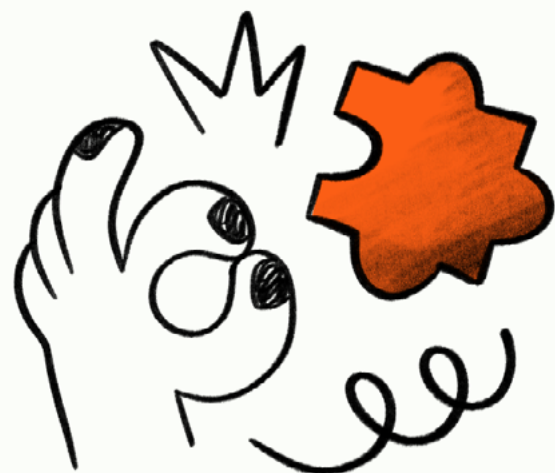
- **Fixed:** This is when a company determines which days of the week employees should come into the office and when they can work from home.
- **Flexible:** Here, employees choose when they will come to the office. They may still have to commit to a minimum number of days per week, but they decide which ones work best based on their personal schedule.
- **Office-first:** Employees spend most of their workdays in an office setting. They have the option to work remotely on certain occasions.
- **Remote-first:** As the norm, employees work remotely. They only come into the office for specific events.

George Penn, Managing Vice President at Gartner, advises us to reframe our definition of hybrid work:

“

Success in a hybrid work environment requires employers to move beyond viewing remote or hybrid environments as a temporary or short-term strategy and to treat it as an opportunity.”

To take a leaf out of Penn’s book, managers should view hybrid work not as something we *need* to do, but something we *get* to do.



Benefits of hybrid working

There's a reason why hybrid work has remained popular in the wake of the pandemic, as employers and employees alike have realized its benefits.

→ Increased flexibility

Flexibility will always top the list as the number one benefit of hybrid work. Some people prefer the quiet haven of their own home while others thrive on the buzz of an office. With a hybrid approach, you get the best of both worlds. Employees appreciate the flexibility that enables them to benefit from face-to-face interactions, like brainstorming sessions, while also getting time alone to work on projects that require more intense concentration, like aggregating report data.

→ Better time management

When you structure your week as a mix between in-office and at-home work, you're able to manage your time better. You can map out your tasks from Monday to Friday, separating them between "Office" and "WFH." This time allocation can boost productivity—when you know you only have a certain window in which to complete a certain task, you're more likely to get it done.

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→ Larger talent pool

As talent acquisition teams know, the hiring process can take a long time to produce the right candidate with the perfect mix of skills. When you expand job opportunities to include people who can't commit to a full-time office schedule, you broaden your talent pool. Many workers are unwilling to compromise on flexibility—in fact, a [recent study](#) found that 42% of European job seekers would turn down a role if it didn't offer hybrid work.



Challenges of hybrid working

Despite the numerous benefits, it's not all smooth sailing. The added flexibility of hybrid work can also lead to a number of challenges.

→ Limited resources

According to a [2022 survey](#) of over 8,000 workers, the top challenge of hybrid working is less access to work resources and equipment. Some employees might not have room at home to set up a fully functional workspace with a separate desk, monitor, etc. You also need to consider the office requirements, such as conference rooms that cater to Zoom calls involving both in-office and at-home workers.

→ Poor coordination

If your team has a flexible hybrid work model, it can be harder to coordinate in-person meetups. Different people will prefer to come in on different days. Fixed hybrid work models can also be tricky as it's hard to get a consensus on which days of the week should be the designated "in-office" days.

→ Inequality among colleagues

[Data](#) indicates that younger workers may be expected to come into the office more than their older, more experienced colleagues. According to **Leesman CEO Tim Roth**:

“

There's an element of trust: the data suggests you seemingly have to 'earn the right' to work remotely more often.”

Hybrid workers may also face resentment from fully in-office colleagues who assume they're more committed to the role by physically showing up more.



Communication for hybrid teams

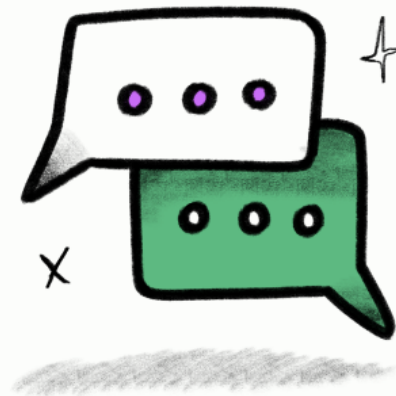
The importance of effective communication

You could argue that communication is even more important for hybrid teams than it is for fully remote or in-office ones. With the latter, you only need to worry about one environment; with hybrid, you have two.

The key is to ensure that messaging is unified across all working models. That means having a standard method of communication for important updates. Let's say your company announces plans to acquire a smaller business—it's not fair if word gets around the office before remote employees hear the news. Instead, send a company-wide email so everyone gets the same info at the same time.

Remember that good communication is not limited to face-to-face interaction. People managers should consider daily check-ins and regular team bonding sessions so that hybrid employees feel as connected to the company as their office-based counterparts, even if they're miles away.

Retaining global talent and building a strong company culture is definitely more challenging with a hybrid workforce, but it's not impossible. Make the most of any opportunity to bring everyone together in the same room, even if it only happens once or twice a year. In the meantime, get creative with Zoom so your meetings don't feel like a chore. When you make the effort to unite distributed teams, you knit them together and give morale a much-needed boost.





Overcoming communication barriers

→ Time zones

Mentally doing time math?
Wondering when daylight savings time ends? Managing hybrid teams across time zones can be tough. Time zone widgets (for [Mac](#) or [Windows](#)) can be useful as a handy reminder not to invite someone to a meeting that starts at 3 a.m. their time.

Of course, sometimes the stars don't align and you might have to wake up a little earlier or finish a little later than the usual 9 to 5 to make a global meeting work. In these cases, encourage attendees to take that extra time back when they can—this avoids burnout and assures them that they don't always need to be online when their overseas colleagues are.

→ Equal access to information

All hybrid employees should have equal access to information. For example, you wouldn't introduce a new tool that's restricted in a colleague's region. Using a centralized, cloud-based system will overcome many issues here, providing a single repository for everything your team needs to do their work.

You likely have extra security barriers for access to sensitive information, like your website's backend. In this case, ensure that hybrid workers have a VPN installed and use it when accessing these sites, along with a secure WiFi connection. If they intend to work from a different country for a certain period, ask them to share this info in advance so their new location doesn't trigger a security alert and potentially lock them out of the tools they need.

Communication tools and techniques

Tools that enable global teams to communicate asynchronously (i.e., not at the same time) are a lifesaver. Email is probably the most commonly used asynchronous tool, but here are some others to consider:



A workspace app to store your company's documents, projects, and knowledge base (or wikis).



A cloud-based messaging app where you can create different channels for team and company-wide communication.



A work management platform with features for reporting, workflow automation, resource planning, and more.



A screen recording tool that enables you to share video messages with your colleagues.



An online whiteboard designed for collaborative brainstorming sessions.



A web design tool used for creating prototypes and storing digital assets.

GitHub

A platform commonly used by development teams to create and manage code, as well as track bugs and feature requests.

It's common for different teams to use different types of tools that cater to their specific function, but their primary communication platform (like email or Slack) should ideally be the same to maintain efficiency. Simply put, it doesn't make sense to discuss the same project in multiple places if you can centralize the conversation in one.



Tips for team communication

There's a reason why hybrid work has remained popular in the wake of the pandemic, as employers and employees alike have realized its benefits.

→ Meetings

Managing meetings can be a balancing act—too many and people will resent their time being used, too few and teams won't get regular updates or opportunities to connect with each other.

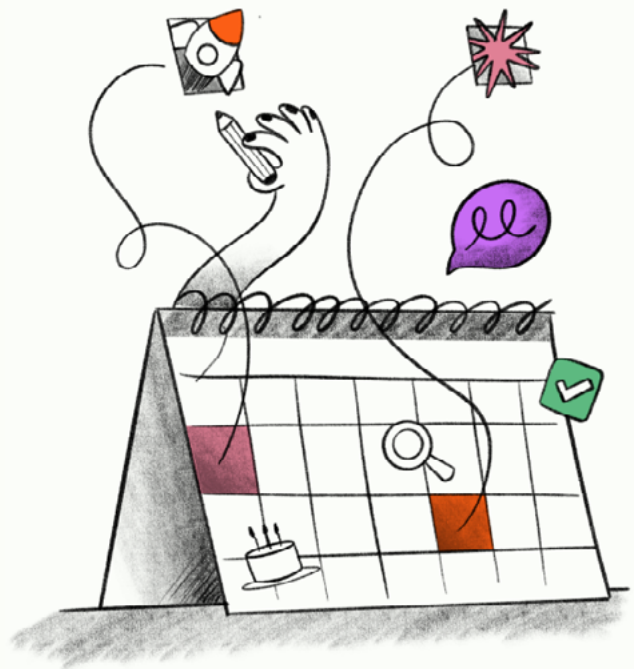
Take time to reassess all the meetings on your calendar. If you have a weekly 30-minute one that always runs over time, consider increasing it to 45 minutes. Conversely, if you have one that you often cancel because there are no updates, consider removing it and scheduling ad hoc ones as needed.

While it's OK to cancel the odd meeting or readjust the schedule if necessary, try to maintain a level of consistency so your hybrid workers can plan their workweek effectively.

→ Project kick-offs

Project kick-offs are especially important when you're not in the same room as your team. When they can't pop over to someone's desk to ask a quick question, they need an alternate avenue to discuss the new tasks on their plate.

For a new project, it's best to host a daily or weekly standup call (about 15 minutes). That way, you keep team members in the loop without disrupting their schedule too much.



Performance management for hybrid teams

Setting goals

Once you've nailed your communication strategy, you can start thinking about how to manage your hybrid team's performance. One surefire way to keep in-person, hybrid, and remote employees on the same page is to set clear goals, both for the individual and the organization.

→ Personal goals

Why are personal goals necessary? Well, without a clear path, employees might feel stuck in a rut and look for other opportunities to climb the corporate ladder.

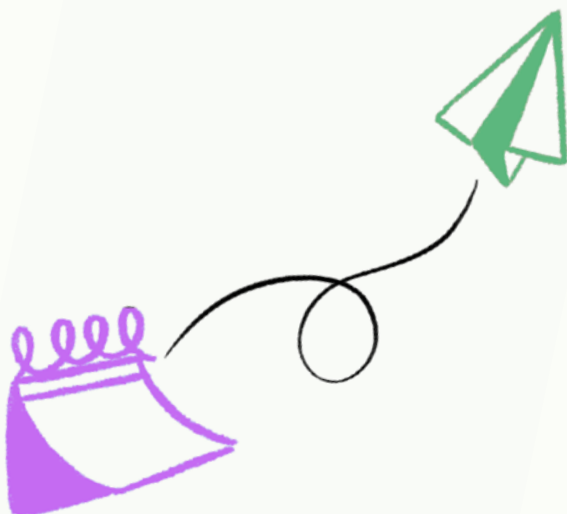
This sentiment was echoed by Stephanie Conway, Senior Director of Talent at LinkedIn, in the company's [2023 Global Talent Trends report](#):

“

We've long known that employees consider career development opportunities to be one of the top reasons to stay at—or leave—their company.”

The first step is to create goals that are SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound



Let's say an employee's goal is to be promoted on their sales team. It's not enough to say they want a pay raise and a new title. They must identify specific responsibilities, decide how to measure their growth, choose an achievable and relevant job title for their skill set and experience, and establish the time frame to move into the new role.

Though personal, these goals still need to line up with the overall goals of the organization. It wouldn't make sense if this particular employee's goal was to learn Latin, as it wouldn't expand their sales abilities or provide any tangible benefit to the company.

→ Company goals

To manage performance across your hybrid organization, you need to set company-wide objectives and key results (OKRs).

Just like SMART goals, these can't be vague. With OKRs, your *objective* is what you want to achieve and the *key results* spell out how to do that. This makes it easier for departments (such as people ops, sales, marketing, etc.) to break them down and see exactly how their teams can contribute.

Example: A company's objective is to increase brand awareness. Its key results are:

- Boost social media following by 50%
- Receive 1,000 responses to a brand awareness survey
- Increase direct traffic by 10%

Company goals help build a sense of unity, which is paramount for hybrid and distributed teams. These teams are more likely to feel isolated working on solo tasks and excluded when they're not in the office. When employees understand how their individual efforts contribute to big company wins, they feel like a valued member of the team.

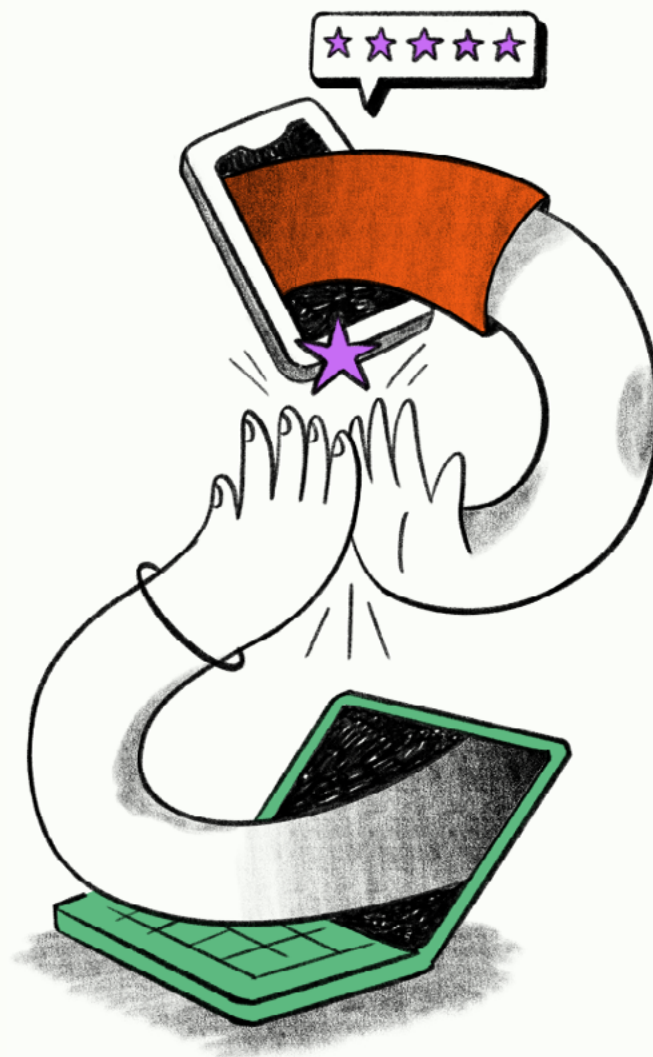


Managing performance reviews

You don't need to be in an office with someone to give them good, regular feedback. As discussed earlier, there's an array of messaging apps and proofing tools that can prompt you to share your thoughts on your colleague's work. Sometimes, even an emoji reaction or a "Nice job!" might be sufficient. That said, when giving constructive criticism or addressing an error, it's best to do this in person, as it might come across harsh or blunt over text.

You should also try to hold performance reviews when your hybrid employee is in the office, as it can feel odd or awkward to discuss personal topics in front of a computer screen. It's advisable to have a performance check-in at least every six months. For roles tied to financial figures or commissions, you might opt to meet more regularly, like once a quarter.

One key thing to remember with reviews is to keep track of everything. Some people prefer to take physical notes, while others might use a workspace app to monitor review sessions. Add dates to everything so you have a clear timeline of feedback—this will be useful if a dispute ever arises.



Overcoming proximity bias

Proximity bias occurs in the hybrid workplace when a leader favors a colleague they see on a regular basis over one that works from home more often.

In many cases, this may be unintentional—though [KPMG reports](#) that 84% of CEOs surveyed admitted they are “likely to reward employees who make an effort to come into the office with favorable assignments, raises, or promotions.” Not only does this favoritism add a layer of division to the workplace, it can also land an organization in hot water. Chris Salmon, Director of Quittance, [warns](#):

“

If home working employees are not given equal opportunities or are ‘shut out’ from the day-to-day life of the company, discrimination and even constructive dismissal claims could follow.”

To counter this, you need to create equal opportunities for progression.

- If there’s an open spot for promotion, let all employees know at the same time and ensure equal access to any relevant materials or resources, like interview coaching sessions.
- Ask candidates to submit a blind assignment so you can assess it on the work alone.
- Make a conscious effort to set aside any bias you may have. Ask yourself: are you rewarding someone because you like working alongside them or because they’re the best person for the job?



Tips for creating a hybrid working policy

Drafting your policy

When COVID-19 first hit, organizations were thrust into a new era of flexible work with very little time to prepare. Now that we've ironed out the kinks, it's time to put pen to paper with a hybrid work policy.

Above all else, this policy should provide easy-to-follow guidelines for hybrid working. This will eliminate any confusion around what's expected of both employers and employees. Avoid the use of company jargon or "legalese" and revise any sections that might be ambiguous.

Rather than just cover experiences you *have* dealt with, try to envision situations that *may* occur. Consider the following elements:



→ Location

State the main location for your organization, whether that's a fixed office or a coworking space, and which days and/or how many days employees are expected to be there. Outline all conditions for working remotely, such as the measures an employee should take if they plan to work in a different state or country for an extended period of time.

→ Equipment

You must ensure that your hybrid workers have what they need to do their job, both at home and in the office. Clarify what your company is willing to provide. Most companies cover standard equipment (e.g., laptop, monitor, headphones) but you may also be willing to cover or subsidize other expenses (e.g., electricity and WiFi costs, commute fees).

→ Security and compliance

People are more relaxed in the confines of their own home and may be more susceptible to security breaches, like phishing scams. That's why you need to offer direct guidance for hybrid teams. Introduce training courses to avoid security-related incidents and incorporate best practices for data privacy, like changing your password or not leaving your laptop unattended in a public place.

Compliance may differ for cross-border teams. For example, EU companies are bound by GDPR laws, while various U.S. states have their own legislation (e.g., California's Consumer Privacy Act). All regions in which your business operates should be covered in your policy.

Implementing your policy

Writing a hybrid work policy may be a one-and-done deal, but implementing it is an ongoing process. First, you need to share it with your entire organization and ensure it's easily accessible so employees can refer to it at any time. Then, you need to review it at regular intervals to ensure it's still fit for purpose.

The rise of [productivity paranoia](#) has led some companies to install employee surveillance software to ensure their hybrid work policy is being adhered to. This can create tension between employer and employee, with the latter feeling they aren't trusted to do their job while working remotely.

Tsedal Neeley, author of Remote Work Revolution, [advises](#):

“

Lean into the inherent flexibility of the remote format. Instead of monitoring team members obsessively, encourage their autonomy. They will gain confidence, agency, and efficiency. The result is a more productive team.”

Start with implicit trust. Hybrid work is all about fostering a sense of human-centered flexibility, so try to keep that people-first experience front of mind. If issues start to arise with a particular individual or team, that's when you should look into further measures.

A hybrid work checklist

Feeling a bit overwhelmed? Managing all the aspects of hybrid work can seem daunting, but as with any big project, you just need to break it down into manageable chunks.

If you've decided that hybrid work is right for your organization, here's a checklist to get you on the right path:

Getting started

- ☐ [Optional] Conduct employee survey on hybrid work requirements
- ☐ Choose your hybrid work model

Communication

- ☐ Define your communication strategy
- ☐ List all necessary tools and techniques
- ☐ Implement communication schedule

Performance management

- ☐ Set personal goals for you and your team (SMART)
- ☐ Set company goals (OKRs)
- ☐ Create timeline for performance reviews
- ☐ [Optional] Add automated reminders for follow-up reviews

Policy creation

- ☐ Draft your hybrid work policy
- ☐ Share and implement the policy

Final steps

- ☐ Review your hybrid work policy
- ☐ [Optional] Revise your policy to incorporate any changes

Every company is different, so feel free to tailor this checklist to suit your specific needs.

How Oyster helps hybrid teams succeed

Hybrid work is especially tricky for international teams. This is where a global employment platform like Oyster is perfectly positioned to help your team embrace hybrid work.

As noted in our [2024 Annual Impact Report](#),

“

Our vision is to try to include as many of the people on earth as possible in the global employment market for knowledge work via remote job opportunities. For this to happen, we believe it's important for companies to hire globally for the widest possible range of roles compatible with remote work.”

Oyster enables one the key benefits of hybrid work: greater access to global talent. Based in the U.K. but found your ideal candidate in Prague? No problem. You can use our platform to hire, pay, and manage talent with ease, no matter where they're located.



Here's a quick rundown of what Oyster offers:

- **Employer of record (EOR):** Hire, pay, and manage talent across 180+ countries—we'll take care of the compliance. We have a unique Direct+ model for our EOR services, including a designated team of HR and legal experts.
- **Contract management:** Automate every aspect of hiring contractors, from onboarding paperwork to payment processes.
- **Global payroll:** Ideal for teams working across multiple countries, our payroll system manages 140+ currencies with >99% accuracy.
- **Integrations:** Connect to your existing apps, including Slack, Zapier, NetSuite, Workday, and more.
- **API:** Can't find the app you need? Develop your own custom workflow.

Continue your journey through hybrid work—head over to [our website](#) to discover more.



About Oyster

Oyster is a global employment platform designed to enable visionary HR leaders to find, engage, pay, manage, develop, and take care of a thriving global workforce. It lets growing companies give valued international team members the experience they deserve, without the usual headaches and expense.

Oyster enables hiring anywhere in the world with reliable, compliant payroll, and great local benefits and perks.

[Book a Demo to Learn More](#)

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