

Trip.com trials hybrid work

Trip.com's most recent trial of the hybrid work model began last August and covered 1,600 employees.

The results showed that 60 percent of workers wanted to participate, and the company's turnover rate dropped by about a third.

In a related company survey, 93 percent employees said they felt the model led to more work efficiency, and more than 75 percent reported an improvement in their overall well-being.

Ah Pan, who leads a team of three, said she was worried at first about the loss of face-to-face personal contact. But she found that online meetings keep her team cohesive and supportive.

Xiao Xiao, a Trip business development manager, said the hybrid model made her "more efficient" both at work and at home. She has more time to spend teaching her child, she said.

Tan Lidong, a business leader in Trip's air-ticket business, said the hybrid work model was no big deal to him because it was quite common in the US where he had been working.

After a six-month trial, Tan found no drop in his team's efficiency but a rise in job satisfaction.

Industry insiders predict the more flexible work regime will help Trip keep talent and rebound post-pandemic.

"We hope that the hybrid work model will be adopted more across Chinese companies in the future, which will have a positive and far-reaching impact on society and the economy," Chairman Liang said.

The hybrid work model helps Trip distance itself from the Chinese digital industry's infamous "996" work culture, which became a grueling, unwritten standard for many tech firms.

The overwork was blamed for the unexpected deaths of some young people.

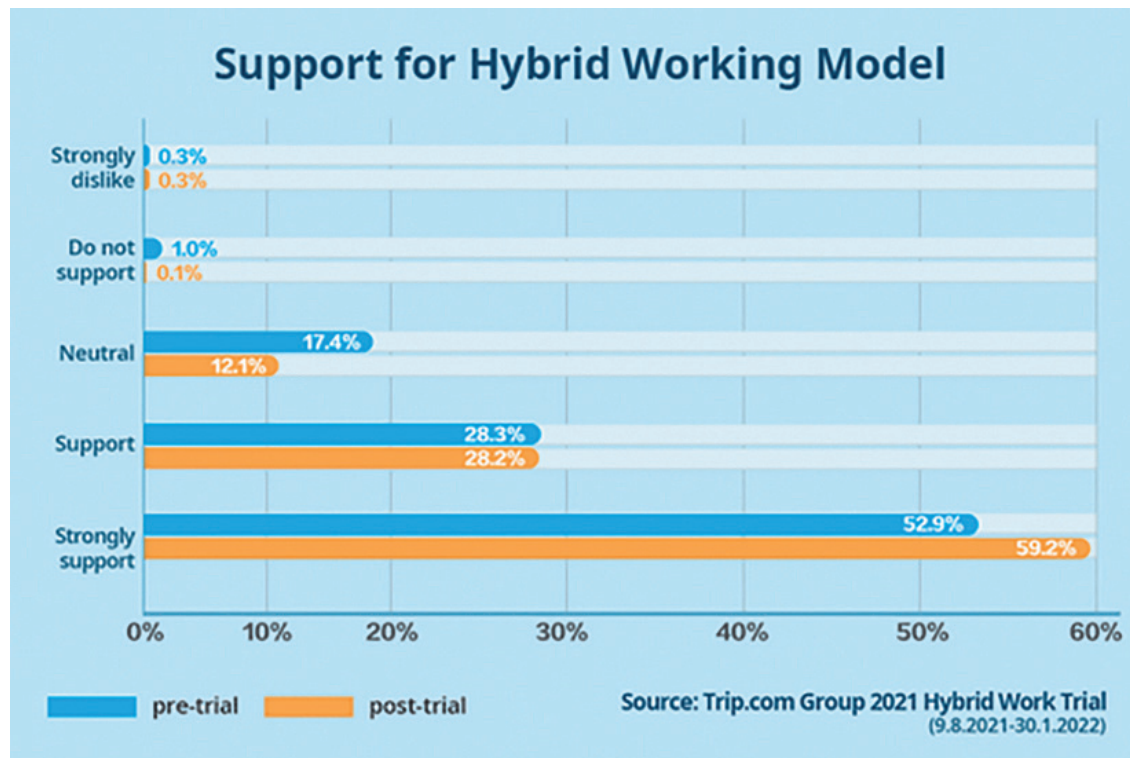
Even China's Supreme People's Court deemed "996" illegal.

Amid widespread public concerns, top Chinese tech firms are making efforts to change.

In November, ByteDance, parent firm of TikTok, announced the "1075" work policy. That calls for staff to work from 10am to 7pm five days a week, including lunch breaks.

That same month, digital giant Tencent announced a "965" plan of working from 9am to 6pm five days a week. Some employees, however, complained that the new policy lack flexibility in hours.

By comparison, Apple, Facebook and Google, among other tech giants, have



Trip.com's survey on hybrid work model — Ti Gong

allowed the majority of employees to work from home for two days or more each week since the epidemic struck.

Technology revolution

Though it may have started with a pandemic, the hybrid work model has generated a life of its own, thanks to the digital revolution.

The cyber transformation in workplaces is "inevitable," and companies have to embrace new models and innovative strategies, said Jenny Zheng, China president of Belgium-based pharmaceutical company Janssen.

Firms like Trip and Janssen are encouraging employees to utilize digital tools like video conferencing to maintain contact when everyone isn't in the same room.

"Passively or actively, everyone has had to face changes in the workplace and in personal lifestyles, especially since the epidemic," said Lily Fu, China managing director for US-based Avaya.

Avaya, which serves 2.5 million remote work seats globally, offers services covering the cloud, unified business communications and hardware such as personal conference devices with AI-powered noise-reduction features.

The company, with local clients including bank, electric car and entertainment industry giants, said demand for hybrid work plans is growing in chip, finance and advanced

manufacturing industries in Shanghai and across China. It has partnered with Alibaba to provide local firms customized services.

Hybrid work is "the biggest shift in how we work in a generation," according to Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella.

A woman who wants to be identified only as Jade is a Chinese marketing officer for a US-based tech firm. She is required to work in the office only two or three days a week.

"We apply for office time online because working slots are limited," she told Shanghai Daily. "That makes me fully concentrate on work and communicate well with colleagues when we are in the office."

Hybrid work also helps digitally connected employees across different regions of China. Talent who used to have to come to Shanghai or Beijing to pursue careers can now remain in other big cities like Chengdu, Wuhan, Xi'an and Chongqing without hurting their professional prospects, according to research from the Tsinghua University in Beijing.

There is no one-size-fits-all model in hybrid work, especially in China, where face-to-face contact has long underpinned business and personal relationships.

Trip.com's decision to formally roll out a hybrid work model recently went viral in an online debate. While the majority of netizens applauded the move, some expressed reservations.



The promotion of hybrid working is a multifaceted win for companies, employees and society.

James Liang
Chairman of Trip.com

Hybrid work in guanxi culture

One post on Weibo asks, "Will I still get a promotion if I work at home and meet my boss less?"

Another worries about how to manage co-workers in dealing with complicated problems.

"Work at home sometimes means meetings at any time of the day, even after 9pm," said a netizen calling himself Da Bing on WeChat. "It sucks!"

According to LinkedIn, only 11 percent of Chinese employees would favor working from home full-time.

Many worry about difficulties in personal communications and the effects on promotions and career opportunities, the website said.

Some Trip managers admitted there were issues with management and communications during the hybrid work trials.

People may embrace hybrid work but they don't want to give up the traditional work model because so many jobs in China rely on building trust and relationships face-to-face, said Chen Yubo, senior associate dean of the School of Economics and Management at Tsinghua University.

"Guanxi and trust-building sometimes are more important than sharing information and ideas," he added.

Trip's Ah Pan sees no problem.

"If I don't get a response online to something urgent, I'll simply make a phone call," she said.