

ENERGY & UTILITIES - IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE HYBRID WORKING

Report

**EXECUTIVE
NETWORK
GROUP**

INTRODUCTION

The fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic caused industries to change the way they structure their workforces. Gone are the days of 9-5, Monday to Friday office-based work schedules, and in their place - flexibility and autonomy rule the roost.

Organisations that don't adhere to these new workplace norms are at risk of missing out and losing their current team, alongside the struggle to attract new talent. The Energy and Utilities industry is no different in this respect.

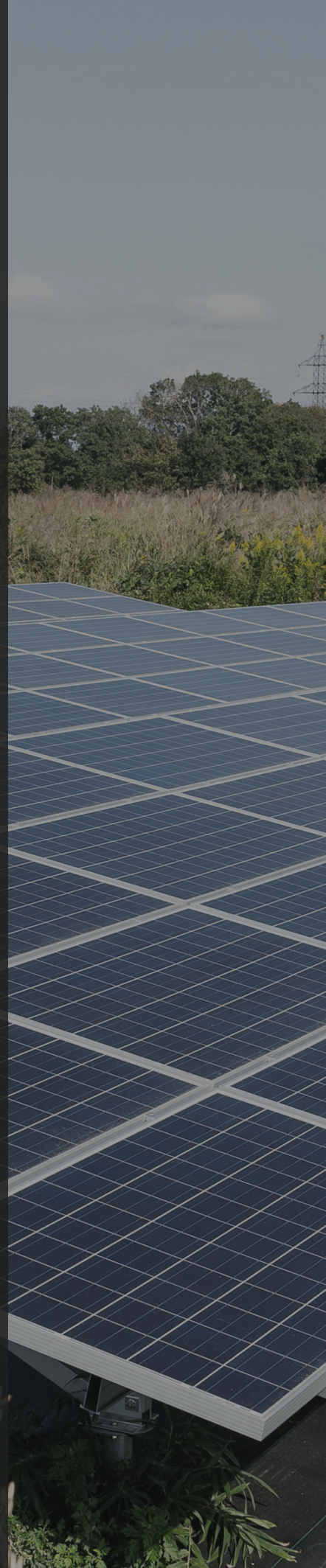
However, how do members of the UK E&U workforces feel about hybrid working 18 months later?

"Accenture took a comprehensive look at the future of work and found that utility workers have very different mindsets, ranging from disgruntled/pessimistic (about 20%) to optimistic/energized/thriving (40%), with the remainder best described as apathetic (12%) or ambivalent (28%).

Hybrid workers are more likely to be thriving, while onsite workers are more likely to be disgruntled. Not surprisingly, 83% of those surveyed wanted to work in a hybrid environment (and 58% had been working in such an environment during the pandemic)." - Accenture

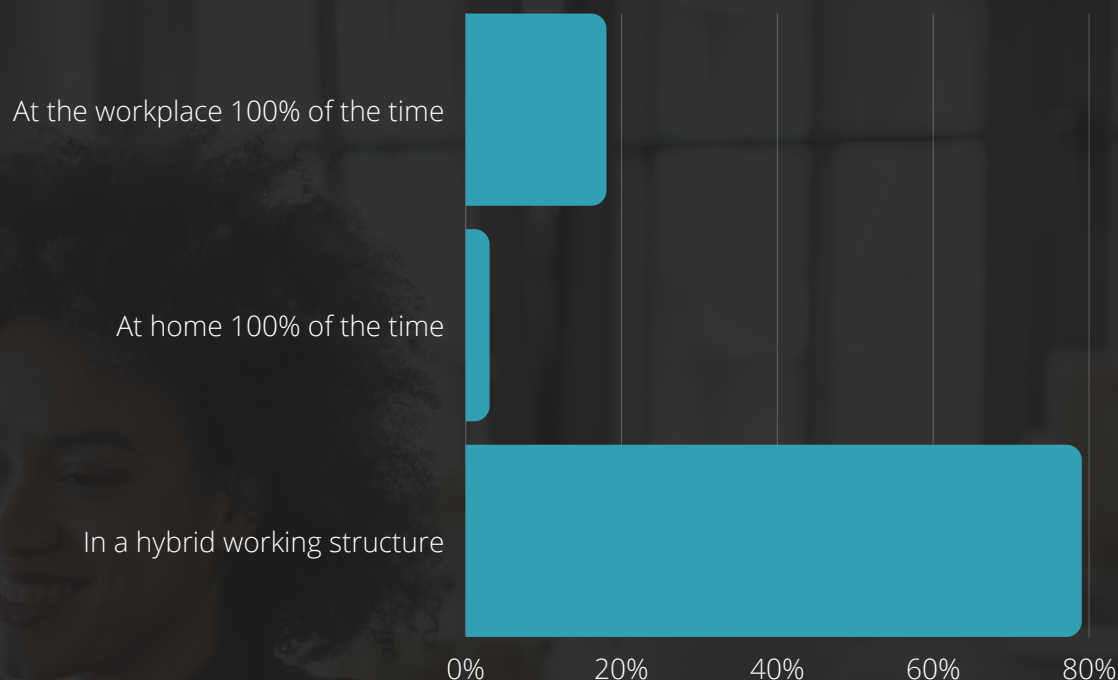
In this report, we will be exploring the state of hybrid working now it's fully integrated into the worldwide work culture.

With the help of our Energy and Utilities community, we circulated a survey on this very subject. Questions ranging from the benefits and risks of hybrid working to their personal preference on how they wish to structure their schedules.



OUR RESEARCH

I PREFER TO WORK...

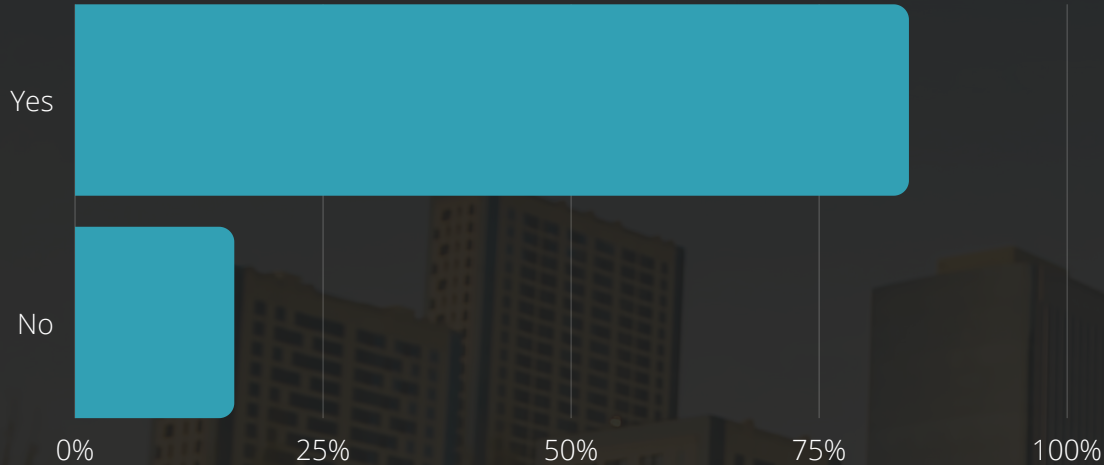


The first question we posed to our audience was about their preferred current work schedules. This would be how the individual splits their work schedule - be it working in an office or on-site full time or they work a hybrid system, whether that would be a 50/50 split or a certain amount of days either way.

18% stated that they would prefer to work a workplace schedule full time, whilst 3% felt that they would prefer to work from home.

However, a large majority of 79% claimed that they desire a hybrid working structure which allows them the freedom to choose their weekly schedule and work from home or on-site when it suits them.

IF YOU WERE SEEKING A NEW JOB, WOULD THE OPTION OF HYBRID WORK BE ATTRACTIVE?



With a growing market demand that indicates no sign of slowing, candidates now have the luxury of multiple offers within their job search in addition to the time to make a considered career choice to elevate not only their progression but also their remuneration and benefits package.

According to the [Office of National Statistics](#), the electricity, gas, steam & air conditioning supply industry sat at 5 thousand open vacancies - with water supply, sewerage, waste & remediation activities at 8 thousand vacancies from January to March of this year (2022).

Flexibility within working schedules, whether that's a hybrid model, flexibility around hours, or autonomy with the management of their workload is now highly desirable.

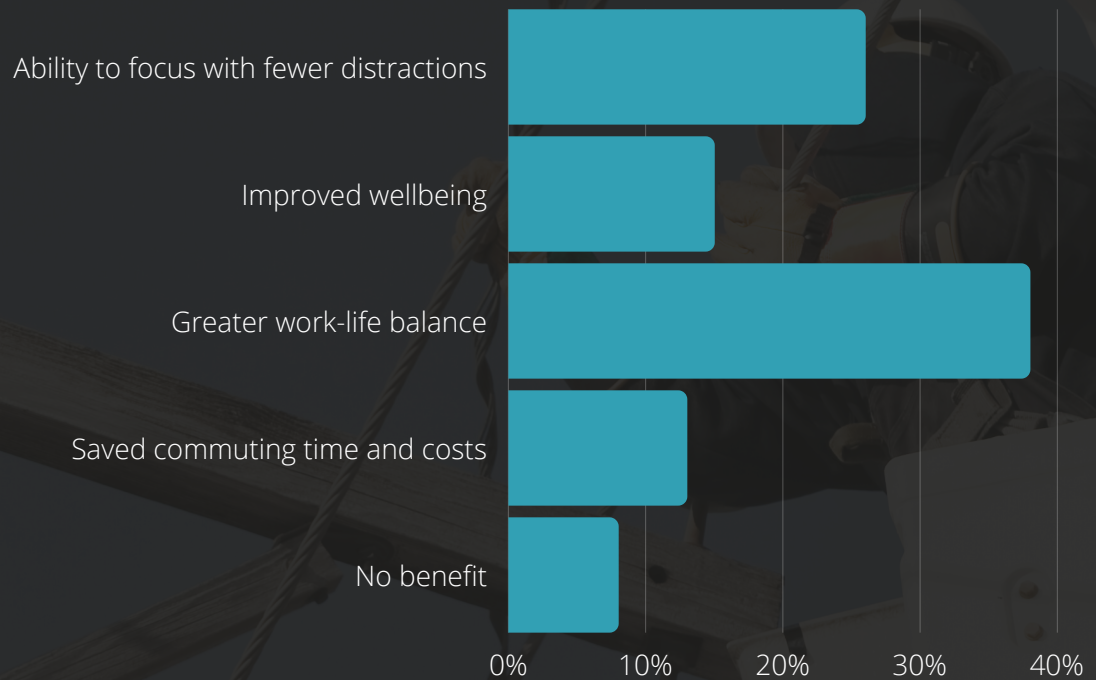
Since, what is now coined the great resignation, more people are looking for work where they can take more time for things like family, hobbies and life outside of work. Therefore it's no surprise that 84% of respondents felt that an option of hybrid work would be attractive for them when looking for a new opportunity within the E&U field.

As we saw from question 1 - most of our respondents prefer to work in a hybrid schedule which begs the question - how could a role that doesn't offer this flexibility compete with an opportunity that does?

According to [Croner](#) - alternatives to hybrid working could include:

- "Staggering start and finish times, letting staff come in later or finish earlier".
- "Implement 'flexi-time', where staff are able to work less hours one day and make it up at a later date".
- "Increased annual leave options, such as the option to buy or sell leave".
- "Job sharing or part-time working options".

WHAT IS THE MAIN BENEFIT OF HYBRID WORKING?



The benefits of hybrid working are numerous. Work-life balance is the most noticeable - as reflected in the findings (38%), followed by the ability to focus (26%), improved wellbeing (15%), and saving on commuting time and costs (13%). 8% of our audience felt that hybrid working had no benefits.

These figures show that E&U professionals are very comfortable with working from home and feel that the greater work-life balance advantage is the main reason why.

WHAT IS THE MAIN RISK OF HYBRID WORKING?

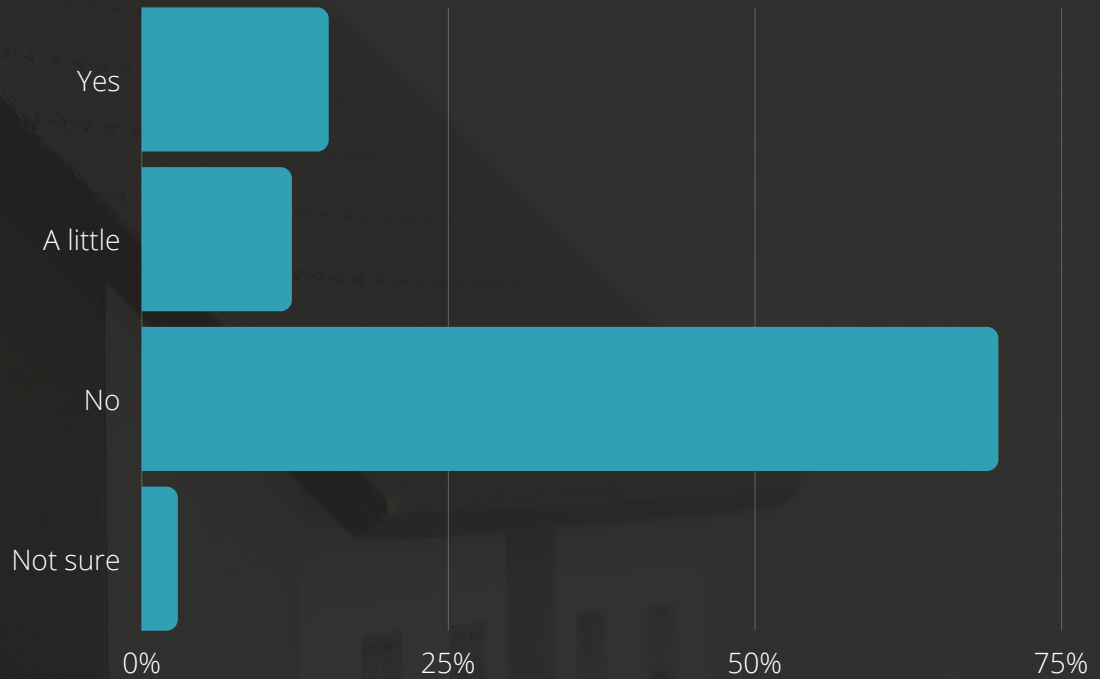


Any new method comes with considerable pros and cons, and hybrid working is no different. The pros have been well documented, and this new method of work has been well received by the E&U community since its implementation 18 months ago.

However, this doesn't mean that the cons should be ignored. According to our respondents, the biggest main risk for hybrid working is the lack of relationships that are being formed with co-workers.

This is no surprise as these connections are difficult to form with only a limited amount of time spent together in person. This was followed by a loss of company culture (23%), work efforts being less recognised (14%), and feelings of loneliness (11%). 12% felt that there is no risk to hybrid working.

DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR PRODUCTIVITY IS REDUCED WHILE WORKING FROM HOME?



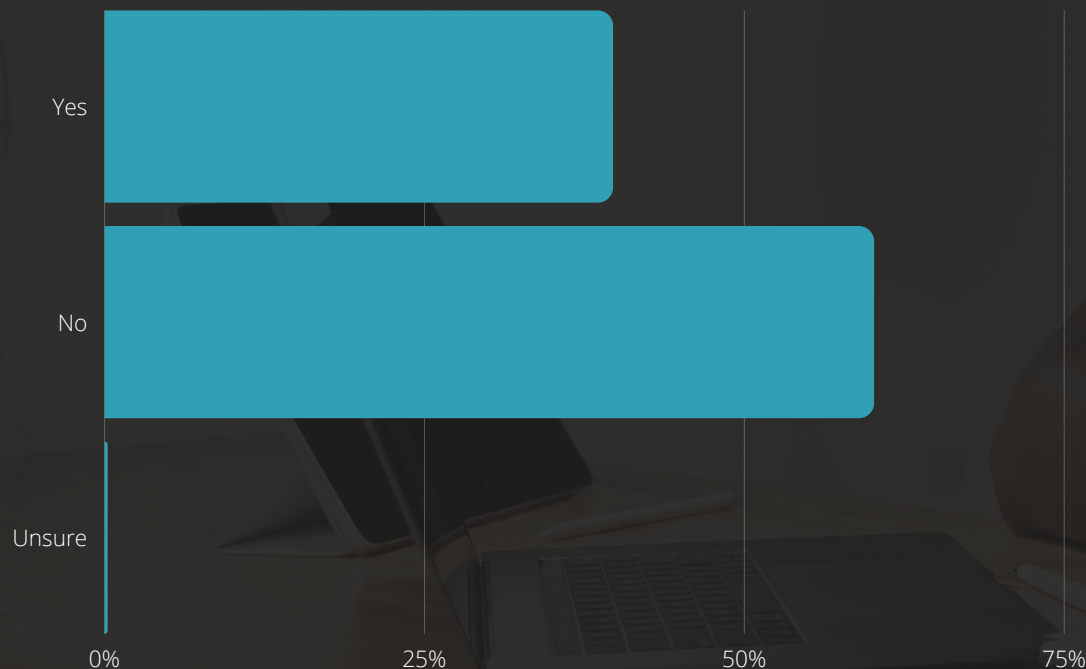
Reduced productivity was one of the main gripes employers had about hybrid working at its inception. Would the allure of working from the comfort of your own home harm employee output?

According to our research, our E&U community felt that working from home had no adverse effects on their productivity with 69.8% voting 'No' to the question.

15.2% do, however, feel that working from home impacted their productivity. This could be from procrastination, responsibilities such as child care, looking after pets or general everyday distractions such as people coming to the door such as salesmen and mail personnel.

12.2% were 50/50 on the subject but felt their productivity was reduced "a little". 2.9% of respondents were unsure if their output was impacted or not.

DO YOU FEEL THAT WORKING REMOTELY COULD MEAN YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO MISS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION?



With development opportunities within organisations a huge reason why talented staff remain with a company - we decided to ask our E&U community if they thought that remote working could harm their chances of being noticed and put forward for career progression and promotions.

Responses were split, with a large number of respondents selected both yes and no although a clear majority was formed with 60.1% believing that working from home schedules would not reduce their chances of promotions and development.

Although 39.7% is a large minority and a worrying stat that so many feel that they may be giving up career progression for more flexibility and autonomy over their schedules. The fact that none of our E&U community selected 'Unsure' shows just how clear our respondents are on their feelings towards this matter. 0.2% were unsure.





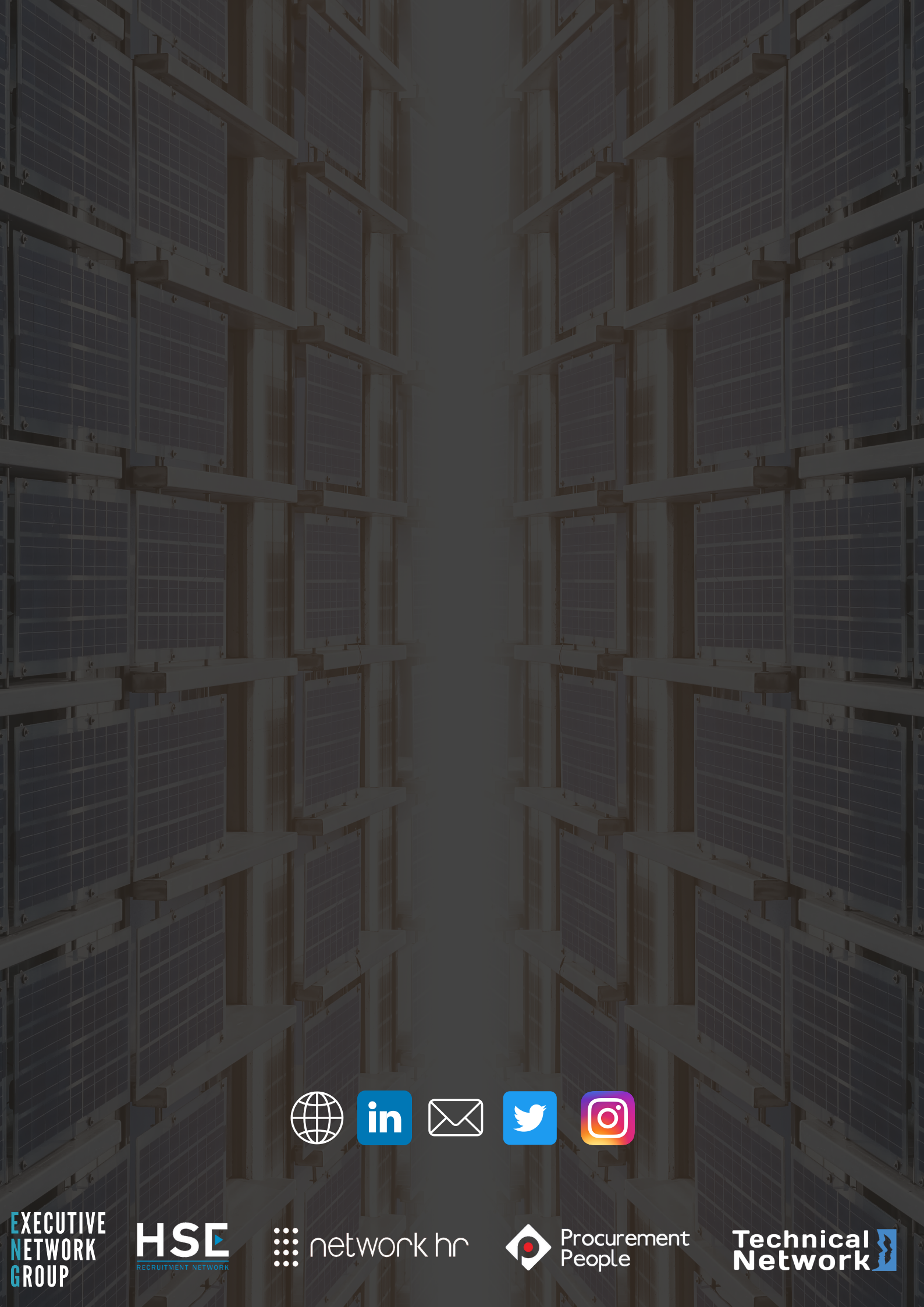
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hybrid working is no longer simply a way of manoeuvring around Covid19 restrictions. It is now a benefit that current employees and possible candidates will look for when choosing whether to go to or stay at an organisation. The data from our survey clearly show that there is a keen hunger for this flexibility from an employee perspective. Organisations that don't adhere to these demands risk losing out on talented individuals to competitors who do offer more autonomy over work schedules.

Of course, these demands will bring a strain on leadership teams and take them out of their comfort zones with unique challenges, such as maintaining fair career progressions for hybrid workers. However, we believe that hybrid working is a positive thing for the energy and utility sector.

"Field personnel at many E&U companies already enjoyed the benefits of digitally connected assets. When the pandemic hit, digital meant they could adapt their ways of working – and do so rapidly. Assets could be monitored and controlled remotely, increasing redundancy and reliability. If personnel from one plant or operating center [sic] were sick, personnel from another could be engaged to take over. Field employees didn't need to be on-site as often; they could complete some of their work from home." - [Atos](#)

Hybrid working, when done right, will be key to success moving forward.



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