

# Back into the Future of Work: What's knowledge management got to do with it?



**BETTER**  
ORGANIZATIONS

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# 1. Crisis? What Crisis?

Crisis?  
What  
Crisis?



Are things going  
to get worse  
before they get  
better?

# 1. The greatest danger...

*“If one is mentally out of breath all the time dealing with the present (= CRISIS!), there is **no energy** left for imagining the future.”*

# 1 The biggest threat...

- *What do people fear as the biggest threat to their work/job/tasks?*

*To become irrelevant and therefore of no value!*



## 2 Back into the Future of “Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere – Work”



## 2. The quest for classifying office/knowledge workers

- Office and knowledge workers are difficult to map. A comprehensive overview of different types of workers includes:  
White collar workers, pink collar workers, gold collar workers, office workers, data workers, information workers, knowledge workers, gig workers, contingent workers, on-demand workers, transactional remote workers, free agents, nomadic workers, freelancers, contractors, knowledge professionals, hybrid workers, platform workers, remote workers, distributed workers, virtual workers, desk workers, satellite workers, telecommuters, liquid workers, infopreneurs, teleworkers, anywhere workers, nowhere workers, green collar workers, knowledge brokers, intelligence workers etc..
- In 2005, Davenport concluded: “Given the *imprecise definitions* in the world of knowledge work and knowledge workers, it’s *impossible* to specify just how many there are in any particular country.”
- In 2005, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics *didn’t classify knowledge workers*, but Davenport has put U.S. workers into categories that can be (somewhat arbitrarily) defined as either knowledge workers or not.
- Finally, Davenport’s effort to classification produced “about 36 million knowledge workers in the United States alone, or **28 %** of the labor force (Davenport, 2005, p.6).”
- Davenport (2005) concluded that now the US Economy is largely based on knowledge work and the effectiveness, productivity and value of knowledge work *has become the key to the success of the US economy*.

## 2 The usability of pre – and post work showering rhetoric

The ‘global work-from-home experiment’ during the pandemic sometimes gets discussed as if it applies to everybody, but it primarily pertains to *advanced economies*:



- “Only about **25 percent** of workers can do their jobs three days a week or more without being on-site. “This is a group that takes a shower *before* they go to work.”
- We cannot forget that most people take a shower *after* they have been at work, and there is a risk of a growing divide between those two groups (p.4)”
- The pre – and post work showering rhetoric is still useful for the distinction between hybrid/remote *deskwork* (pre-work showering) and *deskless work* (post-work showering).



## 2. No remote → Hybrid → All remote → Strictly remote?

- 01 **No remote:** Remote work is not allowed, often due to a leadership mandate or the nature of the business.
- 02 **Remote time:** Also known as "remote tolerated", this stage allows employees to work some days from outside the office. This is commonly seen in organizations where "remote days" are offered as a hiring perk.
- 03 **Remote exceptions:** Some employees can work remotely indefinitely, while most are required to work from a company office.
- 04 **Remote allowed:** Anyone at the company can work remotely some of the time, with very few exceptions for roles that are location-dependent.
- 05 **Hybrid-remote:** Some employees — but not all — are allowed to work remotely 100% of the time. The rest work onsite in at least one physical office. This can be a tempting compromise, but has many downsides, which we'll talk more about in the next section.

Hybrid

- 06 **Remote days:** The entire company (executives included) works remotely at the same time.
- 07 **Remote-first:** The company is optimized for remote with documentation, policies, and workflows that assume 100% of the organization is distributed, even if some occasionally visit the office.
- 08 **Remote only:** There is no co-located work in a common office. However, the work is still biased towards one time zone. Some companies maintain "core team hours."
- 09 **All-remote:** In an all-remote company like GitLab, there is no office, and no preferred time zone. A bias towards asynchronous communication encourages documentation, discourages synchronous meetings, and provides greater flexibility.
- 10 **Strictly remote:** A strictly remote company would never meet in person and never permit synchronous meetings.

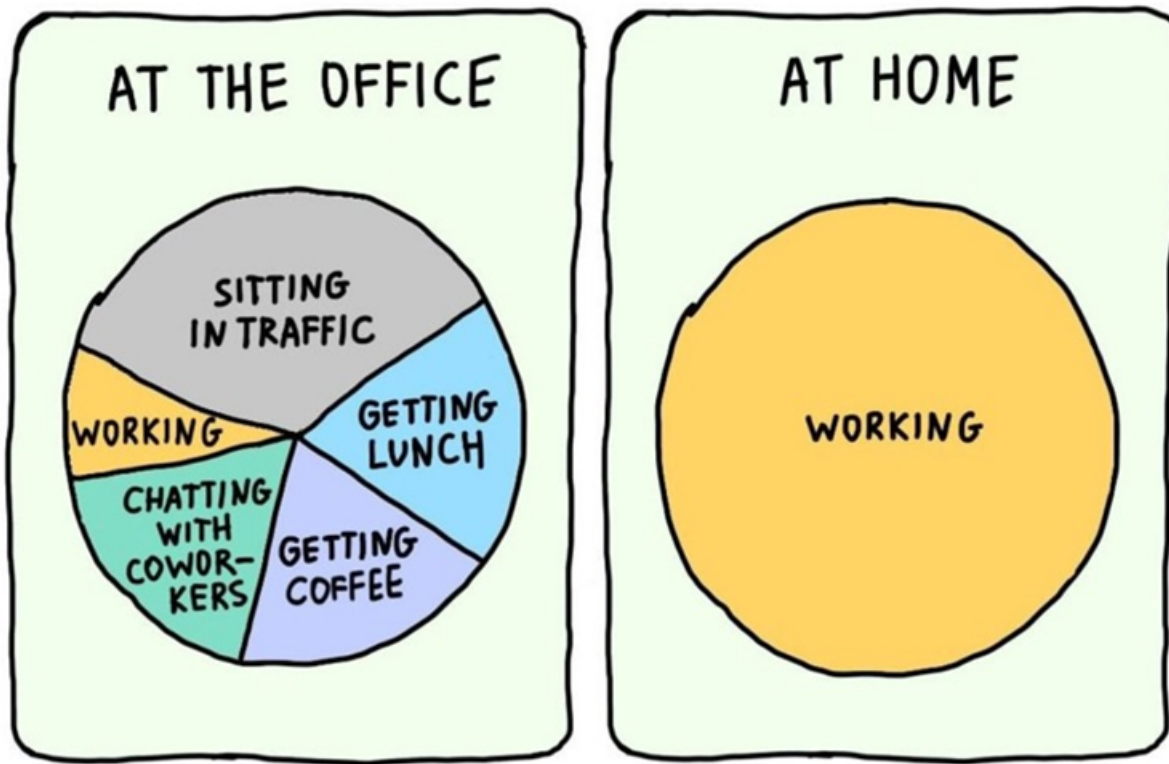


## 2. Is hybrid work here to stay ... or is hybrid work a middle-of-the road approach doomed to fail?

- Case 1 : Productivity paranoia
  - Leaders and managers with an “industrial mindset” (*output/day - hours*) fear that lost productivity is due to employees *not* working, even though hours worked, number of meetings, and other activity metrics have *increased*. In reality, hybrid work often makes people actually *exhaust* themselves!
- Case 2: Work – life harmonization
  - Rather than considering work and life to be two separate entities that need balancing and are forever in competition (*work - life balance*), organizations shift to *work - life harmonization* accepting work as a part of life.
  - In order to ‘get a life’ *each of us* will often negotiate a set of unique flexibility options.

## 2. The challenges of working and living in hybrid world of work

working



Irina Blok

### Warning:

You could end up integrating work into every area of your life *without* integrating much of life into your workday!

### 3. Realizing value through sharp thinking :

#### What's knowledge **management** got to do with it?

- As hybrid work is idiosyncratic, every organization must discover its '*own*' *hybrid work collaborating organization* to improve its performance, employee involvement and innovation power.
- If employees don't find the right culture, connectivity, collaboration, psychological safety and cohesion they seek, they are prepared to look elsewhere (e.g. the Great Attrition or the Great Renegotiating)

### 3. Realizing value through sharp thinking:

## What's **knowledge** management got to do with it?

- In 1997, Drucker stated that knowledge is “different from all other kinds of resources”:
  - Knowledge constantly makes itself obsolete, with the result that today's advanced knowledge is tomorrow's ignorance.
  - Knowledge that matters is subject to rapid and abrupt shifts.
- That's why desk & deskless workers:
  - increasingly own & reside 'their' (often explicit) knowledge in their heads and hands, transforming *meaningful* knowledge into digital form and/or save & share it in the cloud.
  - are continuously *upskilling* themselves. Expanding one's skill set area's by investing into adaptability, curiosity, collaboration, knowledge crisis management.

## Conclusion



I hope this speech and the successful completion of the Knowledge Management Practitioner Certification Course will lead to a *personal value proposition* creating a flow of valuable knowledge that will generate meaningful results.

*May the knowledge be with you*