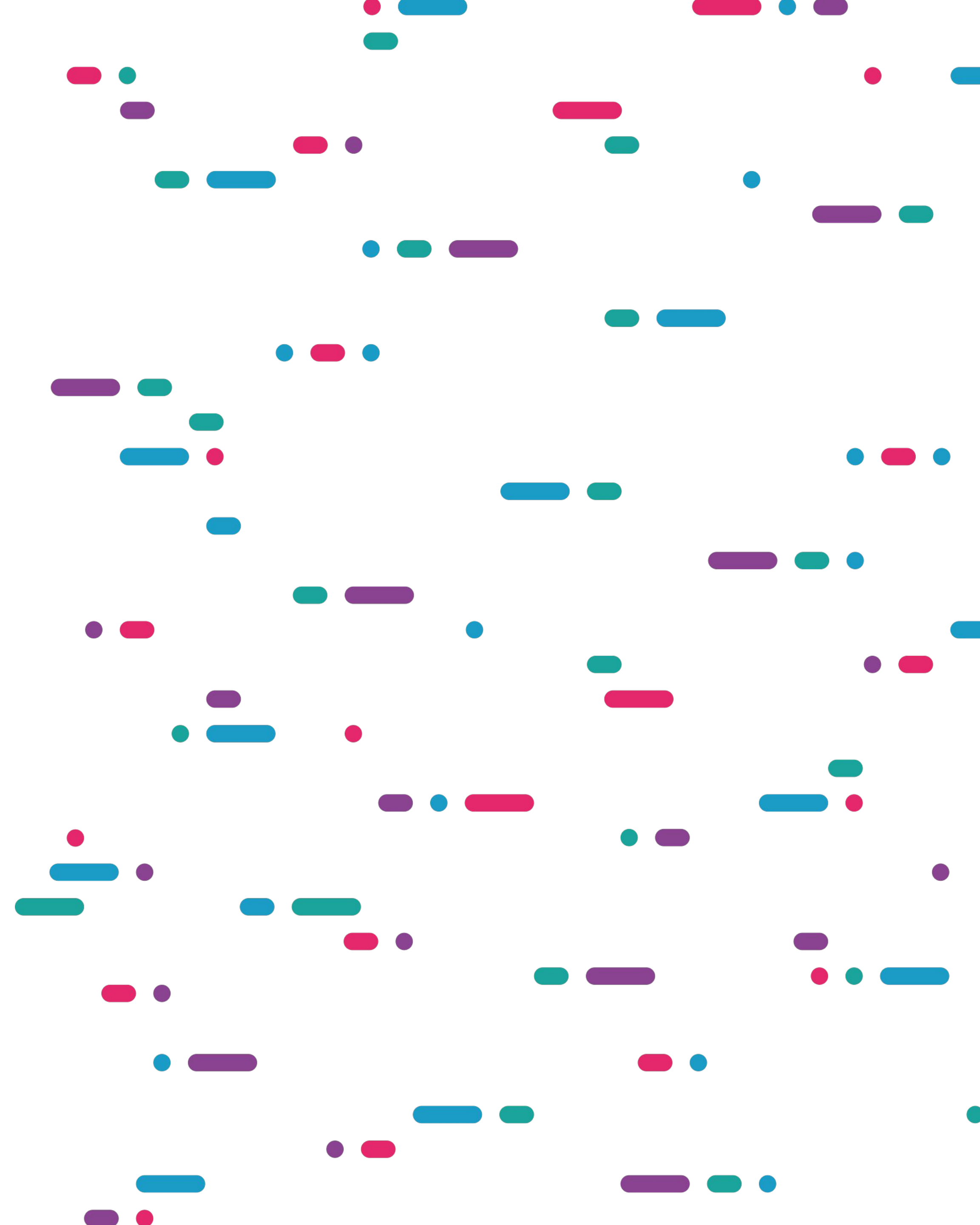




The Hybrid Work Handbook by Growens

Tips, tools, best practices & resources
for happier and more productive hybrid teams.



What do ‘hybrid’ and ‘flexible’ mean?

Traditionally there has been a clear distinction between **on-site working in an office** and **remote working** from home or virtual workers in another external location.

Today, things are much more blurred. **Agile, smart, hybrid, flexible, blended, remote** - what is the right way to name a model?

At Growens, we call it **‘hybrid’**, because of the different options we offer. However, every Business Unit has its unique way of working, that can lean toward one option or the other. We also call it **‘flexible’**, because an international team such as ours cannot rely on rigid work schedules.



Hybrid

A hybrid model enables employees to mix different work locations: in our case, home, office, and elsewhere (be it a cafe, a summer house, or a faraway island). In this respect, Growens is not a remote-first company, with the exception of BEE.



Flexible (or blended)

Flexibility has to do with more than location - it's about timetables and work organization. Flexibility focuses on results rather than time spent at one's desk. That's why we stress this concept beside *hybrid* - they complement each other.

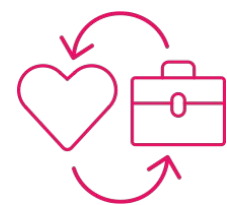


And what about smart working?

Italian speakers are familiar with the “smart working” label, which continues to be correct, but is also a little narrow if compared to the full extent of the definition of hybrid & flexible work.

Advantages of hybrid & flexible work

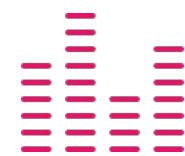
Our model has the potential to **combine the benefits of both remote and on-site working**, while mitigating the potential negatives associated with each.



Improved work/life balance



Optimal use of office space and resources



Greater levels of productivity



Better collaboration and communication



Supported social relationships



Happier people stick around longer :)



The Growens WoW approach



The WoW Manifesto

In today's world, work is so much more than one given physical location. **Work is about connection, creativity, concentration, and empowerment.** These can spark anywhere, and thrive in an infinite kaleidoscope of possibilities and combinations.

At Growens, we want our people to have as much **choice and control around where and how they work** as possible, in order to foster both their wellbeing and performance.

Hybrid and flexible work provide a cornerstone of Growens's DNA: with the **Growens WoW (Way of Working)** program, every team is empowered to choose its own Way of Working. Working at the office, from home or anywhere else form an array of possibilities responding to each employee's and team's needs, habits and rituals.



Work from the office

The office is where we meet, get to know each other, collaborate and have fun. It's the destination of choice to feel supported, fulfilled, inspired, engaged and connected. We can work from any of our amazing offices in Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, mingling with colleagues from different teams and business units.



Work from home

Working from home is a free choice that enables us to achieve a better work/life balance and to better take care of our loved ones. We choose home when our work requires deep focus, or when saving commuting hours opens up more time for our life outside of work.



Work from anywhere

"Anywhere" is any place other than our designated office or our home address. We can travel the world and work from any place for short or long periods of time. Travelling allows us to grow as human beings, to stay connected with our loved ones even if far away, and to pour what we learn into becoming even better professionals.

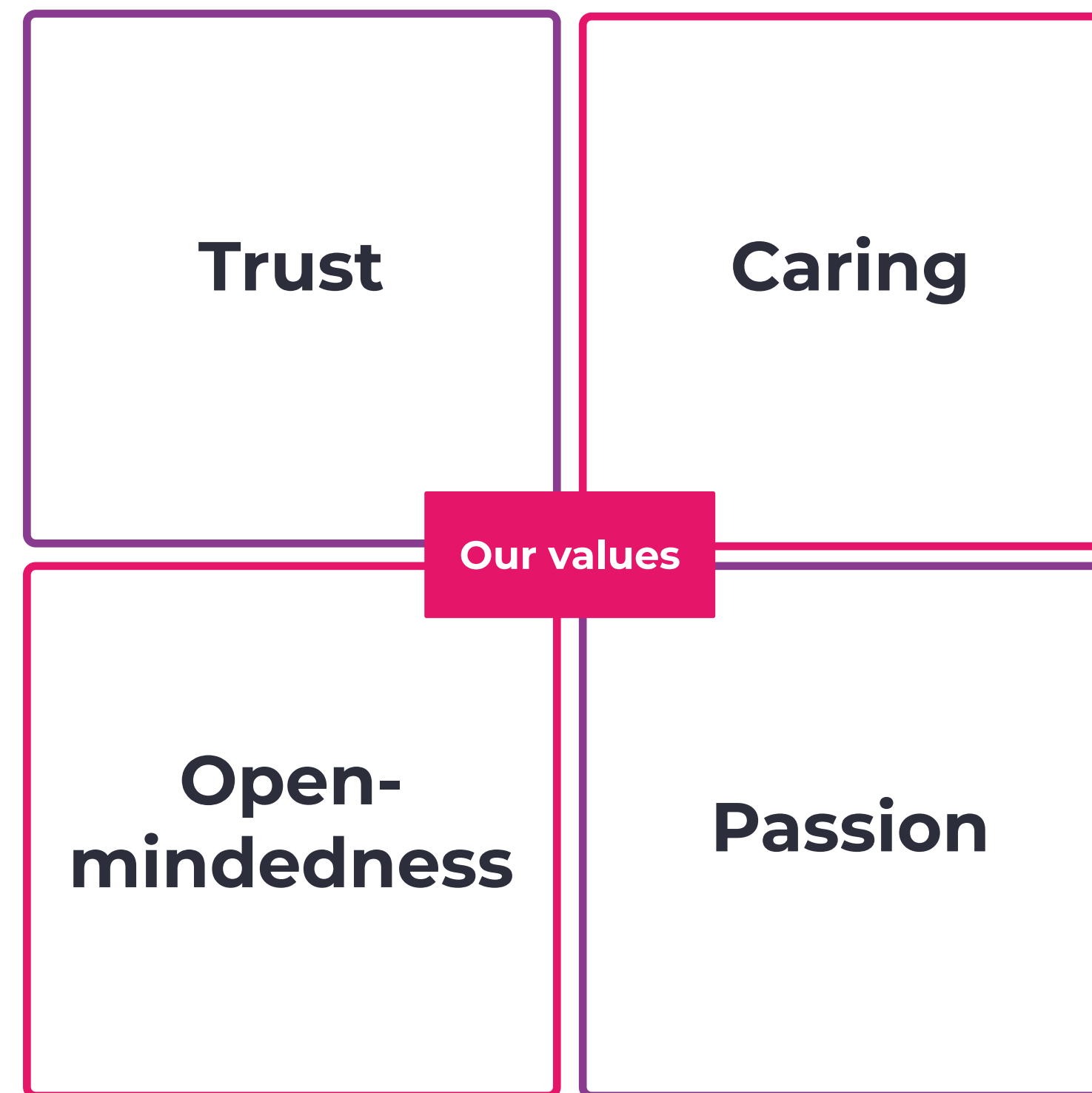
The Growens WoW is based on our values of Trust, Open-mindedness, Passion and Caring

Trust is the foundation of hybrid work.

We believe in empowering people's independence in carrying out their work, and frown upon micromanagement.

Out of the norm, out of the box.

We embrace the variety of working habits, and we are creative in finding the approach that allows us to manifest the best professionals we can be.



People are at the heart of our business.

We are committed to building and maintaining a healthy work workplace, where people are engaged and respected in their uniqueness.

Levelling up our work practice.

We take pride in delivering the best possible work, and we strive for the extra mile no matter where we work.

How to choose how & where to work



Our rituals at Growens

One size definitely does not fit all.

Flexibility is not only about individual habits and needs.
It's also about a **collective culture** made of work organization & team rituals.

That's why at Growens you'll find a **variety of approaches & habits** when it comes to hybrid working, tailored to the specifics of each Business Unit and team.



Full remote

With a dispersed team across two continents, **BEE is natively remote**. Its teams work across multiple time zones and meet on a regular basis for amazing team retreats, to build and maintain the relationships that fuel great work.



95% remote

Although mainly based in the town of Ciudad Real, Castilla-La Mancha, the Acumbamail team works from home 95% of the time, and **meets in the office on occasions**, to have meetings and do meaningful activities together.



Fully hybrid

The Italian & Dutch teams embrace a fully hybrid approach, **mixing in-office presence and remote work** in a multitude of ways.

According to an internal survey (Oct. 22):

- 51% of employees go to the office twice a week
 - 28% once a month
 - 9% not every month
 - 8% every day

How to choose where to work from?

Provided that each of us functions differently, here is a rule of thumb to decide what to do in the morning:

- **Collaboration activities:** choose the office for in-person brainstormings, retrospectives, or other important meetings where creativity needs to flow free in an actual room. Or when you feel like dressing up. Or just chatting. Or all three.
- **Concentration activities:** if you need to focus, your home may work much better. It's distraction-free, you save commuting time, and can concentrate better. Home also works if you have other activities to juggle, for instance if your groceries are being delivered or your kid isn't feeling well.



Stories of WoW workers

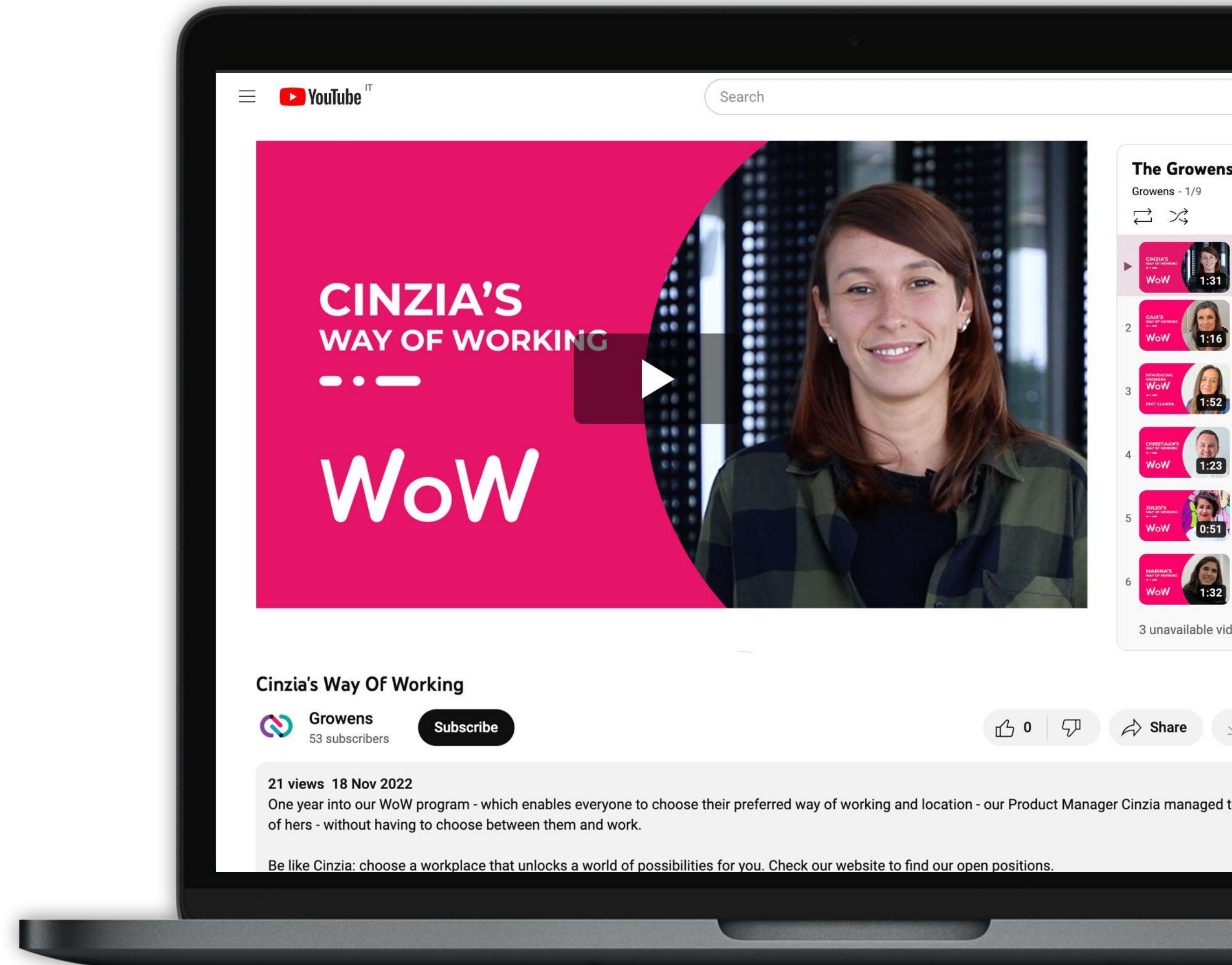
Bottom line: no two people **work in the same way**.

Some prize the **secure cocoon of their home**, where they can focus distraction-free or they better jostle parent duty with work meetings.

Others love their **morning cycle to work**, the watercooler chit-chat, and the sheer, liberating sensation of being out of home.

Some others divide their time **between two cities**, or even two countries - being able to visit family, or a faraway partner, makes all the difference in the world.

So listen to the **stories of our WoW workers** - each of them finding their own balance in a way of working tailored to their life.



Collaborating in a hybrid setting



Ask, explain, create context

When working in a hybrid way, **communication is of crucial importance**, because people may not share the context of each person's situation.

Not being necessarily in the same room, we may have a hard time picking up on moods, non-verbal gestures, small talk, and so on. So prepare to prevent misunderstandings and reworks by **giving nothing for granted** and over-communicating.



Compensate the lack of context

No one can know what goes on in a different room, in a different city, in someone else's mind. Unless you tell them. In details.



Ask, ask, ask

Ask questions to understand your interlocutor's context. This will help understand their point of view and interpret their signals.



Assert yourself when needed

Explicitly reinforce concepts or needs if they go unnoticed or undetected. This speeds processes up and cuts down excuses.

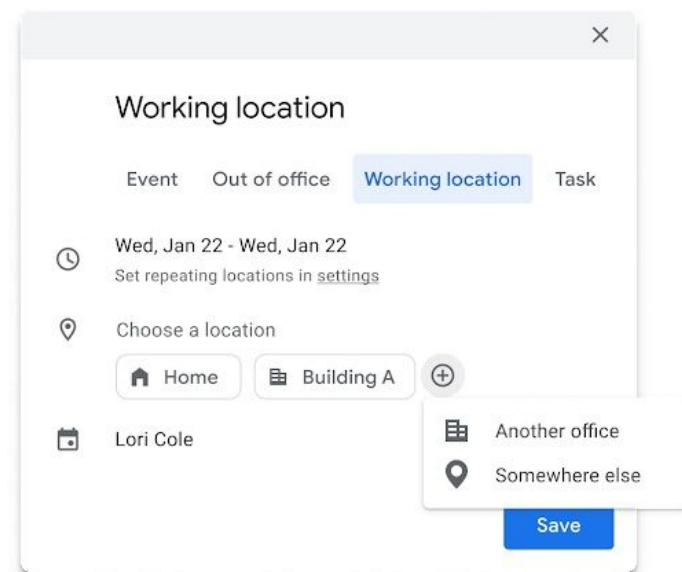


Don't assume your way is everyone's way

When working with people that might be in a different place, timezone, or setting, place extra care in making sure you take all that into consideration. You will minimize misunderstandings.

Be transparent about yourself

Transparency is key in all relationships - also the ones with your co-workers! **Giving your colleagues the context they need** about your location, working hours, and current status, helps them gauge the way they seek interactions with you and to optimize them.



Calendar / Set your work location

Home or office? Let everyone know where you are every day, by showing it on your Calendar.

[How to set your work location >](#)



Calendar / Set your working hours

When working flexibly in a variety of places and timezones, working hours aren't for granted. Make them clear, along with your days off.

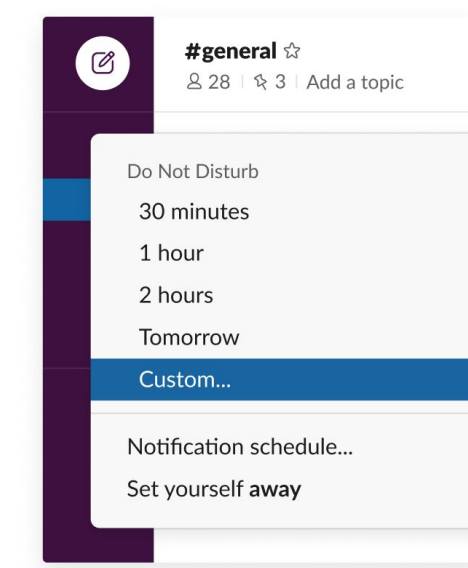
[How to do it >](#)



Slack / Update your status

Attending a virtual conference? In a meeting? On holidays? By letting your co-workers know, they'll be able to contact you accordingly.

[How to do it >](#)



Slack / Pause notifications

If in need of focus time, don't be afraid to pause your Slack (& other) notifications. People will know you may not be immediately responsive.

[How to do it >](#)

Pick the right communication channel

How do you reach co-workers when they could be anywhere?
Not all communication channels are the same - but how do you choose whether to send an email, walk up to someone's desk, or set a meeting?

Choose carefully based on the type of activity & interlocutors' preferences:
provide plenty of context and all necessary details, so that people can organize their work and decide, for instance, whether to join you at the office for a specific meeting.



Email

Email is great for **non time-sensitive matters**, lengthy explanations, or discussion items that must be thought over. Many times, it can replace a conf call for simpler or less urgent matters.



Slack messages

Instant messaging is great for **quick exchanges**, chit-chat, and group discussions. Always drop a line before you ambush someone with an unannounced call.



Remote meetings & Slack huddles

Make meetings **remote-friendly** every time you are not 100% sure that everyone will be present physically. Slack Huddles provide a very efficient way for quick & impromptu meetings to take place.



In-person meetings

We advise against forcing everyone to be present in person - it's not WoW at all. However, at times this may be necessary. Make sure you make this requirement extremely clear and that you have a backup plan in case of last-minute no-shows.

Up to you: what's your best tip to be successful as a hybrid & flexible worker?

“ When I choose to work from the office, I tend to keep my agenda lighter in order to take time for informal connections.

Enrica

“ An effective time management is essential for flexible workers. Respect the others' agenda as you would like them to do with yours.

Sergio

“ Learn how to disconnect (eg. if not needed, don't install work related apps like Slack on the mobile phone).

Massi

“ Keep in touch with colleagues respecting their personal "space".

Andrea

“ Seize the opportunity to use all the three ways of working: from anywhere (every few months to discover new places), from the office (to meet colleagues), from home (when you feel very lazy).

Federico

Up to you: what's your best tip to be successful as a hybrid & flexible worker?

“ Work from anywhere/home creating your own home-desk to stay comfortably focused, avoid stress and time spent on commuting. And meet every 1-2 weeks with the teammates not to lose contact!

Emanuela

“ Create a clear separation between domestic environments and the working ones. Colors helped me a lot since I have a studio apartment :)

Mattia

“ When I schedule a meeting, I try to respect a 5/10 min break in my invitees' agenda (especially if it's shown they are working from the office).

Luca

“ The best way to get the most out of WoW is to embrace it fully.

If staying at home, you can blend work and personal things throughout the day, which gives you great power but also great responsibility ;-) Try to keep some rules to avoid working without limits or breaking too often with personal stuff impacting your productivity.

If you have the chance, work somewhere else than home! Nothing beats emailing colleagues from the beach.

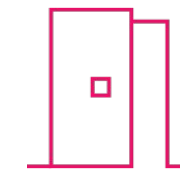
But don't forget to come by the office here and there, meeting in person is still a very important factor when building relationships! Since it became rarer, you'll treasure dearly that coffee break with your buddies.

Marcello

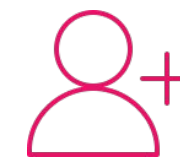
Checklist for hybrid meetings

Meetings are crucial to ensuring that team work proceeds smoothly and collaboratively.

Make sure you create the right conditions for both in-presence and remote colleagues to attend the meeting comfortably and productively, without anyone feeling left out.



Book a meeting room in advance, better if with a connected meeting system (monitor, speakers, etc.).



Add a “join link” for those who join remotely.



Be on time, but also allow a few minutes’ tolerance for those who have to move from one meeting room to the next.

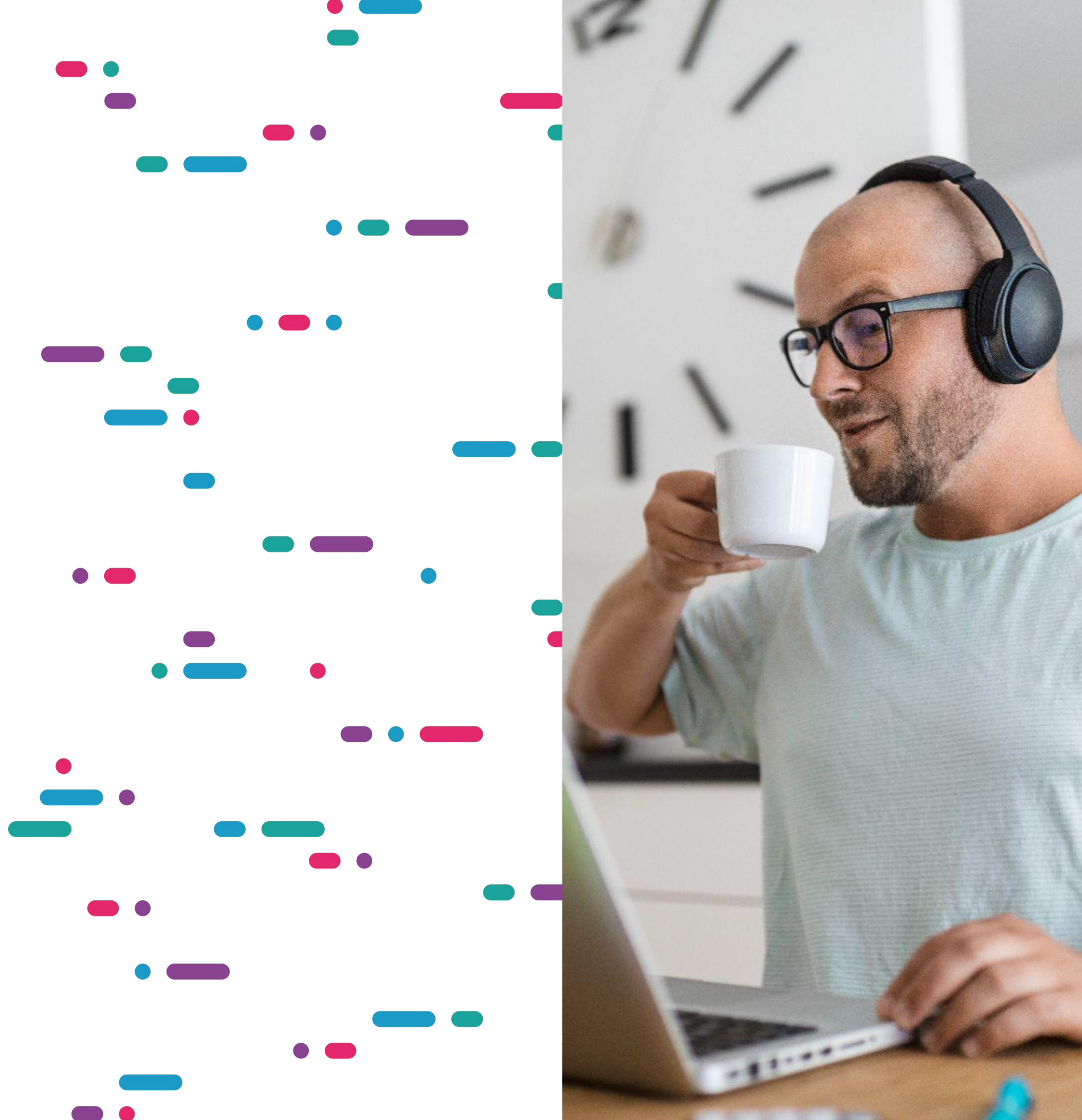


Record the meeting and make it available afterwards.



If you join remotely, act as if in presence: show your face, pay attention, and interact.

Working from home



Best practices when working from home

Do's

- ☐ Focus on important tasks or projects that require concentration
- ☐ Make your availability slots clear to co-workers
- ☐ Use the extra time for personal or family engagements
- ☐ Build social relationships with co-workers, as much as possible
- ☐ Over-communicate, ask questions and interact frequently
- ☐ Set rules with the people you live with for a productive remote work environment
- ☐ Get yourself a good and comfortable working station
- ☐ Go outside and get fresh air

Don'ts

- ☒ Isolate yourself
- ☒ Bury yourself in work
- ☒ Skip meals or neglect physical well-being (don't sit still all day or eat at your desk!)
- ☒ Stay organized and create your own routine
- ☒ Don't get distracted by social media or TV

Clear desk, clear mind

Having a **dedicated room or desk** for your work is the ideal scenario. If that's not possible, make sure to clean out a **small but tidy corner** that favors concentration.

Here is **the minimum equipment** you'll need to work efficiently and comfortably. Remember to look after your **eyes, neck and back**, in order to prevent headaches and stiffness.

Chair

Ideally padded, comfortable, with armrests and good back/neck support.



Lighting

Choose a corner with plenty of natural lighting (while avoiding to face windows directly). Add a desk lamp for the dim hours.



Laptop stand

A stand will help keeping the monitor at eye level and prevent neck stiffness.



Headphones

Unless you live alone, earphones or headphones with a mic are a must-have for calls & online meetings.



Webcam

Online meetings are just like in-person meetings: showing your face creates rapport and makes communication easier.



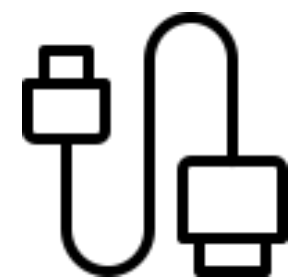
Technical requirements

In today's world, working at one's laptop is possible **almost anywhere**.

There are a few technical requirements, though, you should consider carefully in order to **guarantee connection stability**, prevent disruptions and data loss, safeguard information security and maintain yourself and the company accessible from outside.

Cable connection

It offers maximum stability for video calls and internet activity.
Always to be preferred.



...or strong Wi-Fi

Avoid rooms with weak Wi-Fi reception. If working from your terrace or garden, consider connecting to your mobile hotspot.



VPN access

Some virtual corporate spaces are accessible only via VPN.



Phone redirection

If customers, suppliers or other parties often reach you via landline, opt for a redirection on a different number.



Minimize distractions

Home is where Netflix is. And yet, when it comes to working productively, you should **turn off or minimize any potential distractions** to your concentration.



Close the door



Switch off TV



Switch off radio



Turn off unnecessary notifications on your smartphone



Ask your family or flatmates to respect your concentration



Plan breaks with your family or flatmates



Get in control of your time

When working from home, some people find it hard to **schedule their tasks** and get constantly distracted. Others end up **working non-stop** and feeling overwhelmed.

It's important that you are **always in control of your time**, so that you can work productively, efficiently, for the right amount of hours.



Find a balance

Between flexibility and availability to others. Our Group policy requires that people work at least 50% of your time during regular office hours.



Be on time

Check your calendar invites first thing in the morning. Respect your co-workers' schedule by showing up on time at online meetings and giving them your full attention.



Plan your breaks

Take a 15 min break every two hours. Get a full lunch break and distract yourself with a book or TV. Make your available slots clear to family or kids.



Unplug (for real)

Decide ahead at what time you'll finish work, and respect that plan (except for emergencies). Disconnect your laptop and mobile notifications, and go do something else.

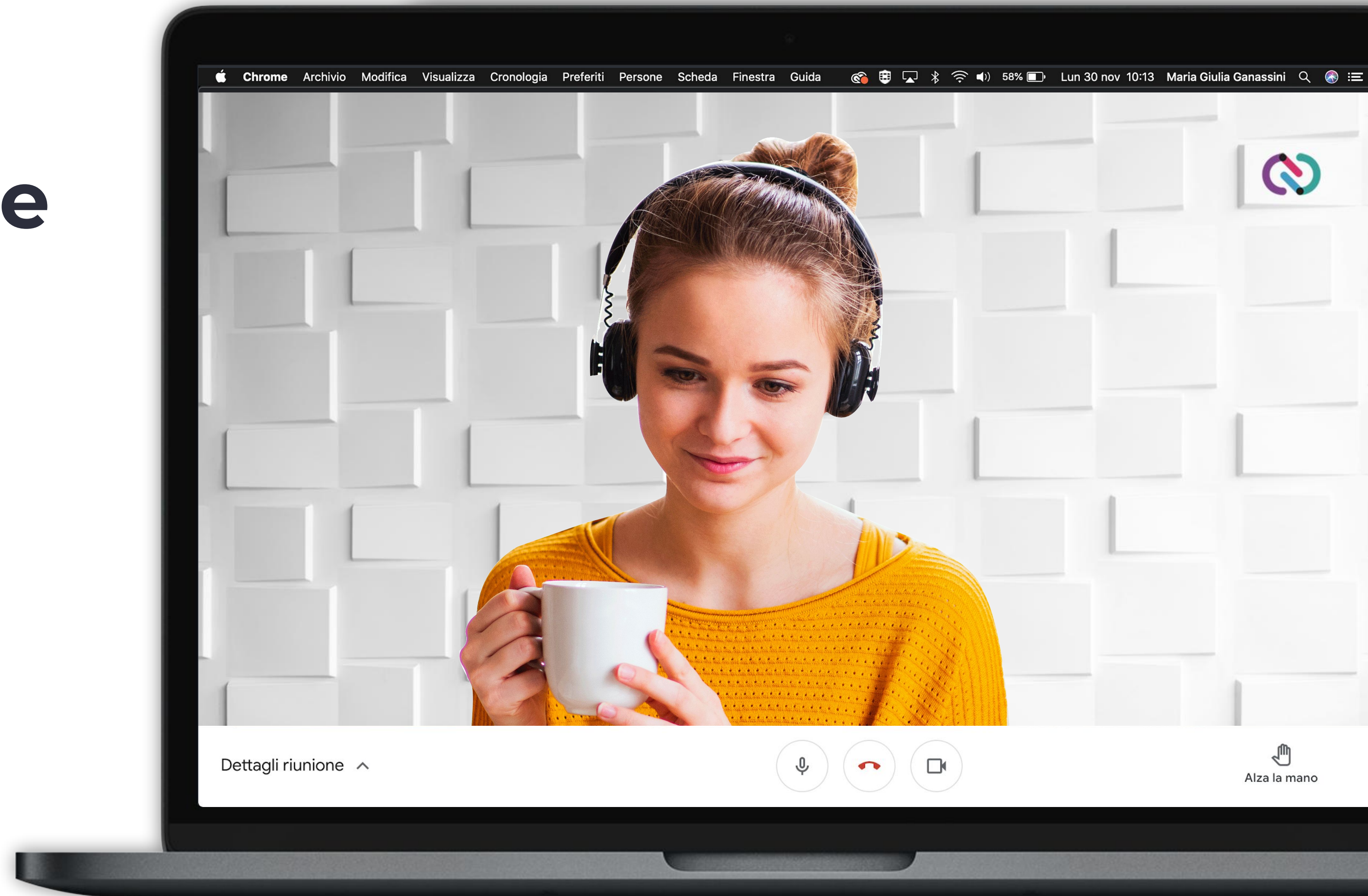
Master your background game

When on a Google Meet call from home, you can **blur your background or replace it with an image.**

This offers multiple benefits:

- **Added privacy:** you won't show your private spaces
- Distraction-free environment
- **Always on-brand:** use the official Growens or Business Unit templates to provide strong branding to your conversations

Check out the official [Google guide](#) to changing your background



Working at the office



Best practices when working at the office

Do's

- ☐ Book desk & meeting rooms in advance
- ☐ Make the most of the office facilities to be more productive
- ☐ Be mindful of your co-workers' focus
- ☐ Socialize and network with people within the organization
- ☐ Treat office spaces & equipment as they were yours
- ☐ Lock your laptop when you are not at your desk

Don'ts

- ☒ Use meeting rooms for individual work
- ☒ Speak loudly in the open space
- ☒ Eat at your desk
- ☒ Waste paper by printing unnecessarily

What does a hybrid office look like?

A hybrid office may look a little different from your typical, pre-pandemic office. Rows of assigned desks don't exist any longer. Instead, **the office works as a social anchor**, with areas for collaboration and team bonding, along with quiet zones for employees to crack on with some deep work.

Here is what you can find at our **Milan, Cremona & Enschede offices**. Elsewhere, the situation may vary according to office spaces and team needs.



Desks

We “hot desk”, meaning that desks are not assigned but free for everyone to book. Remember to book in advance and to cancel your booking if plans change.



Meeting rooms

Rooms are equipped with a monitor and conf-call system. Remember to book one via Calendar or via Condeco. Don't forget that meeting rooms are not substitutes for an individual office!



Individual booths

Need focus to write down an article? Privacy for an individual call? You can use individual booths, that can't be booked but are available for use at all times.



Playroom & community spaces

Office time means social time! You can play table tennis, share lunch, relax at the coffee station, take a break and read from the available Kindles.



This is what
office life looks
like at Growens

Working from anywhere



Best practices when working from anywhere

Do's

- ☐ Arrange your time away with your team and People Manager, to accommodate both personal & business needs
- ☐ Make sure that the location you'll work from has all you need in terms of internet speed, privacy, etc.
- ☐ Be mindful of timezones
- ☐ Enjoy the time away and come back the richer for it!

Don'ts

- ☒ Leave for a place without proper notice and not in alignment with your country's WoW policy
- ☒ Disregard engagements & meetings: if you can't make it, notify promptly and reschedule
- ☒ Assume it's a vacation: you are expected to perform as you would in your regular context
- ☒ Work where you are unable to take calls or where you can't have privacy



Your local library

Get outdoors to your local park, meet with other remote workers in a café, spend some time at your Grandma's house.



Summer house in your country

Make the most of the warm season at the coast, or enjoy the winter snow in a mountain chalet.



A tree house in Bali

You can finally travel all the way to the other side of the world and enjoy the local culture, food, and landscapes, without feeling like a tourist.

What does anywhere mean?

Literally, any place you can think of.

Remember: stays elsewhere don't have a mandated maximum duration. However, different conditions may apply for medium or longer stays.

Work away with Creative Harbour

You want to have a “work abroad” experience, but don’t know where to start? **Creative Harbour** offers Co-working, Co-learning and Co-living experiences for digital workers around the world.

Book a trip for one of the Harbours and you will have the chance to change your lifestyle, gain new skills, discover new places and meet new people!

As a Growens employee, you’ll have a **discount on all stays**.

PS: Our own UX Designer Andreea spent two weeks in Tenerife with Creative Harbour, and [here is how it went!](#)



The power of togetherness





Team retreats & team building activities

Once or twice a year, getting people out of the office & physically together to do something fun and enriching goes a long way in building team spirit.

BU Directors and People Managers are usually in charge of organizing this.



Hybrid corporate events

All major corporate events are organized to be attended both remotely and in person - from the Winter Get-together to quarterly Group Update Webinars.

One exception - our Summer Party is strictly in person!



Virtual get-togethers

Growens is home to a number of thriving communities and initiatives. Virtual events are great because everyone can hop on, from anywhere - from welcome coffees for new employees to Breakfast & Learn sessions, there are plenty of opportunities to meet your peers and expand your circle.

How do we bring everyone together?

When teams are partly remote, **being extra intentional about the moments we spend together** is critical to build team spirit, alignment and cohesion.

Bringing people together is a **distributed ownership** - as a company, we take care of the initiatives to the left.

As a People Manager or individual contributor, you too have a responsibility to connect with people and **organize your own events or activities**.

Frequent meetings make stronger bonds

At team level, different ways of working can create **uneven team relationships**.

Making meetings intentionally more frequent prevents remote workers from feeling isolated from those at the office, **boosts team spirit and morale**, and helps people keep on track with projects and deadlines.



Daily stand-ups

Many software development teams get together as **first thing in the morning** to catch up and start the day on the same page. [Here are some ground rules](#).



Weekly team progress

If daily sounds a bit too much, you can get your team together weekly for a **roundtable update on ongoing projects** and next goals to achieve.



One-to-one's

Make time for frequent one-to-one's with individual people **inside and outside your team**. You'll get a real pulse of people's mood and granular projects progression.



Project sync-ups

When multiple people work together at the same project, frequent check-ins are essential to **ensure smooth delivery**. Plan scheduled sync-ups to help people stay on track.

Community building experiments

Get creative and **find new ways to connect** with your co-workers, bringing people together purposefully.



Share a playlist



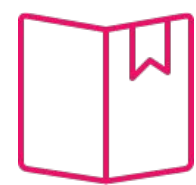
Arrange hybrid Friday drinks



Pair up for randomized video calls with Donut



Share a scheduled table tennis session



Join or create a community



Get together for online gaming sessions



Tips for people managers



How to lead a hybrid team

If you are a People Manager, you will likely have to **adjust your leadership model and work processes** to support a hybrid team.

Everything grows a bit more complicated when dealt with in a hybrid context. **Your people will need you more than ever.** It's your job to make sure that a variety of ways of working doesn't get in the way of achieving the team's goals.

The following pages contain some **general guidelines for People Managers of hybrid teams.** In case you need further guidance or support, do not hesitate to reach out to the People department.





#1 Be positive

In times of global uncertainty, people need **reassurance from those who lead them**.

This doesn't translate into hollow promises nor means you should downplay their worries. **Combine a positive attitude with an honest evaluation of the challenges you may meet** ([here](#) more on becoming a *realistic optimist*).

Take extra care in **filtering the way you pass on sensitive information**, to prevent unnecessary panic and ensure smooth continuance of operations.



#2 Share & communicate

This follows the previous point. **Controlling the narrative** is the best weapon against misinformation, confusion and panic.

So schedule regular update meetings with your team, **promptly share any major updates**, let your people feel active part of what's going on instead of passive bystanders.

Make yourself seen and heard. **Use video as much as you can**.

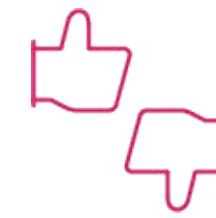


#3 Tighten the bonds

Social and team relationships tend to **loosen with isolation**.

It's your job to tighten those bonds, **boost team morale** and create a sense of togetherness.

You usually hold a weekly progress? **Make it bi-weekly**.
Schedule weekly one-to-one's, take part to your team's virtual coffee breaks, check in often with other People Managers to keep goals aligned.



#4 Give frequent feedback

A critical part of your role is to ensure that everybody is **working towards the goals** you have set as a team and as individuals.

If used to closely-knit teamworking and suddenly isolated, people can **lose their sense of direction**.

Help people get there and achieve their goals by **providing feedback more often than usual**. You will prevent misunderstandings, reworks and failure to reach objectives.



#5 Plan ahead

The global situation is so volatile that things may change from one day to the next. In this sort of scenario, who has the **best chance to succeed** is that who plans ahead.

Schedule activities and projects with an eye to the long term, and draft plans B and C should the circumstances evolve.

The more you prepare, the better chances you have to **be ahead of whatever comes next**.



#6 Write it down

Verba volant, scripta manent - so the Latins used to say. Spoken words fly away, **written words remain**.

In adapting to a new way of working, many a delivery problem can be prevented by **keeping clear written track of activities, deadlines and ownerships**.



#7 Ensure delivery

As a People Manager, your role is to make sure that your team **delivers effectively and on time** with respect to the goals previously agreed upon.

Unless stated otherwise, **goals and objectives remain in place** for all teams even during delicate times.

It is your job to prevent remote work from becoming an excuse for sloppy, slow or poorly executed outputs.



#8 Show up

Bottom line: **be there for your people**. Now more than ever.

Check in, ask questions, chat often. Make sure that people are heard and seen.

By giving clear guidance you will soothe their worries and keep the team on track toward their goals.

Happy hybrid work!