



Small and mid-sized business edition

2022 STATE OF HUMAN CONNECTIONS AT WORK

A new study reveals employees crave connection and better communications tools can help.

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The way we connect has changed drastically

The global pandemic of 2020 ushered in sweeping changes to almost every aspect of our lives, affecting the way we connect both personally and professionally.

Most US full-time workers worked in person prior to COVID, regardless of their company size. **89%** worked full-time in person (three or more days) before COVID. Now, the work environment is quite different, with small and mid-sized businesses increasingly shifting to a hybrid or remote work model. Having a hybrid or full-time remote work arrangement jumped from **11%** pre-COVID to **39%** during COVID, and that shift seems unlikely to change any time soon.

Remote and hybrid work models altered workers' perceptions of human connection.

74% say what it means to be connected to another human changed over the course of the COVID pandemic.

What does human connection mean in this new work landscape? To find out, we surveyed 3,000 people in small and mid-sized businesses to better understand how employees currently feel about work, communication styles, and their employers. In this report, we uncover key findings from our human connections survey and share tips on how to build stronger connections today.

HUMAN CONNECTION IS A NEED NOT JUST A WANT

- **39%** say working hybrid or remotely during COVID has made them feel more lonely and isolated at work.
- Feelings of isolation or loneliness at work have an impact:
 - **29%** say it impacts how much enthusiasm you have for your job.
 - **27%** say it impacts your connection with co-workers.
 - **26%** say it impacts your overall mental health.
- **33%** want to connect more with people at work.
- **88%** say they perform better when they get along with their colleagues.

Key takeaways

- **Put your people first.** With the sudden shift to remote work due to COVID-19, it's no surprise that people are feeling lonelier at work. With that in mind, put your team first and explore ways to enable better connections in your workplace. Get creative with virtual team bonding events like a lunch pizza party, museum tour, or game night.
- **Connect in new ways.** Encourage your teams to care for themselves by caring for others. Arrange volunteer opportunities for your workers. Angela Thoreson, a clinical social worker with the Mayo Clinic,¹ notes that three main benefits of volunteering are:
 - Improving physical and mental health
 - Providing a sense of purpose and teaching valuable skills
 - Nurturing new and existing relationships
- **Spread appreciation.** Show your appreciation for your team with added perks like an extra vacation day or a hosted team lunch with a gift card for a delivery service. Set up an internal communication channel that spotlights team successes and individual stories to help your teams build strong connections with people they might not have ever met in person.

¹[Helping people, changing lives: 3 health benefits of volunteering, Mayo Clinic Health System](#)

EMPLOYERS STRENGTHEN EMPLOYEE TRUST

- **67%** say supervisors were supportive of their needs during the pandemic.
- **82%** have belief in employers to make work environments as safe as possible to reduce the risk of contracting COVID.
- **83%** say their employer considers their personal physical health when making return to work plans.
- **67%** are “very confident” or “confident” in their employer’s plan for a post-COVID return to work.

Key takeaways

- **Keep employees in the loop.** Let workers know what steps you are taking to ensure their physical and mental safety as you make plans for at least a partial return to the office.
- **Communicate personally.** Have honest conversations with each of your employees, and take into consideration their fears or concerns about returning to a shared office environment. Where possible, allow employees to choose their preferred work model.
- **Rethink your workday schedule.** Consider staggering weeks in office and at home among team members. If you intend to offer a hybrid work model permanently, invest in new tools to facilitate your new normal work environment.



COMMUNICATION TOOLS ARE KEY TO BUILDING HUMAN CONNECTIONS

- **68%** say they rely “much more” or “somewhat more” on business communications and collaboration tools since COVID.
- **51%** say business communications and collaboration tools have “greatly improved” or “somewhat improved” communication.
- **76%** believe colleagues that use voice communication are more connected to each other.
- **43%** believe voice communication is the best communication mode to address loneliness at work.
- **68%** say yes to “connecting online through voice or video calls is as good as in-person for work-related tasks.”
- **69%** believe people that make phone or video calls have better personal relationships with coworkers.
- **58%** believe colleagues that rely on team messaging are better communicators.
- **57%** say voice calls through an app (like RingCentral), team messaging, video calls, and phone calls are the best ways to communicate to provide a way for multiple people to connect at the same time.
- **79%** currently use more than one communication and collaboration tool, and 50% would rather use just one tool.
- **83%** agree having access to a messaging platform, voice calling, and video meetings all in one app is ideal.

Key takeaways

- **Double down on a key staple: voice communication.** It’s clear voice communication is here to stay. Whether your team is working remotely, in the office, or both, encourage them to use voice communication more—that means picking up the phone instead of sending another email. Find a complete phone system (with global calling, SMS, fax, voicemail, and immersive video meetings) that’s accessible on a single app for mobile, desktop, and tablet.

- **Get a single vendor for all your communications needs.** Given 83% of workers want an all-in-one communications app, simplify your team's workstreams and keep an eye out for one vendor that can serve all your communications needs. Not only will you increase return on investment (ROI) and reduce total cost of ownership (TCO) by bundling phone calls, video conferencing, fax, SMS, chat, and contact center together, but you'll also reduce your paperwork stack with just one bill. One vendor, one tool, one bill—sounds nice, doesn't it? Think about how much money and time you'll save to focus on what matters to you most: your business. And the best part of having one vendor is you'll get a dedicated account manager to ensure you're getting the most out of your service.



- **Prioritize mobility.** Choose a communications tool built for anywhere and anytime mobility. An all-in-one communications app built for mobility keeps you connected to employees, vendors, and customers—no matter where you are. Think of a world where you can easily switch between devices (phone, tablet, or laptop) on the go and manage your business from anywhere. And employees will be able to do the same: stay productive and work from anywhere. Imagine—no more being tethered to a desk. Now, that's freedom.

THE FUTURE OF WORK IS WHEREVER YOU ARE

- **75%** believe the freedom to work from anywhere is the norm for all relevant industries.
- **53%** prefer working from home vs the office.
- **72%** believe video conferencing will replace in-person meetings.
- **63%** believe they can build personal relationships with coworkers without ever physically meeting them.
- **68%** are “more likely” or “somewhat more likely” to consider an employer with a remote working model due to the Delta variant.

Key takeaways

- **Embrace the future of work.** Set up your business to fully support remote and hybrid work models with a flexible communications platform that evolves with your business; one that makes it possible to scale phone lines, users, and devices up or down in a matter of clicks. And don't forget to look for an open platform that easily integrates with your favorite apps like Salesforce, Microsoft 365, and Google Cloud to simplify workflows for everyone—end the tedium of jumping between multiple screens each day.
- **Don't make business decisions in the dark anymore.** Turn to advanced analytics to build confidence in your business decisions. Find clever ways to increase productivity across your organization, whether it's using data insights to lift sales or allowing employees to use business phone numbers on their own cell phones.
- **Bulletproof your business.** Protect your business with real reliability you can trust. For example, look for a communications tool with 99.9% uptime that keeps you connected during outages and disasters. Ditch those dropped calls once and for all. Look for a solution already trusted by thousands of small businesses to deliver 24/7 support by phone, chat, or email. Most importantly, look for a solution that provides enterprise-grade security to protect your data and all your communications against fraud and abuse.

BRIDGE THE DISCONNECT WITH RINGCENTRAL

Despite the urgent need for communications tools that can bridge connections in the new world of work, **17%** of workers say that their organization still does not use digital communications and collaboration tools today.

If your business is part of that 17%, it's not too late to go digital. Now is the time to get a unified communications platform that puts the power of human connection in your hands.

RingCentral helps small to mid-sized businesses reach new heights and strengthen human connection at the same time. On average, businesses that partner with RingCentral for their communication and collaboration needs see the following:

- **52%** increase in ROI
- **50%** increase in employee satisfaction
- **33%** increase in employee productivity
- **27%** increase in average revenue growth
- **22%** decrease in telecommunications costs

With RingCentral, you'll power your business with an award-winning unified communications platform that's easy to use and powerful enough to grow with your business. Ditch the extra headaches that come with multiple vendors and turn to RingCentral for phone, video, messaging, and much more in a single app.

Not only will you be able to work from anywhere, but it can connect with all your favorite business apps and systems—tap into 250+ integrations in the [RingCentral App Gallery](#) and open APIs through the RingCentral developer portal to customize your workflows.

RingCentral grows right along with you so that you're never alone. Why not say hello to growing your business right now? Learn more about RingCentral by visiting business.frontier.com/unified-communications

Methodology

- RingCentral and Ipsos surveyed the following:
 - 2,000 Americans, British, French, and Australians aged 21–65
 - 1,000 Germans aged 21–65
- Characteristics of survey respondents:
 - Small and mid-sized businesses with 1–399 employees
 - Employed full-time or employed part-time and worked two jobs before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Audience includes business decision makers, non-business decision makers, frontline workers, and information workers