

The best way to ask about hybrid working in an interview

If hybrid working is high on your 'must have' list, what's the best way to discuss it with your next employer?

It might help to start with some open-ended questions in your interview, to test your potential new employer's approach to hybrid working.

More Kiwis are heading back to the office, but that doesn't mean a return to old ways of working. The hybrid model enables you to work from different locations - from home, in the office or on the go – so long as you meet the requirements of the job.

It's a more structured model than flexible work arrangements, which may include ad hoc changes to your working hours or days.

Changing expectations

Many Kiwis are anticipating a hybrid working model this year with research for SEEK showing 54% of people expect that their working arrangements will change to a hybrid model. Additionally 67% think hybrid working is important in assessing a potential employment opportunity.

Clare McCartin, Managing Partner – Davidson Search and Advisory, says more employers are also open to hybrid working since the impact of the pandemic.

"Many organisations now have hybrid policies in place, so it's a conversation that they should be prepared to have," she says.

"But it's better to ask the question during your interview, rather than having to negotiate arrangements after you've signed a contract. That way, everyone is clear about expectations at the very start, and it can save a lot of time."

Start with some research

Before preparing questions for your next interview, it pays to do some research on the company's approach to hybrid work – and to be realistic about it. Some roles, such as those in hospitality, for instance, are generally not suited to hybrid arrangements.

"Phrases like 'hybrid work' and 'remote working' are appearing in more job ads and the career page of company websites, so that's a good way to gauge whether a company is open to different models of working," says McCartin.

"But some leaders are still concerned about what hybrid work might mean for productivity and

culture, so factors these things into your questions.

The hybrid questions to ask

Leah Lambart, Career and Interview Coach at Relaunch Me, says there's a right and wrong way to discuss hybrid work in job interviews.

"In general, organisations now have to be more flexible than they have in the past to secure quality candidates," says Lambart. "But I don't advise making demands about hybrid work in interviews. Asking some open-ended question that allow them to share more information about their approach is a better approach."

Lambart suggests asking questions such as *'How does the company plan to manage the return to the office?'*

"This question shows that you are interested in the company, not just your own interests," says Lambart.

Other questions may include, *'Do most employees work full-time from the office, or is there the option of hybrid working?'*

"This question invites the interviewer to tell you a bit more about the company culture and can start a broader conversation about how the hybrid model works in practice at the company," says Lambart. "If people are already working in a hybrid way, you can then ask if there's a policy in place and the kind of work that people tend to do from the office."

If you don't have a clear picture of a company's hybrid policy, McCartin suggests asking questions that highlight culture and benefits to productivity.

"You could ask how they maintain culture when some people are working from home while others are working in the office," she says. "Or talk to them about how your own productivity has improved since you've been able to work from home. For instance, you could say, *'I find that I can concentrate on task-based work much better when I'm working from home. Is your company open to hybrid working?'*"

If you don't get the answer you're hoping for, Lambart suggests asking for a hybrid working trial to start at the end of your probationary period.

"This is a question to raise during a second interview when you feel more confident about securing the role," she says. "Use the probationary period to build up mutual trust and respect and then use the hybrid trial to show the benefits it can bring to the company in terms of your productivity."

Be clear about your preference

Employers are more open to different way of working since the pandemic, so you should be

prepared for questions about your own preference for hybrid work.

“Employers want to know that you are comfortable working from home and equally happy to work from the office when required,” says McCartin. “The hybrid model is most effective when it works for everyone.”

If your interviewer asks about your preference for hybrid work, Lambart suggests highlighting the benefits it has brought to you and your previous employers. “Be prepared to talk about how your performance has improved since working some days at home,” she says.

“It’s also worth highlighting what it means for your work-life balance, because employers know that people are more productive, more engaged and more excited about work when they have a better balance.”

More employers are open to hybrid working since the pandemic, but it’s not wise to make demands. Ask open-ended questions about a hybrid model in your interview to get a clear picture of their preferences. And be sure to highlight the mutual benefits it can bring.

Source: Independent research conducted by Nature of behalf of SEEK, interviewing 4000 Kiwis annually. Published March 2022.

Read more:

- [How to talk to your boss about hybrid working](#)
- [The good and the bad of working from home](#)