



okta

**How hybrid
working can help
businesses achieve
net-zero targets**

Hybrid working helps save the planet by cutting greenhouse gas emissions

A dynamic hybrid workplace strategy based on strong identity and security processes can help organisations achieve a more sustainable way of working, with the added benefits of reducing costs and giving employees greater flexibility to manage their work-life balance

The planet is in crisis and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is a priority for governments around the world. UN climate scientists have warned that we have less than a decade to act before the consequences of climate change are more frequent, more severe and irreversible.

By the end of the COP26 conference held in November 2021, 151 countries had submitted new climate plans to slash their emissions by 2030 and achieve net-zero commitments, with the aim of keeping to the goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C.

Organisations are asking – and are in turn being asked by their customers – what they can do to reduce their environmental impact.

Among the measures that business leaders must take, the pandemic-induced rise in hybrid working offers one important way in which organisations can contribute to their sustainability goals – with the added benefit of also reducing costs.

This model of dynamic working makes for a more GHG-efficient workplace strategy, with emissions savings coming from fewer employees commuting and less office space per person. Beyond emissions, a hybrid workplace strategy also allows for greater employee flexibility, which helps with recruitment and retention.

Okta is harnessing its expertise as a trusted digital identity provider to help organisations realise how hybrid working and the use of technologies such as identity and access management, zero-trust security, and multifactor authentication (MFA), can realise their ambitions to reduce their GHG emissions footprint for the good of the planet.

“Organisations are aware they must reduce emissions around certification of buildings and meet certain levels of standards to minimise their impact on the environment,” says Ian Lowe, director of solutions marketing for Okta in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Hybrid work pillars

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, remote working became the norm, and now many companies are adopting a more dynamic approach to their employees’ working environment. This is built around flexible access to systems and data to enable secure working by connecting the right people to the right technology, so they can work wherever, whenever and however they want.

Creating this dynamic environment depends on four hybrid work pillars:

- Delivering a first-class experience.
- Ensuring security and resilience.
- Maintaining privacy and compliance.
- Reducing environmental impact.

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Ian Lowe, Okta

Okta has experienced these benefits first-hand following its adoption of a fully dynamic workplace strategy that gives its employees total flexibility. It has allowed Okta to take control of its GHG emissions footprint and to make reductions to help save the planet.

Measurable improvements

To verify how far its aims have been realised, Okta commissioned Anthesis, a global sustainability consultancy and expert in measuring and advising on eliminating organisations' CO₂ emissions in their transition to net zero. The research revealed Okta's progress in reducing GHG emissions through establishing a hybrid work environment based on the four hybrid work pillars.

“During the pandemic, and over the past year, Anthesis found that Okta reduced its environmental impact and GHG emissions by 20% through remote working and restricting impacts associated with factors such as air-conditioning, heating, lighting and travel to work by car,” says Lowe.

These important benefits and findings – which can also be achieved by other organisations – provide confirmation that dynamic working is a more GHG-efficient workplace strategy.

Okta found that the majority of emissions savings derived from reduced employee commuting and lower office square footage per person. There are other advantages beyond reducing emissions, such as the hybrid workplace strategy allowing for greater employee flexibility. Employees do not feel compelled to commute and thereby forced to add to carbon emissions to do their job.

By contrast, Okta calculated the estimated employee energy consumption while working from home and discovered that it was almost double the overall office energy consumption. This resulted from rapid company expansion, diversity of worker location and their local energy grids' GHG emissions, as well as the use of less efficient heating and cooling systems in homes compared with those in offices.



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To tackle this, Okta supported its employees by providing resources on how to conduct home energy efficiency audits, turning off lights in rooms not in use, and switching to energy suppliers that use more environmentally friendly production, such as solar and wind power.

The company also achieved 100% use of renewable electricity for its global offices' electricity consumption during its 2021 financial year.

Pressure from customers

This approach demonstrates how success is based on a collective undertaking, but organisations are increasingly coming under scrutiny from customers and partners that will choose to work with companies that are committed to reducing their environmental impact.

“More and more consumers are making decisions based on whether companies show a drive towards reducing their environmental impact,” says Lowe.

Okta is in discussions with CIOs actively pursuing this aim to reduce GHG emissions in line with their sustainability vision.

“We are talking to CIOs and the C-suite community – for example, one financial services organisation found that, by adopting Okta's MFA factor and authenticator app Okta Verify, they could replace their outdated hardware-based one-time password tokens, which in turn meant they reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by not having to ship these physical tokens constantly,” says Lowe.

A secure foundation

Reducing environmental impact is a core tenet of a successful hybrid work strategy, but it relies on organisations establishing a strong basis for ongoing success based on the hybrid work pillars. Fundamental to getting this right is choosing a robust identity and access management solution.

“Enabling remote work demands a strong foundation in both identity and security processes. This in turn enables organisations to dramatically reduce their environmental impact and helps them to achieve their environmental, social and governance goals,” says Lowe.

In the past, organisations have been accused of not taking sustainability seriously, but a November 2021 report from the UK government revealed that Britain's largest businesses are committed to transitioning to net-zero emissions, with more than half of FTSE 100 companies focused on eliminating their contribution to climate change by 2050.

Pledges trebled in the lead-up to COP26, and 60 of the UK's FTSE 100 companies have signed up to the United Nations' Race To Zero campaign, highlighting a strong shift in the UK economy towards a greener future. The trend is likely to continue and covers all sizes of business in all sectors, including transport, technology, manufacturing, retail and finance.

Business leaders understand that the commitment to net zero is both technologically achievable and economically attractive. By taking innovative steps towards building a dynamic hybrid work environment, the goal of enabling a more sustainable way of working is within reach.

“We're seeing more and more organisations making reducing environmental impact part of their vision statement. They are also understanding how this aim is connected to identity and a strong security foundation to create a dynamic work environment,” says Lowe.

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He highlights how vision statements and corporate governance will commonly include a section on sustainability as organisations try to achieve net-zero carbon emissions in the effort to decarbonise the global economy.

“Awareness accelerated with COP26, and with the continuing news about climate change-induced disasters such as the fires in North America, severe storms, droughts, heatwaves and flooding,” says Lowe.

“It is important for organisations to actively showcase their sustainability efforts, as well as what they are doing to reduce their environmental impact, because customers are scrutinising this more and more.”

Demonstrating dynamic working

Okta has demonstrated through its own steps and approach to hybrid working how other organisations can benefit, with the potential to cut GHG emissions by one-fifth. Its fully dynamic workplace strategy is paying dividends and can be easily adopted if organisations partner with a trusted identity provider such as Okta. Dynamic working provides equity across work environments, which gives employees flexibility and empowers them to be productive.

“We have demonstrated how a strong approach to identity management and security can reduce GHG emissions; how hybrid working is coupled with a positive environmental impact, and aims to be net zero,” says Lowe.

IT leaders interested in hybrid working as part of their strategy to reduce their GHG emissions and environmental impact can work with Okta to implement best practice.

“Organisations need to establish a strong foundation with the hybrid work pillars of experience; security and resilience; and privacy and compliance, which can then be tied into reducing environmental impact,” says Lowe. “We want to be there to help organisations with their environmental aims and demonstrate business value to the leadership.”

He says businesses keen to pursue a hybrid strategy can start by taking a secure first step towards the hybrid work pillars.

“We can show how to deliver a better experience for customers and employees and how implementing MFA across apps leads to not only a better experience but also enhanced security,” says Lowe.

“This solution enables remote working with secure access to the data people need to do their job. By taking these first steps, organisations are automatically able to fulfil their aims to limit environmental impact because employees can work securely from home, which means fewer cars on the road and less heating and lighting for office space.”

The increased flexibility employees enjoy with managing their work-life balance and reducing their carbon impact enhances how employees view their company and the way they think about themselves in doing their bit for the planet by working for a sustainable employer.

Lowe concludes that hybrid working is the future for any organisation focused on helping to protect the planet and reducing GHG emissions.

“Organisations should start with a strong foundation based on identity and security, which will lead to a better environmental footprint to achieve their sustainability goals. Okta can help show them how,” he says. ■

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