REINVENTING WORK CHAIR

"Hybrid Collaboration: Shape it, Don't Survive It"

Event june 2025 | Keynote, Q&A

Decode the changes in today's work to anticipate tomorrow's work

The event of the **Reinventing Work Chair** took place on June 26th 2025, gathering professionals from BNP Paribas and external partners in a hybrid format. Its purpose was to **deep dive on the impact of hybrid work on collaboration** and to present and interact on 5 research projects among the 17 that were launched during the 2 cycles of the Chair.

ANNUAL EVENT 2025 @ BIVWAK!

Takeaways

Keynote by Professor Emmanuelle Léon

Amid the flood of publications on the future of work, often marked by contradictory views that evolve as quickly as the context itself, the Chair plays a vital role: it offers clarity and a scientific framework to help make sense of the new paradigms transforming work.

Drawing on robust qualitative and quantitative research, Professor Emmanuelle Léon shared in her keynote some key findings on how organisations can move beyond surviving hybrid work and actively design it to boost collaboration and increase performance, engagement, and well-being.

ANNUAL EVENT 2025 @ BIVWAK!

Hybrid Work: Productivity and Retention Realities

One highlight of the keynote was a closer look at the real impact of hybrid work:

- Research shows little difference in productivity between fully on-site and hybrid models, but fully remote setups in the US are linked to productivity drops.

- For employees, hybrid work holds significant value — equating to an 8% pay increase — making it a powerful tool for retention.

- Rather than enforcing a return to the office, organisations should focus on balancing individual needs, synchronicity, and asynchronicity in work design.

Rethinking Return-to-Office Mandates

The data challenges the idea that mandatory office returns are a solution:

- Forcing employees back often raises resignations without delivering productivity gains.

- Remote work does not create problems; it exposes existing ones that companies must tackle to improve the work experience sustainably.

Modern Work Organisation: Hidden Costs

There are broader shifts in workplace dynamics:

- Many employees face constant interruptions, and spend more time in meetings than in focused work.

- This overload hampers creativity, productivity, and engagement — key factors that must be addressed to unlock the full potential of hybrid work.

Meetings hijack prime focus time

Studies show that many people have two natural performance spikes each day, but our data reveals that we fill one of them with meetings, leaving little room for focus work.

Source: Microsoft Work Trend Index Special Report, June 2025
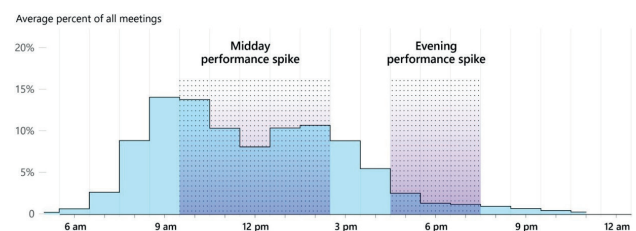
Evolving Dynamics and Psychological Contracts

There are broader shifts in workplace dynamics:

- Traditional psychological contracts built on loyalty and job security are giving way to expectations of employability and continuous career development.

- To thrive, organisations must adapt hybrid collaboration models to move beyond outdated industrial-age approaches (work at same place and at same time).

ANNUAL EVENT 2025 @ BIVWAK!

Re-engineering Collaboration

Today's teams face a paradox: meetings were supposed to replace emails, yet people now multitask in meetings to catch up on emails — leading to even more meetings (+ 50% over the past 12 years).

The research also highlighted a gender bias: men often excel in informational (what I know) and social resources (whom I know), while women tend to outperform in personal resources (time and energy) — underscoring the need for more inclusive collaboration design.

Valuing the "collaboration stars": 35% of the added value from collaboration depends on just 5% of people, who are often not seen as top performers, since this skill is rarely recognized. So how can we properly value the time spent fostering collaboration?

Improving Collaboration and Psychological Safety

Key tips emerged to help teams collaborate better:

- Document processes, share expertise openly, and encourage people to express which skills they want to develop.

- Build a culture of psychological safety, where people feel comfortable asking questions, admitting mistakes, and suggesting new ideas.

The Role of AI in Hybrid Work

Artificial intelligence is also part of the picture:

- AI is well-suited to support remote work by handling repetitive tasks and aiding with writing, but it needs social context to be truly useful.

- While AI alone won't solve hybrid work challenges, it can catalyse better human collaboration when used thoughtfully as it needs more explication (context, objectives, expectations, encouragement) to be formalized to be more efficient... just as humans do!

Structuring Hybrid Work for the Future

Making hybrid work sustainable means setting clear structures:

- Clear schedules and explicit cooperation rules are essential to maintain innovation and creativity.

- Organisations must ensure that projects deliver not just economic value, but also mastery and purpose for individuals.

- Foster focus time for creativity.

- Identify and document people's expertise.

The Road Ahead: Collaborative Intelligence

Finally, Professor Emmanuelle Léon emphasised that the future of work depends on developing collaborative intelligence by blending:

- Network science: structure of collaboration.

- Data science: dynamics of collaboration.

- Management science: purpose of collaboration.

The world of collaboration has changed: it's an opportunity for HR and leadership to reinvent how to work together.

The Chair's next research cycles will continue to tackle topics such as virtual onboarding, cultural intelligence, knowledge sharing, artificial intelligence and flexible work structures.

As work keeps evolving, one message is clear: companies must not just adapt — they must actively shape it and build organisations that are more resilient, engaging, and truly human.

The future belongs to collaborative intelligence
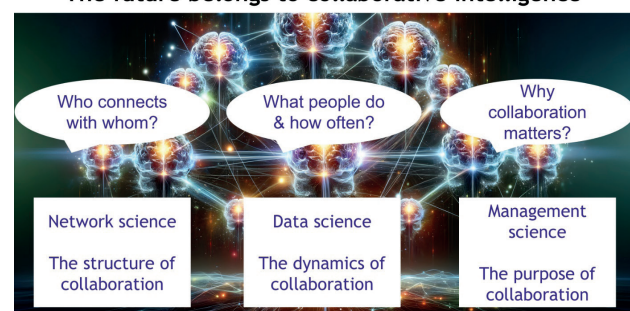
Brief overview of the 5 projects that were presented by the researchers:

- **Integration of newcomers in hybrid virtual teams**
- **Evolving demands and resources in virtual teams**
- **Cultural intelligence**
- **Knowledge management: seeking and sharing**
- **The paradox of flexible working**

To know more about them, and the other projects, take a look on **the Chair brochure**.

Q&A

Given that many teams are already overloaded, how would you recommend implementing the improvements you shared with us?

"To implement improvements in overloaded teams, you could consider these three levers:

- Use **technical tools** like calendar blocking to protect focus time from meetings.
- **Raise awareness** about the cost of large meetings, encouraging more intentional participation.
- **Empower managers** to co-decide priorities by sharing calendars and jointly selecting which meetings truly require your presence."

What happens when remote work's benefits are not as high as healthy mental costs?

- "We can't see when people are not doing well remotely: pay attention to weak signals (when no comments in the chat, or camera off for example).
- Take time to sit and share physically."

AI and collaboration: can we imagine that AI will destroy human collaboration as AI can be perceived as a perfect teammate (very available, never complaining…)?

"How we approach AI is key: how to develop skills on top of AI? AI still needs to be documented as it's not perfect (with hallucinations). AI is just a technology: it is our responsibility to see it evolve, and to make sure the workforce is ready to embrace the change. Training and reskilling should be given the utmost attention."

Five years after COVID, opinions on hybrid work remain divided. What are the next steps to support its adoption and adaptation despite ongoing uncertainty?

"There have already been debates in 2013 about productivity and presence. At that time, Yahoo's CEO, Marissa Mayer decided to end telework, as she claimed it lowered innovation. The reality showed that her focus was less about creativity and more about monitoring screen time and digital engagement. Without a new approach, hybrid work risks drifting toward electronic surveillance—technically feasible and already emerging where regulation is weak. In Europe, legal safeguards exist, but trust remains central. Some futurists envision a world of platform-based freelancers, but this will likely affect only a minority. The key insight: replicating remote routines in the office yields no added value. True hybrid success demands rethinking—not just relocating—how we work."

The concept of "working" needs to be redefined for the future. Work today is no longer what it was in the past, and expectations must evolve. With AI automating many tasks, it no longer makes sense to expect people to work 10 hours a day just to contribute to processes machines can handle. This raises fundamental questions about the purpose and structure of human work in the age of automation.

"That's absolutely true—and it's precisely why we named the chair Reinventing Work. Even six years ago, we anticipated that this transformation would become necessary. Future research will be needed on these topics: we are at the beginning of work reinvention, there is still a long way to go!"