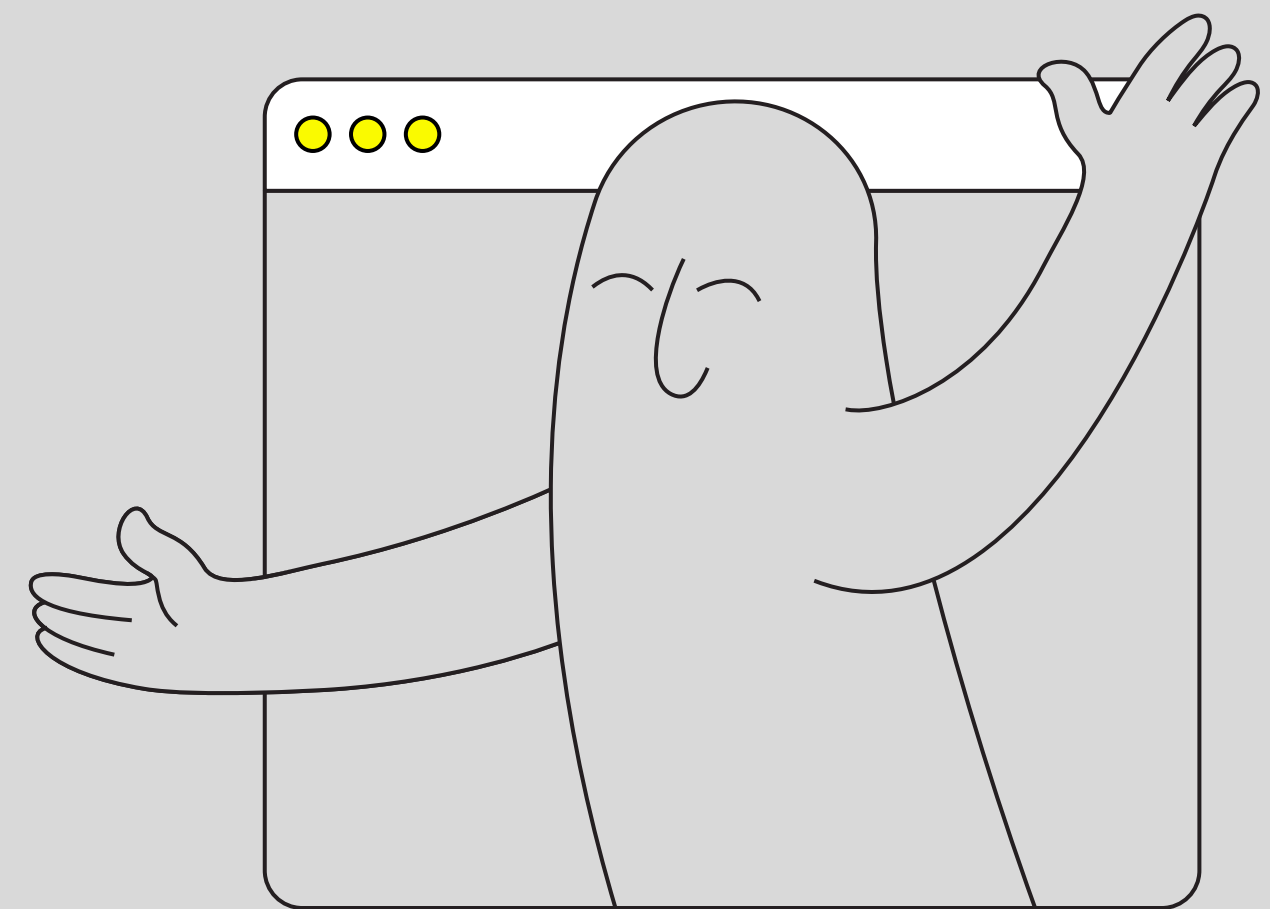
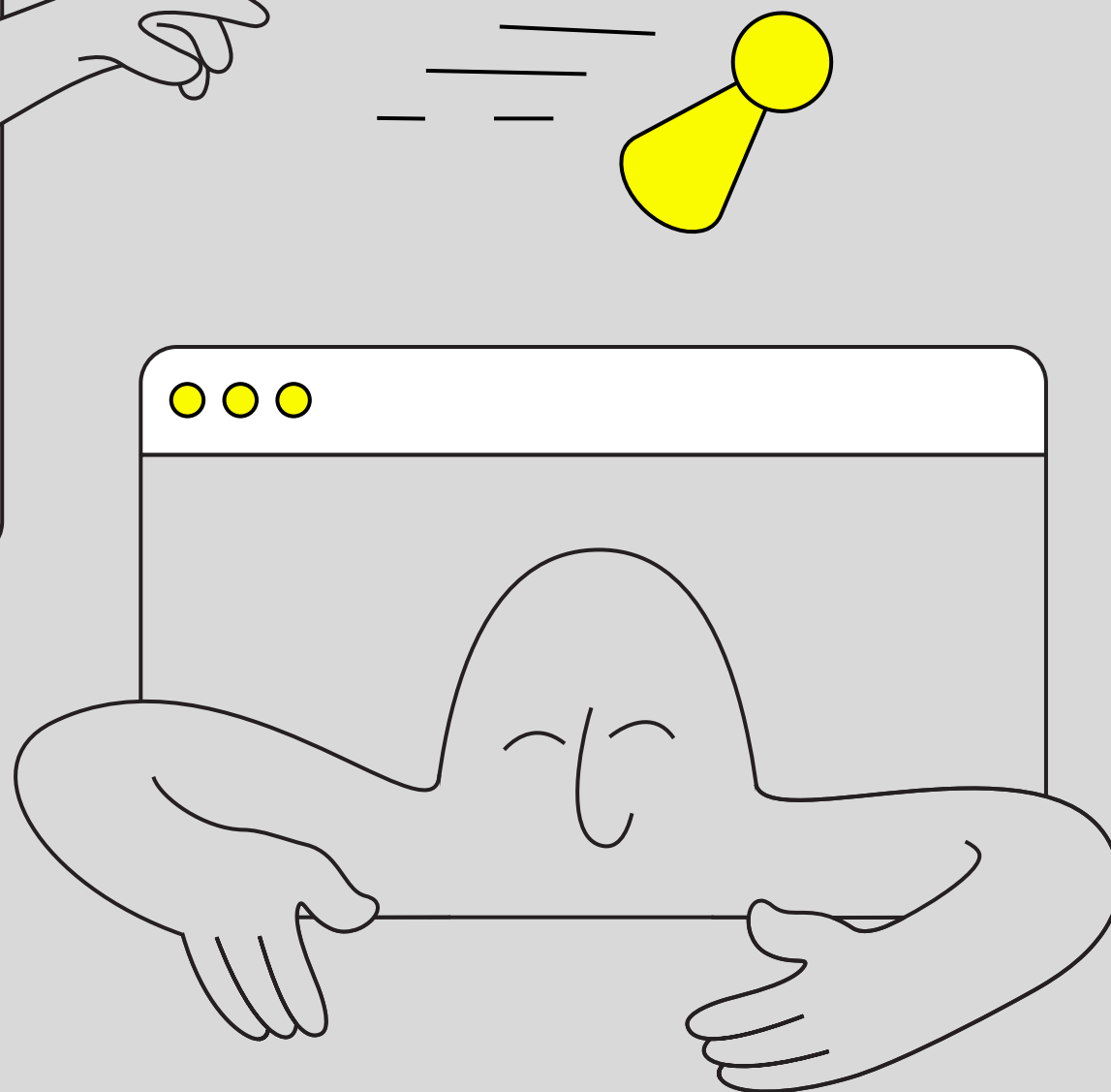
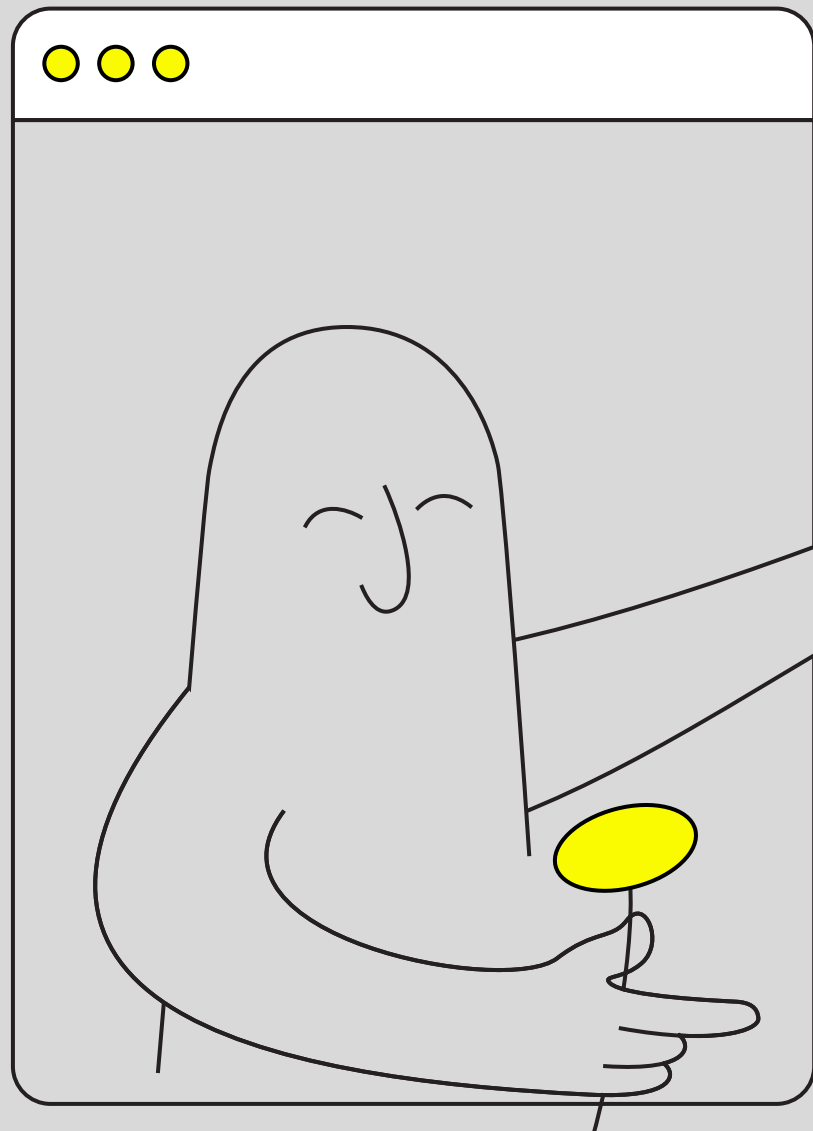


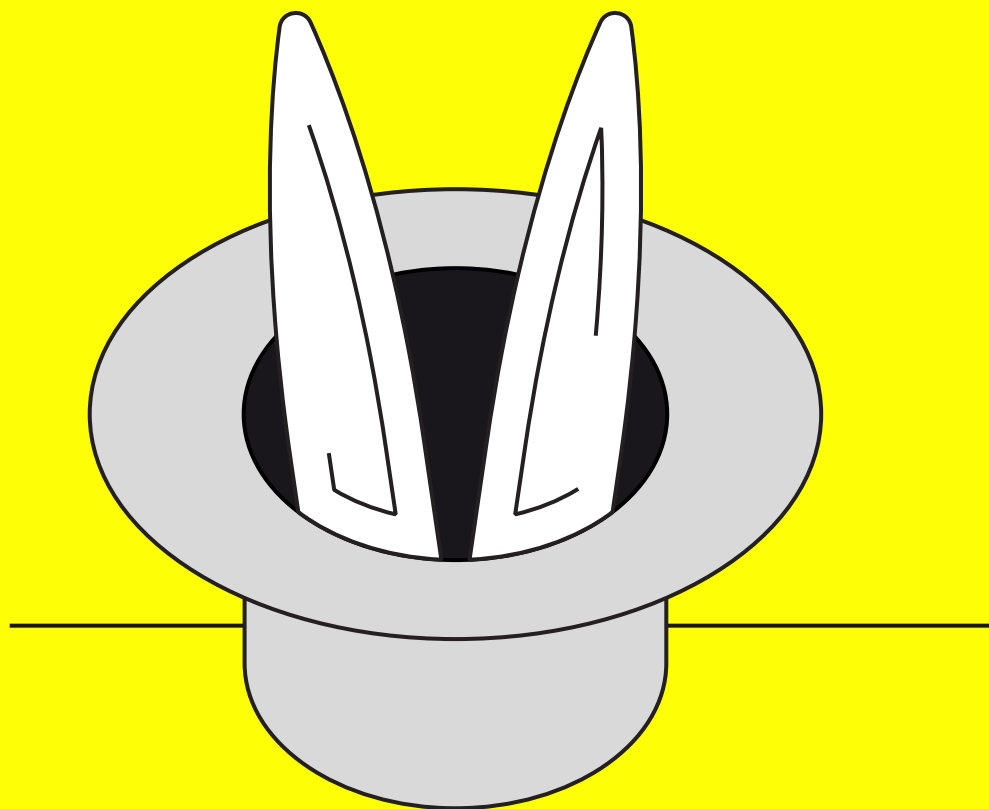
# Remote First

Read our guidelines and  
protect your workforce.

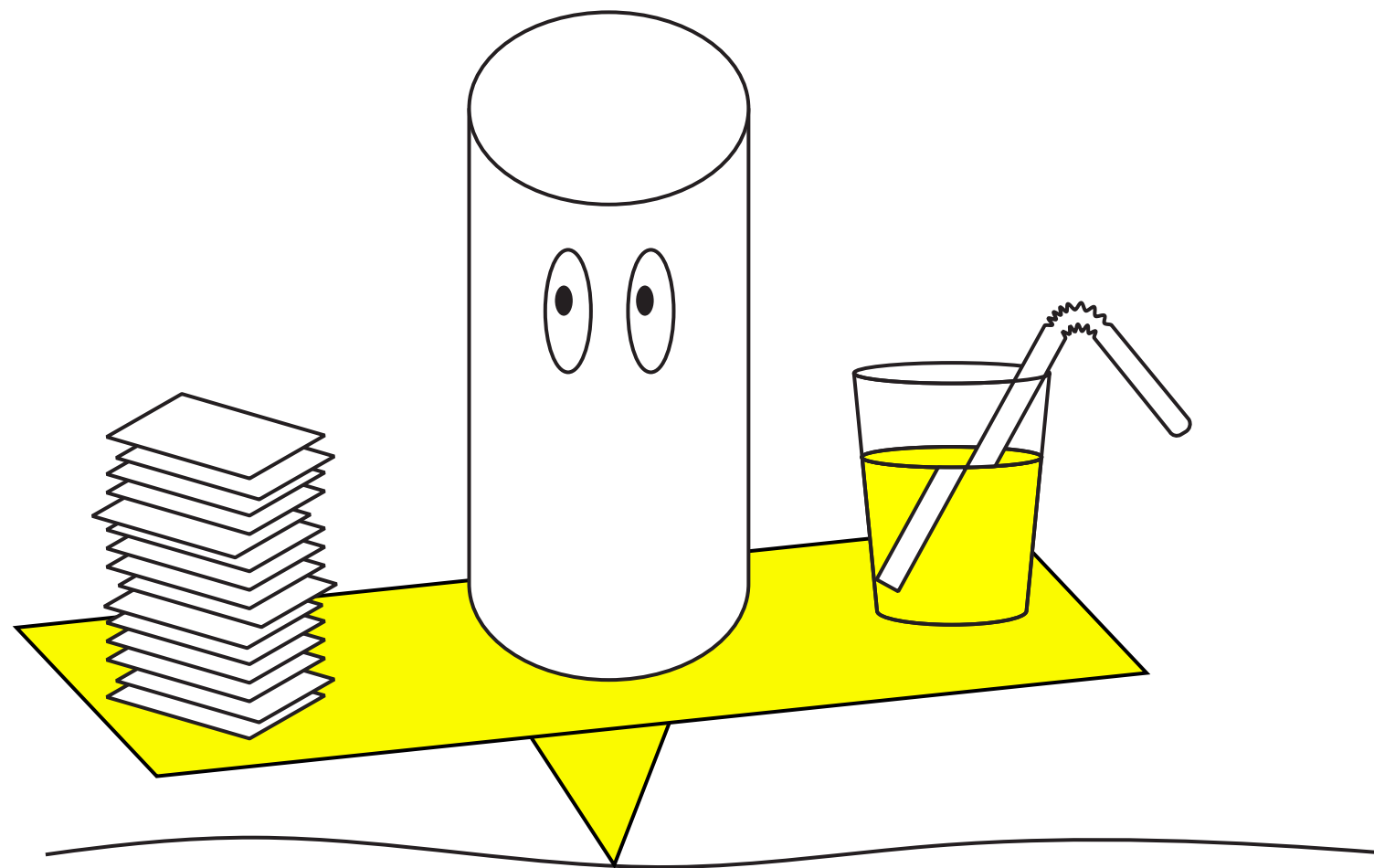


# A few insights

- Companies are worried about loss of culture for remote workers.
- It is vital to take care of employees, so they do not feel lonely, isolated, and that they have good equipment and furniture for work.
- Communication between employees and management must be open, management must promote company culture through informal meetings.
- Good organisation is essential for remote work, as employees generally cannot pick when will they work remotely. It is important for team spirit, to be on the same page and work from the office on same days.



# What is remote first model?



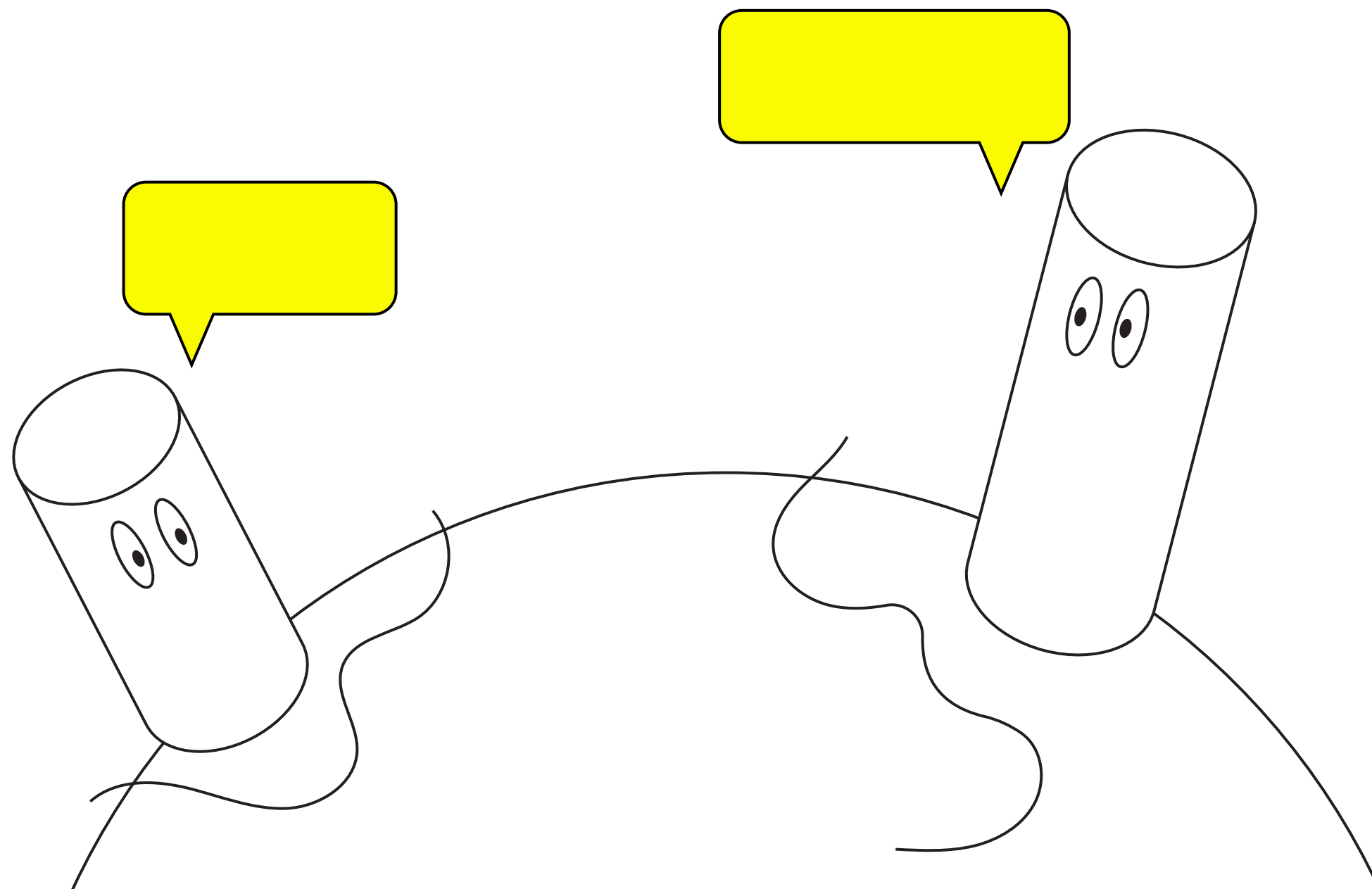
Companies can decide to work remote first instead of office first. When they chose this model, companies often worry whether their employees will feel engaged. Technology can be a double sided blade – it enables work from virtually anywhere, but it also prevents employees from disconnecting at home.

Employees have a hard time separating work and free time, COVID-19 pandemic only further complicated this issue. Although remote work might seem attractive, absence of clear boundary between work and private life (work-life balance) and lack of transitioning mechanisms (i.e. commute) that would symbolise transition between parts of life, can become a burden.

When working remote, companies often encounter challenges because of basic questions, such as lack of space or correct equipment for work. Employees that live with others encounter even more problems than those living alone. They must navigate workspace and time of others.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, it is vital to have good communication with management that understands employee's working conditions and helps them, especially when working remotely.

1. Kniffin, K. M., Narayanan, J., Anseel, F., Antonakis, J., Ashford, S. P., Bakker, A. B., . . . Vugt, M. v. (2021). COVID-19 and the workplace: Implications, issues, and insights for future research and action. *American Psychologist*, 76(1), 63-77. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000716>

# Communication



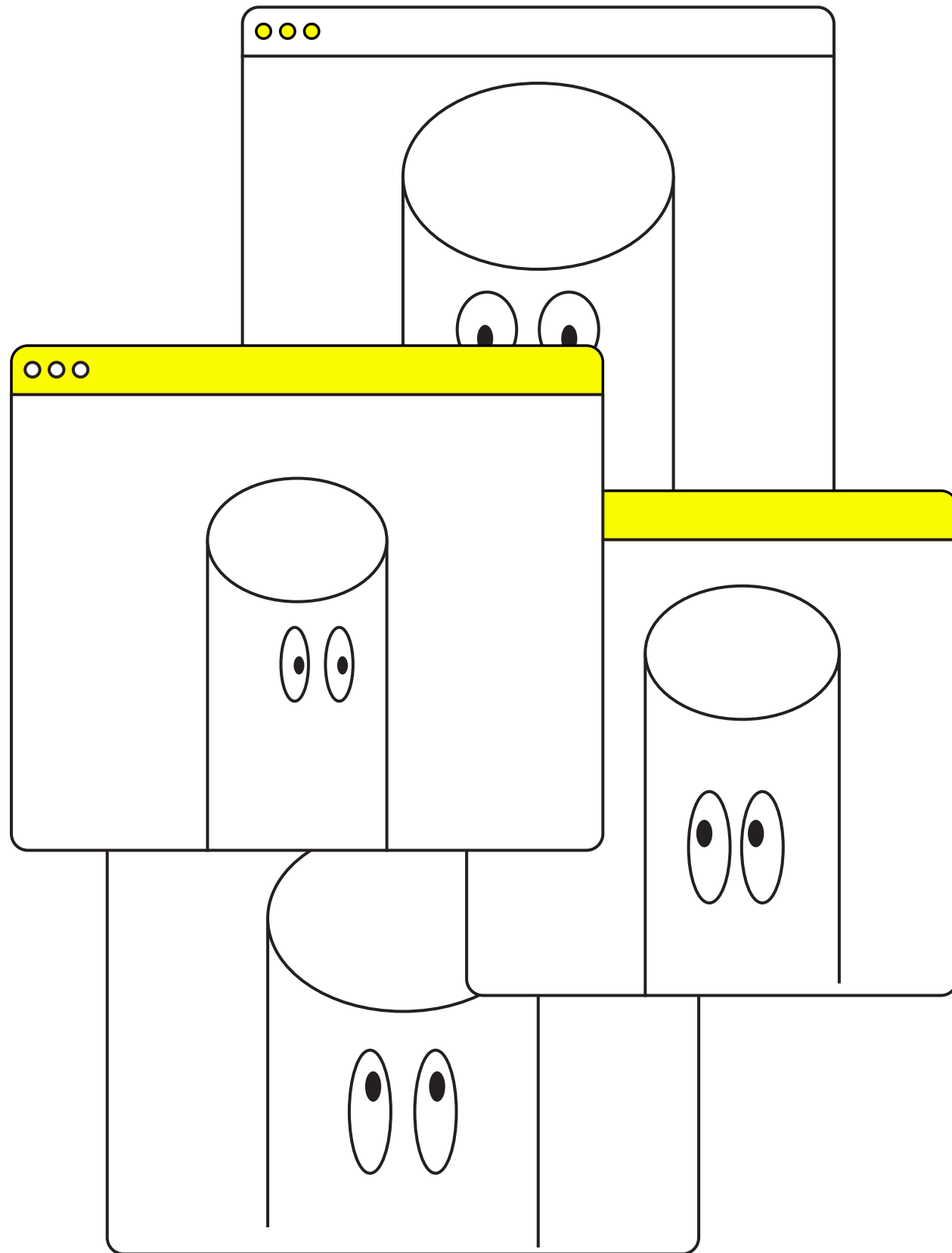
**Main benefit of well organised remote work is better work-life balance. Employees do not lose time commuting to and from work and they can be more flexible. However, companies must be careful that employees do not feel lonely, isolated or under additional pressure.**

One of possible solutions for maintaining connection and acceptance is investing in videoconferencing platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype ... Ribbon Communication survey found the number of large companies adopting Microsoft Teams in 2020 was up 36 % compared to previous year. They also found out that 38 % of small companies and 66 % of big companies are considering investments in better communication and collaboration tools in the next two years.<sup>2</sup>

Investing in communication tools enables companies to choose hybrid work model where they can choose remote first approach.

2. JLL (2021). How remote working is bedding in. <https://www.us.jll.com/en/trends-and-insights/workplace/how-remote-working-is-bedding-in>

# Company culture



**“Remote working requires a slightly different approach. Training and resources are a must-have to enable remote workers. There also needs to be open ongoing conversations between managers and their teams to maintain strong relationships.”**

Anne-Sophie Curet,  
Head of Human Resources at JLL

When working remotely, company culture does not disappear, norms and convictions are still being created and sustained. However, they are not based on system and routine that is present in the office and is therefore so easily maintained. With remote first approach, norms change quicker and are a lot more influenced by external factors, directly from employees life<sup>3</sup>. For this reason, companies must regularly invest in building their culture in the desired direction. The biggest problem is feeling alienated, which is quite common with remote work. Companies can establish more points of contact-it is not employee’s job to search for contact with company. Company can organise regular events to promote creative collaboration and educate employees about their options for communication and informal socialising.<sup>3</sup>

Companies must have strong and inclusive culture for everybody. During pandemic, communication platforms were a saving grace for a lot of employees who were missing in-person contact and regular after work meet ups. Some companies, for example Wealthsimple2, are hosting weekly virtual lunches, where they deliver food to all employees and have some form of informal meeting, regular virtual quizzes or virtual yoga classes open for all.

It is also important that companies take care of their employees’ health and well-being. It is easier to assess employees’ health when in office than when working remotely.

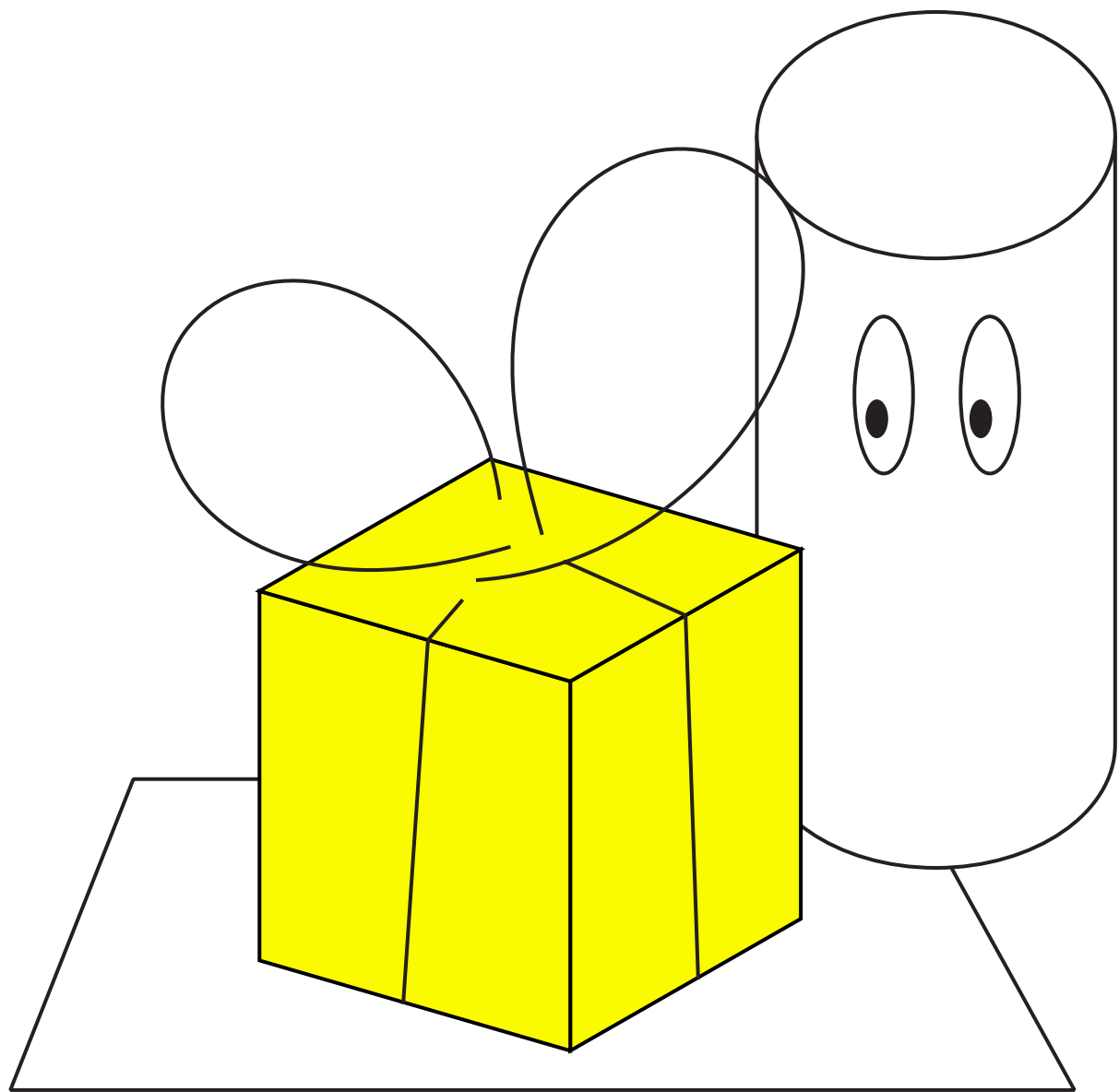
A lot of companies are not adjusting that well on changing work environment. Controlling employees was much easier and direct when working only in the office. When employees work from home, company must trust them to do quality work on time. During pandemic, not only investments in videoconferencing platforms increased, but also surveillance technology, such as ActivTrak, Teramind and Hubstaff.<sup>2</sup>

3. Hindis, P. in Elliott, B. (2021). WFH Doesn't Have to Dilute Your Corporate Culture. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2021/02/wfh-doesnt-have-to-dilute-your-corporate-culture>

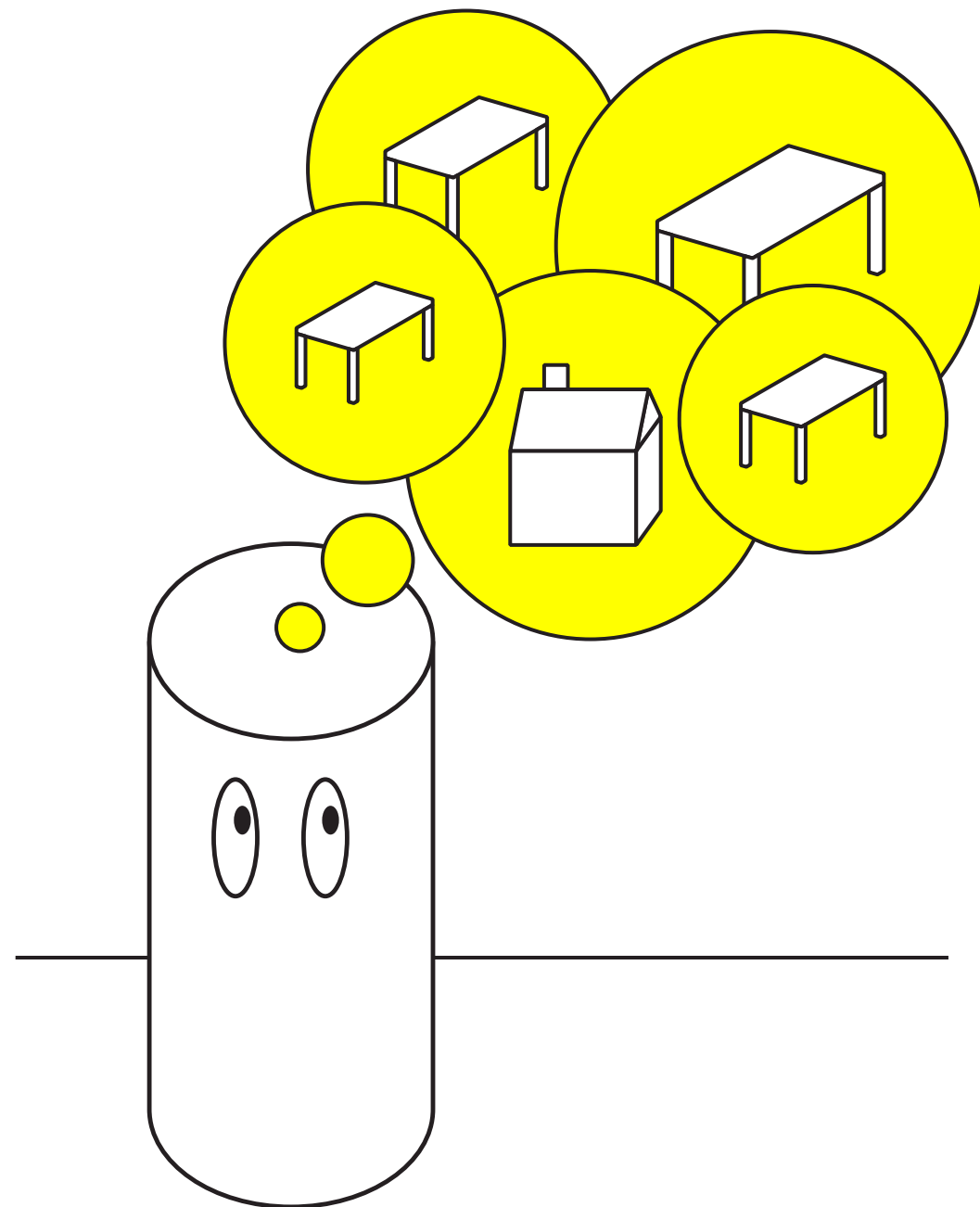
# Home office equipment

When creating home office, we must be careful to choose correct equipment and furniture to support employees and ensure they can work undisturbed.

JLL research found that 75 % of employees expect their employer to help and support equipping their home office and every third employee is asking for dedicated allowance to buy and upkeep their equipment<sup>2</sup>. A lot of companies are choosing to give dedicated allowance to their employees. During pandemic, ergonomic chairs and height adjustable desks sales increased. Some people are also choosing to rent equipment.



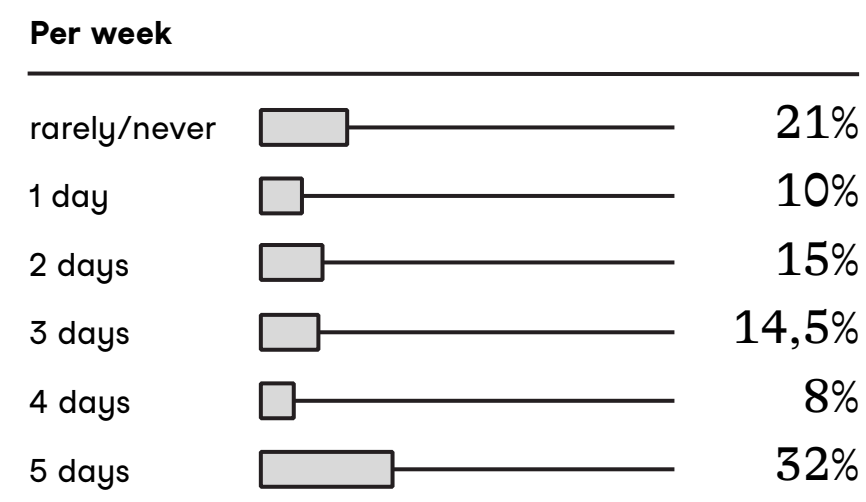
# Choosing days for remote work



Companies mostly do not go for remote work only, but rather for hybrid work model. It is important to consider how much freedom can be given to employees to choose their days of remote work. Companies want to give their employees autonomy and chance to create their own schedule.

HBR survey tracked 30,000 employees since May 2020 and collected data every month<sup>4</sup>. They found out that up to 32 % of employees do not want to return to the office. Mostly, these employees have small children, are living in suburbs and have a long commute. At the same time, 21 % employees asked never want to work from home again. Mostly, these employees are young singles and empty nesters.

## In 2022 and beyond (after Covid) how often would you like to have paid work-days at home?



With such contradicting opinions, it seems reasonable to give the choice to employees. But this can lead to two problems- managing hybrid team and small diversity. Managing hybrid team, where some of the employees work remotely all the time and some work in the office, is very hard and stressful. Unintentionally, two groups can form, however connection between those working in the office is a lot better. Remote workers can feel excluded, even if they have regular meetings in the office, because they do not have informal meetings with others. When we investigate diversity, we can find out that there are rules as to who works from where. For example, 50 % young women with young children want to work from home all the time<sup>4</sup>. This information is concerning, because research has found that working remotely when others are in the office can affect career development negatively. Remote workers do not have as much contact with managers and are consequently more often overlooked for promotion.

Based on this, it is important for leaders to choose days when people work remotely and days when everybody is in the office, so employees have equal career opportunities. When possible, companies should enable teams that collaborate a day or two when all members are in the office.

4. Bloom, N. (2021). Don't Let Employees Pick Their WFH Days. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2021/05/dont-let-employees-pick-their-wfh-days>

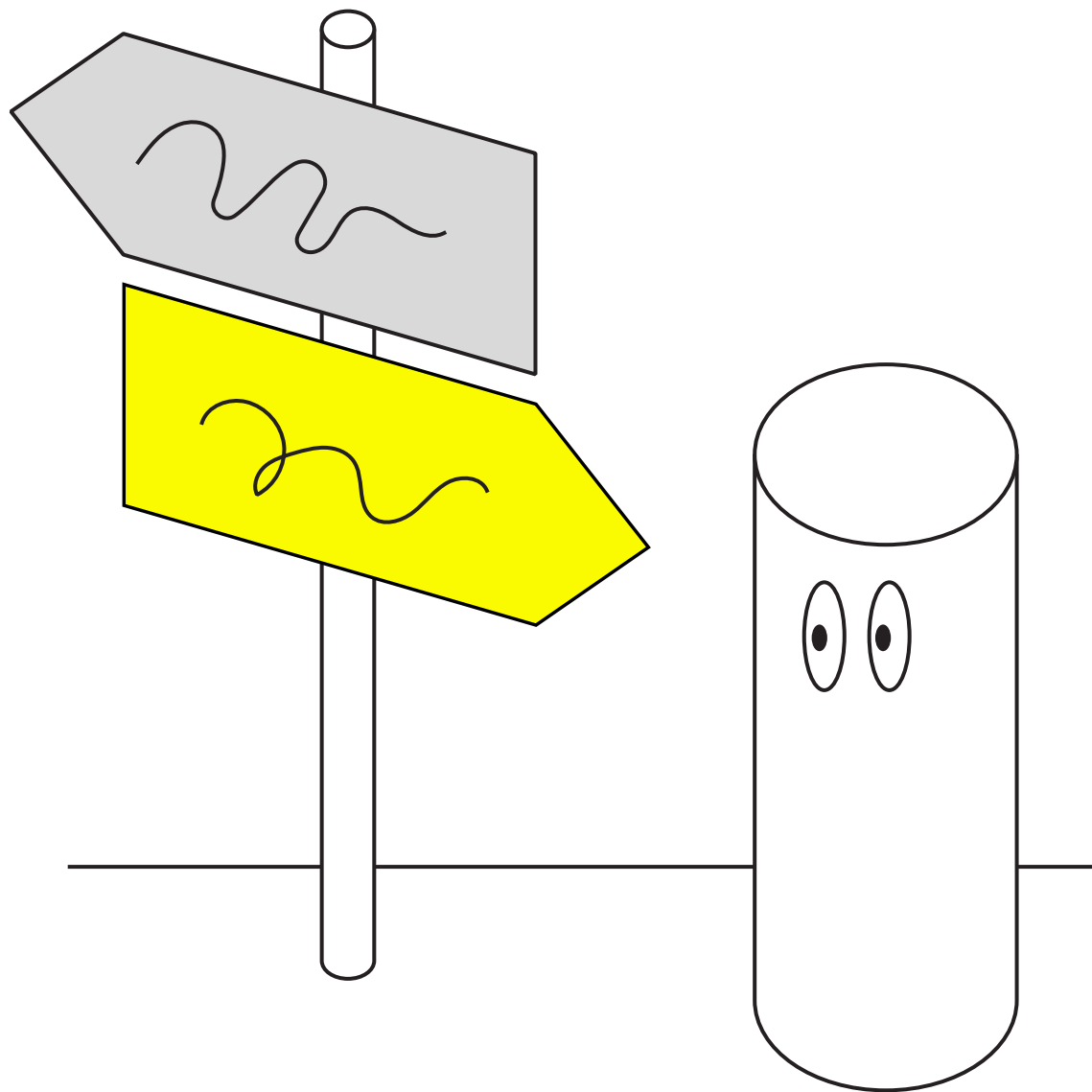
# Is Remote First the right choice?

When company decides they would like to give Remote First model priority, they must consider advantages and disadvantages of this model.

Main advantage of remote first work is employee's feeling of autonomy, as they can better adjust their time. They can arrange their work around other obligations. Employees gain better life-work balance than when working from office. They also do not lose time with commute, which is something that bothers them the most. But there are negative sides to remote first work. Employees can feel isolated, lonely, and even excluded from company. There is a possibility they do not feel company

culture or do not feel sense of belonging. It is also harder to ensure everybody has necessary equipment when working remotely, because it is not enough to consider employee specifics, but also location specifics. So, equipment is a lot more individually adjusted and therefore harder to guarantee.

For companies that decide for remote first model, it is vital to have good communication channels with all employees, have strong virtual presence and to develop and nurture their culture. Companies that are choosing hybrid work, need to define when each team is in the office, because in-person contact is key to build relationships.







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