# Body doubling sparks debate as UK firms adopt virtual coworking to boost productivity



The surge in remote working practices has led to the emergence of a controversial technique aimed at boosting employee productivity and accountability: body doubling. This method, now being adopted by an increasing number of companies, involves two or more employees working virtually side by side, often via platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams, even if they are not actively communicating. The intention behind this approach is to harness a sense of social presence to deter procrastination and foster a collaborative working environment.

Originally developed as a strategy to aid children with ADHD in focusing better within educational settings, body doubling has found a new purpose in the corporate sphere, rebranded as a tool for mitigating feelings of loneliness and enhancing concentration during periods of remote work. However, this practice has attracted criticism for its invasive nature. Employees have expressed discomfort with the idea of being monitored continuously; one worker voiced to The Times, “I don’t really want someone monitoring my every move. It can feel quite Big Brother-y being watched in your own home.”

Despite these concerns, research conducted by the University of East London, which involved the use of the virtual co-working platform Flown, supports the notion that body doubling can lead to improved focus and productivity among users. Notably, Alice Lang, a digital PR executive who utilises body doubling twice a week, remarked, "It's a good middle ground - I still get to work from home, but with a bit of company when I need it." This sentiment reflects the duality of this approach, which can be a boon for some while feeling oppressive for others.

The shift towards remote work had gained momentum during the pandemic when government-imposed restrictions forced millions to adapt to home-based employment. Although many workers have grown accustomed to this flexibility, which allows them to save time on commuting and manage personal responsibilities, a growing number of business leaders are now advocating a return to the office. Lord Rose, former chairman of Asda, has even gone so far as to claim that the shift to remote work has ‘set the economy back 20 years’, asserting that many employees seem to have forgotten the fundamentals of ‘proper work.’ This sentiment is echoed by major firms like Amazon and JP Morgan, which are taking steps to ensure that office staff report in daily, while Lloyds Banking Group has threatened to cut bonuses for those who fail to meet in-office attendance requirements.

Statistics compiled on the UK workforce reveal that only 26% currently engage in hybrid working, with 13% fully remote and 41% operating from the office exclusively. As these trends evolve, they highlight a significant tension between employees longing for flexibility and employers striving for a return to conventional work structures.

Workplace consultant William Arruda has emphasised the need for sensitivity around the adoption of body doubling, suggesting it should remain a voluntary option to accommodate different working preferences. He cautioned, “Some people thrive in silence and solitude,” urging organisations to consider the diverse needs of their workforce.

As businesses grapple with these changing dynamics, the future of work may well depend on striking a balance that caters not just to productivity metrics but also the well-being and autonomy of employees. The question remains whether body doubling will integrate seamlessly as a valuable strategy or become a symbol of workplace overreach in this new era of remote work.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14750399/Big-Brother-watching-you-Growing-number-Brits-working-home-spied-bosses-make-sure-not-skiving.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamarruda/2025/04/28/body-doublingthe-productivity-hack-you-didnt-know-you-needed/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14750399/Big-Brother-watching-you-Growing-number-Brits-working-home-spied-bosses-make-sure-not-skiving.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1911373/body-doubling-it-increase-workplace-productivity), [[5]](https://flown.com/blog/body-doubling/what-is-body-doubling)
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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14750399/Big-Brother-watching-you-Growing-number-Brits-working-home-spied-bosses-make-sure-not-skiving.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamarruda/2025/04/28/body-doublingthe-productivity-hack-you-didnt-know-you-needed/> - This article from Forbes discusses the concept of 'body doubling', a productivity technique where individuals work alongside another person, either in person or virtually, to enhance focus and accountability. It highlights the benefits of body doubling, such as increased productivity and reduced feelings of isolation, particularly for remote workers. The article also addresses potential pitfalls, including the risk of distractions and over-reliance on the practice. It offers strategies to effectively implement body doubling, such as setting clear boundaries and expectations, and suggests various applications like virtual library sessions and power hours for teams.
3. <https://www.digitaljournal.com/business/body-doubling-how-it-works-at-work/article> - This article from Digital Journal explores the practice of body doubling in the workplace, where individuals work alongside another person to improve focus and productivity. It discusses the effectiveness of body doubling, especially for remote workers, and outlines potential risks such as distractions, over-reliance, and privacy concerns. The article emphasizes the importance of clear communication and setting boundaries to ensure the practice is beneficial. It also suggests creating dedicated spaces for body doubling, whether in-person or virtual, to facilitate the process.
4. <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1911373/body-doubling-it-increase-workplace-productivity> - This article from People Management delves into the concept of body doubling, a technique where individuals work in the presence of another person to enhance focus and motivation. It explains the psychological principle of 'social facilitation' underlying this practice and its particular benefits for neurodivergent individuals, especially those with ADHD. The article also discusses potential drawbacks, including the risk of socialising instead of working and challenges in setting performance expectations. It recommends establishing clear boundaries and expectations to ensure the success of body doubling.
5. <https://flown.com/blog/body-doubling/what-is-body-doubling> - This blog post from Flown explains the concept of body doubling, a productivity strategy where individuals work alongside another person, either in person or virtually, to improve focus and accountability. It highlights the benefits of body doubling for remote workers, such as creating structure and preventing burnout. The article also discusses potential challenges, including the risk of overwork and the importance of setting realistic goals. It offers practical tips for implementing body doubling, such as scheduling regular sessions and focusing on a single task per session.
6. <https://www.parallel-eb.co.uk/2025/01/body-doubling/> - This article from Parallel discusses the practice of body doubling, where individuals work alongside another person to enhance productivity and reduce feelings of isolation. It highlights the benefits of body doubling, including combating loneliness, preventing burnout, and managing overwhelm. The article also addresses potential drawbacks, such as the risk of over-reliance and the importance of setting clear boundaries. It suggests creating dedicated spaces for body doubling and ensuring participation is optional to accommodate different working preferences.
7. <https://chadd.org/adhd-news/adhd-news-adults/could-a-body-double-help-you-increase-your-productivity/> - This article from CHADD explores the concept of body doubling, a strategy where individuals work alongside another person to improve focus and productivity. It discusses the benefits of body doubling, particularly for individuals with ADHD, such as increased motivation and reduced procrastination. The article also highlights potential challenges, including the risk of socialising instead of working and the importance of choosing a non-judgmental body double. It provides practical advice for implementing body doubling, such as setting clear goals and expectations.