

NewsMatters

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On-Site, Remote and Hybrid Model Workplace Strategies

The remote workplace is here to stay, but its role may change. As the pandemic shifts, organizations may be planning a combination of remote and on-site working. In a hybrid model, some employees work on-site, while some employees work from home.

This article discusses post-pandemic workplace trends, the advantages and challenges of on-site and remote workplaces, and strategies for hybrid model workplaces.

POST-PANDEMIC WORKPLACES

Recently, PwC's remote work survey revealed that employers and employees want to approach the post-pandemic workplace with more flexibility. Consider the survey's top findings and statistics:

- 83% of employers say the shift to remote work has been successful.
- 87% of employees say the office is important for collaborating with team members and building relationships.
- 55% percent of employees would prefer to be remote at least three days a week.
- Employees want to return to the office more slowly than employers expect.
- While some employers expect to reduce office space, 56% expect to need more space over the next three years.

Taking these trends into consideration, employers need to focus on what their office or workplace is meant to accomplish. By identifying that key business objective and keeping employee health and safety in mind, it will be easier to reimagine how and where employees get work done, along with how much workspace is needed to be effective.

ON-SITE WORKPLACES

When working on-site, employees can motivate each other, which boosts overall morale. Co-workers can also collaborate in real-time for discussions and to solve problems. Employers may also feel more confident that work is being done when they see employees at their desks or workspaces. An on-site workplace can offer peace of mind.

Advantages of on-site workplaces include:

- Better collaboration
- Increased employee motivation
- Fewer environmental distractions
- Stronger workplace culture

Challenges of on-site workplaces include:

- Distractions from co-workers
- Limited talent pool due to geographical factors
- Costly office locations and expenses

As organizations and workplaces transition out of lockdown and into the post-pandemic reality, some employees and employers may still choose to embrace working in a remote setting.

REMOTE WORKPLACES

Remote work has mostly been a success for both employees and employers. As uncertainties remain about how to safely bring all employees back on-site, the remote workplace may continue to be the best option right now.

Advantages of remote workplaces include:

- Wider talent pool as a result of removed geographical limits
- Increased employee productivity
- Stronger employee engagement
- Greater flexibility
- Healthy work-life balance

Challenges of remote workplaces include:

- Potential for different time zones
- Lack of real-time collaboration
- Strain on mental health
- Caregiving responsibilities

Physical barriers can make workplace communication tougher, but employers can take steps to make communication faster and broader than email. In the long run, the extra attention to effective communications is a win-win for both employees and employers.

HYBRID WORKPLACES

In some form, a majority of companies are opting for either all-remote or hybrid remote arrangements. One of the most common hybrid models may be “flex remote,” in which employees are on-site on set days. “Core hours” is another hybrid arrangement, in which employees are available during designated times. In both of those workplace models, employees are allowed to make their workday flexible outside of those set days or hours.

Flex remote is likely to be a popular model to provide employees the flexibility to be on-site some days and work remotely the other days. Employers may also consider whether certain departments or roles need to work on-site or can be just as effective working remotely. Every organization will be different, and the working model will need to be what’s best for both employers and overall employee experience.

It’s equally important to consider what’s critical for businesses when it comes to the physical workplace(s). Employers may consider a large headquarters or one to two main offices. Depending on the business, it may make sense to create multiple proportionately sized offices or small regional workplaces. Employees can travel to regional hubs rather than a central headquarters location that may be farther away. If a permanent office isn’t necessary for business, employers could consider renting flex space for periodic collaboration. Keep in mind that the focus of flex space for a remote workforce is in-person collaboration, not connectivity.

Taking the above models and the advantages and challenges of strictly on-site or remote workplaces into consideration, employers can develop their ideal hybrid workplace. Hybrid workplaces can look very different based on the organization’s priority of factors, including the ability to access talent, individual and team productivity, and the cost of real estate.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Keep in mind that organizations thrive through a sense of belonging and shared purpose that may get lost when an on-site culture and remote culture emerge. Typically, the in-person work culture dominates, which could isolate employees working remotely. As everyone prepares for life on the other side of the pandemic, it’s important for employers to prioritize employee engagement and well-being in workplace strategies and plans.

Contact us today for additional workplace strategy guidance and to learn more about how the pandemic continues to shape the future of working.