MAKING POST-PANDEMIC HYBRID & FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS WORK

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employees today juggle multiple family responsibilities and other personal matters in addition to the demands of their jobs. A 2022 IBI study[3] found that remote and hybrid employees are 22% more **productive,** 21% more **satisfied,** and 51% more **highly engaged.** While multiple studies suggest that most employees want to retain some form of remote work (as many as 89%),[3,4] some employers are implementing return to the office full or part-time.

Some leaders are contemplating what a new culture and working style might entail, as well as how to preserve culture and innovation in a predominantly hybrid workforce. Others argue that the company's culture demands that all employees return full time. To gain more insight into how to optimize work arrangements for employers, attract and retain talent, and maximize productivity, IBI examined flexible work models' variations, benefits, challenges, supports, and outlook through a two-tiered, sequential, **mixed-methods study**.

Key findings from the **quantitative analysis** were as follows:

- **Seventy-eight percent** of employers plan a **flexible work arrangement (FWA) for** those who are remote-capable, post-pandemic.
- Fully onsite and fully remote work **do not align** between employer plans and employee desires, but they more closely agree on **hybrid** arrangements.
- Organizational characteristics that are associated with more FWAs:
  - *Industries:* Finance & insurance, information technology, and professional and business services are more likely to have FWAs
  - *Locations:* Pacific and Mid-Atlantic regions
- Organizational characteristics that are associated with more fully onsite arrangements:
  - *Size:* Smaller organizations (under 50 employees)
  - *Locations:* West, North, and Central regions

Benefits And Challenges

Onsite and offsite work have **unique benefits**

  - Employees say they benefit from onsite work because of social and professional interactions.
  - Employees say they benefit from work from home (WFH) for more practical reasons like saving money and better work-life balance.

Efficiency Changes

  - Post-pandemic (July 2022 – January 2023), working efficiency either remained the same or improved for **89%** of employees where efficiency refers to best use of time.
  - When working from home, 11% say **efficiency is decreased** because the job involves many tasks that cannot be done remotely, or the job requires specialized equipment.

Attraction/Retention

  - If the employer said you must work onsite 5 days, 4.7 out of 10 employees indicate they would quit immediately or begin seeking a job that allows WFH.
  - 5.5 out of 10 say they would definitely or probably seek out a WFH position with a guarantee to work from home.

Happiness/Contentment

  - Respondents who reported they were working from home at least some of the time were more likely to report the highest levels of happiness compared to those who work fully onsite.

Key findings from the **qualitative analysis** were as follows:

- All the case studies included hybrid arrangements (**some work onsite and some offsite)** where possible.
- Some arrangements allowed more flexibility than others for the employee.
- Some of the support provided by the organizations included **stipends**, ergonomic **safety**, emphasis and support for **self-care**, and **caregiver** support.

Benefits and challenges lined up with the quantitative findings, but additionally,

- Be aware of the potential for **rifts** between staff who worked remotely and those who could not.
- There is potential for **proximity bias.** Attitudes must be reimagined.
- **Connection and isolation** for fully remote employees must be offset.
- There is **no one size fits all**. Experimentation may be necessary to find the winning solution(s) for your population and business needs. Data-driven strategy is foundational and should be used to make decisions.
- **Scheduling** takes careful consideration. Coordinating team collaboration onsite is important. Make days onsite meaningful and attractive.
- **Flexibility is key** to maximizing the benefits for both employer and employee.
- **Recultivate culture** so that it does not hinge on location.
- **Measure outcomes** instead of productivity.
- **Rethink meetings** (short, frequent, meaningful, appropriate channels of communication).
- Create a **sense of belonging** and **psychological safety** regardless of the work arrangement.

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

To provide actionable guidance for employers, IBI consulted employer members for input. The key takeaway is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to post-pandemic flexible work arrangements. Employers need to engage with their workforce to determine their preferences and needs, and to gather information about the effectiveness and long-term viability of different types of flexible work arrangements. This information can then be used to make informed decisions about which arrangements to apply and how to adjust them to meet the goals and needs of the organization. Some areas of focus are:

- **Communication/Technology:** Encourage online forums, virtual social gatherings, and team-building activities for virtual employees. Promote instant messaging, video conferencing, and project management.
- **Connectedness and Social Interaction:** Organize virtual coffee breaks, mentorship, and cross-departmental collaboration. Virtual networking promotes knowledge sharing, innovation, and cross-departmental collaboration.
- **Recognition:** Recognizing staff achievements online. Virtual events, team shout-outs, and personal messages show gratitude and belonging.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Normalize employee self-care and wellness. Offer breaks, mindfulness, and virtual wellness activities.

- **Modeling the Culture**: Engage in virtual discussions, attend virtual meetings, and communicate openly.

Employers can create a virtual workplace that fosters connection, collaboration, and belonging by intentionally implementing strategies. This improves virtual employee satisfaction, productivity, and teamwork.

Contents

BACKGROUND

The Several years after the COVID-19 pandemic forced a rapid shift towards remote work, we find ourselves in a new era where many companies have embraced hybrid or fully remote work arrangements. This transition to a more flexible work model has brought numerous advantages, such as increased productivity, reduced expenses, and the ability to tap into a global talent pool. However, as dispersed team members adapt to this new way of working, employees have encountered a unique set of obstacles and challenges.[1]

One of the most significant downsides of the pandemic era work model was the loss of camaraderie and feelings of isolation due to the lack of social interaction with colleagues. To combat this and in an attempt to restore organizational culture as we knew it, some employers (e.g., Morgan Stanley, Disney, NewsCorp, and Starbucks) say they are requiring employees to come back into the office full time.[2] However, many individuals still choose remote work as it allows them to have more control over their professional and personal lives.[1,5]

As organizations are seeking to recalibrate their work arrangements and think about their next steps, IBI conducted a mixed methods study to gain more insight into how to optimize work arrangements for employers, attract and retain talent, maximize productivity, and meet both financial and business goals.

The **quantitative analysis** sought to answer the following questions:

1. How many remote-capable employees are working in a flexible work arrangement?
2. What are employers' plans versus employees' desires going forward?
3. Overall, what are the advantages and challenges of working from home or offsite versus onsite?
4. Do preferences differ by employer characteristics (i.e., industry, location, employee population)?

In addition, the **qualitative analysis** sought to answer the following questions:

5. What flexible work arrangements are being utilized at selected companies?
6. What are some of the advantages and challenges of their FWAs?
7. What measures have employers put in place to support the challenges?

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[1] Neeley, T. (2021). Remote work revolution: Succeeding from anywhere. London, UK: Harper Business.

DEFINITIONS

For this study, we will use the following terms with these meanings:

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are alternate arrangements from the traditional work environment and schedule.
- **Remote work** is a type of flexible work arrangement where employees work from a location outside of the organization's offices.
- **Hybrid work** describes a flexible work arrangement where employees work onsite at least one day per week and work from a location other than the office some of the time.
- **Compressed work schedule** is a flexible work arrangement in which employees work a full 40-hour week in fewer than the typical five days.

Flexibility can take many forms, including the ability to easily take personal time for personal or family matters, the ability to change work start and end times with little notice, the ability to control work schedule, the ability to choose whether or when to work from home, or the option of a compressed work week.[2]

STUDY DESIGN

This study uses a sequential, two-phased, mixed methods strategy to analyze a national survey of flexible work arrangements as well as four company cases. This analytical framework provides a simple and customizable way for assessing large amounts of quantitative and qualitative data.[3]

Quantitative Data and Analysis

To gain insight into current views, preferences, and plans of employers (and their employees), this study analyzes data from the Survey of Working Arrangements and Attitudes (SWAA), which is an ongoing monthly cross-sectional survey of between 2,500 to 10,000 US residents between the ages 20 and 64 who earned $20,000 or more in the prior year. It was fielded by market research firms and weighted to be nationally representative. The data are publicly available and have been validated against The US Census Bureau's Community Population Survey, Household Pulse Survey, and American Time Use Survey. For more complete details about the survey methodology, see Barrero et al. (2021).[4] These data are used to analyze the current state of flexible working arrangements across the US. Sample characteristics, September 2022 – March 2023, are detailed in Appendix A .

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[2] Haley, M. R., & Miller, L. A. (2022). Worker Preferences for Flexible Working Arrangements in Prospective Jobs. Business and Economic Research, 12(1), 2843-2843.

[3] Madill, A., Jordan, A., & Shirley, C. (2000). Objectivity and reliability in qualitative analysis: Realist, contextualist and radical constructionist epistemologies. British journal of psychology, 91(1), 1-20.

[4] Barrero, J. M., Bloom, N., & Davis, S. J. (2021). Why working from home will stick (No. w28731). National Bureau of Economic Research.

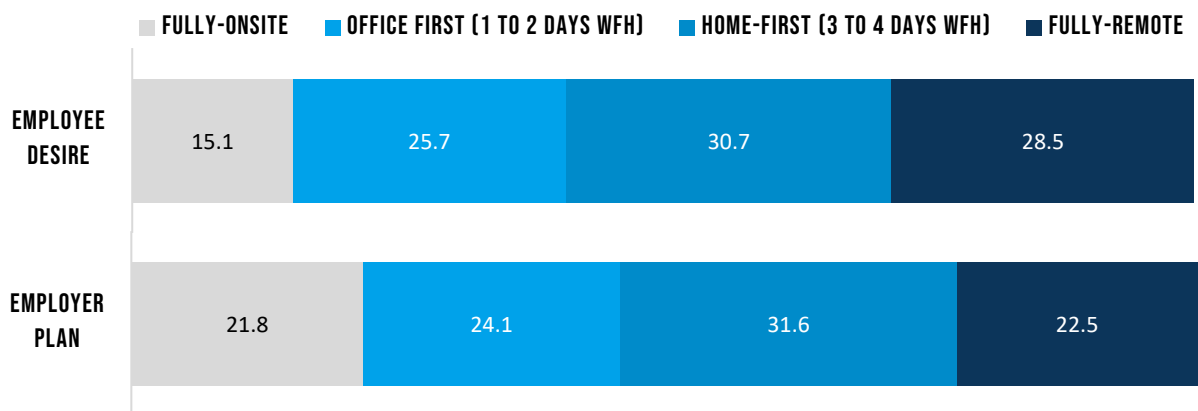## Qualitative Sample, Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative research design was utilized using comparative case studies to explore common structural, contextual issues associated with a flexible workforce, and to investigate flexible work models in depth and within its real-life context. The qualitative data collected from various sources including peer-reviewed literature and industry publications were analyzed to determine and make sense of collective or shared practices and experiences and the implications of those practices and experiences directly or indirectly for the employer.[5] Analysis was conducted using regression analyses to quantify associations between variables while controlling for demographic or firmographic variables. Confidence levels were set at 95% for all statistical tests.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Current Work Arrangements

A vast majority of the workforce with remote work capabilities are choosing flexible work arrangements after the pandemic, with 85% desiring this arrangement from September 2022 through March 2023. Twenty-four percent of employees with remotely capable jobs are currently working entirely on-site, while the majority (56%) are in a hybrid flexible work arrangement. Remote-capable employees are those who have indicated they can work from home at least partially and those who report having mainly worked from home at some point during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: For employer and employee, the desired fully onsite and fully remote do not align. However, they more closely agree on the hybrid arrangement.

	FULLY-ONSITE	OFFICE FIRST (1 TO 2 DAYS WFH)	HOME-FIRST (3 TO 4 DAYS WFH)	FULLY-REMOTE
EMPLOYEE DESIRE	15.1	25.7	30.7	28.5
EMPLOYER PLAN	21.8	24.1	31.6	22.5

Many employers have established plans, but they may not align with their employees' preferences, especially in terms of working full-time from home or working full-time on-site. However, there is
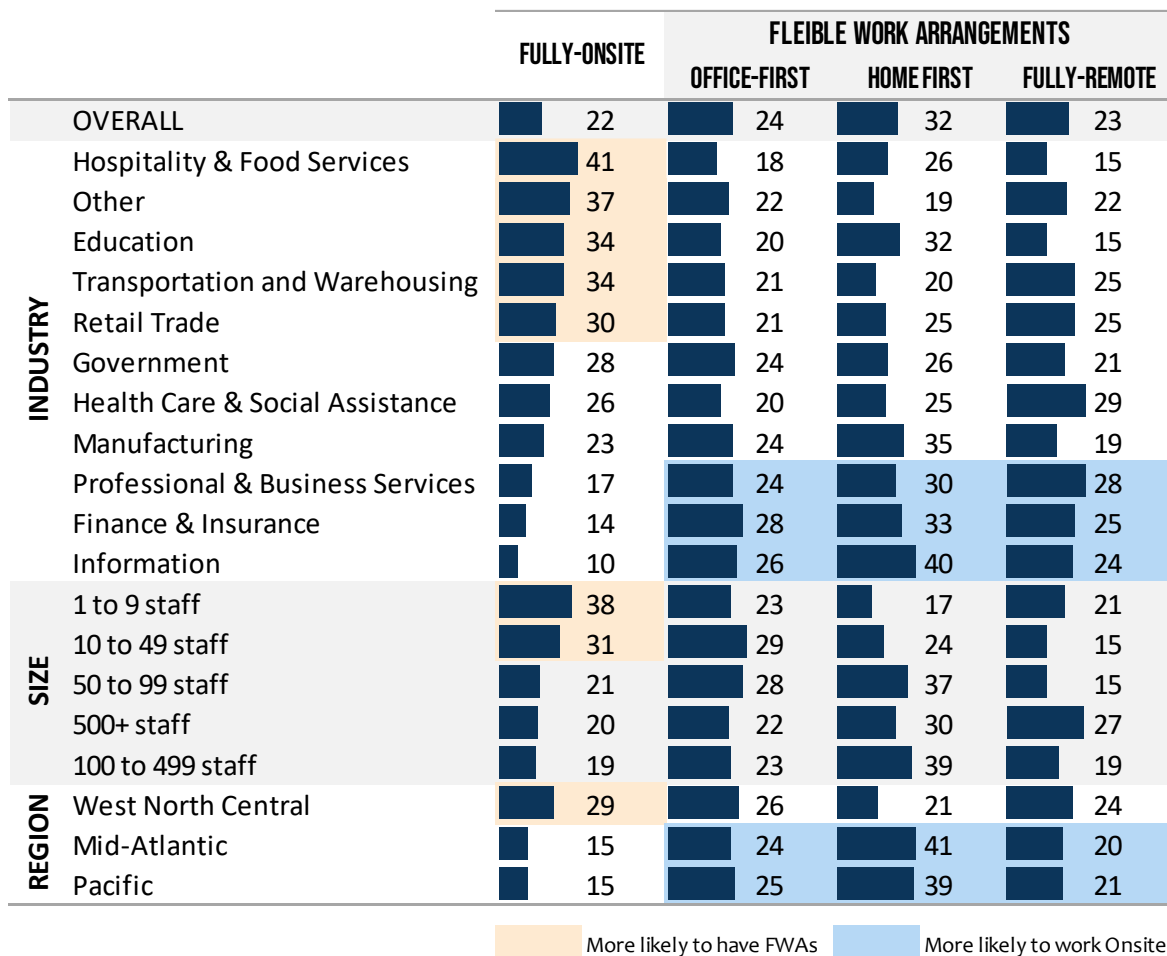
[5] Clarke, V., Braun, V., & Hayfield, N. (2015). Thematic analysis. Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods, 3, 222-248.

greater agreement on hybrid models. The survey questions focused on employee preferences and the plans communicated by their employers.

The findings highlight a significant gap between employers and employees regarding the future workplace. Only 15.1% of remote-capable employees expressed a desire to return to the office full-time, while significantly more (22.5%) of US employers with remote-capable employees want their employees back in the office full-time.

Cross-sectionally, we found that after adjusting for other employer characteristics, employers in hospitality and food services, education, retail trade, transportation and warehousing are more likely to have fully onsite work arrangements along with smaller employers, and those in the Pacific Region. Larger employers, those in the Atlantic regions and those in the professional and business services, finance and insurance, and information technology industries are more likely to have flexible work arrangements. (Appendix C)

Figure 2: The charted cross-sectional employer characteristics were found to be significantly different from the average while controlling for the other variables (see Appendix C)

| | | FULLY-ONSITE | FLEIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS | | |
			OFFICE-FIRST	HOME FIRST	FULLY-REMOTE
	OVERALL	22	24	32	23
INDUSTRY	Hospitality & Food Services	41	18	26	15
	Other	37	22	19	22
	Education	34	20	32	15
	Transportation and Warehousing	34	21	20	25
	Retail Trade	30	21	25	25
	Government	28	24	26	21
	Health Care & Social Assistance	26	20	25	29
	Manufacturing	23	24	35	19
	Professional & Business Services	17	24	30	28
	Finance & Insurance	14	28	33	25
	Information	10	26	40	24
SIZE	1 to 9 staff	38	23	17	21
	10 to 49 staff	31	29	24	15
	50 to 99 staff	21	28	37	15
	500+ staff	20	22	30	27
	100 to 499 staff	19	23	39	19
REGION	West North Central	29	26	21	24
	Mid-Atlantic	15	24	41	20
	Pacific	15	25	39	21

More likely to have FWAs   More likely to work Onsite

Advantages and Challenges of FWAs

Incorporating FWAs into the overall business strategy can prove advantageous in retaining talent since it is non-negotiable for more employees post-pandemic. SWAA participants were asked for their response to the requirement to return to the office full-time by their employer. The results showed that during the pandemic, 40% of respondents stated that they would either quit their job immediately or start looking for a WFH opportunity. Interestingly, post-pandemic, this percentage increased to 47%, indicating a 14% rise in the number of employees who would consider leaving their job due to the requirement of working full-time in the office.

Figure 3: Risk of attrition and opportunity for attraction.
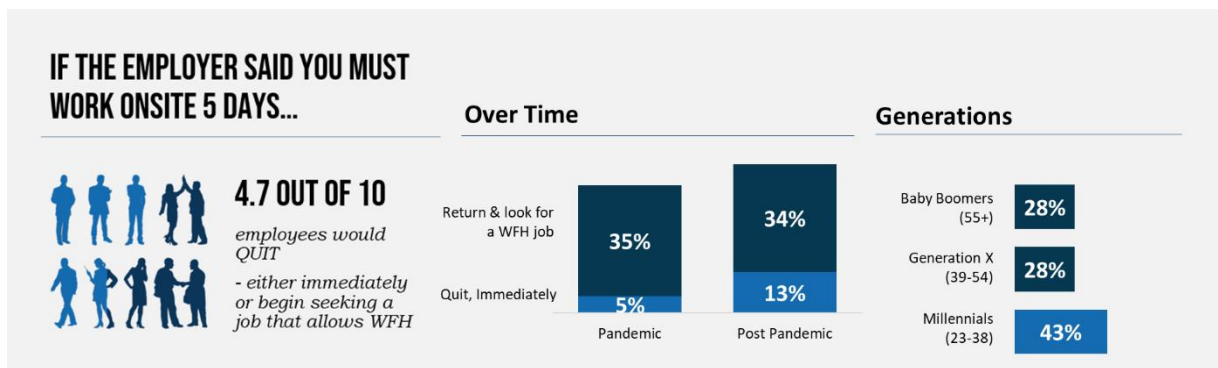
FWAs are a great way to increase the talent pool. SWAA asked respondents if they would consider pursuing a new job if guaranteed the opportunity to work from home. During the pandemic, 51% responded with a definite or probable yes. Post-pandemic, that number increased to 55%, an 11% rise. Employers who do not leverage FWA offerings may struggle to attract and retain their workforce.

Figure 4: Opportunity to attract and risk of attrition.
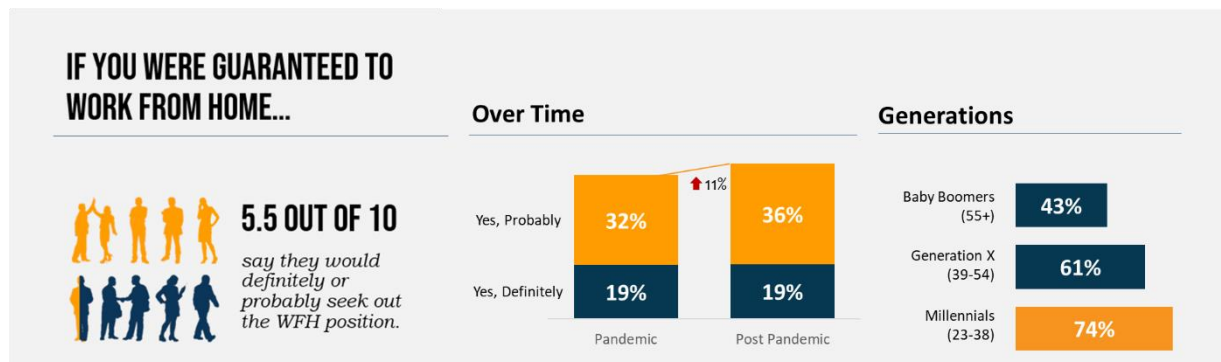
Gains and Losses in Efficiency. A January 2023 study across 27 countries found that working from home saved an average of 72 minutes per day in commute time. The study also predicted that post-pandemic, employees could save up to an additional hour per week by working from home. Out of the

time saved, 40% was found to be dedicated to work-related activities, while 11% was spent on caregiving. Those living in metropolitan areas and with children tended to save more time and allocate more of their leisure time to caregiving.[6] This better use of time saved is considered efficiency – not to be confused with productivity. Post-pandemic, SWAA asked about efficiency while working from home, 89% reported either the same or improved efficiency (Figure 7). Seventeen percent of respondents indicated a decrease in efficiency when working from home. Those who have jobs with numerous tasks that cannot be performed at home experienced an average decrease of 7.1%. Interruptions by adults can lead to an 8.4% decrease in efficiency on average, while the need for specialized equipment can result in a 5.4% average decrease (Appendix D).
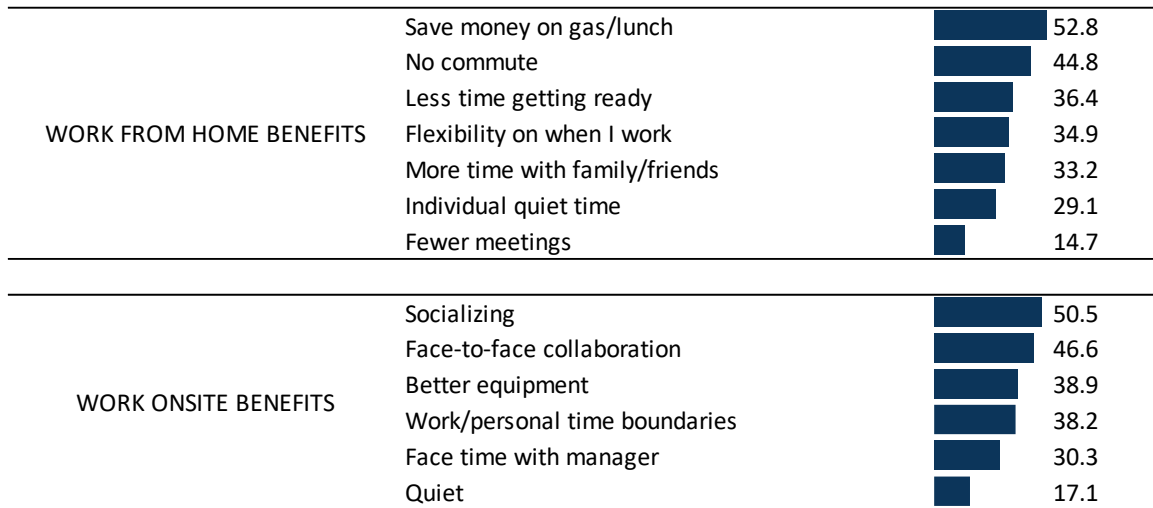
Those who worked from home and experienced fewer interruptions reported an average efficiency increase of 13.8%. Similarly, those who had fewer or shorter meetings while working remotely reported an average efficiency increase of 4.8%. Additionally, respondents found that mealtimes, chores, and childcare were more efficient by an average of 5.5%. Those with better home internet reported an average efficiency increase of 5.5%, while those with better equipment at home reported an average increase of 3.9%. Respondents also reported feeling less stressed at home, with an average increase in efficiency of 8.1%. However, those who required specialized equipment reported an average decrease in efficiency of -3.9%. Those whose jobs involved tasks that cannot be done remotely reported an average decrease in efficiency of -7.1% (Appendix D).

Benefits from working onsite as well as working from home. When asked about the top benefits of working at their employer's premises, most respondents cited socializing (51%) and face-to-face collaboration (47%). Other noteworthy benefits include access to better equipment and a quiet work environment, which may incentivize individuals to spend more time working onsite (Figure 6).

SWAA asked "What are the top benefits of working from home? Please choose up to three." The responses included "other" an open-ended response. Most employees (53%) cite money savings on gas and lunch expenses as the top benefits. Almost half of the respondents (45%) find it convenient and more efficient to avoid commuting to work. It is also noteworthy that 15% of employees view having fewer meetings as a significant benefit of working from home.

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[6] *Aksoy, C. G., Barrero, J. M., Bloom, N., Davis, S. J., Dolls, M., & Zarate, P. (2023). Time savings when working from home (No. w30866). National Bureau of Economic Research.*
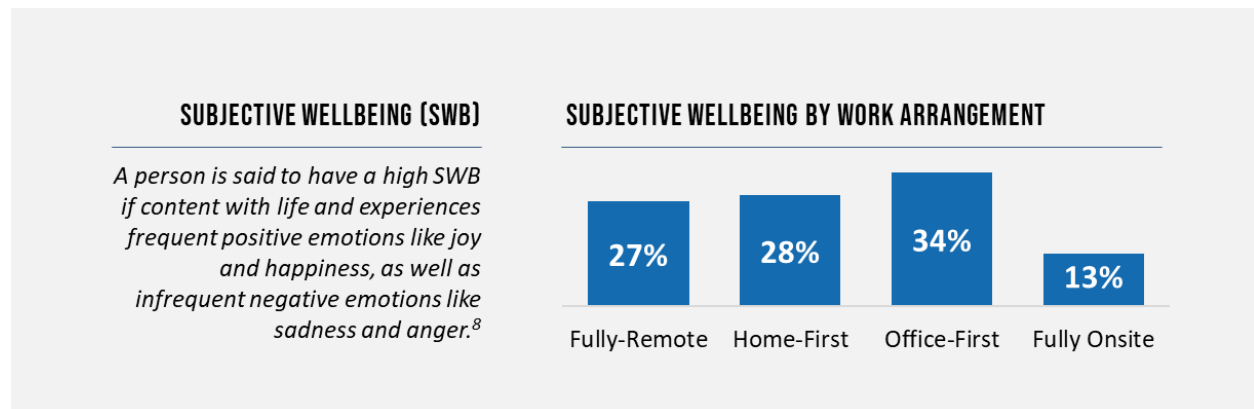
Figure 5: When asked to choose up to three,, most employees indicate benefit from onsite work for social and professional reasons and benefit from working from home for practical reasons.

WORK FROM HOME BENEFITS		
	Save money on gas/lunch	52.8
	No commute	44.8
	Less time getting ready	36.4
	Flexibility on when I work	34.9
	More time with family/friends	33.2
	Individual quiet time	29.1
	Fewer meetings	14.7

WORK ONSITE BENEFITS		
	Socializing	50.5
	Face-to-face collaboration	46.6
	Better equipment	38.9
	Work/personal time boundaries	38.2
	Face time with manager	30.3
	Quiet	17.1

FWAs are associated with happiness. Research has uncovered that subjective wellbeing (SWB) speaks of the individual's cognitive and affective assessments of happiness. SWB predicts favorable life outcomes, such as longevity and the capacity to handle stress, and is associated with favorable work outcomes such as productivity and tenure.[7]

Those who work fully onsite are less likely to rate their level of happiness as high. Those who work in an office-first arrangement, with 1-2 days working from home each week, are the most likely to have the highest possible SWB rating.

Figure 6: Respondents who reported they were working from home at least some of the time were more likely to report the highest levels of SWB (9 or 10 out of 10) compared to those who work fully onsite.

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING (SWB)

A person is said to have a high SWB if content with life and experiences frequent positive emotions like joy and happiness, as well as infrequent negative emotions like sadness and anger.[8]

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING BY WORK ARRANGEMENT

Fully-Remote	Home-First	Office-First	Fully Onsite
27%	28%	34%	13%

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[7] Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2002). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and life satisfaction. Handbook of positive psychology, 2, 63-73.

Additional Challenges

Aligning schedule with others. 75.3% have a manager onsite on the same days and 77.8% have most of their co-workers working onsite on the same days post-pandemic. This did not differ from pandemic numbers.

Proximity Bias & Inequality. In comparison to those who work fully onsite, 46% of respondents believe that working fully remote will hurt their chances of a promotion in the next three years. In addition, there is growing concern that proximity bias will result in disparities between remote and in-office employees, as well as entrenched racial and gender-based structural inequities.

Flexibility. During the pandemic from July 2020 to January 2022, a survey revealed that 32.7% of employees had the option to work from home. 24.7% were given company-wide anchor days, while 22.8% had arrangements dependent on their team. 15.6% were in arrangements set by the organization, and 4.1% had not communicated their plan to employees.

When deciding their work-from-home schedule post-pandemic, employees consider various factors such as coordination with coworkers (50.0%), spouses (44.4%), and customers/clients (49.3%). They also consider the hassle of commuting during less congested periods (38.5%).

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Data Inclusion Criteria

Comparative case studies involve a systematic analysis of multiple cases to identify patterns, similarities, and differences across them. Through this research method, researchers can draw conclusions about the generalizability of findings beyond a single case and test theories across various contexts. Yin (2002) defined a case study as:

> *"A contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context."*[16]

According to Yin, the case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates the "how" or "why" questions concerning the phenomenon of interest. R.E. Stake defines a case as "both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning" in his book *The Art of Case Study Design*.[8] In contrast to Yin, who proposes a very rigid and structured design for the case study method, Stake advocates for a flexible design that permits researchers to make modifications as they move through all phases of the study. The approach in this study is a combination of the two approaches.

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[8] Stake, R. E. (1995). The art of case study research. sage.

CAPITAL ONE

Capital One is a publicly owned company in the commercial bank industry, headquartered in McLean, Virginia. It employs nearly 49,000 people in the US and has consistently ranked in Fortune's "100 Best Companies to Work For" for 17 years. Although it laid off more than 1,000 tech workers in January 2023, the company is still recognized for its dedication to supporting its workforce and being attentive to their needs.[9]

Capital One follows a split-week model, where Mondays and Fridays are designated as remote workdays for employees to work from home, on-site, or at the location of their choice. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are anchor days for on-site work, with fully remote exceptions requiring approval from senior executives.

On Mondays and Fridays, Capital One offices remain open, providing limited services for independent work and skill-building, networking with colleagues from other parts of the country, and project advancement. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are fully open for collaboration and spending time together.

Teams have the flexibility to develop their schedules and practices to cater to their unique needs, and Capital One also offers a compressed workweek option where employees can work a full 40-hour week in fewer than five days.

Benefits

Capital One discovered that remote work was highly effective and empowering during pandemic shutdowns. Shorter commutes and improved everyday routines have made it possible for their workforce to better balance their work and personal lives. Through remote work arrangements, employees are said to feel more productive, effective, and engaged. On the other hand, on-site work offers opportunities for planned collaboration, innovation, and mentorship. As stated on their career site,

> *"Our lives don't always fit around a 9-to-5 work schedule. In a virtual setting, we can better balance our work around life's demands, allowing most of our associates to feel productive, effective, and engaged."[10]*

Challenges

In April 2023, Axios Richmond wrote that a Capital One spokesperson reported a shortage of on-site employees, which is negatively impacting the overall experience and efficiency of collaboration for those who are present. To address this issue, Capital One has clarified its policies to stipulate that all employees in the hybrid model must spend approximately half of their time onsite while maintaining Mondays and Fridays as remote days for the entire organization.[11]

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[9] *Capital One Financial* | *Fortune*
[10] *A hybrid work model at Capital One |capitalonecareers.com*
[11] *Capital One wants workers back in the office*

Supports

Capital One offers various resources to support team resilience and development, including a corporate resource group dedicated to assisting employees who balance work and caregiving. Additionally, the company encourages regular self-care by providing an incentive for staff to take a day off each month.

Capital One prioritizes mental health by providing five free sessions per year for employees. Moreover, the company values work-life balance by offering 15 days of free backup childcare for time off.

According to Rich Fairbank, the founder and CEO of Capital One, these programs were implemented in response to the changes brought about by the pandemic. However, they remain an integral part of the company's commitment to supporting its employees' well-being. He says,

> *"We have seen what we can achieve together, whether in-person around a conference room table or on a checkerboard screen at a kitchen table."* [1]

HUBSPOT

HubSpot is a customer relationship management (CRM) platform based in Cambridge, Massachusetts that provides software and support to a variety of companies. Despite a 7% layoff in January 2023, HubSpot is still on the Best Companies list for the fourth year and is committed to innovation and data-driven HR strategies. Their 2023 Hybrid Work Report[12] explores how to build a connected workforce in a hybrid world.[13]

The Way They Work

At HubSpot, employees choose their preferred work option once a year. There are three options available. For 2023, 63% of employees chose the "Home-First" option, which involves working mostly from home and visiting the office 1-2 times every three months. "Office-First," or "@office" was selected by 8% of employees for 2023, where employees choose to be in the office full time. The third option is the "Split-Week" option, also known as "@flex," where employees spend three or more days onsite each week. 28% of employees opted for "@flex" for the upcoming year.[14]

While HubSpot does not provide the option for a compressed work week, they do offer flexible work hours to accommodate their employees' needs.

Benefits

Balance is highly individualized. With flexibility and the stipend, employees can hire a babysitter for a night out, work out on the treadmill, practice yoga, have someone clean their house, have groceries delivered, or do whatever is most important to them. The addition of flexible hours allows employees to change their schedules to fit the demands of their families. It enables employees to devote time to self-care.

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[12] *2023 Hybrid Work Report | Hubspot*
[13] *HubSpot Best Companies | Fortune*
[14] *Flexible Schedule | HubSpot*

Employees can better pursue interests outside of work at their most productive periods. Furthermore, rush hour can be avoided, saving employees both money and time. This gives employees a sense of autonomy and can be incorporated into the strategy to recruit and retain top talent.[15]

Challenges

Through surveys and research, HubSpot became aware that relationship-building and establishing connections are the biggest challenges. From HubSpot's research on hybrid work arrangements,

> *"Just as there's no uniform approach to building a hybrid company, the experience of meaningful connection varies, too. People feel connection differently and therefore there's not one single solution to improving connection across your workforce. The opportunity as we see it is to rebuild how we foster connection by offering a variety of tools, resources, and moments to do so."*[16]

Supports

Although the workforce is dispersed, HubSpot provides a proper workspace for every work option. They ensure that the work-from-home setup for employees is safe, reliable, and conducive to the employees' success. @office employees are provided with a dedicated desk, laptop, monitor, plants, and other personalization onsite. @flex employees are provided with a "hotel desk" at the office and a work-from-home setup. In addition, @home and @flex employees are provided with a monthly stipend.

HubSpot provides its employees with creative and diverse community-building opportunities as well as relevant manager training. HubSpot provides mental health coverage and eight complimentary sessions per year.

At HubSpot, the Director of Culture plays a vital role in ensuring that our company culture is not limited to physical locations but is instead founded upon our values, employees, and corporate objectives. They strive to be intentional in creating an environment where their employees can experience the culture without the need to be physically present in an office. This involves actively seeking employee feedback, experimenting with new ideas, and remaining adaptable. As Director of Culture Eimear Marrinan emphasizes, *culture can flourish without the confines of four walls.*

STRYKER

Stryker is a medical technology company based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, with 25,808 employees in the US. The company has a high employee satisfaction rate, with 89% of employees saying it is a great place to work compared to the typical US-based company. This is partially due to Stryker's focus on company culture and its emphasis on promoting an inclusive environment, which is reflected in the recently updated code of conduct.[17]

The Way They Work

Some Stryker positions are remote-first, where employees work from a different location for the majority to all of the time. Some occupations necessitate travel, yet employees cannot work outside the

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[15] *Flexible Schedule | HubSpot*

[16] *Hybrid Work Report | HubSpot*

[17] *Stryker Best Companies | Fortune*

country of their job posting. Other roles require 100% onsite work at a Stryker facility. Depending on the function, level, and job needs, some flexibility may be feasible in these roles. This model would apply to manufacturing occupations as well as any role that requires physical presence at the office. Some roles use the hybrid model. Those roles are partially remote and partially at a Stryker location. The expectations for scheduling are set by managers and supervisors.

Stryker also has field-based positions where a majority to 100% of the work hours are spent at customer facilities. This includes most sales roles that have a set territory or Stryker also has field-based positions where most work hours are spent at client sites. Most sales roles have a specified region or an expectation to travel inside a set boundary.

Benefits
Stryker states that flexibility helps the mission to attract and retain top talent and empowers each of our businesses to maximize productivity and engagement with remote and flexible ways of working.

Challenges
This kind of flexibility requires additional coordination for inter-team interactions. It could create a rift between the assigned on-site employees and remote workers. Not all options are offered across the board; work-life integration depends on the role and how it creates value at Stryker.

Supports
Stryker's stance is that they trust employees, in conjunction with their managers, to determine appropriate ways of working that meet individual and business needs. In addition, they provide employees and managers with the tools and skills necessary to be productive, effective, and engaged in a remote and flexible environment. Stryker encourages employee and leader independence in determining the best practices for individual and organizational requirements.[18] Stryker offers mental health coverage and five free mental health sessions per year.

HILTON

Hilton has been named Second on the "Best Company to Work For" list in the US by Great Place to Work and Fortune. It's the highest-ranked hospitality company on the list. Hilton offers workplace flexibility to both corporate employees and frontline workers.

The Way They Work
Hilton's corporate personnel can work remotely. What is unique is they can use Hilton's travel privileges and work from anywhere. With an understanding that flexibility entails more than simply choosing whether to work onsite or remotely, Hilton has implemented a program that allows employees to receive their salaries as they accrue instead of waiting until the end of a pay cycle. Workers value these flexible options greatly. According to a Hilton employee based in the United States:

> *"Certain months, every bill just happens to line up on the same day. It's nice to be able to use DailyPay to be certain that, not only are our bills for the month covered, but so are everyday necessities."*[19]

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[18] Work Flexibility | Stryker
[19] World's Best Workplaces Invest in Well-Being, Flexibility, and Equity*| Great Places to Work*

Hilton offers a flexible employment arrangement they call "SuperFlex." This model enables Call Center employees to determine their own work hours and schedules. Full-time U.S. employees have the option of taking sabbaticals, arranging a condensed work week, or taking temporary unpaid leave while maintaining their full benefits. The scheduling of frontline employees in advance affords them greater flexibility to balance their personal and professional obligations. Additionally, employees have access to skills training that can sometimes be completed at home.

Benefits

Hilton recognizes that providing these innovative flexibility options helps to retain and engage employees while increasing productivity.[20] Providing employees with on-demand access to their wages can increase loyalty. Allowing employees to select their work hours, schedule, and even department encourages innovative contributions.

Many personnel in the hospitality industry are responsible for providing services on-site. By providing flexibility in terms of days, hours, pay, and location for frontline employees, Hilton becomes more competitive for talent. It is uncommon to offer training days away from home or in another part of the world, but doing so goes a long way toward fostering employee loyalty.

Challenges

Scheduling can be a challenge for teams with flexible work arrangements, but it is less of a challenge than employee shortages. Laura Fuentes, Hilton's chief human resources officer, says one of her biggest challenges in an employee-driven market is providing the desired flexibility for workers in an industry that depends on in-person work.

Supports

Hilton states that flexibility is something that has and will continue to change and evolve with its workforce.[21] By prioritizing family wellbeing and the pursuit of hobbies and passions outside of work, leadership promotes work-life balance and professional development. Hilton has a continuing education platform to assist employees in upskilling and achieving their educational aspirations.

Hilton empowers employees to work on a schedule that suits them and their teams, and they provide flexible alternatives to help them be more productive. They also recognize that employees care not only for themselves but also for those closest to them, whether they be children, parents, siblings, pets, or anyone else who requires care. In response to iterations of employee feedback, they provide support to all sorts of caregivers. Hilton emphasizes mental health with coverage and free sessions and requires managers to receive training to support their staff.

Summary of Case Study Findings

Our analysis of numerous cases showed that businesses are adjusting their policies and procedures in response to the demands of the labor market, employees, and business objectives. These modifications include the provision of workplace flexibility, such as the option to work from home or flexible hours. In every case study we reviewed, employees worked both on-site and remotely. Employers discovered that this arrangement resulted in lower utility and physical space costs while fostering effective team communication and collaboration. In addition, some companies mentioned the tax benefits lost by

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[20] _How Hilton is enabling flexible work for frontline employees | Fortune_
[21] _Hilton Earns #2 Spot on Best Companies to Work For List in the US_

office-based employees. The specific arrangements varied based on the nature of the work, the required level of collaboration, organizational goals, and employee preferences. While some companies require employees to be in the office on specific days, others allow employees to choose their days for greater flexibility. In addition, while some organizations had fixed work hours, others provided more flexible options.

Employers in the study warned against the potential for a disconnect between employees and the organization due to limited communication, which is often only for work-related purposes. To bridge this gap, it is important to establish regular communication and maintain personal relationships with employees. Another common focus was the prioritization of the emotional wellbeing of their employees. All offered mental health coverage as well as a limited number of free mental health sessions per year. To strategize and stay current, it is crucial to regularly connect with employees on a personal level to comprehend their needs and goals. This helps cultivate a robust company culture and encourages loyalty.

Scheduling. Effective scheduling helps hybrid teams coordinate and maximize on-site collaboration. Organizations can foster meaningful and enjoyable teamwork by planning schedules. Hybrid team scheduling ensures that employees don't have to come to work if no one else is. Teamwork is enhanced by scheduling on-site collaboration. Employees can collaborate, brainstorm, and discuss when they know their coworkers will be there. Better problem-solving, decision-making, and project progress boost productivity.

Scheduling on-site collaboration optimizes resource use. Companies can maximize the use of expensive office spaces, equipment, and facilities by having employees work together at specific times. This reduces costs and optimizes asset allocation.

Workplace Environment. When it comes to a work environment, these top companies prioritized a pleasant and comfortable space both in the office and virtually. By expanding collaborative spaces, improving the office design, and incorporating natural elements like plants and natural light, morale and productivity can be improved. Additionally, it's helpful to have quiet spaces, moveable furniture, and flexible seating so that individuals and groups can work in a way that best suits them.

For remote and in-person teams, it's important to have high-quality video conferencing, interactive displays, and reliable internet for seamless communication. It's also beneficial to discuss workspace preferences with hybrid teammates through surveys or focus groups to improve the workspace design. Prioritizing these factors and hybrid team workspace design can foster collaboration, flexibility, inclusivity, productivity, creativity, and well-being for all team members, no matter where they are located.

Remote Work Environment. With the rise of remote work, it has become equally essential to create a pleasant and comfortable remote work environment. Companies are investing in dependable communication and collaboration tools, providing remote workers with the necessary apparatus and IT security, and providing support for issues related to remote work. Only one company spoke of a residential risk assessment to identify the potential dangers associated with remote work.

Overall, investing in creating a pleasurable and comfortable work environment, both in the office and remotely, demonstrates a commitment to employee well-being and can lead to greater job satisfaction, employee engagement, loyalty, and productivity.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to a study by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, remote work, flexible work schedules, and compressed work schedules are widely employed in tandem to provide employees with additional flexibility. Employers who are less liberal with FWAs may compensate their employees with higher pay rates, according to the data.[22]

The feature that makes work arrangements most effective is one that values flexibility. Multiple studies indicated that employees with flexible schedules had higher levels of well-being, engagement, and organizational commitment than those with nonflexible schedules.[23,24,25] Employers should also be aware that the severity of this influence varies according to the degree of flexibility.

Employees who can manage their schedules flexibly use their time more effectively, avoiding potentially negative results such as burnout.[26] Individual wellbeing suffers when work hours are not scheduled according to the employee's chosen schedule.[27] Employees who can manage their schedules flexibly make better use of their time, avoiding potentially negative outcomes such as fatigue and burnout. When work hours are not scheduled according to the employee's preferred schedule, individual well-being suffers. However, these studies are limited due to constantly changing working conditions and varying flexible working time models, necessitating iterative research and agility.

As a result of significant shifts in the workplace, it is taking longer than expected to find a balance that works for both employers and employees. Competing desires are a fundamental aspect of capitalism and have always existed. However, we have a unique opportunity to analyze and discuss these desires in the hopes of discovering something new. Instead of settling for bitter compromises, we can strive for a better, more balanced, and more profitable workplace that benefits everyone involved.

Employers can ensure that they are implementing arrangements that benefit both the organization and their employees by researching the best practices for flexible work arrangements post-pandemic. Flexibility should evolve with the workforce and agility is important. Overall, an iterative investigation is essential for ensuring the success and viability of flexible work arrangements post-pandemic.

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[22] *Dalton, M., & Groen, J. A. (2022). Telework during the COVID-19 pandemic: estimates using the 2021 Business Response Survey. Monthly Lab. Rev., 1.*

[23] *Kattenbach, R., Demerouti, E., & Nachreiner, F. (2010). Flexible working times: effects on employees' exhaustion, work-nonwork conflict and job performance. Career Development International, 15(3), 279-295.*

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[25] *De Menezes, L.M.; Kelliher, C. Flexible working and performance: A systematic review of the evidence for a business case. Int. J. Manag. Rev. 2011, 13, 452–474.*

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[27] *Golden, L.; Henly, J.; Lambert, S. Work schedule flexibility: A contributor to employee happiness? J. Soc. Res. Policy 2014.*

EMPLOYER GUIDANCE

To provide actionable guidance for employers, IBI consulted HR executives from its more than 1800 members about their recommendations. In those discussions, it was clear that there were differences in experiences in terms of changes, demographic preferences, and push-back from employees. This highlights the fact that there is "no one size fits all" solution. Finding your organization's preferences by engaging with the workforce is critical for post-pandemic flexible work arrangements because it provides significant information regarding the effectiveness and long-term viability of various types of flexible work arrangements. Employers can use this information to make informed judgments about which arrangements to apply and how to adjust them to their own organizational needs.

The culture of the pre-pandemic workplace no longer exists, many strategies can be employed to meet the needs of today's workers. The environment indeed influences behavior, but you cannot anticipate a return to the pre-pandemic culture. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to revolutionize culture. Mental health, well-being, isolation, and disconnectedness are all of concern. Some strategies noted include:

Connectedness and Autonomy
Employers need to foster a balance of employee autonomy and connection in virtual work environments.
- The US Surgeon General recently released a report on loneliness, which has sparked discussions among employers about the potential negative impact of remote work on social isolation.
- Some employers believe that employees may not want remote work, but rather the choice to work remotely or in the office to balance connection and autonomy.
- Those who could work remotely but are required to report to the office may be less engaged due to their lack of autonomy.
- Social isolation can be a problem with remote work but giving employees a choice can help.

Employers need to prioritize employee engagement and collaboration to facilitate connections in virtual teams.

Communication/Technology
- Employers may help virtual employees connect by encouraging online forums, virtual social gatherings, and team-building activities. These events allow employees to bond, share stories, and bond beyond work.
- Providing staff with trustworthy and easy-to-use communication solutions for seamless collaboration.
- Encouraging real-time collaboration technologies including instant messaging, video conferencing, and project management.

Connectedness and Socializing
- Meeting often to review progress, problems, and open communication. These meetings can foster camaraderie, cross-functional teamwork, and employee networking.
- Offering virtual coffee breaks, mentorship programs, and cross-departmental collaboration. Virtual networking can promote knowledge sharing, innovation, and cross-departmental collaboration.

Recognition out loud
- Celebrating employees' accomplishments, milestones, and contributions online.
- Recognizing employees' contributions through virtual events, team shout-outs, or personalized messages builds gratitude and belonging.

Health and Well-being
- Promoting and normalizing employee well-being and self-care.
- Providing resources to take breaks, practice mindfulness, or participate in virtual wellness activities.

Modeling the Culture
- Set the tone by participating in virtual discussions, being available for virtual meetings, and communicating openly. Employers can encourage employee interaction by exhibiting inclusive conduct.

By intentionally implementing strategies, employers can create a virtual work environment that fosters connection, collaboration, and a sense of belonging among employees. This, in turn, can enhance employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall team effectiveness in virtual settings.
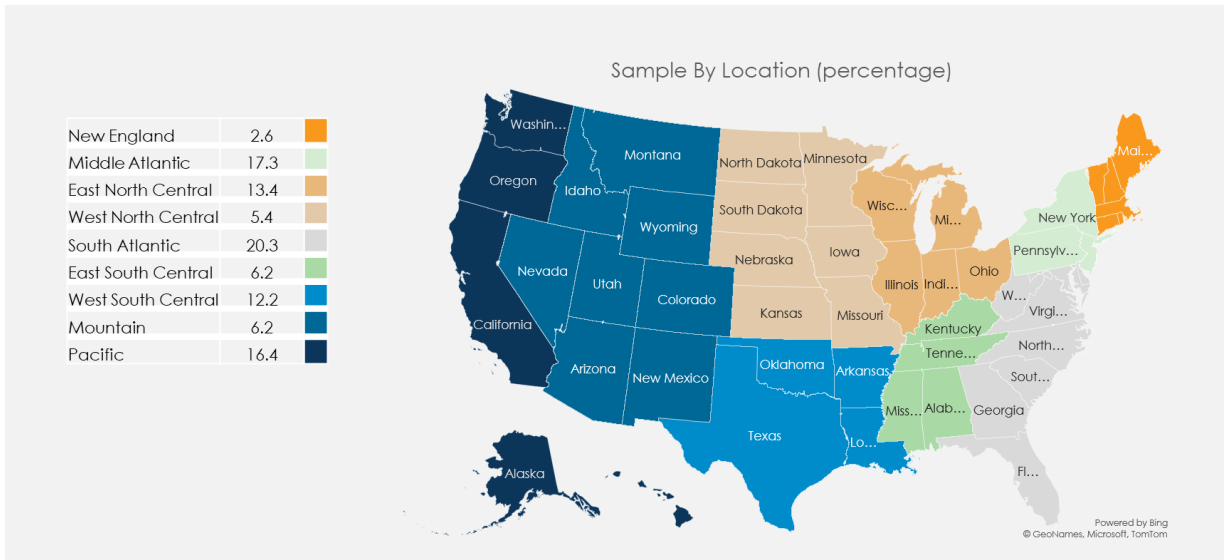
APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Sample Characteristics

	Demographic	Percent of Weighted Sample N = 48,913	95% CI (LB, UB)
Gender	Female	52.4	(47.2, 56.1)
	Male	47.2	(43.5, 52.4)
	Non-Binary	0.4	(0.3, 0.5)
*Generation/ Age Group	Generation Z (20-22)	0	(0, 0)
	Millennials (23-38)	51.1	(48.5, 53.7)
	Generation X (39-54)	25.4	(23.2, 27.8)
	Baby Boomers (55+)	23.5	(21.4, 25.7)
Race/Ethnicity	Black or African American	14.7	(14, 15.6)
	Hispanic (of any race)	6.5	(6, 6.9)
	Asian	2.8	(2.5, 3)
	Native American or Alaska Native	1.3	(1.1, 1.4)
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.5	(0.4, 0.6)
	White (non-Hispanic)	72.7	(71.2, 74.1)
	Other	1.7	(1.5, 1.8)
Education	Less than High School	1.8	(1, 3.2)
	High-school graduate	23.3	(19.6, 27)
	1 to 3-years college	24.3	(20.5, 28.2)
	Bachelor's Degree	26.5	(23.1, 30.7)
	Graduate Degree	24.1	(20.5, 28.5)
Income	$10k to $19.9k	4.2	(2.8, 6.1)
	$20k to $49.9k	34.3	(29.6, 38.3)
	$50k to $99.9k	30.5	(26.9, 34.6)
	$100k to $149.9k	16.8	(13.9, 20.8)
	$150k+	14.2	(11.3, 18.1)
Occupation	Armed Forces	1.4	(1.2, 1.5)
	Construction and Extraction	7.1	(6.4, 8)
	Farming, Fishing and Forestry	1.2	(1.1, 1.3)
	Installation, Maintenance and Repair	3.4	(3.2, 3.7)
	Management, Business and Financial	16.7	(15.6, 17.9)
	Office and Administrative Support	10.3	(9.8, 10.9)
	Production	6.3	(6, 6.7)
	Professional and related	9.2	(8.7, 9.8)
	Sales and related	8.5	(7.9, 9)
	Service	10.9	(10.4, 11.5)
	Transportation and material moving	3.3	(3, 3.6)
Manage	Yes	48.9	(45.3, 52.4)
	No	34.9	(31.6, 38.3)
	Yes, but rarely	16.3	(15.5, 17.1)

Age Groups | Pew Research

	Demographic	Percent of Sample	95% CI
		N= 48,913	(LB, UB)
Industry	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	1.4	(1.3, 1.5)
	Arts, Ent, and Rec, Hosp	2.2	(2.1, 2.4)
	Finance and Insurance	9.6	(8.8, 10.3)
	Construction	9.8	(9.3, 11)
	Educational Services	8.5	(8, 9)
	Healthcare & Social Services	13.1	(12.1, 13.7)
	Hospital	6.1	(5.4, 6.5)
	Information	6.3	(5.8, 7)
	Manufacturing	8.5	(7.9, 9)
	Mining	0.3	(0.3, 0.4)
	Professional Services	12.8	(12, 13.1)
	Real Estate	1.6	(1.5, 1.7)
	Retail Trade	8.1	(7.4, 8.6)
	Transportation	4.5	(4.1, 4.8)
	Utilities	1.2	(1.2, 1.4)
	Wholesale Trade	1.3	(1.2, 1.4)
	Public Admin	4.2	(3.9, 4.5)
	Other	0.5	(0.7, 1)
Company Size	1 to 9	8.1	(5.7, 6.8)
	10 to 49	4.5	(11.9, 13.5)
	50 to 99	1.2	(13.2, 14.4)
	100 to 499	1.3	(23, 24.8)
	500+	4.2	(42.1, 44.8)

Sample By Location (percentage)

Region	Percentage
New England	2.6
Middle Atlantic	17.3
East North Central	13.4
West North Central	5.4
South Atlantic	20.3
East South Central	6.2
West South Central	12.2
Mountain	6.2
Pacific	16.4

APPENDIX B: Average Percentage of Respondents Pandemic Compared to Post-Pandemic

		Pandemic	Post-Pandemic
		May 2020 - Aug 2022	Sept 2022 - March 2023
Employee Desired Work Arrangement	Fully Onsite	18.3	15.1
	Office First (1 to 2 days WFH) *	23.5	25.7
	Home-First (3 to 4 days WFH) *	27.1	30.7
	Fully Remote	31.1	28.5
Employers' Planned Work Arrangement *(with clear plans)*	Fully Onsite	19.8	19.8
	Office First (1 to 2 days WFH) *	21.9	28.8
	Home-First (3 to 4 days WFH) *	28.8	21.9
	Fully Remote*	20.5	20.5

Statistically Significant Different, p < 0.05

APPENDIX C: Multivariate Logistic Regression Results for Flexible Work Arrangements

		% with Flexible Work Arrangements	Odds Ratio N=32,952	95% CI (LB, UB)	
	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	76.9	1	base	
	Arts & Entertainment	80.2	0.73	(0.49, 1.06)	
	Finance & Insurance	86.3	0.37	(0.27, 0.51)	***
	Construction	84	0.96	(0.71, 1.3)	
	Education	66.2	1.56	(1.15, 2.11)	***
	Health Care & Social Assistance	73.8	1.6	(1.19, 2.15)	***
	Hospitality & Food Services	58.9	3.61	(2.62, 4.97)	***
	Information	90.2	0.26	(0.19, 0.37)	***
	Manufacturing	76.8	1.95	(1.44, 2.64)	***
Industry	Mining	76.2	0.99	(0.52, 1.86)	
	Professional & Business Services	82.7	0.65	(0.48, 0.87)	***
	Real Estate	75.7	1.08	(0.74, 1.59)	
	Retail Trade	70.5	2.99	(2.2, 4.08)	***
	Transportation and Warehousing	66.2	2.96	(2.14, 4.09)	***
	Utilities	80.2	1.05	(0.71, 1.57)	
	Wholesale Trade	79.5	0.69	(0.46, 1.03)	*
	Government	71.9	1.43	(1.04, 1.97)	**
	Other	62.8	2.11	(1.27, 3.49)	***
	0 to 9 staff	61.6	1	base	
	10 to 49 staff	68.6	0.68	(0.58, 0.8)	***
Company Size	50 to 99 staff	79.2	0.45	(0.38, 0.53)	***
	100 to 499 staff	81.3	0.5	(0.43, 0.58)	***
	500+ staff	80.1	0.62	(0.54, 0.72)	***
	New England	71.9	1	base	
	Mid-Atlantic	84.8	0.69	(0.56, 0.84)	***
	East North Central	74.9	1.14	(0.92, 1.4)	
	West North Central	71.2	1.32	(1.05, 1.65)	**
	South Atlantic	75.1	0.89	(0.72, 1.08)	
Region	East South Central	68.9	1.22	(0.97, 1.54)	*
	West South Central	74.1	1	(0.81, 1.23)	
	Mountain	72.5	1.11	(0.88, 1.39)	
	Pacific	84.9	0.54	(0.44, 0.67)	***
	Constant		1.77	(1.24, 2.53)	***

$***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1$

APPENDIX D: Multiple Regression of Efficiency Changes

Percentage less efficient when WFH	Coefficient (% Efficiency)	95% CI	
	N=3,046	(LB, UB)	
Job requires specialized equipment	-3.93	(-5.36, -2.5)	***
Involves many tasks can't be done remotely	-7.08	(-8.34, -5.81)	***
No, do not live with adult	base		
Yes, partner/adult children	-6.42	(-7.9, -4.95)	***
Yes, roommates/other	-10.60	(-13.22, -7.97)	***
No, do not live with child/children	base		
Yes, youngest in pre-/primary	-0.78	(-2.66, 1.11)	
Yes, youngest in ES	0.76	(-1.2, 2.73)	
Yes, youngest is in MS	-2.32	(-5.51, 0.88)	
Yes, youngest is in HS	1.88	(-0.65, 4.4)	
20 - 29	base		
30 - 39	-10.40	(-12.29, -8.52)	***
40 - 49	-10.71	(-12.61, -8.82)	***
50 – 64	-12.65	(-14.39, -10.91)	***
Male	base		
Female	-5.11	(-6.27, -3.96)	***
Non-Binary/Other	-9.45	(-14.87, -4.03)	***

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1, R-squared = 0.7202

Percentage more efficient when WFH	Coefficient (% Efficiency)	95% CI	
	N=9,900	(LB, UB)	
Home is quieter with fewer interruptions	13.81	(13.08, 14.53)	***
Fewer/shorter meetings when WFH	4.78	(4.03, 5.53)	***
Mealtimes, chores, and/or childcare	5.47	(4.71, 6.24)	***
Home internet is better	5.46	(4.58, 6.34)	***
Better equipment at home	3.91	(2.91, 4.91)	***
Feel less stressed at home	8.07	(7.14, 9)	***