

Policy Considerations for Remote Work
By Jane E Callahan and Mary E Baker, ***HR Alternatives***

Many of us believe that remote work, in one form or another, is here to stay. Not too long ago, working from home was a non-negotiable for many employers who expressed concerns for accountability, productivity, workers compensation and equity. Perhaps a silver lining in our collective experience with COVID, is the unequivocal evidence that remote work truly can “work” for employees and employers. When forced to “make it happen” these past three years, many of those same employers recognized savings in office related expenses, equal and sometimes greater productivity, and added technology solutions that enhanced communication and maintained company culture. Those companies are now committed to maintaining some form of hybrid work schedule as COVID restrictions change. Furthermore, employees have tasted the long sought-after flexibility in schedules, and a greater ability to prioritize the things that mean the most to them; and they want to maintain that. Employers providing little flexibility will find themselves at a significant competitive disadvantage.

Over half (58%) recently surveyed by [McKinsey & Company](#) had the option of working from home at least one day per week. When given the option of working remotely, 87% of those surveyed will take it.

Employers are also getting creative with jobs that cannot be performed remotely, such as manufacturing, and call center jobs. The focus is on the question “how can we make your job easier?”. With employee input, creative work schedules are being tested. In one example, while the front office is home on Friday, the production area has shifted to a four-day work week.

Consider the following for implementing a successful hybrid work schedule.

- Identifying the critical needs of the department and how they will be met with a hybrid workforce.
- Outlining the needs of internal and external customers and how they will be met.
- Identifying when in person interaction and coordination of work is essential.
- Identifying when immediate access to documents or information located only in the workplace is essential.
- Identifying specific days when all staff should be onsite together, even for a brief period of time.

Be careful not to adjust pay for remote workers before ensuring that there is no disparate impact on a protected group such as women, those with disabilities or long-term health conditions, older workers, etc. Ask yourself if there is a true need to adjust pay. According to the same survey, just 4% of organizations have actually reduced pay or benefits for those predominantly working from home.

Ensure that non-exempt workers record hours worked, take rest and meal breaks, and adhere to company overtime policies.

Clearly outline job expectations including communication, work hours, quantity, quality and timeliness of deliverables. Outline professional conduct, telephone, email and virtual meeting protocols.

Outline reporting responsibilities when working remotely.

[***HR Alternatives***](#) is an independent Human Resources and Management Consulting firm located in southeastern Massachusetts.