



# Post-Pandemic HR Trends and The Impact on Women

There is a lot of optimism that the pandemic will end later this year and that life will return to some semblance of normalcy. Even with our hopes for an end to the pandemic, however, the future landscape of the work environment is forever changed in many ways.

As Microsoft's CEO Satya Nadella recently pointed out, "We have seen two years' worth of digital transformation in two months." As business owners, it is important to look at some of the trends and begin to prepare for how we would like our companies to operate when it is safe to start gathering again.

Some of these trends may be positive, especially around the ability to work from home. As a mom who raised four children while building a company, I am excited to see the pandemic forcing more of an acceptance to a hybrid or work-from-home workforce.

A large majority (82%) of executives say they intend to let employees work remotely at least part of the time, according to a survey by Gartner Inc. and 47% say they will allow employees to work remotely full-time.

Giving employees more flexibility in choosing when and where they work can help to increase gender equality in the workforce. It has long been established that remote work can help parents better balance their work and family obligations, which makes them less likely to sacrifice one for the other. It has also been shown from data collected during the pandemic that fathers are becoming more involved at home. Couples are more equally sharing family responsibilities than they did before the pandemic.

The ability to work remotely can also create many opportunities when it comes to hiring. With 36% of companies now saying they are willing to hire workers

who are 100% remote and live anywhere in the U.S. or even international, there is no longer a barrier of trying to find the most qualified candidate in your region or paying to relocate employees and their families.

However, having fully remote employees brings on other challenges, especially if they are working in different time zones. Technology is a great resource, as we have witnessed, with the ability to use video conferences so that we can see team members and have more efficient meetings.

It is difficult, though, to replace casual team interactions or chatter that naturally comes while eating lunch together or working side-by-side at an office. Recent studies indicate that many employees miss going to a physical office space. Key items they miss include the social interaction, the human contact, and the clear separation of work and home.

As a business owner, the real question becomes, "Should I bring my workers back into the office after the pandemic?" There is no right or wrong answer to this question, as this varies on a case-by-case basis, but here are a few things you should consider:

**Employee WFH Personality:** What is the work-from-home personality of each of my employees? A study by The Martec Group classified four basic types: thriving, hopeful, discouraged, or trapped.

*Thriving employees* are motivated introverts that are satisfied with their jobs and company. (About 16% of the workforce)

*Hopeful employees* struggle with their mental health, focus and productivity while at home yet have high company satisfaction. (About 25% of the workforce)

*Discouraged employees* tend to be extroverts dealing with declines in mental health and job satisfaction. (About 27% of the workforce)

*Trapped employees* miss socializing in the office and have low levels of company satisfaction and mental health. (The largest group, at 32% of the workforce)

**Cost Savings:** The benefits of remote work have been numerous with recent research showing increased productivity, decreased real estate costs, happier and more engaged employees, greater business continuity during emergencies, a smaller environmental footprint, and access to a larger, more diversified talent pool. Every business is different, but it is important to look at the cost vs. benefit of having an office that employees come to everyday.

**HR role:** If you are going to continue with a remote work model, you need to create formal, written policies around worker eligibility and what your expectations are. Companies should track the productivity and outcomes of an individual working remotely. There is also a responsibility to watch for signs of employee burnout as well as actively taking steps to help remote employees maintain healthy boundaries between their professional and personal lives.

This is all to say that when deciding whether to bring workers back, what is right for one company will not be the right choice for another. As with everything in

life, there are positives and negatives to every decision. So as the saying goes "jump in the water and whatever the decision don't look back and only forward." ☺

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