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<https://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/news/2022/01/02/remote-work-office-return-2022.html>

Playbook for 2022: How companies can rethink remote work in 2022

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While 2020 was marked by a massive and sudden shift to widespread remote work and 2021 was characterized by false starts and often haphazard return-to-work attempts, experts say 2022 is when companies will likely need to make some tangible decisions on their future workplace strategies.

Many are choosing a hybrid route that will require employees to be in the office a set number of days a week. Some, such as



EZRA BAILEY VIA GETTY IMAGES

Experts say businesses should keep several factors in mind as they rethink their

accounting giant PwC, are opting for permanent remote work workplace strategies.

Given the high expectations of employees and job candidates alike in an increasingly competitive market for talent, a lot is riding on those decisions, and workers have the leverage.

Regardless of what they choose, it's not as simple as taking an existing company culture and grafting it onto a hybrid or permanent remote strategy, said Rebecca Ryan, an economist and founder of Next Generation Consulting Inc.

"Remote and hybrid is a different beast, and it has to be built in a different way," Ryan said.

Companies need to recognize that remote work is usually not a means to an end for employees, Ryan said, but one outcropping of workers reprioritizing their lives in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"When we talk about remote work, remote work is just one way of talking about flexibility that allows employees to balance, juggle their whole life. It's an accommodation that allows them to have a more complete life, and this is the existential underlying issue going on here," Ryan said.

Sarah Hawley, founder and CEO of remote work firm Growmotely Inc., said companies that resist remote work are going to create more internal struggles among their workforce.

She said a focus on culture and how employees can work in person or from another location will allow companies to "win" during the The Great Resignation.

"As a leader, get clear on where the business is headed, why it exists and what you want the team to embody. Communicate this to current and future hires, and watch your culture transform as people rally behind meaningful work," Hawley said.

The debate over long-term remote-work options comes as 82% of employees say that having a remote work option at least part time would improve their mental health, with 75% saying it would make them less likely to leave their current jobs, according to a survey by Owl Labs.

Kenzo Fong, CEO and founder of Rock, the distributed work platform, said some companies will push everyone to return to work in the office, highlighting The Goldman Sachs Group Inc. CEO David Solomon's outspoken criticism of remote work.

But 2022 will also bring a greater focus over not just who is working remotely, but what tools companies need to use to ensure they are part of the company and part of the decision-making process.

"I think hybrid can definitely work but it does require a lot of very deliberate thinking around things," Fong said. "If meetings still happen in the office and decisions get made in those meetings, I don't think hybrid will work because everyone will realize that 'Hey, I need to be in the office,'"

But many companies will have to overcome a massive rift between managers and employees over remote-work attitudes.

That's because about 44% of executives working remotely want to work from the office every day, compared to just 17% of employees, according to a new report by the Fall 2021 Future Forum Pulse.

Additionally, employers will need to make sure the remote-work path they choose — be it hybrid, permanent remote or some other option — isn't setting themselves up for an unexpected tax surprise.

If an employer plans to allow long-term remote work, experts suggest they have a preapproved list of cities and states employees can work from to avoid tax consequences.

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