

## The Whole-Person Workplace Quick Guide to: Deciding on Your “Return to Workplace” Strategy

This guide presents some of the lessons from The Whole-Person Workplace to help you decide on whether and how you will ask remote employees to return to the workplace, remain remote, or embrace a flexible hybrid approach. There’s no single right answer, but this guide will help you think through the most important considerations.

These quick guides are free for those who purchase the book. See [ScottBehson.com](http://ScottBehson.com) for more resources.

Some employers, including leading tech companies like Twitter, Facebook and Slack, have declared that their entire workforces can work remotely for the foreseeable future, or even permanently. Given their cultures, the type of work they do, their real-estate costs, and their ability to recruit employees nationally and internationally, this decision makes sense for them. Others will bring all their employees back together in person as soon as they can establish workplace safety.

**“Our main office allows up to 75% capacity, but employees are free to ‘return as they wish.’ They’ve been generous with flexibility and balance for us.” -A happy and supported employee, p. 49**

Most employers will adopt a middle-ground approach. Some will maintain core hours but allow more discretion on whether to come in. Others may leave it up to employees to determine when or if they need to be in the office. Others may implement four-day work weeks. Many will phase in and evolve their approach over time. Some will establish explicit policies, while others will handle things informally.

A one-size-fits-all approach is probably not the way to go. You should consider multiple approaches to flex, appropriate to the type of work people do as well as their personal preferences and most effective working styles. As pioneering work-life scholar Tim Hall once professed, **“What we need are less rigid forms of work flexibility.”**

The decisions about when, whether, and how to bring employees back are quite complex. You’ll need to examine your values, your competitive position, the type of work being done, and the needs of your employees. Only after careful consideration will you be able to make Whole-Person Workplace decisions about workplace flexibility.

**“Moving forward, it is our goal to offer as much flexibility as possible to support individual work styles, while balancing business needs and ensuring we live our culture. Flexibility can mean different things to each of us, and we recognize there is no one-size-fits-all solution given the variety of roles, work requirements, and business needs we have at Microsoft” - Kathleen Hogan, Chief People officer, Microsoft. P. 49**

## Here are several important flex considerations:

- 1) **The type of work**– Independent or collaborative. Is the need for collaboration constant or periodic? Customer facing? Do people need to be in a certain place at a certain time? Variety of tasks– some remote, some in-office?
- 2) **Can you redesign work and workflow** to enable more flexible approaches? For example, by sharing information, relying on small teams rather than individuals for projects, overlapping responsibilities, and knowledge management techniques so you are not so reliant on one person’s presence.
- 3) **The people involved**– How do they want to work? How well they’ve been able to work remotely. Some loved it; others struggled. Make sure to survey or otherwise gather employee preferences.
- 4) **The needs of the team**– How much collaboration needed? What about cohesiveness? How much do you need the incidental “bumping into you” or “quick informal question” for new ideas and peer feedback.
- 5) **Your desired culture**- How often do you need to be together to retain or build culture, and integrate new employees? Are you valuing employees as Whole People, respecting their challenges, goals and priorities?
- 6) **Formal or informal**– Will you have explicit policies around flex, or will you empower employees and managers to custom-design solutions that work best for their context.

Flexibility can be a gradual process, the first steps of which can take many different forms. Flexibility doesn’t have to be all or nothing. In fact, it’s usually better when it’s not.

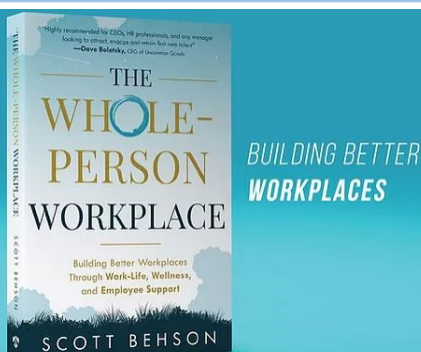
*“We have lots of customer-facing repair and delivery people, essential employees in warehouses and retail, as well as office professionals. Every group needed a different approach. Some could telecommute, others needed to be there, but we had to do everything we could to keep employees and customers safe ”*  
- CHRO, Johnstone Supply, Chris Geschickter p. 60

Finally, one size does not fit all- it is likely that, if you conduct this analysis, you will find that flex works better for some jobs than others, for some people and teams better than others, and that flexible, ad-hoc or customizable solutions may work best.

*“It’s exciting to think of your workplace as collaborative hub, and to work less hierarchically and more autonomously. With more choice on where, when and how people work- do I travel to the main location, a local hub, or my home office? Giving employees that freedom gets them to whole new level of work-life navigation. The more we can offer, the more everyone can get what they need.”* - Elizabeth Hall, VP of Employee Experience, Cambia Health p. 44

“Highly recommended for CEOs, HR professionals, and any manager looking to attract, retain and engage first-rate talent”  
- Dave Bolotsky, CEO, Uncommon Goods

A smart, practical guide for leaders and employers of all sizes”  
- G. Brint Ryan, CEO, Ryan LLC



See [ScottBehson.com](http://ScottBehson.com) and <https://bit.ly/3tSGAQw> for more information.

You can purchase The Whole-Person Workplace at:

