

Back-to-Office CHECKLIST

THE INFO YOU NEED TO SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK





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SafetyCulture powers over 600 million checks a year across 28,000 organizations worldwide: supporting businesses just like yours to do their best work every day.

Back-to-Office CHECKLIST

1

Identify your company's goals for its back-to-office strategy.

- Calculate what percentage of your employees need to be in person to justify building leases/real estate costs.
- Ensure that there's no drop in production from remote and/or hybrid workers as COVID-related restrictions are lifted.
- Identify the optimal percentage of employees back in the office (e.g., 100%, 75%, 50%, etc.).

2

Identify your team/committee that will be responsible for developing your company's back-to-office strategy.

- Determine if each department within your organization needs to be represented on this team.
- Ensure that you have a diverse mix of employees on this team (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, parents/nonparents, organizational level, special needs employees, etc.).
- Establish a timeline for back-to-office planning (e.g., meeting frequency, communication strategy for entire organization, committee dissolve date).

3

If you are adopting a hybrid work model, establish employees' work schedules for both remote and in office.

- Identify and communicate to staff your company's standard business hours, for both remote and in-office workers.
- Establish guidelines for flexibility within working hours, as well as who should be notified if necessary.
- Determine the minimum number of days a hybrid worker must come into the office.

4

Communicate your company's new policy for hybrid workers.

- Determine and communicate stance on requiring childcare.
- Ensure that remote employees receive equal opportunities to connect with supervisors and/or co-workers.
- Set a timeline for assessing the relevance of your hybrid work policy as the COVID pandemic evolves.
- Reserve the right to revoke hybrid work privileges based on employee performance.
- Set clear meeting expectations for both at-home and in-office employees (e.g., beginning and ending the meeting once the people calling in answer and hang up).
- Eliminate distance bias by ensuring that remote and hybrid workers are not excluded, and receive the same level of engagement and interaction as in-office workers.

5

Establish compensation guidelines for newly hybrid or remote workers.

- Clarify new considerations regarding cost of living (e.g., an employee moves away from your corporate headquarter market, how if at all does it impact their compensation).
- Clarify when it is employer or employee responsibility to cover costs for any travel to office/HQ.
- Examine how workers' tax responsibilities may or may not change if they are working remotely and/or hybrid.
- Assess the impact of employee benefits (e.g., healthcare, dental) if an employee moves away from your corporate headquarter market.



6

Develop a plan to communicate the value of having a corporate office for employees.

- Identify what your top reasons are for having employees in the office (collaboration, culture, innovation, etc.).
- Identify who within your organization should be delivering this message. Most likely CEO or president.
- Choose a communication channel that is most preferred and/or used by employees to share your plan (e.g., Zoom, email, Slack, etc.).
- Create a feedback loop for employees to share thoughts, concerns regarding back-to-office strategy.

7

Identify technology systems/solutions that you will need to implement for a newly remote and/or hybrid workforce.

- Communicate what home office tech will be paid for.
- Determine if office equipment (e.g., laptops, monitors, hard drives, etc.) will be shipped to employees or picked up by the employee.
- Identify whether you need remote training courses/tutorials for onboarding newly remote employees on technology systems.
- Create a policy for the return of office equipment/technology in the event an employee is no longer with the company.
- Choose if you will implement productivity tracking.
- Communicate availability of additional aids for those with disabilities that would have been accommodated in-office.

8

Create a benefits plan that will be attractive to both acquire and retain employees who are demanding more flexibility (e.g., remote and/or hybrid work).

- Determine if future hires will be able to work remotely or hybrid.
- Re-evaluate existing benefits package to see if changes are needed for remote or hybrid employees.
- Determine if additional employee benefits are required to attract and retain top-level talent (e.g., hybrid, commuter expenses, etc.).
- Survey or collect feedback from employees to determine what benefits would be most valuable to them if they are being required to return to the office.

9

Encourage and potentially incentivize employees to get a COVID vaccine.

- Be compliant with your state's rules or recommendations on vaccine requirements.
- Decide if you will offer bonus PTO or some other incentive for proof of vaccination.
- Determine if you're going to require employees who travel for business purposes to be vaccinated.
- Communicate to employees that even if they have not been vaccinated, they are not exempt from attending required meetings, traveling for company business, other interactions with co-workers and/or clients, etc.
- Decide if you will require a negative COVID test for in-office employees that are showing symptoms for having the virus.

10

Create and implement safety and design protocols for employees returning to the office.

- Establish new seating arrangements if needed to ensure social distancing.
- Determine if temperature checks, increased sanitization efforts will be permanent, or if temporary, what is the timeline for such actions.
- Determine if face masks are required throughout the office.
- Place signage throughout the office reminding employees to be in compliance with safety protocols (e.g., wear masks, wash hands, social distance, etc.).
- Establish if capacity limits are needed in office meeting rooms to ensure compliance with social distancing guidelines.
- Have a plan in place in the event that someone in the office tests positive for the virus.



As companies prepare to have their employees return to corporate offices and headquarters, go fully remote, or some hybrid of the two, there are many unknowns. As such, we asked executives from leading brands across both the retail and travel and hospitality industries how they're navigating the many challenges and questions that come with defining a new way to work. They responded with honest and actionable answers.

The challenge of bringing employees back into the office in a safe and positive manner is fairly complex, especially when you have more than 20,000 employees around the world, says Nikki Krishnamurthy, chief people officer, Uber.

"As we're all aware, COVID is not impacting the world in a uniform way," Krishnamurthy says. "We need to take both a global and local approach to meet the needs of our employees. Given this complexity, we have a cross-functional COVID Taskforce that represents each function from our people and workplaces team that meets on a weekly basis."

At leading arts-and-crafts retailer Michaels, there are a few key leaders running point and owning the overall back-to-office initiative, shares Brynn Evanson, the company's chief human resources officer. Every two weeks, there's a standing meeting with several key leaders and team members across real estate, operations, technology, marketing, finance, and human resources to gather input, review the latest information, and assess the best next steps.

Michaels also conducted an internal survey to better understand preferences from team members on working remotely full time, working in the office full time, or a hybrid model that includes splitting the workweek between days in the office and days working from home, Evanson notes.

"What we learned was that most of our team members prefer a hybrid schedule," she says.

Jill Granoff, CEO, Eurazeo Brands, which owns many retail and fashion brands, said it also conducted a survey and is pursuing a hybrid work model based on employee feedback. Employees will be eased into the new model. Associates will be asked to return to the office two days a week post-Memorial Day, three days a week after Labor Day, and possibly four days a week starting in 2022. There are no plans currently for asking all employees to return to the office full-time, though teams will be required to come in on Mondays for group meetings, while other days will be at their discretion.

Michaels is also embracing a new hybrid model that combines working remotely and spending some time in the office in an attempt to offer both the human connection people have been craving while keeping the flexibility benefits of working from home.

"We announced that employees can work from home up to two days a week, and from the office three days a week once we've returned to offices," Uber's Krishnamurthy says. "We've optimized for a number of factors, including productivity, engagement, culture and community, flexibility, and collaboration and teamwork."

Flexibility is an outcome work-from-home employees want to keep.



NIKKI KRISHNAMURTHY
Chief People Officer, Uber



BRYNN EVANSON
*Chief Human Resources Officer,
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JILL GRANOFF
CEO, Eurazeo Brands

Evanson from Michaels pointed out a hybrid work model is beneficial for working parents, especially working mothers who still tend to balance more demands between home and the office.

“Providing a flexible model where a working mother can choose which days she’s in the office or working from home offers flexibility that leads to a more balanced and sustainable schedule,” she says. “When our team members are supported and happy, it’s likely that they will be more engaged in everything they do and hopefully remain in the workforce as long as they like.”

Laura Lee, chief human resources officer, MGM Resorts International, says the company already has a daycare for employees within its property on the Las Vegas Strip as well as on-site at one of its regional locations.

“We also worked with a vendor to offer discounted daycare to all employees, regardless of where they sit within the organization,” says Lee. “They can utilize it for work or hire a babysitter for a date night.”

As MGM Resorts International works to reinvigorate company culture, it’s looking at policies on meetings and emails to better promote a work-life balance. However, no policy has been formalized yet, Lee adds.

To address the blurring of work and home life, Katherine Bahamonde Monasebian, president and general manager, North America commerce, Stanley Black & Decker, says that the industrial tool manufacturer and seller implemented “Focus Friday’s” in early 2021, meaning teams should try to avoid group meetings on that day of the week. The decision is also intended to help reduce “Zoom Fatigue” and allow employees to get organized from their week, resulting in productivity and less stress on the final day of the workweek.

“We’ve also allowed for norms such as being off camera and openly stating when we have personal commitments during work hours,” Monasebian says. “In regards to email after hours, managers are encouraged to use the delay email receipt function so employees are not receiving emails outside of work hours, and if they do receive a message, there’s an expectation that employees do not need to respond until core business hours.”

SB&D’s most senior leaders have committed to principles such as acting with compassion, being sensitive to family situations, managing with trust and empathy, and prioritizing employee flexibility, Monasebian adds. To model this approach, SB&D implemented Leading With Empathy to encourage a healthy work-life balance and also set employee expectations. These initiatives encourage managers to schedule meetings between 9 a.m and 5 p.m. to be courteous of employees dropping off or picking up children, and also emphasize the importance of not sending messages after hours or on the weekends. Furthermore, SB&D has designed a Returnship Program which helps professionals return to the workforce after stepping away for a time to care for family members.



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Chief Human Resources Officer,
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KATHERINE BAHAMONDE MONASEBIAN
President and General Manager,
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In the tug of war between remote and in-office work arrangements, Anna Wenngren, chief people officer, SafetyCulture, says its company has seen benefits and drawbacks on both sides, leading it to a hybrid model and a willingness to constantly adapt.

“For high-growth companies like ours, it’s important that our approach to talent acquisition and retention continuously evolves to ensure we remain competitive,” Wenngren says. “COVID-19 has shown everyone the possibilities of flexible working, and at SafetyCulture we embrace a hybrid model, allowing us the ability to hire from all locations. That being said, the office remains a fundamental part of our business plans — it’s somewhere to help embed our culture of innovation and teamwork.”

As an incentive to maintain talent, SafetyCulture offers options to help employees do their best work every day, whether that’s from home or the office. All staff have access to an employee assistance program to support mental and emotional wellbeing. In addition to hosting online personal development workshops, SafetyCulture also offers free online fitness classes.

“Our offices are lively, collaborative spaces with pool tables, rock climbing walls, a basketball court, great coffee machines and, in some locations, a bar on-site. We also provide snacks, lunch and drinks,” Wenngren notes as ways that SafetyCulture has incentivized employees to remain on-site. “When coupled with our award-winning culture and unicorn status, it creates a compelling proposition for existing employees and people considering a career with us.”



ANNA WENNGREN
Chief People Officer,
SafetyCulture



Who WE ARE



SafetyCulture is the operational heartbeat of working teams around the world. Its mobile-first operations platform leverages the power of human observation to identify issues and opportunities for businesses to improve every day. More than 28,000 organizations use its flagship products, iAuditor and EdApp, to perform checks, train staff, report issues, automate tasks and communicate fluidly. SafetyCulture powers over 600 million checks per year, approximately 50,000 lessons per day and millions of corrective actions, giving leaders visibility and workers a voice, in driving safety, quality and efficiency improvements.



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