The future of remote work is here. While this work option existed well before the challenges of the pandemic, MRA probed the extent to which remote work has become a component, or an even stronger component, of organizations’ workforce planning strategies. What are employers doing? What have they learned? Will organizations broaden their remote work options, rethink their future business model, reimagine their top talent strategies, and become even more flexible? How does remote work align for your organization?

Remote Work Options

Managing Remote Work

Sixty-two percent of respondents said remote work flexibility is part of their strategy, compared with 48% who only temporarily employ the strategy during unforeseen business circumstances.

Approaches to managing remote work include:

- **Flexible; allow employees remote work for entire work schedule** (62%)
- **Remote work temporarily during unforeseen business circumstances only (e.g., pandemic, fire, weather-related disaster)** (48%)
- **Remote work as reasonable accommodation when medically necessary only** (14%)
- **Considering, but have not implemented a remote work plan** (10%)
- **No remote work; all employees must work onsite** (6%)
- **Other*:**
  - Only allow certain positions to work remotely; remote work on case-by-case basis depending upon circumstances (5%)

Temporary Remote Work During Pandemic

For many employers, a quick solution to adhere to social distancing recommendations and other work protocols was a remote work strategy.

Here’s how employers plan to bring employees back to the workplace:

- **Reviewing long-term strategy; may offer on permanent basis** (24%)
- **Returning to workplace in next 1–2 months** (22%)
- **Rotating time in the office to allow for social distancing** (17%)
- **Returning to workplace in next 3–4 months** (11%)
- **Working remotely will continue through end of 2020** (4%)
- **Continuing without remote work** (1%)
- **Other*:**
  - All employees returned immediately, or will return to the workplace once stay at home is lifted; conditions will be monitored and employees will return in phases; no decision yet, still working remotely; self-determined by comfort level (21%)

*Only allow certain positions to work remotely; remote work on case-by-case basis depending upon circumstances
Remote Work: Where Are Organizations Now?

Why Remote Work?

Reasons Organizations Allow Remote Work

In addition to ensuring continuity of operations during unforeseen business circumstances or disasters (65%), organizations support remote work as it nurtures recruitment and retention efforts and work-life balance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuity of operations in unforeseen business circumstances or disaster</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to attract and retain employees</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment with philosophies around work-life flexibility</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company culture fit</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead costs in the organization’s facilities reduced</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence in other geographies</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in carbon footprint and environmental impact</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other* provides employee/client safety during pandemic and helps keep people socially distanced; accommodate employee, family or medical issues.

Benefits and Challenges of Offering Remote Work

Remote work options can be beneficial, especially in safety (83%), though remote work may also pose challenges for organizations. Understanding potential challenges, addressing them early on, and developing solutions will build resilience for the long term.

**Benefits**

**Business Operations**
- Promotes safety; supports social distancing during the pandemic (83%)
- Increases employee productivity (27%)
- Reduces overhead costs (13%)
- Expands geographical territory/presence (8%)

**Human Resources**
- Increases employee morale, satisfaction, and engagement (51%)
- Reduces unscheduled absences (27%)
- Lowers employee turnover (17%)
- Attracts a larger and stronger talent pool (16%)

**Other**
- Other* (5%)
  * Flex scheduling is family friendly; increases communication and collaboration; allows for medical necessity; useful for sales teams

**Challenges**

**Business Operations**
- Managing performance/productivity (66%)
- Communicating with remote workers (40%)
- Wi-Fi, VPN, video conferencing (36%)
- Technology – confidentiality/security of data (16%)

**Human Resources**
- Teamwork/collaboration (66%)
- Perceived fairness among employees who can/cannot work remote (57%)
- Separating work/home life (48%)
- Scheduling and monitoring hours worked (34%)

**Other**
- Other* (3%)
  * Lack of company culture; equipment cost/availability; business not conducive to remote work
Remote Work: Where Are Organizations Now?

**Strategies to Address Remote Work Challenges**

**Business Operations**
- 49% Implementing new platforms and methods for communication
- 45% Revising remote work policies and procedures
- 45% Implementing new technology to support remote workers

**Human Resources**
- 28% Training managers on managing remote workers
- 5% Implementing new technology to monitor computer activity

**Other**
- 10% Other*
  * Not addressing at this time; increasing communication; temporary arrangement—brought employees back

**Measuring Remote Work Effectiveness**
Sixty-four percent of organizations measure remote work effectiveness, yet 36% do not. Here is what they measure:

- Quality of work performed (57%)
- Quantity of work performed (49%)
- Employee satisfaction/engagement (29%)
- Employee retention (12%)
- Employee turnover (6%)
- Top talent recruitment (3%)
- Other (4%)*
  * Response time; manager feedback; developing a more formal measurement

- Do not measure remote work effectiveness (36%)

**Impact of Remote Work on Business Metrics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Declined</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee satisfaction/engagement</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of work performed</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee retention</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of work performed</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee turnover</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting top talent</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Remote Work: Where Are Organizations Now?

Reimbursement for Remote Work Expenses

Forty percent of organizations reimburse employees for expenses related to remote work as part of their company policy or as required by state law, whereas 60% do not reimburse remote work employee expenses.

Offer Reimbursement to Employees

- **19%** Yes
- **21%** Yes, as required by state law
- **60%** No

Cell Phone/Service Reimbursement

- **71%** No reimbursement
- **6%** Full reimbursement
- **5%** Half reimbursement
- **1%** Less than half reimbursement
- **17%** Other* *Reimbursed a flat dollar amount each month; position dependent; company-owned devices

Wi-Fi Service Reimbursement

- **36%** No reimbursement
- **13%** Full reimbursement
- **10%** Less than half reimbursement
- **8%** Half reimbursement
- **33%** Other* *Flat dollar amount per month; position dependent

Conclusion

The future of work most likely will look different as a result of the pandemic. Emerging trends in remote work are taking on greater focus for many organizations. Renewed emphasis on remote work offers organizations a key to attract talent, exercise flexibility, remain competitive long-term, and engage employees; however, a remote work strategy may not work for all organizations. Finding the balance right for your organization is important.

MRA is committed to helping organizations grow stronger. We will continue to partner with you and provide the resources necessary to help you navigate through remote work and other workforce planning strategies—and beyond!
Remote Work: Where Are Organizations Now?

Demographics
Survey participation continues to align with characteristics of MRA's membership: nearly 50/50 manufacturing and non-manufacturing (with a plus or minus 3% margin of error), and employers of 500 or fewer employees.

Industry Type

- **48%** Manufacturing
- **26%** Non-Manufacturing
- **12%** Nonprofit
- **8%** Financial Activities (Banking, Finance/Financial Services, etc.)
- **4%** Healthcare
- **2%** Education

Size of Organization

- **17%** Fewer than 50 employees
- **70%** 50 to 500 employees
- **7%** 501 to 1,000 employees
- **3%** 1,001 to 2,500 employees
- **3%** More than 2,500 employees

Methodology

- **481** MRA Participating Organizations
- **13** Question Survey
- **June 11 – 15, 2020** Data Collected

Questions regarding this survey? Contact the Survey Department at Surveys@mranet.org or 800.488.4845, ext. 3508.
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