

Assessing roles for Remote/Hybrid Workplace Strategies

As a manager, how do you know that a specific role can effectively utilize a remote or hybrid Workplace Strategies? Here are some questions and considerations to keep in mind.

First, make sure both you and your team members understand the variety of Workplace Strategies available and the relevant central and School/Unit policies and guidance. No one Workplace Strategy (such as remote) will work for all positions, but all positions should be evaluated for possible Workplace Strategies.

Second, there are no set rules regarding whether or not a position can benefit from remote or hybrid Workplace Strategies since the primary considerations are whether or not the Workplace Strategy is job appropriate, operationally viable, and legally compliant. View the on-campus workspace as a tool that should be utilized very intentionally.

Newly implemented Workplace Strategies should begin with a 30–90-day trial period to assess feasibility. The pilot period is especially helpful in determining how effective the workplace strategy is and how it impacts employee performance, team/stakeholder satisfaction, and business results. It is important to understand that the modality may change to meet University or School/Unit needs.

General Considerations for Determining if a Position Requires Some to Full On-Site Presence:

- The position is responsible for face-to-face, walk-in, scheduled or unscheduled advisory or customer service to students, faculty, staff or external clients.
- The position requires ongoing, frequent on-site check-ins and collaboration with team members, stakeholders, internal partners or external partners.
- The position necessitates on-site equipment or tools.
- The position requires a visual inspection of work in order to assess performance or ensure health, safety, security or quality standards.
- The position supervises employees whose work is on-site.
- Licensing, accreditation, or other compliance requires an onsite presence.

Additional considerations/questions for primarily remote positions:

- The extent of market-based competition for/access to talent for the specific position
- The position requires unique or niche skills, not otherwise readily available in the local market
- What percentage of time per year is the employee expected to be on campus if at all? Review remote policy for additional guidance, including regarding travel and expenses.

- What equipment, services and supplies are reasonable and necessary to enable the employee to fulfill their responsibilities?
- Is the employee equipped with adequate internet connectivity to perform their work, including video conferencing?
- Does the employee have the tools to effectively engage with a distributed team or stakeholders (e.g., webcam, access to conference rooms, virtual collaboration tools)?
- Has the proposed primarily remote strategy been assessed via a fair, consistent, and transparent process relative to other members of the team?

Additional considerations/questions for hybrid positions:

- To what extent does the employee need to work on site and why?
- Where will the employee work when on-site?
- What equipment, services and supplies are reasonable and necessary to enable the employee to fulfill their responsibilities, both on and off site?
- Is the employee equipped with adequate internet connectivity off-site to perform their work, including video conferencing?
- Does the employee have the tools to effectively engage with a distributed team or stakeholders (e.g., webcam, access to conference rooms, virtual collaboration tools)?
- In some cases, employees who are new to the role and/or the institution would benefit from an initial period of on-site interaction and support.
- Has the proposed hybrid work strategy been assessed via a fair, consistent, and transparent process relative to other members of the team?

What do I do about team members whose work requires them to be on-site?

Not every role can be remote or hybrid but that doesn't mean those roles can't benefit from other Workplace Strategies, such as flex time, seasonal schedules (which may include some remote work), compressed weeks, or even shift swapping.

Consider, too, the role's specific responsibilities and whether flexibility might be appropriate for employees in approaching those responsibilities. For example, you may find that certain remote-appropriate activities (like answering emails) could be grouped together every Wednesday morning, allowing that role to be remote during that time.

Work with your team to identify what needs to be done; how it needs to be done; and where it needs to be done. Then co-create solutions that you can pilot. These solutions aren't limited to existing Workplace Strategies; a great example is Harvard professor Tsedal Neeley's suggestion that each fully on-site employee receive 10-15 remote learning days a year. These days then become ways to leverage remote days to upskill those employees and advance their professional development.

Additional Resources for Determining and Implementing Distributed (Remote/Hybrid) Teams

[The Dos and Don't's of Returning the Office, WorkLife with Adam Grant podcast, Tuesday, June 7, 2022](#)

[Knowledge Workers Aren't the Only Ones Who Want Flexibility; Here's How to Offer it to Others, Gartner Report, August 30, 2021](#)