Remote vs On-Site Work: A Global Perspective

October 1st, 2025

Introduction

As we approach the sixth-year anniversary of the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is evident that there has been a massive shift in the global workplace landscape, and we may never go back to the practices of the past. Companies across all industries were quickly forced to adapt to a remote work style that would continue to promote productivity and growth for both their businesses and employees with the hopes that everything would eventually return to the way it was. However, we know this was not the case. It is now nearing the end of 2025 and companies are struggling to revert to their past in-person work models and this is especially prevalent in the technology space. In a world where rapid technological advancements define our lives, the critical question organizations face remains: How can companies around the world balance flexibility and accountability in a post-pandemic era of work?

The Current Global Landscape

There are three models the world has adopted for work: Remote, On-Site, and Hybrid. Though all these models were relevant before the pandemic, there was a major shift and reshaping of the way people work across the globe. Depending on the region, each approach looks very different to people and companies.

North America

Especially in the United States, pre-pandemic office life was mainly in-person whereas now there has been a massive surge in remote/hybrid work. Data from the US Census Bureau suggests that there is an inequality with how people have chosen to adjust post-pandemic. Higher-income, white-collar employees are pushing for a remote lifestyle while lower-income/service workers are tied to in-person roles. As of 2025, the dominant model is hybrid, however, there is a lot of push from corporations to revert to in-person work and from employees to work remotely. [1]

Europe

Europe was one of the few regions in the world that had remote/hybrid work prevalent before the pandemic but now there has been a significant expansion. Though it varies by country, generally we are seeing hybrid models as the dominant with few areas returning back to more in-person work. The European Data Journalism Network notes that remote work has more than doubled since pre-pandemic. A lot of it has to do with European cultural influence and how work-life balance is highly prioritized. [2]

Asia

Asia on the other hand has leaned back towards the in-person work life. This is highly influenced by culture, government, infrastructure, and corporations. Unlike Europe and North America, the percentage of hybrid works decreased and fully-on site workers increased. The Accounting Times notes from an ADP survey; they saw that the percentage of fully-on-site workers has increased from 49% to 53% from 2022 to 2023. While some larger cities such as Singapore or Tokyo can have companies sustain hybrid/remote work, most of the region has a very low long-term remote adoption. [3]

Latin America

This is another region where remote work has seen a major increase. Nearshore Americas has referenced studies that show remote work made up roughly 3% of work pre-pandemic and it is now almost 30% today. People in Latin America prefer fully remote work which is an interesting shift as this was one of the regions that did not used to have any. [4]

Throughout the world, models have been adopted not just based on what employers require, but what the cultural values, infrastructure, and economic situation are. The thing that unites these regions is the

idea of how the pandemic altered the way work gets done and how to navigate through the changes. As we approach 6 years since the end of the pandemic, the hardest question is taking the differences and finding a balance for both employers and employees that allow for a good work-life balance while still promoting productivity. 4

Employee Perspective

While companies around the world are pushing to bring back in person office culture, it's been a tough battle for employees as their needs, priorities, and perspectives have drastically changed post pandemic. What began as an emergency shift has now become a lifestyle that many people consider better for their financial situation, mental health, family, and overall well-being. For many of these employees, going back into office is not just showing up for work anymore, it is a change in priorities, balance, and lifestyle. The shift in employee perspective is driven by a mix of both personal and practical reasons highlighted below:

Disruption and Cost of Relocation
During the pandemic, many people had shifted from large metropolitan cities where most company headquarters are located to smaller locations. Whether it was to be closer to family or save costs in a less congested area, employees had a new freedom to live somewhere that suited their needs and wants rather than where their employer required them to be. Having employees uproot their lives to cities where housing costs and inflation are rapidly increasing has posed as a significant challenge and even seen as unreasonable.

Improved Work-Life Balance
Remote and hybrid workplace set-ups have allowed people to create a balance in their lives that they did not have before. For families, childcare has never been easier in terms of school/activity drop-offs, reduced daycare costs, and overall involved parenting style. People are also able to help take care of elderly family members and just overall reclaim commuting time that is put towards an improved lifestyle. Employees now have choices to meet deadlines and complete their work based on when they know they are the most focused and productive.

Mental Health Considerations
Because people have this new increased control over their lives, there have been reports of lower stress levels and reduced burnout for many. Those who have chronic health conditions and social anxiety have a way to continue working without the stress and drain of a traditional work environment. Employees are also able to better maintain personal relationships and practice healthy habits such as working out and increased sleep time.

Moonlighting and Financial Flexibility
With more time in the day, people have been able to find ways to make extra money that help cover costs and ease financial burdens. Whether it is a side hustle in social media, part time work at an establishment, or a whole full-time role during off hours, there have been numerous ways people are able to increase their salary. This is especially prevalent in regions like India where taking a secondary job or freelance gigs alongside a full-time job is known as moonlighting.

Based on all these reasons, employees have found ways to embrace the change that the pandemic had in a positive manor. Ultimately, the resistance to returning to office is focused on flexibility, mental health, and economic necessity. Employers will need to understand and address these new realities and focus on rebuilding trust, retaining talent, and overall creating a future of work that works for all involved parties.

Employer Perspective

Though remote and hybrid models have offered undeniable benefits, employers are starting to see the long-term trade-offs arise. When the pandemic hit, companies were forced to seek any option that would help sustain business while staying safe, but this also raised key concerns of lack of collaboration, culture and productivity. Some factors that challenge remote work models are highlighted below:

Collaboration, Innovation, and Culture

Face-to-face interactions took a major hit not just during the pandemic, but through the growth of technology. This has led to negative impacts on productivity and social skills that are especially impacted on roles that are client facing or heavily networking based. The sense of belonging is also affected as people cannot meet in an environment of people who have shared purpose and encouragement to succeed. Long-term remote work also weakens mentorship and slows onboarding for new hirings making it harder to cultivate a strong sense of accountability.

Data Security, Compliance, and Privacy

It has become increasingly harder to monitor sensitive information as people relocate to different geographies during remote work. There are now higher risks of cyber-attacks from unsecure public networks, personal devices, and phishing attempts leading to data breaches. Data privacy concerns are especially prevalent in industries such as finance, government, and healthcare where information is extremely sensitive.

Productivity and Moonlighting

While remote work helps many with work-life balance, there is a major issue with lack of productivity that arises. Home-related distractions, technological issues, communication discrepancies, and overall lack of motivation are things that make it difficult for employers to maintain accountability and drive performance. In regions such as India where moonlighting is common, people overwork themselves not giving full attention to their main job driving down productivity and commitment. This also violates many company policies and creates conflict of interest for many employers. [5]

Physical Office Spaces

Many companies had signed leases for offices spaces 20-30 years ago before there was any scope of remote work. Especially in urban centers where costs are high, bringing employees back in office is a way to justify investments and reconnect teams with the brand's physical presence.

Overall, it is not that companies are just forcing people to come back in person out of tradition, they are trying to respond to legitimate concerns around collaboration, security, culture and long-term talent development. Though flexibility is important, leaders see the need for intentional in-person interaction for mentorship, innovation, and integrity. It is becoming increasingly important to find the right balance as companies begin to reshape their work models in the coming future.

Finding the Middle Ground

The debate on return-to-office is a constant tug of war between employee preferences and employer priorities. After years of debate, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is no one right answer anymore. Employers are working on creative solutions that are regionally adaptive and redefine how and where work will get done.

The most prominent solution that we have seen is the use of a hybrid work week, typically 2 or 3 days in office and the rest of the week remote. This allows for a compromise between employers and employees giving that work-life balance while also fostering a collaborative, team-building environment. There is more trust within the workplace and overall increased satisfaction on both ends. One of the hardest challenges with this model, however, is the idea of inequality as those who are in-office more may have access to better resources and opportunities than those who choose to work from home more often.

For those companies that choose to bring back a mostly or entirely in person work setting, one solution that has worked for companies is creating better culture through intentional programs to incentivize employees to want to come in. Things like quarterly offsites, wellness programs, office enhancements, meal programs, childcare, are just a few ways to enhance the work environment for employees.

In a remote or hybrid setting, issues such as moonlighting still might arise and the best way to navigate a situation like this is to set clear boundaries. Companies need to create policies that outwardly address what is or is not acceptable to ensure transparency and protect core business interests. This also goes hand-in-hand with increasing security policies overall and focusing on data privacy and reduce risk of cyber-attacks.

In countries with high population density such as India, a major concern is shifting from smaller regions to large urban areas for work. A solution to this could be to open satellite offices in tier 2 or 3 cities to avoid the high stress and costs of relocation. This helps ensures a physical workspace for daily needs and bridges the gap overall. [6]

Finally, there is a shared interest with an employer and employee and that is to get results. Shifting the traditional mindset of logging in time and tracking physical performance to an outcome-based performance model that is focused on results, continuous learning, and overall impact. Investing in improved product and analytical tools can be a step forward towards a well-managed organization.

Conclusion

The global shift towards flexible work models is a strategic advantage that companies are quickly realizing and adapting towards. Rather than focusing on finding the perfect middle-ground solution, companies are now moving with intention, transparency, and inclusivity to create an environment to drive performance, retain talent, and stay resilient in such a changing landscape.

While there are numerous practices companies are adopting to succeed, the question that arises are whether both parties are ready for this shift and what this looks like for the future of corporations around the world.

1. U.S. Census Bureau. (2025, January 25). Work-from-home inequalities persist post-pandemic. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2025/01/work-from-home-inequalities.html

2. European Data Journalism Network. (2023, October 4). Remote work in Europe before and after the pandemic. Retrieved from https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp_data_news/remote-work-in-europe-before-and-after-the-pandemic/

3. Nearsh ore Americas. (2023, May 17). Remote work in Latin America surged tenfold in three years. Retrieved from https://nearshoreamericas.com/latam-remote-work-surged-tenfold-in-three-years/

4. Accounting Times. (2023, August 22). Asia-Pacific region sees largest drop in hybrid work arrangements, survey finds. Retrieved from https://www.accountingtimes.com.au/profession/asia-pacific-region-sees-largest-drop-in-hybrid-work-arrangements-survey-finds

5. Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Moonlighting [Definition]. In Cambridge English Dictionary. Retrieved from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/moonlighting

6. Invest India. (n.d.). Rise: India's tier-2 and 3 cities - investment hubs. Retrieved from https://www.investindia.gov.in/team-india-blogs/rise-indias-tier-2-and 3-cities-investment-hubs