

<https://www.nhregister.com/business/article/Today-s-Business-Returning-to-the-workplace-16230439.php>

**New Haven Register**

<https://www.ctpost.com/business/article/Today-s-Business-Returning-to-the-workplace-16230439.php>

**CONNECTICUT POST**

<https://www.thehour.com/business/article/Today-s-Business-Returning-to-the-workplace-16230439.php>

**The Hour**

<https://www.stamfordadvocate.com/business/article/Today-s-Business-Returning-to-the-workplace-16230439.php>



<https://www.greenwichtime.com/business/article/Today-s-Business-Returning-to-the-workplace-16230439.php>



<https://www.newstimes.com/business/article/Today-s-Business-Returning-to-the-workplace-16230439.php>

**newstimes.com**

<https://www.middletonpress.com/business/article/Today-s-Business-Returning-to-the-workplace-16230439.php>

TheMiddletownPress

<https://www.registercitizen.com/business/article/Today-s-Business-Returning-to-the-workplace-16230439.php>

**THE REGISTER CITIZEN**

# Today's Business: Returning to the workplace and the emerging crisis

Gary Phelan  
June 11, 2021



*Gary Phelan is an attorney with Mitchell & Sheahan, P.C. in Stratford, where he practices employment law. He is the co-author of *Disability Discrimination in the Workplace* and teaches Disability Law at Quinnipiac University School of Law. He can be reached at 203-873-0240.*

*Contributed photo*

As we begin to shed the COVID-19 pandemic and many employees resist their employer's call to return to the workplace, it is apparent that the surge in working from home will transform the American workplace.

Most people expected that remote work was a temporary solution to a public health crisis and would not become embedded in the American workplace. In fact, though, a Gallup survey showed 71 percent of employees, including 52 percent of white-collar workers and 14 percent of blue-collar workers, still were performing some or all of their jobs from home in April 2021, and a clear majority of employees want to continue to have the option of remote work. Among the full-time employees in the Gallup poll who have worked remotely

during the pandemic, 35 percent wanted to continue working remotely while 17 would choose to go back to the office.

According to a survey conducted by Wakefield Research for Envoy, 47 percent said they likely would leave their job if not allowed to work remotely part of the time, and 41 percent would accept a lower salary to be able to work remotely part of the time.

While fear of COVID-19 is one factor, primarily, employees may want to continue working from home because they prefer it. Thrive Global Vice President of Finance and Accounting Julia Coto captured that sentiment when she stated on LinkedIn, “If an employee is performing well delivering on what they need, meeting the deadlines and is engaged at work, why force them to change the location? For me, working from home has been a complete life changer. I get so much value now out of the 2-3 hours I used to spend on the daily commute. Whether it’s self-care, time with family, making dinner, not having to rush everywhere — this time is priceless to me and am definitely not giving that up.”

On the other hand, while grateful that it helped them navigate the pandemic, most employers have not embraced remote work. In a survey conducted in a wide range of industries by Best Practices Institute, 83 percent of CEOs wanted their employees back in the office full-time in 2021. In contrast, only 10 percent of employees wanted to return to the office full-time, while 64 percent preferred at least a hybrid arrangement which would enable them to work remotely part of the time.

The core of the conflict is the belief among many employers that employees will not be as productive if they are not in the office and supervised. However, in the Best Practices Institute survey, 76 percent of employees believed that they were more productive working from home while 72 percent thought the productivity of their entire team improved while working remotely.

Employers’ concerns about the emergence of remote work is not limited to perceptions about reduced productivity. The Wall Street Journal observed in a recent article, “Bosses Question Eagerness of Remote Employees,” that many CEOs think remote workers are not as committed to their jobs. At a WSJ CEO Council Summit, JP Morgan Chase CFO Jamie Dimon stated that remote work is not a good fit “for those who want to hustle.” In a controversial Washington Post

op-ed, Washington Media CEO Cathy Merrill stated that “the CEO’s I have spoken with fear erosion of collaboration, creativity and culture” with remote workers. For those employees who “work from home and pop in only when necessary,” she warned that they may face risks such as being converted to independent contractors, losing health care coverage and having less job security.

Grappling with the challenges posed by employees embracing the benefits of working from home in the wake of the pandemic likely will be the most difficult human resource challenge companies face in the next year. Eventually, a hybrid model which blends working in the office and remotely likely will evolve. The terrain to that destiny will be a rocky one. Nevertheless, it is clear that “going back to the way things were” is no longer a viable option.

*Gary Phelan is an attorney with Mitchell & Sheahan, P.C. in Stratford, where he practices employment law. He is the co-author of Disability Discrimination in the Workplace and teaches Disability Law at Quinnipiac University School of Law. He can be reached at 203-873-0240.*