

REMOTE OR OFFICE WORK, COVID A 'CATALYST FOR CHANGE'

WORK-FROM-HOME OPTIONS LIKELY TO REMAIN POST PANDEMIC: CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA

Working from home, videoconferencing, relocation to different parts of the country — the pandemic has certainly shifted how, where and when many Canadians work. Employees have had to manage increased responsibilities and/or adjust to new forms of work arrangements, as some have been tasked with simultaneously playing the role of employee, parent, chef and homeschool instructor.

Recent research the Conference Board of Canada did in partnership with Carleton and Ryerson Uni-



ERIN MILLS
Column

versity, "Remote, Office or Hybrid?" showed that as expected, COVID-19 has indeed been a catalyst for change.

Employee preferences regarding post-pandemic work arrangements vary widely, but results do show that most employees prefer to continue working the way they did during the pandemic, which presents both challenges and opportunities for employers and employees alike.

Working from home can be just as productive as working in an office and



LINDSAY COFFIN
Column

is highly valued by employees, particularly as it facilitates a better work-life balance for some. Remote work, where possible, will likely remain an option. Employers are adapting and allowing for flexible working arrangements to keep employees engaged and productive. Prior to the pandemic, many organizations were resistant to flexible or remote work offerings.

While some employees prefer in-person connections and look forward to returning to conferences, events and travel with cli-

ents and co-workers, still others are actively seeking out work-from-home options when considering a job or career change.

It is something employers can offer to attract and retain talent and increase their search over a larger geographical area. This allows organizations to attract better prospective employees as they aren't limited to talent located in close proximity to the office.

Our CEO Dr. Susan Black, PhD, for example, has made the bold move of selling our head office, creating a virtual-first organization, which has resulted in a truly pan-Canadian organization with representation from almost all provinces in the country.

The ongoing pandemic has also affected the mental health and well-being of employees. Many Cana-



dians have reported anxiety, fatigue and a myriad mental health concerns as a result of the uncertainty, lockdowns and restrictions. This has resulted in some organizations offering enhanced mental health benefits, while others trial four-day work weeks that improve employee flexibility. The Conference Board of Canada is conducting important research on this topic and has exciting announcements coming soon.

The workplace measures that become permanent in a post-COVID

world will become clearer as we navigate through restrictions to recovery. It is those organizations that are able to effectively adapt to the ever-changing pandemic restrictions, while continuing to support their employees, that will be in the best position to mitigate and manage the demands of the future.

Lindsay Coffin is the Conference Board of Canada's senior research associate, human capital. Erin Mills is director, human capital and workplace health at the Conference Board of Canada

D. SCOTT CAMPBELL

55 Sinclair Ave., Unit #6
Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4x4



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