

**Future of (How We) Work Task Force**  
**Meeting #15: Returning to Work - July 20, 2021**

*Notes*

**Summary of Session**

The session's focus was on how Kendall is returning to work. Our goal was to have a broader understanding of the ways Kendall companies are doing this and offer opportunities for mutual support and learning among attendees. This session did not feature a speaker/educator; instead, we organized three breakout rooms for discussion among attendees. However, we did take some time to review survey responses to our Return to Work Survey completed by members beforehand.

**Based on the survey, some of things that are top of mind among Kendall companies include:**

- Updating health and safety policies to create a hybrid vaccination policy for employees,
- Identifying ways to create small and large team gatherings to enhance social connection,
- Updating health and safety policies to require all employees be vaccinated,
- Navigating the different desires among employees and senior leadership about working from home.

**Yuqi Wang, Senior Manager of Programming:**

- All survey respondents will be updating their organization's health and safety policies - some are requiring vaccinations as part of the employment process while others are enforcing a hybrid policy for vaccinations.
- Opportunities to connect and get together were top responses for creating a welcoming environment. Other ways to welcome employees revolved around ensuring their health and safety are protected.
- Top challenges were around offering and sustaining flexible WFH policies and navigating a vaccine mandate to employees.

**The three small breakout rooms were focused on the following topics:**

- Room 1: Updates to Your Vaccination Policy
- Room 2: Welcoming Employees Back
- Room 3: Managing Employees' Expectations About WFH

**Room 1: Updates to Your Vaccination Policy**

- Facilitation Questions

- According to the MassInc Survey that Yuqi presented, 66% of employees surveyed would like their employer to require all employees working in person to be vaccinated. What policies around vaccination does your organization have or will plan to have for employees now and in the future?
- What are some of the challenges you are seeing or will anticipate to see in creating or implementing this type of policy?
- What questions or thoughts do you have based on what you've seen from the survey?
- Attendee discussion
  - Plans to ask for vaccine status, but will not mandate vaccines. While a mandate would be preferred, there's an unwillingness to feel like the first company to do so

## **Room 2: Welcoming Employees Back**

- Facilitation Questions
  - How is your organization planning for your employees' safe return to the office? What are you hearing from your colleagues?
  - How is your organization planning to create opportunities for employees to connect with each other?
  - To what extent is your organization promoting different types of transit as employees return to work?
  - What are some of the challenges you are seeing or will anticipate to see?
  - What questions or thoughts do you have based on what you've seen from the survey?
- Attendee Discussion Notes
  - Employee roles have an impact on return to office
    - Majority of employees coming into the office aren't eligible to work from home because of their role
    - Other employees benefit from being there for networking.
  - Organizations want to make being in the office a great experience for employees
  - Transportation is a major focus for managers as they welcome back employees to the office

## **Room 3: Managing Employees' Expectations About WFH**

- Facilitation Questions
  - According to the MassInc Survey that Yuqi presented, 51% of employees surveyed would like to work from home a few times a week. What has

your organization's work policy been during the pandemic and to what extent will it change in the fall and beyond?

- What are some of the challenges you are seeing or will anticipate to see?
- What questions or thoughts do you have based on what you've seen from the survey?
- Audience Discussion
  - Managing social aspect of return to work
    - Multiple organizations are doing socials to prepare for a return to the office
    - Some "pre-parties" are being done in-person, while others are being done virtually
    - Junior employees might see more of a benefit to returning to the office
  - Acknowledging personal lives as part of workplace experience and culture
    - Employees from multiple organizations are preparing to see large changes in home-work balances
    - People with children or pets will now be apart from them for extended periods of time, which they haven't done in over a year
    - For some people, the office is or will be like a "haven" away from home
  - Logistics of returning to the workplace
    - There's some anxiety about spatial configuration in offices
      - Some companies have opened "zones" for employees to self-select where to be in the office, based on vaccination and masking requirements
    - Some employees were very hesitant to return to the office and face this type of change, but for most people that decreased after about an hour of being in the office
    - There was some discussion around who goes into the office and when, and how management oversees that
      - Tuesday-Thursday are the most popular days for the office
      - There's a strong desire to not micromanage employees
    - Managers are preparing themselves for drops in productivity
    - Transit is an early focus for employers
      - One organization is increasing their MBTA subsidy for employees
    - Some companies are requiring employees to go in on a "as needed for business" basis, but there's no set definition for that yet.
    - Visitor policies for visiting offices haven't been set yet
    - There are still questions about running hybrid meetings

- Organizations want to maintain the ability to have people join virtually rather than only making in-person meetings an option
- Balancing freedom, responsibility, and flexibility
- Few employees are mandating vaccination before returning to the office, but more are asking to know vaccine status