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Employers want everyone back in the office — for real this time
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Employers want everyone back in the office — for real this time

Kristin Schwab | Apr 4, 2023

Heard on:



Companies like Meta are pausing the hiring of remote workers. CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the data suggests that engineers who started at the company in person generally perform better than people who trained remotely. Josh Edelson/AFP via Getty Images



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The giant tech firm Meta kicked off what it's calling its year of efficiency with tens of thousands of layoffs. The company also placed a pause on hiring remote workers.

The parent of Facebook and Instagram is far from alone. A [recent survey from the Labor Department](#) showed that nearly 3 of 4 businesses said their employees rarely or never worked remotely in 2022. How does this push against off-site employment affect the economy?

Since the pandemic began, companies have been punting employees by changing their remote work policies. Every time they would say, "OK, it's time to come back!" the virus' delta, omicron or whatever variant would sneak its way in and disrupt the plan.

"We've seen those dates come and go over and over again for years now," said [Andy Challenger](#), with the outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. "Really because employees voiced that they would leave."

The power, once in the hands of workers with lots of options, is shifting back to employers, Challenger said, especially in industries with more layoffs and fewer openings.

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Julia Pollak, an economist at ZipRecruiter, said most companies don't like fully remote work because studies show that, generally, candidates who tend to apply for those jobs are less productive.

"People who want to moonlight or want to smoke pot all day or watch movies while working or whatever," she said.

Workers in [hybrid environments have the highest productivity levels](#) because it allows for face-to-face meetings without the taxing daily commute. And Pollak said companies that list hybrid jobs get the most applicants.

“It is about twice as many and sometimes even more,” she said.

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But it'll take more than strict bosses and a questionable economy to cement a back-to-the-office lifestyle. Economist [Nicholas Bloom](#) at Stanford said the push coming from the corner office has the support of younger workers in the pit.

“They want to socialize. They also want to get mentored,” he said. “And they normally live in apartments, flat shares, so they can't all work from home.”

Mark Zuckerberg noted this in [his decision to pause remote hiring](#) at Meta. He said data suggests that engineers who started at the company in person performed better than people who trained remotely.

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