FTI Consulting Survey: 70% of Remote and Hybrid Workers Would Leave Job Over Return-to-Office Rule

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Occupiers of Newer and Updated Office Spaces are Better Positioned to Attract Employees Back to Office say Experts in FTI Consulting's Real Estate Solutions Practice

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- The majority (70%) of U.S. workers who are fully remote or in a hybrid arrangement said they are very likely or somewhat likely to seek alternative employment if they are required to return to the office ("RTO") full time (at least 30 hours per week) at their current salary, according to a new FTI Consulting, Inc. (NYSE: FCN) survey.

The survey was conducted by Southpaw Insights for FTI Consulting's Real Estate Solutions practice among 1,000 people who worked in a corporate office setting or home office setting and who were asked about their views of a hypothetical RTO mandate.

The survey found that a third of office workers are or would be excited about returning to the office, primarily due to increased productivity, camaraderie and opportunities for collaboration. Of those that said they would be accepting of an RTO mandate, 60% said they would appreciate the camaraderie, and 53% said they are more productive working in the office.

"We have all seen the headlines about the return-to-office mandates by some of the nation's largest employers, with some companies reporting that they expect all of their workers, with few exceptions, to return to the office full time in 2025," said Josh Herrenkohl, a Senior Managing Director in the Real Estate Solutions practice at FTI Consulting. "But our research shows that their ability to implement this mandate is not cut-and-dry, and employers risk losing talent if RTO mandates are enforced. How employees feel about RTO involves many factors, including their industry, the size of their company, whether they have children and the nature of their current work arrangement."

The Current Work Arrangement Matters (or Does It?)

The current work model appears to correlate with employees' attitude towards working remotely or in the office.

- Of those who are currently fully remote, nearly half (45%) said that being able to work remotely or have the flexibility to work in a hybrid setting is one of the most important aspects of their employment. Similarly, 41% of current hybrid workers gave the same answer, while only 15% of current in-office workers prioritized the remote or hybrid work arrangement.
- 74% of fully remote workers said they are likely to seek employment at another company if they were required to return to the office full time, while 62% of hybrid workers made the same statement. Only 12% of those that are fully remote would not be willing to come into the office at all, but 38% said they would be excited to come back into the office.
- Of those who are currently working remotely, 88% said they would be willing to work in the office for at least some portion of the week, with 33% indicating no more than two days, and 29% saying as many as three to four days a week.
- Worth noting, the top three most frequently cited important employment factors across the survey population were salary and benefits (73%), enjoying the work (56%) and health benefits (50%). The ability to work remotely or hybrid was the fifth most popular key factor (34%), right behind vacation/PTO (37%) and well ahead of career path/opportunity to advance (25%) and company culture (24%).

The Profession and Company Size Matter

Among the most important factors that seem to impact employee attitudes toward RTO mandates is the industry in which they work.

- For example, 94% of people with desk jobs working in the architecture/engineering field would be excited or accepting of an RTO, while 74% of those in banking, 68% of those in the manufacturing sector and 66% of those in healthcare agreed. In contrast, only 51% in tech and telecom, and 58% in business and professional services felt the same way.
- Of those who said they would be excited or accepting of an RTO mandate, those in financial services (70%), retail (69%) and healthcare (67%) said they appreciated the camaraderie the most. Those in architecture/engineering (76%), manufacturing (76%) and banking (67%) felt they would be more productive in an office setting.
- Employees at mid-sized companies (2,500-10,000 employees) are most likely to seek alternative employment (46%) if forced to return to the office full time. In contrast, employees of large companies (more than 10,000 employees) are the least likely (34%) to seek alternative employment if forced to return to the office full time, based on the survey's results.

Demographics Play a Role

- Geographically, employees in the Northeast (45%) and the South (45%) are most likely to seek alternative employment compared with those in the West (29%), if required to return to the office full time.
- Among Gen Z respondents, 42% said they would be excited and 33% would be accepting of a possible RTO mandate, compared to just 33% of Gen X respondents who said they were excited and 25% who said they would be accepting.
- Baby boomers and older are least likely to seek alternative employment (31%) compared to millennials (45%) and Gen Z (45%), if required to return to the office full time.

- Workers with children under the age of 18 are more excited to return to the office than those without (41% vs. 31%).

“This data should send a message to employers and owners of office space that, even though salary and benefits remain the top criteria for people in their jobs, they need to adapt their work environment to appeal to younger employees, as well as those who welcome the opportunity to be more productive and enjoy office camaraderie,” said Ingrid Rivera Noone, a Senior Managing Director and Co-Leader of the Real Estate Solutions practice at FTI Consulting. “That means if there is going to be a war for top talent, you need to incentivize and ‘amenitize’ your office space to compete effectively. This may require companies to pay more for real estate to attract and retain strong employees as RTO mandates are implemented.”

Larissa Gotguelf, a Managing Director in the Real Estate Solutions practice at FTI Consulting, said, “Employers in older and non-updated office buildings will be at a distinct disadvantage to newer and updated office space occupiers, who will be better able to support RTO directives and provide modern workspaces that enhance productivity and offer amenities that can help attract and retain top talent that sometimes might be reluctant to return to office.”

About the FTI Consulting Real Estate Solutions Practice

FTI Consulting Real Estate professionals have the industry expertise and experience to help real estate owners, users, investors and lenders better navigate the market’s complexities and manage its inherent risks. As unbiased and independent advisors, FTI Consulting represents leading public and private real estate entities and stakeholders, including REITs, financial institutions, investment banks, private equity funds, insurance companies, pension advisors, and owners/developers, offering real estate consulting services that help align strategy with business goals.

About FTI Consulting

FTI Consulting, Inc. is a leading global expert firm for organizations facing crisis and transformation, with more than 8,300 employees in 34 countries and territories as of December 31, 2024. The Company generated $3.69 billion in revenues during fiscal year 2024. In certain jurisdictions, FTI Consulting’s services are provided through distinct legal entities that are separately capitalized and independently managed. More information can be found at www.fticonsulting.com.

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