Butts-in-Seats v. Remote Work

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April 20th, 2023

Welcome to the Webinar

- We'll email the recording and slides within 24 hours

- Please participate in our poll + post-webinar survey

- Use the **Q&A** feature to ask the presenter questions

Agenda

- The current state of affairs
- Essential steps for remote and hybrid success
- Boundaries and building community
- Remote work compliance issues
- If remote or hybrid work isn't in the cards
- Attracting and retaining talent

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The Current State of Affairs

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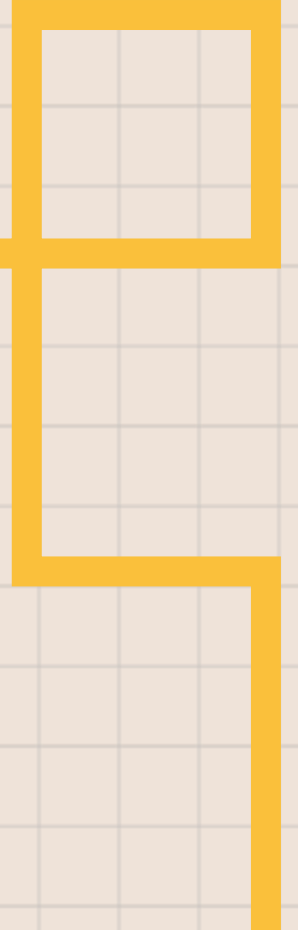
Desire for Remote Work v. Employer Behavior

Assorted surveys – employee perspective:

- 56% - 65% want to be fully remote (Buffer, FlexJobs)
- 32% - 41% want a hybrid work environment (Buffer, FlexJobs)
- 27% - 57% would leave their job if the company wouldn't offer remote work options (FlexJobs, Andiamo)
- Employees are 22% happier working remotely than in an onsite office environment (Owl Labs)
- 70% said their job happiness has greatly increased due to remote work (Playvox, call centers)

Resume Builder survey, employer plans:

- 90% of companies will require employees to return to office in 2023
- 21% of companies will fire workers who do not return to the office
- 88% of companies are offering incentives to get employees to return, including catered meals, commuter benefits, and higher pay

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Why Employers Want People Back in the Office

- Culture is harder to maintain and build

- On-the-job training is more challenging

- Employers don't trust that employees are productive at home

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Let's Talk Productivity
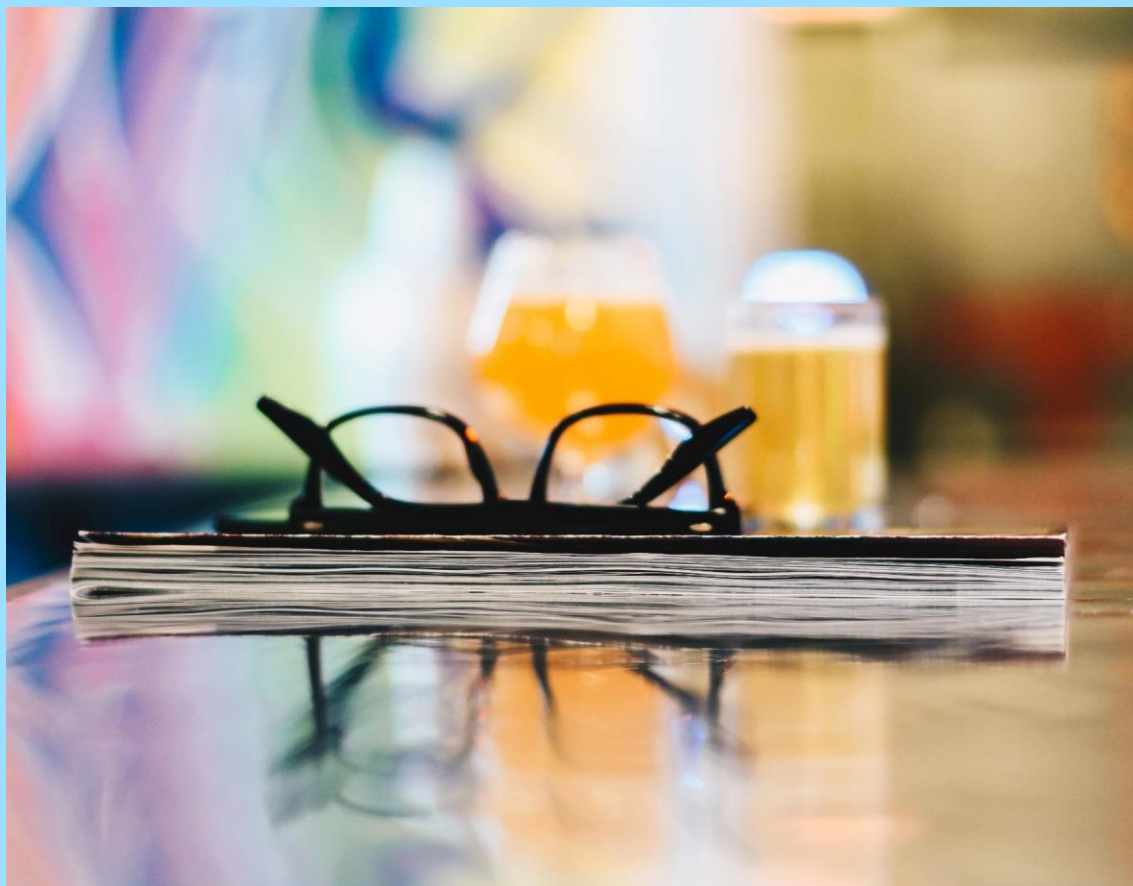
Many surveys and studies over the last few years have indicated that employees are, on average, more productive working from home.

Microsoft surveyed 11,000+ employees and analyzed trillions of Microsoft 365 "productivity signals" along with LinkedIn labor trends and Glint People Science findings and they likewise found that the amount of work being done is up.

- Meetings are up 153%
- Double-bookings are up 46%
- 42% of people are "multitasking" in meetings

Their takeaway? End productivity paranoia.

https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work-is-just-work

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Task Switching is the Real Productivity Killer

- For 98% of us, *there is no such thing as multitasking*

- It takes 15 min. to get properly into a task

- It can take 25 min. to get back to a task after interruption

- It takes more time to get tasks done if you switch between them than if you do them one at a time

- You make more errors when task switching than if you do one task at a time

- If the tasks are complex, time and error penalties increase

- Each task switch might be fast, but if you switch a lot in a day, it can add up to a 40% loss in productivity

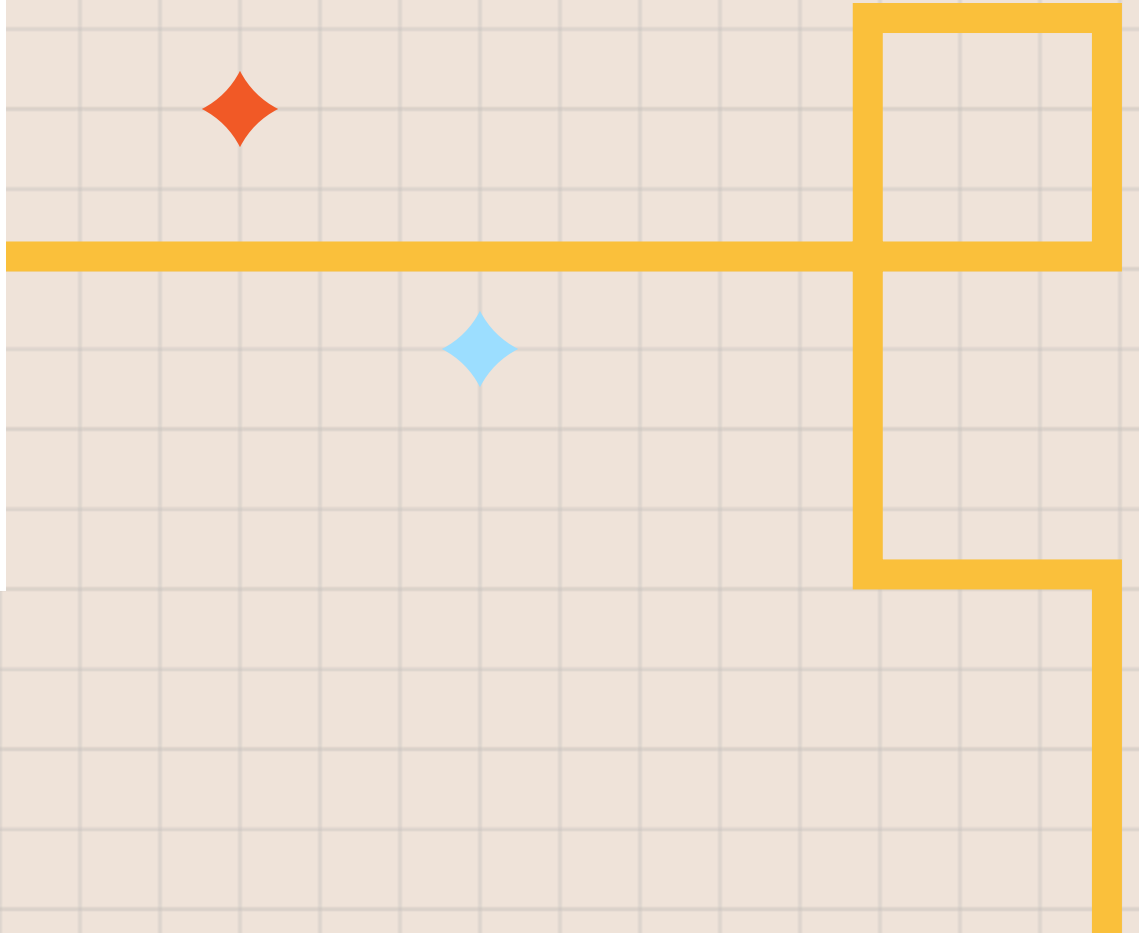Not tax or legal advice | Powered by **Mineral**™
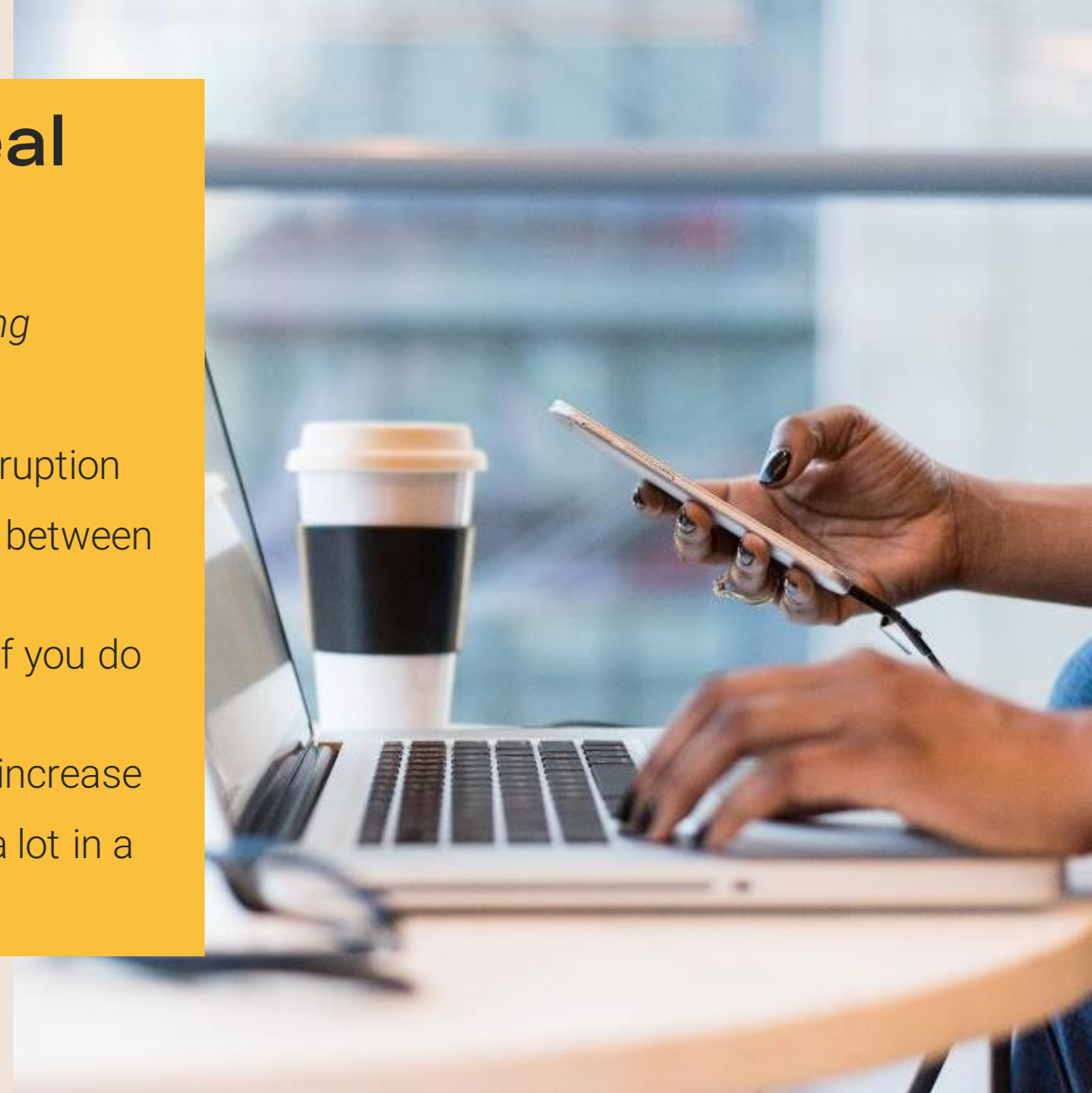
Poll Question

Ideally, what percentage of your workforce would have a hybrid schedule?

- 0% - we want everyone in the workplace all the time
- 0% - we want everyone fully remote
- 1 to 25%
- 26 to 75%
- Over 75%

Remote and Hybrid Work: Essential Steps for Success

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Accept that Command-and-Control Won't Work

Unless you've implemented some serious surveillance, you're going to have to find a way to measure employee success and productivity that doesn't boil down to butts-in-seats.

This will be a good thing.

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Give the Benefit of the Doubt

- Even if you don't, pretend that you trust your employees (fake it till you make it)

- Better to assume good intent and behavior and be proven wrong than to treat remote employees like they can't be trusted from the outset

- Remember that even in the office where you can see them, employees spend plenty of time on non-productive activities

Implement SMART Goals

- **Specific**: detailed, narrow, jargon-free

- **Measurable**: find concrete metrics that will help you know if the goal has been achieved; avoid more or better

- **Attainable**: based in reality; be wary of "reach goals" - take current conditions into account

- **Relevant**: make sure goals align with values and long-term objectives, preferably for both the company and employee

- **Time-bound**: set reasonable deadlines and help employees work backward from them to set intermediary goals

Track Outcomes and Adjust as Needed

- Watch for results not "busy-ness"

- Check progress against the SMART goals

- Ask employees what obstacles they're hitting and if they have ideas for how you can help remove them

- Be prepared to provide more structure if needed

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Create and Maintain Trust and Transparency

- Treat employees equally even if they are in different locations with different benefits required by law

- Try to maintain equity between teams

- Have frequent "coffee talks" (or similar) with the leadership team

- Host "AskMeAnything" sessions

- Provide ample time for Q&A after meetings – make sure you're catching both chat and raised hands

- Provide more frequent company updates

- Regularly meet with your direct reports and those with a dotted line to you
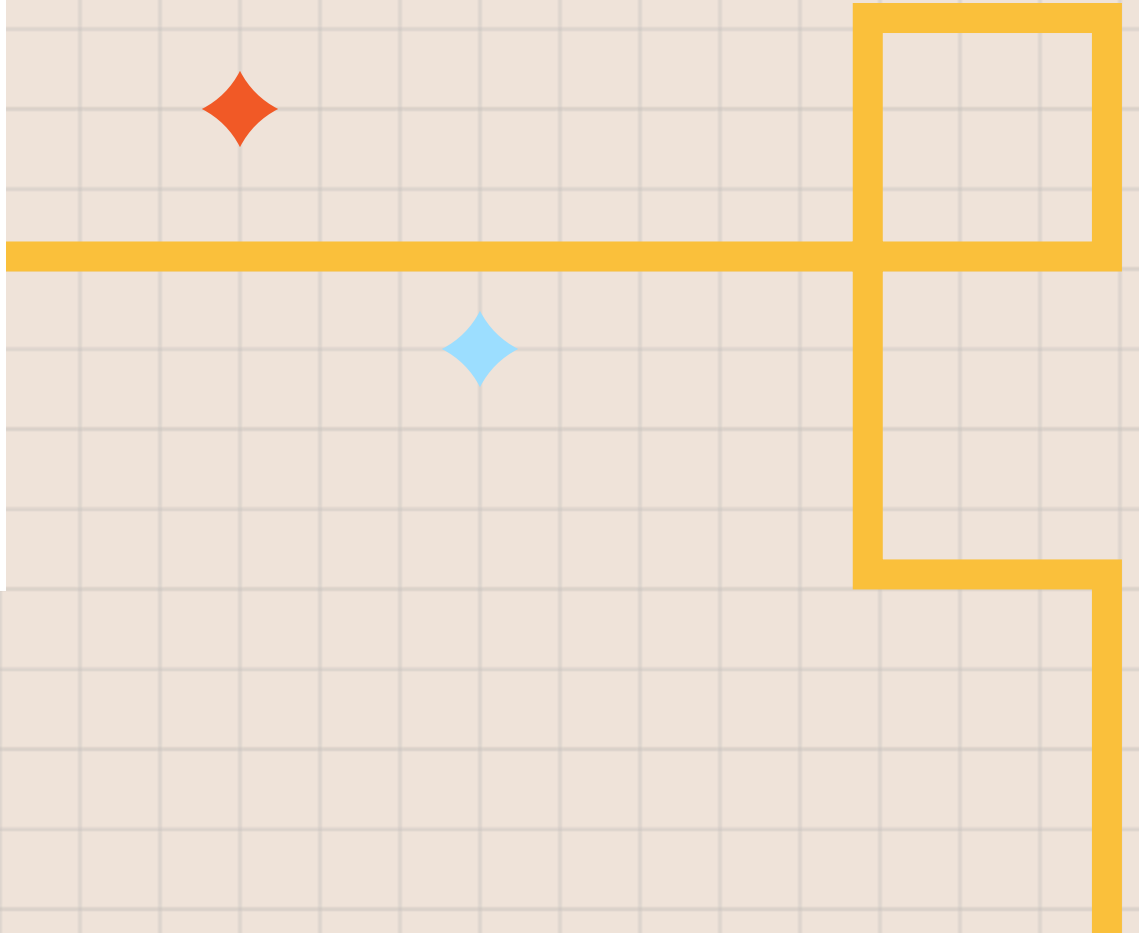
Poll Question

Is your focus *more* on bringing people back to the workplace or figuring out how to make remote work a long-term option?

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Remote and Hybrid Work: Boundaries and Community

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Acknowledge and Support Boundaries

- Saved commute time should not become work time

- The workday is still the workday and weekends are still weekends

- If you have people in different time zones, establish expectations

- Do not watch people on video all day

- "Happy Hour" should not be mandatory

- Instantaneous responses on messaging systems and email are not usually reasonable or necessary (and will seriously hinder productivity)

- Endorse the 10 a.m. coffee run

- Expect and, if necessary, require people to log out of their work apps or laptop at the end of their shift

Calendar Everything and Don't be Afraid to Close Slack

- Alleviates stress about not responding instantly

- Allows you to have unbroken focus

- Makes it more likely that project work will actually happen during the regular workday

- Allows coworkers who can no longer see you across the cube farm to know if you're available or not
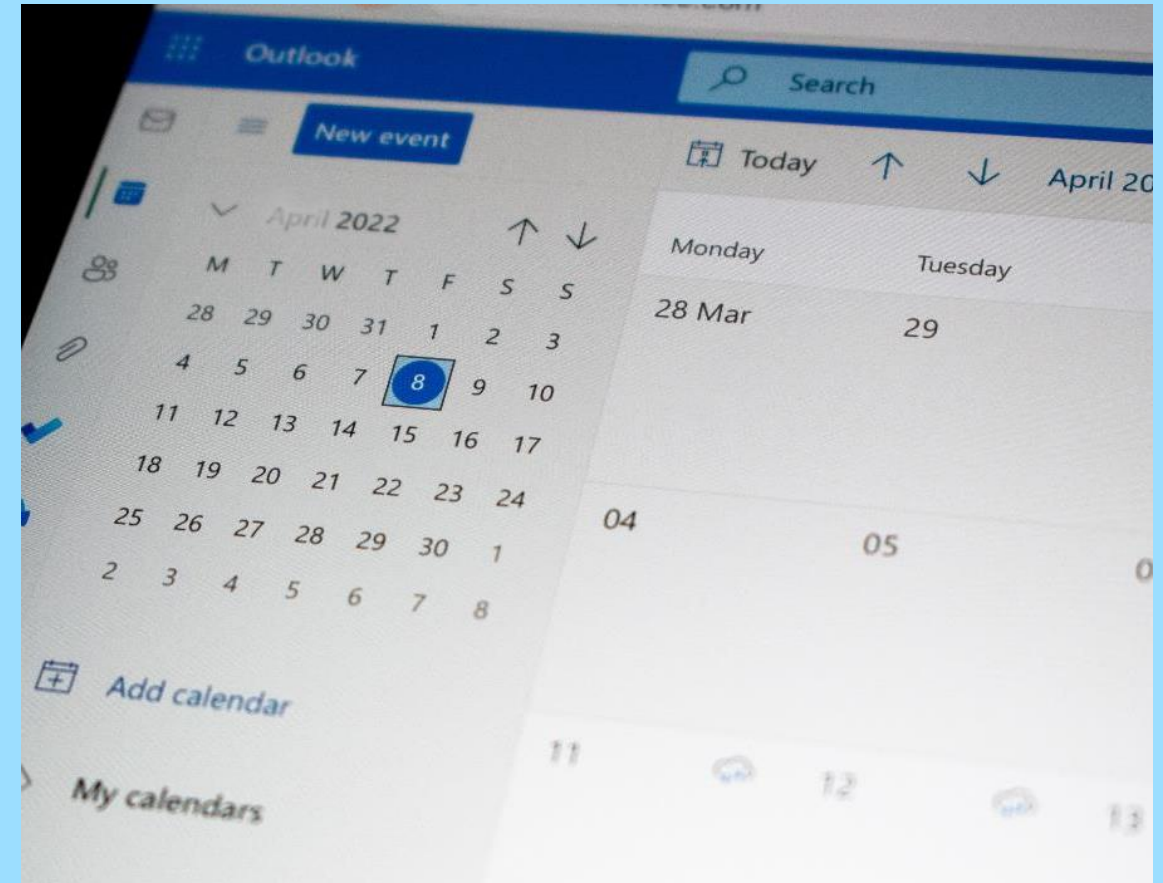
Maintain Community

It's not the same when you can't hang over someone's cube wall to gossip, but try to recreate that as best you can, and encourage your employees to do the same:

- Have the team lunches

- Reach out to talk about non-work topics

- Create drop-in group workspaces

- Have spontaneous (optional) happy hours

- Let the kids say hello

- Enjoy the pet cameos

- Have communication channels for non-work banter (e.g., cycling, music, PokemonGo, book club, cryptocurrency, dogs, cats, food)

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Community Question

What is one special or creative way you have built or maintained a feeling of community with your remote workers?

Remote and Hybrid Work: Compliance
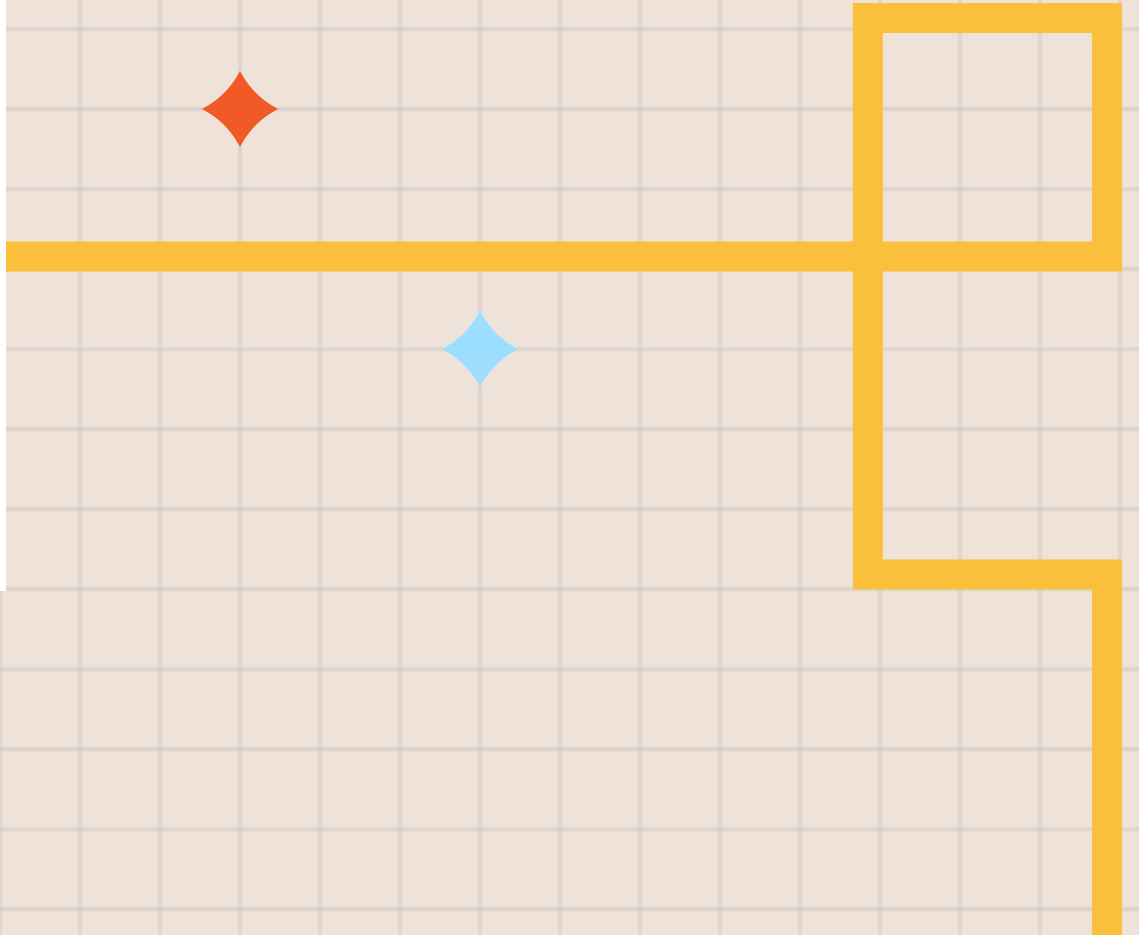
Time Tracking
for non-exempt employees

- Beware of off-the-clock (untracked) time

- All time worked must be tracked and paid

- Have a detailed policy

- Make sure your system makes sense for WFH

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Meal and Rest Breaks

- These are still required (if they were before) and should be logged just as if employees were in the office

- Even if they aren't required (like for exempt employees), breaks should be encouraged

- Breaks restore motivation, help us retain information, improve productivity, creativity, and focus, and reduce decision fatigue (How Do Work Breaks Help Your Brain?, Psychology Today)

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Posters and Notices

- Laws about postings are evolving but not as fast as we'd like

- Post on the company intranet or virtual bulletin board

- Scan and email or print and mail

- Non-compliance is low risk, but not no risk

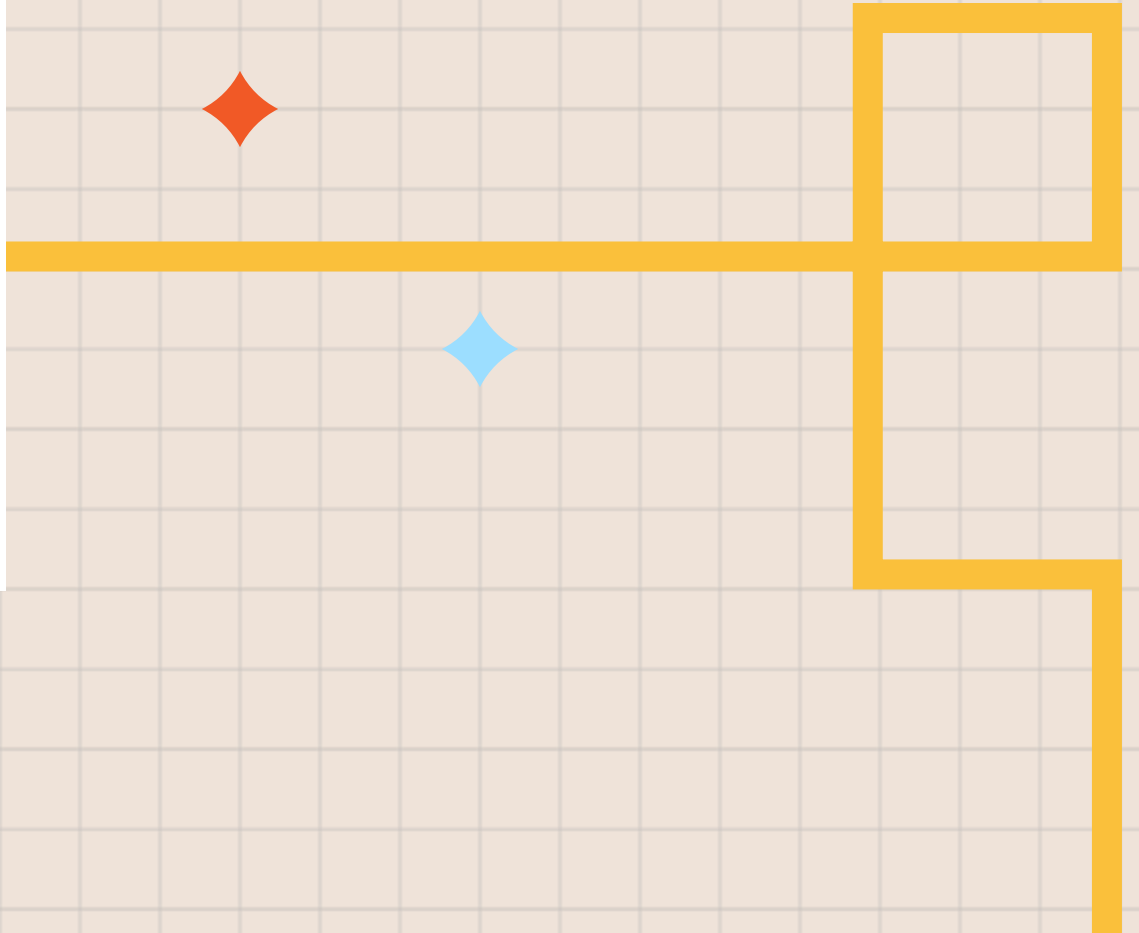Not tax or legal advice | Powered by **Mineral**

Safety Obligations

- You aren't responsible for their space like you would be in the workplace, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't offer suggestions or best practices

- Make sure that employees are not exposed to reasonably foreseeable hazards created by their at-home employment

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If Remote or Hybrid Work Isn't in the Cards

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Find the Right In-Office Perks

What do people like most about working from home, other than flexibility? Ask them!

- No cost to commute or park
- More variety in work areas
- Better lighting
- More comfortable places to sit or stand
- Easier to make meals
- Better coffee
- Ability to work in a crowd

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Be Flexible When You Can

- Schools pick up and drop off

- Longer lunches for errands

- Twice a month half-day at home or on-call

- Swapping or reworking of standing schedule

- Optional shift changes on a set schedule (monthly, quarterly)

- Work from home on days with appointments

Be Consistent with Scheduling

- Release schedules as far in advance as possible and treat them as if they cannot by changed by you, the employer

- If you have to change someone's schedule last minute, offer a penalty/reward/cash apology

- If you send someone home ahead of schedule, pay at least a portion of the called-off hours

- If you have people working split shifts, offer a premium

Attracting and Retaining Talent

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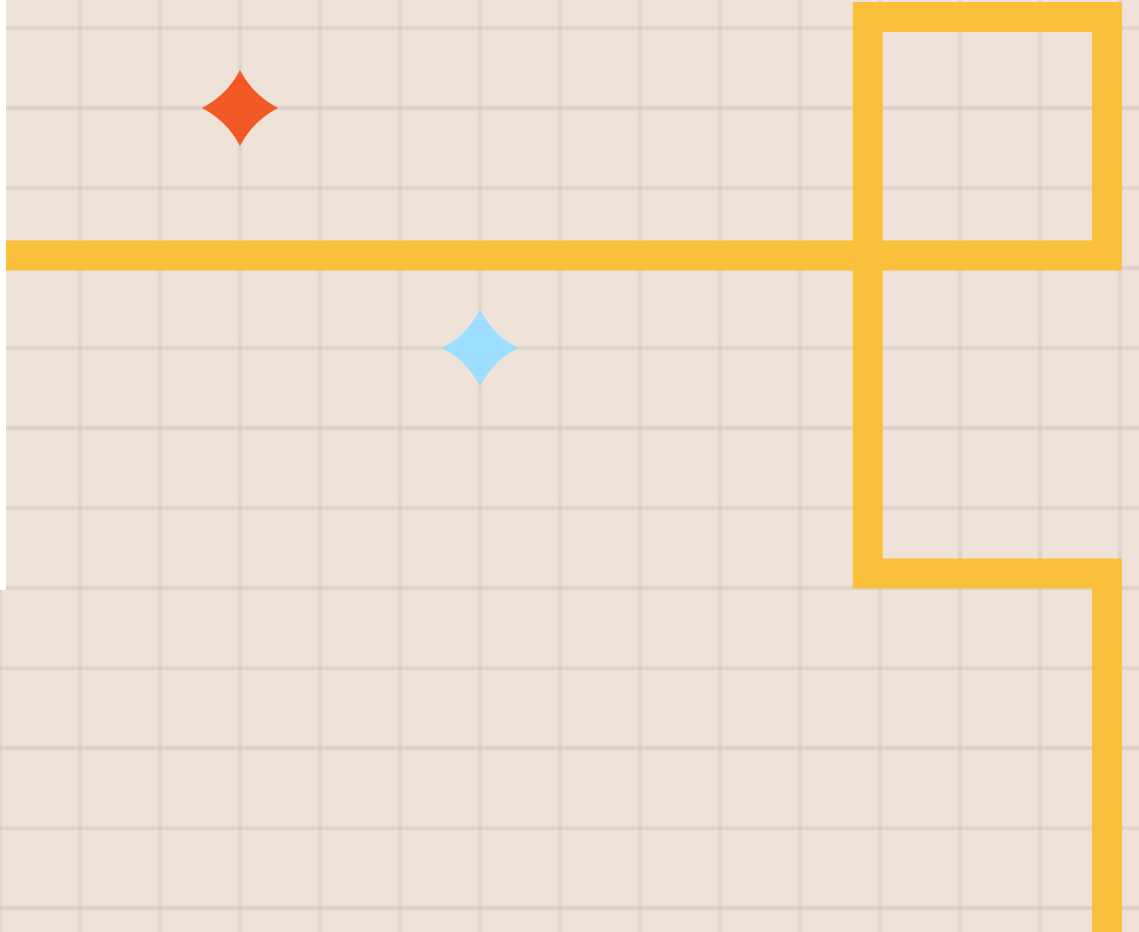
Stand Out on Paper

- Share your wage range in job postings

- Talk about your unique benefits and perks

- Talk about your culture and values

- If you cross train or promote from within, hype it

Don't Drug Test Unless You Must

Cannabis is legal for recreational use in many states.

Even someone who never uses any drugs could be put off by the intrusion, lack of trust, and expense in terms of both time and money.

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Help People Grow

Don't make it so people have to leave to advance their careers. Build a structure that allows for "leveling up," but If that won't work, create ways for people to "level over."

- Cross-train

- Let them learn a new area of the business

- Create a mentorship program

- Pay for outside education or training

- Ask what *they* want to do or learn or try

Offer Benefits that Appeal to *Your* Employee Demographic

Different things appeal to different groups of people, and while you can't make everyone happy, you can avoid offering irrelevant benefits. Ask employees what they want! Then be prepared to deliver.

- Remote or hybrid work

- Paid parking

- Gym memberships

- Monthly birthday events

- Beer or kombucha on tap

- Pet insurance

- Free or discounted products

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Work on Your Culture

Culture looks different in every workplace. The culture you want may not appeal to everyone and that's okay.

- Regularly solicit employee feedback, then act on that feedback

- Care personally

- Respect boundaries

- Be transparent

- Communicate frequently

- Pay equitably

- Say thank you

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Q&A

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Thank you for joining!

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