

Return to work survey: 12 questions to ask your staff

As organizations welcome employees back into the workplace during the pandemic, many are using return-to-work surveys to gauge their employees' hopes and fears—and help plan for the future look of their workplace.

Employee surveys are a necessary step to help your company identify employees' concerns about returning to the workplace and help your company choose the best COVID-mitigation measures. Plus, it will uncover employees' attitudes about telecommuting and help you gather ideas to shape a more digital, cost-saving future for your organization.



Before you set a return-to-work timetable, remember that the World Health Organization continues to recommend that nonessential workers only return to the workplace when there is:

1. a sustained decrease in community transmission
2. a decreased rate of positive tests
3. sufficient testing available to detect new outbreaks
4. adequate local hospital capacity to accommodate a possible surge of new cases.

Below are some sample questions you can include in your employee survey.

Questions on safety

What are your utmost safety concerns about returning to the office? Select all that apply.

- Becoming exposed to Covid at the office
- Possibly infecting co-workers with the virus
- Lack of flexibility to work from home
- Arranging child care
- Missing time from work due to health reasons
- Not being able to assist vulnerable family members at home
- Other (please specify)

What safety procedures would you like in place before returning to the office? Select all that apply.

- None necessary
- Standard precautions such as six feet of separation, easily available hand sanitizer, required masks when mixing
- A system for contact tracing
- Temperature checks
- Staggered shifts and/or workdays to limit contact

- Closure of, or limits to, break room areas and/or communal spaces
- A limit to the number of employees entering the building
- Restrictions on visitors to the office
- The installation of physical partitions between workspaces
- I would not feel comfortable returning until vaccines are widely available, there is an “all-clear” from the CDC or local authorities, etc.
- I would not feel comfortable returning until the pandemic is truly considered over, with close to zero Covid cases in our area.

Which of the above measures do you feel *need* to be in place for you to feel safe in returning?



What safety procedures would you find too intrusive? Select all that apply.

- Enforced mask wearing
- Temperature checks
- Contact tracing
- Enforced vaccinations
- Antibody tests
- Closure of communal spaces and/or break room areas
- Partitions between workspaces
- Staggered shifts and/or workdays
- Other (please specify) _____

Do you generally trust in your colleagues' ability to observe safety precautions, report symptoms and stay home if they sense they may have been exposed to Covid?

- Yes, completely.
- Not sure
- I'm not fully trusting during this difficult time.

Questions on productivity

How productive do you think you've been working at home versus in the office?

- A lot more productive
- A little more productive
- About the same
- A little less productive
- A lot less productive



Which challenges have you faced while working from home? Select all that apply.

- Communicating with colleagues
- Computer/video/cellular/internet problems
- Time management: separating work and personal activities
- Developing ideas, problem-solving, etc. that I used to do in person
- Maintaining a quiet and functional workspace
- None

If you were to continue working at home sometimes, what resources are you currently lacking? You can select multiple options.

- Updated computer/monitor(s)
- Camera for video calls
- Printer
- Hi-speed internet
- Appropriate office furniture
- Training in some necessary applications
- Other (please specify) _____

Questions on the future of telecommuting



When the office officially reopens, would you want to:

- Resume your normal in-office work schedule
- Start a new routine that includes more work-at-home time

How many days per week would you prefer to work at home if given the option? _____

What is your attitude toward reducing the office footprint in the future? Select all that apply.

- I would be willing to share a workspace with another person if necessary.
- I would be willing to stagger my days in the office on a fixed schedule if necessary.
- I would be willing to work remotely full-time if necessary.
- Other: _____

Do you think your team could be as productive using *only* digital means to communicate and work, with no in-person meetings possible long-term? Please explain further in the space provided.

- Yes, we can be just as good working remotely from one another long-term
- In many ways, we could still succeed, but not all
- No, I don't think remote work for everyone on the team would produce consistently excellent results long-term.

Employee survey best practice tips

- Provide text boxes for fuller responses whenever you feel it's appropriate.
- Keep the response window relatively tight to impress upon staff the importance of responding quickly, and to ensure the survey doesn't fall between the cracks of their duties.
- Use a simple platform and design. Using a third party application instead of an in-house system goes a long way toward assuring workers their answers are kept anonymous, but always reaffirm they will be.

- Employees will surely discuss the survey among themselves, so craft your questions so you'd feel comfortable asking them even in an open setting.