

What do bosses think about returning to the office? We asked them.

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FULL TEXT

Across the country, employers are struggling with how, when and even if they will bring employees back to the office. In conversations with leaders at companies in a broad variety of industries –the people charged with making the ultimate call –the consensus was that there was no consensus.

C.E.O.s are struggling to balance rapidly shifting expectations with their own impulse to have the final word on how their companies run. They are eager to appear responsive to employees who are relishing their newfound autonomy, but reluctant to give up too much control. And they are constantly changing policies in response to worker demands, re-examining aspects of their business that they might not have tinkered with otherwise.

David Gelles, The New York Times's Corner Office columnist, talked to several C.E.O.s to learn how they're thinking about working from the office at this point in the pandemic.

- In early October, PwC announced that remote work was a permanent option. Workers had two weeks to decide what they would do. Those who decide to change cities or remain remote may have their assignments changed, but are not at risk of being let go. "I believe what we announced will be commonplace for the mass employers in a matter of months," said Tim Ryan, the U.S. chairman of PwC.
- "What employees are saying they want in their work environment going forward is going to be a lot more important than a bunch of senior executives at the top of an organization determining what that will be," said Andi Owen, the chief executive of MillerKnoll, the maker of the Aeron chair and other office furniture, which has yet to bring all of its own white-collar workers back full time.
- As Google prepares for more employees to come back to the office next year, it is planning a makeover of many of its office spaces. Sundar Pichai, the chief executive of Google and its parent company, Alphabet, said that Google, where some workers have returned on a voluntary basis but most are still working remotely, remained productive (and profitable), but that going so long with limited in-person interactions with colleagues was getting old. "We are working on some borrowed time, in terms of working on memories of the relationships you have and the connections you have," Mr. Pichai said. "It's taking a toll."
- A full third of workers said last fall that they were putting in more hours than they had been before the pandemic, according to Pew. This was especially the case for people who used to commute. For many, the hours spent driving or taking public transportation had simply been subsumed into the workday. "I think people are working harder," said Ms. Owen of MillerKnoll. The blurring of the lines between the workday and the rest of life has contributed to a growing sense of disaffection in the labor force, and may help explain the mass resignations that are upending the job market.

C.E.O.s are eager for employees to return –and afraid of alienating those who have grown accustomed to working from home. *READ THE FULL ARTICLE*

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