

Planning Remote Work: Considering the Organization, Role, Team and Individual

It's time to start thinking about transitioning from the makeshift solutions responding to shelter in place to a remote work strategy that makes sense to the organization and the individual. This phased Return to Campus encourages you to develop a plan for determining which roles and employees will continue working from home and in what capacity. Best practice is to consider the organization, the role of the employee, the team and the individual.



The Organization

Leadership decisions during crisis set the stage of culture for an organization. Finding a way to transition back to the workplace is the next step in simultaneously supporting the needs of the University and the needs of the employee. Our mission, values and goals remain the same, but a new normal has shifted how those values can be expressed and how those goals are met. Consistency, clarity, and authenticity in the cultural message are important in establishing a credible and equitable path forward.



The Role of the Employee

When evaluating a fit for longer-term, at-home work, decisions should be based on the task definition and the employee's ability to work independently and effectively in the role outside a traditional workplace. According to Gallup, the optimal remote work role meets three criteria:

- Employees can perform their duties outside of an on-site workplace.
- Most of the role's tasks and processes are well-defined.
- The role does not require highly interdependent work for success.

Working-at-home is not an "all or nothing" prospect, many campus jobs are best suited to a combination, reaping the benefits of intentionally identifying and doing the best type of work in the most productive environment. While the State of California still recommends those who can work from home do so, a hybrid model is a way organizations can, with intention and strategy, boost productivity and worker autonomy while still limiting interaction for health and safety.



The Team

The location of the team is less important than the person who is leading it. The keys to success are clear expectations and communications, meaningful feedback, and frequent assessment. When evaluating teams which are best suited for consistent remote work, consider the following:

- **Interdependency** of team members: Do they frequently work on detailed, complex projects that require intense partnership?
- **Dynamics** of team member contributions: Which roles may cause bottlenecks that could affect downstream work?
- **Team engagement:** Are you equipped to manage the remote work challenges?
- **Trust:** Has the team achieved past accomplishments in the face of challenges and proven their ability to depend on each other?

The Individual

Workers are reporting high levels of worry and stress. Leadership allows and encourages managers to individualize plans that reasonably honor the needs of their employees whilst simultaneously supporting the efficiencies that get work done effectively. Managers should evaluate the following criteria for each person on their team:

- **Readiness and Comfort:** Is the person comfortable with the protocols and precautions that we are implementing at the workplace? Are there special health and safety considerations for this individual or their family members?
- **Life Circumstances:** What personal demands is this person experiencing regarding childcare, elder care or responsibilities for tending to sick family members? What type of transportation does this person depend upon to be at the workplace? Does this person have an appropriate workspace and tools to engage in productive long-term remote work?
- **Performance:** How has this individual performed before and after shifting to at-home work? Tracking and supporting low performers is usually more difficult from a distance.
- **Strengths:** People are unique. Some people work remotely with a high degree of success despite minimal interventions and some people perform better with the interactions and structure of on-site work. And, just like people, tasks are unique, some better done at home, some best done in the workplace. Identification of the strengths/challenges of the people, tasks and locations are key.

