



## Why Your Hybrid Strategy Is Doomed to Fail?

Organizations have been plotting a full-scale return to work since the pandemic began, but those plans are typically based on the assumption of a consistent “new normal.” After two years of COVID-related disruptions, however, it is clear that organizations will need to put additional time and energy into developing a more resilient hybrid strategy; one that will hold up in the face of whatever disruptions come next.

We recently ran a poll that demonstrates how organizations are thinking about their back-to-office plans. According to the survey we hosted on LinkedIn in January of 2022, 43% of respondents are eager to return to the office as soon as possible, and another 32% said their plans are on hold due to the spread of the Omicron variant. Furthermore, only about 35% said their organization’s future workplace solution would be primarily or entirely remote.

These findings are echoed by another recent study conducted by Robert Half Canada, which found that 55% of employers intend to return their staff to the office full time.

If this is starting to sound familiar, it’s because it probably should by now. Employers have been circling dates in their calendar, planning for a full or partial return to work at regular intervals for the past two years, only to have those plans further delayed or complicated by factors outside of their control.

For example, a July 2020 study by PwC Canada found that 78% of employers were expecting to return to the office within the next three months. Another study conducted in August of 2021 by ADP Canada found that 60% of employers had already communicated back-to-work plans. As we all know, those plans were largely disrupted, first by the Delta variant, and more recently by Omicron.

As much as we'd all like to be able to execute a full-scale return to pre-pandemic norms, it's time to accept the reality of the situation; the transition to hybrid work isn't going to be as simple as telling staff they can work from home for a few days each week.

In a highly dynamic and constantly evolving situation, setting-and-forgetting sweeping policies and plans is not a realistic option. Without constant re-evaluation and adaptation, back-to-work plans are unlikely to hold up against our new reality.

Furthermore, many organizations have established hybrid work strategies to satisfy growing employee demands, but haven't really had an opportunity to put those plans into practice at full scale. As a result, many are developing their hybrid work strategies in a vacuum, and under the assumption that we're gradually approaching a new and consistent normal. It's one thing to sit at your home office and sketch out a hybrid work policy; it's another to put those plans into action. I fear that too many organizations haven't really given these plans the time and attention they require.

Those that fail to take their organization's existing culture, human resources, staffing, and other norms into consideration will likely find significant challenges once they attempt a hybrid work arrangement. Even basic and practical issues related to employee schedule coordinating could leave organizations without a reliable hybrid work roadmap, just when they need it most.

Furthermore, many are also likely to discover that it's not sufficient to have a singular back-to-office, hybrid work strategy. In fact, the average organization might need upwards of three: one for operating in a traditional hybrid model, once restrictions are lifted and it is deemed safe to do so; one for operating remotely when necessary due to safety restrictions; and one for operating fully or near fully remote if and when office use is restricted.

When the pandemic began, many corporate leaders assumed they would be returning to the business as usual within a few weeks or months. Nearly two years later, it's time to accept that a return to the office and the introduction of a hybrid strategy isn't going to be as straightforward as many had assumed.

To explore how our latest findings and discover new strategies for managing the complexity of this ongoing situation visit [www.cresatoronto.com](http://www.cresatoronto.com).

---

## About the authors



**Stacey Litwin-Davies**

Principal, Consulting  
sdavies@cresa.com  
416.648.8479



**Jamie Grossman**

Managing Principal,  
Broker  
jgrossman@cresa.com  
416.402.1430