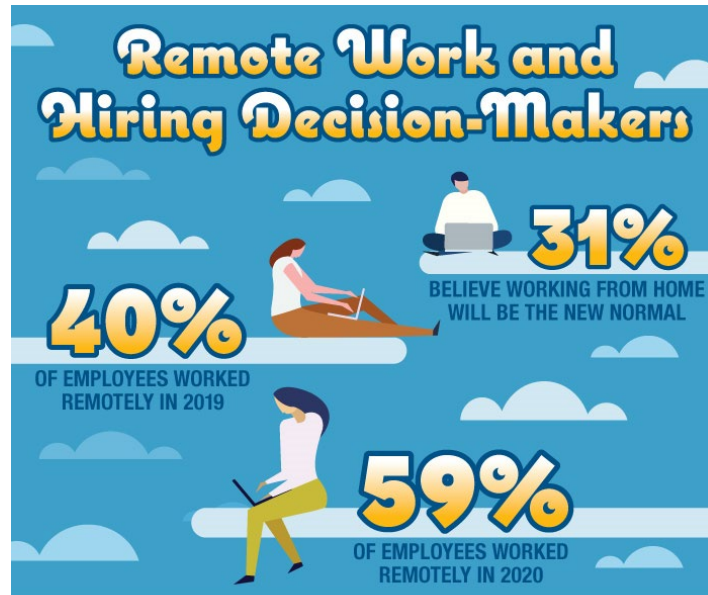

Survey: 1 in 3 Companies Say Remote Work to Become New Normal

Sick Day Policies Also Changing Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

TORONTO, April 14, 2021 – As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, record numbers of Canadian employees have worked remotely from home, an arrangement that will remain for many even after the pandemic has passed, according to a survey from The Harris Poll, commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

The survey found 1 in 3 hiring decision-makers (31%) believe remote work will become the new normal. It also found a significant increase in the number of employees who regularly worked remotely last year (59%), up from 40% in 2019.

Although remote work has become more common as a result of the pandemic, the majority of employees who have worked remotely are expected to return eventually. Among companies with employees who worked remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 13% say the majority have already returned to their physical workplace, while 62% expect the majority to return by the end of the year.



Source: The survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Nov. 16 and Dec. 7, 2020, among 506 Canadian hiring decision-makers.



Remote work is not the only way the COVID-19 pandemic is changing workplace policies. The survey found 1 in 3 companies (32%) have increased the flexibility of their sick day policies. Additionally, a sizeable proportion (37%) say their company's greater acceptance of employees staying home when sick will be a permanent impact of the pandemic.

Sarah Vitelli, an Express franchise owner in Richmond Hill, Ontario, believes the majority of workers who are currently working remotely will likely remain working that way in some fashion even after the pandemic has passed.

"With the technology offered today, people are able to work remotely as efficiently and productively as being in the office," said Vitelli. "In many cases, employers have seen an increase in productivity from employees working remotely compared to when they were working in the office."

Terry Stewart, an Express franchise owner in Surrey, British Columbia, says some clients have already let him know that many of their employees will be working at home indefinitely. But he points out that remote work is not feasible or desirable for every company or employee. He also points out that some employees have not enjoyed working from home and want to return to the workplace.

"A lot depends on the mindset and culture of a company, as there are those who like to operate with a more 'all hands-on deck' approach in the office for collaboration and teamwork, or whose employees cannot easily maintain productivity while at home, will likely return," said Stewart.

"Those positions that have transitioned from office to home and have maintained or exceeded

productivity will likely remain remote.”

Vitelli agrees that remote work is not feasible for all companies or jobs.

“There are companies that need staff to be on site to be able to complete certain tasks, and companies with smaller teams wearing multiple hats make remote work less feasible,” she said.

Jessica Culo, an Express franchise owner in Edmonton, Alberta, reports an increasing number of employers are introducing the ability for employees to split their time between their workplace and working remotely. She is implementing that option for some of the employees in her own office.

“We are looking at giving some employees the option to work either 20%, 40% or 60% of their week remotely,” she said. “This would be scheduled with the same days being worked remotely each week for planning purposes, both professionally and personally.”

As for when employees will head back to the office, Express experts agree that the majority of the population will need to be vaccinated before large segments of the workforce that are currently working remotely returns to the workplace.

One other byproduct of the transition to remote work during the last year is the evolution of sick leave policies.

“I think most companies are now more understanding of people staying home when sick, especially because no one can afford to have a COVID-19 outbreak at their workplace,” said Stewart. “We have a protocol to do our part to keep our clients’ workplace safe for our associates and their employees.”

Vitelli agrees and adds that any company that wants to keep their top talent will help ensure its workforce stays healthy and safe.

“Every company we deal with has an intense COVID-19 protocol, from online check-ins to temp checks and screening prior to entering the workplace,” said Vitelli. “Over the past year everyone has had to adapt to a new normal, and I believe more companies will remain more flexible and accommodating when it comes to sick leave.”

Remote work is just one of the many ways companies have had to adapt in the past 12 months and the lasting impact of this transition remains to be seen, Express CEO Bill Stoller said.

“Until the COVID-19 virus is under control, I believe remote work, in some form, is here to stay,” he said. “Companies need to continue production, and flexibility is key to profitability.”

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express

Employment Professionals between Nov. 16 and Dec. 7, 2020, among 506 Canadian hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in Canada who are employed full-time or self-employed, work at companies with more than one employee, and have full/significant involvement in hiring decisions at their company). Data was weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email ana@mapleleafstrategies.com.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing company has more than 830 franchises in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Since inception, Express has put more than 9 million people to work worldwide.

About Express Employment Professionals

At Express Employment Professionals, we're in the business of people. From job seekers to client companies, Express helps people thrive and businesses grow. Our international network of franchises offers localized staffing solutions to the communities they serve across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, employing 526,000 people globally in 2020. For more information, visit www.ExpressPros.com.