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THE FUTURE OF WORK POST COVID-19

INSIGHTS AND RESEARCH

Talent Solutions Provider

DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

A NOTE
FROM ANDREW

After 12 months of real uncertainty about what companies would do regarding a 'return to work', the subject is a hot topic amongst many business leaders. Although none of us know what the future will look like, I believe it's important that we continue to share, debate and challenge what the best practices might look like.

I think the future of how we work is incredibly exciting. Companies now have the ability and confidence to create more flexible working environments for their staff which should help with work-life balance, increasing productivity, and creating a happier workforce.

We recently surveyed over 1,000 companies on what they thought the future of work would look like and I am pleased to present our insights and findings.

Should you have any queries or would like more information, please get in touch.

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The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted labour markets globally during 2020. The short-term effects were sudden and often severe. Millions of people worldwide lost their jobs or were furloughed; while others rapidly adjusted to working from home as offices closed.
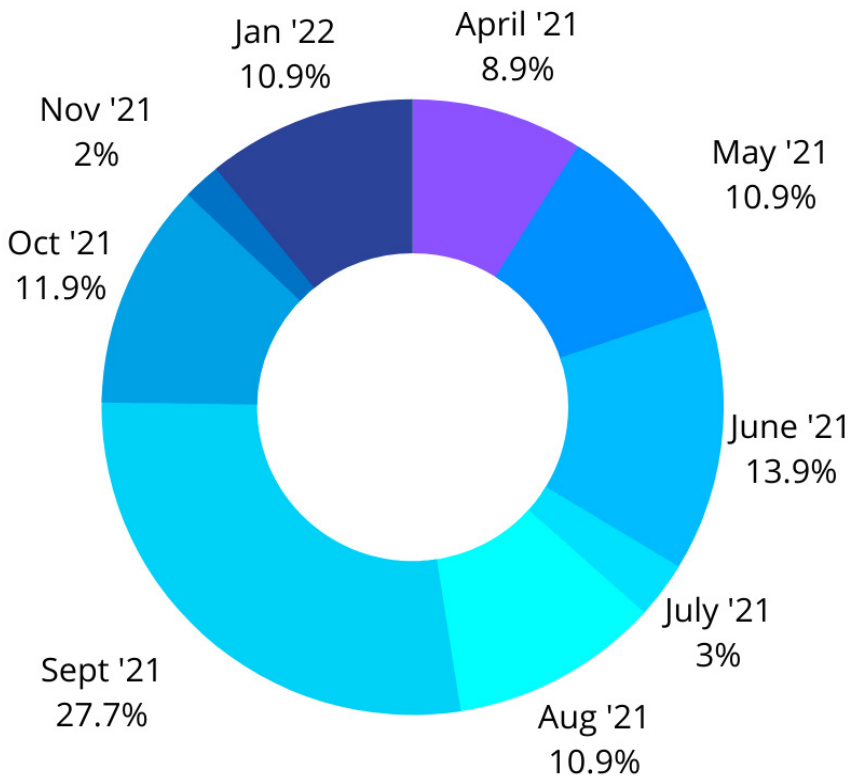
For Ireland, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the necessary public health measures to contain the spread of the virus, resulted in the largest monthly increase in unemployment in the history of the State during March 2020. The lockdown in Ireland has initiated a large-scale move to remote work. Along with the rest of the world, the way which Irish people work and live was changed almost overnight, in ways that tested our capability to merge people and technology in an extremely unique business environment.

Now as we are nearly halfway through 2021, many companies and individuals are starting to think about the future of work post Covid-19. How will jobs be affected? What different skills will be needed in the future? How can companies and individuals best prepare?

At Mason Alexander, we have spent many months listening and talking to our clients about these issues, concerns, and queries around the future of work post Covid-19. We sent out a survey to employers to learn about their plans for the coming months and their opinions for the future of work post Covid-19.

Predicting the future of work is difficult. While it's anyone's guess what's next for the world of work, some factors remain: organisational performance will always be vital, and it is dependent on employees.

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Jan '22
10.9%

Nov '21
2%

April '21
8.9%

Oct '21
11.9%

May '21
10.9%

June '21
13.9%

Sept '21
27.7%

July '21
3%

Aug '21
10.9%

When are people expecting to return to the office?

Nearly **28%** of our respondents said they would be returning to the office in September 2021, with the remaining being quite a mix of dates, as shown in the chart.

Post Covid-19, will you still complete the hiring process remotely?

53% will still hire remotely post Covid-19

However, **30% said no**, with some stating that they believe it's really important for the interviewee to see the environment they are going to be working from

60%

40%

20%

0%

Yes   No   Maybe

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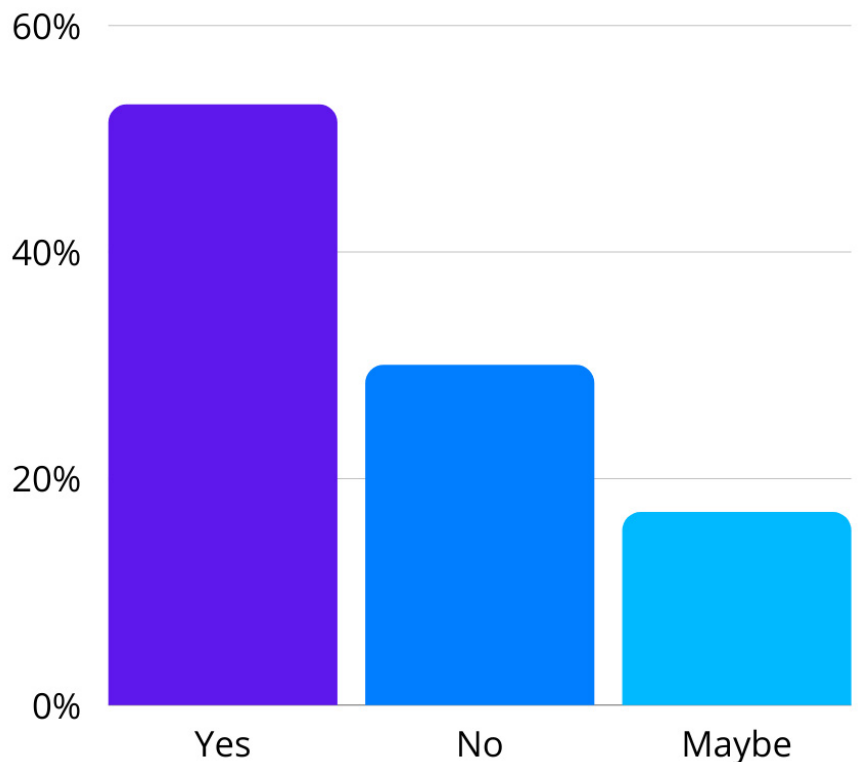
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Covid-19 Vaccination and Employees

We asked our respondents about staff Covid-19 vaccinations – will they be encouraging staff to get them, and what would their policies be regarding staff vaccinations etc.

62% of respondents said they will not force staff to get vaccinated, stating it's up to their employees whether or not they want to get vaccinated. However, they stated they would be highly encouraging staff to get the vaccination. A lot of respondents believe their staff will get the vaccination anyway.

Some respondents suggested that if staff opt not to get the vaccination, for their own personal reasons, these staff members will more than likely have to continue to either work from home or work in a different area to employees who are vaccinated.

Some companies have proposed that staff who do not wish to be vaccinated may have to complete bi-weekly Covid tests.

From the results of the survey there was a lot of uncertainty around the vaccine and how it will affect their workforce. Companies are calling out for the government to provide guidelines on this so they can create the right policies and procedures in terms of dealing with employees who are not vaccinated and what the restrictions around this will entail.
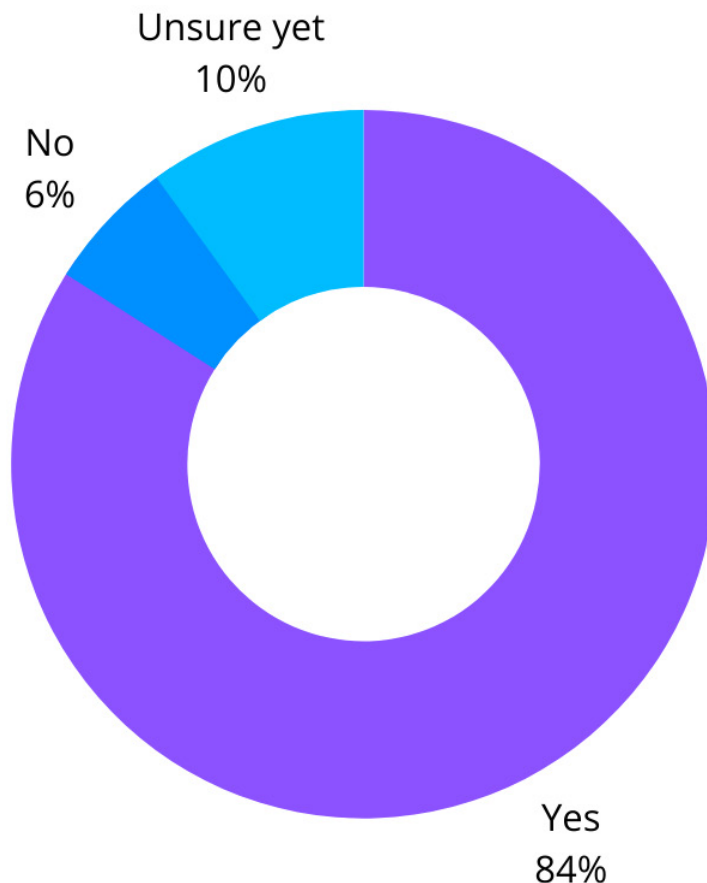
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Working Flexibility after Covid-19

Remote work has seen a particularly dramatic change in the past year. We believe working from home will likely continue at significantly higher rates than before Covid-19.

84% of respondents stated that they will continue providing their employees with flexible working options after Covid-19. While only **6%** said that they would not, with some stating that they expect everyone to return to the office.

Some respondents mentioned it would depend on the role, for example, certain key roles will not have the same amount of flexibility as others.

84% stated they'll continue providing working flexibility options after Covid-19

Unsure yet
10%

No
6%

Yes
84%

6% stated they won't continue flexible working options post Covid-19

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## What Does Work Flexibility Mean to You?

When asked what does work flexibility mean to you, a massive **90%** of our respondents said having the option to work from home and the office.

This was followed by the option to work your own flexible hours, and the option to work anywhere in Ireland as long as there is sufficient WIFI.

10% view flexibility as working from home all the time.

These results indicate how important it is to offer your employees some sort of decent working flexibility. The option of working from home and the office will be important, in order to retain staff.

90% said having the option to work from home and the office

Working anywhere in the world	Working anywhere in Ireland	Working flexible hours	Working from home & the office	Working from home all the time
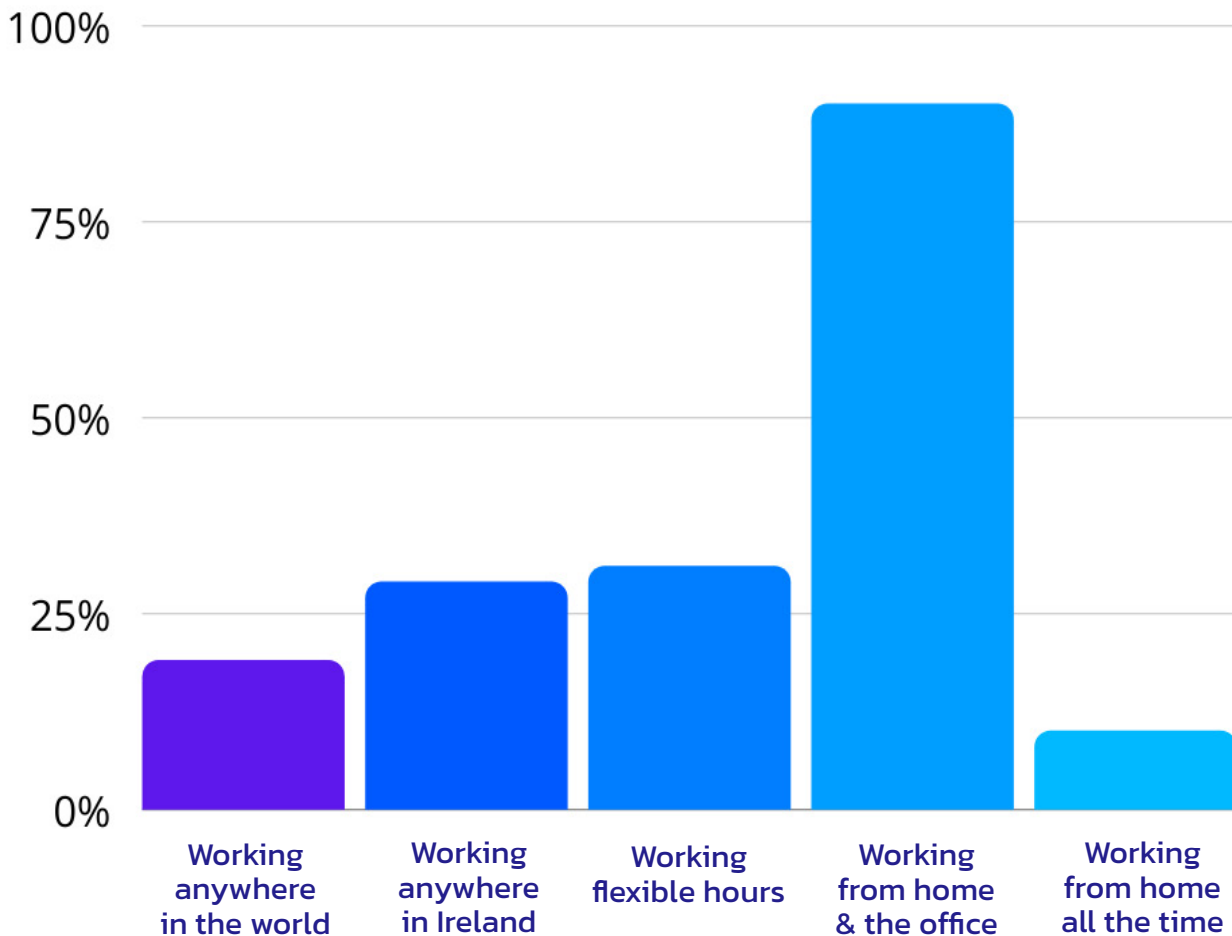
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Salaries in Dublin V Regional Ireland

With the majority of employees now working remotely, we checked in with employers to see if they will pay employees the same salary if they're working in Dublin versus regional Ireland. Historically, Dublin salaries have been slightly higher than regional Ireland. But will this now change due to remote working?

64% of respondents have said yes, they will pay the same salary and it doesn't matter where their employees are located – rather it depends on their role and experience. While only **8%** have said no.

"
## We look at the market rate but also experience
"

However, there is still a big enough pool of people, **24%**, who are unsure yet and have mentioned it depends on the market rate too. This indicates that there are still a lot of discussions to have regarding remote working and salaries post Covid-19.

"
Salary is dependent on role and what the person delivers to the organisation
"

Unsure
24%

No
8%

Yes
68%

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Yes
34%

No
66%
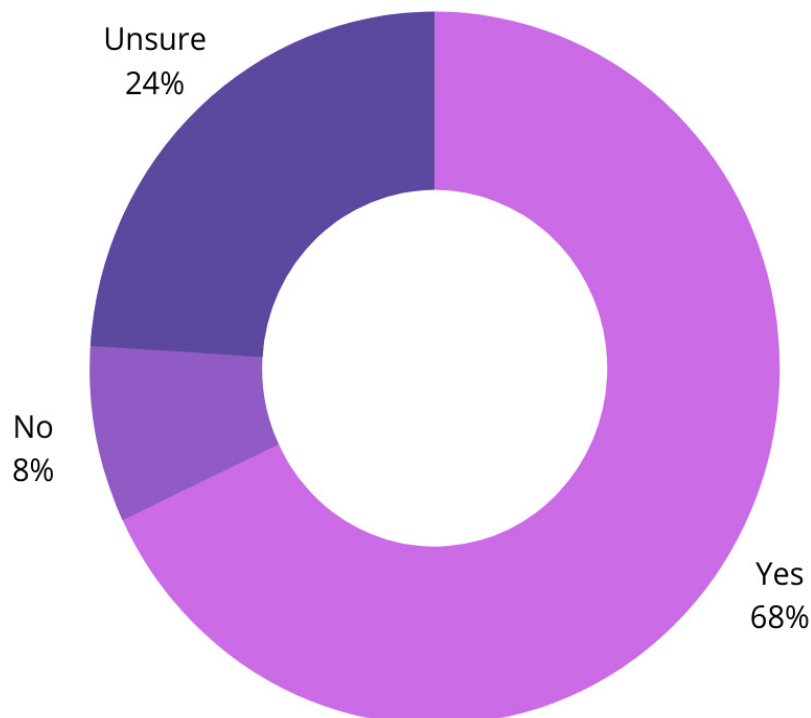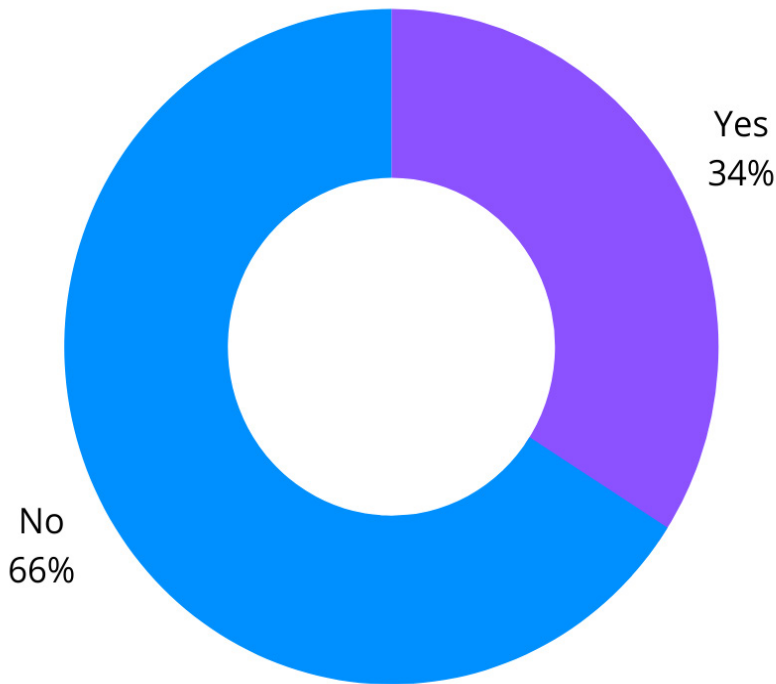
Employees Looking to Change Roles Last Year

66% stated that their employees did not look to change roles during last year, while **34%** did look to change roles. However, employee's now have more choice over whom they work for. Companies are now competing for talent from around the world, who also have more options because they can work remotely.

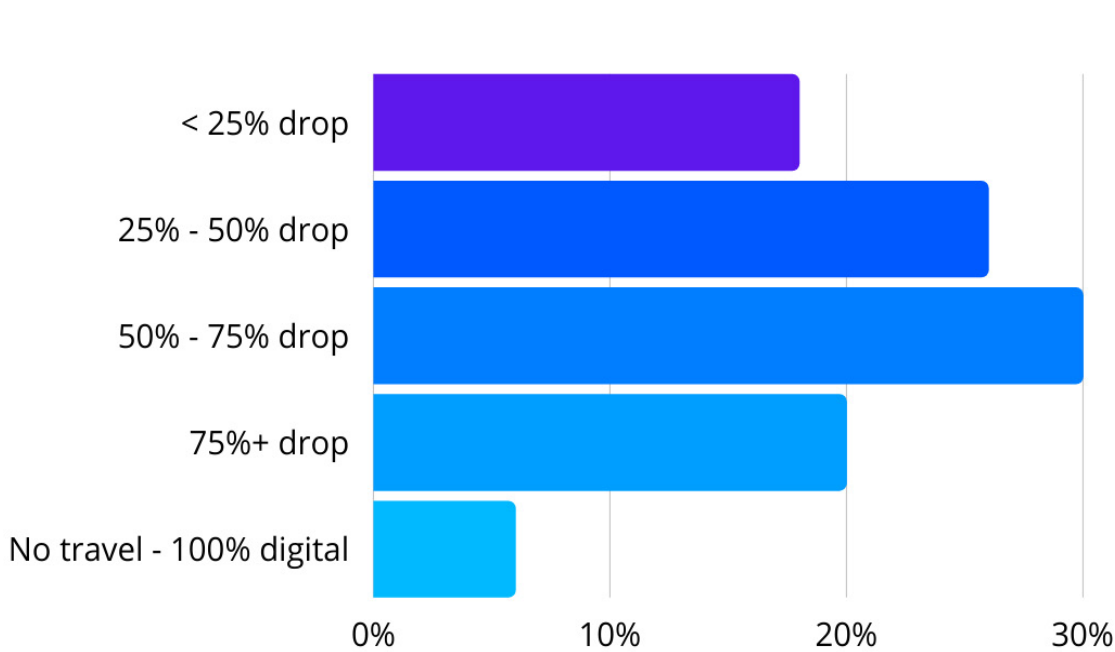## Employees Productivity over the past 12 Months?
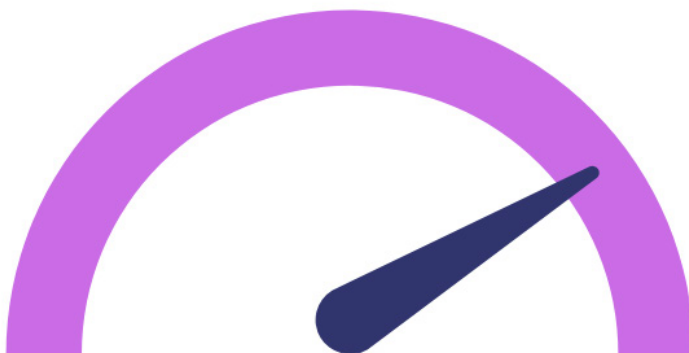
Average productivity level from 1 – 10 was **8**

The average workforce productivity level over the last 12 months according to our research is 8 (with 10 being the most productive).

This would suggest that the majority of companies have remained very productive during the Covid-19 pandemic while working remotely – perhaps capitalising on the latest technology to collaborate effectively and efficiently with their team.
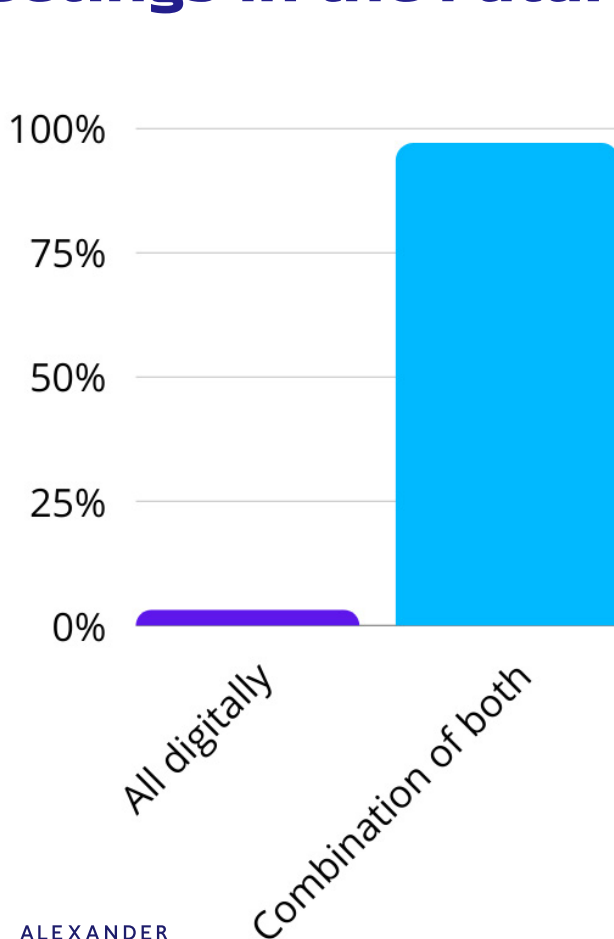
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Drop in Business Travel post Covid-19

Bar chart — Drop in Business Travel post Covid-19:

- < 25% drop: ~18%
- 25% - 50% drop: ~26%
- 50% - 75% drop: ~30%
- 75%+ drop: ~20%
- No travel - 100% digital: ~6%

(x-axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%)

Meetings in the Future?

0% said meetings will be "all in person"

Bar chart — Meetings in the Future?:

- All digitally: ~3%
- Combination of both: ~97%

(y-axis: 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%)

Nearly **97%** of respondents selected a combination of both in-person meetings and digital meetings.

A lot of respondents also made the point that it depends on how things progress or change with the pandemic, but they would also like to have their staff get together in different locations for team building once it is safe to do so – and noted how important this is for company culture.

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Skills in Most Demand for 2021 / 2022

Digital Marketing DevOps Analyst

Legal Finance Engineering

Development Risk Tech

Data Digital Developers

E-Commerce Management

Technology is pushing all kinds of companies to seek alternative solutions as we enter a new era of 'hybrid working'. Covid-19 has activated dramatic changes to our day-to-day working norms, shaping new trends and business scenarios. Although this pandemic has brought about a lot of unknowns, what is certain is how essential tech professionals are for the long-term success of any organisation.

With remote working set to continue in some form for the foreseeable future, acquiring top tech professionals who possess a combination of the right technical and soft skills required to navigate and lead a team through this digital era will be vital for organisations.

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Recommendations

From this survey, we have been able to gather some feedback and valuable recommendations for how business leaders can create a new working world that will keep employees both happy and productive post-Covid.

As much as some employees will crave the return of in-person social connections in the office, they have also become accustomed to the flexibility that comes with working remotely—from saving commute time to more valuable time with family. However, we believe many will still enjoy occasional visits to the office for real-time connections with colleagues. Human beings are social creatures who need to be together some of the time to feel connected and to generate new ideas and solutions – this is also vital for companies to thrive and succeed.

Working remotely has also meant that employees have lost time for those casual conversations that come before and after a meeting or bumping into colleagues when grabbing a coffee. Post-Covid, we would encourage business leaders to foster the same efficiency with meeting schedules when back in offices, but also to create time blocks, either online or in person, for the random connections that are critical for developing team culture.

Online, this could mean doing virtual coffees with different colleagues that change each week – giving employees that vital time to connect with colleagues on a more personal level. It is important to have virtual "watercooler" interactions like this, to foster informal social exchanges in remote workplaces. It's also important to note that when new employees begin remotely, to ensure they are on-boarded in a way that makes them feel connected to the company and their new colleagues. For example, you can arrange one-to-one calls with new staff members or create a virtual buddy system where they are paired with someone outside of their immediate team.

In the office, this could be setting expectations that employees who are in the office are not just there for in-person meetings. We would suggest ensuring there are times for people to just sit together and work, or just to have more casual connections. Business Leaders need to make sure the days in the office are most meaningful and focused on connections with colleagues, both scheduled and unexpected.

A lot of companies have also said they will set up quarterly staff days and team-building exercises when restrictions permit and it's safe to do so. While other companies are going to continue with virtual social events throughout the year to ensure the remote workforce and those who are continuing to work remotely will remain connected and included in the company.

Ultimately, every company will have to determine the best path for their employees and their entire ecosystem. Likewise, every company needs to be prepared to handle the cultural impact of whatever path they decide to follow.

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CONCLUSION

Covid-19 has undeniably accelerated the world of work for companies, stress-testing their ability to successfully blend people and technology in the most dynamic business environment many of us have ever seen. As uncertainty about the future of the workplace remains, organisations must start asking new questions in order to make bold decisions today.

As the Covid-19 pandemic drives intense organisational shifts, leaders have the opportunity to return to work by designing the future of work they want – building on the lessons and practices their organisations implemented during the crisis.

The sustainability of these actions is where the true path towards a post-Covid recovery will commence. And this path must be paved not only with good intentions, but with profound change. Organisations now face a choice between returning to a post-Covid world that is simply a heightened version of yesterday or building one that is a sustainable version of tomorrow. But the risk is more than that of falling behind—it's the danger of never catching up at all.

Now is a vital time to prepare to thrive in a new normal and move forward in today's climate. One thing is for sure – it will certainly be interesting to see and watch how the world of work changes. And how we should all undoubtedly adapt and embrace this new world.

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