



Ideas and information for  
human resource professionals



## ADMINISTRATION

### ***Key Tips for Conducting Virtual Interviews***

When quarantine officially came into effect, thousands of businesses with no remote work policy in place scrambled to piece together teleworking procedures robust enough to handle the complications of COVID-19. For many it was a learning process, a time of continual adjustment to find the right solutions for their organizations. Quarantine has now been in effect for several months now, and many departments have gone from growing pains to smoothly operating remotely.

This means the re-emergence of non-crisis operations, like assessing your organization's current talent and possibly filling in open positions. If your organization is at this point, you're probably going to be conducting virtual job interviews soon—a daunting prospect for even the most seasoned HR professionals. No matter how skilled you are at conducting interviews, replicating an in-office meeting over Skype or Zoom can be a tricky needle to thread. Here are a few tips for conducting virtual interviews.

### **Maintain “Digital Eye Contact”**

A crucial factor for in-person interviews, the importance of eye contact in an interview doesn't disappear just because it's over video conferencing. When maintaining eye contact in person isn't possible, interviewers should keep their eyes trained on the camera, rather than on the candidate's video feed. Some video conferencing software also displays an image of the person using it—I think we've all caught ourselves staring at our own image during a Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime, instead of the person talking. It's easy to get distracted on remote calls, so be aware of where your eyes are focused.

### **Check Your Posture**

As always, you'll be a more engaging interviewer if you're sitting up straight and exhibiting an alert, attentive posture. For virtual interviews, you should also consider leaning slightly forward



to show interest in what the candidate's saying. Leaning forward may be overkill for in-person interviews, but it's advisable given the added barrier and distance of a video call. Just be sure to not to get too close to the camera—about an arm's length away will suffice.

### **Limit Gesturing**

Gesturing is an essential part of conversation, adding an important dimension to the way we communicate. While animated talking and gesturing helps provide context and additional information when we're conversing in real life, it can be distracting on a small screen. Try to limit expressive hand motions so that the interviewee can focus on what you're trying to communicate.

### **Consider On-Demand Interviewing**

Despite the wide availability and ease of video conferencing, many concede it still fails to replicate the experience of an in-person interview in a satisfying way. For that reason, some companies have been experimenting with alternatives to interviews over Zoom or Skype. These include on-demand interviewing, where candidates record their responses to interview questions at their own convenience. "Instead of scheduling interviews during limited windows of time during business hours, recruiters can effectively interview larger volumes of candidates in a shorter period of time, effectively eliminating the bottleneck that often challenges that part of the hiring process," [explains](#) HRMorning's Tim Ilhefeld. If video conferencing interviews still aren't cutting it for your organization, you may want to consider on-demand interviewing instead.

## **HR TRENDS**

### ***Should Your Company Keep Its Telework Option?***

Across America, states, cities and counties are gradually easing stay-at-home orders and expanding the industries that can now reopen their doors or return to work on premises. After months of teleworking, many employees will soon find themselves able to return to the office: it's just that not all of them may want to. Whether it's due to continued fears of COVID-19 exposure or simply because they prefer it, many workers have found that remote work suits them for the time being.

The question then falls to the employer: should remote work be allowed to continue, even when the office reopens? If so, should it be under the ad hoc coronavirus policy, or a new, more robust one? How will an office split between remote workers and on-premises staff operate? If your organization is asking these types of questions, read on for an exploration of how other businesses are handling this issue.

### **Where the Majority Stand**



According to a survey of 1,000 businesses, conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the global advisory firm Oxford Economics, all but five percent of the companies reported that they expect their workforce to return to pre-crisis levels within six months. Clearly, they believe the temporary transition to remote work has been just that: temporary.

But these companies may be underestimating just how much the American workforce will shift in the New Normal. The ability to work remotely was already a popular job benefit before COVID-19. Post pandemic, its popularity has soared. [In an article](#), for NASDAQ.com, SHRM CEO Johnny C. Taylor reports that the debate of remote work not being viable for most companies has ended on a definitive note. “Before the pandemic there were always managers who claimed that this job or that job could never be done remotely,” says Taylor. “Now, they can’t say that because it’s working. And not for a week because of a hurricane, but for months now.”

As the American job market continues to recover, it’s more likely than not the workers will prefer positions that have a robust teleworking policy. So despite most businesses imagining a return to normalcy, in reality it may be smarter to keep what’s now one of the most prized job benefits on the market.

### **An Office Divided**

Some employers balk at the idea of operating an office where a significant number of employees are working off-premises—in reality, many successful organizations have been managing a balance of on- and off-site staff long before COVID-19. Day-to-day tasks like meetings can (usually) be replaced with video conferencing software and other remote working tools, but the larger difficulties lie in managing these two different groups. Remote workers face different challenges than in-office ones: their workday tends to blend into their free time, and while that can mean more productivity, it also increases their risk of burnout.

It’s not impossible or unfeasible to manage an office that’s a mix of remote and in-office workers. But managers will need to take into consideration how to juggle these two different types of employees.

### **Should Your Company Keep Its Telework Option?**

There isn’t a simple formula for determining whether or not your organization should keep its remote work policy once employees return to the office. It depends on a myriad of factors: industry, specific position, team structure, and even office culture. But as we head forward into the New Normal, remote work will continue to grow in popularity. It’s just one of the ways COVID-19 has forever changed the business world.



## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

### ***10 Resources for HR Departments to Foster a More Diverse Workplace***

Fostering a just and equal work environment means more than a diversity seminar once a quarter. It takes work to cultivate a truly inclusive environment for all employees. Here are ten resources to help you get started.

#### [College & University Professional Association for Human Resources \(CUPA-HR\) Knowledge Center](#)

Although CUPA-HR specializes in the higher ed sector, their knowledge center includes case studies, webinars, and eCourses that any HR professional can benefit from. They even have a [diversity, equity and inclusion maturity index](#) to gauge your company's progress.

#### [Racial Equity Tools](#)

Racial Equity Tools provides resources research, tips, curricula and ideas for people who want to elevate their own understanding and to help those working toward justice at every level—systems, organizations, communities and the culture at large.

#### [Diversity in Hiring](#)

GitHub hosts a continually growing document of resources to promote diversity in hiring, including job boards focusing on different races, genders, and sexual orientations. This is a fantastic resource for HR teams looking to diversify their workplace.

#### [Forbes Diversity & Inclusion Reading List](#)

Essential reading for anyone tasked with cultivating a more diverse workforce. Compiled by Janice Gassam, author of the forthcoming “Dirty Diversity: A Practical Guide to Foster an Equitable and Inclusive Workplace for All.”

#### [Conscious Style Guide](#)

A massive repository of guides and articles for understanding and using conscious language in corporate communications (and in everyday life).

#### [Project Implicit](#)

Project Implicit is a non-profit dedicated to the research and education of implicit social cognition: thoughts, feelings, and biases outside of conscious awareness and control. Project



Implicit provides consulting services, lectures, and workshops on implicit bias, diversity and inclusion to help organizations translate research into actionable practices for organizations.

### [EEOC Discrimination by Type Hub](#)

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission provides a launchpad for learning about the different types of workplace discrimination, links to relevant laws, regulations and policy guidance, as well as fact sheets, Q&As, best practices, and other information.

### [American Psychological Association Employer Resources](#)

The APA understands that diversity and inclusion play a key role in a psychologically healthy workplace. The pages on psychology [topics](#) offer guidance in navigating issues affecting our personal and professional lives.

### [SHRM Tools and Resources for Diversity and Inclusion](#)

The Society for Human Resource Management provides many resources to help create a better workplace, including current, topical articles on bias, diversity and inclusion, gender identity, cultural awareness, and more.

### [Toolkit For Establishing & Maintaining Employee Resource Groups](#)

An excellent starting point for HR teams interested in forming healthy employee resource groups for their staff.

## EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

### ***What HR Teams Need to Know About Productivity Monitoring***

Even before the pandemic, remote work was trending upward. From 2017 to 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [found](#) that 28.8 percent of college graduates were working from home for all or some of the work week. After COVID-19, that percentage has skyrocketed—roughly [two-thirds](#) of the American workforce is now operating remotely.

The stay-at-home orders have forced the hand of many employers that previously resisted the idea of telework, fearing a downtick in productivity. What's more, jobs that were once thought impossible to do remotely have since been proven to be feasible, even an improvement over their in-office counterpart. It all adds up to teleworking becoming even more normalized as we navigate COVID-19 and beyond—a possible concern for those same employers that don't like the idea of being sequestered from the staff they're supposed to be monitoring.



In response, some employers have considered implementing productivity and employee monitoring software. These tools enable employers to track log-on and log-off times, device usage, and even how much work employees actually perform. They may seem like a fitting solution for managers and executives, but HR teams should know some of the baggage that comes with productivity monitoring.

### **Office Culture**

You'd be hard pressed to find an employee that was enthusiastic about productivity monitoring. Nobody wants to be subjected to further scrutiny and surveillance, which means productivity monitoring could take a toll on office morale. With recent research having [all but confirmed](#) the correlation between office morale and productivity, these monitoring tools could actually *lower* an employee's productivity. Furthermore, employers may find themselves being viewed as intrusive and branded as micro-managers. Overall, most productivity monitoring is going to have an adverse effect on office culture and employee engagement.

### **Legal Concerns**

If the office morale concerns weren't enough, there's also a knot of legal ramifications that come with any employee monitoring implementation. Generally speaking, employers are allowed to monitor employee activity while they're in the office. But the legality gets much dicier when that same employee is working from home, especially if they're using their personal devices instead of company-provided ones. There are a plethora of different laws and statutes, including the Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 and the National Labor Relations Act, as well as some industry- or state-specific protocols to follow as well. It all adds up to a complicated, sometimes even contradictory, web of legal concerns. If your upper management is considering employee monitoring, make sure they're aware of the potential legal headaches that accompany it.

### **How Do We Measure Productivity?**

Monitoring tools aren't a silver bullet for employers concerned about their employees' productivity. For example, software installed on a computer that tracks program usage can't account for time spent on a phone call. Tools that only activate during the workday fail to capture work done off the clock.

A more feasible (and less expensive) solution for managers that harbor productivity concerns about working from home may be simply opening a dialogue with their employees and re-examining the way they think about productivity. For many office jobs, the outcome is more important than the output.



## EMPLOYER WEBINAR

### ***Recent Timeframes, Cafeteria Plan, and Account-Based Plan Relief for Group Health Plans Due to COVID-19***

**Tuesday, July 14, 2020 • 2:00 p.m. ET / 11:00 a.m. PT**

On March 13, 2020, President Trump issued the Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak and by separate letter made a determination, under Section 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, that a national emergency exists nationwide beginning March 1, 2020, as the result of the COVID-19 outbreak. In response, the Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and Internal Revenue Service (IRS), have been active with releasing guidance to help alleviate problems faced by health plans to comply with strict Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and Internal Revenue Code (IRC) timeframes and problems faced by participants and beneficiaries in exercising their rights under health plans.

This webinar will:

- Provide an overview of the extended group health plan timeframes (HIPAA special enrollment periods, COBRA deadlines, claims procedures, and external review process) set forth in the joint notice on extension of timeframes released by the DOL and the Treasury
- Provide an overview of the relief issued under EBSA Notice 2020-01 regarding required notices and disclosures under Title I of ERISA
- Discuss the extension of timeframes guidance from CMS for governmental health plans
- Discuss best practices for amending plan documents and notifying plan participants of extended group health plan timeframes
- Provide an overview of the new guidance contained in IRS Notice 2020-29 (including the cafeteria plan election changes and extended claims period for health FSAs and DCAPs)
- Provide an overview of the new guidance contained in IRS Notice 2020-33 (including the increased health FSA carryover amount and reimbursement of premiums paid before the first day of the plan year)
- Discuss best practices for amending plan documents and notifying plan participants of changes made in accordance with IRS Notice 2020-29 and IRS Notice 2020-33

This 60-minute intermediate level webinar will help employers understand new guidance that has been released.



## Registration

[Register here for the webinar](#). The presentation will be posted on the [UBA website](#) the afternoon before the webinar.

## About the Presenter

[Chelsea Deppert](#) is an associate in the Atlanta office of Fisher Phillips. She provides practical guidance to employers on the technical aspects of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and other state and federal laws impacting the design, implementation and ongoing compliance of employee benefit plans and programs. She advises clients with respect to all aspects of employee benefits, including retirement plans, health and other welfare benefit plans.

## Certification

This webinar has been submitted to the [Human Resource Certification Institute](#) and the [Society for Human Resource Management](#) to qualify for 1 recertification credit hour.