

Do you plan on returning to the office post-pandemic? This is a big question on the front of a lot of our client's lips right now. To return to the office, OR Not?

Here are the 3 top reasons we hear as to **why** some companies plan to return to the physical office:

Returning to the office: Interpersonal relations.

It's true. Humans are by nature social creatures. We are designed, on a very basic level to interact, plan and grow together. Our very evolution is based on that ability to work together and build interpersonal relationships. Strong "at work" relationships are proven to generate ideation, collaboration, mentoring opportunities, personal development opportunities and much more. It was cited, Pre COVID, that companies in the US spent \$8 billion annually to help their employees feel like they belong. [\(More here.\)](#)

"But we have Zoom and video conferencing, and slack, and our phones, and, and, and..." you say. So why are interpersonal relationships a core reason to go back?

"Meetings in person are not only about the exchange of knowledge, they are also [important rituals](#) in the office. Rituals provide comfort, put us at ease, and are essential in building and maintaining rapport." [\(read here why zoom meetings are exhausting.\)](#)

Psychologists cited in Discover Magazine said, "Much of communication depends on nonverbal [body language](#) — mannerisms, gestures and postures that are largely absent or more difficult to interpret over video. Real-life interactions don't come with the same pressure to perform as on video chat."

Returning to the office: Collaboration:

As many companies flipped to 100% remote, the question of impact on collaboration arose. We heard from many of our clients that, the one thing they miss/ed, is spontaneous

collaboration. That ability ideat with people unexpectedly. That accidental collaboration of a “watercooler” conversation. Where person A from X team happened to mention to person B from Y team that they were working on Q. That just typically doesnt happened when we all work from home. There is no space for accidental collaboration. Every interaction is intentional and that will come with the added pressure to perform. Thus collaboration becomes a task rather than something that happened organically. Collaboration nowadays [“happened in a moment. Not a meeting”](#) . Many people hope that coming back to a physical workspace, in one way or another, will spark that spontaneous collaboration.

Returning to the office: Productivity:

It is not surprising that many companies have experienced a drop in productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this is attributed to many factors: Remote work, mental health, ability to shift to a COVID-19 restrictions accommodated workplace, the need for new technologies and the added pressure of learning a whole new way to exist.

It is an interesting equation to consider when we look at the cost of the drop in productivity vs the company bottom line. (This sounds cold we know, but we’re talking productivity here.)

Consider this; X amount of people reduced their work productivity by 20%, it would take hiring, training and onboarding X amount of new employees to cover that productivity gap from pre covid days. Question: is the cost of hiring new people plus or minus the cost of a physical office? AND will productivity increase back to preCOVID days OR has the how and why and way we work all shifted in a permanent nature?

Additionally, we are curious to hear from you. Are you going back? Do you need help? BLANKSLATE Partners offers a comprehensive return-to-work package. This will help you and your teams design your #futureofwork plan and implement your return to the office.

