



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

Crafting Remote Work, Flexible Schedule, and Working from Home Policies



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Introduction

It's 2019. Many companies are beginning to or already have made the switch to a flexible remote work arrangement being an option for employees. Over [half of companies worldwide](#) are either fully-remote or allow employees to work from home on a more flexible basis. More than half also report [not having a remote work policy in place](#). Not only does remote work [cut company costs](#) and improve employee happiness and job satisfaction, but it's also becoming a key benefit to [attract and retain top talent](#). When it comes to making the transition to allowing your employees to work remotely, it's essential to have a clear, concise policy defining who, how, how often, and where employees may choose to work.

Even if you already have a policy in place, it's recommended that you [review and update policies at least annually](#) in order to prevent liability issues, keep policies clean, short, and understandable, and keep organized documentation of any problems that arise with a given policy or suggested changes for the coming year. With technology rapidly growing and changing and the workplace quickly becoming a concept and not a physical location, make sure you are on the same page as your employees and have defined guidelines on how working from home works at your company.



CHAPTER ONE

Defining remote work, flexible schedule, and working from home policies

Over 3.9 million Americans [reported working from home](#) at least some of the time in 2018. Remote work or working from home encompasses many different remote work setups and arrangements. Before we dive into creating remote work policies, let's spell out a few important remote work terms and definitions. **Key remote work terms and definitions:**

- › **Remote work:** Any work that is not in a traditional office environment
- › **Flexible schedule:** A schedule that is tailored to the individual employee and doesn't fall into a typical 9 am to 5 pm schedule.
 - Some employees may choose a certain number of days per week or certain hours in the day.
- › **Flexible job:** A flexible job can be variable in hours or location, allowing employees to have complete or partial autonomy when it comes to schedule.
- › **Working from home:** Working from home encompasses both employees who work remotely from a home office or shared workspace full time or those who work remotely some of the time.
- › **Telecommuting:** Working remotely when one normally works from an office or working remotely for a company with a primary location in another area.
- › **Remote work policy:** A policy that outlines when, how, and with what support employees may work remotely
- › **Flexible schedule policy:** A policy identifying the rules and regulations for employees to work with a flexible schedule. This may include a minimum number of weekly hours, a time tracking software, or other stipulations.
- › **Work from home policy:** A policy outlining how employees may take advantage of working from home some or all of the time, how they get approved, and how they should communicate

- › **Video conferencing:** Using video to conduct meetings, interviews, or any other business; requires video conferencing software and a web camera.
- › **Remote technology:** Includes any technology related to working remotely. Ex. messaging software, video conferencing, VPN, etc.
- › **VPN: Virtual private network,** used for security and enables remote employees to access company files from home.
- › **Cloud storage/files:** Documents and data stored in the cloud, enabling remote teams to work together anywhere and in real-time.
- › **Messaging app:** Apps like Slack, Skype, and Google Hangouts that allow teams to communicate instantly, have team conversations, and promotes hybrid team communication.
- › **Remote company:** A company that is entirely remote with no physical location.
- › **Remote team:** A team that is entirely remote with no in-office teammates.
- › **Hybrid company:** Companies with employees who work both in an office/ HQ and full-time remote employees.
- › **Hybrid team:** A team with some remote team members and some in-office team members.
- › **Asynchronous communication:** communication that doesn't happen in real-time (i.e. email)

If you'll be rolling out or updating a remote work policy, collaborate with internal stakeholders to analyze what is currently taking place or has been requested. Review any employee surveys to see if employees are mentioning remote work as an option, fully-remote roles, or the flexibility to choose. Whether you think your company needs a remote work policy or not, [benefits like flexible work help to retain employees](#) for over five years.



CHAPTER TWO

Surveying internal stakeholders

When creating a policy for remote work, flexible work, or working from home, you'll need to work with employees and department heads and gather data about their desires and concerns. Research has shown that for 89% of millennials, they would choose **benefits like flexible schedules** over a pay raise. Many would think that anyone would choose cash over benefits which is why research and working with employees is so important when creating new policies. Policies are put in place to protect your company and to benefit employees, so they need to be a team effort.

To start laying the groundwork for a new remote work policy, create a short, anonymous survey using software like **Survey Monkey** or **TINYpulse** to send to all employees.



Ask questions about how often they would like to work from home if they could, what they might require to be able to work from home, and how they would feel about having a manager who worked remotely part of the time. As more and more **executives are entering the remote workforce**, carefully evaluate if a new policy may negatively affect employees who prefer a certain relationship. You can also incorporate HR trainings and new documentation (to be discussed later on) to help smooth the transition and answer any questions folks may have about how the dynamic of the workplace will change, if at all. Consider if your managers are equipped to **manage a remote team** and if workshops to ease the transition may be helpful for those getting used to the technology landscape of **hybrid** or remote teams.

Questions to ask employees before creating a remote work policy

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If given the chance to work from home or work remotely, how often would you choose to do so?

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What would be your primary motivator for working remotely?

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What tools, if any, would you require in order to work remotely?

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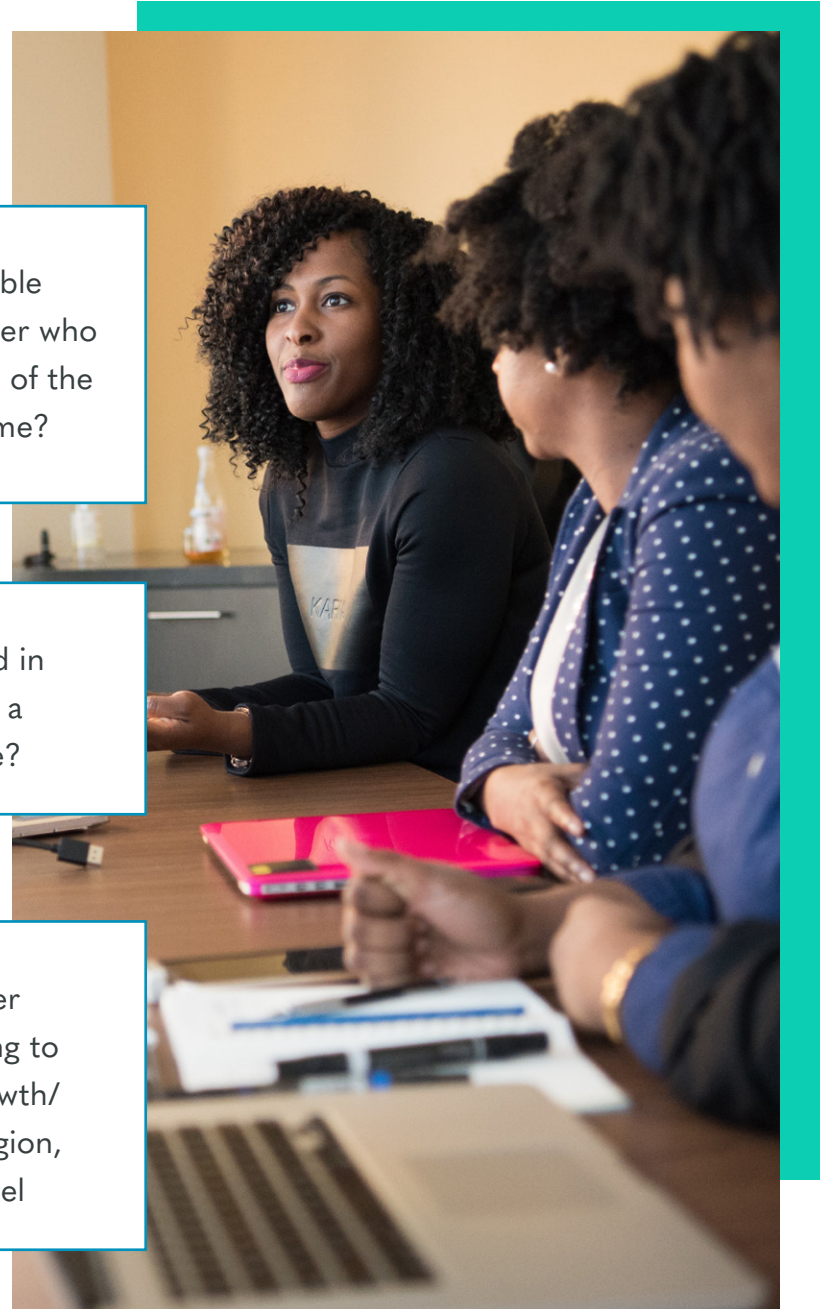
Are you comfortable working with a manager who works remotely some of the time? All of the time?

?

Are you interested in flexible hours or a flexible schedule?

?

Include any other questions pertaining to your company, growth/transition stage, region, or business model



Choosing policy specifics with legal, HR, and benefits teams

Like we said before, the reason that companies [create and update policies](#) is twofold—for liability and employee satisfaction. Setting parameters with legal, HR, and benefits teams is essential and can be complicated, covering topics like taxes and insurance, if people are working remotely in different states.

Your team doesn't live in a fully decked out office. Many of them may be younger employees who only have a company laptop and hardly have space in a small, shared apartment, for a true [home office](#).

Think about what technology your employees will need. A study showed that Zoom, a video conferencing software, was [20% more effective in improving communication for remote teammates](#).

To create your remote work policy, follow these steps.

- 1. Employees.** Who is covered by this policy? Will it be all full-time employees, or all employees, including part-time, interns, and administrative or support staff. Will international employees have the same guidelines as domestic team members?
- 2. Define.** Spell out what “remote work” “flexible work” “working from home” or “flexible schedule” means to your business. Does “flexible work” mean that your employees are expected to be in the office from 9 am to 5 pm with the occasional work from home day? Or does it mean that employees have no expectations at all and are at liberty to choose where they work as long as they mark it on their calendar at least 12 hours in advance. No matter what it is for your company, make sure it's clearly written out with no wiggle room (unless the wiggle room is part of the policy!)



3. Tools and Support. Include a portion of the policy that covers what **tools your employees will need to work remotely**. Perhaps you'll need to give them VPN access, they will need to have WiFi, or will need a laptop. Write down how each employee will get access to the necessary software, hardware, or tools, or if they will be required to supply these items themselves. During this step, evaluate your company's current meeting setup. Will you need to invest in new audiovisual equipment or software? Do you have an adequate **video conferencing setup** for a **hybrid workforce**?

4. Communication. Identify how employees will be expected to **communicate while working remotely**. How will they share where and when they are working with their manager or team? Will they be expected to update a Google calendar when they are working remotely? Will they need to be available on Slack when they are working remotely?

5. Meetings. Will employees be expected to tune into meetings virtually when working from home? Will there be a certain day of the week designated for meetings? Will employees be **required to attend certain meetings**, like 1:1s or performance reviews, in person? Figure out how you will be supporting teams with employees who are working remotely and whether or not you'll have to revamp conference rooms or invest in new technology. Don't forget—both in-office employees and remote employees will be affected by a new remote work policy. If your in-office employees don't have monitors, how will they see remote teammates on a web camera without crowding around a laptop?

6. Approval and Tracking. Will employees have to request to work remotely and if so, how will they do so? Will it be each time or just once? Will employees have a certain number of remote days per week, month, or quarter?

7. Remote Work Agreement. Create a written statement encompassing the entirety of your policy.

CHAPTER FOUR

Adapting your policy for multiple departments or teams

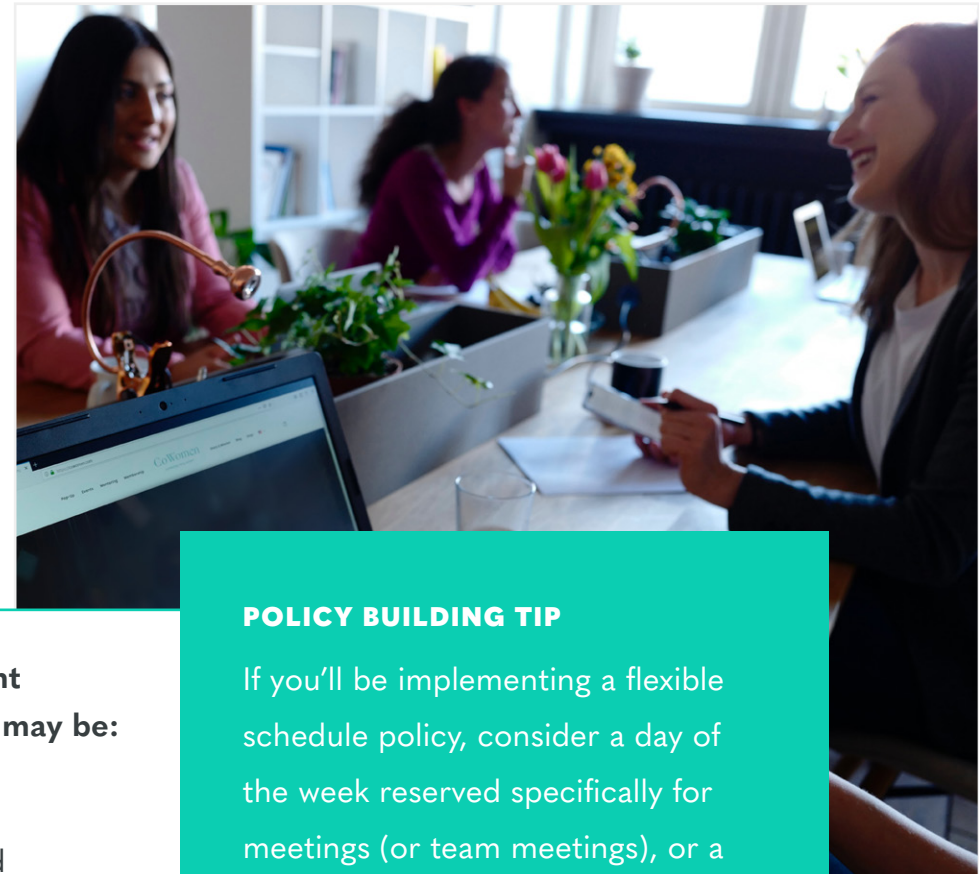
For many companies, different teams work differently. Maybe your support team works shifts but other teams have flexible hours. Perhaps some teams at your company are international or split between time zones and regions. Determine if policies will work differently for each department or if your policy will be company-wide. Create addendums or entirely new policies depending on how different each department may be.

Options for different versions of policies may be:

- Team-based
- Department-based
- Location/time zone-based
- Seniority-based
- Role-based

POLICY BUILDING TIP

If you'll be implementing a flexible schedule policy, consider a day of the week reserved specifically for meetings (or team meetings), or a day where meetings are discouraged. That way, those who work flexible hours can better plan for childcare, pet care, exercise, or anything else that they may be doing on their own off-hours.



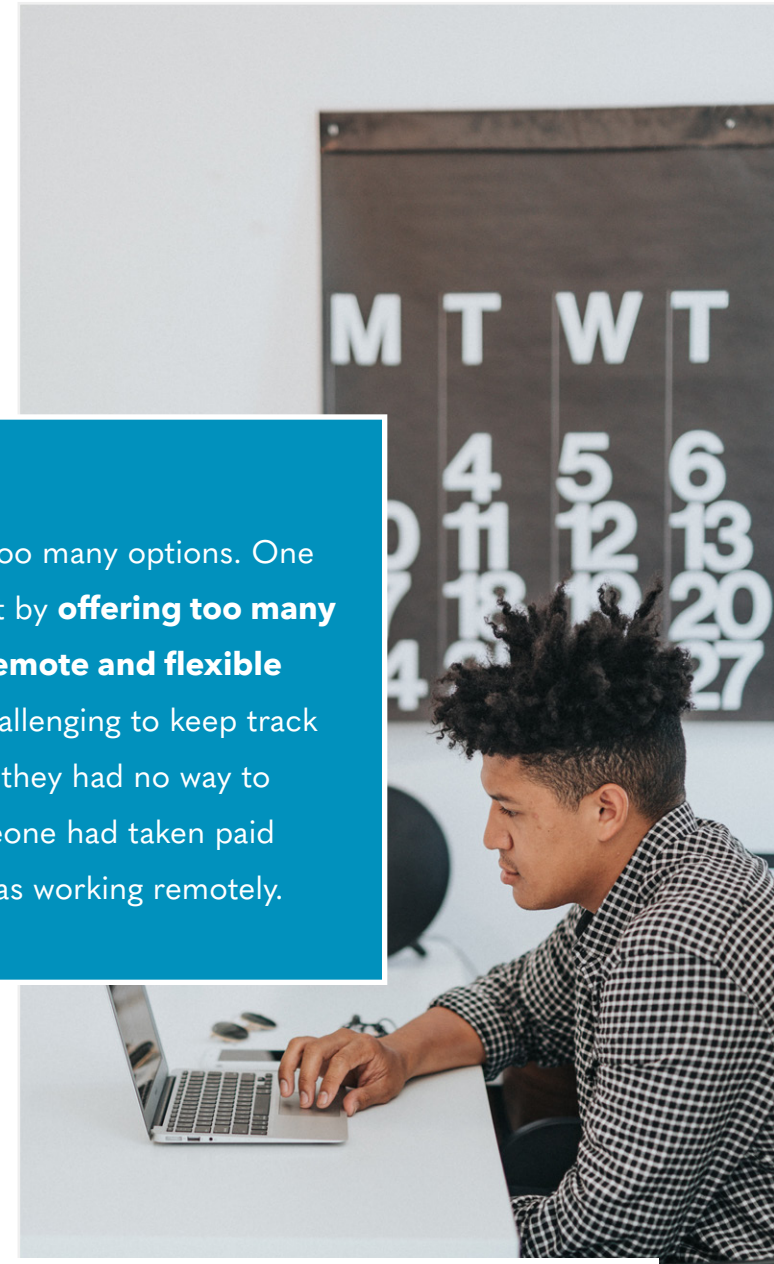
CHAPTER FIVE

Setting boundaries and guidelines for remote or flexible work

While remote work is built on trust and empowering employees to be productive from home, you still need to clearly outline what it means for employees to work remotely in great detail. Determine what, if at all, the cadence will be for how frequently employees will be able to work remotely, use a flexible schedule, or work from home. Incorporate details like holidays and vacations and make sure you have a clear strategy to distinguish the two. Consider a public Google calendar with color-coded labels indicating if someone is working in-office, remotely, on vacation, or traveling. Encourage the use of up-to-date email responders, instant messenger away messages, and calendars.

TIP

Beware of offering too many options. One company found that by **offering too many combinations of remote and flexible work**, it was too challenging to keep track of employees, plus, they had no way to know whether someone had taken paid time off (PTO) or was working remotely.



Creating documentation and rolling out your new policy

Now, it's time to work out the kinks, write out the policy, and share it with staff. Document and publish the new policies. Be sure to run your policy by your legal team or a lawyer if you're a smaller company to protect yourself. Have employees and managers from several different departments across the company take a look as well before you finalize the document. Finally, remember that the remote or flexible work policy is a living document and will likely change frequently.

When rolling out the new policy, have a human resources representative or member of your company culture and development team conduct trainings on how best to support and manage a remote or [hybrid team](#). One of the [biggest barriers to companies allowing remote and flexible work](#) is those who believe that employees who aren't in the office are not as productive.

RESOURCES FOR NEW REMOTE MANAGERS

[How to Enable and Support Remote Work at Your Company](#)

[Meeting Agenda Templates](#)

[Remote Management Leadership Guide](#)

[Stanford Remote Work Productivity Study](#)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Remote work, flexible schedule, and working from home policy templates and instructions

To help you create a new remote or flexible work policy, we've created three customizable templates with all the questions and considerations to create a new policy for your company or team. Each template includes sections to incorporate your policy with prompts to get you started. Feel free to adjust each template as needed for your company or use case, these are meant to be templates to get you started, but you can take them in whatever direction your team needs.

Here are some tips to help you create an airtight policy that will benefit both you and your employees:

- Include links to any relevant or overlapping policies, or any that would be affected by the implementation of a new remote or flexible work policy.
- Update or review policies at least once a year, your company can still be responsible for outdated policies.
- Create a policy. If you don't have a policy in place, your business can be **liable for employees who work remotely**, which can create unwanted lawsuits and unsafe working conditions.



- Keep it simple, clear, and concise. Your employees should be able to read and comprehend the policy without a lawyer present. Bold or bullet main points to make it crystal clear.
- Review your policy with junior employees and executives before rolling it out. Someone may catch a loophole or unclear section. Save yourself a lawyer or HR representative's time by triple- checking before roll out.
- Document any feedback in the first few months to a year. Make sure you have a space for employee thoughts or concerns and that it's clearly communicated to your staff where they can submit comments. If needed, make adjustments at the six- month mark after you've gathered and analyzed your data.

Download the free templates below!

[Remote Work Policy Template](#)

[Flexible Schedule Policy Template](#)

[Working from Home Policy Template](#)



Conclusion

It's time to create a remote work, flexible schedule, or working from home policy for your employees. Those who **work remotely are 24% happier** than their desk-bound colleagues and **twice as productive**, according to a Stanford study. Remote work is a rewarding and useful perk when it comes to work-life balance and can have a huge impact on your employees' lives — just **ask our engineer, Chris**. When it comes to creating a remote work, flexible schedule, or working from home policy, it may seem like a lot of work. When considering if the work will be worth it, think about how the **option to work remotely can help lower stress**, decrease burnout, improve turnover rates, and create an inclusive workplace.



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