



reimagining reentry:

3 things for mobility to consider for an effective return to the office

As the global effort to get people vaccinated against COVID-19 continues, more and more venues have been able to slowly reopen. Stadiums are welcoming back fans, restaurants are welcoming back diners and countless other establishments are easing restrictions, allowing people to safely visit these shared spaces.

Office spaces are no different, and many businesses that sent employees home at the onset of the pandemic are now figuring out their return-to-work plans. In a survey of Plus clients, 50% said their offices would reopen in the third quarter of 2021, and another 15% are eyeing the fourth quarter.

A return to the office presents a [slew of challenges](#) — a large number of employees say they enjoy working remotely and would like to keep doing so on at least a part-time basis, while organizations want to once again collaborate and innovate in person.

Mobility can play a key role in reimagining what a return to the office looks like. Savvy mobility teams will see this as an opportunity to leverage their unique skills and experiences to both satisfy employees' wishes and meet business goals. Here are three things to consider as you develop your reentry strategy.

1 Continue to support flexible arrangements and remote work

As the pandemic intensified, companies experienced a rise in “de-locations,” or employees moving away from physical work sites (often in expensive, urban areas) while maintaining a job remotely. We [explored de-location strategy](#) and noted:

Remote work requests and arrangements are unlikely to fade away. One study found that [four out of five people enjoy working from home](#), and almost 70% of remote employees felt they were just as or more productive than they were at the office.

By adopting a formal de-location policy, companies can retain existing employees who would like to work and live somewhere other than where the company is located. Organizations can also access new pools of talent with fewer geographic constraints, and adopt innovative processes to boost employee engagement...

Whether you adopted a formal de-location policy or not (or plan to), mobility teams should remain flexible as employees begin to return to the office. Many will continue to crave the freedom of choosing to live

where they want and working on their terms, and organizations will have to decide just how flexible they will be when it comes to remote work opportunities in the future. Because businesses saw that they can be successful in a fully remote environment — and learned how to better support remote employees, too — remote work isn't going anywhere.

That means mobility teams should be prepared for more and more employee-driven moves, such as requests to de-locate, that look a bit different than traditional relocations. Mobility and HR teams will also want to stay on top of compensation strategy, because larger remote workforces present [interesting questions when it comes to taxation and fair salary practices](#).

2 Revisit your policy mix and focus on emerging areas

By now, you've probably heard the term "hybrid work model," referring to an arrangement that is a mix between remote and in-office work. Many organizations are currently in the process of figuring out what that mix looks like, but there's no denying that [hybrid work models are on the rise](#). In our recent client survey, 60% of respondents said they'll be moving toward a hybrid model, and only 12.5% said they'll be entirely back in the office.

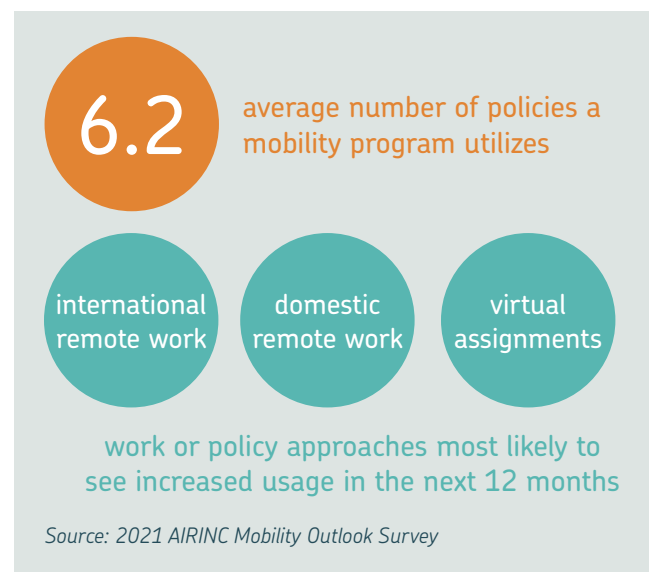
As a result, employee movement will look different in the future. For example, maybe you had employees who moved away from a job location amid the pandemic — potentially even to another state or country. If you are going to once again require at least a part-time presence in the office but also allow these employees to remain in their new home locations, you may have a new population of commuters that you didn't have before.

What's your "mobility philosophy?" [Discover the building blocks to creating a mobility program that is suited for success.](#)



Business trips will also look different. While global business travel is expected to [continue trending upward](#) from the low point that was 2020, some business leaders may now have a higher bar for approving trips. If their teams have been successful in a virtual environment, why budget for the time and costs associated with business travel?

All of this means it's a great time to look at things such as commuter and business travel policies. If there are areas that need updating or streamlining to account for the new work environment — or if you need to build entirely new policies — it would be smart to get out ahead of those changes, and a relocation management company (RMC) can help walk you through that process. Teams may also want to explore alternative options such as [virtual assignments](#) to supplement traditional assignments or extended business trips.



If it seems like you keep adding new policies, it's quite possible that you have — AIRINC found that mobility programs in 2021 [have an average of 6.2 unique policies](#), up from 4.5 just four years ago. As you go through your current policies and potentially add new ones, consider if there are areas where you can trim down or consolidate. Think of it like you're adding new clothes to a wardrobe — if there's an old shirt that's no longer being worn, it might be time to throw it out.

This process can help your program run more smoothly in the long run by focusing more of your time on high-use policies and less on the areas that don't see as much volume. According to AIRINC, mobility leaders expect international and domestic remote work, as well as virtual assignments, to see the biggest usage spikes in the next year.

3 Think outside the box and expand what's possible

Last but not least, use this time to reconsider what's possible for your mobility team. During the height of the pandemic, many teams were stretched in new directions to meet unexpected business needs.

Don't lose that momentum! It would be easy to fall back into pre-pandemic ways of doing things, but mobility professionals have shown they are valuable resources to an organization beyond just facilitating traditional relocations and assignments.

Whether your team adopted new policies amid the pandemic or has an opportunity to try new things in the years ahead, periods of change are the best time to get disruptive and see what innovative ideas emerge.

Want to engage your employees no matter where they're working from? Consider teaming up with your supplier partners and internal HR and talent stakeholders to reimagine the new employee onboarding process in a hybrid work environment of the future.

If new employees will be working remotely at least part of the time, there are considerations about how to set them up for success within your company that possibly weren't on the radar before. Think about the support and resources they may need to set up an effective home office and get integrated into your company culture even if they're not in the building every day.

This is outside the traditional scope of mobility but is critical for organizations to address within their larger HR function, so mobility leaders can show tremendous value by bringing the issue to the table. [Connect with Plus](#) for more ideas and insight on how your mobility team can be a strategic resource for your company.

