

Airbus Group Spain, Cisco, EcoVadis, ManpowerGroup France, and Steelcase Discuss Return-to-Office Policies

In the webinar “To Return or Not to Return,” HR experts tackled the topics of culture, technology, and space through the lens of hybrid work.

🕒 Read 14 minutes

We are heading full force into the future of hybrid work. Companies and employees around the globe are rethinking their workspaces and strategies for fostering community, engagement, and productivity in the workplace. Many companies are left asking the same questions: do we return to the office, and how do we do it? Navigating the landscape of hybrid work is both exciting and unpredictable; but one thing that’s certain is hybrid working looks different for everyone.

To learn more, Rocío Díez, Steelcase Brand Communications Director EMEA, talked to expert panelists from five major companies about their return-to-office policies and how they are adapting to the post-pandemic work world. Watch the full webinar [here](#).

Panelists:

- Antonio Lasaga – Head of HR – Airbus Group Spain
- Stefania Capelli – People & Communities partner South Europe – Cisco
- Laurianne Le Chalony – Chief People Officer – EcoVadis
- Gwenaëlle de la Roche – VP Marketing, Communications & Influence – ManpowerGroup France
- Karin Vidic – Director, Applied Research Consulting EMEA – Steelcase

Rocío Díez: Where are you connecting from and what is the return-to-office policy in your company?

Laurianne Le Chalony: I’m working from home today, in Paris. We are aiming to attract talent from all around the world, and to do so, we are adopting a hybrid model that allows employees to work from anywhere they want. We promote flexibility, autonomy, and trust, and our people can choose where they work best.

Gwenaëlle de la Roche: I’m connecting from the ManpowerGroup headquarters in Nanterre, France. Our company is taking a hybrid work approach, with three days in the office and two days at home.

Stefania Capelli: I’m connected from the Cisco office today in Milan, Italy. We also have a hybrid work model in place. Since 2021, we have also been offering the option to work abroad for up to 20 days. After the pandemic, we expanded our employees’ choices, with the idea that work isn’t where you go, but rather what you do.

Antonio Lasaga: I'm joining from our office in Madrid. We have developed a global hybrid work policy that allows for 40% remote working, and a minimum of 60% in the office. The intention is to provide this framework to the managers, allowing them the freedom to choose how they use their skills for the purpose of their activity. We believe in a trust-based approach and flexibility.

Karin Vidic: I'm connecting from the new Steelcase WorkLife in Paris. When it comes to our return-to-office policy, we strongly believe in how being physically together unlocks serendipity and innovation. At the same time, our research and discussions with our own employees have taught us that people want choices. So, we have put in place a flexible hybrid work policy.

RD: From your point of view, what would you say is the major challenge that organizations face right now when it comes to hybrid work?

AL: At Airbus, we have significant and complex industrial activity that cannot be performed remotely, and we also must accommodate the different needs and expectations of office colleagues. Combining these two worlds and ensuring the engagement of all employees is one of our major challenges. Plus, developing and creating complex products like airplanes, satellites, launchers, and fighters requires multifunctional teams to work together efficiently and effectively. In the past, these teams collaborated in person. Our challenge is to ensure that efficient work and complex problem-solving continues in a hybrid work environment. The managers need to be able to execute these processes in the context of the hybrid work environment. Our hybrid work model is designed to address these challenges.

GdIR: The pandemic was a large catalyst for transforming the world of work. In this context, ManpowerGroup has launched global research [What Workers Want: From Surviving a Global Pandemic to Thriving at Work](#), which surveyed 5000 workers around the world. The survey shows that workers don't want one-size-fits-all flexibility; they want more choice, more autonomy, more trust, and more consideration for their well-being. Leaders must pay attention to employees ready to vote with their feet if they don't feel supported.

KV: Our research at Steelcase has shown that people expect more sense of community, comfort and safety, productivity, and choice and control over how they work. People are looking for workspaces that bring together all of these elements. I think the biggest challenge will be to create a work experience that addresses these points while aligning with the organization's initiatives to accelerate innovation and build community, purpose, and social capital. Ultimately, bringing all of these factors together creates the culture and behaviors organizations need to thrive and achieve their business goals.

RD: How will the return-to-office policy in your organization affect your real estate? Will it be reduced/will it be increased/will it be modified somehow/if so, how?

SC: At Cisco we think hybrid is here to stay, and we are constantly observing major changes in customers and employees' behaviors. Before the pandemic, 60% of our people in EMEA were in the office more than three days per week. Now, only 25% of our people are on-site from one to three days per week. Looking at those data, we realized that we don't need as much space, and we have to rethink the workspace experience. We are designing our offices to become collaboration hubs, where people go with the purpose of interacting with others. We are also investing in social capital and expanding the network of work location options by encouraging work at third party serviced places. The Venywhere project is a great example of this, launched by the city of Venice to repopulate the city and attract hybrid workers. This concept resonated with us, and we decided to have 16 of our employees working in Venice for three months, working in nontraditional coworking settings, like universities or research centers. Projects and strategies like this one help attract new talent and engage employees.

LLC: It's important to go back to the basics of your objectives as a company. We are hiring and onboarding new people every day, and we must grow our office space to accommodate this. The first step in our strategy was to understand the expectations of our employees through surveys. We then adapted our policy to individual needs, while supporting culture and collaboration. We've also found it important to adapt to local scenarios. For example, at our office in Barcelona, many of our people were from other countries and wanted to come to the office to socialize. So, we decided to build a bigger space there.

KV: In our organization, we are evolving our workplace to create hybrid neighborhoods where people feel belonging and purpose. Our goal is to earn the commute and show our employees that the office is the best place to work. We've been reflecting on how to ensure that what we offer works best for the teams, individuals, and partners that come into our offices. One example is the new WorkLife in Paris. The goal for this space was not real estate reduction, but rather creating a space that would be the perfect fit for our people and mission. We wanted to ensure that people would feel pride in the new space. We've been very intentional in selecting the location and designing the space. We are noticing that compared to some of our other locations, a lot of people are coming to the office. This is the first space that we've been rebuilding after the pandemic, so we're learning a lot and taking the opportunity to apply the experience to other locations.

The Steelcase Paris WorkLife was intentionally designed to create an engaging and comfortable environment where people want to go to work.

RD: What are the specific ways in which your organization is engaging and attracting talent?

GdIR: We realize that traditional methods for engaging talent are not enough; we need a full range of innovative solutions. In particular, the younger generation wants more than a job. They want to work for a company that aligns with their own personal values and helps them leverage and develop their talent. In response, we have developed the ManpowerGroup Mypath program, which works with more than 50,000 motivated talents in France to place them in jobs while developing their skills and employability.

LLC: We try to develop our talent through our company's mission, which is to make a positive impact on the planet and society. We aim to not only develop their competencies but also engage them in activities that strive for a greater purpose. For example, the team at the Paris office worked on building houses together. For us, these activities serve as the glue that brings together the people and the mission of the company.

SC: Leaders are key in a hybrid world, because they create the strongest link between the company and team members. We are coaching them to become "Talent Magnets" for candidates and investing in developing their roles as social connectors. Leaders who can foster connection and socialization are critically important to promoting community, well-being, and purpose at work.

We also believe that innovation is key for engaging talent. We are investing in co-design activities, creativity programs, and supporting a culture where people feel empowered to propose solutions. Projects like Vennywhere speak to the culture of innovation. We take an idea, grow it, and implement it. We are trying to accelerate these projects as much as possible during this time.

RD: If our audience takes away one thing from what you've shared with us today, what would it be?

AL: The key takeaway is that one size does not fit all. It's important to know what your mission and needs are and adapt to produce what fits the business purpose and expectations.

SC: It's important to concentrate on "how" instead of "what." Make sure your processes are closely connected to the company's DNA, and don't be afraid to try, fail, reframe, and then shape to exceed. This is the outcome I'm always thinking about.

LLC: Train your managers. When challenges arise, managers who are well-trained will know what steps to take.

GdIR: The real challenge for leaders will be to listen, adapt, and think differently about flexible working and how to approach flexibility in a way that works for the company and employees.

KV: We need to earn the commute and the only way to do that is to take a holistic approach and define the best work experience that we can offer. The solution is specific to each organization and takes into account space, technology, leadership, and culture. We need to rethink what we do and how we do it, and it's an exciting time for all of us.

AUDIENCE POLL RESULTS

Tell us what best identifies your role.

36% - Architect & designer

24% - Other

20% - Real estate and facilities management

12% - Corporate strategy & leadership

5% - Human resources

3% - Information technology

Right now, how often are you going into the office each week?

- 35% - 3-4 days
- 34% - 2 days or less
- 21% - 5 days
- 11% - Only working from home

What's the biggest challenge when it comes to the talent crisis right now? Choose one.

- 40% - Engaging people and fostering loyalty
- 30% - Attracting people
- 12% - Onboarding people
- 10% - Maintaining productivity
- 9% - Developing people

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