

# A year on, it's back to WFH mode

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It was just a few months ago that offices in the corporate sector began buzzing with employees. Having worked from home for a major part of 2020, the company managements began allowing their employees to trickle back to workplaces amid strict Covid safety guidelines.

But the sudden spike in Covid cases has reverted the situation back to square one for the corporates. While the state government has mandated running of offices with 50% capacity, many firms have completely shut some of their departments and asked employees to work from home again. Though the situation is grim and businesses are suffering, the hiring of employees has, however, continued in many firms.

## Old new normal

Since the surge in Covid cases over the last few weeks, we have asked many employees to work from home again. While in some departments the entire staff is working from home, in others employees are working in shifts. The situation has gone back again to what it was last year," said Shabnam Gaitonde, head HR, Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd. The company implemented strict Covid guidelines to keep its employees safe at their workplace.

Some companies have con-



tinued with the WFH arrangement since the outbreak of the pandemic last year. "Out of our 1,400 employees, 1,200 have been working remotely since March last year. Only those in critical positions are permitted to work from the office," said Shashikant Patange, director, human resources, Linde Engineering India.

"We allowed some additional employees to work from the office when cases began declining. However, we have again shifted to remote working after the current surge in Covid-19 cases. We are also planning to come out with policies for remote working,"

## Remote Work Has Become A Permanent Part Of The Hybrid Workspace

he added.

Ahmedabad-based Torrent Group has re-introduced work-from-home for its corporate offices in the city. Harsha Engineers Ltd, too, has partly implemented WFH after the state government mandated that offices should operate with only 50% staff.

"A large number of organizations had resumed working from office during October-

January since many were missing in-person interactions. This fierce second Covid-19 wave has again forced almost all companies to ask their non-essential workforce to operate from home," said Samir Parikh, founder of NamanHR.

According to Parikh, unlike the first wave, this time there is increased confidence in moving to remote working. Companies and their employees are well prepared with SOPs, guidelines, testing protocols, technology integration, medical assistance, and are overall better prepared than 2020 for ensuring continuity and productive output.

"Like most companies, we too have our employees work-

ing from home. This cannot be avoided. Close to 60% of our colleagues are working from home at present. However, we also recognize the need for people to work from the office and we are flexible about it to ensure their efficiency and mental well-being," said Pratik Mehta, group COO, The Gateway Corp.

## Hiring stays up

Fearing a slide in business, companies were expected to put new hiring on hold. The current surge in Covid-19 cases, however, has not subdued hiring. "While the current wave may again dampen the spirit, companies are sure of their capital expenditure. Hence, hiring will reach a new peak with every cycle," said Samir Parikh.

"Our recruiting arm saw three times the total number of hiring mandates in just three weeks," he added.

According to the staffing firm Teamlease, job postings surged 30% during January-March over the October-December quarter. "Gujarat saw 8,000 job postings every month in October to December 2020, which increased by 30% between January and March. The hiring is not subsiding at present," said Kaushik Banerjee, vice-president and business head of Teamlease and Freshersworld.

"We are hiring employees in the departments where there is a need," confirmed Shabnam Gaitonde, HR head, Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

(With inputs from Niyati Parikh)

"The second Covid-19 wave has reaffirmed corporate India's belief that remote working or hybrid working will remain. Leaders and managers have now aced the art of managing remote work and people. They can align business goals with this hybrid working model"



Samir Parikh | FOUNDER, NAMAN HR

"At this point, barely 1-2% of staff work from office. The rest work remotely. Even while hiring people, the industry is widely attracting new talent from remote locations. In fact, job candidates, too, are preferring work from anywhere"

Tejinder Oberoi | CHAIRMAN, GESIA IT ASSOCIATION



"It seemed normalcy was returning and many companies began work from office. But the spike in Covid cases over the last few weeks has compelled companies to go back to the WFH model. Only factories are allowing staff in workplaces"

Nilesh Shukla | PRESIDENT, INDIA SME FORUM (GUJARAT CHAPTER)



"Most companies have sent 100% of their workforce to work from home. We are much better placed than last year. Despite work-from-home models, hiring has not been affected"

Maulik Bhansali | CHAIRPERSON, NASSCOM SME COUNCIL, GUJARAT REGION

