

The Companies Calling Workers Back to the Office Five Days a Week

UPS, Boeing and other employers are insisting on full-time attendance as some bosses lose patience with remote work

By [Chip Cutter](#)

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The number of companies requiring full-time attendance dropped to 38% at the end of 2023 from 49% at the start of the year. PHOTO: JUTHARAT PINYODOONYACHET FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

UPS on Tuesday joined a small group of large companies pushing for a return to what has become an anomaly in American worklife: [five days in the office](#).

The delivery giant followed among employers requiring full-time attendance for at least some segment of their workforces.

The push for in-person attendance Monday through Friday [reflects a desire among top executives](#) to fully repopulate offices and to return to prepandemic ways of working. Some CEOs say it is unfair for corporate employees to do their jobs remotely part of the time while front-line staffers must show up daily.

During contentious labor negotiations at last year, union officials said drivers and warehouse staffers resented working in-person while office employees could stay at home. "I'm a big believer in the power

of one,” UPS Chief Executive Carol Tomé said on a call with investors Tuesday, explaining the move to require everyone back in offices. “In terms of our culture, we are a network company, not just of logistics capabilities, but of personal relationships, too.”

It is still relatively uncommon for large employers to require corporate staff in person full time. In the Fortune 500, [82% of employers](#) offer at least some remote-work opportunities, according to data from Scoop Technologies, a software firm that tracks return-to-office efforts. An analysis from Stanford University economics professor Nicholas Bloom and colleagues found that Americans spent about 30% of their paid days working from home in January 2024, largely the same from a year earlier.



Surveys have repeatedly shown that there is a disconnect between bosses and workers on return-to-office policies. PHOTO: MERIDITH KOHUT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The five-day club appears to be shrinking. The number of companies requiring full-time attendance dropped to 38% at the end of 2023 from 49% at the start of the year, according to Scoop.

Some notable employers, particularly in finance, have insisted on a full office return for at least some employees. JPMorgan Chase issued a memo to the company last year telling managing directors—among the company’s most senior employees—that they would now be required in offices five days a week.

Boeing last fall told workers in its commercial division they need to be in the office five days a week, without setting a deadline for the return or threatening consequences for those who failed to do so. Stan Deal, who heads the unit, told managers to work on getting their teams back on site working their prepandemic schedules.

Boeing noted that manufacturing employees have been working in person since factories reopened following a brief pandemic shutdown. “As we continue to hire new employees and continue our airplane development work, it’s beneficial to have teams in the office more often to support our customer commitments and collaborate in person,” the company said.

Employees took to social media to complain, and the union representing Boeing engineers said some of its members planned to quit if they were forced back full time.

“If Boeing can outsource engineering work to Poland or India—effectively letting those workers telecommute from other continents—it can and should also allow its aerospace professionals living in Stanwood or Sumner to work remotely too,” the union, known as Speea, said.

Surveys have repeatedly shown that there is a disconnect between bosses and workers on return-to-office policies. Many workers want to retain some flexibility, while CEOs have indicated that they hope to see greater in-office attendance.

In the continuing tug of war, workers have largely won out. Office occupancy rates in 10 major U.S. cities have hovered around 50% for months, according to data from security provider Kastle Systems, with [large corporate offices still sparsely populated](#) on days like Friday.

At chip maker , the company requires that employees spend four days a week in its offices. CEO Cristiano Amon said he doesn’t see a need to change the policy to full-time in-office attendance.

“I feel like four days a week, five days a week is kind of the same right now,” he said.

In Qualcomm’s San Diego headquarters, the office looks like it did before the pandemic, with engineers working together and employees largely complying with the policy, Amon said.

“We’re back to normal,” he said.

For years, bosses felt they didn’t have enough leverage to compel employees back to the office. When employees ignored return-to-office directives, managers often felt reluctant to enforce the policies, fearing high-performing workers might quit. Now, in the face of a softening job market and white-collar layoffs, some workers say they feel more compelled to show up. has asked campus office associates to be in offices the majority of the time while continuing to reinforce the importance of flexibility, said a spokeswoman for the company. Practically, in-office requirements and behavior vary greatly department-by-department at the country’s largest retailer, who has offices in California, the New York area and Bentonville, Ark.

Other companies say they want to maintain a hybrid approach with work at home and in the office. At tech company , the printer and laptop maker has asked that employees come into the office a few days a week, as determined by teams. CEO Enrique Lores said a younger generation of workers, including his own children, won’t tolerate a five-day-a-week plan.

“They value flexibility so much that they will not work for a company that will tell them you need to come to the office five days per week. They will not do it,” he said. “We really think the way of working in the future is hybrid.”

Lores said he sees the value of in-office work for training, collaborating with colleagues and learning from peers.

“But you don’t need to be 8-to-5, five days a week to do that,” Lores said.

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