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**FIRM MANAGEMENT**

# How to Craft a Remote-Friendly Recruitment and Retention Strategy

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**Paul McDonald** • Feb. 01, 2022



It was hardly a foregone conclusion that professionals would embrace remote working after the pandemic struck. Many people struggled through the early days of improvised desks and work-life conflicts. If COVID-19 had come and gone in a matter of weeks, few would have dreaded a return to the office.

But COVID-19 lingered, people adapted, and then they thrived. In a survey for the [2022 Salary Guide from Robert Half](#), 75% of workers said they wanted to work at least part of the time remotely, and one in three (34%) would quit a company that didn't allow remote work. After the anywhere worker, meet the anywhere-but-the-office worker.

With 7-in-10 (69%) finance and accounting managers keen to continue offering remote work to support their employees' work-life balance, the remote work revolution isn't about workers vs. bosses. The real battle is with your competitors. How can you attract the remote workers you need to give your firm a competitive advantage in a talent-scarce hiring market? And once you have them, how do you keep them?

### Why hire remote workers?

It'll be an uphill battle to craft a remote work recruitment strategy for 2022 if you view the practice through the lens of 2020. Different types of remote working roles have evolved since then, including:

- Local remote workers who telecommute full-time but are close enough to the office to come in for training days, social events or client meetings
- “Anywhere workers” who may join and leave a firm without ever setting foot in the office
- Hybrid workers who divide their time between home and the office

Some leaders may wonder whether the pros of [managing such a diverse range of roles](#) outweigh the cons. But in addition to the need to protect employees from COVID-19, there are other distinct advantages to a remote-friendly recruitment strategy.

One is that it widens the talent pool — significantly. More than a third (35%) of finance and accounting leaders polled by Robert Half said they had expanded their hiring search geographically to find the candidates they need. Another advantage of distributed work is increased coverage, particularly if you have employees in different time zones. Rather than working late, an auditor on the East Coast who receives an

urgent query at 5 p.m. can “hand over” to a Seattle-based colleague, who still has three hours left on the clock. In an age when work-life balance is a top employee priority, using remote teams to relieve pressure in this way could also be a powerful staff retention tool.

## How to hire great remote workers

Here are some of my suggestions for attracting the most talented remote workers.

- **Tap a broad range of resources** — Job search websites enable you to post open positions quickly, but you risk being flooded with applications from under-qualified job seekers. For a more targeted approach, ask current team members to recommend people they know. Employees get a morale boost when their manager shows trust in their judgment, and it’s unlikely your staff would recommend people who would underperform. Finally, working with a [talent solutions firm like Robert Half](#) gives you immediate access to highly-skilled, remote-ready professionals.
- **Offer perks and benefits that attract remote workers** — If your remote job postings tout your sleek new office gym, don’t be surprised if you get a lukewarm response. Consider adding perks that employees can actually use, like remote learning opportunities.
- **Learn how to evaluate remote working skill sets** — Beware the otherwise perfect candidate who just isn’t cut out to work from home. Remote workers need soft skills like initiative and the ability to work under minimal supervision, plus the technical savvy to navigate cloud-based collaboration and finance tools. When [interviewing potential remote hires](#), ask about telecommuting experience and their strategies for staying focused and connected when working from home.
- **Accelerate the hiring process** — It’s a candidate-led hiring market right now, which means professionals may end up fielding multiple offers. Almost [half of applicants \(43%\) lose interest if they don’t hear back within two weeks](#), so keep in touch with promising candidates and don’t dither about making them a competitive offer.

## How to retain remote workers

Remote work has razed the geographical barriers to talent. But it can also erect new barriers within your workforce if you don’t (forgive the paradox) make remote workers feel at home.

If some of your workforce has returned to the office, avoid creating a two-tier system where remote and hybrid workers feel more isolated and less valued than their office-based colleagues, which is a recipe for increased turnover. Try to:

- **Give equal access to training resources** — Many remote workers feel like the pandemic put the skids under their career development. If you host seminars and workshops at the office, invite local remote workers to join their on-site colleagues. Give those farther afield the chance to attend such events virtually, or at least have access to a good-quality recording of the workshop.
- **Don't overlook remote workers for bonuses and promotions** — To ensure fairness, ensure that performance reviews and any other triggers for rewards and promotions are standardized across your team.
- **Give shout-outs to remote workers** — It's easy to spot on-site workers who put in extra hours during tax season, but remote workers do this too — and often invisibly. Make sure you give public shout-outs on team calls to remote workers who make valuable contributions.

The “new normal” may be something of a cliché, but it does describe how arrangements like remote working have become routine in a pandemic-changed world. The challenges of leading

dispersed teams are real, but not having a remote-friendly recruitment policy may leave you playing catch-up with your competitors.

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*Paul McDonald is senior executive director at talent solutions and recruiting firm [Robert Half](#). He writes and speaks frequently on hiring, workplace, leadership and career-management topics. Over the course of more than 35 years in the staffing industry, McDonald has advised thousands of company leaders and job seekers on how to hire and get hired.*

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