

Delivering on the Remote Work Promise

Bookminders has been offering a remote-first environment for our accountants since 1991, decades before COVID-19 forced a meteoric rise in remote work adoption throughout the world. In fact, while only 6% of employees worked from home prior to the pandemic, over 33% were working remotely by May 2020.¹



Unfortunately for those who value working from home, many businesses have abandoned their remote work culture as quickly as they embraced it.

Data released by LinkedIn reveals that the “the peak for remote jobs was in March 2022, with over 20% of all listings offering the option,” yet by “November 2022, barely 14% of paid job postings invited remote applicants.”² In March 2023, the Wall Street Journal published an article citing the U.S. Labor Department’s report that “72.5% of business establishments said their employees teleworked rarely or not at all last year,” up from 60.1% the year before.³



While the reasons cited by firms for abandoning or scaling back on remote offerings range from claims around productivity to sunk costs for physical office space, the fact is that for many, remote work is simply not a key part of the corporate culture. Management will invest in the type of culture they believe best serves the firm and its clients, and rightly so.

Getting hybrid and remote work right isn't always easy, and when leadership believes an in-person, physical presence is best for the business, they are more likely to abandon efforts to get remote work right. Instead, remote work requests are reluctantly permitted as an occasional exception to a colocation-based culture.

If firms act with transparency, their attitude towards remote work is clearly and intentionally communicated to prospective applicants. Sadly, in the race for talent, not all businesses embrace transparency, and new employees see the promised hybrid or remote position quickly modified to a primarily in-person role.

Despite the negative headlines and lack of transparency, remote work opportunities DO still exist and the demand for them has not abated.

A Pew Research Center Survey reports that 35% “of workers with jobs that can be done remotely say they are working from home all of the time,”⁴ and a recent Washington Post-Ipsos poll revealed only 6% of remote-capable workers would prefer to rarely or never work virtually.⁵

How often remote-capable workers want to work from home

Q: If you had a choice, how often would you want to work from home?



Note: Totals may not equal 100 because of rounding. "No opinion" not shown.

Source: March 30-April 11, 2023, Washington Post-Ipsos poll of 482 remote-capable workers with an error margin of +/- 5.5 percentage points.

EMILY GUSKIN / THE WASHINGTON POST

Even in the Accounting industry, a field that has typically delivered services in-person, workers are demanding remote work opportunities and wise firms are delivering them. 50% “of the top-performing CPA firms have staff working remotely”⁶ and while only 29% of financial services firms permitted staff to work remotely one or more day per week pre-pandemic, now 60% do so.⁷

So, how can accountants who value remote work avoid the bait-and-switch of a promised hybrid or virtual role to one that quickly morphs into an on-site position? Look at the company culture! Applicants should evaluate the attitude around remote work conveyed via a firm’s website, in their social media postings, and from employee reviews on job sites.

Prospects can ask interviewers and current/former employees when remote work was adopted at the company, what kind of work or meetings require on-site work, and what tools are being used to support employees who work virtually. A company that has prioritized remote work within its culture will have readily available answers to these questions and will be excited to share how they position their employees and clients for success despite the challenges of telecommuting.



Bookmindere has done just that since 1991, with a work-from-home environment that attracts and retains the best talent while simultaneously providing excellent client service. We've continually optimized our suite of resources and processes that allow our accountants to deliver exceptional service, no matter where and when they choose to work. Over the years, Bookmindere's service offerings have expanded from fully hybrid to also encompass 100% remote employees and clients.

While face-to-face meetings are still preferred by some clients and our market-based accountants do meet with them onsite, many others have moved to Weekly e-Service. With e-Service, clients embracing a fully virtual experience benefit from efficiency gains while still enjoying weekly virtual meetings, which are led by either a hybrid or fully remote staff member.

No matter what level of remote work a staff member has individually chosen, all enjoy a transparent, flexible, employee-centric culture. At Bookmindere, work-life balance (and remote work) are will continue to be the rule, not the exception.

Sources:

1. Coate, P. (2021, January 25). Remote work before, during, and after the pandemic quarterly economics briefing–Q4 2020. Remote Work Before, During, and After the Pandemic.
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2. Moore, M. (2023, January 7). Remote work may be past its prime. LinkedIn.
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