

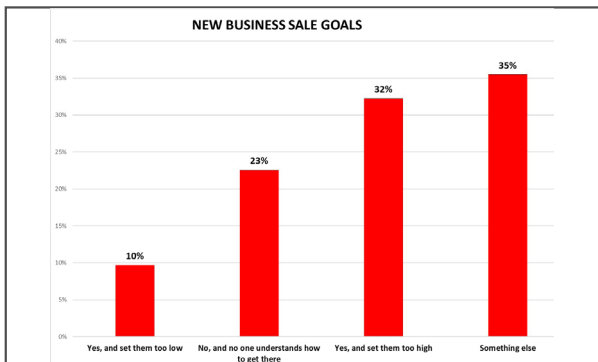


87% → 100%

We Allow Employees to Work From Home

Source:
PSMJ's 2019 Bonus & Benefit Plans
Benchmark Survey Report

TELEWORKING AND COVID-19 ... MORE on p. 2-3



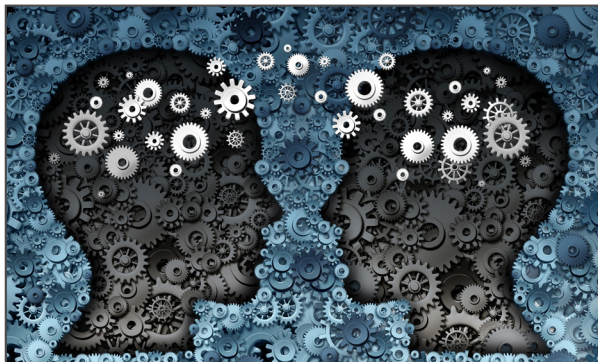
Business is business ...

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Senior Executive Briefing

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- **No Employees, No Problem:** The Virtual Firm Has Arrived
- **Congress Extends FMLA In Coronavirus Response**
- **Now More Than Ever—Dealing With Young Professionals**
- **Immediate Need, Cash, Cash, Cash**
- **4 Keys To Telecommuting Success**
- **Ask The Experts:** *Once The Covid-19 Crisis Is Over...*

NOW NO ONE IS SAYING 'NO' TO TELEWORKING

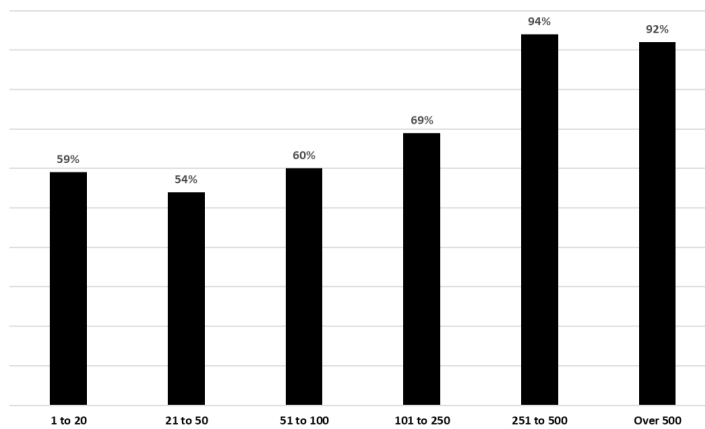
Before COVID-19, nearly 90 percent of firms reported that they allowed at least some staff to work from home. That is the good news. However reluctantly, engineering, architecture, and construction management firms across the United States and Canada were somewhat ready to ramp up their teleworking efforts.

PSMJ's Dave Burstein admits that firms were slow to the teleworking dance, and were more apt to offer flexible hours policies to satisfy staff's needs to balance home and work. "We found that nearly all firms were embracing flexible hours," he explains, and while some staff worked from home—it was not the norm. And those who did may have had to meet such requirements as minimum length of service or be a part of upper management.

BEING FLEXIBLE

"What we find is that firms had embraced core hours—in large numbers," explains Burstein, "even before COVID-19." In fact, according to PSMJ's *2019 Bonus & Benefit Plans Benchmark Survey Report* it was only the largest firms that—across the board—do not allow staff more flexibility as to when people are in the office. And even the large firms (with over 500 staff members) allow such flexibility with 77 percent allowing staff to decide their own schedules and only asking that people show up for set core hours (usually nine to five).

WORKING FROM HOME

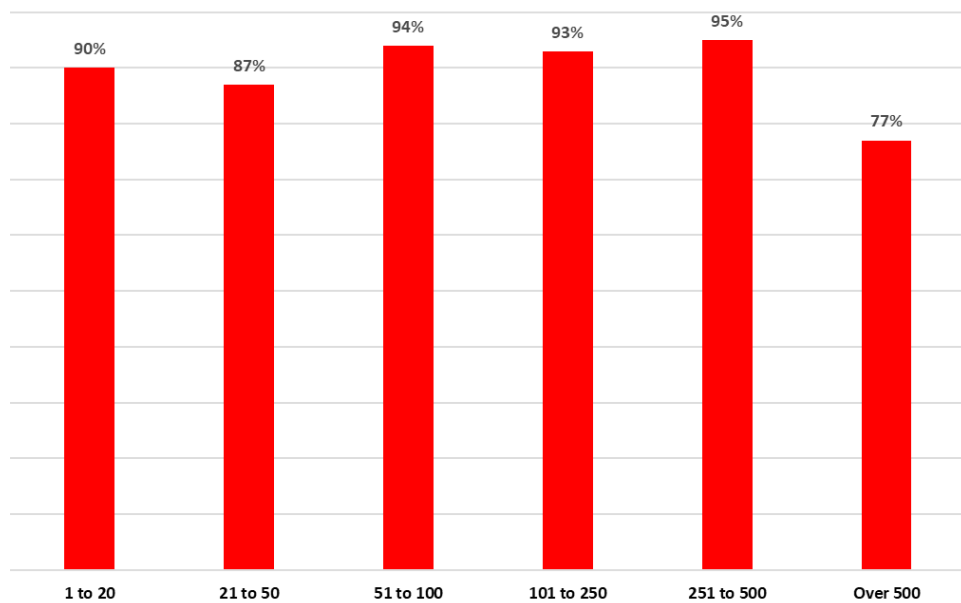


Source: PSMJ's 2019 A/E Bonus & Benefits Plans Benchmark Survey Report

While core office hours are one thing, only 65 percent of firms reported (pre-COVID-19) that staff regularly worked from home. In fact, only about half of firms staff sizes 21 to 50 reported having employees who routinely work from home.

For safety and health, these numbers have changed and nearly everyone is getting their work done outside the office, Burstein says. "The percentage of people working at home will not stay at the inflated numbers that we have now," he explains, but he says that post-COVID-19 numbers will be higher than what PSMJ found for 2019.

FIRMS ALLOW FLEX TIME



Source: PSMJ's 2019 A/E Bonus & Benefits Plans Benchmark Survey Report

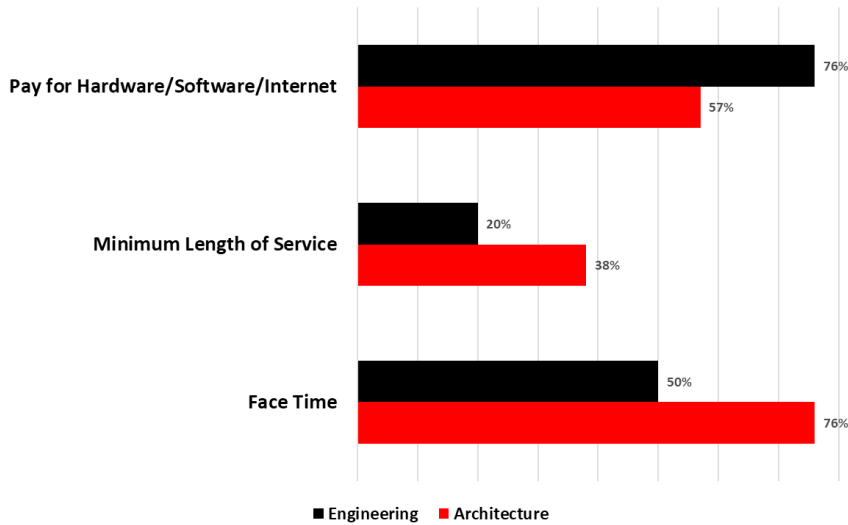
"Firms will learn that staff are productive and can work—at least for a short time—from outside the office," Burstein says. The only missing piece is for firms to decide the policies that cover office coverage and working away from the office.

MORE STANDARDS

Many A/E firms had to rush to allow all staff members to work from home during the COVID-19 outbreak. Most did not have time to put requirements in place or make decisions regarding expensing the cost of teleworking.

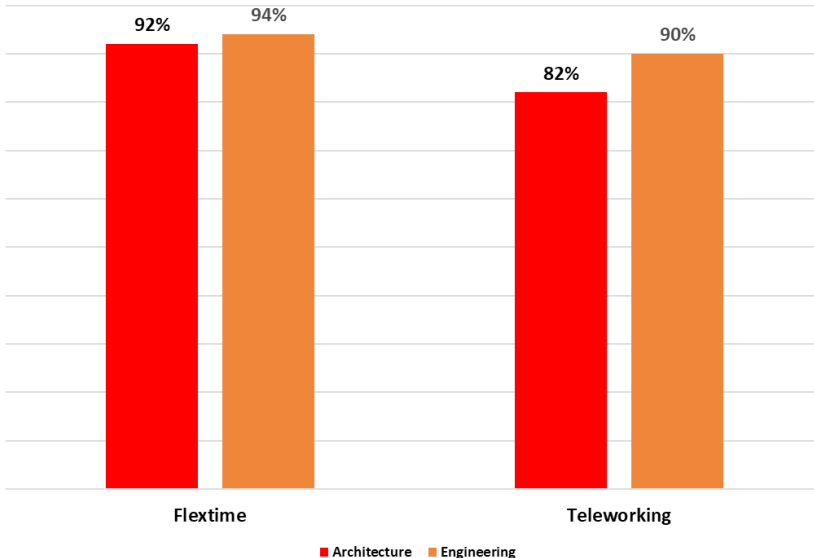
"Some firms have made decisions about who and how staff will work from home," Burstein explains. He gives the following

REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT



Source: PSMJ's 2019 A/E Bonus & Benefit Plans Benchmark Survey Report

MORE WORK/LIFE BALANCE



Source: PSMJ's 2019 A/E Bonus & Benefits Plans Benchmark Survey Report

as just a few of the important considerations:

- Repayment for phone use
- Reimbursement for internet access
- Minimum length of service to work from home
- How many hours staff must work in the office
- How often must staff touch base while working outside the office

Once the United States and Canada come through current events, firm leadership will have to face the fact that teleworking and office hours will need to change. Burstein suggests firms consider lessons learned and what will be needed to complete the work of the future. ■

BY THE NUMBERS

4

Firms have put all on the table—implementing flexible time, embracing remote working, and more. How about a change in schedule? Many design firms have already embraced a partial four-day work week—at least for having to make an appearance in the office.

0

As the *Financial Times* reports, the result of so many people online at the same time could lead to overwhelming broadband and mobile network operators. If the spike continues, firms will find themselves cut off from internet access at peak times.

23%

According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, prior COVID-19, 23 percent of workers worked at home on an average day. Workers with an advanced degree had a higher percent of work at home—42 percent.

82%

According to a recent survey of working professionals and hiring managers on LinkedIn, 82% of workers want to work from home at least once a week. And 57% want to work from home at least three days per week.

4.4%

When you compare Work From Home to Work From Anywhere, the productivity was greatest among the WFA workers—4.4 percentage points higher than WFH. And lowest among WFH who live more than 50 miles from the office.

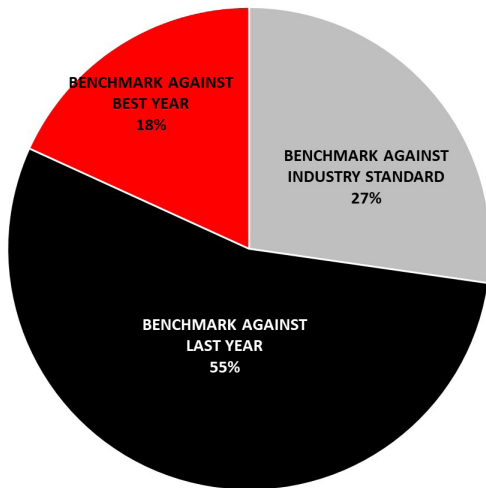
BUSINESS IS BUSINESS, NO MATTER THE ECONOMY

Working with about 50 firms worldwide on improving profitability, management consultant Brian Flynn, P.E., BCEE, has developed a system for what works—no matter the state of the economy.

“If you build your firm or move it in the right direction to where you have high utilization and high profitability, you wind up very resilient to downturns,” says Flynn, author of *Maximizing Engineering Firm Profits—Profit Fundamentals*.

“I can say it bluntly,” he adds. “If you do it my way, you can take a 30 percent downturn in revenue and not go belly up—and you might even avoid a layoff.”

SETTING PROFITABILITY GOALS



ONE METRIC DOES IT ALL

Top-performing firms use the SUM (salary-to-expense, utilization, multiplier) metric as a comprehensive management tool—a rational analysis that exposes weak spots to focus efforts on.

Flynn advises making a reasonable projection of next year’s net revenue, and reducing it by 10 percent. Calculate the “U” needed at your current “S” and “M” to yield, say, 20 percent RON.

This sets your utilization goals. If revenue is higher than 90 percent, your profit goes up. Put up with high workload until overtime approaches 10 percent. It might take a while to right size your workforce through attrition. In today’s marketplace, it’s important to hire behind the work. While that may put some stress on your staff, and you’ll have to figure out ways to motivate

them, compensate them well and you’re more likely to see handsome profits—which means attractive bonus programs.

To make the work that comes in more profitable, make it lump sum.

According to Flynn: “It has to have a very definable scope, and you need an experienced project manager who is committed to bringing it in under budget—without worrying about the team’s utilization goals. You can make a lot of money that way, and then each one of those [extra] dollars goes toward the bottom line.”

How else to improve financial performance?

Insist on change of scope when needed. Put a line item in your proposals showing dollars for out-of-scope items. Flynn has never been shy about explaining to clients that he needs to make a living just like they do. “Sometimes it’s nickel-and-dime stuff, but it adds up.”

Know your clients. A client satisfied with a job done quickly likely will come to you with another job sooner rather than later, so figure out which projects can move easily to the head of the line.

Use data. “So far I have not found a firm that looks at new business development and generating work with existing clients in a quantifiable manner,” says Flynn.

Firms should run their biggest in-house nonbillable project—marketing and sales—with stringent direction. For example, know what your client replacement rate needs to be.

Review KPIs monthly, not weekly. This can tell you how much profit you’ve made, and help determine whether SUM calculations are matching the firm’s goals. Then you can troubleshoot.

Look at non-labor overhead expenses. “See if there are some obvious things you should kill instantly there,” Flynn says. ■

Navigating Your A/E/C Firm Through the COVID-19 Crisis

With **With PSMJ Founder and CEO Frank A. Stasiowski, FAIA** and
PSMJ Principal David Burstein, P.E.

Thursday, March 26, 2020 / 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. (EDT)

"Unprecedented times" is a huge understatement. The greatest economic boom period in history has come to a screeching halt. A/E/C firm leaders now face uncertainties about backlog, staffing needs, transition plans, and more—all surrounded in an atmosphere of fear.

In this direct, no BS, action-oriented LIVE webinar and BREAKING NEWS message to our industry, PSMJ Founder and CEO Frank A. Stasiowski, FAIA, along with PSMJ Principal David Burstein, P.E. draw upon their decades of advising A/E/C CEOs on how to navigate through fear and uncertainty right now.

Frank is a leading futurist and visionary, having written two prescient books on the coming decades of change in A/E/C and how principals should adjust to succeed. Last year he predicted that a catastrophic event could take down our economy. Dave is the A/E/C industry's leading data-driven voice on market conditions, speaking regularly on the industry economic outlook.

Together, they will tell you LIVE what every A/E/C firm leader needs to do right now to ensure their firm comes out stronger when the dust settles.

This is a unique, **SPECIAL PSMJ LIVE Broadcast** with clear, no BS answers to your burning questions today, such as:

- **What is likely to happen in the next few months?**
- **What will our world and our industry look like after the crisis has passed?**
- **What should I be doing (and not doing) right now to preserve cash?**
- **How can I cut costs today in a way that will make my firm stronger after the crisis has passed?**
- **What does this crisis mean for my firm's ownership transition plan?**
- **What should my message be every day to both clients and staff?**
- **What are other CEOs across the country doing right now?**
- **Which "work at home" policies work and which ones don't?**

PLUS you get answers to your specific questions in an extended Q&A session. Don't miss the unique opportunity to get time-tested and proven advice from the worldwide leaders in the business of A/E/C.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/566277586> • Meeting ID: 566 277 586

This 90-minute discussion is **FREE** for PSMJ Members. **Not a member? JOIN TODAY** to access this broadcast and many more benefits! Visit **<https://store.psmj.com/membership-psmj>**

DISCUSSIONS ON THE FORUM...

"What if 14 days turns into 28 days or 6 weeks? You might say that's crazy, but are you sure?!? As business leaders, we need to be having these difficult conversations with our staffs today. We are not committing to covering anything at this point as there is too much unknown. We are telling our staff to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst. We don't know what is going to happen. This has changed so much in the last 96 hours, who knows where we will be by the end of this week."

"Our office is all laptop users. We did allow staff to take monitors and other equipment home as needed. We wanted them to have whatever I do have one question, are all of the staff members utilizing their home computers to work offsite? Or are they utilizing office equipment transferred to their home? That would seem complicated."

"Our firm transitioned to secure cloud servers & Revit 360 (cloud Revit) two years ago. We moved last Friday to remote working with only 1 hitch (out of 55 staff), a single employee who did not have internet at home yet. That was successfully set up yesterday. Our project teams are in constant contact with each other via Zoom, Slack, email, text, etc."

"In Ohio we are hearing rumblings of a mandatory 14 day quarantine. What are you all considering doing for your employees who cannot work from home if that were to happen? If someone is quarantined on a one off basis because of exposure to COVID-19 and they cannot work from home, what measures are you considering?"

"We believe that this emergency will lead employees to asking for a more permanent trend towards working like this (remotely)."

"As a result of COVID-19, has anyone been experiencing any stopped projects? Delayed projects? We have only had a potential site shutdown at a hospital project, but no other project types. That hospital site has not shutdown yet, just a discussion about it so far. We are trying to forecast how this virus will impact our business."

"Our office is still open. We are a small Architectural and Interior Design firm with only 14 in Mid-Michigan. One team member took a leave of absence to home school her children, but other than that everyone has been around when they can be. Most of our staff either doesn't have children or has teens/adult children."

"We've had the ability to do work remotely for a long time on a case by case basis... currently we don't have the need. However it may come to that."

"Our office is all laptop users. We did allow staff to take monitors and other equipment home as needed. We wanted them to have whatever I do have one question, are all of the staff members utilizing their home computers to work offsite? Or are they utilizing office equipment transferred to their home? That would seem complicated."



WANT TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION?

The PSMJ Discussion Forum is an exclusive service of PSMJ Membership. It provides a professional forum for members to ask questions, share thoughts and ideas, and keep each other informed. If you are not on the busy forum, send a request to Cathy Cecere: ccecere@psmj.com. If you are on the forum and want to add other professionals at your firm, send your list to Cathy.

NO EMPLOYEES? NO PROBLEM— THE VIRTUAL FIRM HAS ARRIVED

Until six years ago, the career path for Peter S. Macrae, AIA, was traditional. That all changed in 2011 when he parted ways with the recession-ravaged firm where he was managing principal and started his own firm. Macrae ARCHitecture, Inc., based in a suburb of Columbus, OH, has a website, 25 or 30 clients, and an annual portfolio averaging 150 projects. It has everything that a typical architecture firm has, with one notable exception—employees.

THE VIRTUAL FIRM

Macrae's firm is a thriving, high-production design firm that delivers architecture, interior and graphic design, project management, and 3D modeling services to clients in the commercial, residential, and civic markets. And he is its

5 KEYS TO RUNNING A 'VIRTUAL' FIRM

Here are five key factors that allow Macrae ARCHitecture to complete an average of 150 projects a year with only owner Peter Macrae as a full-time employee:

1. Financial discipline. Despite almost no overhead, Macrae ARCHitecture, Inc. charges the market rate for its services. Macrae also requires clients to pay half the fixed-fee up front and the remainder before receiving the final contract documents.

2. Focus on results, not hours. All projects are fixed-fee. "I've actually convinced all the people doing this with me to never again think about how many hours it takes to do something," he says. "All that matters are the deadline and collectively realizing the profits."

3. Successful independent contractors. "Every one of the people who works with me is an independent firm owner with their own clients and projects," says Macrae. "I insisted on it and now we are just one of each other's clients."

4. The right clients. The vast majority of Macrae's clients are in the private sector, largely because public-sector clients won't agree to his contract terms and can sometimes limit a firm's profit.

5. Appropriate technology. Macrae and his contractors hold meetings using apps like GoToMeeting and Skype, while exchanging files with Dropbox and similar tools.

only full-time staff. "My goal was to start a firm without any cash," Macrae says. "I thought that it must be possible to have a full-service, national architecture practice with zero fixed overhead. No rent. No equipment. No payroll. Just a laptop, with everything in the Cloud. And it worked like a charm. I put money into an account on day one just in case, but I've never touched it."

INSPIRED BY CIRCUMSTANCES

Macrae says the idea came to him in his prior position when he noticed that, although they were in a room together, his staff was working, more or less "virtually." "The CEO is in the corner office and there's a big bullpen with all the staff in their ten-by-ten spaces. It's the same work environment as when I started forty years ago, but instead of having a set of drawings rolled out on a drafting desk, they have ear buds in and they're throwing electronic files to each other."

In building his firm of independent consultants, Macrae had a ready-made talent pool from the good employees that his firm laid off as it dwindled from approximately 20 people to six. Even more doors opened with the passing of the Affordable Care Act, easing the considerable worry of high healthcare premiums among his contractors.

PRESENT COMPANY INCLUDED

Macrae's total stable of talent consists of about 16 contractors, but he works regularly with up to eight. The firm works throughout the U.S., as well as in Canada and Mexico, having grown to six teams. Five are led by mid-career professionals and the sixth by Macrae himself. "We have team leaders located in four different states and five different cities. Four teams serve national accounts, one team does high-end corporate interiors, and I head up the group that does the one-of-a-kind stuff."

The "virtual" state of the firm remains out of its clients' view; there's nothing on the website or in any communications indicating that the firm isn't like any brick-and-mortar establishment. Macrae's few overhead costs include regular license renewals, periodic software upgrades, and the necessary liability insurance. "I don't pretend that this virtual practice model is the great disruptor or that it's going to be the only way architects are going to deliver services in the future," Macrae says. "It's just an alternative. The Internet and all its connectivity have made this type of practice viable." ●

CONGRESS EXTENDS FMLA IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

U.S. Congress burnt the midnight oil deliberating legislation to help individuals, families, and businesses during the coronavirus pandemic crisis. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201) passed the House on March 16, 2020 after significant modifications designed to mitigate the impact on employers.

The Senate passed H.R. 6201 as amended by the House on March 18, 2020, and shortly thereafter the President signed it into law. Such bi-partisan deliberations are good news to A/E firms already reeling from the transition to remote work, not to mention the potential that valued employees may require extended leave due to self-quarantine, contracting COVID-19, or the need to take care of children and other family members.

“This legislation will affect a lot of firms as so many are between 50 and 500 employees,” offers Peter C. Atherton, P.E., President and Founder, ActionsProve, LLC. “A/E firm leaders and leadership teams are seeking the best way to navigate this crisis.”

PARSING THE DETAILS

Here is a rundown of what details A/E firms need to know. Employer-related provisions in H.R. 6201 include:

Emergency Paid Leave

Private sector employers with fewer than 500 employees and government entities would have to provide 12 weeks of job-protected leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to employees who have been on the payroll at least 30 days and who are unable to work or telework in order to care for a minor child whose school/child care has been closed.

- The first 10 days of leave could be unpaid, although employees could use accrued PTO during this period.
- Following the first 10 days, employees must be paid at least two-thirds of their normal pay.
- Emergency FMLA paid leave would be limited to \$200/day or \$10,000 in aggregate.
- DOL would be authorized to exempt businesses with fewer than 50 employees from paid leave provisions.

Emergency sick leave

Private sector employers with fewer than 500 employees and government entities would have to provide paid sick leave to self-quarantine, get a diagnosis for COVID-19, or provide care for a family member in quarantine or a child whose school has closed.

- 80 hours of paid sick leave for full-time employees. Paid sick leave for part-time employees based on their work hours over a two-week period. Emergency sick leave is on top of any other paid leave provided by the employer.
- Limited to \$511/day or \$5,110 in aggregate for an employee's own illness or quarantine and \$200 or \$2,000 in aggregate to care for family members.
- DOL would be authorized to exempt businesses with fewer than 50 employees from the paid sick leave provisions.

Employer tax credits

The bill would provide payroll tax credits to employers to cover wages paid while employees are using the emergency paid leave and sick leave established by the legislation.

- Sick leave credit of as much as \$511 per day if the employee is caring for themselves, and as much as \$200 per day if the employee is caring for a family member.
- Family leave credit of as much as \$200 per day, or an aggregate of \$10,000.
- Employers could receive the tax credit even if the credit exceeds the amount the employer owes in payroll tax.

“The act goes into effect April 2,” states Kristi Weierbach, Managing Director, Workforce Advisory Services Stambaugh Ness. “It is important that companies have a Rapid Response Team to be able to quarterback situations when an employee is exposed to the virus or becomes infected themselves.”

Atherton concurs that how A/E leaders act today is extremely important. “As leaders, we need to empathize,” he says. “We also need to ensure we and our managers stay truly connected with every employee every day in order to maintain communication, awareness, and as much performance as possible. This will have a huge impact on the level of engagement and trust we will have with employees (and clients) moving forward.” ●

NOW MORE THAN EVER—DEAL WITH YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AND ANXIETY

“There can be a disconnect for baby boomer or Gen X managers who have learned to power through their emotions. The next generation—the millennials—are learning to deal with their emotions and find more purpose in their work. The solution lies in how to bridge that gap.”

Think about the millennials and Generation-Z employees at your firm. Are they self-absorbed, entitled and afraid of responsibility? Or are they innovative thinkers with high self-awareness who are seeking to make a difference?

The fact that you probably answered “all of the above” is an indication of how challenging it can be to manage this section of the workforce. And while concepts like flextime and casual dress codes can help make your workplace more inviting, providing means of personal satisfaction and emotional well-being are just as important to this generation.

TALENTED CHALLENGES

For even the most talented young employees, mental health can be a defining issue. According to a study in the Harvard Business Review (HBR), millennials were three times more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety than baby boomers, and Generation Z (the most recent college graduates) were four times more likely.

Of course, firms should help these employees by offering counseling and other HR services. But executive coach Steve Sebolt, founder and owner of Rhode Island-based Fearless Performances, advises you to start by taking an “inside out” approach, looking first at your firm, its values and what it offers its employees.

“As children, your youngest employees were raised to focus on externals: ‘Am I popular, are my grades good enough, did I win the trophy?’” Sebolt says. “Now, as adults, they’re searching for intrinsic meaning in their lives.”

PURPOSEFUL WORK

More than anything, he believes, what they want from work is a sense of purpose: “They don’t want to spend their lives chasing money and possessions. That feels inauthentic. They’re looking for the ‘why?’ of work.”

Research shows that half of millennials and 75 percent of Gen-Zers say they have left a job at least partially due to mental or emotional reasons. And while mental health benefits and other resources like support groups are important in retaining this cohort, Sebolt believes it starts with creating the right culture.

“Passions, principles and purpose: They provide the ‘why?’ that these workers look for,” he says, adding, “Don’t do it as a reaction to employee dissatisfaction—you should have a mission and values clearly defined, and then find employees that fit in the culture.”

NEW HABITS

Sebolt acknowledges that this approach requires new ways of thinking about leadership: “There can be a disconnect for baby boomer or Gen X managers who have learned to power through their emotions. The next generation—the millennials—are learning to deal with their emotions and find more purpose in their work. The solution lies in how to bridge that gap.”

He suggests a two-track approach to management: promoting the “doers” who are great at the work, and the “leaders” who are compassionate, empathetic, and can talk openly about the mental health challenges their employees are facing and resources they might avail themselves to.

“Find your mission, and surround yourself with people who believe in it,” Sebolt advises. “And as you train and mentor your young employees, show them not only the ‘how’ of their work, but also the ‘why.’” ■

IMMEDIATE NEED, CASH, CASH, CASH

How much cash on hand should an A/E/C firm have? Should you factor a portion of your receivables balance into the amount you set as a goal to keep in your “rainy day” fund? Cash on hand is defined as the total amount of any accessible cash, regardless of whether it is in your pocket or your bank account. Investments that can be converted to cash in 90 days or less are typically included when calculating cash on hand.

Given the cyclical nature of the A/E/C industry, PSMJ’s experts say that having a cash reserve as well as an unused bank line of credit is a good idea, especially if the firm’s book value is less than \$35,000 per employee. PSMJ President Frank A. Stasiowski, FAIA, offers some specifics: “In one form or another, every firm should have a cushion of three to four months’ worth of payroll on hand. Whether you keep cash in an investment account or a line of credit or both, such a cushion gives you time to react to a crisis, whether it’s happening within your firm or externally, in the economy.

“However,” Franks warns, “keeping lots of cash in a non-interest-bearing account or a safe, low-interest account is not the best use of those funds. In my opinion, it’s much better to secure a larger line of credit and use your cash or take it out. If you keep a cash account, put it into an investment account to get higher earnings. But remember: In any liability lawsuit, your cash account could be subject to an immediate freeze by a judge as an asset, whereas a line of credit is never in such jeopardy.”

Another, slightly more conservative, opinion comes from Gene Marks, the well-known author, columnist and small business expert. Marks says that holding at least six months of operating cash on hand is a smart move. “This is not just to cover payroll—it includes operating cash that would sustain your business if no receivables were coming in,” Marks says. “And we’re talking about liquid assets, so it could be cash in a money market fund or a mutual fund.”

Marks says his conservative viewpoint was borne out by the last recession.

“A lot of companies learned from the downturn in 2010 – 2011 that if your money is tied up in inventory, equipment and property, it’s hard to put your hands on the cash you need when the bills come due.”

As for whether you should factor a portion of your receivables balance into the amount you set as a goal, Marks’ answer is “No.” He refers to support to the “quick ratio,” which measures a firm’s ability to meet its short-time liabilities by comparing the total amount of a firm’s cash and accounts receivable to the amount of current liabilities.

“Don’t forget to net your current accounts payable,” he advises. “If an economic downturn comes, it’s hard to rely on receivables to pay all the bills.” ■

4 KEYS TO TELECOMMUTING SUCCESS

Telecommuting doesn’t work for everyone—or for every A/E firm—but to ensure success, there are some basic guidelines that should be established. Here are four rules for working remotely, that any firm must consider.

1. Expect Availability

Team dynamics are part of the architecture and engineering industry. In addition to requiring your employees to be available, via phone and email, when working from home; you should also require that they be in the office one to two days per week.

2. Define Communication Protocol

Check with your IT folks about phone and email use from home offices. Standardize your firm’s preferred video conferencing tools, such as Skype, GoToMeetings, Hangout, etc. Consider using a group messaging application such as Slack.

3. Put It In Writing

Consult with an HR professional to develop a Remote Work Agreement or Telecommuting Policy. It should cover not only workspace requirements and attention to duties, but also a weekly schedule of which, or how many, days the employee will be working from home. It should be signed by the employee and manager.

4. Understand the Fine Print

Check with your lawyer and insurer about any liability protection your employees must have. Will Workers’ Compensation come into play if your employee is injured at home during work hours? Is a special homeowner’s insurance policy required for home office coverage? And if so, who’s going to pay for it? ●

ASK THE EXPERTS

QUESTION:

How do firms establish or reestablish criteria that a firm is comfortable with covering those staff who wish to work from home?

ANSWER:

Firm leadership who moved staff quickly to work from home and get the work done remotely will find they are unable to put the work at home “Genie in the bottle” once the COVID-19 crisis is over. Staff will not only expect their firms to embrace an emergency “Work from Home” policy that allows staff to continue to do their work from a desk located remotely. But many will simply assume they are able to work from home and will continue to do so.

The first step for a firm is to set up a policy or make staff aware of the policy already in place. Here is a policy one firm shared with PSMJ:

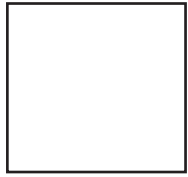
Work from home requests are reviewed and approved on a case by case basis and involve numerous factors including, but not limited to, training needs, management of employees, technology requirements, etc. Having this protocol is no guarantee of approval even if all technology specifications are met. Approval is at the discretion of the supervisor and human resources. Remote Work Requests are more likely to be approved if the following conditions are met:

1. Working remotely provides a benefit to the company and not only the employee
2. All deadlines are still met or exceeded
3. All client/employee/supervisor communication needs are still met or exceeded
4. Best practices are taken to ensure equal or greater productivity remotely
5. A dedicated workspace is provided remotely that mirrors the office workspace and minimizes distractions.
6. The following minimum hardware requirements are met:
 - a. Computer capable of VPN/RDP without interruption.
 - b. Monitors that match the number you have in office.
 - c. Mouse and keyboard
 - e. Headset for communication through Microsoft teams
 - f. Camera for videoconferencing
7. The following minimum software requirements are met:
 - a. Up-to-date version of Windows 10
 - b. Up-to-date anti-virus program
 - c. Microsoft Teams used for intraoffice communications
 - d. Scotland Yard is utilized to inform when you are available/out of office/etc.
8. The following internet speed requirements are met
 - a. Wired connection
 - b. 50Mb minimum download speed
 - c. 20Mb minimum upload speed

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PUBLISHER / Frank A. Stasiowski, FAIA
EDITOR / Cathy Cecere
GRAPHICS/LAYOUT / Marc Boggs
PUBLISHED BY / PSMJ Resources, Inc.
10 Midland Avenue, Newton, MA 02458
TEL / 617.965.0055
EMAIL / customerservice@psmj.com

PSMJ - Professional Services Management Journal is published monthly by PSMJ Resources, Inc.
Annual Membership Price: \$497
Single Issue Price: \$59

VOLUME 47 | ISSUE 4

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