

# Remote Leadership

## Challenges and Approaches

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# Overview



The Before-times

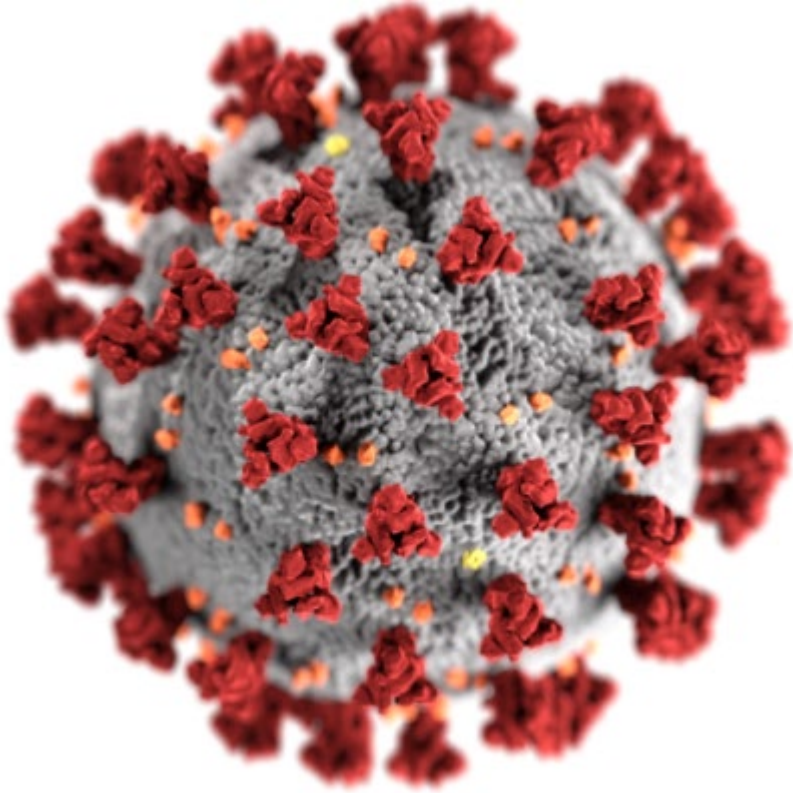


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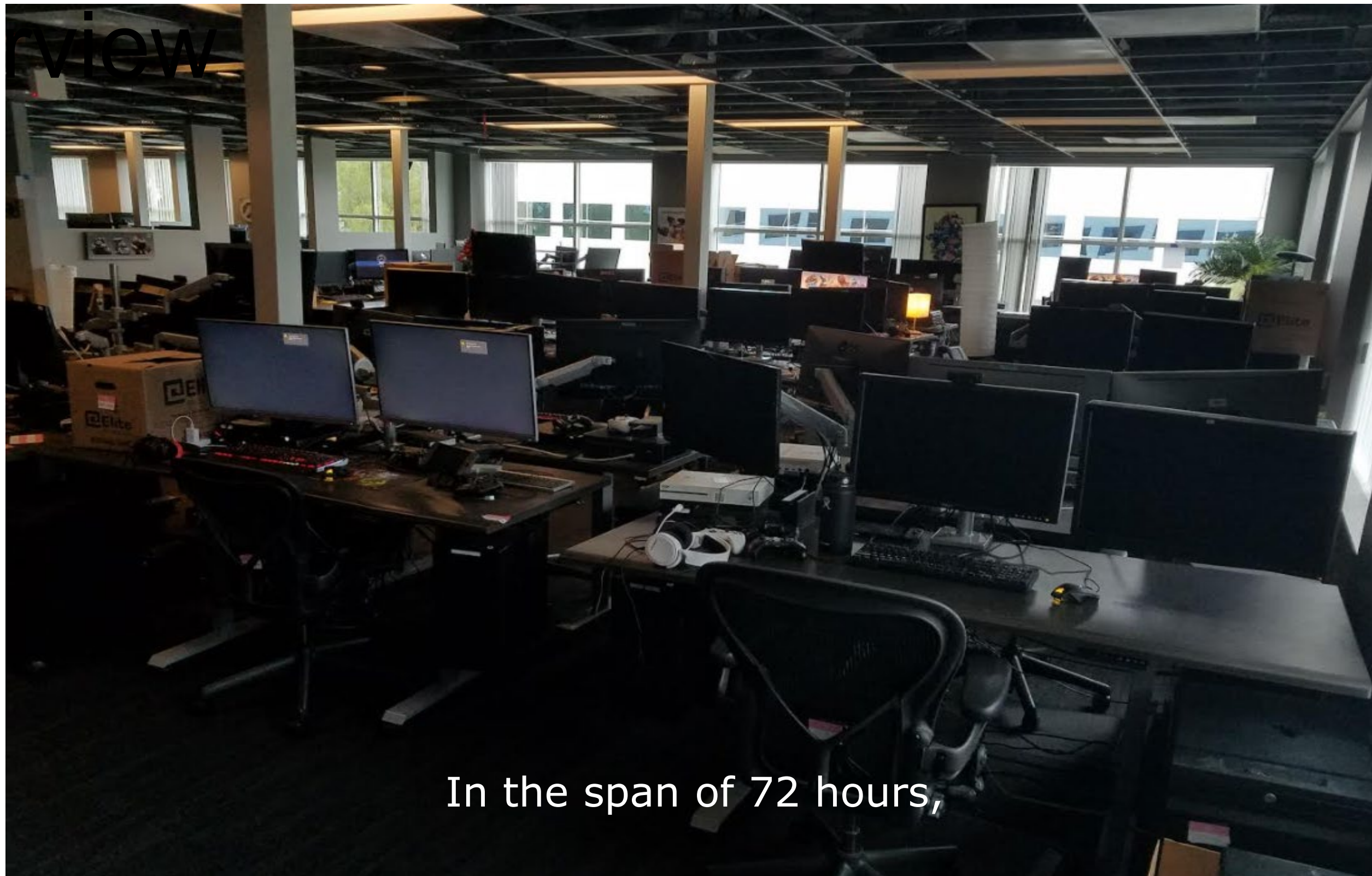


# Overview

MARCH 2020						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2					7
8	9					14
15	16					21
22	23					28
29	30					

And then...

# Overview



In the span of 72 hours,



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# Overview



...we were here.



# Overview



...we were here.

# Overview

- Part I: Challenges (and how we are adapting)
- Part II: Benefits (how can we leverage it)
- Part III: Recommendations for managers
- Part IV: The road ahead



# I: Challenges

- Team communication
- Social cohesion
- Work/Life balance
- Physical challenges



*"I always thought I was an introvert until two weeks ago."* April 2020 1-on-1



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# I: Challenges

- Team communication
  - Social cohesion
  - Work/Life balance
  - Physical challenges
- Shift to 100% intentional communication
    - No casual, before or after-meeting chat
    - No ambient communication or informal learning
    - Splintered communication
      - Zoom, Webex, Slack calls and Groups, Email, Discord chat - all became (possibly overlapping) communication tools – and opportunities to lose information
  - Very limited non-verbal cues

*"I miss over-hearing things about design two desks away."* May 2020 1-on-1



# I: Challenges

- Team communication
  - Social cohesion
  - Work/Life balance
  - Physical challenges
- Maintaining culture – What makes your team special if the work experience feels like any other Zoom call?
  - Hiring and Onboarding remotely – How can new hires integrate socially and learn the culture?
  - Turnover – Even experienced team members can lose their social connection and functional work-network over a prolonged time

*"I feel like I don't know half the team now."* Nov 2020 1-on-1



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# I: Challenges

- Team communication
  - Social cohesion
  - **Work/Life balance**
  - Physical challenges
- Home and work are now the same place
    - Feels like you never really leave work
  - The workday becomes unstructured outside of required meetings
  - Task/context switching is instantaneous
  - There can be a tendency to work longer hours

*"I can see my workstation from every spot in my apartment."* April 2020 1-on-1



# I: Challenges

- Team communication
- Social cohesion
- Work/Life balance
- Physical challenges
  - Home office ergonomics
  - Child-care/home school
  - IT issues
  - HR: Remote labor laws and taxation
  - Offboarding
  - Less office-related physical activity
  - Eye strain from longer screen time
  - Depression

*"This is hardest on [my spouse]."* May 2020 1-on-1

# I: Addressing the issues



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# I: Addressing the issues

- Team communication
  - Social cohesion
  - Work/Life balance
  - Physical challenges
- Keep or increase team standups, updates
  - 1x1s are your most powerful tools to help
  - Control “splintered” communication by bringing awareness of the issue; consolidate channels
  - Team-room communication can be mimicked to a degree with all-day-active Zoom-rooms
  - Use of collaboration tools like Miro help align large and small groups

*“The Zoom-room has been great. People unmute to ask questions and the whole group gets to hear the answer.”* Feb 2021 1-on-1



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# I: Addressing the issues

- Team communication
  - Social cohesion
  - Work/Life balance
  - Physical challenges
- Maintaining culture – Keep up or increase public employee recognitions
  - Onboarding remotely – Ensure that new hires have opportunities to interact with team leadership in small settings; use new hire feedback to improve onboarding continuously
  - Turnover – Make sure new hires and the team have many opportunities to interact informally – coffee break meet-and-greets
  - Play the game as a team

*"The Zoom-rooms have made a big difference."* Nov 2020 1-on-1



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# I: Addressing the issues

- Team communication
  - Social cohesion
  - **Work/Life balance**
  - Physical challenges
- Switch the environment (change a mousepad, switch systems, change the lighting)
  - Encourage others to create a schedule for themselves that includes lots of breaks and a stop time. Revisit this in 1x1s.
  - Task/context switching – wherever possible, build in moments to pause/breaks

*"I wear shoes during the work-day."*

*"In the morning and evening, I take a walk that's the same time as my normal commute."* 2020 1x1s



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# I: Addressing the issues

- Team communication
- Social cohesion
- Work/Life balance
- Physical challenges
  - Home office ergonomics
    - Offer subsidized IT, desk, chair purchases
  - Child-care/home school
    - Offer limited paid leave for special circumstances
  - IT issues
    - Reframe IT to be a hybrid service
  - Depression: Listen. Be an advocate for healthy life-practices; ask about these in 1x1s

*"It [wfh] took a while to get used to, now it feels natural."* May 2020 1-on-1



# Overview

- Part I: What's missing
- Part II: What's gained
- Part III: The road ahead

# II: Benefits

- Schedule flexibility
- Focus time
- Happiness
- Communication
- Workforce

*"I love it."*  
March 2021 1x1



# II: Benefits

- Schedule flexibility
  - For people who can work asynchronously, they can schedule their work and personal time.
- Focus time
- Happiness
- Communication
- Workforce

*"This feels natural now."*  
March 2021 1x1



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# II: Benefits

- Schedule flexibility
  - Focus time
  - Happiness
  - Communication
  - Workforce
- Multiple people reported the ability to have more quiet time to focus deeply on tasks. This is an obvious difference from the office and the far greater chance of having continual intended and non-intended interruptions.

*"I feel more efficient. I have less distractions. It feels like the team is getting more work done too."*

April 2020 1x1



# II: Benefits

- Schedule flexibility
  - Focus time
  - Happiness
  - Communication
  - Workforce
- Multiple people reported their overall quality of life has improved. More family-time, less commute time were the most frequent call-outs.

*"Covid is bad, but I'm also kind of grateful. I would have missed so many moments of my new daughter's life."*

Sept 2020 1x1



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# II: Benefits

- Schedule flexibility
  - Focus time
  - Happiness
  - Communication
  - Workforce
- It's easier via remote communication tools to get a small or large group looking at a screen and discussing it.
  - A 2-minute sync on an issue with a small group is now possible.
  - All of these events are possible with remote tools and a larger team room is not distracted by conversations.
  - Video calls can support meaningful 1x1s.

*"...made my world very easy, people are available to add when needed  
- great for problem solving." - May 2020 1x1*

# II: Benefits

- Schedule flexibility
  - Focus time
  - Happiness
  - Communication
  - Workforce
- Companies embracing permanent work from home have a recruiting and retention advantage.
  - Enabling a remote workforce is a powerful tool for aiding workplace diversity - particularly gender diversity – more women would prefer to make the home their primary work location.

*"I am so happy – and my family is so happy - to be closer to our larger family and friends."* - Dec 2020 1x1



# III: Recommendations for managers

- Keep up, or increase 1x1s
- ID individuals who may need more frequent check-ins
- Use your camera! Encourage peers to do the same
- Encourage social video calls

# III: Recommendations for managers

- Be super-explicit in communication.
  - Nuance suffers in video calls. Ask follow-ups like: “What questions do you have?” or “What’s the biggest concern you have?” As opposed to “Do you have any questions?”
- Repeat back action items/key takeaways

# III: Recommendations for managers

- Be aware of your video and audio presence
  - ***stay focused*** – while in front of the biggest distraction machine in human history
- Mute pop-ups
- Stay in touch with leads and production to ID people who may be falling behind schedule



# III: Recommendations for managers

- Use your vacation time
- Develop/Build social connections outside work
- Battling Video-Call Fatigue
  - Video meetings can be more draining – give yourself breaks
  - Use a blue light filter for your screen or glasses
  - Look away from the screen and focus on middle-distance views every 30 minutes for 1 minute or so

# IV: The road ahead

- Return to office 100%
- Hybrid in-house
- Hybrid remote
- Full remote

# IV: The road ahead

- Hybrid-model challenges:
  - Communication challenge
  - Inclusion bias
  - IT challenges



# IV: The road ahead

- Hybrid-model challenges:
  - Communication challenge
  - IT challenges
  - Inclusion bias

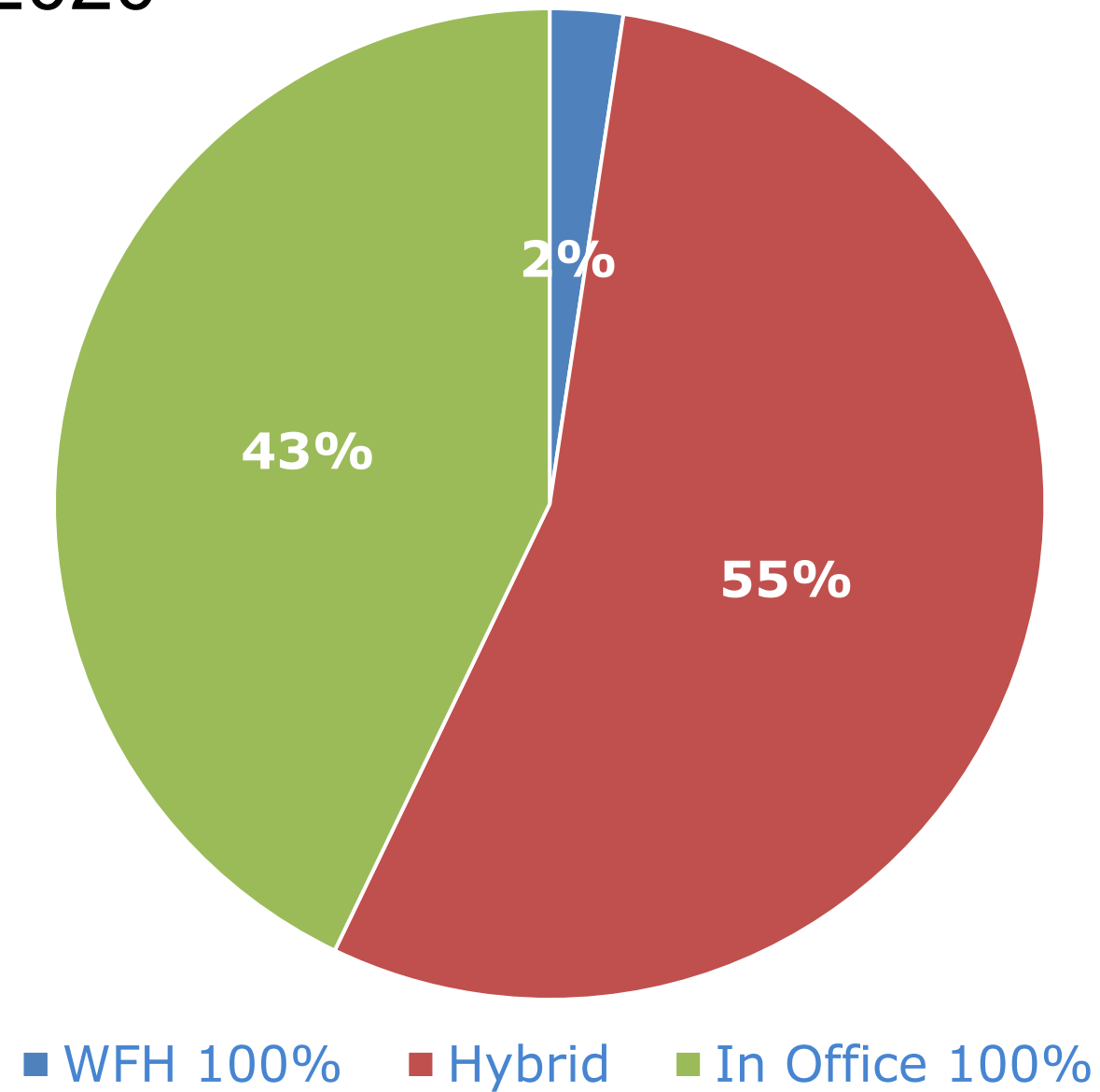
- Hybrid-model advantages:
  - Recruiting and retention
  - Increased diversity
  - Happiness

# IV: The road ahead

- Hybrid model approaches:
  - Be aware of “inclusion bias” – Gartner survey: 64% of managers believe on-site workers are higher performers than remote workers; data from 2019 and 2020 shows the opposite – remote workers are 5% *more* productive.
  - Change communication culture – make sure remote workers are heard.

# IV: Employee preference

April 2020



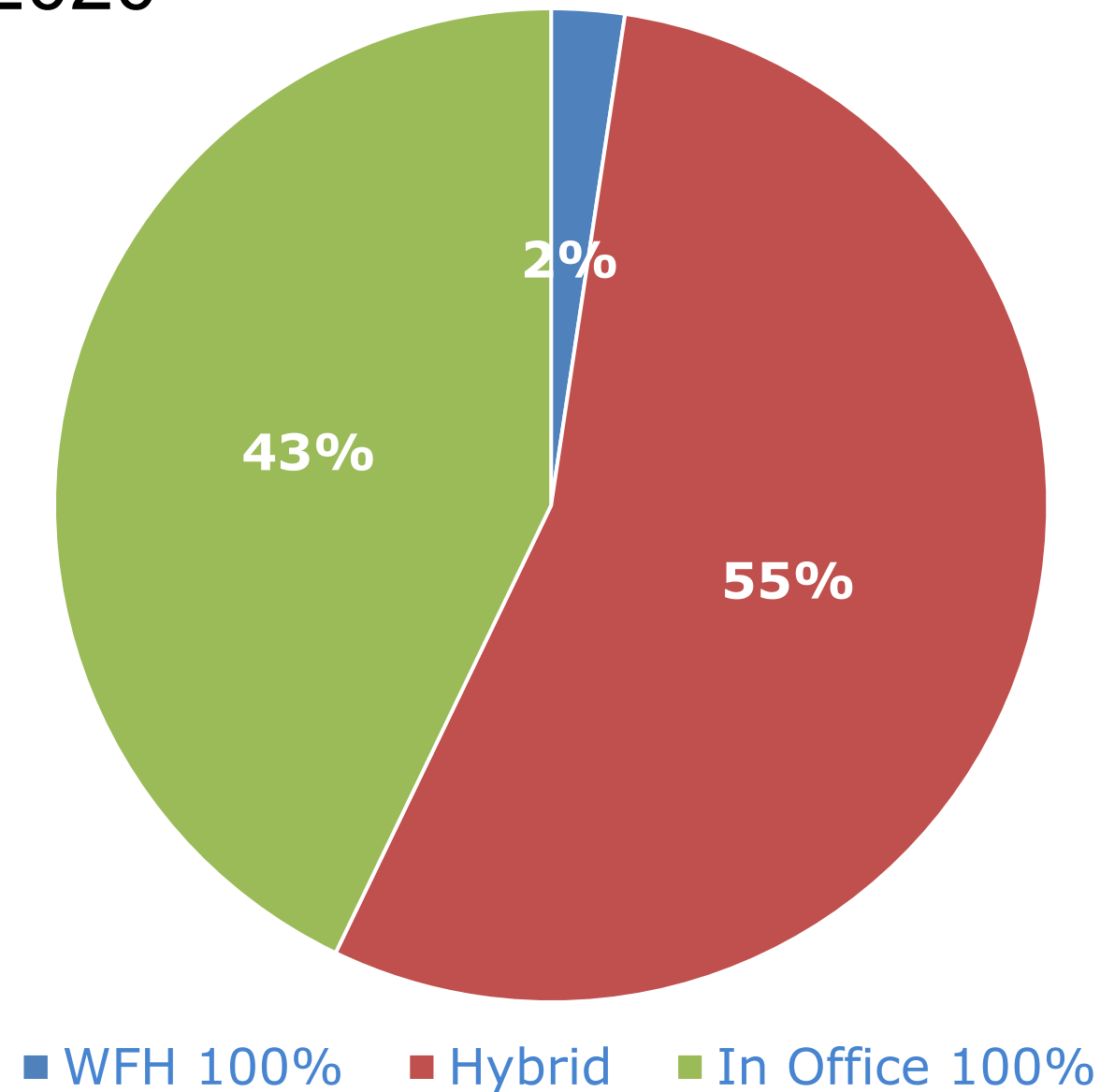
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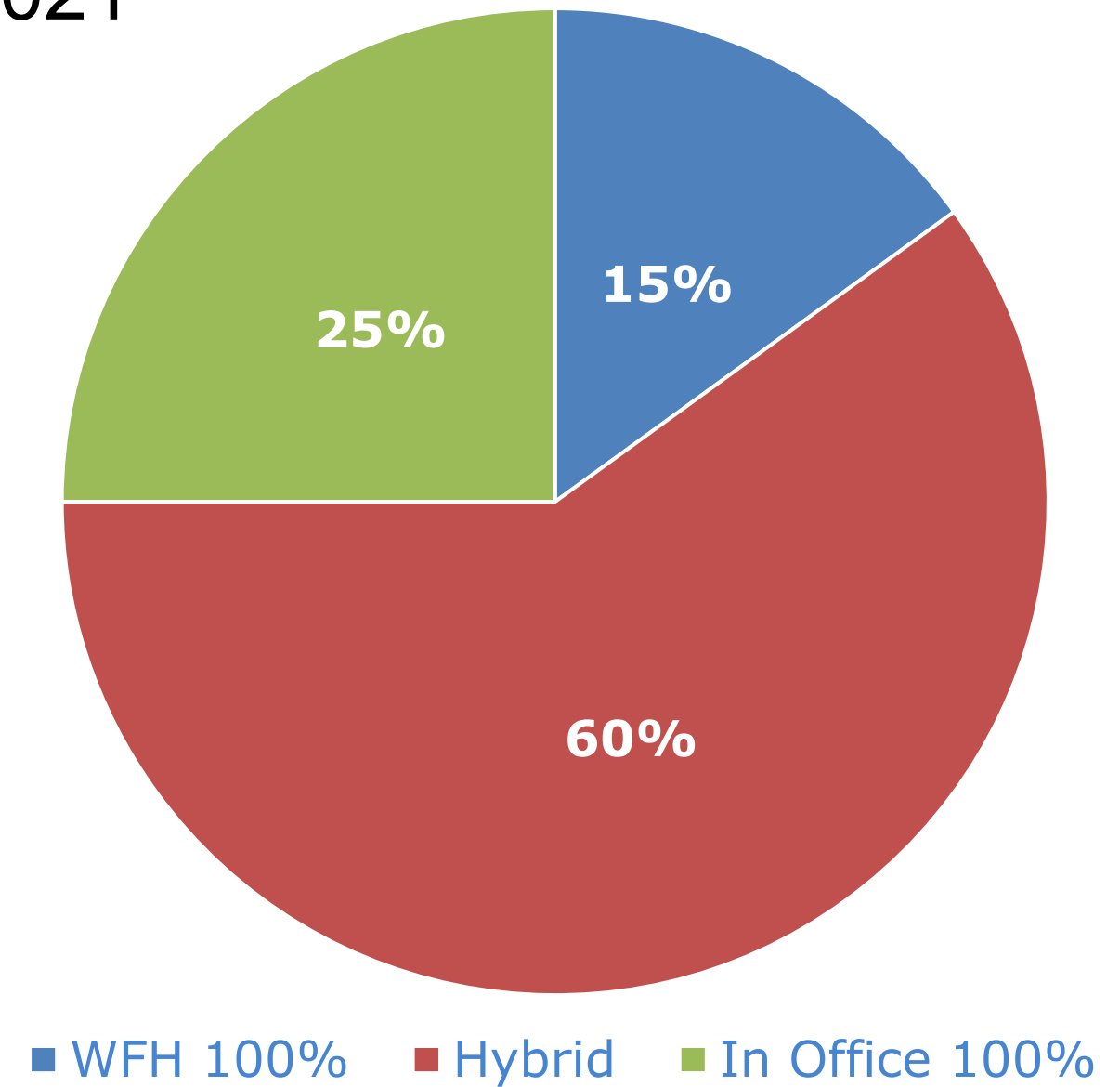


# IV: Employee preference

April 2020



April 2021



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# Thank you!