



COVID in the Biopharma Workplace

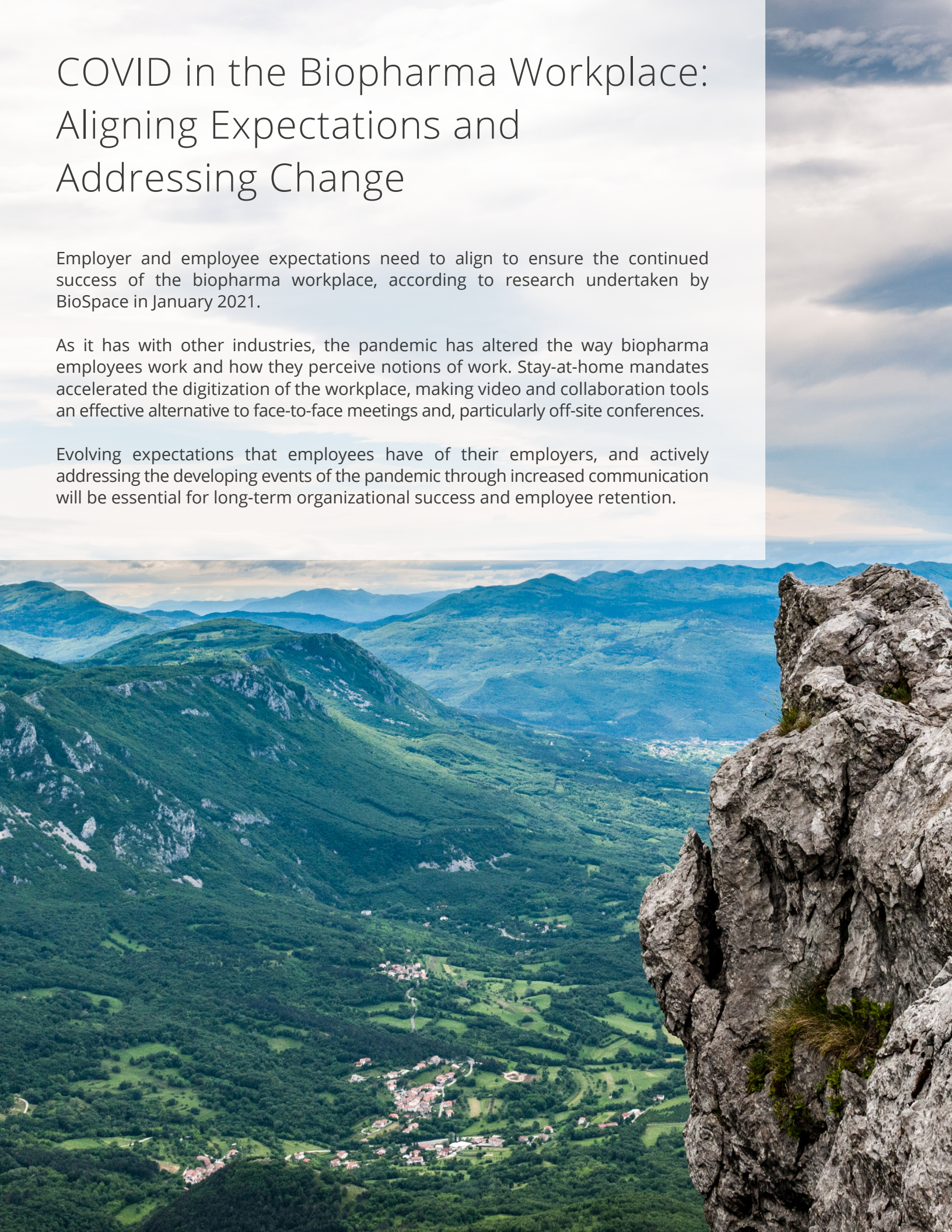


COVID in the Biopharma Workplace: Aligning Expectations and Addressing Change

Employer and employee expectations need to align to ensure the continued success of the biopharma workplace, according to research undertaken by BioSpace in January 2021.

As it has with other industries, the pandemic has altered the way biopharma employees work and how they perceive notions of work. Stay-at-home mandates accelerated the digitization of the workplace, making video and collaboration tools an effective alternative to face-to-face meetings and, particularly off-site conferences.

Evolving expectations that employees have of their employers, and actively addressing the developing events of the pandemic through increased communication will be essential for long-term organizational success and employee retention.



Ambiguity Defines the New Normal

A lot of uncertainty remains, as the pandemic continues to unfold and people try to envision the new normal.

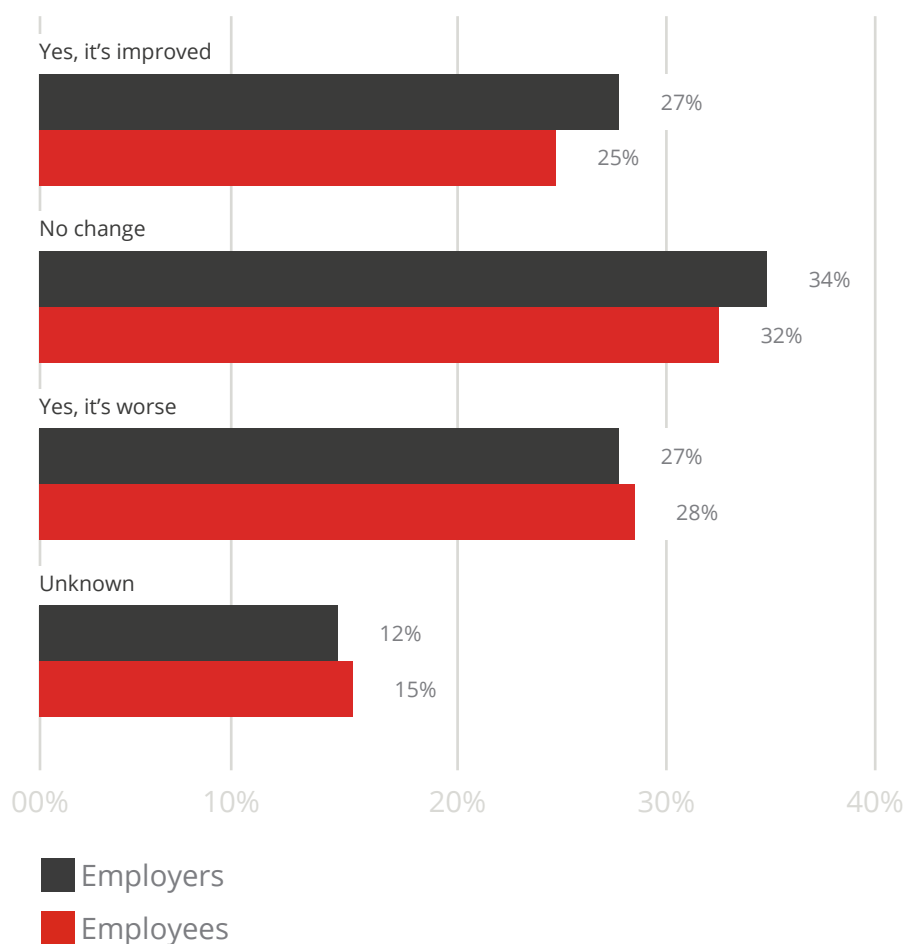
With so many people working from home, perceptions of the effects on corporate culture are mixed. Close to one-third of industry professionals say there's been no change, while overall, 25% say the culture improved and 28% say the culture is worse than before the pandemic began.

HR and talent acquisition professionals were similarly divided on the point as well. What can employers do to maintain employee engagement and provide a stronger sense of stability? Increase their communication.

Transparency is essential to maintain trust with employees as the pandemic requires pivoting and constant change to address new needs and reacting to new situations. While the lack of stability both in the industry and broader terms have caused many to feel uncertain, employers should increase regular communication with their employees to provide a strong sense of leadership, belonging and engagement.

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Do you feel the company culture at your organization has changed due to the pandemic?



Virtual Events Reinforce Corporate Cultures

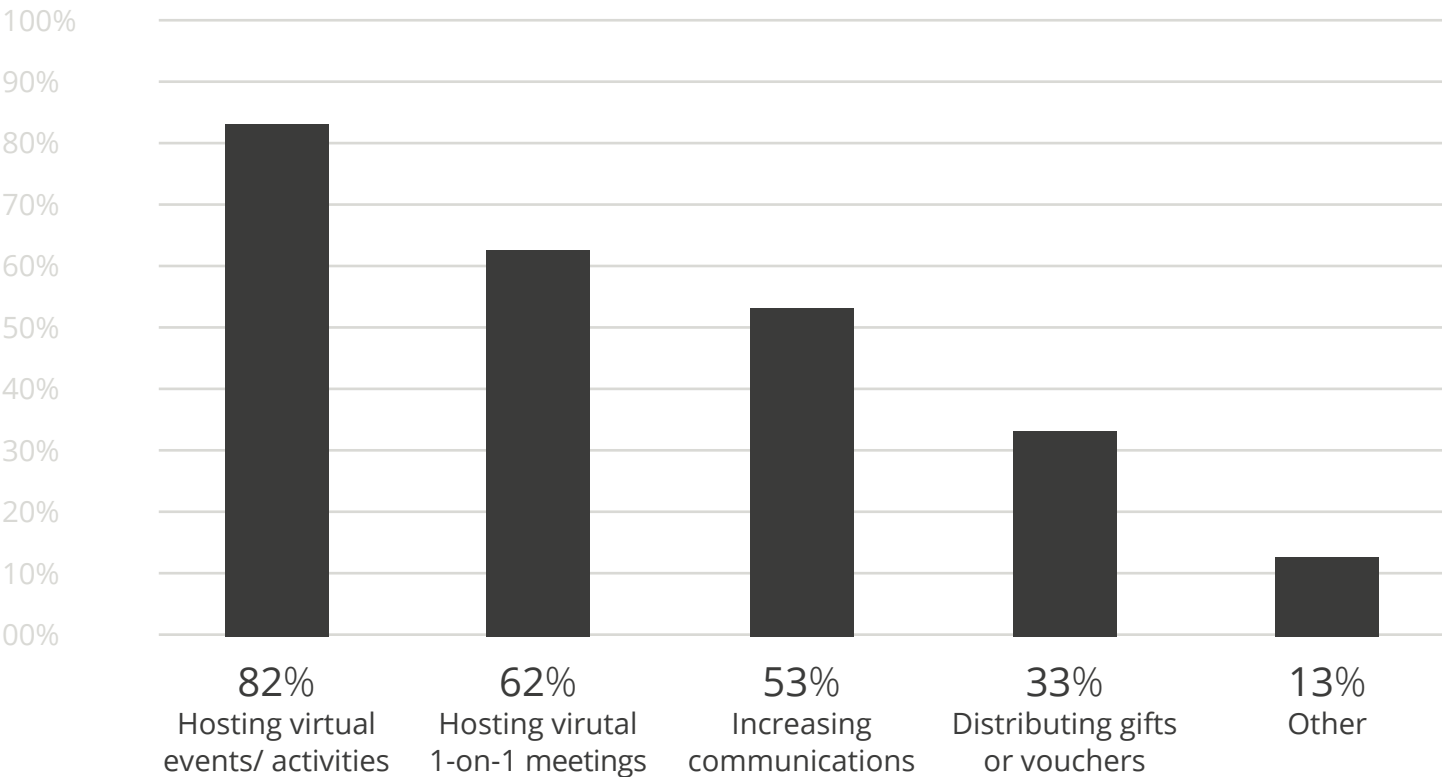
Employers’ neutral-to-positive view of the culture may be because companies worked diligently to counteract cultural erosion during the pandemic. The most frequent strategies to reinforce and improve the corporate culture were:

- Hosting virtual events/activities (82%)
- Hosting virtual one-on-one meetings (62%)
- Increasing communications (53%)
- Distributing gifts or vouchers (33%)
- Other (13%)

This was a notable shift from the previous year, when companies grappled with ways to collaborate virtually, without in-person interactions, in a work-from-home environment.

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What have you done to maintain or improve your company culture during the pandemic?



Working from Home: Here to Stay?

Over the last year, 49% of biopharma employees worked from home. How do they feel about remote working now?

50% of respondents now prefer that arrangement. Only 29% would prefer to return to the office. Digitization has proven that people can work effectively remotely. Consequently, some companies may rethink their real estate needs as well as their approach to staff development, based upon who truly needs – and wants – to be in the office.

Once the pandemic ends, companies would be smart to continue offering a work-from-home option and ensure that they are providing their employees with effective tools to optimize productivity for remote working long-term. Only 62% provided the tools needed to help employees work effectively from home, indicating businesses have more they could be doing.

Among respondents:

- 40% consider working remotely very or extremely important
- 30% consider it moderately important
- 15% will consider a new job only if they can work from home permanently

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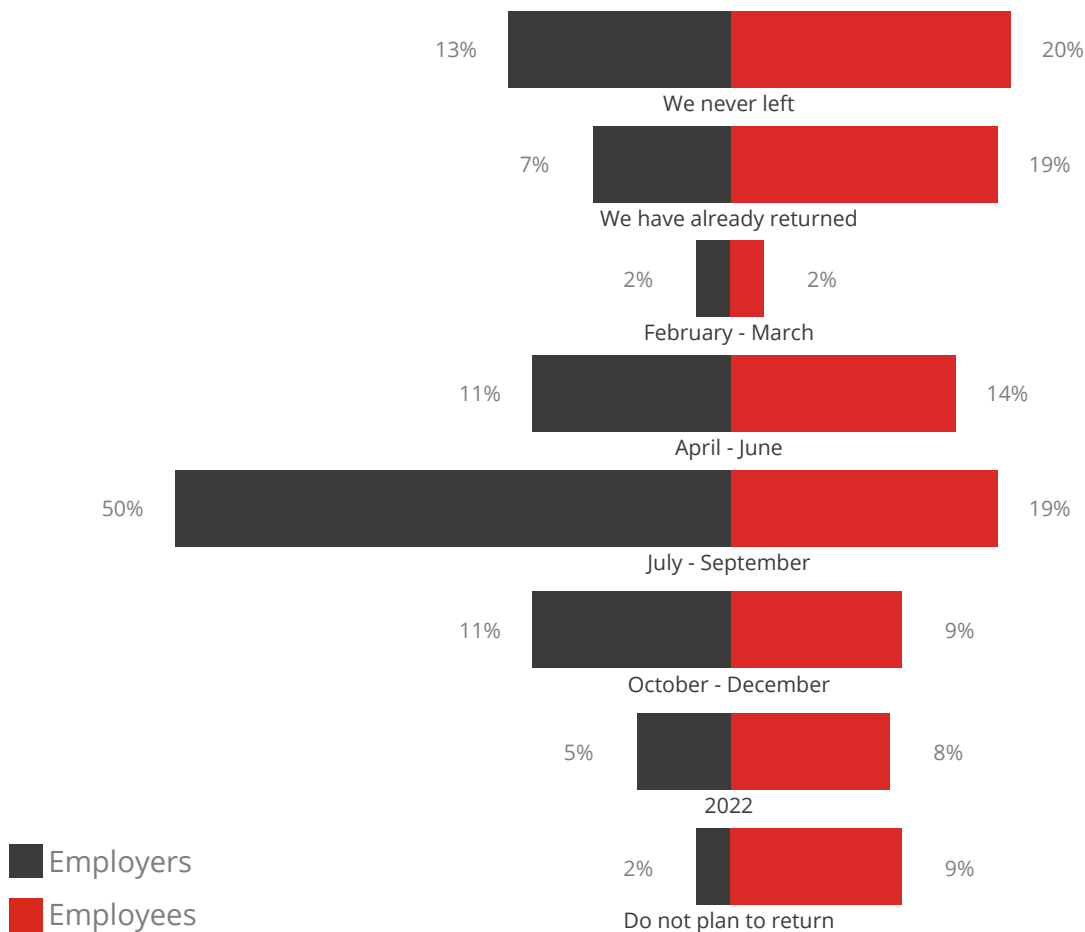
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Summer in the Office... Maybe

Returning to the office soon isn't considered likely. Although 20% of industry professionals indicated they never left the office and 19% have already returned, 9% don't expect to ever return to the office. Another 8% don't expect to return until 2022.

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When do you anticipate your entire workforce to return to the office?



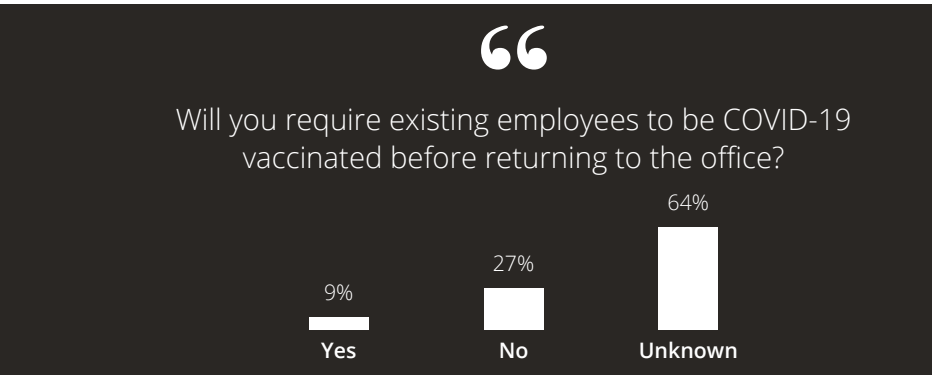
HR professionals are more optimistic. As more and more people are vaccinated against COVID-19, 50% of HR professionals predict the entire workforce will return to the office sometime between July and September 2021.

Those predictions speak to when the severity of the pandemic might lessen. With new variants emerging and mutating, though, any prognostication is dicey. Last year, after all, more than half the respondents to the BioSpace survey believed the pandemic would end by late June. Only 6% thought it would continue into 2021.

Vaccination May Not Affect Office Returns

Businesses are still deciding whether to require vaccination before allowing employees to return to the workplace. They're weighing the safety of their employees against the benefits of vaccination in the face of new, more resistant SARS-CoV-2 variants.

For example, when employers were asked if they would require existing employees to be vaccinated before they return to the office, 9% indicated they would, 27% indicated they would not. 64% indicated that hadn't been determined.



Regardless the decision on vaccination, most companies are taking COVID-19 safety seriously, and their employees realize that. Overall, nearly 75% of biopharma employees say their employers have created a safe COVID-19 environment and handled the situation effectively.

Perks & Benefits

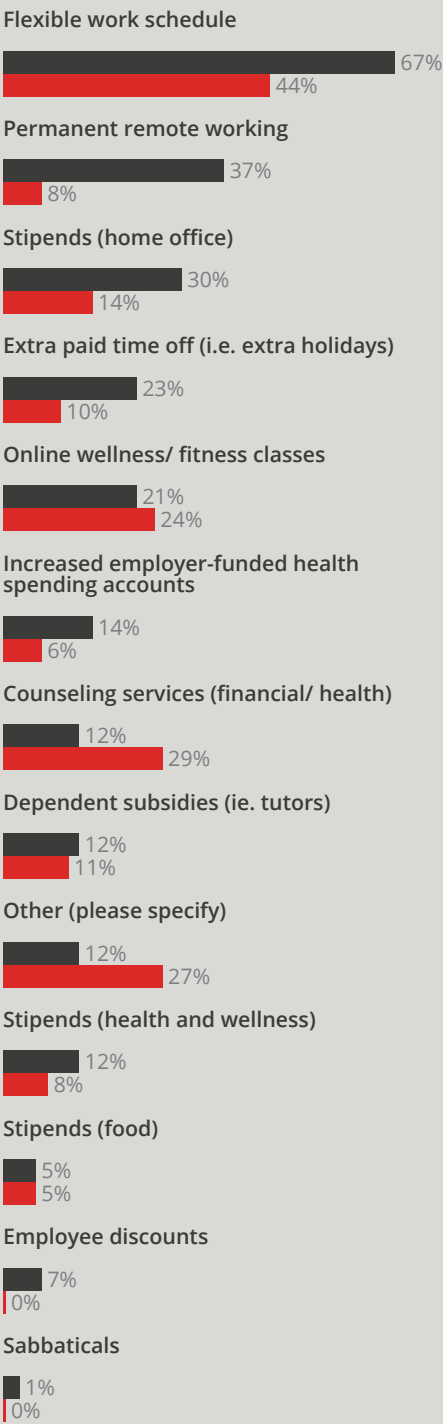
That said, only 52% say their employers adjusted benefits to meet employees' needs during the pandemic. Employers may want to consider adjustments to meet changes in needs, particularly for at-home employees.

According to employers, they have already started to offer new job perks in order to attract and retain talent, with 67% adding a flexible work schedule. However, employees aren't exactly on the same page, as many aren't aware of the new benefits offered.

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Employer offered perks
vs
Employee expected perks

Employers Employees



Paid Time Off: Not an Issue

Disruptions came in the form of company priorities that often shifted, projects that were paused and work locations that suddenly were remote. Yet, layoffs and furloughs were unusual and paid time off was rarely affected. Specifically:

- 64% reported no changes
- 15% were unable to use all their time off and lost it
- 13% were forced to take paid time off
- 8% were provided additional paid time off



64% of respondents reported
no changes in PTO



15% of respondents were unable
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13% of respondents were
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8% of respondents were provided
additional paid time off



The Pandemic Enhanced Biopharma's Status

The industry is currently enjoying buoyed public perception due to its fast response to the pandemic.

From the biopharma industry's position as least favorable among all industries in terms of public perception in 2019, it could only improve.

As the industry worked round the clock to develop vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics for a novel virus, 63% of the industry professionals (both employers and employees) surveyed believe public perception of the industry has improved. This is a positive change for biopharma employees, who can enjoy an increased sense of pride in their work, employer and industry as a whole.

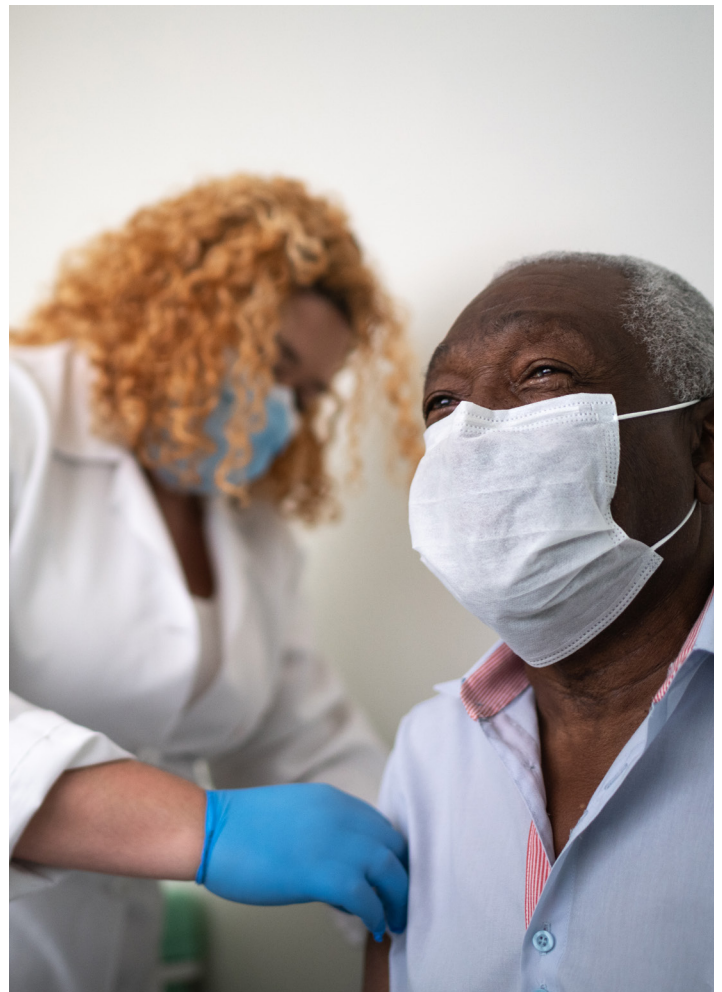
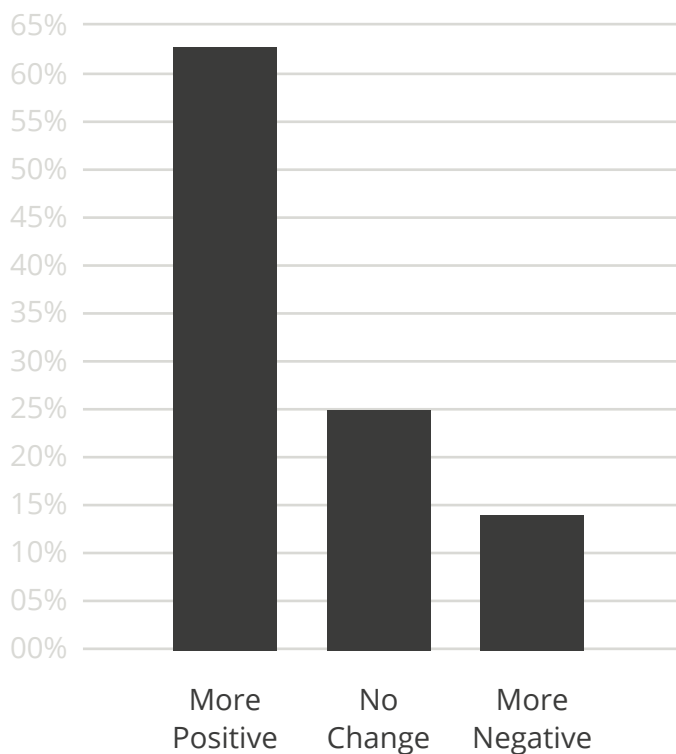
Public perception will undoubtedly be influenced by continued challenges and successes as the pandemic progresses.

Building on that perception, however, requires not only continued advance, but establishing an honest, transparent dialog on some of the more confounding – and typically obscured – debates occurring in the industry.

Employers should continue to communicate regularly and effectively about the impact their work is making.

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How do you feel the pandemic has changed public perception of the biopharma industry?



Looking into 2021 and Beyond

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving, as vaccines roll out, new variants are discovered and lock-down regulations fluctuate. Biopharma companies have become adept at surmounting those changes and, in the process, created a new and effective way for many to work.

How long the need will continue is unknown, but the industry has the potential to continue to attract and retain the best and brightest, even when working remotely.

Amidst the ambiguity, employers should focus on transparency, communication and effective remote working culture to maintain and improve employee morale and retention.

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