

Want hybrid working? Then kiss goodbye to that promotion

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- 68% of employers will base promotions on physical presence in the office
- But 73% of workers feel more productive at home

Employees that want to work on a hybrid basis could be putting their chance of a promotion at risk as increasing numbers of employers call for in office returns. That's according to new research from specialist recruiter, Robert Half.

The data – gathered as part of the firm's 2025 Salary Guide – revealed that more than two thirds (68%) of employers in the UK felt that an individual's physical presence in the office significantly impacts their chance of a promotion. And this sentiment is not just being felt in the UK, similar trends are being noted across Europe, including Germany (69%), the Netherlands (68%), and France (62%).

However, with the research also showing that the majority (73%) of employees believe they are more productive when operating in a hybrid set up, there could be a productivity challenge facing those firms pushing ahead with in-office strategies. Business leaders also indicated that they are currently finding it difficult to give staff a better work-life balance while also boosting employee productivity, signalling a mismatch between worker and employer sentiment.

As Chris Lawton, Vice President of Permanent Placements UK & Ireland at Robert Half explains, a potential miscommunication could put productivity, retention and recruitment at risk:

"Employers are clearly placing growing value on staff being physically present in the office and our data suggests that career progression could be hindered for those who wish to continue with hybrid set ups. However, we can't overlook the fact that the power is still very much in the hands of the workforce. Skills shortages are rife, and firms are struggling to fill highly skilled roles in core STEM remits. If workers are made to feel that they are unable to progress because they aren't in the office every day, they will simply move on. And more often than not, it will be the best performers or most in-demand professionals who will jump ship first – something that employers today simply can't afford. We also can't overlook the fact that the nature of an individual's job will impact productivity both at home and in the office. Some tasks are far more effective in a different environment and this needs to be factored in when choosing where staff should work from. And such working arrangements should be purposeful when it comes to building company culture, managing multi-generational workforces and bringing early-in-career talent who might need more touchpoints with experienced colleagues than others, for example. All in all it undoubtedly is a balancing act, yet when done well it can yield great results.

"Nonetheless, aside from the retention and recruitment issues that could be created by sticking to the corporate sentiment of remote working being at the expense of career progression, the productivity conundrum is also set to be exacerbated. The UK is facing a fundamental productivity crisis at the moment, but employers and employees are seemingly at odds around what an optimal set up looks like. If people are more productive at home, they shouldn't have limited career progression opportunities, inadvertently or not."

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