



Roundtable Member, **Martin Bélanger**, Director of Public Alerting at Pelmorex Corp., explores the future of work and shares his tips for advocating for flexibility in a post-COVID world.

Mentoring **MATTERS**



Throughout the pandemic, I have been fully working from home. This setup has worked really well for me and other members of our team for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, senior leadership and my boss are socializing the idea of returning to the office and would prefer to have everyone back in the office between Monday and Friday. This isn't sitting well with me and I'd like to talk to them about it. Any advice on how to approach the conversation without making it a career limiting move?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our personal lives and how organizations conduct business. It led to many organizations offering a more flexible work arrangement, including having employees work from home to minimize exposure to the coronavirus and to ensure the health and wellbeing of employees and their families. As time goes on, it is not surprising to see companies evaluating whether they should maintain a certain level of flexibility as part of this new normal or require employees to come back to the office.

Here are some steps for building your case for flexibility to work from home.

1. Listen to and Acknowledge Management's Position

Start with identifying what makes you feel uneasy about the idea of returning to the office. When having the conversation with your boss, ask about the reasons motivating the senior leadership team to bring everyone back to the office. It is always good to remember that leaders may want employees to go back to the office because this is what they know best, what they have been used to.

2. Show Accountability

Share how you feel about being asked to come back to the office and how you would benefit from continuing to have a flexible work from home policy. Highlight how you and the team managed to be just as productive — if not more — while working from home and how you delivered results. Ask whether the leadership team would consider extending flexible work arrangements given that you and the team demonstrated the ability to work successfully from home.

3. Build Your Case

If your boss is still not warm to the idea of keeping a flexible work arrangement, you may want to further share that you care deeply about your team and the organization. Success comes when employees are healthy and deeply engaged. Adopting an approach where employees are not rushed back to the office would provide each team member the flexibility they need to balance work and family. It would also give the organization time to see whether there might be an increase in COVID-19 cases as health authorities gradually lift restrictions and more people return to the office. You can further support your position by mentioning the decision by several major organizations such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Shopify and Twitter to continue offering employees the ability to work from home in the foreseeable future.

4. Get Consensus

Lastly, consider gathering support from peers and other leaders in the organization in keeping a flexible workplace policy that allows employees to continue working from home. One silver lining of this pandemic is that it demonstrated our ability to be resilient and to find innovative ways to adapt to this new reality.



Martin Bélanger is the Director of Public Alerting at Pelmorex Corp. He leads the strategic direction of public alerting for Pelmorex and oversees the operation of the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination (NAAD) System, the central technical infrastructure of Alert Ready, Canada's emergency alert system.

Martin manages the relationships with all federal, provincial and territorial governments across Canada whose roles in public alerting are integral to the safety of Canadians. He appeared twice before the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence in 2018 to provide information on Canada's national alerting system.

Martin is fully bilingual in English and French and is proud to play such an integral part in public safety in Canada. When Martin is not at the office, he can be found spending time with family, jogging in his neighbourhood, skiing or relaxing on a beach in Costa Rica.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.