



## What Prospective Employees Really Want In A Post-COVID Era

COVID-19's grip on the world has proved to be enduring. While there was a glimpse of normalcy returning in the late spring and early summer of 2021, the constant mutating of the virus has kept us from truly living as we did before the pandemic. The Delta, Delta+, and now Lambda variants have proven that we are not out of the woods and instead, are entering a new phase of living with this virus for at least the foreseeable future. However, what happens if and when we do “go back to normal”? Since so much of our way of life had to be adapted, halted, or altered for well over a year, it is easy to understand why our “normal” may be different than it was pre-pandemic. With these major changes in our way of living and working, we began to see significant shifts in where people wanted to live. During 2020, [moving wasn't really hampered by the pandemic](#), and while some people chose to move home with family or changed one city for another during that formidable year, the majority left cities in favor of suburban or more rural areas. The reason for this was that people wanted more space both inside and outside of their homes while seeking a lower cost of living. Remote work opened up a whole new world of possibilities for millions of people and as it proved to endure, more employees began looking at their lives through a shifted paradigm, one in which they could work from anywhere.

Initially remote work had some major headaches and curveballs for organizations and employees alike who had never relied on Zoom to conduct business before. However, as with all things, time makes things familiar and as remote work became comfortable and for the most part effective, it proved itself to be enduring. So much so in fact that more than half of employees are still remote midway through 2021, with an estimated [two out of every five employees](#) expected to be remote at the end of 2021. What this means is that remote work for many companies, is just one of the ways that we will likely see COVID-19's impact endure for the coming years. This is likely to due to the fact that remote work has many benefits for companies. By having employees working remotely, firms need less office space and the office space they do require, may not need to be in a city with high overhead costs if they have a substantial percentage of remote employees. The pandemic made many companies realize that for some or all roles, in-person work wasn't necessary,

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and as a result, we have seen firms making significant changes to their remote work policies, with [many big name firms](#) going permanently and fully remote. Add to that many companies downsized their offices and/or moved their [locations](#) during the pandemic, especially companies in California and New York who sought lower overhead costs while also witnessing their workforce leave those states as well for the same reasons. So, what does this all mean for companies' recruiting and retention efforts?

Recruiters know that an increase in remote jobs also means more competition for the same talent. Being able to work from anywhere means that top talent can openly vie for better offers from other companies' in other states without having to weigh the requirement of moving for the job. It also brings up the question of companies potentially being able to save on [payroll costs](#) by being able to hire qualified candidates who reside in locations with lower costs of living. With remote work finding itself to be a fixture in our way of working, it may bring up questions about employee preference. We know remote work has proven useful for many companies in terms of lowering overhead costs but do employees actually prefer it to being in-office? For recruiters and companies looking to make competitive offers to top talent, is remote really the best choice? To answer this question and others related to how the pandemic influenced employee attitudes on moving and work, northAmerican Van Lines® and Corporate Mobility Today conducted a survey of 477 employees across varying seniority levels and industries.

## Do Employees Want to Remote Roles?

According to our findings, for Director-level and below, fully remote roles came in first as the most desirable with 57.2% of respondents who were director-level or below indicating a strong preference for fully remote jobs. A close second were roles that required a mixture of in-person and remote work. Interestingly, for senior & VP titles, there was a preference shift, with 61.5% of senior respondents wanting a mix of in-person and remote working. The difference here could be related to generational differences with senior positions being more likely filled by people with a longer history of working in-office. It could also be that those charged with managing more people may feel more inclined to have at least some in-office facetime. Regardless of the difference between these cohorts, the numbers don't lie, some or all remote roles are strongly preferred over full-time in-person. From a recruitment perspective, these findings suggest that to be considered competitive in making offers for Director roles and below, fully remote work is the ideal and some mixture of in-person and remote would be a close second. For those recruiting more senior roles, the goal should be a mixture of in-person and remote to be the most competitive.

To read about all of our findings, [download](#) our whitepaper entitled, "Relocation and Delocation in the Post-COVID Era".



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## Does a Remote Role Automatically Make an Offer Competitive?

Not so fast. It may be easy to assume that with a fair compensation package and remote offerings that your firm would be viewed as competitive. However, for reasons discussed above, competition is getting stronger as the labor market flattens. Meanwhile, remote work is no longer a major differentiating factor in a landscape in which more than half of employees are still working remotely. That being said, there is no denying the findings and it will be interesting to see how those firms who are pushing full-time in-person work for all roles will fair in terms of recruitment and retention. So, while remote offerings are attractive and important, they are not uncommon enough to garner an automatic win from a top tier candidate.

## What Can My Company Offer to be Truly Competitive?

Sometimes the most competitive offers are those that include an “outside of the box” component. As we mentioned earlier, 2020 saw many urban dwelling individuals and families alike, leaving expensive and densely populated cities for more rural or suburban locations. While some of these moves were temporary and done to just “ride out” the pandemic, many were for the long-term as more employees’ began to get word that remote work would become the new normal for their companies. While creating our study, this made us wonder about those that had yet to move as a result of the pandemic during the time of our survey. If becoming a remote employee made significant numbers of the population move elsewhere, we were curious about the attitudes of those who hadn’t moved in 2020. If given the opportunity to move for a job, we wondered if they would be more or less likely to accept given the reality of the pandemic at the time.

Our findings were clear. Of our 477 respondents, nearly 65% stated that they had a willingness to relocate for a new job. Perhaps most interestingly, 30% of respondents indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic made them more likely to relocate for a job. The pandemic created millions of remote workers and according to the best predictive statistics, many of those remote workers will stay remote both now and into the future. Additional research performed in 2020 found that [22% of the American population](#) either moved or seriously considered moving during the pandemic. With the data we have, it is easy to see that perhaps people are not only more amenable to the idea of moving but may also be eager to capitalize on their new, remote worker status. More space for less money is a new, feasible reality for many who no longer need to reside in or around pricey metro areas for the sake of being close to the office.

Helping to facilitate these relocations may be the most innovative and competitive addition to both offers being extended to potential new hires & to existing remote employees to promote retention. This is a proven concept called delocation and it is exactly what companies need to be offering to truly meet the needs of today’s employees and standout in a competitive labor market.

It is understandable that some people would want to move out of the city if given the opportunity. Not everyone loves being in the middle of the action and saving money on overhead costs can have long-term financial benefits while gaining more space can be refreshing, especially for those with or starting families.

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## Delocation: A Proven Concept Primed to Grow in a Post-COVID Labor Market

While very few people have heard of the term “delocation”, it is a practice that has been in play for years amongst a small set of companies, primarily within the Silicon Valley and San Francisco Bay Area. The idea behind delocation is that the company finances an employee’s move out of the city to a more affordable location while simultaneously offering remote work as an option. In other words, the company allows the employee to work remotely and also offers to cover the cost of the employee’s move to what is often, a more affordable location with an overall lower cost of living. This makes affordable housing a possibility for the



employee and gives the company the ability to offer a salary suitable for the employee’s lower cost of living. This lowers the company’s payroll costs because they no longer have to compensate the employee to make up the difference for the high cost of living in the city and if enough employees do this, it allows the company to either downsize their office space and/or move it to a more affordable location, creating further cost savings. Delocation truly is a win-win for employees who want more space for less and for the companies that employ them that desire lower overhead and operating costs themselves.

Delocation as a tool for recruitment and retention makes sense for where we find ourselves in 2021. In fact, even cities and towns are jumping on the delocation bandwagon in a way.

Several cities and small towns have tapped into this desire that many remote workers now exhibit to live in less populated, more affordable areas. In fact these towns are offering all types of cash incentives to motivate remote workers to move there, including cash to cover the move itself. It’s easy to see that we are on the precipice of a major shift in terms of how we recruit and retain employees but also on a macro level, a shift in terms of where more white collar workers will be living in the coming years.

## What is the Best Way to Offer Delocation to Potential and Existing Employees?

While some firms may choose to provide employees with a lump sum payment to cover the cost of their delocations, that may not actually be the most attractive offer. Another aspect we set out to uncover in our research was to learn how much of a difference relocation programs made in the attractiveness of a job offer that required relocation. What we discovered is that when compared to lump sum, reimbursement, or no relocation program, a full-service corporate relocation program is **298% more effective overall** in recruiting talent. When compared head-to-head with reimbursement it was 80% more effective, and against lump sum, it was 22% more popular. What this means is that, how companies move talent matters. Offering a delocation benefit via a full-service corporate relocation program is a unique offering that will win today’s companies top talent and better retention for their existing all-star employees. If your company already has a corporate relocation program, be sure to check with your provider to ensure that delocation is covered under your policy.



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## Employees Want Something Innovative That Changes Their Lives For the Better

The long-lasting, transformative effects of COVID-19 have made remote work a seemingly permanent fixture that for the most part, people prefer. Being able to live and work from anywhere meant a shift in the paradigm for what was considered an ideal place to live. Proximity to an office is less important now than ever. Many remote employees enjoyed ridding themselves of long, arduous commutes and for those who left cities, they found more spacious and affordable living situations. As mentioned previously, companies also enjoyed the cost savings benefits of a remote workforce, with many downsizing and/or relocating office space to more affordable locations.

The pandemic has spurred a major cultural and attitudinal shift that is causing many to feel that cities are no longer worth their high price tags. As a result, companies who intelligently approach the ways they structure their remote and in-person mix while also offering innovative benefits like delocation to new and existing employees, will come out on top in this increasingly flat, competitive labor market. As municipalities begin recruiting remote workers with cash incentives and more roles maintain their remote status, moving away from cities will likely be a continuing trend into the coming years. Tapping into this need for more affordable housing, more space, and the shedding of the densely populated, urban lifestyle with delocation makes sense. Not only will it incentivize potential employees to accept your company's offer, it may please current employees and make them stay longer, too. Your company will save on payroll costs on the roles they delocate, quickly recouping the cost of the move while also creating the potential to downsize office space and save on overhead costs. Just make sure that you offer a full-service corporate delocation over a lump sum or reimbursement. Not only will your employees be in safe hands and be more likely to have a successful move, but the offer itself will be viewed much more positively.

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*If your company is without a corporate relocation provider but you are interested in extending job offers to top talent with greater confidence and gaining a partner in your delocation efforts, email Bobbi Maniglia at [Bobbi.Maniglia@northamerican.com](mailto:Bobbi.Maniglia@northamerican.com). Plus, learn more about how our corporate relocation offerings can make job offers to highly sought-after talent nearly 300% more effective, support any sized firm, and are fully inclusive of delocation.*

For more information visit: [northamerican.com](http://northamerican.com)

