



Offices and Omicron: How Companies Can Stem Infection with Vaccination Policies



Just as the corporate world was getting ready to return to in-person work, the Omicron variant created a surge that derailed many back-to-office plans. Since the new year, some states have already logged up to 31,000 new cases of COVID-19. This has prompted health experts to say that a bigger surge is likely on its way. This has prompted many companies, including tech giants Google and Tesla, to indefinitely put off their return to the office until the newest COVID-19 variant subsides.

That said, with over 75% of employees reporting that they are eager to return to the office, and many industries saying that in-person work is preferable, 2022 may still see a slew of office reopenings.

COVID-19 and the Corporate Response So Far

Although more than 164 million workers transitioned to remote work in 2020, by the end of the year, with lockdown and travel restrictions easing up, surveys showed 3 out of 4 Americans were back to physical or hybrid work. Among the companies that resumed office work, strict hygiene and safety protocols were practiced. This included guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that entailed wearing face masks in public areas, reducing the number of staffers in-office per day, and regular office disinfections.

Unfortunately, these safety measures are no longer enough. With Omicron being more infectious, the WHO has said that COVID-19 vaccinations remain the best measure. In the corporate world, this has translated to 57% of all employers saying that they plan to require vaccinations among employees. However, considering that vaccines are still met with some resistance, offices must be smart and purposeful in their vaccine policies.

How Offices Can Fairly Implement a Vaccine Policy

Optimize popular technology

Popular everyday devices like smartphones and tablets can be used to run visitor authentication and management system (VAMS) software. These can be enabled to run health screenings, store client records (which include vaccine statuses), and access authentications. This means that your office can streamline entryway workflow, reduce the physical touchpoints, and limit who is allowed in certain areas. Since VAMS can be run via an app, employees—and even visitors—can easily update their profiles online and it will immediately reflect in your own records. This means that you can be updated on which employees are already vaccinated, who are scheduled for it, and who may have health issues that prohibit it.

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Underscore and protect employee rights

For some who are hesitant to have the vaccine, it boils down to their rights. This is why you want to underscore your respect for employee rights in your vaccine policy. For starters, explain that employees who are eligible for medical or religious exemptions will not be forced to get vaccinated. This must be laid out in legal terms to protect both parties. Next, since you'll be adopting digital solutions, outline their data privacy rights. Data has become a prime target for hackers, and everyone, from small businesses to large corporations, needs to hire a cyber expert. When bringing on such an expert, make sure they have an educational background in cybersecurity. If an employee's vaccine status is leaked your company could face a big lawsuit. A strong cybersecurity infrastructure will also make it clear that you're respecting employee rights on all fronts. This will make them more likely to cooperate and make it easier for you to track vaccine statuses. Your visitor management system can also notify them of FAQs and the concomitant answers to help them understand this promptly..

Provide updated policy resources

To limit any misunderstandings, provide updated educational resources. These should run through each and every point in your vaccine policy, as well as the laws and regulations that protect you and your employees. The more specific your resources, the more your employees will grasp what you're trying to achieve. Try to answer questions: Will you be requiring regular booster shots or is the initial vaccination card enough? What proof of vaccination will you require from employees who got vaccinated abroad? How does the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission apply to your workplace? To ensure that you're abiding by the right procedures, have your most senior HR specialist lead this. As graduates of human resources, they'll be well-versed in the legal and ethical requirements that these resources should satisfy. They could also provide this information on the visitor management system, where all employees are signed in.

There are a variety of reasons why an employee may not get vaccinated. But as an employer, you do have the right to require this for the safety of your company and the rest of your team. By implementing a vaccine policy that accounts for the moral, health, and professional concerns of your workforce, you can expect a return to the office with your team's wellness and trust intact.

A contactless visitor management system can help you deploy this vaccine policy in a seamless, digital interface that is married to your access control systems. Your employees will not find the requirement burdensome, given it allows instantaneous crosschecking of their vaccination status with external governmental databases—on smartphones.

Making workplaces Secure, Safe, & more Efficient

