Returning to work - a 2021 survival guide.

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What's in the guide?

Welcome to 2021. As Australia's leading workplace solutions company, at Winc we know a thing or two about workplaces.

This year, the return to work looks a little different. Some companies are returning to the office for the first time, some still have their people working from home and others are maintaining a hybrid approach.

In this guide, you will find:

1 Our tips for a successful return to work, wherever work happens to be.

2 Suggestions on supporting those returning to the office.

3 Why goal setting is important.

4 Tips for hosting 2021 team workshops and collaboration sessions.

We hope this survival guide helps you and your team ease your way into the new working year and that 2021 is a successful one for you and your organisation!

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Our top tips for a successful return to work.

Returning to work from holidays and getting back up to speed is a January tradition. If you're struggling to remember your computer password or even what day it is, you'll know you've had a good break!

To ease into a productive 2021, here's four tips to help you and your team get back into the swing of things:

Tip 1: Make plans for lunch
Celebrate the start of a new working year with your colleagues over lunch, either in person or virtually. Taking regular breaks is a good way to keep revitalised and feeling refreshed.

Tip 2: Go for walks
If you can, make sure you get out of the office (or your home office) for a walk during the day to keep the holiday feeling going for longer!

Tip 3: Try something new
Change things up to avoid the routine taking over. This could be listening to a new podcast during your commute or trying a new café for your morning coffee.

Tip 4: One thing at a time
Full inbox? Everything marked 'high priority' or urgent? A lot of things that need to be kickstarted? Keep calm, take some time to go through your inbox and prioritise your tasks.

And when you're back up and running, it's time to set some big goals!

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Simple ways to support those returning to the office.

Reports of some of Australia's largest organisations found that while 63 per cent of employees want a hybrid model involving some working from home and some days in the office, employers estimate it will only be available to 40 per cent of staff.[1] Employers will need to motivate workers to return, educate why it's important and embed the new ways of working across the organisation.

Make your employees feel welcome by creating a safe space for them to return with branded welcome back kits and hygiene essentials. Equip the kitchens with single-serve coffee and individually wrapped snacks and stationery for each employee's sole use.

In our research conducted with remote workers in early 2020, office chats were the number one thing employees missed about the office. Encourage social interaction such as collaboration sessions, workshops and team building days to start the year fresh. Remember to check local health authority guidelines and stay safe by observing social distancing at all times.

[1] Patty, A., Wade, M., 2020, 'Bosses and employees divided over working from home rules' https://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace/bosses-and-employees-divided-over-working-from-home-rules-20201130-p56j3m.html

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Setting measurable goals.

Why goal setting is important.

As Australia sets out on the road to recovery from a challenging 2020, it's important to start planning for what you want to accomplish in the year ahead. Setting measurable goals is key to getting back on track.

This year is the year to think big and set stretch targets for your people. Research has shown challenging goals are more appealing, and suggests that the more challenging goal, the higher the success.[2][3]

When your strategy and plan is set, maintain honest and ongoing communication with your employees. Having a clear understanding of what the business is aiming to achieve will provide employees with the information they need to do their jobs well and help the organisation succeed.

2021 is also the year to focus on your company culture. While many organisations adopted technology last year to keep connected, it's time to reset and strengthen cross-functional connections. The case for strengthening culture is clear, as highly engaged organisations are 17 per cent more productive and see 21 per cent higher profitability.[4] Wherever possible, use forums to encourage staff to ask questions, share ideas and get involved. Bring people together to foster new relationships, collaborate and achieve more together.

[2] Chowdhury M.R., 2020, 'The Science & Psychology Of Goal-Setting 101'
    <https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-psychology/>
[3] w, A., Stamatogiannakis, A. & Chakravarti, D. 2018, 'Why You Should Stop Setting Easy Goals'
    <https://hbr.org/2018/11/why-you-should-stop-setting-easy-goals>
[4] Wickham, N., 2020, 'Why is Employee Engagement Important?
    <https://www.quantumworkplace.com/future-of-work/14-benefits-of-employee-engagement-backed-by-research>

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Our top tips for hosting the perfect 2021 workshop.

As Australia adapts to a COVID normal, many workers are expected to return to offices in some capacity where it is safe to do so.

Collaboration is an incredible contributor to innovation and profitability. A study of over 1,000 companies found that those who promoted collaborative working were five times more likely to be high performing.[5] Research has also shown that teamwork increases individual performance and people who collaborate are committed to working on those tasks for 64 per cent more time than those working alone.[6]

In terms of revenue, when asked what changes would make the greatest impact to the organisation's profitability, one survey revealed 56 per cent of leaders ranked collaboration as number one.[7]

To kick start collaboration, begin the year with workshops and brainstorm sessions to harness knowledge, align on goals and capture ideas.

Tip 1: A little preparation goes a long way
Before your workshop, have a plan of action and talking points prepared. Your space should be set up to allow it to run smoothly. Products like coloured sticky notes and highlighters are great visual tools that you can use to make things more interesting.

Tip 2: Comfort is key
Encourage everyone to get involved in group discussions, brainstorming or even a game. Start off light with an ice breaker to get people comfortable sharing. Provide everyone with a pen and paper so they can jot down notes and creative ideas throughout the workshop.

Tip 3: Short and sweet
If your workshop is planned to run for over an hour, consider splitting it into multiple sessions to allow attendees to digest the information and come back fresh the following session.

Tip 4: Low numbers for high value
If possible, limit participation and invite only those who should be involved. This will create a valuable experience by giving every attendee personal attention and time to contribute and ask questions.

[5] Kahootz, 2018, '5 collaboration benefits that will blow your mind', <https://www.kahootz.com/collaboration-benefits/>
[6] Planbox, 2019, 7 Benefits of Workplace Collaboration', <https://www.planbox.com/7-benefits-of-workplace-collaboration/>
[7] Valdellon, L., 20117, '11 Key Business Benefits of Team Collaboration (& Why You Should Work on Your Teamwork)', <https://www.wrike.com/blog/business-benefits-of-team-collaboration/>

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