



# Don't Fly Blind As You Begin to Reopen Your Office

By Charles Araujo

The sun is gleaming just above the horizon.

A new, glorious day is dawning as you reopen the doors to your office. Your employees joyfully rush in, almost skipping, as you and they eagerly enjoy life returning to normal.

Uh, yeah right.

If there's one thing that we can all agree on, it's probably that there will be no "return to normal" anytime soon. Still, a very different version of that scene will be playing out at your offices sometime soon. Whether in the next few weeks or several months from now, you will eventually reopen your office.

But here's another thing that we can probably agree upon: this isn't going to be a big swing-open-the-doors-and-welcome-everyone-back sort of moment.

"I expect by the end of the year, we'll be at 20% to 30% capacity. Which may still mean we are able to get 60% of our employees in once a week, or something like that," Alphabet (Google's parent) CEO Sundar Pichai said recently on "The Vergecast" podcast.

[According to CNBC](#), the company reports that it will begin by bringing back 10% to 15% at any one time, ramping up slowly, and prioritizing based on a variety of factors.

You can expect that you'll be in a similar boat. You will need to choose which employees to bring back first — and perhaps, which to leave home permanently. But how?

The answer may not be as complicated as you might think. The reason is that there is a wealth of data available to you to make these essential decisions, as long as you know how to capture and use it.





## Are They Thriving or Suffering at Home?

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the long-standing office work paradigm, a class of technology was developing behind the scenes. We refer to this category of management tools as User Experience Management platforms.

Organizations have historically used these platforms to collect data on the employee experience when using core, mission-critical applications, such as SAP. These platforms collect data on application usage to identify productivity and adoption issues, problems with the software that reduce efficiency, and similar experiential challenges.

However, as the pandemic hit, [enterprises quickly realized that they could use this same data to optimize the new work from home experience.](#)

This same data on how employees are interacting with their software can also serve as the foundation by which enterprise leaders choose which employees to bring back first — or at all.

The key is all in how organizations use the data.

I have worked remotely for over twenty years. I know how to manage my time and environment, and I am never more productive than when I work from home.

And based on the erroneous assumption that everyone was just like me, I once made a very costly mistake.

Many years ago, I recruited an employee (I'll call her Veronica) by extolling to her the great benefits of working from home. The only problem was, for Veronica, it just didn't work.

She, unlike me, thrived in an office. She needed the camaraderie — and the accountability — that a physical office provided. Needless to say, our employment arrangement did not work out.

There's an excellent chance that you have employees like both Veronica and me working for you. Some are reveling in their newfound work from home productivity and freedom. Others are struggling to keep it together and are counting the days until they can return to the office. But how can you tell which is which?

The only real answer is in the user experience data. It will tell which of your employees are thriving at home and finding all-new ways to work productively — and which should be the first to come back to the office.

While you can and should ask them how they feel, the proof, as they say, will be in the pudding. Rely on anything other than the data, and you'll be flying blind.

## Optimizing Your Path Back to “Normal”

Successfully transitioning back to the office will require that you do two things simultaneously.

First, as we've discussed, you must identify which of your employees are thriving at home and which are not. Second, you must determine which parts of your software stack you will need to tune to most effectively help you transition into this new hybrid work model.

User Experience Management data can help on both counts.

These platforms capture metrics such as user productivity, application adoption and engaged adoption (active time vs. idle time), and error rate, which can help enterprise leaders separate striving from struggling employees. This process becomes even more powerful when you combine them into a composite-type, benchmark metric.

The critical factor is to use these metrics to match employees to their ideal work environment by understanding how they respond and react in each of them.

This process is most effective, of course, if you already have a platform deployed and can use pre-pandemic data as a baseline. But even if you don't, you will be able to build that baseline over time as you slowly bring workers back — particularly if you are bringing some employees back on an occasional basis, as Alphabet is planning to do.

This same data, however, can also help you understand which applications may be more or less optimized for different work environments.

For instance, you may find that one application has a productivity loss for most employees — even if they are otherwise productive. If you likewise see that this application



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performs fine when employees are using it in the office, it may indicate that it is somehow poorly optimized for a remote environment.

## The Intellyx Take: Data at the Center of Everything

We are all eager to find a pathway to some semblance of normal. In that desire, there will be a tendency to fall back on traditional ways of handling situations.

But this is anything but normal.

Whenever you begin to reopen your office, it will be the first step on a long journey to something different. This transition is not a one-and-done sort of thing.

You will be grappling with the challenges of managing a new type of work environment for years to come.

You will also be facing increased pressure to allow some portion of your workforce to remain at home permanently or more consistently — not to mention realizing potential operational and financial benefits from doing so.

Those organizations that attempt to make those decisions based on traditional approaches — hierarchy, tenure, personal relationships, and so on — will be flying blind into a storm.



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It is only by having the type of data that User Experience Management platforms, such as

Knoa, provide that you will be able to navigate this dynamic situation as it continues to evolve.

Ironically, the pandemic has had a leveling effect in some regards. Everyone is back at “Go.” We all need to figure out how to manage in this new environment.

Those organizations that manage this transition most effectively will gain a significant advantage over their competitors — and much of it will come down capturing and leveraging user experience data most effectively.

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