

Facebook Plans to Broaden Remote Workforce Capabilities Due to Covid-19

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6 hours ago

As Facebook employees continue to work from home during the novel coronavirus pandemic, the company will embrace the practice and start recruiting employees without mandating that they can work from any of its offices.

In a weekly town hall meeting that was publicly livestreamed, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg vowed to be the “most forward-leaning company on remote work on our scale.” At least 95% of Facebook employees are currently working remotely and will continue to do so as the pandemic continues.

“It doesn’t make sense to constrain all our hiring to people who live near offices we’re not going to be in anyway,” he said.

Zuckerberg’s announcement comes after Twitter told most employees they could work from home indefinitely and Shopify offered employees a similar option.

The ability to refocus recruiting efforts not necessarily based on geography could open the company to hire more diverse candidates and spread economic opportunities on national and global levels. Facebook will begin by hiring experienced engineers with this new approach.

However, remote hiring will not be extended to new college graduates and less experienced hires, as the company feels that in-person training is critical.

"Most remote-first companies don't tend to hire a lot of new college grads, but we do," Zuckerberg said in the town hall.

Despite the more lax approach to remote workforces, Facebook will still take a candidate's geography into consideration and sort them into three categories: those that live within a four-hour drive of existing offices, those that live near cities where the company wants to establish itself more and those living in rural areas.

"Over time, we expect most of our workforce to be spread across large parts of the U.S. and beyond," vice president of people Lori Goler said in a Facebook post. "We'll also begin to open up opportunities for some current employees to work remotely so that we can learn from their experience to help us get this right."

Retaining existing employees is also valuable, Zuckerberg said, noting that he could see about 50% of employees working remotely.

"Culture is built very carefully over time," he said. "Products can sometimes get built in a matter of months. It is really important to take a long-term approach to how we think about remote work. This is fundamentally about changing our culture."

Of employees surveyed, 20% of respondents were very interested in remote work after the Covid-19 crisis ends, and another 20% were somewhat interested. A little more than 50% wanted to get back to the office as soon as possible.

Facebook found that more experienced and tenured people wanted to work remotely than junior people, and there was no difference in preference by gender, which Zuckerberg said he had been concerned about due to the possibility of a disproportionate load of domestic responsibilities falling on women. The company also found that 45% of people who want to work remotely were pretty confident that they would relocate,

and 30% indicated that they might.

Meanwhile, 30% of managers said they would definitely support fully remote teams, while 30% said they probably would and 10% indicated that they would not be willing to do so.

Zuckerberg outlined the criteria for permanent remote work status, including experience and strong recent performance, belonging to a team that supports remote work and approval from a group leader. Facebook may also reconsider employees' compensation if they do want to relocate.

"If you live in a location where the cost of living is lower and the cost of labor is lower, salaries tend to be somewhat lower in those places," Zuckerberg said, adding that employees who do want to relocate must determine their new location by Jan. 1.

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