

Zoom tells staff to come into the office at least two days a week

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It was the poster child for remote working and may have made more gains from people able to work from home during the pandemic than any other company, but even Zoom has told its staff to come into the office more often. The company, which became a household name during Covid lockdowns because of the popularity of its video-conferencing tools, has told employees to travel in at least two days a week, according to a report in Business Insider. The policy will apply to those living a “commutable distance” – within 50 miles of the office. The office working mandate is part of what the company has described as “structured hybrid approach” affecting its 8,000 employees at 12 offices worldwide, including in the UK where it has about 200 staff and offices in central London. Many companies have brought in rules related to remote working after pandemic restrictions ended. However, Zoom held out on bringing in any formal guidance, perhaps because of its reputation as a figurehead for employees working flexibly and remotely. Its share price rocketed from \$89 (£70) before the start of the pandemic to a high of \$559 in October 2020 as Covid lockdowns forced many workers to remain at home. The shares have since fallen to \$68 as people trickled back to offices and rivals expanded. A spokesperson said: “We believe that a structured hybrid approach – meaning a set number of days employees that live near an office need to be on site – is most effective for Zoom. As a company, we are in a better position to use our own technologies, continue to innovate, and support our global customers. “We’ll continue to leverage the entire Zoom platform to keep our employees and dispersed teams connected and working efficiently.” Companies are taking differing approaches to hybrid working – the chief executive of Apple, Tim Cook, told staff to come in three days a week, while Commonwealth Bank ordered employees to spend half of their hours each month in the office. In February, Zoom announced it was cutting about 1,300 jobs as demand for its video-conferencing services decreased with the waning of the pandemic. While announcing the layoffs, its chief executive, Eric Yuan, said he would take a 98% pay cut and forgo his bonus. The redundancies will cost the company between \$50m and \$68m. At the time, Yuan said: “We worked tirelessly ... but we also made mistakes. We didn’t take as much time as we should have to thoroughly analyse our teams or assess if we were growing sustainably, toward the highest priorities.” A recent survey showed UK employees work from home for an average of 1.5 days a week, compared with an international average of 0.9 days. In 2019, about 12% of UK employees were working from home to some extent; by 2022 it was between 25% and 40%, depending on the time of year. • This article was amended on 8 August 2023 to add a reference to Business Insider’s report on the Zoom office return.