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# Unlocking Return-to-Office (RTO) Strategies for an Engaged Workforce: An Interactive Workbook

Discover how to build community, culture, and connection through your RTO initiatives, resulting in increased employee engagement and retention.

# Your New Playbook for Return-to-Office (RTO) Initiatives

When you think about your return-to-office (RTO) initiatives, what honestly comes to mind?

Sure, the prospect of once again connecting and collaborating in person can be exciting. But, if you've found yourself here, considering RTO has likely brought on its fair share of challenges.

The new world of work has left employees feeling more disconnected than ever. For virtual employees, "water cooler" moments and opportunities for non-work related discussions are limited. Even in the physical office, employees are still lacking connection because many are forced to sit on video calls all day.



## Maximizing RTO and Hybrid Engagement Through Networking and Connectivity

[WATCH THE WEBINAR RECORDING](#)

**To build a successful RTO strategy, we need a new playbook for connectivity in the workplace. One that drives employee engagement and retention, regardless of location.**

It's clear that genuine relationships between employees play a pivotal role in determining job satisfaction, with 77% of workers emphasizing their importance.<sup>1</sup> Workplace relationships not only boost employee morale and retention but also foster collaboration, innovation, and productivity within an organization.



We've crafted this interactive playbook to help you prioritize the employee experience in your RTO initiatives with a focus on the outcomes that matter: collaboration, engagement, performance, and retention.

# Crafting Your RTO Blueprint for Community, Culture, and Connection

Welcome to 10KC's hands-on guide for engaging your workforce in RTO initiatives! We encourage you to use this not only for inspiration, but also to record your own thoughts. This will serve as your personalized blueprint, helping you unlock the full potential of your RTO strategy to build community, culture, and connection. Let's begin.

## Step 1: Determining the objectives of RTO initiatives

There's a lot of nuance to RTO. Employers have their own motivations to bring people back into the office. Some employees are enthusiastic to return, while others are hesitant.



- 22.5% of U.S. employers with remote-capable employees want their employees back in the office full time, while only 15.1% of remote-capable employees expressed a desire to return to the office full time.<sup>2</sup>
- Almost half (47%) of employees indicate they would quit a job or begin looking for a new job immediately if their employer mandated a full-time return-to-office policy.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2021, Microsoft's Work Trend Index uncovered the "hybrid paradox" where more than 70% of employees desired ongoing work flexibility, while over 65% yearned for increased face-to-face interactions with their teams.<sup>3</sup>
- An employee's network alone is a 5x better predictor of performance compared to personality, experience, cognitive ability, or education.<sup>4</sup>

To get employee buy-in, it's extremely important to prioritize communication and culture before initiating a return to the office. It's crucial to have a firm grasp of the "who, what, why, and when" of your RTO strategy.

Why are you returning to the office? What are you hoping to accomplish if employees go to the office more often? How often do you want people in the office?



“Humans are wired to connect and a hybrid work environment shouldn’t impede employees from connecting with others. With hybrid work environments here to stay, companies and leaders need to adapt and symbiotically enable employee connections in an easy and automated way.”

- Karissa Bussard, Global Senior HR Partner, Digital Technology at GE

Here are some questions to help you outline the objectives of your RTO initiatives.

### What are your RTO goals?

Increase collaboration within specific teams.

Encourage better cross-functional collaboration.

Boost opportunities for career advancement.

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### Are you planning to get employees in the office full-time, or for a set number of days per week / month?

Employees will be in the office full-time, 5 days a week.

Employees will be in the office for a set number of days.

Employees can choose how often they come into the office.

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## Will you have a mix of fully remote, hybrid, and full in-office employees?

Yes, there will be a mix of remote, hybrid, and full in-office.

No, all employees will be in-office the same amount of time.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## Jot down any additional notes about your RTO goals here.

## Step 2: Getting employee buy-in

### How can you get employees bought-in and excited about RTO?

Now it's time to build a program that not only brings your employees back, but also ignites their enthusiasm and commitment. Remember, it's not just about telling them to return just to come in and sit on video calls. It's about making the in-person experience materially different from the virtual one. Make it clear that this return signifies a valuable opportunity for connection, collaboration, and growth.

### Do you have consistent expectations and commitment from leadership?

RTO won't thrive if you're only expecting individual contributors (ICs) to return to the office while middle managers and senior leadership team (SLT) members aren't on board or participating in your office-as-a-destination activities. It's also important that executives and people managers lead with empathy and understand how to accommodate employees who may struggle with mandates.

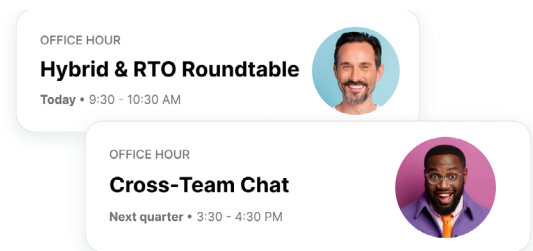


“We wanted to build meaningful connections that superseded historic silos or proximity barriers. We wanted to drive connections that were human-led and tech powered, and 10KC allowed us to do that.”

- **Chris Dulny, Chief Digital, Data & Innovation Officer, PwC**

## Step 3: Executing RTO experiences

Building a sense of belonging decreases turnover risk by 50%<sup>5</sup> and employees who say their culture is positive are 3.8x more likely to be engaged.<sup>6</sup> What better way to transform the office into an enticing destination than by creating unique, in-person experiences? It’s time to reimagine the office as a hub of learning, collaboration, and community. Let’s dive into some ideas.



### Host virtual sessions pre-RTO



“With the shift to hybrid work, our focus has turned to connecting our teams in a more organic way. Office Hours allows us to recreate those serendipitous hallway conversations where employees share and learn from each other.”

- **Victor Tung, U.S. Chief Technology and Operations Officer and Chief Information and Operations Officer, BMO Capital Markets**

To rebuild a sense of connection and cultivate trust and confidence in your RTO plans, consider hosting virtual, small-group sessions prior to returning to office. These roundtables also provide a safe space for employees to have open dialogue and share their perspectives without fear of judgment.

Helps with:

- Employee RTO buy-in
- Employee engagement
- Employee retention

For example:




- Address change-related transitions and create a sense of community in virtual sessions.
- Prior to meeting in-person, facilitate 1-1 connections through virtual networking.

## In-person leader / subject matter expert learning sessions

To engage leadership in RTO initiatives and provide employees with opportunities to learn and connect, consider hosting in-person leader/subject matter expert sessions.

- “Ask me anything” session to get to know senior leaders.
- Interactive, guided career development activities.
- Roundtable discussions to spark innovation and creativity.

Helps with:

-  Leadership RTO buy-in
-  Employee engagement
-  Career development



“Once we rolled out 10KC as PwC Connection Central we saw connections being facilitated across all locations and business units - it's been an amazing success. And one important example of its impact is that our CEO, Nicolas Marcoux, is in fact its biggest super user!”

- Chris Dulny, Chief Digital, Data & Innovation Officer, pwc

## In-person networking / connection day (or hour!)






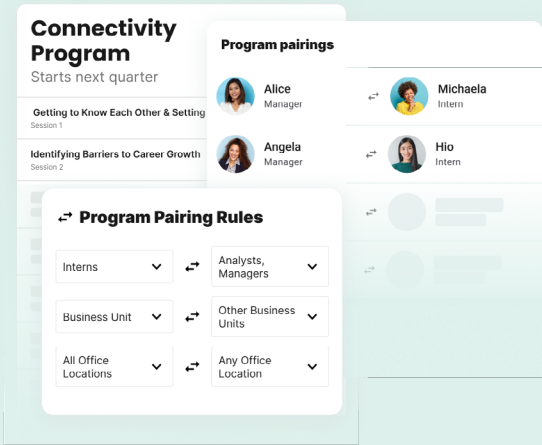
According to Microsoft's September 2022 Work Trend Index report, 85% of individuals found motivation to return to the office driven by the prospect of socializing with colleagues.<sup>3</sup>

Remember those spontaneous moments in the office when you'd grab a coffee and strike up a conversation with a colleague you might not have otherwise connected with? Or when you'd casually chat with a colleague at their desk? These moments can lead to connections, collaboration, support, and a sense of belonging. You can recreate this in a structured format to ensure equal opportunities for connections across teams and levels, free from bias.

- Use location-match criteria to connect employees within the same cities or office towers.
- Build conversation guides to help break the ice.
- Set time for casual, in-person introductions with managers.

Helps with:

-  Connectivity and networking
-  Support and belonging
-  Employee engagement



## 10KC's Connectivity Program

### Help build momentum for RTO by:

- Matching employees based on their interests, goals, location, and more
- Providing curriculum and conversation starters to help foster meaningful relationships
- Creating opportunity for conversations between senior leaders and employees

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## Anchor days for specific teams or cross-functional groups

If your RTO plan involves having employees in the office on designated days instead of a full 5-day workweek, you can optimize this approach for enhanced connectivity and collaboration. Consider setting specific anchor days for teams and their counterparts to connect and work together.

- Marketing goes in on Tuesdays to encourage connectivity and creativity.
- Sales and marketing converge on Wednesdays to facilitate collaboration and alignment.
- Teams that might not typically work closely come in on Thursdays to cultivate connections and build culture.

### Helps with:

- Connectivity and networking
- Collaboration
- Employee engagement
- Career development

## Virtual, global connections

For employees across different office locations, or those who remain remote, ensure that you're facilitating moments that drive cross-team collaboration, employee engagement, and connection across geographies and teams.

- Host virtual global town hall meetings or Q&A sessions with leadership to promote a sense of unity across geographies.
- Organize virtual coffee chats to encourage informal conversations.

### Helps with:

- Connectivity and networking
- Support and belonging
- Collaboration
- Employee engagement
- Career development



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“With 10KC, we now have an ideal platform to enable connection on a number of dimensions and extend our reach across the national firm in ways that would not have been possible for us in the past.”

– **Soula Courlas, Interim Chief People Officer PwC**

### **It's time for some reflection.**

Use the space below as your canvas to brainstorm and reflect on the ideas we've outlined. Consider how you can build community, connections, career development opportunities, or incentives that make returning to the office appealing.

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**How can you spark enthusiasm from your employees at every level about RTO?**

## Step 4: Ensuring an equitable employee experience

If you have a mix of in-office, hybrid, and remote employees, it's important to ensure all employees, no matter where they work from, have an equitable and inclusive experience. Employees spread across different geographical regions or working remotely shouldn't feel isolated or disadvantaged.

A consideration of employees' unique circumstances and commitment to equity in experience promotes engagement, collaboration, and a thriving workplace culture, making it crucial for overall business success and employee well-being.

- Due to enduring discrimination or the exhaustion of having to “code switch”, 97% of Black workers would rather do remote or hybrid work and 80% of women say remote work is a top factor when considering a job.<sup>7</sup>
- For mothers with young children, 38% say that lack of workplace flexibility would result in leaving the company or reducing work hours.<sup>8</sup>
- 42% of managers say that remote workers are sometimes forgotten when assigning tasks.<sup>9</sup>
- 34% percent of remote workers say working remotely on a permanent basis would reduce the number of career opportunities available.<sup>9</sup>

### Let's build a strategy together below to ensure an equitable experience for all employees.

We plan to avoid proximity bias with equitable access to senior leadership and growth opportunities by:

Developing mentorship programs.

Creating opportunities for cross-team collaboration.

Implementing regular performance reviews.

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### 10KC's Mentorship Program

- Accelerate career growth and build future leaders
- Facilitate engagement, learning, and development
- Break down traditional barriers to networking and opportunity

[LEARN MORE](#)

**We will ensure hybrid / in-office employees aren't just coming into the office to sit on calls with remote employees by:**

- Organizing purposeful in-person meetings.
- Fostering a culture of collaboration, not just co-location.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**When hosting gatherings, we won't forget remote/global employees by:**

- Planning virtual components for all in-person events.
- Leveraging technology to connect remote employees.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**We plan to consider inclusivity in our RTO initiatives by:**

- Hosting sessions where employees can share concerns.
- Offering mentoring programs to ensure diverse talent gets access to opportunities.
- Creating ERG-specific events.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 5: Measuring success for your RTO connectivity program



“Being able to make this investment requires a clear ability to talk about the ROI. [...] And so tech enablement through platforms like 10KC make measurement and monitoring pretty seamless in how we do the work.”

– **Jarvis Sam, former Chief DEI Officer, Nike**

Determining the primary KPIs for success of your initiatives will depend on your initial goals. Don't wait until the end of the quarter to gather insights. Collect feedback and insights as you progress and ensure you're meeting your RTO goals. Some potential metrics to measure from RTO include:

- Employee engagement
- Satisfaction
- Retention
- In-office attendance
- Career advancements
- Business performance

Say goodbye to guesswork, and gather all the insights you need on the impact of your connectivity programs.

[Check out 10KC's Data Dashboard.](#)



“You can see who's connecting naturally, who opts in, how many people they've connected with. We also see who hasn't opted in. [...] The [10KC] technology is so helpful. We can notice trends and make sure employees aren't getting lost in the shuffle”

– **Susie Gould, Deals People Leader at PwC**

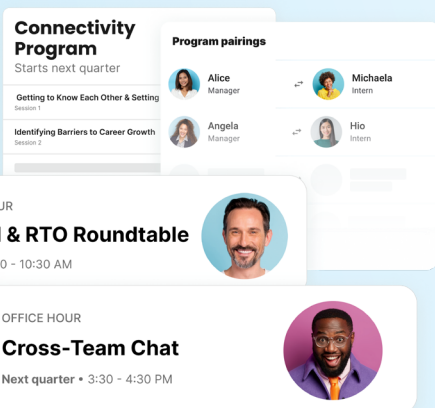
To gather feedback on your RTO initiatives from your employees, consider providing survey questions and scales that funnel up to your target outcomes. Many of these metrics are hard to quantify early on, so we recommend using a few leading indicators. Then overtime, you'll be able to assign actual numbers to the lagging metrics.

Refer to this chart for examples:

Target Outcomes	↑ Engagement	↑ Retention	↑ Performance	↑ Mobility
<b>Survey Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Did this RTO, connectivity, or mentorship program meet your expectations?</li> <li>✓ I would recommend this program to a colleague.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I feel more connected to our people and culture.</li> <li>✓ I feel my organization is investing in/ recognizing me by providing this opportunity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I feel better equipped to succeed in my role.</li> <li>✓ I have deepened my understanding of our business, vision, and/or goals.</li> <li>✓ I have improved my ability to network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I gained insight into the job(s) I'm interested in pursuing.</li> <li>✓ I received and/or shared valuable career advice.</li> <li>✓ I feel more confident I can achieve my career goals here.</li> </ul>

## Step 6: It's time to embark on your RTO plan

Your RTO and hybrid work strategy can be the catalyst for meaningful change. By fostering a culture of engagement, trust, connection, collaboration, and community, you're not just bringing your employees back to the office; you're creating an environment where they can thrive. With your personalized blueprint in hand, it's time to embark on your RTO plan.



### Ready to transform your RTO strategy?

See how 10KC's inclusive mentoring and networking platform can help boost employee engagement and retention.

[BOOK A DEMO](#)

# About 10KC

10KC is the only all-in-one platform for inclusive mentoring and networking that drives better employee engagement and retention.

We help employees get the skills and relationships they need to succeed. We do this by providing software that delivers:

## REACH & SCALE

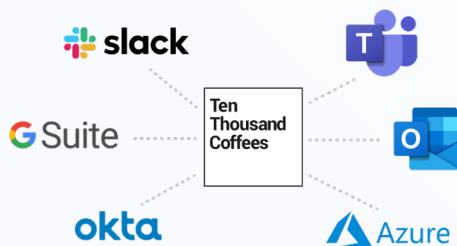
Match 1000s of employees in your organization with the click of a button.

## MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Create high impact employee connections leveraging our Smart Match algorithm, which delivers high quality and unbiased matches with a 98% match quality score.

## EASY TO USE

Our software is embedded in your company's existing IT systems. Designed to fit into employees' flow of work.



## MEASURABLE RESULTS

We provide data on employee sentiments, program insights, engagement levels, adoption rates – all in real-time making the feedback actionable.

## FLEXIBLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

We provide off-the shelf programs for all your employees. Already have a program? Great! Use our platform to deploy it to everyone.

## REWARDS PARTICIPANTS

Our platform recognizes the employees that are connecting and building culture at your organization in real-time.

The best part? Your employees will love 10KC.

Here's what our past participants say:

**98%**

want to maintain the connection they have made post program

**88%**

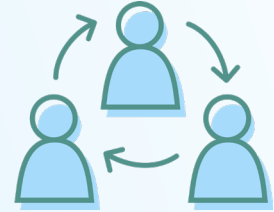
said the program helped them make progress towards their development goals

**93%**

want to be notified about future program offerings

# Connectivity Solution

Build the community and connections that retain & engage employees - no matter their work location.



## 10KC's Offerings

### 1 Build collaboration with Introductions

Automatically match employees with peers, leaders and mentors to build the network they need to enhance cross-team collaboration and break down silos

### 2 Make the office a destination with *Office Hours*

Draw employees into the office for important moments of connection and conversation with curated sessions hosted by leaders and SMEs that foster skills development curated to your employees' interests

### 3 Foster belonging & skills development with *Mentorship Programs*

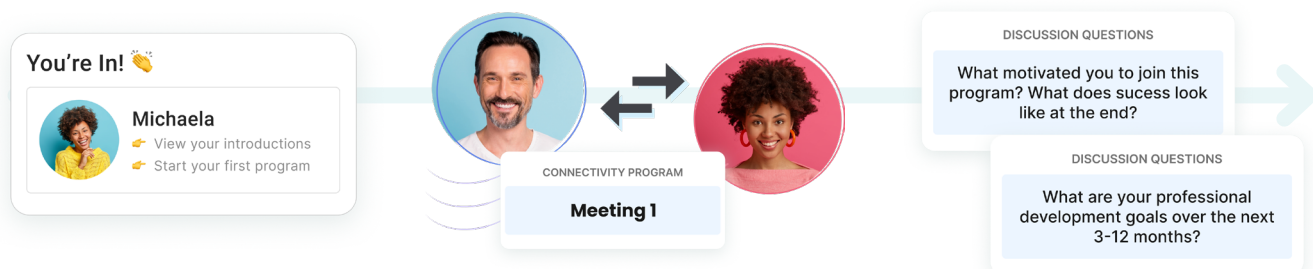
Create guided mentorship programs with structured curriculum and resources tailored to your businesses needs - no matter where your employees are located

## How we build connectivity in an omni-connected workforce:

→ **In-Person Experiences** that feature the office as a destination to build collaboration and connection among employees

→ **Online Experiences** that replicate the "water cooler" moments that drive cross-team collaboration and employee engagement

→ **Smart Matching** techniques to connect people with similar goals and interests within hybrid & onsite work arrangements



# Client List & Testimonials

Join the hundreds of companies who've trusted 10KC with scaling their connectivity solutions to drive engagement, promotion and retention.



"You can see who's connecting naturally, who opts in, how many people they've connected with. We also see who hasn't opted in. That's the kind of person we might spend more time focusing on and encouraging our leaders to connect with. The technology is so helpful. We can notice trends and make sure employees aren't getting lost in the shuffle."

**Susie Gould**  
Deals People Leader at PwC



"Humans are wired to connect and a hybrid work environment shouldn't impede an employees' opportunity to connect with others. With hybrid work environments here to stay, companies and leaders need to adapt and symbiotically enable employee connections in an easy and automated way."

**Karissa Bussard**  
Global Senior HR Partner of Digital Technology, GE





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