

The Strategic Presence: New Study Reveals 72% of Employees See Return-to-Office Mandates as “Stealth Layoffs”

New data reveals 72% of employees view RTO mandates as "stealth layoffs," driving a wave of "coffee badging" and on-the-clock job hunting.

NY, UNITED STATES, May 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [A new report from Enhancv](#), a global

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*Volen Vulkov, Co-Founder of
Enhancv*

leader in resume technology and career insights, has uncovered a deep trust deficit taking root in the modern workplace. According to a survey of 1,000 full-time U.S. professionals, corporate mandates forcing workers back to physical desks are actively backfiring, with 72% of surveyed employees now convinced that these policies are actually stealth layoffs designed to force resignations and avoid the financial burden of severance packages.

The study indicates that instead of rebuilding corporate culture and boosting productivity, aggressive return-to-

office (RTO) policies have ushered in an era of tactical resistance. Rather than working harder, employees are increasingly finding ways to perform attendance while mentally and strategically checking out.

How Automated Monitoring and Mandates are Reshaping the Office

Almost three-quarters of the workforce now suspect that RTO policies are attrition by design rather than genuine efforts to improve collaboration or productivity.

Nearly half of all employees admit to practicing "coffee badging" by showing up at the office just long enough to swipe their badges and satisfy tracking systems before leaving to work elsewhere.

A massive wave of on-the-clock exit planning has begun with 36% of workers using office time to apply for new jobs directly from their current corporate desks.

Workplace surveillance is severely backfiring as trust scores drop to a dismal 50 out of 100 among professionals whose card swipes and hours are strictly monitored by management.

A shift in traditional corporate loyalty is evident as more than one in three employees have started a side hustle since their mandates were announced to build a personal financial safety net.

The Paradox of Workplace Surveillance

The research highlights a critical disconnect between the executive narrative of "serendipitous innovation" and the ground-level reality of the cubicle. When companies lean heavily into aggressive badge-tracking, the employer-employee social contract is effectively canceled.

"When 72% of your workforce believes a policy is a hidden trap to trim headcount, the corporate culture management wants to build is already gone," said Volen Vulkov, co-founder of Enhancv. "The office is no longer functioning as a collaborative hub. Instead, strict tracking has turned desks into staging grounds for the Great Exit. Employers are trading genuine employee engagement for empty performative presence."

The Breakdown of Generational Trust

The survey also highlights a stark generational divide regarding corporate motives, bringing the executive defense of "in-person mentorship" into question.

Gen Z and younger Millennial workers report the lowest trust in leadership with average trust scores that sit nearly 20 points lower than their Baby Boomer counterparts.

Over a quarter of the workforce has successfully negotiated personal exceptions to the rule creating a visible, two-tier system that fuels immense resentment among the remaining 72.2% of employees who are forced to comply.

About the Study

This research is based on a survey of 1,000 full-time employees across the United States who have been subject to new or stricter return-to-office policies within the last 12 months. To ensure absolute transparency and the highest level of candor, Enhancv utilized a double-opt-in, mobile-first survey platform to collect anonymous feedback and open-ended messages directed at corporate leadership.

The full study and data breakdown are available at: <https://enhancv.com/blog/rto-stealth-layoffs/>

About Enhancv

Enhancv is a leader in AI-powered career tools, helping millions of people build modern, recruiter-approved resumes. By blending career data with human insights, Enhancv works to make the job market more transparent and effective for everyone.

Monika Kalinova

Enhancv R&D
monika@enhancv.com

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