Herrera
HR GROWTH PARTNERS

FOUNDER FIELD GUIDE

THE REMOTE WORKFORCE GUIDE

Remote and hybrid teams, *managed on purpose.*

The compliance details remote work adds, a remote work policy you can adapt, and the management habits that keep distributed teams connected and productive.



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A NOTE BEFORE YOU START

Remote work rarely fails because people can't work from home. It fails because the company never decided how remote work actually works.

Who can work where? How do we track hours? Who pays for the internet? How do managers know what's getting done without hovering? When those answers live only in people's heads, you get uneven rules, quiet resentment and compliance gaps nobody notices until they're expensive.

This guide covers both sides: the rules that follow your employees home, and the management habits that make a distributed team work. It pairs well with my Multi-State Employer Guide.

Peter Herrera

Founder, Herrera HR Growth Partners

SECTION 01

Remote work is here to stay

Despite the return-to-office headlines, Gallup's data shows how remote-capable U.S. employees work has held fairly steady since mid-2022.

52%
of remote-capable U.S. employees work hybrid

26%
work fully remote

22%
work fully on-site

28%
of hybrid managers have been trained to lead hybrid teams

Source: Gallup, Hybrid Work and Productivity: What the Data Show (2026).

The real gap is management

In Gallup's research, teams with a formal plan for how hybrid work gets done were 66% more likely to be engaged and 29% less likely to experience burnout. Yet in 2025, only 54% of managers strongly agreed they trust their remote teams to be productive. The answer isn't more surveillance. It's clearer expectations and better-trained managers.

Decide
Who can work remotely, from where, and what "in the office" means for hybrid roles.

Comply
Follow the laws of each employee's state, track hours, reimburse expenses and secure data.

Lead
Set outcomes, communicate on purpose, and give managers the skills to do it.

SECTION 02

Know where everyone works

Where an employee physically works usually decides which state's tax, wage, leave and safety laws apply. If you don't know where people are, you can't know which rules you're under.

Set location rules

- [ ] Decide which states, or countries, you'll allow people to work from.
- [ ] Require approval before anyone moves or works from somewhere new for more than a short trip.
- [ ] Collect the work address separately from the mailing address, and keep it current in payroll.
- [ ] Set a limit for temporary work from another location, for example two weeks a year, before HR reviews it.

MOVES IN THE U.S.

A new state means new setup

- Tax, unemployment and paid leave registrations
- New wage, sick leave and final pay rules
- Workers' comp coverage for the new state
- A state handbook supplement

MOVES ABROAD

Treat it as a different project

- Immigration and work authorization
- Foreign tax, social insurance and employment law
- Possible tax exposure for your company
- Usually needs an employer of record or local entity

> **Hybrid workers have a home state too**
>
> A hybrid employee who lives across a state line, say in Indiana while commuting to Chicago, can create obligations in both states. Check with your payroll provider before you assume everything runs through the office state.

SECTION 03

Hours, pay and expenses

For non-exempt employees, work done at the kitchen table counts the same as work done at the office.

ISSUE	WHAT THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SAYS
Tracking hours	You must pay for all hours you know or have reason to believe were worked. A reasonable way for employees to report extra time is one way to show you're tracking hours with reasonable diligence, but only if you pay for what's reported and don't discourage reporting
Short breaks	Breaks of 20 minutes or less count as paid time at home too. Meal breaks when the employee is fully relieved of duty don't
Lactation breaks	The PUMP Act applies to remote employees. They're entitled to break time and to privacy, including no required video during the break
FMLA eligibility	Remote employees qualify on the same basis. Their worksite is the office they report to or get assignments from

> **Off-hours messages add up**
>
> A non-exempt employee answering Slack at 9 p.m. is working. Set clear hours, tell managers not to expect after-hours replies, and make it easy to record extra time.

Expenses and equipment

A number of states require employers to reimburse necessary work expenses, including California, Illinois, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Hampshire and D.C., with narrower rules in others such as Iowa, Minnesota, New York and Massachusetts. In Illinois, employees generally submit expenses within 30 days, and a written policy can set reasonable limits. Federal law also bars expenses that push a non-exempt employee's pay below minimum wage.

The simplest approach: provide the core equipment, and pay a set monthly stipend for internet and phone that's reasonable for each state. Put it in writing.

SECTION 04

The compliance details

AREA	WHAT TO KNOW
Form I-9	E-Verify employers in good standing can examine documents remotely: review copies of the documents, hold a live video call where the employee shows the same documents, keep copies, and check the alternative procedure box. Everyone else must examine the original documents in person, which can be done by an authorized representative near the employee
Safety	OSHA doesn't inspect home offices and doesn't expect employers to. You're still responsible for hazards from equipment or work you provide or require, and work-related injuries at home are still recordable
Workers' comp	Injuries during work at home can be covered. Confirm your policy covers each state, and define work hours and workspace in your policy
Electronic monitoring	New York, Connecticut and Delaware require notice before monitoring employees' email, phone or internet use. New York requires written notice at hire, an acknowledgment and a posted notice
Accommodations	Remote work can be a reasonable accommodation under the ADA and the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, if the essential duties can be done from home. Decide case by case
Posters and notices	Deliver required notices electronically, and make sure remote employees can find them
Data security	Company devices or approved personal ones, multi-factor sign-in, updates, and clear rules on where company data can be stored

Monitoring: just because you can doesn't mean you should

Keystroke trackers and webcam checks tell you someone is busy, not that the work is good, and they signal distrust. If you do monitor, give clear notice, follow each state's rules, and measure outcomes instead.

SECTION 05

Write your remote work policy

Two pages is plenty. It should answer the questions employees and managers actually ask.

SECTION	WHAT IT COVERS
Eligibility	Which roles can be remote, hybrid or on-site, and who decides
Location	Approved states or countries, approval to move, temporary work elsewhere
Hours and availability	Core hours, time zones, response expectations, tracking time for non-exempt employees
In-office expectations	Anchor days for hybrid teams and in-person gatherings for remote teams
Equipment and expenses	What you provide, the stipend, how to submit expenses, returning equipment
Workspace and security	A safe, private workspace, data rules, reporting injuries and lost devices
Changes	That remote arrangements can change with business needs, and how much notice you'll give

Sample language

> ***Location.*** *"Employees must work from an approved work location in the United States. Please get approval from HR before you move or plan to work from another state for more than 14 days in a calendar year."*

> ***Hours.*** *"Non-exempt employees must record all time worked, including time spent on email or messages outside scheduled hours. Report any unrecorded time to HR; you will be paid for all time worked."*

> ***Expenses.*** *"The company provides a laptop and pays a monthly stipend for internet and phone use. Submit other necessary business expenses within 30 days."*

Sample language is a starting point. Adapt it to each state where you have employees.

SECTION 06

Manage remote teams well

Remote teams don’t need more meetings. They need clearer expectations and more deliberate communication.

1 Manage outcomes, not activity

Agree on three to five outcomes per person per quarter, and review progress weekly. Green dots and quick replies are not performance.

2 Write down how the team works

A one-page team agreement: core hours, which tool for what (chat for quick, email for formal, documents for decisions), expected response times and when to get on a call.

3 Protect the one-on-one

Weekly, on camera, rarely canceled. The employee owns the agenda. It’s where problems surface early, before they show up in a resignation letter.

4 Give feedback more often, not less

Remote employees miss the hallway “nice job” and the quick course correction. Gallup reports that only 21% of employees strongly agree they got meaningful feedback in the past week.

5 Watch for proximity bias

People in the office get seen, and often get promoted. Review assignments, raises and promotions by work location twice a year to make sure remote people aren’t falling behind.

Onboarding remote hires

Remote new hires can’t pick things up by watching. Plan the first 30 days on purpose.

WHEN	WHAT HAPPENS
Before day one	Equipment arrives and works; accounts are ready; I-9 is planned; a welcome note from the manager
Week 1	Daily check-ins with the manager; a peer buddy; meetings with five key people; a small first project
Weeks 2 to 4	Clear 30-day goals; weekly one-on-ones; an in-person visit if you can manage it
Day 30	A two-way conversation: what’s working, what’s confusing, and what they need

Keep people connected

- Bring remote teams together in person on a regular rhythm, such as once or twice a year, with real work on the agenda.
- For hybrid teams, set team anchor days so the office is worth the commute.
- Recognize work in public channels so remote contributions are visible.
- Train managers. Leading a remote team is a skill, and most were never taught it.

Score your remote readiness

1	We have a written remote work policy, and everyone has signed it.	YES NO
2	We know where every employee works, and moves need approval.	YES NO
3	Non-exempt remote employees record all time worked, including after hours.	YES NO
4	Our expense and equipment rules meet each state’s requirements.	YES NO
5	Every manager holds weekly one-on-ones and sets clear quarterly outcomes.	YES NO
6	We review promotions and raises by work location.	YES NO

6
A strong foundation. Keep training managers.

4–5
Close. Start with the policy and time tracking.

0–3
Gaps in both compliance and management. Let’s build the basics.

SECTION 07

How I help

I lead HR for growing companies on a fractional basis, on one fixed monthly retainer. For remote and hybrid teams, that means getting the rules right in every state and helping your managers lead people they don't see every day.

- A remote work policy that fits each of your states
- Time tracking, expense and equipment rules
- Location tracking and new-state setup
- Manager coaching on remote performance and feedback
- Remote onboarding plans
- Accommodation requests, including remote work

20+ years of HR leadership	**4 industries** financial services, healthcare, hospitality and tech	**2 companies** where I built HR from scratch	**1 to 250** employees: the companies I serve



ABOUT PETER HERRERA

I've spent more than 20 years leading HR in financial services, healthcare, hospitality and tech, including building the HR function from scratch at two companies. I founded Herrera HR Growth Partners to give growing companies senior HR leadership on a monthly retainer, for a fraction of the cost of a full-time hire. I'm based in Chicago and work with companies across the U.S.

SOURCES

1. Gallup, Hybrid Work and Productivity: What the Data Show (2026); Hybrid Work in Retreat? Barely. (2025).
2. U.S. Department of Labor, Field Assistance Bulletins 2020-5 and 2023-1; OSHA Directive CPL 02-00-125, Home-Based Worksites; USCIS, Remote Examination of Documents.
3. New York Civil Rights Law §52-c; Delaware Code title 19 §705; Connecticut General Statutes §31-48d.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Leading a remote team? *Let's make it work on purpose.*

Bring your readiness score from page 9, or the remote work question you're stuck on, to a free intro call.

FREE 20-MINUTE INTRO CALL

What you'll leave with

- The compliance gaps remote work has created for you
- What your remote work policy should say
- How a monthly retainer would work for a company your size

No pitch deck, no obligation. If you don't need me, I'll tell you.

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