

FP WEEKLY CHECKLIST: DOES YOUR COMPANY NEED A CHIEF REMOTE OFFICER?

Insights

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Each week, FP Weekly members receive a practical and cutting-edge checklist of issues to consider, action steps to take, and goals to accomplish to ensure you remain on the top of your game when it comes to workplace relations and employment law compliance. This week we provide you a checklist of items to consider when determining whether your organization needs a Chief Remote Officer – and how to get the most out of such a position.

What is a Chief Remote Officer?

Whether your organization has long been friendly to remote or hybrid work, or whether you have adapted quite a bit since the start of the pandemic, it might be time to take a fresh look at where things stand. Some companies have created a singular position to take charge of this crucial task rather than spreading out responsibility over multiple departments – a high-ranking leader solely dedicated to overseeing remote work for the benefit of organization and worker alike. This is the role of the Chief Remote Officer. Once considered only necessary for tech companies, we're now seeing organizations in all fields bring aboard leaders to handle this unique position.

Imagine you had a single leader to assist your organization on all elements of remote working as they relate to your company. They could look at all aspects of your corporate structure specifically through the lens of remote work and then identify what you need to adapt or upgrade to get the most out of each function. Most importantly, they would then champion and oversee those changes. Rather than a distributed model where each department handles their

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function while considering the role of remote work, you would have a single source who would be dedicated to getting the most out of it.

But they could have a longer-term purpose after the initial work is done. You could maintain them in a leadership role in your organization to ensure there is continuous improvement in those functions. The checklists below will help you determine whether such a role is right for your company, how to hire a CRO (or its equivalent), and how to get the most out of such a leader.

Hiring a CRO

First, determine **whether your company** is ready for revolution. While you might know you need a Chief Officer, you need to determine whether the time is right to dive in. Is your organization ready to fully commit to change this will bring about? Will your leadership buy in? Appointing a powerless figurehead without the backing of your organization's leaders will most likely backfire and do greater harm than good.

Consider whether **retaining a consultant** rather than a full-time employee in the CRO role is right for your organization as a start. A gradual evolution might help your leaders recognize the value of a singular remote worker.

Is this a role with an **expiration date**, a "fixer" to correct the ship and set you on the right course? Some Chief Remote Officer roles best as a non-permanent role whose work is essentially done once they have embedded the changes into your company's DNA, while others provide ongoing support and leadership such a role provides.

Determine the **correct job title**. You don't have to have a Suite title in order for this role to function effectively. The title could be a director-level or similar leader depending on the scope of the role.

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structure and organizational fit. If not a standalone role, some organizations are housing this a leader in Human Resources Department to start.

— Once you have committed to the project, **develop a description** with the help of leaders across your organization. Gather all of their input about the way their departments can be aided by having a remote leader.

— When moving to the hiring process, recognize that not many “experts” handling this role right now. Out the tech space, **this is a new role** in corporate America. Identify your candidates accordingly and look for skills that will translate to the role.

— Look for someone who is an **ideas person**. They will continually come up with new concepts to get the work done.

— But they also need to be grounded in reality and have **skills to execute on the ideas** that are identified as implementation.

What Should Your CRO Do?

— Once hired, the first order of business will be to **rev your company policies and job descriptions** to get the various roles at play and the structure they are within. Some important policies include a written remote work policy, the employee handbook, and other policies that govern employees.

— They should then **meet with all department heads** to discuss issues and pain points, gathering information about which they can make your leaders’ lives easier.

— An early task will be **prioritizing** which functions need immediate resources compared to others. Each org

will be different in this regard, depending on how the evolution has played out over the past several years

Of the various functions that could use your CRO's input, it is likely that they should get involved in **recruiting** at an early stage. Your organization may need to adapt marketing and hiring plans in order to more closely reflect the current reality and to position your organization as an attractive landing pad.

Another key issue that you may want to have them input on is your **onboarding** process for remote workers. Ensuring consistency in the process – while building frameworks that make workers feel connected to and invested in the organization from day one – are critical functions that may have been overlooked in the past few years.

Fostering a **collaborative work environment** for the organization is key – and integrating remote workers into the picture will also be a critical task for your CRO. They will need to guide you in creating and maintaining a positive workplace culture despite having a far-flung and diverse workforce. They will need to do more than just schedule occasional Zoom happy hour. Instead, sustained team-building exercises and other effective techniques will need to be deployed in order to build and maintain a positive culture.

They will want to help **manage workflow** of employees through collaboration and regular contact and check-ins.

Two other areas that might deserve early attention: **learning and development** space; and **promotion and advancement** opportunities.

Determine the level of involvement that your CRO will have when remote workers develop **performance issues**. Your CRO should partner with department leaders and your HR team in addressing the problem, identifying potential solutions, and removing barriers to success – while supporting your organization's efforts should it be determined that discipline is appropriate.

For those CROs who will stay in the role on a longer-term basis, they should **conduct regular surveys of the workforce** to receive real-time feedback on all aspects of the remote work experience. They can then work with

leaders to make adjustments as necessary.

_____ From a big-picture perspective, the CRO should **pro**
look to the future to identify impending problems in
remote work – and then work to solve them before t

_____ Another key function: serving as **conduit to outside**
regarding workplace law compliance in states or co
where remote employees work. They should collab
outside counsel to ensure your company is assessi
and ensuring compliance as your remote workforce

Conclusion

We will continue to monitor developments regarding the rise of remote work in today's workplace and provide updates where warranted, so make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. For further information, contact the authors of this Insight or your Fisher Phillips attorney.