



2801 S. University Ave.  
Little Rock, AR 72204

April 22, 2026

Anderson Chester  
*Managing Partner*  
Irol Industries  
1001 Main St.  
Chicago, IL 60827

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I am pleased to submit the attached strategic report, “Addressing Return-to-Office Resistance at Irol Industries: Rebuild Trust, Align Stakeholders, and Implement a Flexible Hybrid Model.” The purpose of this document is to assess the level of resistance from employees regarding Irol's return-to-office (RTO) initiative as well as offer suggestions to help in maintaining organizational performance while responding to employee concerns.

Three main suggestions are recommended within this strategic report: (1) rebuild trust using open communication, (2) align stakeholders' priorities through formalized processes of engagement, and (3) implement a phased-in flexible hybrid work model that will meet both the organization's operational needs while also meeting the expected levels of the workforce.

These recommendations are supported by recent studies and were developed with the intent to reduce resistance, sustain productiveness, and ultimately improve long term organizational performance.

This document also includes practical approaches for implementing each recommendation including developing a plan for the phase-by-phase roll out of each recommendation, establishing measures of success, and ensuring that all leaders are aligned on their communication so there will be no surprises or disruptions to the organization during the transition.

Thank you for the opportunity to analyze this issue and provide recommendations. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these findings further.

Sincerely,

*John Hancox*

John Hancox

Communication Consultant

# Memorandum

Date: April 22, 2026

To: Anderson Chester, Managing Partner

From: Hancox John, Communication Consultant JH

Re: Strategic Report: Addressing Return-to-Office Resistance at Irol Industries

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## Rebuild Trust, Align Stakeholders, and Implement a Flexible Hybrid Model

Irol Industries is having a major problem with employees resisting their return-to-office plan. In addition, it has been determined that there is a disconnect as to what the leadership of Irol wants and what the employees want or need. The recommendations outlined below include a communications plan which will address three primary areas; (1) align stakeholders' priorities via structured communications engagements, (2) rebuild the trust lost via communications by being open and honest with all parties involved in this process, and (3) implement a phased hybrid model to meet both the corporate requirements and the employees' expectations.

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## Identify the Root Causes of Resistance to Restore Trust

Irol Industries currently finds itself in a communication crisis due to the implementation of an in-office mandate for four days per week. The response from Irol's workforce has been overwhelming as reported, more than 40% of employees signed a petition against the policy, while 24% stated they were seriously contemplating departing the organization. Although management at Irol hopes to foster improved collaboration, mentorship and innovation through its new policies, many employees see the mandated in-office time as a reduction in flexibility which was previously found to be productive.

The key reason behind the strong employee pushback is based on what is referred to as a **psychological contract violation**. Many employees have structured their lives around remote work options. Due to the policy, many employees will experience increased expenses, longer commutes and less autonomy in their work. Based on these changes, employees feel a significant amount of distrust with respect to why physical attendance is being mandated given that productivity and customer satisfaction levels have remained unchanged.

This reaction is supported by research. Employees demonstrate higher engagement and commitment to their jobs when allowed autonomy in how they complete their work tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2020)<sup>1</sup>. Remote work also provides a better opportunity for completing tasks in a distraction-free manner because it reduces interruptions and allows employees to manage their own schedules (Waldrep et al., 2024)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Self-determination theory. *Self-Determination Theory*.  
<https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory/>

<sup>2</sup> Waldrep, C. E., et al. (2024). Preferences for remote and hybrid work: Evidence from employee survey data. *Social Sciences*, 13(6), 303. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13060303>

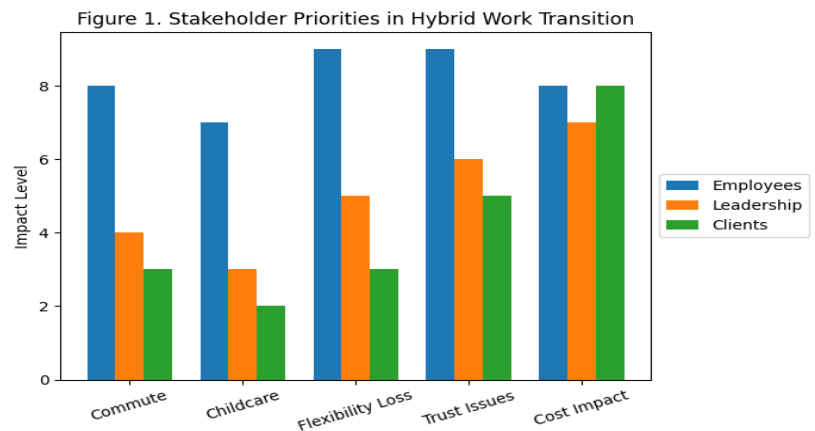
Limiting flexibility in terms of the workplace without having sought input from employees regarding this issue has further intensified the opposition.

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## Align Stakeholder Needs to Support Organizational Goals

Numerous groups across various generations and positions of employment exhibit different forms of employee resistance as shown in Figure 1 (ChatGPT, 2026)<sup>3</sup>.

- The most prevalent concerns of employees include flexibility, cost, and fairness. Younger employees tend to be most concerned about being able to afford their living arrangements as well as having mobility in where they can live. Caregivers, such as those who care for young children or elderly parents, have concerns regarding childcare costs and achieving a better work life balance. Older employees prefer to work independently and reduce travel time from home to the workplace.



- As shown in Figure 1, the leadership's primary concern will continue to remain the organization's long-term viability, maintaining company culture, developing more effective mentorship programs, and providing support for innovation. In doing so leadership's goals and objectives align with the HR 70-20-10 learning model. According to (Stefaniak 2025)<sup>4</sup>. The HR 70-20-10 model indicates that 20 percent of an individual's professional development comes from mentoring and social interaction.
- A third group as shown in Figure 1 are clients. While client satisfaction may not necessarily relate to the number of hours worked at an office or other worksite, clients do expect a certain level of consistency when it comes to services provided by the organization. Therefore, organizations must find ways to communicate effectively with all three groups and address the conflicting expectations of each group.

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<sup>3</sup> ChatGPT. (2026). *ChatGPT* (March 2026 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/>

<sup>4</sup> Stefaniak, J. (2025, August 18). *Everything you need to know about the 70/20/10 model*. Litmos. <https://www.litmos.com/blog/articles/what-is-70-20-10-model>

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## Implement Transparent Communication to Strengthen Engagement

To successfully respond to this crisis, management needs to create an internal communication plan using transparency with employees and open communication in which employees can participate as well as allow for some level of flexibility.

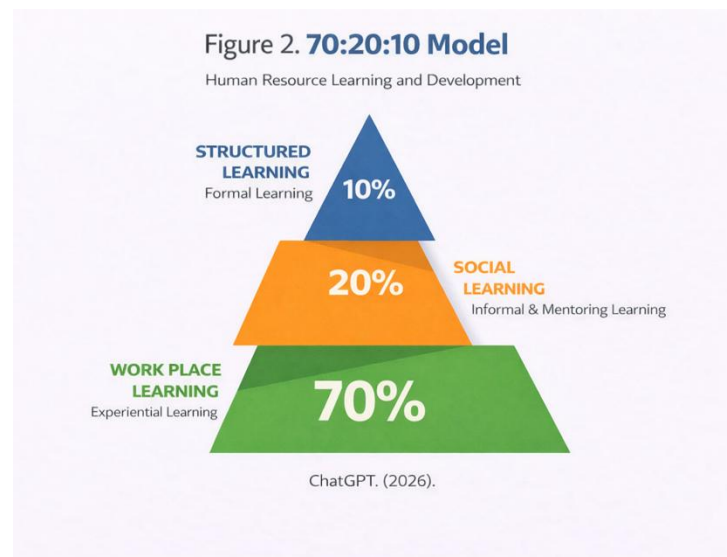
- Employee Value Will Be Strengthened Using "YOU" Perspective Messaging.
- Management communications need to focus on employee value and how all employees will share in the successes.
- As you have maintained high levels of client satisfaction and productivity, so too will you enjoy the same type of flexibility and collaborative and mentorship opportunities that we believe you will find most valuable.
- The changes being made today are based upon your input therefore, it is likely that your feedback will shape the implementation of the next phases.
- A phased-in approach will allow us to test new approaches and identify what works best, thereby allowing both the organization and our employees to achieve their goals.
- By emphasizing employee benefits instead of strict adherence to policies, resistance to the changes will be lessened.

### Gather Employee Feedback to Build Trust

Build trust with employees by encouraging them to provide input prior to implementing changes, prior to making any organizational changes, management should take steps to solicit employee input via surveys, meetings and/or group discussions.

### Explain the Value of In-Person Work

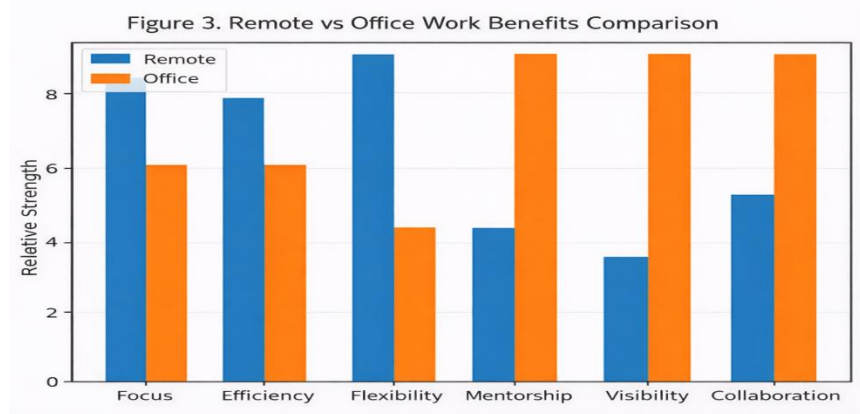
As illustrated by Figure 2, managers can support professional development and collaboration when employees have a clear understanding of how working in an office contributes to their professional growth. The 70/20/10 model illustrates the significant impact of formalized mentoring and informal learning experiences on employee success (Stefaniak, 2025)<sup>5</sup> both of which are enhanced in person-based environments.



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<sup>5</sup> Stefaniak, J. (2025, August 18). *Everything you need to know about the 70/20/10 model*. Litmos.  
<https://www.litmos.com/blog/articles/what-is-70-20-10-model>

In Figure 3 (ChatGPT, 2026)<sup>6</sup>. Research shows that remote work improves focused task completion and efficiency due to fewer interruptions (Waldrep et al., 2024)<sup>7</sup>, while in-person work strengthens mentoring, relationship visibility, and organizational awareness through spontaneous interactions (Waizenegger et al., 2020)<sup>8</sup>.



### Introduce a Phased Hybrid Model to Balance Flexibility and Collaboration

To balance employee needs and organizational goals, a Hybrid Work Model will allow for an adaptable, staged implementation of the new way of working. The Hybrid Work Model in Figure 4 & 5 illustrates how collaboration can be integrated into the workweek while providing flexibility. Gradually implementing changes allows employees to adjust to the new way of working and provide management with opportunities to assess results and modify practices based on data. Studies have shown that hybrid models maintain or improve worker productivity compared to traditional office-based models and reduce the potential turnover costs of remote workers (Bloom et al., 2024)<sup>9</sup>.

In addition, gradual implementation of policies is less stressful than abrupt implementations of policies. This provides a basis for creating consistent performance expectations and for equitable evaluations during performance review cycles. Scheduling structures are also important considerations in the design of the Hybrid Work Model. For example, 10 hour days over four days could potentially create conflicts around child care availability whereas 8 hour days would allow for greater alignment with the typical day care schedule and reduced external stresses which impact both employee performance and retention.

Figure 4. Hybrid Work Structure

<b>2 Office Days</b> In-person collaboration	<b>1 Team Day</b> Team interaction	<b>2 Flexible Days</b> Remote flexibility
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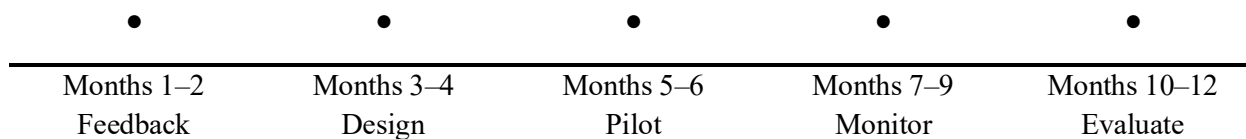
<sup>6</sup> ChatGPT. (2026). *ChatGPT* (March 2026 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/>

<sup>7</sup> Waldrep, C. E., et al. (2024). Preferences for remote and hybrid work: Evidence from employee survey data. *Social Sciences*, 13(6), 303. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13060303>

<sup>8</sup> Waizenegger, L., McKenna, B., Cai, W., & Bendz, T. (2020). An affordance perspective of team collaboration and enforced working from home during COVID-19. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 29(4), 429–442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0960085X.2020.1800417>

<sup>9</sup> Bloom, N., Han, R., & Liang, J. (2024). Hybrid working from home improves retention without damaging performance. *Nature*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07500-2>

Figure 5. Hybrid Work Model Timeline



### **Align Managers to Ensure Consistent Messaging**

Managers should be trained to use similar communication techniques with employees that include common “talking points” around employee value, flexibility and collaboration. Consistency of message helps eliminate ambiguity and fosters trust in managers.

### **Maintain Client Confidence to Protect Service Delivery**

Teams that deal directly with clients should assure them that client service quality/ delivery will continue without disruption as a result of this transition. This is to ensure stability within external relationships.

### **Provide Individual Flexibility Pathways to Promote Fairness**

Managers need the option to be able to accommodate individual requests on a case-by-case basis based on their employee's.

- Disability Accommodations
- Personal Child Care Responsibilities
- Significant Commute Challenges

Organizations are moving towards being flexible about work so they can meet the needs of both their employees and operational demands. Research conducted by (PwC 2023)<sup>10</sup>, found that employees want increased flexibility in terms of when and where they work but have concerns about maintaining productivity and collaboration at the same time. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2025)<sup>11</sup>, has also provided guidance that supports flexible work options as a method to increase employee job satisfaction, improve employee retention and promote workplace equality.

### **Measure Outcomes to Strengthen Transparency and Trust**

Managers should measure and report on various key performance indicators such as:

- Retention Rates (Target >10% of 24%)
- Employee Engagement
- Mentorship Participation
- Client Satisfaction

Reporting these measures will reinforce that decisions are made based upon data and not assumption.

<sup>10</sup> PwC. (2023). *What workers want: Adjusting to a new age of flexible working*. PricewaterhouseCoopers. <https://www.pwc.com/jg/en/events/what-workers-want-adjusting-to-new-age-of-flexible-working.html>

<sup>11</sup> Society for Human Resource Management. (2025, December 16). *Managing flexible work arrangements*. SHRM. <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/toolkits/managing-flexible-work-arrangements>

## **Strengthen Trust to Support Long-Term Performance**

Irol Industries can improve its employees' willingness to accept changes and ultimately enhance the overall performance of the organization through the processes of rebuilding trust, aligning stakeholder priorities, and introducing a phased hybrid model. Through this process, the leaders of Irol Industries can provide employees with a voice in decisions regarding how best to meet the needs of various stakeholders, allowing for increased flexibility in terms of meeting those needs, while increasing opportunities for collaboration among the workforce.