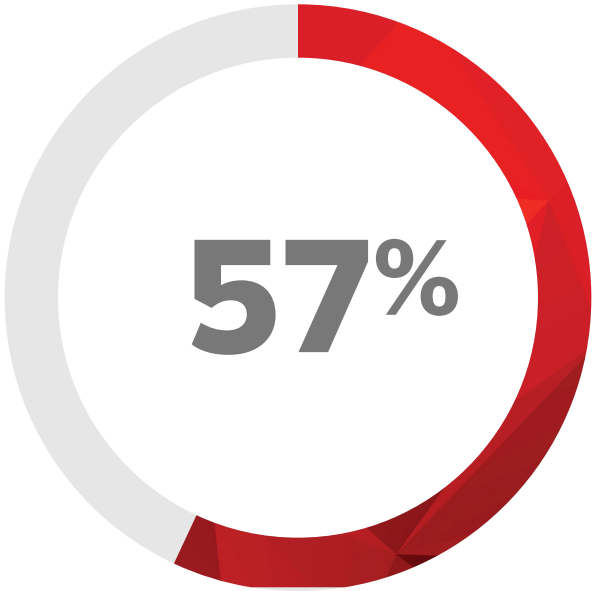
Staples

Workplace Survey 2017

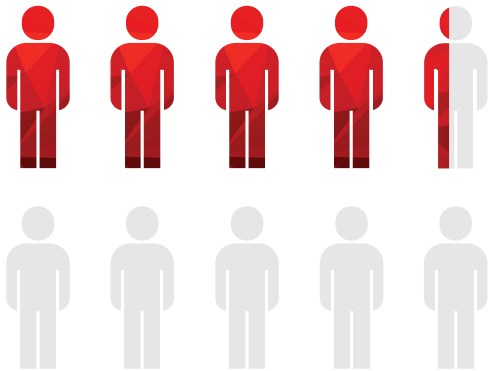
Workplace Productivity

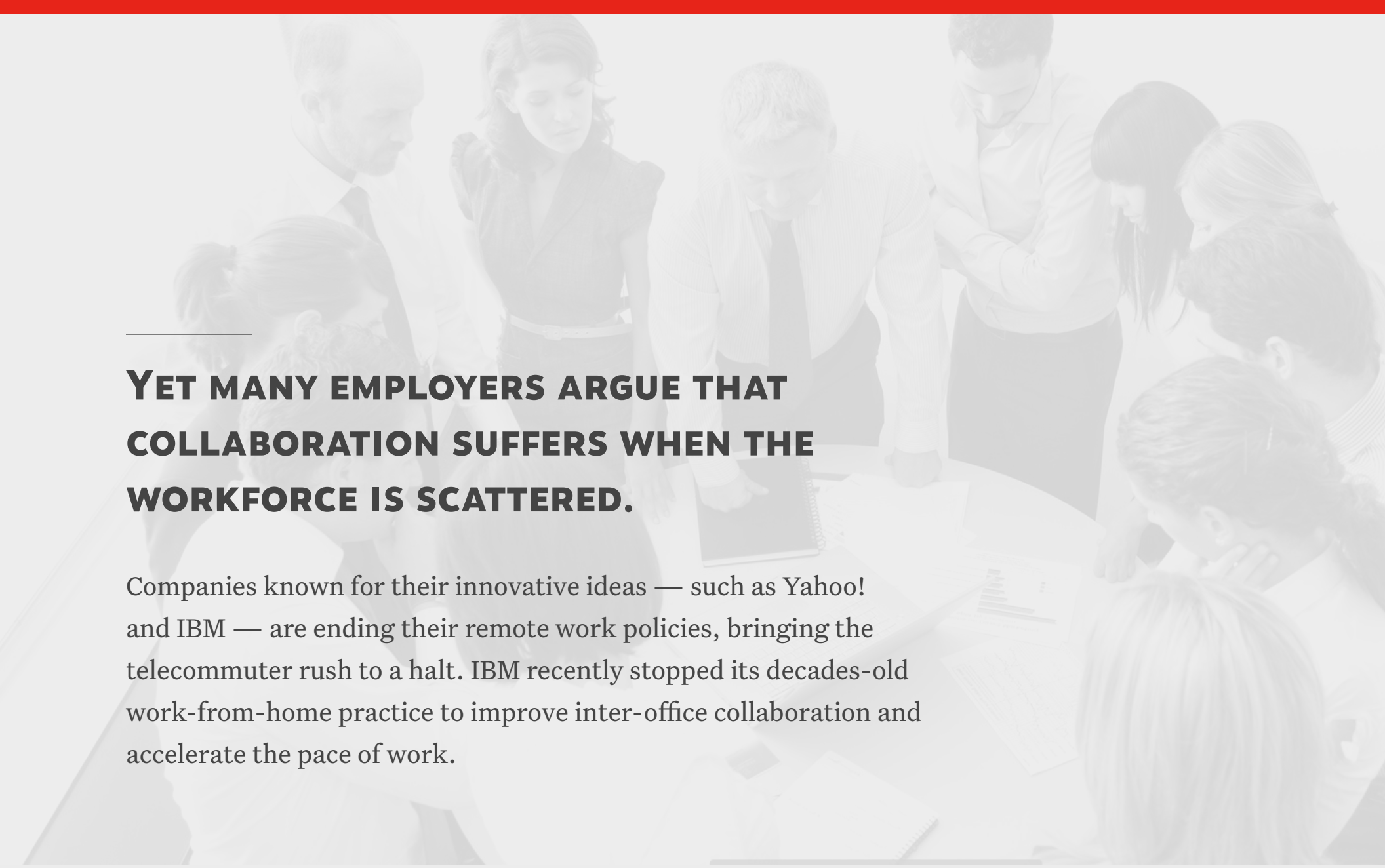
Strike the balance between home & office.



Working from home isn't just about personal convenience. Nearly 60 percent of workers see it as a way to eliminate office distractions like chatty coworkers, according to the most recent Staples Workplace Survey.

It's an essential recruiting tool as well. In the Staples survey, 43 percent of respondents listed flexible work-from-home policies as a must-have when considering a job.



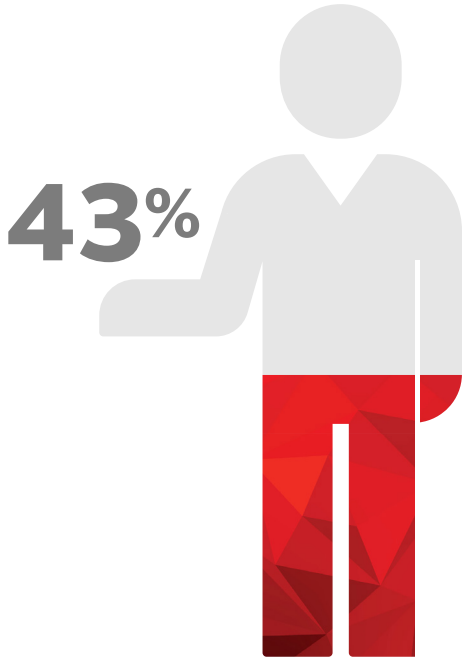


Yet many employers argue that collaboration suffers when the workforce is scattered.

Companies known for their innovative ideas — such as Yahoo! and IBM — are ending their remote work policies, bringing the telecommuter rush to a halt. IBM recently stopped its decades-old work-from-home practice to improve inter-office collaboration and accelerate the pace of work.

And when employees aren't face-to-face, it can be difficult to collaborate on a project with a lot of moving parts.

43% of survey respondents report they are "much more focused" when working from an office, rather than remotely.



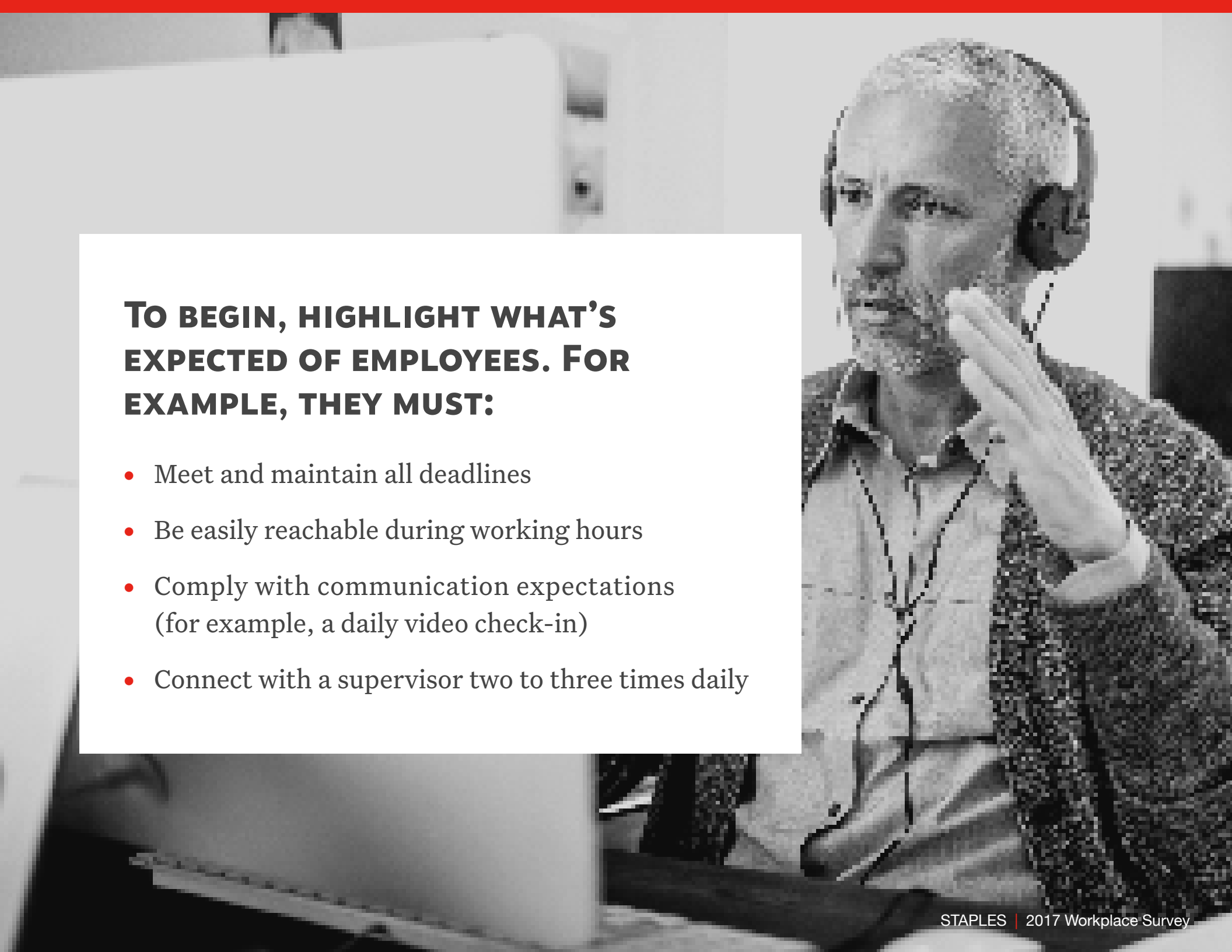
The good news is it's possible to have the best of both worlds — the option to work remotely from time to time, but a culture that enhances collaboration.

Read on for tips on how to strike the right balance.

1

Establish a clear company policy

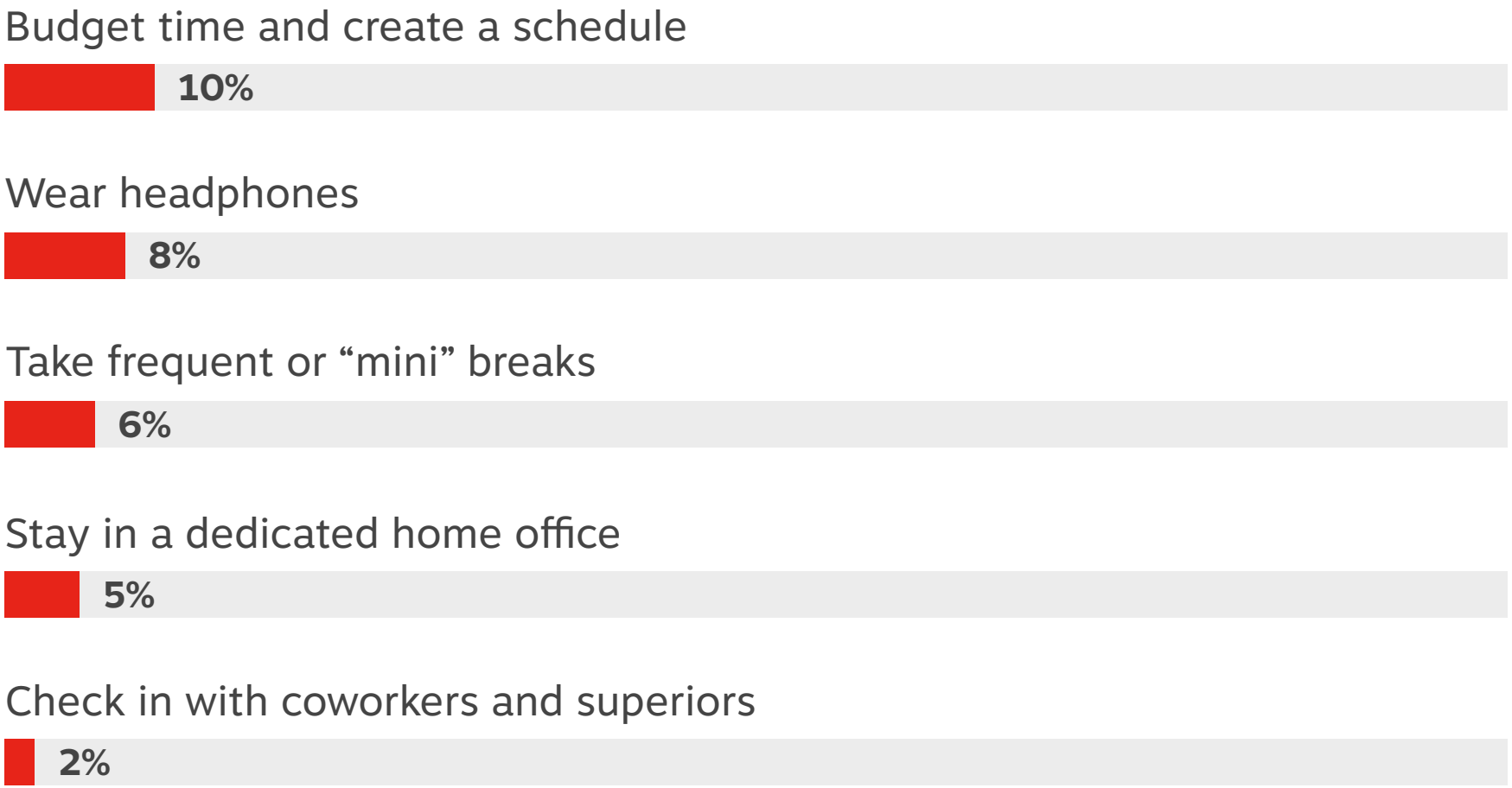
To ensure clarity on your company's approach, revise your telecommuter policy to state when and how often staff has the option to work remotely. Let your team know upfront what you need from them to maintain the perk.



To begin, highlight what's expected of employees. For example, they must:

- Meet and maintain all deadlines
- Be easily reachable during working hours
- Comply with communication expectations (for example, a daily video check-in)
- Connect with a supervisor two to three times daily

To ensure productivity, share the methods commonly used by Staples Workplace Survey respondents to stay focused while working from home:



Additionally, specify exactly when and on what terms working remotely is acceptable. For example, the option may be determined by:

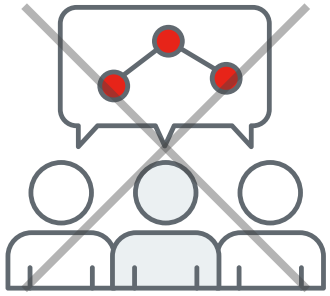
- **A situation:** If a child is sick or bad weather inhibits the work commute.
- **Day of the week:** Every Wednesday and Friday are dedicated "work-from-home" days.
- **Workload:** If a project requires deep thinking or is under a tight deadline.

2

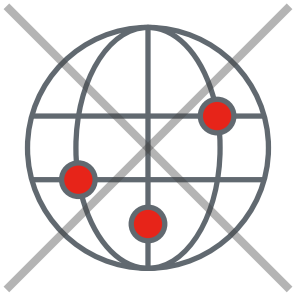
Employ tools to enhance collaboration

Because of remote work's rising popularity, a fleet of software programs now exists to fill in various communication or collaboration gaps.

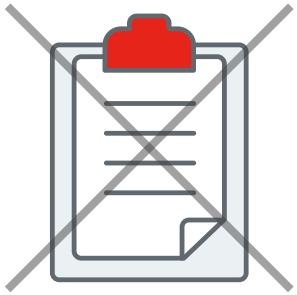
To find the program that's right for you, determine the challenges your team faces when working remotely. For example:



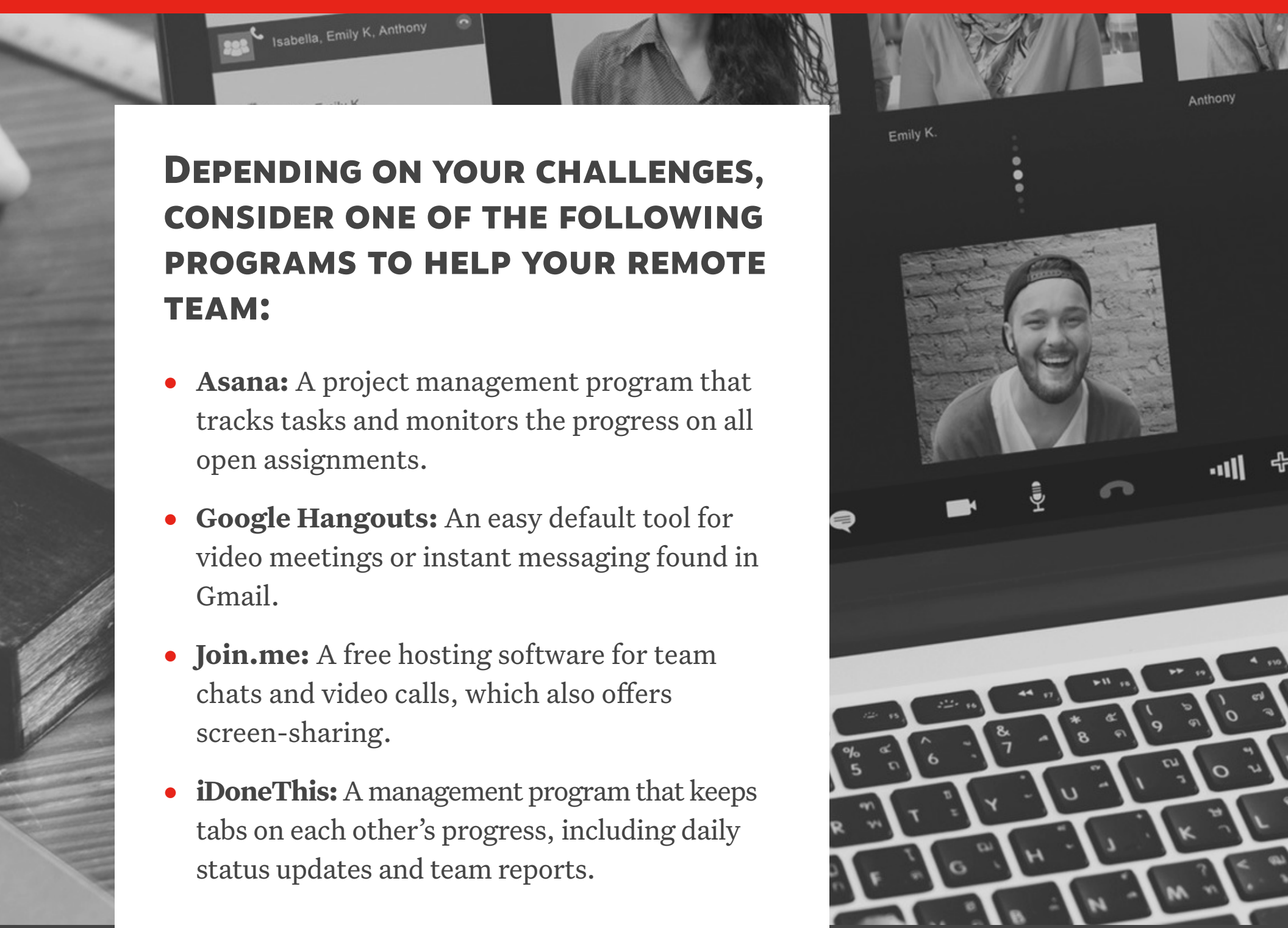
Lack of communication



Difficulty managing a team in various locations



Inability to keep track of daily tasks



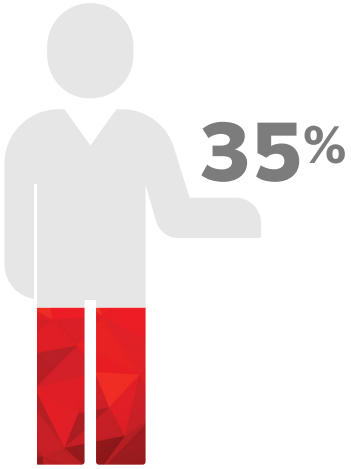
Depending on your challenges, consider one of the following programs to help your remote team:

- **Asana:** A project management program that tracks tasks and monitors the progress on all open assignments.
- **Google Hangouts:** An easy default tool for video meetings or instant messaging found in Gmail.
- **Join.me:** A free hosting software for team chats and video calls, which also offers screen-sharing.
- **iDoneThis:** A management program that keeps tabs on each other's progress, including daily status updates and team reports.

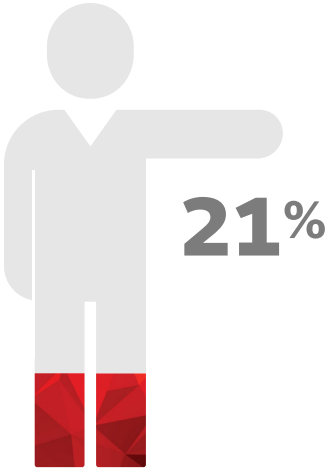
3

Create an enticing office environment

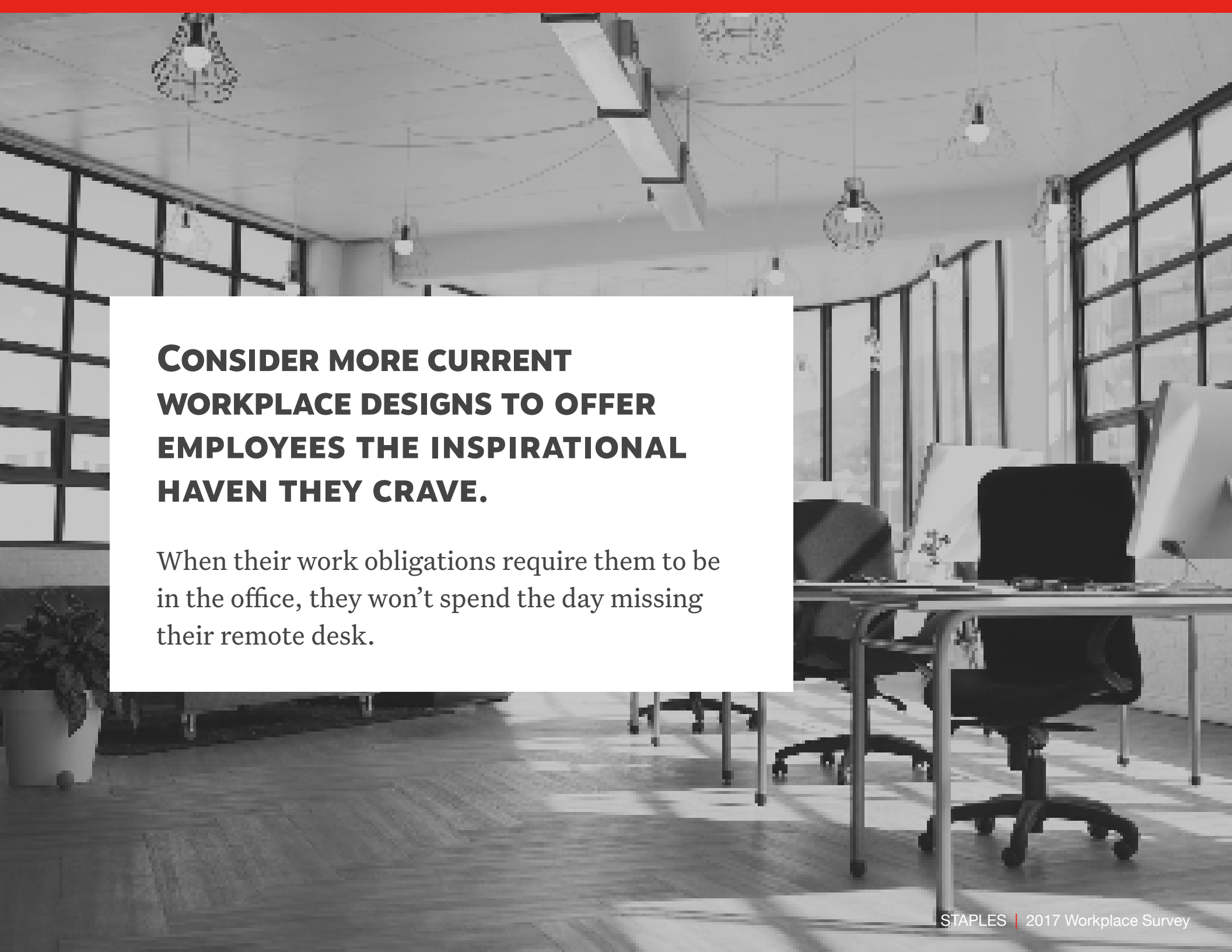
If your goal is to encourage more productivity for employees in the workplace, office design can have an impact. Show you take productivity concerns seriously by forming a workplace environment where employees can feel comfortable, inspired and able to concentrate.



35 percent of workers say their office design makes it harder to focus on work. By dedicating the right resources to your office design, you may see an elevated work effort from staff.



Tellingly, 21 percent of workers polled said they would take a pay cut to work in a nicer office.

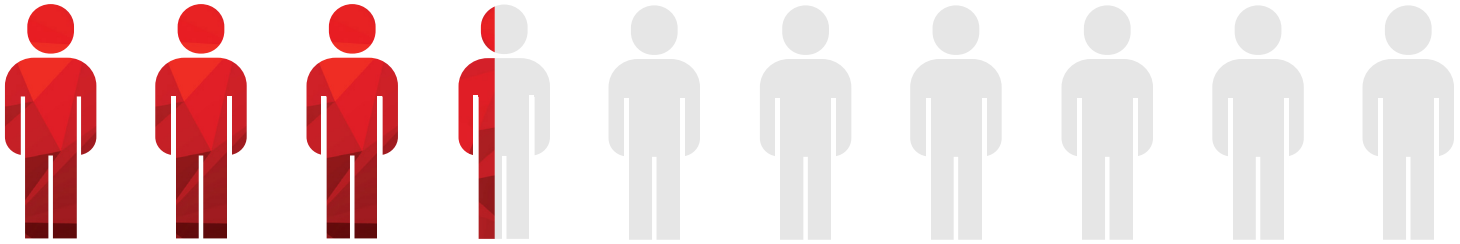


Consider more current workplace designs to offer employees the inspirational haven they crave.

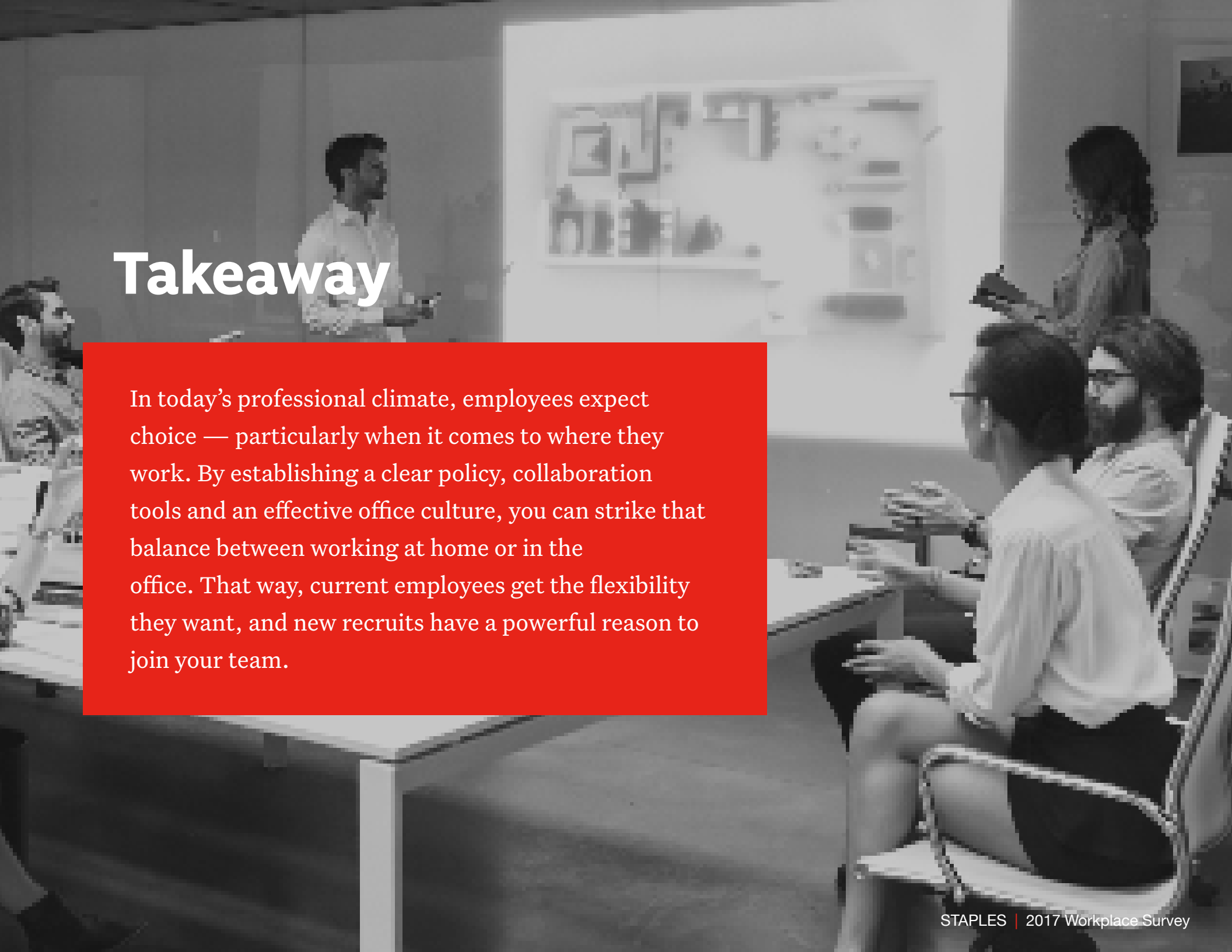
When their work obligations require them to be in the office, they won't spend the day missing their remote desk.

Respondents in the Staples Workplace Survey cited the following as additions that would improve the workplace:

- A designated collaboration zone that inspires teams to brainstorm, like a colorful room with a whiteboard, coffee, snacks and thought-starters to get the team humming.
- A relaxation room for resetting the mind or unwinding before a presentation, devoid of electronics to give eyes and brains a much-needed rest.
- A standing desk room or flexible seating to alleviate the monotony of being in the same place every day.



33 percent of Workplace Survey respondents reported their offices were “loud.” Simply designating a quiet area can alleviate this issue by providing a space for deep concentration and an escape from distractions.



Takeaway

In today's professional climate, employees expect choice — particularly when it comes to where they work. By establishing a clear policy, collaboration tools and an effective office culture, you can strike that balance between working at home or in the office. That way, current employees get the flexibility they want, and new recruits have a powerful reason to join your team.

For more tips on finding the right telecommuting balance for your business,

visit the Staples Workplace Survey Website.

Staples