**How has the return to the office impacted you?**

**The Good**

**Social connection with coworkers**

* I've enjoyed seeing co-workers again.
* It’s great to meet the people I'm working with.
* I work in the newsroom and am happy to return to the office once a week to see my colleagues and my editors. I did miss that connection while I was working from home, and I'm looking forward to attending regular team meetings in person.
* It's nice to see people, and I see the benefit of being able to interact with colleagues.

**Collaboration with coworkers**

* It has been nice to have organic conversations with colleagues and supervisors about stories, etc.
* For our relatively small group, the once a week gathering has been beneficial. It encourages me to stay up to date on what other reporters are working on while getting their feedback on stories I'm working on or teams/players they have seen.
* There is definite benefit to meeting in person. I also have made the effort to talk to the new folks who are there on those days. There is no substitute for the interactions that happen in person between new employees and more experienced coworkers. Is it easier for me to work from home? Yes. But I believe in the necessity of personal interaction to make journalism that is the best it can be and to make a workplace that works best … I also believe a balance can be struck between work at home and gathering to function best as a team.

**Flexibility from individual managers**

* Going back once a week seems reasonable, and I appreciate the ability to choose between a Tuesday and a Thursday each week. That's great.
* I would like to acknowledge that my immediate manager has been extremely supportive, flexible and accommodating during these past 2+ years of our remote work schedules.
* It has worked out well. … My boss has been flexible.
* I'm glad the RTO plan has been flexible. My manager left it up to individual team members for which days we wanted to be in the office … While I do feel a little less productive/more distracted on office days, I do appreciate being able to see my coworkers and catch up in person, definitely better for connecting with folks from all departments. I also enjoy the flexibility of the workday hours on days that I need to make the commute to the office (45-60 mins each way). Being able to leave at a good breaking point in the day to avoid traffic is important for returning to the office not feeling like such a burden.
* It has been nice to come in for one day to feel a part of the team since I'm still new … While I do believe it will help build community, and make a better sense of team between all employees, I also understand that not everyone is productive in the office. I love to see everyone, but the pandemic has changed how we approach work and work environments.

**The Bad**

**The distractions**

* I'm not getting even half of the work done in the office that I did at home. The office is very distracting, noisy, people coming up to my desk, and basically I am NOT happy that we are being forced back into the office.
* Stressed and anxious. I do understand one day for meetings or connecting with colleagues but doing the actual work is distracting and less productive in the office, so I feel any more should be a choice/flexible.
* Still early, but I seem to get less done.
* As an evening worker, I do find the first two hours to be incredibly distracting … Work still gets done, but I’m used to a much quieter environment.
* It can be very distracting, and I am judicious about when I go and have changed where I sit when I am in there to be around fewer people.
* It is so distracting in the office! I'm not as productive while there, and that's a complete opposite of when I'm home. The few times I have been in the office, I have come home not feeling well and then sick for a few days each time. We have so much pressure on us to sell, and then dragging us down with spending time in the office, especially during one of our busiest times of the season, makes no sense. This is making me take a hard look at both physical and mental health now. I know I'm not alone; I have heard this from several of my other coworkers as well!
* Once in the office, it's difficult to focus and concentrate because of the noise/interruptions, and I'm physically and mentally exhausted after I get home. … After a most successful work year, I'm concerned that the noise, distractions, interruptions, etc., that returning to the office brings will affect my sales/commission. If it does … is the job worth it with the increase in cost to go to work? We haven't received a significant and meaningful pay raise in years.

**Added costs/commuting frustrations**

* I get less work done on those days, and the cost to commute hurts at a bad time.
* I spend more money on gas, on coffee, on lunch when I don't pack enough food, and I don't exercise that day because with the commute I lose an hour. I like seeing my editor and colleagues one day a week … but there is no denying coming to work costs money. … I still am paid at least 5 percent less than I made in 2008 before the universal 10-percent wage decrease the union approved – and with inflation, I now have to carefully consider money spent on food and gas. So saving even $30-50 a month is a huge, huge savings.
* The extra cost to budget to return to office: gas, wear and tear on vehicle, tolls, etc.
* I have been happy during the pandemic to not have to commute; it's 60 miles round trip. I would not mind NOT resuming that, especially in the winter… I find I concentrate really well at home.

**Major disruption in work/life balance**

* Find it to be very stressful, disruptive to my week's workflow and distracting, personally and workwise.
* Having a long commute again means losing the important work/home life balance we have had for 2.5 years.
* What irritates me the most is that I go into the office, sit at my desk, attend Zoom meetings and basically do exactly what I do when working from home, except now I have to get up earlier, inconvenience my spouse (one vehicle household), and put on a mask to walk around the building or talk to anyone.
* On the days I've been in the office, I'm getting headaches from the stress, anticipating/doing the commute, the inside air, lack of cleanliness.
* Having to plan what I need to take with me including equipment and cords, work paperwork, computer glasses … With an hour (+) commute one way, I can't afford to forget anything.
* It's causing me to leave my son home alone while in the office (late night shift) and that's not cool. I also do not feel comfortable at all being in the office alone … and absolutely hate walking to my car – the only one left – in the dark parking lot. For me, it's a safety issue, in a huge way.
* I've had no team meetings at work since I've returned for one day a week. Everything I need for work I have at home. I prefer working at home with more privacy, especially talking with people on the phone, with no distractions. I'm more focused and productive. There's a work and personal life balance which means less stress, healthier and happier (working remotely) … The only con is not seeing people at work. One day a week fulfills that need. All in all, personally it's a MUCH better balance of life working from home.

**Not seeing the benefits of in-office time**

* I have worked one day in the office, voluntarily, and it was a waste of my time. Only my supervisor acknowledged my presence, and after 6:15 p.m. I was there by myself.
* Half our team is in one day and half another. And there is hardly anyone else in the building. It is still a ghost town.
* It is taking a bit to get used to the distraction of being in the office again. Also there are not enough people around for me to see value in my being there.
* It feels like they want bodies in the office to appease upper management.

**The Ugly**

**Continued COVID-19 concerns**

* With COVID still out there, I don't feel that being in the office is "safe." Hardly anyone is masked (and yes, I understand the company is CDC compliant) but common sense ... Several coworkers have recently had COVID.
* I don't want to get sick, and it's shocking how cavalier everyone seems … like the last two years of a pandemic never happened. I basically hole up at my desk … there isn't a need for me to be in the office to do my job well.
* Being there still feels a little stressful and, after a few COVID cases in the newsroom in the past week, I worry a bit about getting sick from being there.
* I'm not sure of the official rules, but I also hope with more folks being in the office that we will be notified if someone who has been in the office has tested positive for COVID so that we can continue to be mindful of when masking/staying home would be appropriate.
* What I would like to see enforced is better COVID protocols. Employees who’ve been exposed should not be working in the office, especially when we’ve proved it can be done from home. I know the CDC says quarantine for exposure isn’t necessary, but I think we should do better than that. We’re being made to come in, forcing us to potentially put our health at risk and to have someone come in, even masked, and to know they’ve been exposed to COVID feels reckless and disrespectful.

**Reconsidering employment**

* To be honest, having to go into the office even one day a week is forcing me to assess if my job is still worth it to me.
* As a part-timer, I have not returned to the office and will not. If it's mandatory, I probably will retire.

**No more than one day a week**

* I am strongly in favor of keeping the mandatory office visit to one day a week.
* I don't mind coming in one day per week, collaborating at team meetings, brainstorming ideas, etc., but I do not see the benefit of coming into the office 2 days per week. Everything I did during the day I can do remotely.
* I also worry that the company is going to require us to go in more than one day a week, which I don't want to be required to do.
* What troubles/worries me is that management will keep requiring more days until we are there all the time. Given that the office is in the middle of nowhere/office park, it's not like the location is even slightly helpful for news gathering.

**Flexibility**

* I'd like to see management take cases on an individual basis making exceptions where it makes sense.
* Most of the people I interact with are not PPH employees, and I have rarely ever had in-person meetings with them. It's hard for me to understand the logic of the "no exceptions" comment when we all have different job requirements. It shouldn't be one size fits all.
* For the sake of collaboration, we can do that remotely, too.

**Trusting employees**

* I also feel like employees across the company showed that we could do our jobs well from home when we needed to during the pandemic, and I think employees should be free to make the choices they know are best for their work. For me, that does mean coming to the office once or twice a week, but that might not be true for everyone. I trust my coworkers to make their own decisions, and I hope the company does too.
* All told, requiring us to come back to work more than one day a week honestly feels like a punishment, and I don't know why I would be punished when I work so hard for this company: I hustle, I work odd hours and I work more than 15 weekends a year, easy.
* Requiring us to come into the office more than one day a week feels like management – those above my immediate editor – do not feel they can trust us, do not feel we care about the quality of our work. Requiring us to work in the office more than one day a week honestly feels like management doesn't respect us. So many newsrooms around the country allow their people to work from home. My three friends who are reporters at metros do. It does not make sense that the Press Herald newsroom has a different culture in this regard. After 20 years, I just don't get it.
* I feel upper management and Lisa DeSisto are blaming the sales reps for not making the company goal, when everyone knows that it's the economy and inflation and just the state of our nation that has slowed profit. If someone is a business owner, and has trouble keeping and hiring staff, also has to put up with inflation costs and the supply and demand issues , then business may not be able to afford advertising. And if there are a lot of businesses that closed (due to all of this) in a reps zone, then of course it's more difficult for the rep to reach their goal. And it doesn't help that management keeps raising their total goals.