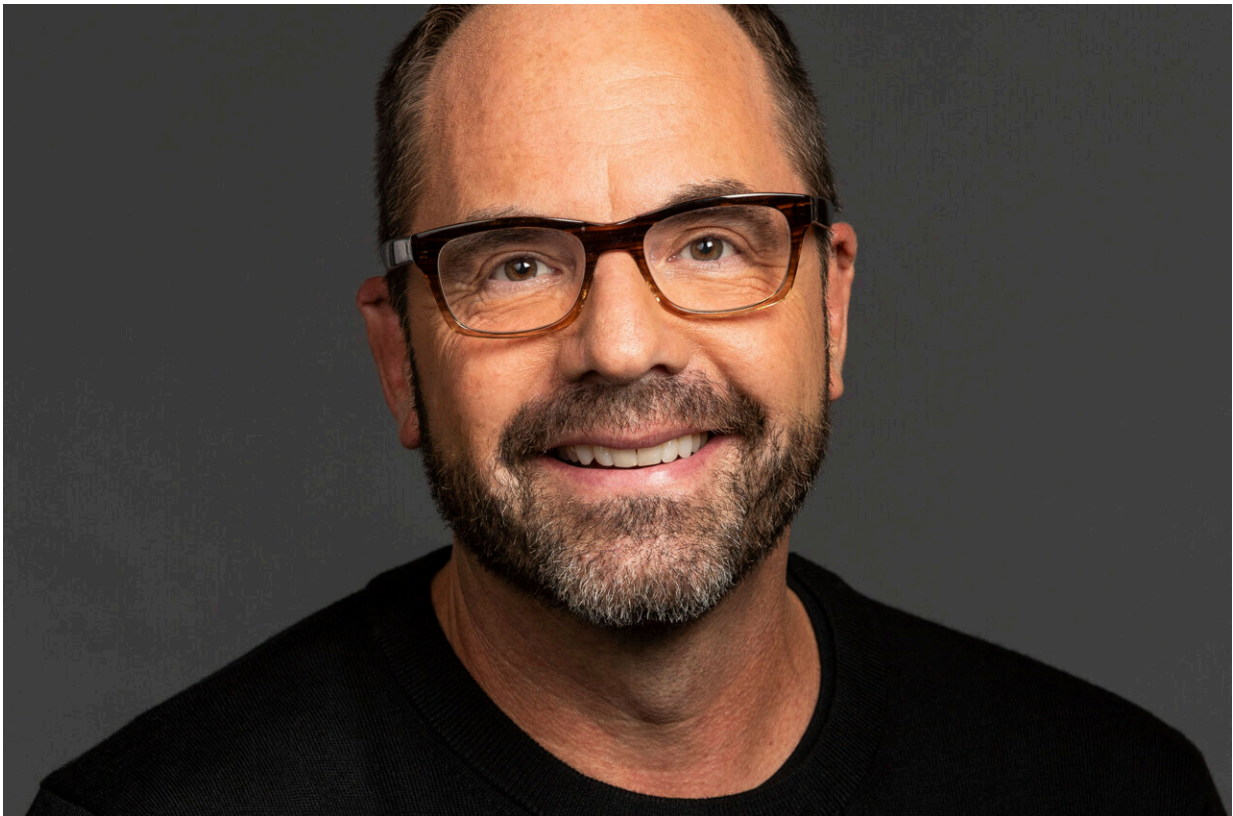


Salesforce exec discusses post-pandemic playbook for work

July 5 2021, by Michael Liedtke



This photo provided by Salesforce.com, shows Salesforce's chief people officer, Brent Hyder. Credit: Eric Millette/Salesforce.com via AP

After reshaping their businesses to deal with threats posed by the pandemic, many companies are facing another daunting challenge: how

to bring remote workers back to the office when people are still debating face masks and not everyone has received the COVID-19 vaccine.

With roughly 60,000 workers, business software maker Salesforce.com has already navigated that in roughly one-third of its more than 100 offices around the world. Just last month, it began to bring back some of its 10,000 workers in San Francisco, where its 61-story headquarters is the tallest building in northern California.

Brent Hyder, Salesforce's chief people officer, discussed the company's approach with The Associated Press.

Q: How is the return to the office going so far?

A: Quite honestly, in the U.S., I am not sure people are super ready to get back into office spaces, even though they are all working like crazy. Thursdays are by far the busiest day. Up to 80% of our collaboration spaces are full on those days. We have moved exclusively to really open seating. We call it neighborhood seating where we have no dedicated offices any more.

Q: Why did you decide to have a flexible policy that allows employees to keep working remotely?

A: This need to get on the train or get on the bus or get in your car to go into the office for no particular reason has gone away. The pandemic has taught us that. If you don't need to commute, why? But there are times when it's worth the commute. The need to be together is still critical to our culture and probably to everyone's culture. So for us the office does that.

Q: Are you finding when employees do come into the office, they are more collaborative?

A: Without a doubt. Maybe the most exciting thing about this is the opportunity to be intentional about your collaboration. People will say, 'OK, why am I going to the office? Who am I meeting with? What's it for? I have a choice and so if I make this choice, it's going to be better and more productive.'

Q: Is there any consideration to requiring employees to be vaccinated?

A: We are not saying you have to be vaccinated. What we are saying in the United States (where Salesforce employs about 35,000 people) is if you are vaccinated, you can choose your own journey (...) What we do want to make as a statement is we believe in vaccines.

Q: What percentage of your employees have indicated they want to work remotely on a permanent basis?

A: Before the pandemic, 18% of our population was fully remote. And today we believe about 25% of our team will be fully remote.

Q: How has the pandemic changed Salesforce's approach to free food and snacks in the office?

A: We will still have snacks and drinks. We will just follow our safety protocols, so instead of me going in and grabbing a whole handful of gummy bears from a bowl, which unfortunately, I used to do several times a day, we have individually wrapped packages where I am only able to have 10 or 15 at a time! So it is probably healthier.

Q: What are some of the biggest lessons you have learned from all this?

A: We have to keep remembering this was a very traumatic experience, and while we see some positive momentum for businesses and culture, what we went through is going to take some time to get over. Being

intentional about things is critical for a flexible environment. If we just go back to what we did before, I believe we will fail. And not only that, our business won't grow as fast.

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