

# Amazon cracks down on 'coffee badging,' amid return-to-office push

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Amazon might be stepping up requirements for its return-to-office mandate—and workers are feeling uneasy.

After more than a year of requiring [employees](#) to work from the office at least three days a week, Amazon is now considering a minimum number of hours per day to meet that mandate, according to screenshots from the internal messaging app Slack shared with The Seattle Times.

The crackdown, the messages say, seems to be focused on "coffee badging," a term coined in a 2023 report by the videoconferencing hardware [company](#) Owl Labs.

"Coffee badging" refers to workers who pop into the office to grab a coffee and then head home, allowing them to skirt in-office requirements but still clock the appropriate number of badge swipes.

The trend extends beyond Amazonians. The 2023 report found more than half of respondents at various companies said they would use the technique.

In a series of Slack messages last week, Amazon workers said there had been "lots of talk" about the new minimum and turned to one another to compare notes. The expectation is not a formal policy change, the messages said, and does not appear to be uniformly applied.

Uncertainty about compliance and enforcement has left some workers frustrated with Amazon leadership since the RTO mandate was first announced in spring 2023. Now, with new requirements potentially under consideration, one employee said on Slack that leadership told them simply to abide "by the spirit of RTO."

"While I applaud that sentiment," the worker said, it leaves too much room for "subjective interpretation."

Amazon spokesperson Margaret Callahan said the company has started to "speak directly with employees who haven't regularly been spending

meaningful amounts of time in the office."

The company made the return-to-office mandate because it believed that "would yield the best long-term results for our customers, business and culture. And it has," Callahan said. "The vast majority of employees are in the office more frequently, there's more energy, connection and collaboration, and we're hearing that from employees and the businesses that surround our offices."

Some teams have not heard anything about the expectation while others have been told they must be in for two hours a day, according to the Slack messages and interviews with two employees who asked to remain anonymous to protect their jobs.

Others were told there was a six-hour minimum, according to Business Insider, which first reported that Amazon was tracking the number of hours workers spent in the office.

On Slack, one worker said there were no specifics yet "but it is brewing."

"Not sure what this all means. This place is becoming less and less hospitable to work," the employee wrote.

While some employees welcomed the return to office, others have pushed back on the mandate since it was announced in February 2023. Roughly 20,000 employees signed a petition the next month asking Amazon to reconsider.

Hundreds of employees participated in a walkout to protest the mandate shortly after it went into effect in May 2023. Workers have asked the company to allow more flexibility with its policy and to provide data to back up its decision.

Since then, public criticism of the mandate has quieted but some workers are still pushing back internally.

"You can't help but laugh at how terribly this company has handled this entire fiasco," one employee wrote on Slack.

As chatter about the in-office requirements circulated, [workers](#) turned to Slack to express frustration and ask for help to ensure they were complying with expectations.

One worker suggested setting an alarm to ensure they stayed for the minimum amount of time. Another said the closest bathroom was located outside of the badged entry zone, and wondered how that would impact their compliance. Yet another joked they would badge in and then "rappel down the side of the building" to avoid badging out.

Responding to the lack of clarity, another employee wrote "working here feels more and more like middle school every day ..."

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