

Will 5-Day RTO Mandates Cost Carriers Top Talent?

Carriers in the 5-day RTO club may stand to lose much more than they hope to gain as employees and prospects opt for alternative opportunities, and poor policy planning could leave carriers vulnerable to litigation.



After a few months of five-day return-to-office mandates in effect for select P&C insurance carriers, the implications so far are unsurprising and perhaps even exactly what executives hoped for in cases: Talent is fleeing, and vacant roles are sitting open on job boards for significantly longer than average.

The resulting talent shifts just a few months in suggest the ultimate goal of RTO was less about productivity and more about shrinking payroll.

According to **Monster's 2025 Work Watch Report**, 33% of workers would refrain from applying to jobs that are fully in-person. As it stands, 93% of workers are looking for or plan to look for a new job in 2025, even in the face of economic uncertainty and tightening hiring budgets, signaling many professionals are dissatisfied with their current roles.

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Employees at 4- or [5-day offices](#) like **AIG**, **Argo Group**, **Allied World (AWAC)**, **Starr** and **Kinsale** have flooded job boards and networking groups seeking open positions with carriers holding to a hybrid work model.

AWAC and Starr were both criticized for their handling in communicating in-office mandates and changes to remote-work policies, both by employees and industry professionals outside of the company. On Glassdoor, recent employee reviews take a big swing at major market players **Chubb** and Argo Group.

At least 20 Chubb employee reviews name RTO as a leading con, with additional critiques of the company's changing negative culture. One current employee wrote: "RTO: pretty much everyone has said it but this was poorly handled, and it is now my firm belief that as much as Chubb wants to consider itself a place for people with families to work, it no longer is. [...] there is no logical explanation for why the policy changed considering consecutive years of record results."

Offering advice to management, this employee writes: "If Chubb wants to remain a top tier company that is going to require retaining top talent [...] RTO should be proactively reconsidered if you want to continue to see record results." Another active employee based in N.J. wrote in a June 27 review: "Allow for more flexibility for your employees that have showed up every day. Return to office has burnt all of us out."

Recent reviews of Argo Group convey similar grievances, citing RTO and an alleged toxic work culture hand-in-hand, with some noting that a talent shrinkage has added another layer of challenges. A June 2 post states, "as underwriters leave the company for better opportunities, the pressure to bring more and more premium has become toxic and overwhelming."

These employees have also been targeted by recruiters, levying company remote work as a prime benefit.

The job market at present, however, may be pigeon-holding employees looking to make a move.

Job reports in June saw open roles in the U.S. insurance industry decline by 1,600 month-over-month — a stark reversal from the month prior, with 5,300 jobs added in May, reports from the **U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics**. Of the seven insurance sectors measured, P&C added the least number of jobs, and claims adjusting jobs declined by 200.

Separately, recruiters continue to express concerns that strict RTO mandates will limit companies' talent pool, as top talent exits and the strongest candidates opt for more flexible, desirable working arrangements elsewhere — as if recruitment in the industry didn't have enough hurdles.

The **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics** estimates there will be 400,000 unfulfilled insurance roles by 2035 thanks to a retirement-fueled exodus, with highly skilled roles like actuaries, underwriters and claim adjusters at risk.

Results from **Conv**'s Insurance Talent and Tech Trends survey of 200 commercial P&C insurance decision-makers found that leaders across departments recognize they are struggling to recruit underwriting talent at all levels.

Industry execs said recruitment with age groups 31-40 and 21-30 are the most challenging to hire, and the hardest to retain. Respondents indicated that the role of remote work and the impact of RTO are on clear display. An estimated 73% of leaders say most to all underwriting positions have the option of being remote, while only 8% say none of their open underwriting roles have that potential.

"RTO can negatively impact recruitment efforts, especially in industries with a talent shortage such as insurance," said **Vicki Salemi**, career expert at Monster. "When recruiters aren't limited to zip codes, they can cast a wide net for top talent that isn't constrained by geography."

"If insurance professionals prefer to work remotely or in a hybrid environment and companies are only offering RTO, candidates will pursue employment opportunities with employers who offer what they seek," Salemi added.

Retention efforts are also at risk – Monster found that 82% of workers are willing to seek new roles if they're required to work in the office full-time.

"Turnover can spike, and morale can plummet," Salemi said. "As workers leave, time to fill those positions can be delayed, and the remaining workers will be burdened with additional work that is probably not accompanied by additional pay."

Jeanne Branthover, managing partner and head of the financial services practice at **DHR Global**, notes the timing of RTO: The pendulum swung from a labor market that favors talent to one that favors employers.

While the unemployment rate remains low at 4.1% in June, new hiring has slowed, falling from a record 603,000 fresh job openings in 2021 to 168,000 in 2024 and 144,000 in April, according to the **Department of Labor**.

The **Ludwig Institute for Shared Economic Prosperity** estimates that the "true" unemployment rate – which also accounts for workers who do not have a full-time job but want one and workers who make less than \$25,000 a year – is closer to 25%.

"Right after the pandemic, we had what we call a candidate market, and candidates didn't want to come back," Branthover said. "They started taking care of their kids more, they had better work-life balance, and now employers are somewhat taking that away."

Branthover believes that big P&C carriers are likely putting the industry to the test: By mandating five days a week in the office, will other insurers follow suit?

"If that's the case, then employees don't have a lot of choices. That's just the industry trend," Branthover adds. "On the other hand, if some companies remain flexible, then we're going to see employees hop [to those companies]."

Who Comes Out on Top?

Salemi is confident the hybrid work model will more or less be standard in corporate America, serving as a compromise between employers and talent. Currently, 45% of employees work fully in-person, according to Monster. That leaves the other half of employees in either hybrid or a fully remote work models.

"Most CEOs that I talk to in insurance really feel it's critical for employees to be together in the office on a regular basis," Branthover said. "They feel it's important for training, mentoring, group meetings, bonding and knowledge sharing."

Salemi echoes Branthover's observation, adding that companies are also prioritizing their leases. "Instead of renting vacant office space, they're prioritizing business needs and their balance sheet by utilizing their physical location," she noted.

Regardless of motivation, Branthover emphasizes that RTO mandates don't necessarily have to cause employees to flee – especially if carriers are only asking workers to come back to the office for about three days out of the week.

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She advises insurers to be clear about why they want employees to return to the office and to allow for flexibility where possible. For example, caregivers may need to arrive late or leave early to meet their family's needs.

And while it may seem like a no-brainer, Branthover reminds leaders that they have to practice what they preach.

"You can't tell people to be in the office and your leaders aren't there," she stressed. "Companies have to show employees that they're benefiting from coming back, whether it's through training, mentoring or hosting events. Employees need to feel like their company wants them back for a reason."

Consistent [communication and connection](#) aren't only key to a healthy workplace culture, but a compliant one.

"It's important to document the business justification or need for RTO in the first place," said **Jason Tremblay**, partner at **Saul Ewing** and vice chair of the firm's labor and employment practice.

"Inevitably, whenever you change where people need to work, the question that's going to be posed is, since everything worked well from the employee's perspective for the last three or four years, what is the justifiable reason?"

Beyond advanced notice on any policy change, carriers can do themselves a big favor by articulating why the change is happening. Poorly communicated or inherently vague policies leave employers [vulnerable to lawsuits](#), Tremblay underlined.

Carriers should also be prepared to offer accommodations under the *Americans with Disabilities Act* after mandating employees back to the office.

Last week, **Farmers Insurance Exchange** was sued by a former claims adjuster claiming that, after her longtime employer ordered all employees to return to the office two years ago, it refused to accommodate her pre-existing remote-work arrangement that began in 2008 and ended with her departure in 2024, and stemmed from a debilitating anxiety disorder. **Whitney Bachamp-Schroeder** is seeking damages for violations of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and retaliation for exercising her rights under the ADA.

Tremblay advises carriers considering updates to their in-office policies, "Make sure that whatever policy you have is flexible."

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"If someone truly is able to perform the essential function of the job from home, and their medical condition requires them to work from home, either entirely or partially, your policy should allow that."