get-togethers with broadband and a subscription to Circl.es (and to a lesser degree with Zoom or Google Meet).

Finding Fit

Peer learning can take time to nurture within an organization, but once it is well established as a cornerstone of your culture, it also serves as an effective litmus test for people who are a questionable fit for the organization.

If you fully embrace the tenets I'm talking about here, you'll want to recruit individual contributors and leaders who are open to self-reflection, coaching, and other foundational principles. Peer learning sessions, steeped as they are in personal openness and vulnerability, may prove to be a bridge too far for some. There's nothing wrong with that, and it's valuable to recognize it.

Eventually, you will learn to spot individuals likely to be open to peer learning in the hiring process. That is how your organization can build a culture and community that serves everyone, from new hires to the oldest veterans.

Chapter Nine

HIRING FOR THE WFH WORLD

In my twenties, my choices led me on a career path that prioritized my desire to have fun, so I moved to California. I was going to be an entrepreneur, or so I decided when I couldn't get a career-oriented job. Lacking in focus and determination, I certainly wouldn't have succeeded in a job at JumpCrew. I was living in Los Angeles and struggling to get my career on track. While bartending in Venice Beach, I had the idea for a personal valet business. I had teed up all my contractors, came up with my marketing and advertising strategy, and I was actually the first one in the space. My buddy Howard, who had been Phi Beta Kappa at Yale and already had a successful business, was helping me. I was twenty-three years old.

Opening weekend came. My advertising was dropping, and I had my dedicated phone line set up. I had built a trusted network of contractors and told them to expect the phone to be ringing off the hook. Then, just before the weekend, I got an invitation to go on this crazy ski trip. I asked my friend Nicole to cover the phones, dropped everything, and went skiing. I don't know what the hell I was thinking.

Was it some crazy act of self-sabotage? I don't know. What I do know is that I came back to my now-defunct business and angry clients whose requests went unfulfilled and would never come back. It turned out that Nicole, who was supposed to manage the business in my absence, went to the racetrack to place a bunch of bets for someone who paid her more money than I did. Irresponsibility breeds irresponsibility, I suppose.

I had the freedom to make a choice, and I made a stupid one. I made multiple stupid ones. But that's hardly unique to me. There isn't an entrepreneur out there who hasn't done something that, when they look back, they can't believe they were dumb enough to do. But the reason I'm sharing that story is that it's an illustration of a simple truth: success is often a matter of putting the right people with the right level of maturity and experience in the right position at the right time. That's why, when it comes to building a successful, sustainable, resilient organization in a world where WFH has become the new normal, hiring the right people is more critical than ever.

A Post-Resume World

I'm not claiming that training and experience aren't important because we know they are. In running JumpCrew and my other companies, I've become persuaded that a person's ability to see themselves clearly is as important as intelligence, education, or even attitude in determining how they adapt and how far they will go. If a candidate for a position can't be honest with me when I ask about their weaknesses in an interview, then they're unlikely to admit them after they are hired. They're unlikely to grow in our organization before they fail.

In the same vein, if that same person grew up with a sense of entitlement that exceeded their desire to prove themselves, how will they contribute to making their team or our community better? Will they be a giver or taker? As my very wise eighty-seven-year-old therapist once said to me, "Without a little fire in your belly, what difference are you going to make in the world?" Years later, that fire in the belly—otherwise known as grit—would become a cornerstone of JumpCrew's cultural values. If you don't have that fire in your program when you get here, you're not likely to find it when you're under pressure to perform, particularly in an achievement-based organization.

Once upon a time, I was having lunch with a new friend, a real estate professional named Long Doan. He had an extraordinary life story. He had escaped from Vietnam at age thirteen in a boat, alone. His father spent years in a Communist reeducation camp, but that thirteen-year-old refugee has become a successful entrepreneur in Minnesota, owner of one of the largest independent real estate firms in the state. During that lunch, Long told me that there are three ways you learn: imitation, experience, and reflection—reflection being the hardest.

That's why I've focused so strongly on reflection in this book, not to mention coaching and peer learning, which aid self-reflection and self-awareness. Reflection is what separates random actions and undesirable outcomes from intentional action and desired

outcomes. The combination of grit, humility, the ability to be reflective, and openness to learning are the most important qualities I look for in hiring people who can thrive in a demanding, intense, accountable environment. I'm not after checks on a resume. The hunger to learn, the willingness to say "I don't know," and to share and connect and grow are the qualities you should be looking for in the people you recruit as well.

I've written about our first hiring binge—one hundred people in one hundred days. Well, we weren't targeting the top of the class at Vanderbilt. That's just not who we are. We hire many folks from UT and Middle Tennessee State. Why? Because people don't go to college to be salespeople. They become salespeople when they need to make a living. Only then do they discover that sales is the greatest business classroom on the planet, not to mention a career most accessible to liberal arts graduates with the right qualities.

We rarely hire recent graduates. We prefer to hire people who've already had a few learning moments in the world of work. When we do hire recent grads, we look closely at their level of intrinsic motivation. We hire doers, not necessarily the best students. We're looking for bold thinkers and leaders—on teams, in communities, in their side job, or in their own journeys. We hire based on how we think people will contribute when they're on the right team, not based on their LinkedIn profile. In a lot of other organizations, the goal of leadership is to be comfortable, retain your job, look good, and get promoted. That isn't what we're after at JumpCrew, especially after the world changed and everyone was suddenly working at home.

Eddie Moncayo, JumpCrew's VP of talent acquisition, says that getting to post-resume thinking was a heavy lift at first. "We're supposed to be in a post-resume world, and that includes the hang-ups that we have reviewing a person's LinkedIn profile," he says.

"We comb over every detail, often obsessing over what the content means, and make snap judgments that instantly cancel that individual's opportunity to become a member of our team. We did a lot of work this year on selecting competencies that speak to the behaviors that we'd like our team members to have reflected in their daily work. When we've honed in on those behaviors, the issue of character and grit rises to the surface and provides us a look into what it means to be that person and whether they would translate well into our environment."

We were trying to create the chemistry to both accelerate achievement and maintain a sense of safety for taking risk and failure. We wanted our people to be challengers, to be comfortable being uncomfortable so they could grow as leaders, to connect to each other, and to become part of our community. Even as things evolve from a forced WFH scenario to something more flexible and customized, the lesson Rob and I learned during 2020 remains just as clear as ever:

· ·

In building a high-achieving WFH organization,
hiring is the key to success.

· ·

In the WFH world, it's not just traditional leadership skills that have become obsolete. The qualifications that might make someone a perfect hire for a face-to-face office are staggeringly different from those that make someone a great fit for a WFH organization. When you hire from a pool of folks who've been in the workforce for ten, twenty, or thirty years, they bring their programs and bias to your company. Your recruitment team's responsibility is to recognize

who possesses the personal characteristics that you're looking for—and to recognize that regardless of someone's accomplishments, you can't change them.

If someone is not a fit for your culture, it doesn't matter what their list of accomplishments looks like. This is a hard lesson we've learned at JumpCrew, and it's been a limiting factor in our ability to grow by hiring experienced talent. The forced WFH experiment has exposed that truth in the starkest terms.

In any company, there's a tension between the reality of the labor pool and your aspirations. It's appealing to think of effortlessly hiring three hundred people who are reflective, humble learners with the ability to lead and the character to leave their egos out of leadership, but those recruits are not hanging out in your lobby. They're being scooped up by other companies, and that activity is only accelerating with the move to WFH. That's why some of our most talented salespeople are on the recruitment team: we know everything depends on hiring people who can thrive working remotely.

The autonomy, isolation, distractions, and complexity of remote work strip away all pretension about who fits into an organization that depends on a mostly distributed labor force. Some people, despite their experience and skills, simply cannot be effective and productive working at a distance. In part, that's because without the usual workplace dynamics and without the motivation of peers and a boss in the room, success in WFH hinges more on the qualities we've talked about here: intrinsic motivation, focus, discipline, coachability, accountability, and humility.

I asked Jarron Vosburg what else differentiates hiring for WFH from hiring for an in-person org. Systemic WFH is so new there are no hard and fast rules. However, one phenomenon he and I have both noticed is that the people who fit the 2020/2021 version of

JumpCrew are often not polished and may have resumes that have nothing to do with sales, but they are a fit because of their *character*. Character seems to be the new killer app in WFH, which makes sense. After all, I can teach someone skills, but I can't teach them to love working hard or to show up with integrity.

Example: I had a wonderful onboarding Circles call with seven new "Crewbies," and one guy's only prior experience was being a personal trainer. He was an athlete who worked hard and trained to become better and had helped others do the same. He'd never had another job, period! Well, he actually turned out to be wonderful. But he had his baseball hat on during the meeting, his camera angle was weird, and he looked like he was sitting in a Mexican restaurant for the call. Yeah, he needed some coaching. I Slacked him and had a five- or ten-minute phone call with him afterward, and I took a chance on him because things are different now.

Professionalism. Experience. Polish. We may have to tear up the recruitment rulebook for the new WFH world. Because the people who thrive and become A players in this environment will be nothing like the stars we've tried to hire in the past. If you're going to build an accelerated achievement team, you'll need more of them.

The Importance of Training in WFH

A while back, I mentioned the need for training on soft skills in peer learning, but training truly comes to the head of the class when we're talking about making new hires successful. Can you train people on your organization's culture? The answer turns out to be a qualified "yes." I spoke with Amber Bartlett and Eddie Moncayo about this and other WFH training-related questions.

"We've done a great job with product training," Amber says,

There was no decrease in the quality of people's skillsets. People were still able to meet their quotas. What we were really struggling with, though, was culture—getting people to have that same vibe that we've really loved at JumpCrew. That's been something that we've had to be much more cognizant of. We've created several events to help people still have that feeling, but we're still learning. We're hoping that as we continue to create more engagement with the CultureCrew team that plans events, having something once a month that people can participate in virtually, that we'll continue to increase engagement. But right now, it just feels like people are really close to their own team.

Amber also makes the point that when you're trying to grow culture, leadership buy-in is critical. "If you're going to do something remotely, it's much more difficult to get people involved without hearing from leadership," she says. "You can have thirty minutes in the middle of a work week to do something fun with your peers, but what I know from experience is that you have to be extremely aggressive in pushing a remote opportunity or else you just don't get people involved. We have to train up the folks in the culture and teach them that you can't just make one Slack invite about an event. You have to reach out to people. You've got to be aggressive in your Slack or email. So you've got to cast a really wide net and really push hard."

Eddie came from a previous role with a larger company where most of the workforce was remote, and that showed him that in WFH, leaders just have to accept that some people won't participate, and they need learn how to help them develop despite this. "I've had remote teams now for fifteen years at least, and there are

some remote employees who don't necessarily want to participate in culture stuff," he says. "They're different animals. Often as a leader, we say that you can't cater to everybody, but in some ways you have to because you have to learn how to figure out how to connect with all different types of personalities in a remote space."

As Amber points out, leading in this manner requires a level of mindfulness that some leaders have never been called on to show. "Leaders have to be incredibly thoughtful," she says.

Do you have an individual development plan for them? I think every single person deserves an IDP. Everybody deserves the ability to grow a technical skill and a competency. I encourage every single leader to sit down with their folks and find out what motivates them, what they're naturally good at, and then discuss a business case for how they can grow. That requires a lot of time and a lot of thoughtfulness. Making that switch from being someone whose main job is getting rid of obstacles to actively reaching out to each one of your employees takes a lot of time. It's just a different leadership skill set.

Eddie's view is a bit different, which is great because healthy disagreements breed healthy organizations. "Having IDPs for everybody is really tough," he says. "That's a difficult investment when the leader's cost per hour is high and you want them to focus on other things that will make money or launch new initiatives. It is logistically hard for leaders who have a lot of direct reports to help build IDPs. IDPs are incredibly important, but they really depend on having somebody with the self-awareness to say, 'I know that I'm not doing something right. I need to figure out how to fix it.'

"When you have those people, they'll have the conversation

with their leader that helps them understand where their gaps are," Eddie goes on. "Then the leader has to have enough self-awareness to give them the type of candid feedback they need. As much as leaders manage down, we have to train employees have to manage up. They need the courage and resolve to have hard conversations with their managers about why they feel like they're not excelling in their roles. Everybody fails at some point, right? It's how you deal with that failure and how you move on from it that determines how successful you are."

Let me highlight two things Eddie said that are especially important:

. . . .

As much as leaders manage down, we have to train employees have to manage up. Everybody fails at some point. It's how you deal with that failure and how you move on from it that determines how successful you are.

. . . .

The Realistic Future of Working from Home

Of course, by the time you're reading this, the issue of how to hire, train, and develop employees in a WFH environment will be clearer. We're already looking at WFH with more healthy skepticism. By the fall of 2020, cracks were appearing in the sunshine-and-roses predictions of a brave new world of completely remote work. As the bloom came off the WFH rose, the press was all over it. The hit podcast *Hidden Brain* ran an episode that featured a Stanford professor's kids interrupting his videoconferences with bagpipe practice, and the host and guests revealed that working from home—and doing it well—is a lot harder and less satisfying that it seemed before the pandemic.

On *ZDNet*, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella claimed that working from home "lulls you into a stupor."[1] *The Atlantic* ran a piece[2] about how working from home costs young professionals opportunities to socialize, network, and make friends, and they lose out on advancement opportunities because they're not in the office to be noticed. The website *Ladders* reported that "work from home fatigue" seemed to be setting in around the time the kids were scheduled to go back to school but didn't.

The story cited an IBM Institute for Business Value study[3] that found that in August of 2020, 67 percent of American workers said they'd like to continue working from home at least occasionally, down from more than 80 percent mark in July. The same study found that while 65 percent of respondents said in July 2020 that they wanted to work from home permanently, that number was down to 50 percent by August. I could go on (and on and on), but there's no need. By late 2020, the WFH honeymoon had turned into a loveless marriage.

I don't think that's a bad thing. As with any business phenomenon, remote work should be viewed realistically, not with cynicism or through rose-colored glasses. WFH may not be the panacea some believed it would be, but it's not going away either. As with many things in business, the answer to the future of WFH will be "It depends."

Consider that *2020 State of Remote Work* study I cited earlier in this book. In it, 98 percent of respondents said they would like to continue WFH in some capacity for the rest of their careers. Plenty of other surveys and anecdotal reports support the idea that while 100 percent WFH probably won't exist, it will still be around in some

form. Large portions of the workforce take to it like ducks to water, and your and every other organization will almost certainly need to find way to accommodate both in-office and remote workforces. In the future, even when organizations are not forced into WFH situations by external events, they will self-sort into two main types:

1. **WFH Native.** These are enterprises founded from the outset as remote companies, companies like Zapier, GitHub, Toptal, Upworthy, and DesignLab. WFH-native orgs are often in tech-centric sectors like coding and app development or information/content fields like writing, design, and video, which makes delivery of products location independent.

   For WFH natives, remote work is baked into their cultures from the beginning. It's part of the business plan, enabling them to hire people who relish working anywhere and are emotionally suited to being self-directed and to promote leaders who are just as comfortable with running a distributed org. For companies like these, reflective leadership, peer learning, and coaching will probably be part of their operating system from day one. These companies will have learned from the lessons of 2020 that making WFH work means upending decades of management tradition, and they'll be fine with that.
   They will also benefit from a global hiring pool. That not only reduces startup costs but drastically levels up any young company's ability to land game-changing talent. DesignLab, which teaches students how to design online user interfaces and develop the user experience, has more than four hundred mentors all over the world and a fully distributed workforce. Zapier, which lets users automate app-based tasks, has three hundred remote employees scattered across seventeen time zones in twenty-eight countries. This will be the new normal. These companies will compete fiercely because of their talent and low overhead.

   Because these tech-centric natives will lean heavily toward a global workforce, their cultures will be agile and totally digital, centered on the wonders of avoiding nasty commutes, living anywhere, and maintaining a better work/life balance. Challenges will include maintaining a consistent culture, recruiting people who can thrive in a self-motivated, distributed world and putting in place the kinds of regular touches and warm, authentic cultural fabric that's worked so well for us at JumpCrew.

2. **Hybrid.** These will be everybody else. They will be the corporations like Facebook and Twitter that have announced they plan to allow their people to work remotely "forever" but who will inevitably have a cohort of employees who either want to be or need to be working onsite. It will almost certainly be JumpCrew.

   By and large, hybrids will operate with a blend of in-office personnel and people working remotely, employees whose positions afford them the freedom to choose WFH (some, like nurses or law enforcement officers, obviously can't do this). As a result, these organizations will be built around complicated calendars where some employees do all their work from the office, others do all their work from home,

and some people work from the office three days and week and at home two days or follow a "one week on, one week off" schedule. Just thinking about it makes my head hurt.

Other hybrids will return to the office as flexible office-remote companies, but as they grow, they will focus on building their workforce primarily by hiring people who can work from home, probably from all over the world.

This has been the JumpCrew model. In the summer of 2020, just as the novelty of WFH was wearing off for some of our people and they were itching to come back to the office and see the colleagues who they missed, we started expanding recruitment beyond Nashville. We began interviewing people from all over not only the U.S. but from all over the planet.

By the fall, I had started having Google Meets with new hires who were from six, eight, even ten different locations. In the future, it's very likely that our company will be a hybrid made of a people who thrive as part of a close-knit F2F tribe of people who work in Nashville, new hires from 2020 and beyond who have always been remote and on occasion come to Nashville for training or events, and executives and managers whose collaboration on strategy and tactics benefit from being predominantly in the hive.

For hybrids, the greatest challenge will be avoiding the "two cultures trap," where there's one set of rules and cultural standards for in-person employees, and another for remote employees. That's a surefire recipe for resentment and conflict, so leaders will need to be mindful and intentional about measures that help everyone in the org feel seen, heard, respected, and cared for.

WFH Changes the Meaning of "Fit"

Worry about the short-term economic environment related to COVID-19 was our catalyst for running a more fiscally disciplined business. What had been a relatively slow process of recognizing people unlikely to excel and exiting them from the organization became a high-speed process out of necessity. In the past, the more relaxed pace of a face-to-face office had given us time to suss out people who could not adapt to the demands of our organization, but WFH concentrated everything. We had to figure out who was most likely to excel *now*.

Why the urgency? Many of our smaller clients struggled. As sales cycles stretched, they struggled to manage their cash flow, and their payments to us slowed or stopped. As the cushion of cash we had raised from investors shrank, we rallied the troops. Fortunately, we already had a strong, tight tribe within JumpCrew—a large and dedicated core that had bonded around a strong sense of community. Instinctively, we knew that community might give us a big edge over competitors who had no idea how to make WFH work. The push forced us to be more deliberate in our hiring, and doing so improved the fabric of the company. We came to think of hiring as a process of building a matrix of relationships.

We did something right, I guess. In 2020, even as so many organizations our size were flailing around trying to get their people settled, we went from EBITDA-negative to EBITDA-positive and built JumpCrew around a core of the most engaged and highest-performing employees. But how did we do that?

One of the things we understood right away was that the radical shift to work from home immediately changed how we had to think about the concept of "fit." In the traditional workplace, a new hire who fits with the established culture is generally someone who

shares and appreciates the values, personalities, and norms of the company. They're people who get the prevailing sense of humor, share the mission, and can make your goals their goals without missing a beat. That's still true in the WFH world . . . to a degree. But that's not the whole picture.

Eddie Moncayo also highlights a critical point: *training* is essential to succeed in hiring and developing personnel in WFH. "We'll be doing culture work next year that should help leaders bridge what has become a real divide in how they lead people who are only represented to them in a two-dimensional way," he says. "It's difficult for employees who have always performed in an in-person format to suddenly have the world change and force them to WFH with no runway, time to adjust, or competence to pivot to a virtual environment, and it's equally difficult for many leaders to perform effectively if untrained on how to create, nurture, and maintain virtual relationships with people that in some cases, they will never get to meet in person. It should be underscored how much of a challenge that has become for organizations around the world."

In remote work, fit also comes from seemingly mundane factors, like being able to be meaningfully present over a video chat. It comes from being utterly reliable, so your peers know they can depend on you even when they can't see you working. It comes from knowing that in order for people to feel that you empathize with them, you have to over-communicate and be forceful with your emotions, like a stage actor speaking 20 percent louder than in real life so the audience in the last five rows of the theater can hear you. When we saw that we would have to look for different people with different gifts, we changed our approach for hiring.

We also became much more ruthless about letting people go, as Lavall Chichester, our brilliant former CMO, says. "I had to let

someone go who we just weren't on the same page with anymore," he relates. "That was rough, because he was very good at pretending to do work, and he was super talented, but you just no longer wanted him to be on the team. After coaching him and trying to help him figure out what was going on, we realized that we weren't on the same page and he wasn't hitting any of our values. When that happens, we've learned that we just have to let them go."

Look for the "Self-Selectors"

But our key revelation was understanding that everyone working at JumpCrew in 2020 had been forced into working from home. Under normal circumstances, that wouldn't be the case. Employees and prospective hires would sort themselves into the three groups I mentioned: people who want to work from home all the time, people who want to be in the office all the time, and the ones who want a little of both. That wasn't happening in the depths of COVID-19, but we could still keep our eyes out for the self-selectors!

The piece I quoted in *The Atlantic* a few pages ago nails it: "There are tons of studies on the positive benefits of teleworking, but most of that research is interviews and surveys with people who have self-selected into remote work," says Kati Peditto, an environmental design psychologist at the United States Air Force Academy. Workers who value day-to-day flexibility in their schedules are ideal work-from-home candidates; those who like strict boundaries between their professional and personal lives, not so much. Career positioning also matters—people who have already built strong social and professional networks may not suffer much from the lack of face-to-face contact at the office, but for those still trying to make such ties, remote work can be alienating.[4]

In other words, we didn't have to hire people who we could teach to gel in our connected, hyper-reflective, heart-on-the-sleeve WFH culture. We just had to watch for recruits who were already wired to thrive in that environment. Joel Gascoigne and the team at Buffer have found that people with these traits often come from freelance, contracting, or startup backgrounds. They tend to be independent thinkers, flexible, and accustomed to working in nontraditional settings. However, this has not been my experience. Freelancers and people with lots of startups on their CVs want to do things their way and are thus less likely to commit to our way and culture. That's fine, but those aren't the folks most likely to succeed in a connected, "we're all in this together" type of culture.

Task automation software company Zapier has some ideas[5] I agree with about the qualities we should be looking for in a potential A-level remote employee:

An action orientation. Self-starters who will take the initiative and get work done without waiting to be asked.

The ability to prioritize. Someone who knows how to allocate their time and where and when to spend it depending on the goal.

Proficient writing. This one is smart. In WFH, a lot of communication will take place in writing—Slack channels, instant messages, text chats during videoconferences. New hires should have strong "lexical empathy." In other words, they should know how to email and text without being jerks.

Support system. The person you hire should interact with human beings other than the fine folks on the other end of the video chat.

Technical savvy. You'd think this would be obvious, but not everyone can manage their Wi-Fi connection or knows how to use Zoom.

That, however, is the tip of the iceberg if you're looking to build a WFH organization around reflective leadership, coaching, and peer learning. You need a more precise portfolio of traits to find real fit. This is a very new area, so we're learning as we go, but these are some of the other areas we've watched closely in our recruiting:

Psychological Factors. Introverts and extroverts process remote work quite differently and not always as you would expect. Introverts, who can find the constant banter and pressure to socialize mentally exhausting, often thrive in WFH because they can bottleneck the stream of communication until it's just the right size for their comfort. True, you want people who will step out of their comfort zone, but that doesn't happen right away. Over time, introverts can become more extroverted.

> Extroverts, as we've discussed in our talk about salespeople, typically have more trouble working from home. There's no energy source for them to feed on. Still, people are not profiles. Consider these traits to be at the top of your list:

- Organized
- Focused
- Self-disciplined
- Reliable
- Adaptable

- Strong communicator
- Good listener
- Self-aware
- Humble

Experience. Values, communication and collaboration skill, emotional intelligence, drive, the ability to build relationships…in most cases, they matter more than specific job experience in the WFH world. You're hiring people, not resumes. At JumpCrew, we were hiring personal trainers, musicians, waitresses, even a Domino's delivery guy. Some knew little about sales, but they had the character, and they had the hunger to achieve.

Home Environment. This should be obvious. Your recruits should have a physical space conducive not only to work but to a professional appearance and performance. It should be an office, not one corner of a loud kitchen filled with kids and barking dogs. I realize that's not always possible because of where people live or economic factors, so if you really want someone on your team who doesn't have a presentable space, consider renting them an office at a local co-working space . . . or not hiring them.

The Three Pillars. They are central to the extraordinary success we've enjoyed, so why not look for people who have an affinity for these methods? Even if you don't fully adopt my philosophy, any company will benefit from hiring people who are reflective, can coach others, and are open to learning from and teaching colleagues.

Your job as the leader is to try and connect with people in interviews, during onboarding, and after onboarding. That's how you'll start to see if someone is a true fit for your culture and your WFH strategy. If they are, you're home free. If they're not, you have a decision to make. Can you accept where they are today and coach and train them to be more in alignment with your culture down the road? Or should you save your breath and ask them to move on?

Again, the answer is "It depends." Is the new hire productive enough to warrant investment? Are they open-minded and receptive to the idea that the way they approach work could be counterproductive and interfering with their ability to succeed? If you find someone to be eminently coachable, invest the time. However, most new hires can't be coached into fitting into a Three Pillars culture if they aren't ready when they start. That's simply not who they are, and you do them and your organization a favor in letting them go sooner rather than later.

Practical Challenges in Hiring for WFH

Have you tried onboarding new hires via Google Meet during a pandemic? It's strange. But at JumpCrew we've tried to turn the strangeness of the distanced environment to our advantage. Peers often handle onboarding of new employees in keeping with the basic principles of peer learning. These sessions are set up like Circles and are intentionally personal, friendly, and open to anyone questioning anything. They're completely in line with JumpCrew's values.

Onboarding is one of many practical considerations WFH organizations must account for when recruiting from a WFH labor pool. Interviews are another. In neither case will you meet in person with your prospective employees, so it's vital to be prepared with a warm-up process (to evaluate the person's ability to connect) and some good follow-up questions. When I'm interviewing someone without them being present in the room, an entire channel of data about them is closed to me: body language, posture, attire, nervous tics, eye contact, and so on. So I have to ask more direct questions about values and character. What does this person care

about? What do they stand for? How do they problem solve? What makes them uncomfortable?

As for answers, I'm looking for trustworthiness above all in a WFH employee. This person will be representing me without anyone else present to keep an eye on them. Are you confident that they will represent you well? Beyond that, I expect JumpCrew candidates to level with me about their opinions and their weaknesses. Be direct, be brave, be clear. WFH demands employees who can speak honestly, mean what they say, and meet high standards for candor and kindness.

WFH is also a unique environment for misunderstandings. Working via video conference creates all sorts of possible scenarios that keep corporate lawyers up at night, from sexual harassment claims because someone told a bad joke to the horror of someone inadvertently coming into the room in a state of undress (just Google now-former *New Yorker* writer Jeffrey Toobin). Success often depends on a group's ability to self-police acceptable behavior. WFH requires a whole new set of HR and legal strategies that are still being formulated. In the meantime, be patient, understanding, and have a sense of humor.

Terminating people takes on a new dimension in WFH too. The needs to the business may change and necessitate change or the individual's skills or performance may not evolve with the changing needs in the business or the individual may not reflect the character and values that it takes to succeed in your community. It's important to cut people loose before they impair your ability to succeed or your culture, like a baseball manager who has the unique instinct to take the ball from his tired pitcher's hand *before* the pitcher can give up the grand slam, not after. For example, while I was writing this book, we parted with a number of executives as part of a

restructure. Some exited based on performance; others left because we eliminated their positions. We were direct and clear about our reasons, all the executives received similar levels of communication, and we expected the results would be an amicable with all of them. We've had a lot of success with this type of "parting of the ways" in the past, which is why we have some executives on their second stint with JumpCrew.

It's critical to set expectations early on, especially if your culture is as demanding as ours. We insist on high performance, even from home. We're upfront about what recruits should expect and what we expect of them, so when a termination does occur, it should not be and is rarely a surprise.

However, we're not perfect. In the situation above, one well-liked executive hadn't heard the communications the same way the others did, and his termination came as a shock. The executive ended up angry, breached employment covenants, and jeopardized relationships. Needless to say, the risk of such misunderstandings rises in a WFH organization. To avoid potential disasters, I recommend a multipart WFH termination process:

1. Decide what your criteria are for A, B, and C players in your WFH organization. They might be all about performance and KPIs, or they might be about the ability to adapt to working remotely. Just know what sets off alarm bells.
2. Once the bells go off, decide quickly if the patient can be saved. Is she coachable? Can she admit mistakes and grow, or is she set in her thinking?
3. If the employee can't get to or get back to a measurably positive ROI in a reasonable time frame, then have an honest, empathetic and clear conversation and move on.

Circumstances are always changing, and what may have worked in the past may not in the new reality you are managing. Be clear and be decisive.

Finally, there's the issue of burnout. In September of 2020, *Forbes* reported that 69 percent of WFH workers reported experiencing burnout symptoms.[6] We've talked about some of the likely reasons for this: the feeling that the workday never ends because you're always in the same space, the pressure to perform on Zoom calls, the lack of a social outlet for anxiety or frustration, or just longer hours.

Our kind of organization, by its nature, pushes individuals into a zone of discomfort and frequently a bit beyond. This is even more true in WFH. As the leader, it falls to you to keep your finger on the pulse of your people's work-life balance and to help them achieve it in a way that works for everyone. But this goes beyond the leader. The entire tribe should be encouraged to engage in a healthy self-care regimen, including self-reflection but also eating a healthy diet, exercising, and getting enough sleep. This is one way the community of peers can and should look out for each other.

The Benefits of Hiring for WFH

Of course, things aren't all bleak when it comes to hiring in a WFH world. There are many upsides that we experienced at JumpCrew. The most obvious would be that if people can work from home, your recruiting pool jumps from nearby cities to distant states or, perhaps, the entire planet.

WFH can also be good for retention. Obviously, you're more likely to keep good employees if you hire people who are psychologically and emotionally suited for WFH. Plus, people who might otherwise leave because of work-life balance issues or the need to care for small children can be compelled to stay if offered a good remote work situation. But WFH in and of itself isn't a solution. You have to be proactive about building connections between your new hires and the community, and do it early. According to the O.C. Tanner Institute's *2021 Global Culture Report*, 20 percent of turnover happens in the first forty-five days of employment.[7] Strong onboarding and paying close attention to any early issues that show up can prevent good people from jumping ship.

Is it possible to build a completely WFH organization with a deep, authentic culture without starting with an organization where workers are face-to-face in an office? It is, but it's difficult. You have to hire with tremendous care, calibrate your culture and the personalities of your recruits with extraordinary precision, operate with a scalpel, and move with great speed. You must apply resources, effort, and relentless repetition to building culture, building community, and building relationships. This will be easier for small organizations, but it's also more complicated if you're in rapid growth mode, as culture becomes both more watered down and more complex the larger your company gets.

The best solution will probably turn out to be the hybrid model, starting with a blend of in-person and WFH personnel (when you're not dealing with a global pandemic, of course). Create an atmosphere where face-to-face work occurs and where remote workers can come in whenever they like to bond with their colleagues and collaborate on projects—or just when they get bored. That's the best of all possible worlds: your WFH employees maintain their independence but have the option to get face time when they need it, you still lower your overhead, and everyone benefits

from the unparalleled community-building power of being live in a room together.

There are unquestionably challenges in hiring for WFH. Doing so calls for a great deal more care than simply hiring for the office. But if you use reflective leadership, coaching culture, and peer learning as screening tools to identify folks who are likely to blossom in your WFH community, you boost your chances of building something extraordinary, lasting, and transformative.

Chapter Ten

CAN WFH LOWER THE COST OF LEADING?

As I alluded to in Chapter Nine, by late 2020, the honeymoon phase of WFH was definitely over. Nicholas Bloom, a Stanford University economics professor, studied the effects of WFH on companies and individuals and called it a "productivity disaster" and "ticking time bomb for inequality." Those were big statements to make while most of the professional world was still celebrating the freedom to show up for work in sweatpants and shorts.

In his extensive research, Bloom found that productivity and innovation suffered during the pandemic-driven WFH boom largely due to four major factors that will sound familiar to many