

Meet the co-CEOs who differ on working from home

Tess Bennett *Technology reporter*



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The co-chief executives of technology company Kablamo, Allan Waddell and Angus Dorney, have very different but complementary leadership styles that have translated into two distinct approaches to spending time in the office.

Mr Waddell, the company's founder who looks after people and culture, and product development, comes in once a week while Mr Dorney, the operational expert, is in Kablamo's new office in Sydney's central business district four days a week.





Co-CEOs Angus Dorney and Allan Waddell made a big investment to fit out the company's Sydney office. **Oscar Colman**

Their contrasting approaches to working from home hasn't caused a rift for Kablamo's co-CEOs, but the right balance still eludes many workers and their bosses.

"I've built a life around a different schedule, and it's hard to undo that schedule," Mr Waddell said.

Mr Dorney, who prefers the work/life separation that the office provides, added, "Al leads by example and is always very open and honest and vulnerable.

"I think that makes the team feel comfortable that if they're in the same position, and they want to work remotely most of the time and take the time to make those adjustments then that's fine."

The company builds cloud-based products for various industries, including payments platforms for fintechs and video streaming platforms for media companies. It employs mostly software engineers who prefer to work remotely.

A reason for the office

But the co-CEOs would like to convince their staff that there's value to sitting side by side.

"It's easy to forget the value of face time when you've changed your entire life and put up defensive walls to enjoy work in an isolated space," Mr Waddell said.

After two years of working fully remotely, Kablamo recently signed a three-year lease and moved into its new Sydney office, recognising the

importance of providing a place for people to collaborate and socialise.

Staff have the choice of working wherever they like and Mr Dorney said COVID-19, [<https://www.afr.com/policy/health-and-education/virologists-predict-new-centaurus-variant-will-drive-next-virus-wave-20220704-p5ayt6>] the flu, public transport strikes [<https://www.afr.com/politics/nsw-commuters-to-face-more-transport-chaos-as-perrottet-ir-woes-deepen-20220701-p5aycg>], and the rainy weather [<https://www.afr.com/policy/energy-and-climate/why-there-is-so-much-rain-at-the-moment-and-when-it-will-stop-20220704-p5ayys>] had made it more difficult for people to come in.

On an average day, eight to 10 people of Kablamo's 50 staff in Sydney come into the office.

“We can see some value in encouraging an individual or a group to spend some time together and build those human connections again,” Mr Dorney said.

“It's a challenging balance. I find that really hard, particularly for people that are worried about sickness.”

Disagreements over how much time should be spent in the office have continued to simmer throughout 2022, with new research from the University of Melbourne indicating that many employers would still prefer their workers to be in the office more often than workers would like.

A survey conducted by the Melbourne Institute and Roy Morgan, found 38 per cent of workers would like to spend more time working from home than their employer permits.

One third of workers are in agreement with their employer over how much time they spend in the office and the remaining 29 per cent of workers said they could work more time at home but prefer to be in the office.

The research found 88 per cent of workers said they would like to work at least part of the workweek at home. However, only 49 per cent of workers reported their employers would agree to hybrid work.

The survey was set up in 2020 to track how Australians felt about policy changes in response to the pandemic.

Women want more work from home

Women are 25 per cent, or 8 percentage points, more likely than men to want to spend more time working from home than their employer would allow.



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The research found a 7 percentage point gender gap remained even after accounting for having children in the household.

The report's author Professor Ragan Petrie said while women typically take on greater caretaking responsibilities around the home, they may also find it a more efficient location to get work done.

“Office environments can be competitive, and women may find being at home a more efficient and relaxing way to complete their work, without

having to deal with office politics and other distractions,” said Professor Petrie.

“Workers who would like more flexibility have the option of seeking alternative employment, and given current labour shortages, employers may need to give workers what they want.”

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