



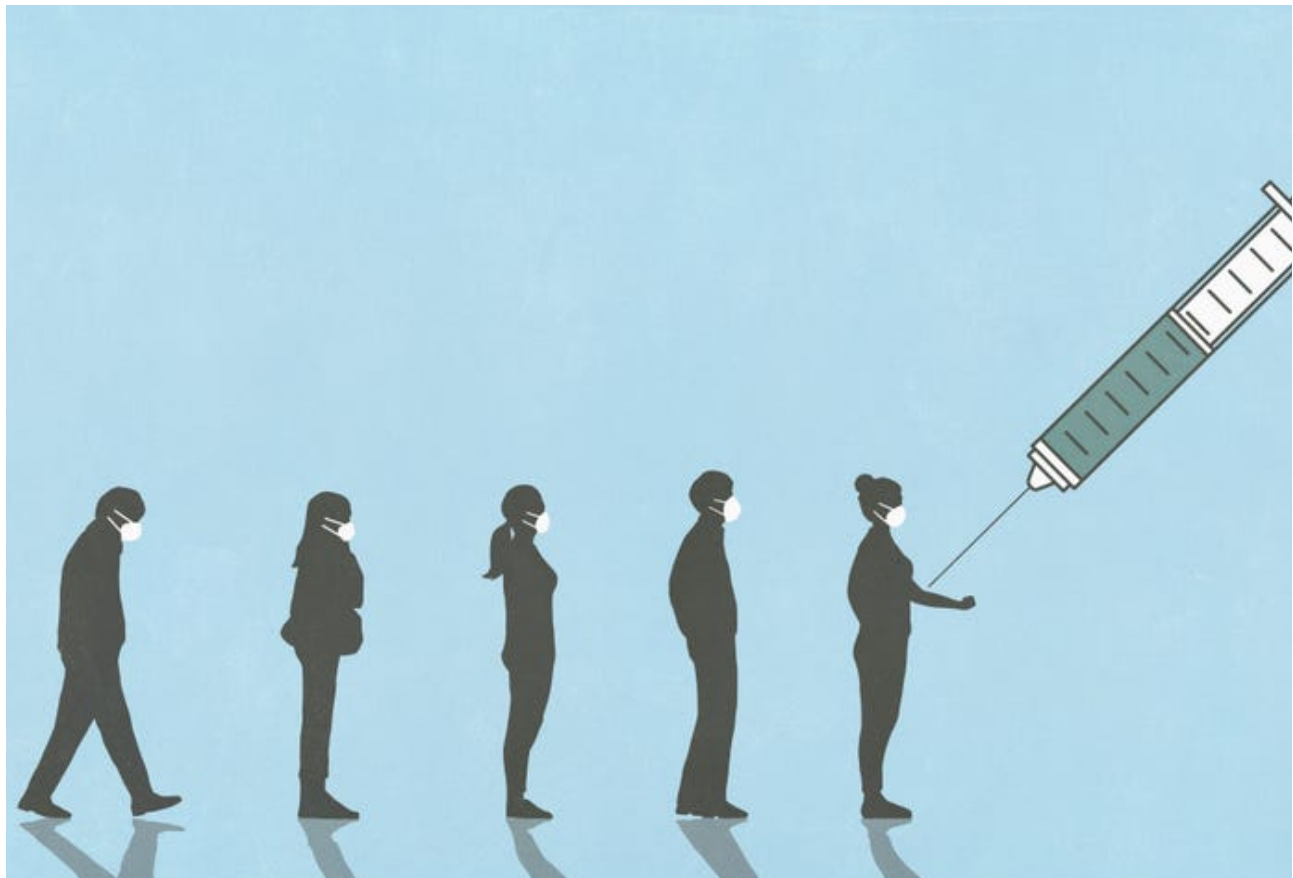
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A top consulting firm told employees get vaxxed or don't get paid. Every company considering mandates should follow its lead.

Caroline Hroncich and Rachel DuRose



The policy is a case study in how employers should craft their mandates, workplace experts said.

Employer mandates are the strongest incentive the US has to encourage workers to get the shot.

One consulting firm is introducing a unique policy to get workers vaccinated: Get the job or don't get paid.

Alvarez & Marsal, the corporate-turnaround firm that handled Lehman Brother's high-profile bankruptcy in 2008, said that it would be requiring all workers to provide proof of vaccination by September 7. Unvaccinated employees have 75 days to get the shot or they'll be placed on an unpaid leave of absence starting October 31 for up to six months. Alvarez & Marsal did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

More employers are expected to take this type of approach as the FDA gives full approval to COVID-19 vaccines. The Pfizer vaccine received FDA approval Monday.

"One out of every 27,700 vaccinated Americans have been hospitalized," A&M said in a release. "These facts make it clear that vaccinations are extremely effective."

A&M joins a growing number of employers such as IBM and Uber that are requiring employees to get vaccinated if they want to return to the office. Although the firm's policy may appear to be taking a strong stance on vaccination, workplace experts say it's a good

example of a nuanced approach to mandates. It provides a timeline for employees to get the shot, and allows exceptions for those who are pregnant. Anyone with a deeply held religious belief or another medical reason can be considered for an exception, though there are no guarantees, the company said.

The policy "seems to be grounded in both federal agency guidance and the law," Walter Foster, a labor attorney at Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott LLC, told Insider. "It's saying, 'We want to accommodate our employees to the degree that we can.'"

Mandates like Alvarez & Marsal's may be the only way to reach universal vaccination in the US

About 92% of Alvarez & Marsal's workforce is vaccinated, the company reported. This policy will likely push the final 8%, who are either unvaccinated or chose not to report their vaccine status, to either get the vaccine or show proof of it, Foster said. And it provides a flexible enough timeline for them to do that, he added.

"It's a way to manage the workforce," Foster said.

If employees are put on unpaid leave and don't get vaccinated, they could run the risk of losing their job, Foster said.

"It definitely holds out the promise that the person could be separated if they're not in compliance by that point," he said. This

creates a major incentive for most employees to get the vaccine. Possible downsides, like retention and tracking will be minimal, experts said.

Data shows that most workers are supportive of these kinds of policies. A recent Gallup poll of over 1,800 US adults found that 52% of respondents favor or strongly favor a COVID-19 vaccine mandate at their place of employment.

This is a good thing, said Patricia Toro, a senior director of health management at Willis Towers Watson, because employer mandates might be the strongest incentive the US has to encourage people to get the shot.

"These mandates go beyond incentives, but are likely the only way to move toward near-universal vaccination rates, with the subsequent improved health of the local community," Toro told Insider in an email.

Employers have a clear business interest to help reach near-universal vaccination levels, Foster said. If COVID-19 cases continue to rise, the cost of having to shut down again could create more financial strain.

Foster added, "It's a balanced and incremental approach that I think a number of employers are looking toward."

Shana Lebowitz contributed reporting.

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