Study on the Essence of Remote Working during Covid times

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Abstract: There was a times when working from home was considered as blessing nut no longer it is considered so, employees are expecting work from home just another feature of their requisite job. Although remote working is now considered as blessing for both employer and employees but it also comes up with its share of positives and negatives. In this paper we are trying to find out the perspectives of remote working is it going to be the future or is it just a fad.

Key words: Remote, Performance, Stress, Retention.

Introduction: Remote working was initially known as Telecommunicating and work from home, an option that was given to employees to work remotely i.e. from home or any other place, using communication technology. The word Tecommunting was first used by Jack Niles while working in NASA communication system in the year 1972.as quoted by Allied Marketing in year 2016.

"Ten years ago, remote employment basically meant a telemarketing or customer service position at below minimum wage," said Samantha Lambert, director of human resources at website design company Blue Fountain Media. "It rarely was connected with a full-time career. Nowadays, technology affords us the ability to get the same job done, no matter where in the world we are. [It has] enabled us to be in contact with co-workers or clients at any time."

One of the most helpful technologies in making remote work seamless is videoconferencing. Live video feeds help out-of-office workers see and speak to one another in real time, anywhere they are, which is the next best thing to a face-to-face meeting. But this capability wouldn't be possible without the widespread broadband internet adoption that's occurred over the past 10 to 15 years   Even though remote working offers a number of potential benefits, it goes without saying that it has its risk and challenges, and one of the most difficult situation that companies face in remote working is building up of company culture. Culture which is foundation of every company can't be built remotely and moreover the interaction between the employees is very less.

Although remote work offers a number of potential benefits, it is not without risks and challenges. Companies can find it difficult to build a culture that is accepting and supportive of remote work. It can also be difficult to track exactly who is working remotely, particularly when remote work is adopted more informally, and to measure the business impact of these initiatives. Remote workers can face a

number of personal and professional challenges. For instance, they may struggle for exposure and access to professional opportunities and there is the risk that those working outside the office can become socially isolated. These issues suggest that companies need to be both careful and deliberate in how they design and implement their remote work programs.

It is clear that remote work has become a global phenomenon. Yet in a majority of companies, flexible work options, including telecommuting, are still considered a perk rather than standard operating procedure. Nevertheless, more innovative companies, for example Amazon, Dell, Lenovo, IBM, Sales force, Oracle, JP Morgan Chase and many more, understand that trends are clearly moving towards more flexible work as a way of doing business.

So what is causing the shift towards working remotely, what are the exact benefits, and last but not least – how to make it work?

GROWING EMBRACE OF REMOTE WORK – THE REASONS:

There is amazing talent all over the world so why limit yourself to a 50 mile radius from your office .People want flexible schedules and do not want to have to work from 9-5pm every day.

1. Technology:

Let's face it – remote work has become possible thanks to the technology and various tools available. Advancements in technology and devices, including the Cloud, and several online communication tools, have massively contributed to the rising popularity of remote work. A PGi survey showed that a reported 91% of telecommuters had been provided with company laptops, 76% have access to company data, and 75% use web conferencing tools. With online communication tools, staying connected is easier than ever.

In the recent past, you'd have to walk over to your employee's desks and talk to them, to see whether they are using their time productively. For collaborating on a document at the same time, you'd need to be sitting next to each other at a computer. These days, time-tracking software can be used to monitor productivity, team collaboration and project management software can be used to edit documents, master projects, and much more – from anywhere in the world. These examples are just the tip of the iceberg; we'll get into details on which are the best tools to use for remote work later on.

2. Shifts in attitudes about work:

According to PwC's Millennial at Work study, the millennial generation – born between the years of 1980 and 1995 – now entering employment in vast numbers, are shaping the world of work for years to come. Bentley University estimates millennial will make up 75% of the global workforce by 2025, and this new generation of talent brings with it radically different expectations about the nature of work, and how, when and where it's done. It's clear that millennial will be a powerful generation of workers, able to strongly influence the way they work. More significantly, the oldest of millennials are now in their thirties, have moved into management, and are now starting to be the architects of workplace culture.

So how do millennial want to work? According to PWC's study, a good work-life balance is their number one priority. Adam Kingl, London Business School's Director of Learning Solutions, says that flexibility is one of the most important reasons why millennial are attracted to a workplace. Time no longer equals money – instead, it is a limited resource to be spent wisely and actively managed. It's not just about the millennial – a recent survey conducted by Flex Jobs shows that people of all ages, careers, and life stages consider flexible work options a priority.

Among other factors, work-life balance and flexibility also include working remotely. Essentially, an increasing number of people want to be able to work in the way that suits them best. Employees want to be rewarded by results rather than the number of hours or where they work, while offices will become meeting spaces rather than a fixed location for the working day.

Today's high-performing companies understand that in order to both compete for and keep top talent in the years ahead, they'll need to bake flexibility into the core of their corporate culture and let employees set their own schedules as long as they get their work done. Adam Kingl, London Business School's Director of Learning Solutions, suggests in addition to technology, fundamental shifts in management thinking are indeed aiding the shift towards working remotely. He says: "Leaders are learning how to enable their teams to flourish, and there is a recognition that the notion of a traditional 9-5, Monday-Friday, commute-to-the-office job is quickly eroding. There is, though, an equally strong case for bringing teams together on a regular basis to inspire and to share."

BENEFITS OF REMOTE WORK

In recent years, remote work has been investigated quite a bit by academics, news organizations, businesses, and government agencies – all looking to come up with statistics about how flexibility impacts the marketplace. Plenty of studies, news articles and white papers provide an array of statistics about remote work, and the many benefits telecommuting offers to both employers and workers.

1 Work Anytime and Anywhere:

One of the best part for remote working is that you can begin to work from anywhere and anytime. Instead of having to check into the same office at the same desk every day, you can work from your home office, in the backyard, at a cafe shop, at a conference, and anywhere you want as long as you have a computer with internet connection. Working from home means you can create the ideal workspace for yourself like staying at home or traveling to various places without limits.

You can also decide when you work and rest. While some time constraints are simply a fact of life, such as meetings and project deadlines, remote workers generally finds that they can set their own hours and plan their own schedule as they see most fit for their workload and project requirements. In other words, the first advantage of remote working is great freedom and flexibility given to you.

2. Reduce Costs for Employers and Employees:

The second advantage of remote working in your daily business life is saving your money on transportation costs, eating lunch out with colleagues, or purchasing a morning coffee. Unless you need to do video conferencing with your clients or colleagues, you can wear informal clothes, even a housecoat is allowed, no need for a work wardrobe.

Additionally, companies are able to reduce spending on the purchase and maintenance of office equipment. They have no need to purchase or rent a big working space and much office equipment for remote workers. The increasingly extensive use of cloud services, mobile platforms and video conferencing has made remote work possible and very acceptable to both employees and employers in business life. For example, working remotely can create online meetings or online training within your organization. Remote workers can use their own devices to manage projects through cloud-based software, and collaborate with others anytime anywhere by using a piece of cost-effective video conferencing software like ezTalks Meetings, which features HD video and audio to create an interactive and real-time online meeting experience.

3. Increase Working Efficiency:

Imaging that you have a lot of work to do but you are running into a huge traffic jam due to a road traffic accident or a morning rush hour, and go to the office 1 hour later. It is a waste of time for your busy work time. Working from home can be a significant way of increasing your working efficiency and saving your time, there are more opportunities to focus on the job at hand without interruptions of socializing or office chatter. You have the ability to get into the working condition and buckle down to complete your assignment as soon as possible.

4. Take Better Care of Yourself:

It is never a fun experience that you have to go to the office for work when you get a bad cold or a sore throat. With working from home, you can take care of yourself and still get work done. According to research, remote workers tend to have less sick days than employees who go to the office every day to work. Remote workers have more time to do physical exercise each day. In other words, if you're the sick person, staying at home allows you to take care of yourself while still being productive. Working from home when you are sick also avoids passing on your illness to fellow colleagues.

DISADVANTAGES OF REMOTE WORKING:

We have talked about some advantages of remote working in the above. However, anything has its pros and cons, remote working is also included. The following part is about some disadvantages of remote working.

1. Lack of Connection with Colleagues:

Even if remote workers can interact with co-workers with all kinds of communication and collaboration tools, it is sometimes not the same as being in the office environment, doing face-to-face meeting, hearing colleagues discuss projects or even eating lunch together. Group work will help people feel more included. Those people who work from home often feel a little isolated compared to traditional workers, they are just like "outsiders" that are not part of company structure. To overcome the isolation, remote workers who work from home can go outside to work in a coffee shop or go to the office at least once a month.

2. Distracted by External Interference:

Working from home means that you will work in an environment with all kinds of distractions, good or bad, which depends on each remote worker's circumstance. For example, if you have children or baby, you have to spend much time taking care of them when you are working. Their every movement will demand your attention. Or if you are staying at home, tidying up the house, washing the dishes, doing the laundry, surfing Facebook or watching TV will be a waste of productivity.

3. Separation Challenge between Work and Life:

When you have no specific hours or a clear separation of workplace and home space, it can be hard to end a day's work and stop thinking about work you have to do, or stop constantly checking your phone or inbox even if it is too late for you. Or if you are a remote worker without strong self-control,

you can't get out of bed and enter working state quickly. When working from home it is important to make clear distinctions between your workplace and home space.

4. Working Too Much:

One of the reasons many managers don't approve of remote work is they fear employees will slack off without that physical, in-person oversight. But, in fact, the opposite tends to be the reality–remote workers are more likely to *over*work. When your personal life and your work are both under the same roof, it's harder to "switch off."

"When does the work day start? End? Creating a hard line between work/home is tough,"

5. Prioritizing Work:

Remote workers need to be self-motivated experts at time management, because we don't have others constantly overlooking our work or managing our time for us. While every worker might find it difficult to stick to a schedule and manage their todos, it's especially challenging for remote workers who have more flexible, free form days as well as managers in a different part of the world.

Managing your own work is hard enough. Then there's the constant temptation to watch one episode of your favorite show during your work break, tidy up the kitchen when you're procrastinating on a project, or take your dog for a walk because of their pleading look. All of the sudden, it's evening and you have nothing to show for the day.

6. Interruptions: You Have a Family, Pets, and/or a Doorbell:

The good news is, when you work from home, you avoid co-workers dropping by your desk and other office interruptions (it's someone's birthday! Let's have cake in the breakroom!). The bad news is you'll likely have to deal with other kinds of interruptions and distractions, whether it's the UPS delivery person needing your signature or in-laws dropping by unannounced.

7. Loneliness and Lack of Human Interaction:

If you *don't* have family members home with you when you're working, you might have the opposite problem: Isolation. Even with internet access and tools like Slack, you might still develop "cabin fever" from being in the same place for too long all by yourself. "It is too easy to get the habit of working from home all day," says CEO of ad tech firm Monetize More, Kean Graham, "and then remain in your home for the remainder of that day and sometimes for subsequent days."

8. Technology Hiccups :

Nothing makes a remote worker shake in fear as much as an internet outage. Or, perhaps, when your computer breaks. Both are your problems to solve.

Attorney Elizabeth Potts Weinstein says that she and her husband have worked remotely for years and "by far the biggest challenge is being able to rely on a stable and fast internet connection. We do our research ahead of time, but that doesn't mean that the speed and stability is guaranteed, particularly in developing countries."

CHALLENGES FACED BY REMOTE EMPLOYEES:

It is always perceived that employees working remotely are the happiest employees but the situation is not so, remotely working employees face their own challenges and among them major challenges are:

- The impact on organizational culture and individual well-being
- Accountability and visibility
- Security – both physical, and digital
- Maintaining boundaries between work life and home life
- Time zone and communication difficulties

1. Impact on organizational culture:

Many remote workers say the lack of community and a disconnect from the overall company culture as one of the biggest downfalls. There are fewer opportunities to connect and engage with their peers, resulting in a lack of that much-valued sense of 'camaraderie' many office workers experience. There's also a lack of visibility of the overall business direction, mission and values.

2. Accountability and visibility:

Then, there's management and accountability concerns. As a manager, how do you know if your remote workers are actually doing what's being asked of them? How do you balance the need for transparency and 'checking in', with the threat of becoming a Big Brother-style organization that causes resentment from employees who feel excessively checked up on?

On the other end of the scale, the need to be visible and show productivity can result in remote employees over-working and doing more hours than their in-house counterparts. As self-managers, they

often face difficulties in prioritizing work and gaining insight into bigger picture business priorities or objectives.

It's a process that can result in burn-out, dissatisfaction and ultimately, staff turnover.

3. Security:

In an age of global hacks, cyber terrorism and in fact, physical terror attacks, the question of how to keep our employees, our data, and our information safe, is at the forefront of everyone's minds. In the office, we have protocols, procedures and policies covering everything from virus protection and password policy through to fire evacuation or what to do when working alone in the office. Some of these are still relevant. However, remote employees encounter an entirely different set of risks when working in shared spaces, home alone, or even accessing business systems on public networks.

4. Work-life boundaries:

Improved work-life balance is usually cited as one of the major incentives, and benefits of, working from home. However, it's not a given. Remote workers are more likely to be subject to home interruptions, and a blurring between work and home life. We saw this comically demonstrated in a BBC televised interview fail, which saw Professor Robert Kelly accidentally interrupted at a key moment.

Without physical boundaries between a work environment and home environment, this can result in longer or unpredictable hours worked, increased stress, a strain on personal and professional relationships, and the threat of one, or both, sides taking advantage.

5. Time zone bingo and communication concerns:

One of the greatest difficulties experienced by remote or dispersed teams is the question of communication. If you have individuals working across different time zones or even different countries, you have logistical challenges. What if your employees don't speak the same language? Could political, cultural or social differences cause difficulties or unforeseen divisions? If your remote workers are based across different time zones, how do you coordinate them?

Conclusion:

The current trends suggest that companies will grow their working remotely there is no doubt about it Remote work is not and will not be for everyone, and not for 100% of industries.. In this article we also came to know different perspective of employees and employers, and also we tried to convey a common

notion that employees working remotely have more happiness quotient which is not always true, they face their own challenges, their own situation. Overall we can say that grass is always greener on the other side, every trend comes with pros and cons, now the real challenge for employees and employer is to sustain and grow with this challenge.

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