

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Remote Work (For Employees and Employers)

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Introduction

Remote work, also known as telework or telecommuting, has gained immense popularity in recent years due to its numerous benefits. Not only does remote work benefit organizations in terms of cost-savings and increased productivity, but it also provides flexibility for employees who work outside of the traditional work setting which has positive environmental impacts. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are also some disadvantages associated with this work arrangement and environment. This paper explores the potential advantages as well as disadvantages that remote work or telework offers to employees and employers outside of the traditional work settings in the digital realm.

Background

The history of remote working is varied and rich that goes back to the time when the world saw the rise of the office throughout the middle of the twentieth century as the larger and more complex structure of the organizations needed administration at that time. The growth of population in urban areas, expensive commuting, cities becoming more congested, and societies caring more about the environmental impacts of transport, towards the end of the twentieth century, changed the way organizations used to work in olden times. In response to these changes, the momentum changed and organizations introduced telecommunicating in their work in the 70s. Towards the end of the 90s, the US government took the initiative of agile practices for its federal agencies which was a turning point as this pushed remote working into the mainstream at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Simenenko & Lentjushenkova, 2021).

A global pandemic, Coronavirus, at the start of 2020 put various parts of the world on social lockdowns that resulted in many organizations stopping their working from office spaces. This forced change led many people and organizations to embrace remoteness for a protracted period of time. The period of pandemic sparked what Nicholas Bloom, a famous economist, calls “the working-from-home economy” as the unprecedented shift from offices to remote work developed strong life-work boundaries that have bridged the gap between employees and employers as well as increased productivity (Jacks, 2021). Workers understood the necessity and merits of working from the relative comfort, serenity, and safety of home rather than gathering and working in enclosed spaces. Like

employees, employers have also understood the importance and benefits of working from the relative safety of home as many see expenses fall and productivity increase with several other benefits. Thus, there seems to have no way back to pre-pandemic work settings.

Interview Questions/Answers with Human Resource Professionals

Interviews have been conducted with human resource professionals to ask them about their experiences and suggestions about working remotely. Some of the important questions that were asked during interview sessions and the answers HR professionals provided are as follows:

Question: How do you address the challenges of enabling knowledge transfer and managing synchronous teams in a remote work setting?

Answer: Well, it is a daunting task even though I have years of experience in the field of working, managing, and operating remotely. To address these challenges, I emphasize the use of collaborative tools and technologies through virtual platforms including video conferencing and sharing drives that facilitate information sharing. I also encourage teams to document their knowledge and share their expertise through centralized platforms such as project management systems.

Question: Can you tell us about your experience with managing employees in a remote work setting?

Answer: As an HR professional with experience in managing employees remotely, I have found that trust-building and effective communication are crucial for success. By utilizing various communication tools, implementing regular check-ins, and providing clear expectations, I have been able to foster a strong sense of collaboration and accountability among remote teams.

Question: How do you ensure that remote employees feel engaged and connected with the rest of the team?

Answer: To ensure remote employees feel engaged and connected, I prioritize open and regular communication channels including scheduled team meetings, casual check-ins, virtual social events, etc., to foster a sense of working community among the team members.

Question: Is it challenging for an HR professional to maintain data security when managing remote teams?

Answer: There are several strategies that every professional can adopt to maintain data security including establishing clear protocols regarding data security, educating teammates on protecting sensitive information, using encrypted software and communication tools, and providing comprehensive training to employees on safe data handling practices.

Question: How has the transition to remote work affected the overall performance and productivity of your remote team?

Answer: The transition has had mixed effects on the overall productivity and efficiency of the team. While some struggled to adapt and maintain their level of productivity, others really thrived well and maintained their productivity levels. I realized that some felt efficient while working from home whereas others struggled with maintaining focus due to distractions at home.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Remote Work

Remote work, just like daily commute, offers numerous advantages to employers and employees but several disadvantages as well to the working community around the globe. On one hand, the advantages suggest how companies can shift from the hassle of unreliable public transit to reliable videoconferencing. On the other hand, disadvantages suggest the potential issues and challenges posed to individuals working or operating from home comfort and how employers as well as employees can improve the issues surrounding remote work.

Building on the rich history of remote work, the following are curated some of the advantages as well as disadvantages that remote working poses for employers and employees.

Advantages of Remote Work

1. For Employers
2. Pool of Talent

The process of recruitment or hiring employees remotely allows employers to choose the market-best, well-qualified, experienced, and professional individuals for the prospective and progressive outcomes of the company. Hiring remotely, across the country or around the world, provides the opportunity to hire prospective individuals from any part of the world which the commute working lacks as employers require recruited individuals to be in a particular location or time zone in order to provide their services to the organization. It benefits employers as they do not have to incur the cost of relocation in comparison to the individuals located within commuting distance of the company's headquarters or expanded offices. Moreover, the talent pool would increase exponentially as remote recruiting strategies remove the geographic boundaries from the available and wider pool of high-quality and professional talent (Kowalski & Ślebarska, 2022).

Savings on Equipment

An official setting requires an employer to arrange and manage pieces of equipment that are needed by the employees and required by the company to effectively continue its operations. Contrary to

work-at-office environments, working from home saves the employer from paying for types of equipment that his/her employees need at their workstations. Instead, employees, working remotely, are bound to pay for their own pieces of equipment they would need for their business to run. Freelancers are a very fine example of how employers save their money and employees pay for their resources. Hence, pieces of equipment are one less thing that employers have to worry about while offering remote business opportunities to their employees.

1. For Employees
2. Effective Communication

Communication is an effective outcome that comes with remote working. When employees work with a remote team, they use different asynchronous communication tools using technology such as Messaging and Email that helps them keep a collaborative mindset. For some employees, it would be quite strange in the beginning that they are going to work without office chat and in silence but once they are used to it, they know when, who, what, and how they need to talk to people, without wasting time.

Less Commuting Time

The benefits of working remotely have been extensive but the less or no commuting time to and from the office setting compared to the comfort of home is surely one of the most tangible advantages of remote work. This not only saves time for the employees but also saves money which they can use for purchasing equipment or resources needed for the business or setting up a working space at their home. Less commuting or traveling to the workforce allows flexible work, energy, and productivity which improves the life-work balance and overall happiness of the workers.

Higher Retention Levels

Full-time remote working is an opportunity that any individual whether a man or a woman from any strata of society can opt for at any time. Hiring remote workers comes with a lot of benefits for the hired individual, employer, and the organization as it increases the employee retention rate. The individuals who are hired remotely and are expected to offer their services on a full-time remote basis would have more flexibility in terms of time, resources, and work (Chatterjee et al., 2022). Women, as the biggest shareholder of the business world, working and operating not less than men in society can carry on working on their remote tasks or operating business remotely during their pregnancy and early motherhood.

Disadvantages of Remote Work

1. For Employers

2. Monitoring

Monitoring allows employers to get quick visibility into their employees' activities, deliverables, and progress. It is possible when employees work in the workforce setting but it seems difficult to monitor each individual in a remote work setting. An employer can adopt legal digital surveillance methods such as keystroke monitoring, tracking usage of social media websites, and time tracking to monitor employees during their working hours (Ingusci et al., 2023). Employers can also track their employees through a number of non-invasive techniques such as idle or active time, measuring distraction scores, setting goals, checking deliverables, and monitoring employees' attendance, as well as, productivity. These techniques and strategies on the part of employers would guard them against the security and loss to their companies as well as track their employees' productivity while ensuring they are sitting and working at their laptops at their homes.

1. Security

While offering remote opportunities to employees, employers may have to struggle with security issues throughout their organization. The employers and their teams need to manage and secure the information regarding the business regardless of where their employees live, move, or travel while offering their remote services to the company. In this regard, employers have to create security policies and train individuals to ensure that their corporation's sensitive and confidential information does not get hacked, altered, or leaked in any case. Such requirements need an additional amount to be invested in a team which can understand the security risks and play an effective part in reducing such risks on a daily basis to keep the devices and company's information safe.

1. For Employees

2. Collaboration

Company-wide remote work restricts employees to work or collaborate with other employers or employees in other formal and informal business groups. People who indulged in remote work have fewer opportunities to communicate frequently with others because they mostly stay in their homes and only communicate with their managers or employers when they need to. Employees working from home become isolated and do not engage in real-time conversations more often. Moreover, an employee working in a full-time remote workforce can be less diligent in acquiring and sharing new information as compared to an employee working in a commute work setting which has more implications for innovation and productivity.

Collapse of One-On-One Discussions

Working remotely allows employees to utilize a range of asynchronous forms of communication for information sharing such as Messages, Google Docs, Messenger, Email, video conferencing, and phone calls. The pandemic has also influenced this trend as businesses tend to communicate through asynchronous forms of communication over mail and digital meetings more than ever before. On one

hand, employers and employees have found a new way to connect to each other but this trend has discouraged organizations to hold more official meetings in their meeting rooms. Hence, remote work has caused employees' collaboration networks to be less interconnected which leaves workers to feel left out (Kłopotek, 2017).

Overworking

Although working remotely provides the freedom to offer services from the safety and comfort of home on one hand, it leaves no room for the employees to break away from work at the end of the day. Working at an office has the freedom to leave the table, pack the office bag, close the computer and other appliances, shut the door, and leave the office. However, unlike office work, remote working lacks this feature of comfort as employees sometimes have to work for more hours in a day than they work in the office on a normal working day. To overcome this issue, remote employees can optimize work-tracking software to clock out on time which would help individuals to stay on track instead of benching when to close the computer. Employees in this way can get an insight into how long they have been active to perform their official tasks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, remote work has become increasingly popular in recent decades but it offers advantages as well as disadvantages for both employers and employees. Preparing employees or hiring prospective candidates is a daunting task for employers as this task can have upfront costs that employers may not have anticipated before founding their business. Employers may struggle to pay for software, additional resources, and upgrade tools for maintaining optimum productivity and control of their business. However, numerous benefits of full-time remote work outweigh fewer disadvantages as remote work improves performance, engagement, timeliness, and retention rate as well as offers loyalty and flexibility that lead to higher productivity for an organization.

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