

Impact of Working Remotely On Productivity and Professionalism

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Abstract: This paper explores published articles and research papers that bring to light the impact of working remotely (Telecommuting and Telework) on the productivity of employees and the professionalism their work demands. Although the articles and papers present both positive and the negative impact of working remotely on employee performance and work specific professionalism, the negatives outweigh the positive ones. Amabile & Kramer (2013) and Vanderkam, 2013, mostly discussed the positives of this work option and acknowledged that work from home has increased productivity and lead to more employee satisfaction. While Roger(2013), Carter, 2016, MicroExec, 2013, Richardson & Writer, 2017, Go, 2016, McCain, 2013, MSG.E., Ricci, 2014 and Roger(2013) implied that although there are positives of this work option, the negatives of working remotely require attention as they directly impact productivity of the employees and makes supervision and communication difficult. This paper discusses the difficulties and challenges that any company could face while adopting this mode of work besides the option being one of the most lucrative ways to keep the workforce motivated and satisfied.

Keywords: telecommuting, work from home, performance, professionalism.

I. The Impact of Telecommuting on Employees' Productivity and Professionalism

Telecommuting, popularly known as 'work from home' option that a company offers its employees, is an option to work remotely (from home or any other place other than the physical location of the workplace) using internet, telephone or other information and communication technology.

According to AlliedMarketing, 2016, the word 'Telecommuting' was first coined by Jack Niles while he was working on some NASA communication system in the year 1972. The concept soon received acceptance especially in the United States but took time to receive global acceptance which happened in the years spanning 2008-2015. In Reaney, 2012, poll it was found that approximately one fifth of the workers work from home in some capacity globally. This meant that one in every five worker was using this option in some capacity. Basu, 2016, says that a Ranstad survey on Indians revealed the more than half of the Indian working respondents want to work remotely. Moreover this group of respondents who wants to work remotely had most of them aged 45 or more.

Since most of the companies today offer the 'work from home' option, it is important to weigh the positive and the negative impact it has on companies' performance and the way it functions. There has been number of researches done in this area and the conclusions drawn from these researches point fingers to problems that could be crucial in deciding whether a company should reconsider the work from home option or change the way it operates. The researches in general talk about the benefit of work life balance and freedom the option gives employees. However, they also point out the difficulty in supervision, maintaining professionalism and meeting the deadlines as most common issues companies face. This paper examines the impact of 'working remotely' on the performance of the employees and professionalism that is required to keep the business operations running smoothly.

II. Literature review

Amabile & Kramer, 2013, According to Harvard researchers work from home transmission has changed work life of the employees this is helping the employees to parallelize and differentiate their corporate work with their daily chores. The research done in New York bank implies that work from home has increased the productivity, saved time, completed their targets on time, were more creative than the remote employees but also satisfied with their job. This transition also helped them to give more time for their personal life.

Carter, 2016, According to the statistics only 7% of the employees outlook that they work more productive in corporate rooms rather than home. Yet, while 65% of workers think they would be more productive telecommuting than working in a traditional workplace. The three disadvantages that telecommuters face when they work from home is over work, continuous isolation and in adequate tools to work on this downside of work from home will affect the professionalism of the employees in the corporate world.

According to the Forbes Stats show that 44% of telecommuters don't have the relevant information with them when they are working from home. According to MicroExec, 2013, 88% of employees increase the impact of discussions by video conferencing. To solve for the challenge of craving more social interaction than working from home provides. Their some of the ways in which work from home can improve the professionalism at work from home like effective management of projects which is meeting to the submission dates prior to the deadlines it is better to under promise than under delivering the given work. Keeping away from distractions work from home suggests there will be many distractions especially who are homemaker taking care of children and their day to day chores which needs to be completed this factor is main reason where the professionalism of the telecommuters affect the most a daily timetable need to be set and time and hard work should be dedicated. Another major reason which affects the professionalism is working etiquettes namely the body language, dressing at webinars, keeping the work area clean, etc. This will help to maintain professionalism at work from home.

Richardson & Writer, 2017 implied that increase in modern technology work from home has increased the credibility i.e. increase usage of internet for web conferencing, voice mail, fax which made work more easier according to Richardson work from home has affected in positive as well as negative sense. Some highlights of positive side, employees can start their work according to their convenience this statement also negative impact convenience will give them the liberty to delay the work and not submitting the work on time. The attire and working etiquettes will be misguided this statement also has a positive side the employee can work freely and comfortable in different times.

Go, 2016 stated that the article mainly focuses on the on the gloomy side of work from home and the major failures after initiating work from home, the cultural differences which are faced by employees when they handle webinars. Work from home creates a communication gap between superior and the subordinates and other co-employees to communicate with in the team.

McCain, 2013, spoke about the pros of working from home like wearing favourite clothes, cutting the costs on office cum professional dresses, less commute time, and its benefits to moms; she also highlighted the cons of working from home. Such as isolations, distractions disconnect with the company, keeping personal and professional life separate. What I liked about the article was that it highlighted the point – “Cost of setting up a home office” with cost it not only means monetary cost but also the non- monetary cost, but it failed to specify which in particular.

MSG.E, This article shared the employers point of view. Many HR professionals say that work from home, imposes additional costs on the organizations in terms of home connectivity and other infrastructural aspects, which the organizations have to pay for the employees. Many managers also say that work from home, is a knock on effect wherein other employees want to follow suit and this creates an undesirable situation for organizations'. It was also said that there is no way to keep a check on the employees' working hours when they work from home and hence, there is no way of knowing whether the employee is being extra productive or merely postponing work to be done once they return to the workplace. Ricci, 2014, This article spoke about telework research network which revealed that approximately 2.5 % of America's employee work force consider home as their primary and preferred work place. Ricci also cautioned that work from home can be less collaborative, absence of IT department and help desk.

Rogers, 2013, This article has a reference to Rogers Connected Workplace report which says that half of Canadians including both Baby Boomers and Generation Y employees - feel it's essential to work with the latest technology and want freedom to do so from anywhere, but lack in appropriate resources. Marissa Mayers, CEO at Yahoo, banned work from home. She wrote: “Speed and quality are often sacrificed when we work from home. We need to be one Yahoo, and that starts with physically being together.”

Vanderkam, 2013, This article brought new insights such as The benefits to environment by taking cars off the road. It also revealed that one meta-analysis of 46 studies found that telecommuting was associated with more job satisfaction, less desire to leave an employer, and -- at modest levels -- had no effect on the quality of workplace relationships. In another study, researchers from **BYU** analyzed 24,436 IBM (IBM, -0.53%) employees in 75 countries to identify the point at which 25% of employees reported work-family conflicts. People with the ability to work from home and set their own hours could work 57 hours per week before a significant chunk experienced work-life stress. For those who had to be in the office at set hours, that break point occurred at 38 hours. However Karen Finerman, co-founder and president of Metropolitan Capital Advisors and author of Finerman's Rules, tried working from home. And said - “For me, working from home was literally the worst of everything,”

III. Discussion

In 2013, Amabile & Kramer stated that the option of working remotely offers a number of benefits to the company and the employees at the same time. In 2013, Vanderkam highlighted something similar which are the possible benefits of the option of working remotely and how does it impact the way it affects the productivity of employees and quality of their relationship with the co-workers or managers.

Most of the articles and papers discussed in this secondary research bring to light both the negative and the positive sides of this lucrative work option for the company from the point of view of being cost effective and being comfortable for the employees.

IV. Limitation of These Studies

The papers by Amabile & Kramer, 2013 and Vanderkam, 2013, do not highlight any substantial challenge or difficulty either to the employees or to the company. These papers seem to have covered all possible benefits of the option but little did it talk about the operational or functional challenges that a company could face while adopting this mode of work. This is probably because the respondents/subjects of the research were only the employees who company chose to offer the option of working remotely. Most of the articles and papers do not mention demographic details of the respondents which makes it difficult to conclude whether both the genders would respond to the option in the same way or have similar point of view.

Most of the studies are surveys that just asked people about how they would feel if they were allowed to work remotely. There is not much data that talks about what actually happens if this option is functional and a substitute to working from office.

V. Conclusion

The option of working remotely has been gaining acceptance and could prove to be an economic and more feasible work option only if we are able to understand and tackle the challenges and difficulties it pose and exploit the benefits it offers. The expert articles, research papers, statistical data all point that this option poses business specific challenges related to employees' productivity and professionalism that need attention and thought before adopting this work mode besides the benefits it offers. With the limited data that is available, studies point out that there are more chances that this option would affect employee productivity and professionalism negatively than it would positively.

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