

## WORKING FROM HOME: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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### ABSTRACT

Work from home is method of employment, which is gaining importance across various sectors and industries that are essential for its success. Technology allows professionals to effectively collaborate even while working from different locations, thereby eradicating the requirement for a physical space for associates to assemble. Working from home is an idea which provides an employee a freedom to perform his or her job from home utilizing company assets, guidelines and methods. Working from home gives flexibility to employees in working hours along with performing the job for the employer in comfortable zone.

**Keywords:** flexibility, work life balance

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### INTRODUCTION

Flexibility is the demand of the employees in recent scenario which is also giving solution to the various problems of the organisations relating to structure and responsiveness to the fluctuating environment. But in the process of making workplace flexible, the nature of employment has also been affected. At present according to a survey approximate 30 per cent of employees in UK are working part time or adopting flexible working schedule. Further, in various organisations in a survey, it was found that up to 25 per cent of the workforce follows the flexible work schedule. In leisure and retail industries it was noticed that part time and shift working is adopted at most. Over the period of time there is increase in number of part time jobs over the full-time jobs. By the year 2026, the number of part time employees is expected to increase to 41 per cent as a result of both organisational and individual needs. The HR managers and line managers will be facing the challenge in the upcoming era due to the change in the employment structure to more flexible one and increase in the number of short-term contracts with employees. So, for the purpose of managing flexible work force, there will be a requirement of more accurate planning and matching changes in HR systems and criterions. Thus, with the help of latest technology, it appears that most of the jobs will be performed away from the workplace as per the suitability of the employees as well as organizations.

According to Workplace Flexibility 2010, "Flexible work schedule as any one of the spectrums of work structures that alters the time and for place that work gets done on a regular basis". A flexible work arrangement incorporates flexibility in the following ways:

- Flexibility in scheduling of hours worked, such as alternative work schedule and arrangement regarding shift and break schedule.
- Flexibility in the number of hours worked such as part time work and job shares.
- Flexibility in the place of work such as working at home or at a satellite location.

The most common form of flexible work schedule which is taken as a prime focus in this study is: **WORK FROM HOME**

This method of employment is gaining importance across various sectors and industries that are essential for its success. Technology allows professionals to effectively collaborate even while working from different locations, thereby eradicating the requirement for a physical space for associates to assemble. Working from home Work From home is an idea which provides an employee a freedom to perform his or her job from home utilizing company assets, guidelines and methods. Working from home gives flexibility to employees in working hours along with performing the job for the employer in comfortable zone. Work from home is helpful in bringing work life balance to the employee, and accordingly helping the company to achieve its goals. These days, various employers offer this choice to their employees. Working from home is a work arrangement where an employee performs his or her job out of the work place and at a place of their comfort. Such arrangements can be advantageous for both employers and employees and can do wonders to the overall growth of a company.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of the study is to analyze the challenges and opportunities of work from home.

#### **NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY**

Work from home (or working from home) is a contemporary work method aided through internet and flexibility wherein regardless of the physical location of an employee, work can be performed. Work from Home is also called Working Remotely or telecommuting which means that the employee is working from a remote location generally home. The study highlights how work from home promotes work life balance.

#### **OPPORTUNITES OF WORKING FROM HOME**

Work from home approach is gaining prevalence in current scenario. It ensures performance of the employee to remain same or even improve and also with this the employee to remain with his/her family and can handle the personal issues at the same time. Further, if the employee is having some health problems of self or of the family, Work from Home approach can prove as a significant tool for supporting employee to stay at home and also perform his job at the same time. In 2020, during Coronavirus Pandemic, Work from Home allowed many companies to continue their operations and keep themselves relevant. Here are various benefits of working from home which promote work life balance for employees:

**Reduced Commuting Time:** Working from home leads to the substantial saving in time and reducing stress connected with commuting. Most of the people spend a lot of their time daily on commuting from one place to other and due to which they are left with very less time to focus on their personal lives. Work from home remove the problems like traffic while going to the workplace, and give more time daily to perform personal and professional duties. Eliminating the need for commuting can also reduce physical activity for many people, which can result in health issues.

**Increased Productivity and Performance:** When employees work from home, there are typically fewer distractions than in an office environment, resulting in increased productivity. As they no longer commute, they have more time available to work each day. To maintain productivity, it is important to set up a designated office space in home to help signal to others that you are working.

**Increased Job Satisfaction:** Employees become more satisfied on their jobs when they are given autonomy to work from home, which results in increase in retention rate of employees in the

organization.

**Improvement in Work-Life Balance:** In Remote working employees can follow the flexible schedule and plan their daily routine and can balance their personal and professional life. They are able to complete their assigned job efficiently and also manage their personal responsibilities.

**Access to a Broader Talent Pool:** Employers are able to bring the professional talent irrespective of their location, which allows them to hire skilled and experienced employees from across the world.

**Customized Work Environment:** Another significant importance of working from home is that employee is able to make his workplace as per his needs and requirements which enhance his productivity. Employees can choose the physical setting, temperature and other facilities as per their own comfort. It is important to confirm that home workplace is ergonomically precise to evade uneasiness or injury.

**Flexible Schedule:** Remote work allows you to establish a work routine that suits your personal preferences and needs. You can take breaks as and when you require, which can help you stay energized and focused throughout the day. To make the most of remote work experience, consider using the money to save to fund any pursuits one is passionate about, like certifications, workshops, classes, personal projects or travel.

**Greater Work Inclusivity:** Remote work can benefit individuals with disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, or other constraints that might make traditional office-based work challenging. It fosters a more inclusive work environment by accommodating a broader range of needs.

**Improved Focus:** One of the benefits of working remotely is the ability to create an environment that allows staying focused and being more productive. Working from home eliminates many distractions that often arise in an office environment, allowing accomplishing more in less time. To optimize the productivity while working remotely, consider using productivity apps on the smartphone. These apps can help to stay organized, manage the time effectively and track the progress towards daily, monthly or weekly goals.

**Environmental Benefits:** Less commuting means reduced carbon emissions and a smaller ecological footprint, which can positively impact the environment.

**Increased Mobility:** Another advantage of working from home is the flexibility to live and work from any location. Without the requirement to report to a physical office, one can choose to relocate to be closer to family, live in an area with a lower cost of living or reside in a location that one may prefer for other reasons. By leveraging the benefits of working from home, one can build a healthy work ethic, while maintaining the flexibility to live in locations that are ideal for the personal pursuits.

**Eco Friendly Impact:** Fewer commuters mean reduced traffic congestion and carbon emissions, contributing to a greener environment. Embracing remote work on a large scale can have a positive impact on sustainability and climate change efforts.

**Cost Savings:** Working from home can lead to significant cost savings for both employees and employers. Employees save money on commuting, work attire, and dining out, while employers can reduce expenses related to office space, utilities, and other overheads.

With these added advantages, it's no wonder that the allure of working from home continues to shape the future of work for countless individuals around the world.

## CHALLENGES OF WORKING FROM HOME FOR EMPLOYERS

As the world shifted towards remote work, employers faced a new set of challenges in

managing remote teams. From maintaining productivity to fostering team collaboration, let's look at some challenges of working from home for employers:

**Remote Hiring:** High-level management typically favors in person interviews when hiring. However, the difficulties posed by remote employment are more serious. The visual components do play a significant role in the hiring process because a resume and phone interview can only convey a limited information. Critical roles need to be filled promptly to prevent performance from degrading systemically, even within teams. Remote collaboration, which creates difficult circumstances for groups as employees no longer share a single physical office space, is one of the significant ways to make money from home. Whether you need to schedule a team meeting or have a small question, everything must be planned to ensure availability, which can take up a lot of the employees' time and cause them to neglect their middle-level responsibilities.

**Loyalty and Retention of Employees:** It's common for all employees to want to climb the office ladder. If shared workspaces are removed, employees may be concerned about a lack of visibility. In addition, to close engagement, care should be taken to check that employees' advancement within organizations is not compromised. Employees who outperform expectations should be rewarded for their efforts.

**Employees from Exclusive Places and Time Zones:** Allowing employees to work from home enables businesses to hire qualified specialists from across the globe without being constrained by a particular region. However, the significant drawback is that organizations wind up with a dispersed workforce working from various locations and time zones. Forcing all the employees to be available simultaneously isn't possible for a long-term solution, considering many could emerge as they are running through the night. But by permitting far-off employees to set their schedule based on what works for them, you grow to be with employees who all work at specific times of the day. Collaborating with team members, communicating at the proper time according to a weekly timetable, team meetings, or even 1:1 conference can grow to be exceedingly challenging.

**Team Performance Misaligned:** Working from home can lead to misaligned performance. While this can occur in the office, the risk increases with less direct contact between the supervisor and employees. In the process, employees must supervise and be accountable without over-stressing them. When these tools are overused, chaos can occur if they are not managed.

**Increase in Cyber Security Risks:** Everything takes place in the digital space when you have a distributed workforce. Individuals and teams are at risk in this area. With remote company servers and centralized resources, the risk is even greater. Financial and reputational damage can result from any cybersecurity incident, such as data loss.

## CHALLENGES OF WORKING FROM HOME FOR EMPLOYEES

As a world adapted to remote work, employees faced numerous challenges in navigating the new landscape of working from home. From maintaining work-life balance to dealing with technology issues, here are some hurdles faced by the employees:

**Developing Blurred Boundaries between Work and Personal Life:** While managers often assume that personnel don't work as correctly remotely as they do from an office, the reality contrasts. With no excessive breaks or long commutes to the office, faraway employees are 20-25 percent more effective than their office counterparts. But the shortage of leaves with extended work makes far-off employees more susceptible to burnout. After all, if you have to manage your professional life and private life inside the same house, it can be hard to create boundaries, leading to exhaustion, overwork, and a decrease in productivity.

**Isolation:** With no informal social interactions with colleagues, employees can experience isolation

or expanded communication problems with the rest of the group. After all, if you don't sense close to your team contributors, you'll hesitate to even attain ideas to them by asking a simple question. For employees who have been compelled to make money while working from home for a long time or are entirely far off, the social isolation problem is not addressed nicely. In addition, they can get annoyed and cause burnout, decreasing efficiency and generating an elevated aim to depart.

**Communication Barriers:** When you have face-to-face interactions with your crew contributors on weekly or monthly video calls, most effective it can be as a substitute to create an experience of trust and bonding in the group. Communication can be more challenging while working remotely, particularly if team members work from places in different time zones or have limited access to technology. This can lead to miscommunication or delays in project timelines.

**Distractions:** Home environments typically have distractions, including children, pets, household chores and visitors. These distractions can make it challenging to stay focused and productive during work hours, leading to decreased efficiency and a lower quality of work for some individuals.

**Lack of Structure:** While working from home, there is often less structure and routine compared to working in an office. This can make it difficult to stay motivated and productive, and can also lead to feelings of disorganization or overwhelm for some individuals.

**Lack of Trust by Supervisors:** Many employers have demonstrated a lack of trust in remote workers, which is a clear source of concern for them. Many strange occurrences have resulted from this system, such as mandatory live camera monitoring, increased reporting, or virtual timekeeping. It is acceptable to have some accountability implemented. However, over-the-top monitoring destroys unit cohesion and can lead to feelings of resentment very quickly.

**Potentially Reduced Career Growth:** In some industries, employees who work remotely may have limited opportunities for career advancement in comparison to their in-office colleagues. This can be due to a lack of visibility or access to leadership, or simply due to a preference for familiar individuals who are physically present in the office.

**Troubleshooting Technical Issues:** Although some employers can support remote workers with appropriate technical staff, it is not something every organization can afford. Employees working remotely may encounter significant technical challenges in situations such as these. The issues may not be as complex as hardware faults, but they may be as minor as difficulty processing application functionality. Working from home necessitates using such tools, leading to increasing challenges in this area.

**Home Office Set Up:** Setting up a home office can be costly and you may not have the space or resources to create a dedicated workspace. Without a proper home office setup, some individuals may find it challenging to stay organized and focused during work hours.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGING WORK FROM HOME

Managing Work from Home (WFH) effectively involves implementing several best practices to ensure productivity, connectivity, and well-being. Here are some key strategies:

**Establish Clear Communication Channels:** Utilize various communication tools such as Slack, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom for regular team catch-ups, updates, and one-on-one discussions. Clear communication helps in maintaining connectivity and clarifying expectations.

**Set Clear Expectations:** Define clear work hours, availability, and expected deliverables. Encourage regular check-ins and provide a transparent framework for tasks and deadlines to ensure accountability.

**Create a dedicated Workspace:** Encourage employees to create a designated workspace that mimics an office environment as much as possible. This helps in setting boundaries between work and personal life.

**Encourage Regular Breaks:** Remind employees to take regular breaks to avoid burnout. Encourage short breaks, walks, or stretch sessions to refresh and maintain productivity.

**Promote Work-Life Balance:** Emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Encourage employees to log off at regular hours, disconnect from work-related communication after work hours, and take time off when needed.

**Provide Necessary Tools and Support:** Ensure employees have access to the required technology, software, and resources to perform their tasks efficiently. Offer IT support and training if needed for remote working tools.

**Support Mental Health:** Offer resources or initiatives that support mental well-being, such as virtual counseling sessions, mindfulness programs, or mental health days.

**Encourage Social Interaction:** Organize virtual team-building activities, casual hangouts, or non-work-related discussions to maintain a sense of camaraderie among team members.

**Flexibility and Adaptability:** Be flexible and adaptive to individual needs and circumstances. Acknowledge that each employee might have unique challenges and be open to accommodating their needs where possible.

**Regular Feedback and Recognition:** Provide regular feedback on performance and recognize accomplishments to boost morale and motivation among remote employees.

Implementing these best practices can help organizations effectively manage remote work arrangements, fostering productivity, engagement, and employee satisfaction in a WFH setting.

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