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Remote working (home working) The benefits and issues for employees by Dr Tony Miller, *adjunct Professor, M.B.A., F.C.I.P.D., FinstAM, M.R.S.H., MAPS, M.B.P.S., FILM*

Very little good has come from the COVID-19 epidemic. It has, however, created a new world of work. Despite years of managers saying, "if people work from home or remotely, they won't do any work, " the reverse has been the case. Many case studies have shown productivity increases which can be described as substantial. According to a recent McKinsey American Opportunity report, nearly 90% of the people surveyed said, if offered, they would accept a flexible work option. This finding was consistent across the demographics among the 25,000 Americans polled. In the United States, almost 60% of people currently work from home at least one day a week, with 35% working from home full time.

With childcare issues, concerns about Covid resurgences, and other potential health hazards like Monkeypox, burnout, and the savings on gas achieved by not having to commute, a flexible work model provides the answer to achieving a greater work-life balance.

Other research in America, which you may find interesting, has shown working from home is a relatively new experience for a majority of workers with jobs that can be done remotely – 57% say they rarely or never worked from home prior to the coronavirus outbreak. For those who have switched to homeworking, their work lives have changed in some significant ways. On the plus side, most (64%) of those who are now working from home at least some of the time but rarely or never did before the pandemic say it's easier now for them to balance work with their personal life: And many (44%) say working from home has made it easier for them to get their work done and meet deadlines, while very few (10%) say it's been harder to do this. At the same time, 60% say they feel less connected to their co-workers now. Most (72%) say working from home hasn't affected their ability to advance in their job.

So, what are the significant benefits of remote working for the employee?

Commuting

Most people have to commute to get to their place of work. In the U.K., the capital London is a location used for the data given here:

- Time travelling to and from work daily 3.5 hours

- Cost of rail fare to and from London (average) per year £5680.00
\$6916.00
- Cost of food and beverages while travelling and at work 226 PWD
x £8.00 = £1808 \$2202

For our commuter, the savings per year amounts to £7488.00

\$9188.00

Time saved in a year (minimum) 3.5. hours x 226 PWD = 791 hours

Home working situated

For home and remote workers, the cost savings and time are very significant. Also, the quality of life is better, less stress and more time with the family and loved ones.

Home working does not necessarily mean working from home. It could be in any remote location or a mixture of both – called Hybrid working. A coffee shop, public library, a beach in Barbados, anywhere where you have the internet and are productive when working. Although remote work has a great amount of flexibility today, surprisingly, the majority of remote workers (84%) work where they live. According to recent studies, remote workers feel that working from home improves their performance because of the convenience and the quieter work environment.

You need to be disciplined and get into a routine that works for you. A good strategy is to keep a daily log of how you spend your time. Record it in 30-minute slots. It will help keep you on track, and should you require it later; it will provide you with an accurate picture of how you have spent your time. This technique is used by most consultants, lawyers and accountants who have to account for and bill their time to clients.

So, what type of person are you? Do you see yourself as someone who views the current situation of change as positive or negative?

You can live where you want to

Approximately 5 million workers moved between 2020 and 2022 because remote work made it possible. No longer connected with a physical office, many fully remote employees could keep their jobs and move closer to family, to a dream location, or to an area with a lower cost of living. (Maybe all three!) Just keep in mind that in some cases—like employers that want you to attend in-person meetings once a week—changing locations may not be ideal. You should also make sure to check that your organization can legally employ someone based in the state or country you're looking to move to. (The Muse)

Typical types and their views

Is your glass half empty (Pessimist), or is your glass half full (optimist)

A pessimist would view remote working as:

- Only a temporary measure, and I will be glad when things get back to normal.
- Resent having to use my own laptop and equipment.
- Be worried about making decisions without their manager to support them.
- See this situation as an encroachment on their family life.
- Worry about who will pay for the extra electricity used to recharge the laptop.

An optimist would view remote working as:

- Inevitable and a great chance to do things differently.
- No more commuting.
- I will save lot's of money.
- A tremendous amount of flexibility.
- Perhaps I don't need a car anymore?
- It means immense freedom - I could work from anywhere or do something completely different.

One common theme among home workers is that they can feel isolated. The universal use of Skype, What's App, Microsoft Teamwork or Sysco Webex means we can all be in touch with our work colleagues when needed.

Start up opportunities

If you have ever thought of starting up your own business, there has never been a better time. Working patterns and people's needs have changed dramatically during the COVID period. Everywhere you will see good deals on shops and office premises. All you need is a business opportunity that you see as an extension of what already exists or something completely new that will explore a new idea in a rapidly changing environment. In his book Zero to One, Peter Thiel explains how the current business environment has opened up a range of new opportunities. Of particular interest is his model, which helps you to focus on which direction to take.

The vertical line typically relates to technology in its many guises, but this is not exclusive.

Match your thinking to the current environment, masses of change in every aspect of our lives; do you have that unique idea(s) that could make you the next Elon Musk?

Will remote working make you happier?

A new study found that the ability to work remotely is strongly linked to happiness at work. In the study by Tracking Happiness 12,455 employees were surveyed about their work conditions. A total of 65.1% of respondents were male, and 34.5% were female. The location of the respondents varied with 38.6% coming from North America, 36.1% coming from Asia, 19.5% from South America and 5.1% from Europe.

The survey respondents were asked, "If you look at your work, how would you rate your happiness on a scale from one to ten?" and "How much of your work is currently done remotely or from home?"

Key findings of the study include:

- The ability to work remotely increases employee happiness by as much as 20%.
- Millennials are happiest when working remotely. That is Generation Y and Z.

- Returning to office-based work after the pandemic reduces employee happiness.
- Employee happiness decreases as commute times increase.
- Happiness at work is significantly correlated to overall life happiness.

Can you predict who will make the best home workers? The research is very consistent on this. Using OCEAN Personality profiler we have a very good model that shows us who will be a good home worker and more importantly who will not.

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