

# Home Office

## Report

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## Executive Summary

The diversity of home office popularity in different countries is quite big. In India home office does almost not exist while in Switzerland to work from home is quite popular. Cause of that also the way home office is done is very different. For example in a maternal leave, somebody is probably almost never going to the office for longer time while in Switzerland home office is usually done every week a few days. Except from the differences, home office also brings some other challenges for a company that should be addressed in a socio-technical approach. As shown in science, people working in home office need to be very dutiful concerning their work. At home often people have more distracting things then in the office. For a superior it's difficult to keep control of the work progress of his employees or to motivate his employee. Also for a team it's more difficult to exchange about work and also to have informal conversations and creating a good team spirit. Further two very important points have to be concerned in the approach: The need for personal contact for Indians and the need for flexibility for Swiss.

Our solution for all this is an online platform that is like a virtual work space. People working at home can get virtual coffee to have informal chats, they can have meetings in virtual meeting rooms, they can play online games together to enhance the team spirit etc. The employees do have an avatar there to move around. Part of the platform is also a web-based training, where they can learn about company rules, intercultural competence etc. Also we offer some guide lines that are helpful if a company wants to have a successful home office project.

## Body of Report

# Differences and Similarities

Similarities	<b>Communication Channels:</b> Email, Chat, Phone, SMS, ... <b>Equipment and room</b> <b>Flexibility</b> of the Working Hours		
		India	Switzerland
Differences	<b>Commonness</b>	Very rare	Quite popular
	<b>Timeframe</b>	Several months	1-2 days/week

# Social Aspects

Problems	Possible Solutions
Crosscultural communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidelines</li><li>• Online learning platform/ Web based training</li><li>• Live Training</li></ul>
How to get a good team spirit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow Time to get to know each other</li><li>• Frequent Meetings (Online)</li><li>• Shared Tasks (Project based)</li><li>• Interdependence</li></ul>
How can the employee stay motivated? (Lack of acknowledgements, feedback, perspectives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frequent meetings with superior</li><li>• Goal settings</li><li>• Provide instruments/infrastructure to reach goals</li></ul>
How to deal with interruptions from family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidelines concerning working space</li></ul>

# Technical Aspects

Problems	Possible Solutions
Control of the work progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many small deadlines</li><li>• Control</li><li>• Set up possible timeline who shows progress of the workflow</li></ul>
Technical Aid/Support (if one's got a technical problem at home work will be interrupted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set up a technical support hotline</li><li>• Set up rules how/when to contact this hotline</li></ul>
Infrastructure (Room, technical equipment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide technical equipment from company</li><li>• Paying money to people for buying equipment</li></ul>
Communication & Share Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online Working Space</li><li>• Ensure appropriate infrastructure (Guidelines)</li></ul>

## Online Platform

### General Points:

- People have Avatars
- Its build up in Modules
- Different Communication Channels can be used

# Online Platform

## Modules:

- Web-based Training
- Online Games
- Virtual Coffee Place, Chatrooms, Lobby
- Meeting Rooms
- Progress Overview and Shared Point
- Company Emailaccount
- etc.

## Guidelines

- The employees have the permission to contact their superior whenever they need it
- The company will set up several different communication channels for that reason
- The work in home office one need to have a room on his own at home, that he/she can close and where he/she is not disturbed
- The company gives a certain infrastructure to their employees working in home office
- The employees working at home have to update their progress status daily on a web based platform
- There will be a weekly formal meeting with the superior and the team for exchanging about the progress and for setting team goals
- There will be a meeting every second week with the superior and every employee working at home individually to exchange about the work and to set up individual goals

## Appendix

### A. Working paper

Identification of differences and similarities regarding home office work:

Home Office in India	Home Office in Switzerland
Rare, mostly in case of maternity. But slowly gaining popularity It is not very common here in India.	It is getting very common
Might be applicable for the women in case of maternity leave and other issues. Also in case of medical leave (very rare) Usually a person works in a home office for an extended period of time	Usually 1-2 days per week
Works from home usually their own work studio.	Work in own office at home
Via phones, mails and maybe SMS	Contact to office via phone, e-mail, SMS
Not really sure about this part but maybe the working pattern maybe flexible according to their convince.	Usually no clear rules regarding home office work
	People usually have flexible working hours, e.g. Working at night or late evening

The chart is divided in social aspects and technical aspects. And further in Problems occurring in the company, the team or at home. In one row we can collect problems/issues and in the following row we can fill in our „solutions“ for the specific problem. So this chart below can be completed with our inputs and of course also extended by further inputs.

Inputs in Blue → Swiss part of the team

Inputs in Green → Indian part of the team

Social/psychological Aspects	Problems/Issues	Solution
Concerning the Company	Difficulty to „control“ workprogress when workers work in home office	Inform company about workprogress (how?)
	Regulation of financial contribution from the company regarding technical infrastructure (e.g. Computer, Cell phone, etc.)	Work out Regulations that could be applied for Home Office Work (Ensure that all employees are treated the same way)
	Incertainty about working hours and reachability	Establish rules concerning Working hours and reachability in Home Office
Concerning the teamwork	Cross-cultural understanding	Trainings in intercultural competence
	the communication can maybe become a problem	familiarize the team mates to one kind of way for communication and get comfortable with it
	Difficulties with shared tasks / how can other team-members be informed about workprogress?	IT-Solution (maybe shared online workingspace?)
	Lack of social interaction with team members	Regular Skype-Meetings (or meetings with any other technical solution)
At Home	No room to work	Own room/space for Home Office
	no restriction at home so one may delay the work for last minute	keep a sort of planned timetable for oneself and work on it diligently.
	interruption from family members (office environment)	Own room, clear rules and communication with the family members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maybe some sort of</li> </ul>

		presentation or introduction for the employee so he know where there could be problems and what he needs to think about
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Technological Aspects	Problems/Issues	Solution
Concerning the Company	Safety of data	creating some shared system where people can enter from different places
Concerning the teamwork	How to share data?	Decide on a way (eg. dropbox) to use for everybody
At Home	Speed of Internet	Company taking part in paying for the internet at home
	What technical equipment is there?	Company giving equipment (eg. laptop)

## B. Template of a SWOT Analysis

Online Game	Helpful	Harmful
<b>Internal</b>	<b>Creates bonding between team members. A conversation starter.</b>	<b>Distracting &amp; Digressing May lead to unwanted conflicts and unhealthy competition</b>
<b>External</b>	<b>Partnerships</b>	<b>Threats if there is no video chat included then there are chances that crucial information can get leaked to some other person (probability of this happening is very low )</b>

### Description and Scope

A game maybe like online poker or word games online. Can be extended to team games. Inter team games.

Web Training	Helpful	Harmful
<b>Internal</b> (to the organization)	<b>Everybody can use it anytime, people are flexible</b>	<b>People may totally ignore it.</b>
<b>External</b> (attributes of the environment)	<b>Change to adapt the training according to external needs chance to work under other region's professional guildlines .</b>	<b>May lay emphasis on differences if in the training one person keeps ignoring the training then chances of creating rift between team member</b>

### Description and Scope

A web based training for learning the guidelines and intercultural competence

Frequent Meetings and Goal Settings	Helpful	Harmful
<b>Internal</b>	<b>People stay updated about each others work</b>	<b>It's time consuming</b>
<b>External</b> (attributes of the environment)	<b>Opportunities they come to know exactly how much work of their's is either lagging or how much ahead they are in comparision to others</b>	<b>Time shift in a intercultural setting can become difficult</b>

Online Coffee place	Helpful	Harmful
<b>Internal</b>	<b>Allows an informal exchange</b>	<b>People might not find time to</b>

(to the organization)	<b>among team members working at different places and their superiors</b>	participate due to workload (==> ensure, that there is time to get involved)
<b>External</b> (attributes of the environment)	<b>People can get in contact with new work mates, get to know each other</b>	<b>People can stay there to often to long and not working anymore</b>

**Description and Scope**

People can have a virtual coffee with each other and chat there

<b>Chat-room and Lobby</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>
<b>Internal</b> (to the organization)	<b>People can exchange about different topics and create new ideas</b>	People can stay there to often to long and not working anymore
<b>External</b> (attributes of the environment)	<b>Innovation</b>	

**Description and Scope**

People can exchange their opinions on different topics

<b>Communication Channels</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>
<b>Internal</b> (to the organization)	<b>Different possibilities of communication with each other and superiors Everybody has the possibility to use the channel he is most comfortable with</b>	Can become complicated to check all the channels all the time
<b>External</b> (attributes of the environment)	<b>Empolyes get used to work with different channels</b>	

**Description and Scope**

To set up different communication channels for contacting each other

<b>Infrastructure from company</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>
<b>Internal</b> (to the organization)	<b>Everybody has the same infrastructure</b>	Costs the company money
<b>External</b> (attributes of the environment)	<b>Good deal with a IT-Supplier</b>	<b>if after a pro long time some infra gets damaged then acquiring same model of infra could get problematic</b>

<b>Separate Working place</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>
<b>Internal</b> (to the organization)	<b>Quite place helps to concentrate</b>	Weakness immediatly help that you would get from your neighboring cabin is not possible for separate working space
<b>External</b> (attributes of the environment)	<b>Opportunities get to work in your comfy clothes and how ever u want=P</b>	<b>People may feel lonely and miss human contact</b>

<b>Progress Overview</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>
<b>Internal</b> (to the organization)	<b>Employees and Superiors see directly where everybody is in this work progress</b>	Weakness
<b>External</b> (attributes of the environment)	<b>Opportunities letz one keep a check on how input he or she did each day</b>	<b>Could create problems if an employee is not up with his superiors expectations at the end of the day</b>

**Description and Scope**

At least once a day, everybody has to state there how he is progressing



## C. Guidelines

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