A New Definition of Workplace A New Definition of Workplace

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Research Article

A New Definition of Workplace

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Abstract

"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty." Change creates the opportunity and opportunity develops the intelligence. Learning attitude is the root of intelligence. The learning behaviour always attract the changes and develop the new things to perform the same task with new vibes. The current scenario also opens the door of opportunity. The all those organization which adopts the IT techniques to perform their task remotely. The remote working is a blessing for the organization in this period of crisis. This paper highlighted the new version of workplace definition and also pointed to challenges faced by organization as well as employees to adopt the concept of remote working.

Keywords: WFH; Importance of WFH; Challenges; Strategies to faced challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new." The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a sudden shift in the dynamics of workforce behaviour. More and more companies are bound to rush towards work-from-home arrangements in an extremely short period. Although many companies already had a work from home policy in place, managing a large scale of remote employees and that too in such urgency can be overwhelming. Technology now allows people to connect anytime, anywhere, to anyone in the world, from almost any device. This is dramatically changing the way people work, facilitating 24/7 collaboration with colleagues who are dispersed across time zones, countries, and continents.

The COVID-19 breakout has left the entire world shaken and stirred. Due to the lockdown several businesses and industries have taken a hit in terms of revenue and employment. Despite several measures undertaken by the government to improve the MSMEs' condition, there seems no respite due to this unprecedented contingency. Even before the onset of this pandemic, the global economy was confronting turbulence on account of disruptions in trade and diminished growth. The situation has now been aggravated by the demand, supply and liquidity shocks that COVID-19 has imposed.

Once the pandemic is controlled, the shape and speed of the recovery in the US and China will be key factors, determining the nature and traction of global economic recovery.

It is expected that the course of economic recovery in India will be smoother and faster than many other countries. While securing the population of the country has played a major role in these times and several safety measures have been taken by the government by complete lockdowns and restricted movement in the country. We also need to think about sustaining businesses and the livelihood of people. Apart from providing robust safety nets for the vulnerable, ensuring job continuity and job creation is the key. Moving in this direction, organisations (profit or non-profit) have introduced a whole new ball game i.e. work from home/remote workers.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Every researcher has some objectives to conduct the research study. Behind this paper writing, we also have some objectives to studied. Some main objectives are as follow:

- To study the impact of COVID-19 on workplace

- To understand the new definition of the workplace

- To study the challenges of working from home in the times of crisis

- To recommend strategies to overcome the challenges faced by employees during remote working

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Objective 1: COVID-19 and THE NEW WORKPLACE

a. Concept

Covid-19 declared as a novel disease by Inia in February 2020. According to World Health Organisation, COVID-19 states as a Corona Virus Disease of 2019 which caused due to the virus of SARS-CoV2 virus (Vergnaud, S.). It is a respiratory disease so it is easily spread by inhaling the droplets in the air. It can also spread by touching the infected person.

It is the combination of words, 'CO' stands for 'corona,' 'VI' for 'virus,' and 'D' for disease, and 19 represents the year of its occurrence. It is a single stranded RNA virus which has diameter ranging from 80 to 120 nm ranging of diameter. The first of this pandemic issue was reported in December 2019, in Wuhan, Hubei province, China (Chakraborty and Maity).

b. Why the concept of New Workplace Arises?

Since 2005 the number of people who are working from home has drastically increased by 140%. This number is now even more in our newfound world of social distancing. Earlier it was a choice or an option but post this apocalyptic era I assume this how the world will function or at least will prepare itself to embrace Work from home if required.

This is not new and is in practice since the dawn of the century. This concept in its early days was adopted by some start-ups to manage resources and reduce costs. Since it showed great results, the same concept was even accepted by some of the corporate but only on a conditional basis.

Work from home has many advantages for both individuals and companies. It allows flexible work hours, an uninterrupted environment, avoids commute and makes the home food available right next to your room. For an organization, it helps to save infrastructure costs and allows them to manage resources efficiently.

Sector	Degree of COVID-19 Impact	Recovery Time
Automobile	High	Long Time
Financial Institution	High	Long Time
Pharmaceutical Industry	Moderate	Short Time

Electronics Industry	High	Long Time
Tourism Industry	Severe	Long Time
Textile	Moderate	Short Time
Logistics	Severe	Medium Time
Retail	Severe	Short Time
Hospitality	Severe	Long Time
Events & Entertainment	Severe	Long Time
Information Technology	Severe	Long Time

3.2 Objective 2: NEW DEFINITION OF WORKPLACE

a. Work from Home

WFH is a concept where the employee has right to do their job from home. It facilitates a flexible working hour to the employee as well as the job for the employer is done with ease. Work from home is helpful to delivering work life balance to the employee, and also parallelly helps the company to get the work done.

WFH is a totally modern work approach which can perform through internet and mobility wherein irrespective of the physical location of an individual work can be done. Work from Home is also known as Working Remotely or telecommuting which implies that the employee is working from a remote location usually home.

b. Benefits of Work from Home

Working from home concept opens up a new range of possibilities for the way businesses can work and structure themselves. With the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, WFH has given some employers the flexibility they need to continue their business operations while prioritising staff and customer health and wellbeing as part of their public health responsibility.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, working from home was on the increase as many employers identified the benefits that it can bring to their business and the improved work-life balance for their employees.

Advantages of employees working from home

- Flexibility and agility in working arrangements.

- Improved employee retention to meet childcare needs, reduce their commute and enable them to fit their work around their personal life

- Attract new talent for business.

- Increased productivity - due to fewer interruptions

- Increased staff motivation due to allowed a degree of autonomy to get on with their work

- Improved staff health and wellbeing through providing stress free environment.

- Financial benefits also increased. Savings on office space, office supplies, utility bills and other facilities. Staff may also be able to take advantage of the tax relief available from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) for working from home

- Less sickness absences

- Less need for regular holidays

- Highly Convenient method to do work and manage the load of work too

- Better balancing between work and life

- Technology Friendly

3.3 Objective 3: Challenges faced by Work from Home

As the ongoing COVID-19 crisis continues to create unprecedented workplace challenges, companies must leave conventional wisdom at the door — whether ready or not. As far as employees go, these changes will mean different things to different people. Some may already be accustomed to remote work, but for those who aren't, these changes can be a bit shocking.

Followings are some challenges faced by organization as well as employees to opt concept of WFH

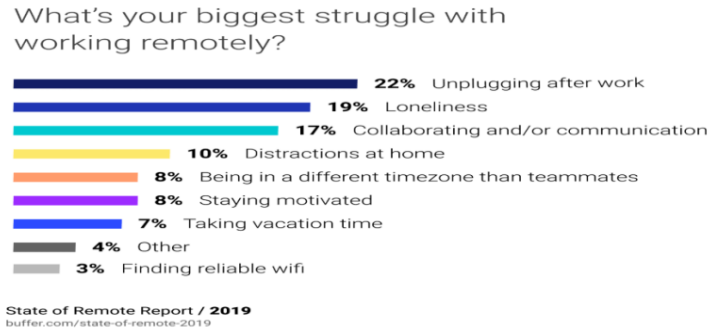| Challenges faced by Organization	Challenges faced by Employees
• Security Issues • Poor Employees Engagement • Performance Matrix • Communication Issues • Supervision Challenges • Difficult in Team Collaboration • Motivation Issue • Difficult to Develop Working Culture	• Time Management • Health Issues • Imbalance between Personal-Profession life • Overwork Load • Less Motivation • Connectivity Issue • Socialization and Priority Work

Challenges faced by Organization:

- Supervision Challenges: It's not an easy task to supervise their team members virtually.

- Communication Challenges: In the concept of WFH, whereas, achieving a similar level of engagement like physical organisation meetings is not easy. The workflow is bound to get somewhat affected when employees are remotely working, but online platforms workplace tries to bridge the communication gap to a great extent. "Communication is What Makes a Team Strong".

- Performance Metrics Challenges: It can be hard to monitor employee performance when your team isn't physically in the office, especially for jobs that require employees to be engaged for a certain number of hours per day. But it's also hard to find the right balance of checking in without becoming a resented micromanager. Yet another troubling scenario is when remote workers overcompensate for not being in the physical office by overworking, which can lead to burnout.

- Motivation Challenges: It's a biggest challenge for an organization to motivate their employees at the time of crisis. Even an individually can't boost their morale themselves.

- Poor employee engagement: Organizations face difficulty in maintaining company culture as people tend to lose the sense of common identity, especially if they have been employed recently. This leads to lower employee engagement and eventually a higher attrition rate. Also, distractions at home lead to procrastinating employees who sooner or later end up in a vicious cycle of low morale, as the peer influence factor disappears.

- Security Concern: many employees prefer to use their personal laptops which typically don't offer enterprise-grade security. This increases the data theft and other kinds of malware attacks.

- Culture Difference: "Strength lies in difference and not in the similarities." It's a biggest challenge for organization to manage the culture differences at a same point of time with virtual meeting.

Challenges faced by Employees:
- Time Management Challenges: It is major challenge for employees because remote working increases the work load on employees so it is difficult to them that how they can manage that work with limited hours of working.

- Distraction Challenges: Work from home can give a peaceful environment for work without any regular disturbance from colleague. But WFH creates the unwanted distraction during working hours like a TV noise, other family members talk, etc. create lots of the disturbance.

- Overworking: WFH increase the work load on the employees. Because due to this crisis every organization fire their workers due to less operation activities. So, the load increase on the existing employees. And second reason is the employees are helpless to manage their schedule according to priority works.

- Create balance between Social and Professional life: A balanced life is a must as it helps to focus on your personal life and boost your professional life. "Never get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life"- Dolly Parton. But WFH increase the load of work to employees, so the social life is totally destroyed because the priority work is official task which has a limited time for completion and also has fear to lose the job if work is incomplete. This issue create frustration in the mind of employees.

- Connectivity Issue: This is the biggest issue in India. Preparing for the worst-case scenario will make your job easy and the work will not get hindered. "Always have a backup plan."

- Health Concern: Socializing is more positive than being alone, that's why meetings are so popular. People don't like being alone. That would be, however, an important skill to learn. If a person has their social circle, then he can enjoy their life in positive manner. But COVID reduce the social circle and increase the work load on individual which affect the mental health. Mental health is also one of the important factors. While employees are at home, they are always thinking about their office work, and they are unable to create a mindset where they can separate their both professional and personal life as both are converging in the same place.

- Technology slipup: This is greatest challenge for employees which are belongs to low-income stats and rural areas. They are restricted with limited technology upgradation, internet issues, limited broadband problems, etc.

What's your biggest struggle with working remotely?

- 22% Unplugging after work
- 19% Loneliness
- 17% Collaborating and/or communication
- 10% Distractions at home
- 8% Being in a different timezone than teammates
- 8% Staying motivated
- 7% Taking vacation time
- 4% Other
- 3% Finding reliable wifi

State of Remote Report / 2019
buffer.com/state-of-remote-2019

3.4 Objective 4: STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME FROM CHALLENGES

Challenges	Overcome/Suggestions
Maintaining good communication	• Take advantage of cloud-based collaborative technology • Establish regular communication • Schedule designated work times
Creating a culture	• Provide opportunities for colleagues to connect • Organize team-building activities • Use social tools or your company intranet • Make collaboration a priority • Take advantage of the cloud
Tracking employee performance	• Establish expectations • Use time-tracking and/or project management software • Trust your employees
Maintaining security	• Reduce points of vulnerability • Establish secure connections • Enforce password safety

Maintaining good communication

- Take advantage of cloud-based collaborative technology: It is the best strategy to maintain good communication with their employees and colleague. Cloud based technology like Google Meet, Skype, etc. facilitate constant and open two-way communication, and try focusing on these more collaborative channels rather than on email.

- Establish regular communication: It is must to check the remote employees working regularly and contact with them frequently so that they enjoy and start to focus on remote working attentively.

- Schedule designated work times: For success a well-designed schedule is required. For making a sound conversation with employees scheduled specific time blocks in which all employees need to be online. The whole meeting should be recorded and share with those who are not able to attend the meeting due to any reason.

Creating a culture

- Provide opportunities for colleagues to connect: To create the working culture during pandemic organization try to connect with employees while a once at least in office. To build a strong relationship organization start industry conference for meet.

- Organize team-building activities: Creativity always win in every situation. If organization wants to develop a working culture during remote working, then start to make team activities and the involvement of each member should be compulsory.

- Use social tools or your company intranet: Organization used their intranet and social tools to update their employees on the culture as well as share their insights related to the company mission and values, provide business updates, etc.

- Make collaboration a priority: Make collaborating just as much of a priority in the virtual environment as it is in the office. Group presentations, team research projects, and colleague-to-colleague mentoring can all help promote a collaborative environment.

Tracking employee performance

- Establish expectations: It's crucial to outline clear expectations from the get-go when managing remote teams. Employees need to know exactly what is expected of them at all times and should have goals and metrics established. When armed with this knowledge, teams are happier and better able to live up to set expectations.

- Use time-tracking and/or project management software: If necessary, time-tracking software can help you better understand what remote workers are doing throughout the day. It can also help motivate employees to stay on task and be accountable for how they spend their time. Cloud-based project management software helps everyone see where employees are at on specific projects and identify where help is needed.

- Trust your employees: At the end of the day, flexible work arrangements are only possible if organization has trust on the employees and their working capability. Take a proper time schedule for the hiring process to find team members and also feel confident will succeed in a self-directed role. The team members should have some qualities such as independence, initiative, and self-discipline.

Maintaining security

- Reduce points of vulnerability: Make sure employees keep business-sensitive documents in one secure cloud location rather than on individual laptops. Have a central platform where data and information are stored rather than having it spread across inboxes and hard drives. This practice also ensures employees always use the most up-to-date documentation.

- Establish secure connections: Remote workers are more at risk for internet attacks since they often work from public Wi-Fi. Make sure employees connect through a virtual private network to keep all internet traffic secure.

- Enforce password safety: It only takes one weak password to maintain the security of organization data, so be sure to constantly reinforce the importance of secure passwords and remind employees of password best practices. Organizations also implement two-factor authentication.

4. CONCLUSIONS

"The secret of crisis management is not good vs bad; it's preventing the bad from getting worse." The crisis is getting worse day by day, even things will fall in place. The biggest challenge an organization is to maintain their continuity and presence in market at any cost with whatever way possible because

a famous philosopher says that *"Prepare for the Worst and Hope for Best".* Some organization that has followed this mantra has leveraged profit even in this scenario while for many organizations it was a learning curve to implement that mantra in their DNA. The future looks bright as the new world order will make sure that work from home becomes more proficient and capable.

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