Nathan Daleo

Sophia Learning

English Composition II

09 February 2023

Remote Work: Virtually Impossible or New Reality?

Many companies across the globe have pushed for an increase in productivity by implementing a work-from-home strategy, especially given the protective measures put in place during the beginning phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to McKinsey & Company's American Opportunity Survey from the spring of 2022, 58 percent of Americans had the opportunity to work at least one day a week remotely, while 35 percent reported they could work remotely five days a week (para. 3). This survey also identified that when given the opportunity to work remotely, 87 percent accept (para. 4). This highlights the interest in remote work for Americans, but many believe that working remotely is not without detriment. According to Intuit (2022), opponents of the remote work strategy argue that there is an increased likelihood of overworking and social isolation can have negative impacts as interactions with managers and coworkers are limited to video conferencing ("Social Isolation," para. 24; "Overworking," para. 25). The preference for remote work varies by employee; some prefer the freedom to work from home, while others prefer to work on location. Employers with the capacity for remote work should offer the option to work from home because of the increased productivity, work-life balance, job satisfaction, organizational benefits, and the positive impact on climate that remote work provides.

The first reason that many employers should offer the option to work from home is that it has been shown to increase the productivity of some employees. A study by Worhmann & Ebner

(2021) on the effects of telework showed that employees working remotely had more control over their working time, which resulted in greater working autonomy (p. 364). They also found that working from home limited the number of disturbances and interruptions typically seen in an office environment (p. 364). This would suggest that working from home benefits the organization as productivity increases. The Forbes article, *5 Proven Benefits of Remote Work for Companies*, found that "teleworkers are an average of 35-40% more productive than their office counterparts, and have measured an output increase of at least 4.4%" (Farrer, 2020, para. 5). With higher productivity and performance, these employees are more engaged, showing 41% lower absenteeism (para. 5). When employees have more control over their working hours and locations, their productivity increases, which supports the argument for employers to offer remote work if they have the capacity to do so.

While the increase in productivity from remote work benefits the organization, job satisfaction and work-life balance improvements are benefits that directly impact employees, which further supports the argument for organizations to offer remote work. Forbes reported that a FlexJobs survey of employees working from home revealed that 73% felt as though working from home improved their work-life balance (Pelta, 2022, as cited in Spiggle, 2020). Working from home allows mothers with newborn children to return to work sooner while also tending to their children. According to Shepherd-Banigan et al. (2015), mothers who had just given birth reported lower levels of depression when they were allowed to work from home (p. 109). Having schedule autonomy while working from home has also been shown to positively affect job satisfaction (Golden & Veiga, 2005, as cited in Wohrmann & Ebner, 2021, p. 355). It is reasonable to assume that increased job satisfaction reduces employee turnover intention. Golden (2006a, as cited in Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015, p. 45) noted that "telecommuting is

positively associated with organizational commitment and negatively associated with intent to leave the organization." Knowing that job satisfaction improves with the availability of remote work, companies with the capacity to offer remote work should consider offering this option to their employees.

The organizational benefits of offering remote work for employees are not limited to increased productivity and engagement. Farrer (2021) also noted that organizations could expect to see an increase in employee performance. According to their data, workers with stronger autonomy through location independence produced results with 40% fewer quality defects. This suggests that working remotely allows employees to focus more on their tasks. This could be directly related to the decrease in interruptions and disturbances that are associated with working on location. Employers that offer a remote option could also see higher levels of retention. 54% of the employees surveyed expressed that they would change jobs for one that offered (para. 5). Farrer noted that this results in an average turnover reduction of over 12% if a remote work agreement is offered. Profitability is another potential organizational benefit of offering remote work. As evidence, Farrer offers that remote work "[o]rganizations save an average of $11,000 per year per part-time telecommuter, or 21% higher profitability" (para. 5). With increases in productivity, performance, engagement, retention, and profitability, it is difficult to understand why more companies with the capacity to offer remote work do not.

The final reason organizations should offer remote work is because of its positive impact on climate. Several possible benefits have been identified from employees not commuting to work in their personal vehicles or on public transportation. According to data from Global Workplace Analytics, Earth.org reports that working from home could possibly reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs) by 54 million tons (Miller, 2022, para. 3), which would, in

turn, improve air quality (para. 4). Since remote employees would not be driving to work, there is also the possible reduction of impact on infrastructure. Miller also noted that fewer vehicles on the road could increase the reliability of public transportation (para. 10). These benefits are echoed by Adi Glaskell (2021), who noted that "working from home four days a week would reduce the amount of nitrogen dioxide, which is the main pollutant generated by traffic emissions, by around 10%" (para. 3). Paresh Dave (2022) reported that a Reuter's survey of 20 large companies that report their carbon footprints and offer remote work found that one company was able to reduce the combined emissions from commuting and remote work by 32% from the previous year (para. 3). This is a strong point for organizations to consider, especially since many companies are committed to reducing their carbon footprint. Offering remote work could help these organizations achieve that goal.

Contrasting the advantages of remote work, opponents claim that this employment model is not without its challenges. Mint's blog post, "Pros and Cons of Working From Home: Is It Better for You and Your Wallet," highlighted a lack of social interaction as one of the challenges of remote work (Mint, 2022, para. 23), which is supported by Wohrman & Ebner, who found that although employees who telecommute do not experience as many disturbances and interruptions, the quality of relationships with coworkers was lower (p. 359). Mint also claimed that there is the possibility of overworking (para. 24), which is also supported by Wohrmann & Ebner's findings that telework is related to increased boundaryless working hours (p. 359). Another common counterargument is that results on job satisfaction are inconsistent. Golden (2006b) noted that when analyzing the consequences of remote work, results with job satisfaction have been consistent (p. 327). On the environmental front, Miller noted that remote work creates higher energy consumption (para. 14). These counterarguments might seem

concerning to some organizations, but they should not deter organizations from considering the remote option for employees that express interest. This is because there are workarounds for employers that are concerned with the possible negative outcomes of remote work. One option would be to offer a hybrid schedule that allows employees to work from home for part of the week. This could mitigate the social isolation that full-time remote work can create for some employees, allowing them to build meaningful relationships with their coworkers. The hybrid model could also help with the potential for overworking, as employees' working hours can be more strictly enforced in the office. Another option would be to provide high-performing employees the option to work fully remotely so long as their performance is consistent. This would allow those employees who benefit from remote work to continue performing for those benefits. Businesses could also monitor the effectiveness of either of these models to determine what works best for that organization. For those that are concerned with higher energy consumption, it is important to understand that the net impact is still positive (Gaskell, para. 6). Monitoring the effectiveness of remote work would allow organizations to gain insight into what conditions work best for which employees, specifically regarding job satisfaction.

Interest in working remotely has increased and continues to do so. The potential benefits of offering remote work greatly outweigh the possible disadvantages, especially since the benefits expand to employees, the organization, and the environment. Employees are able to enjoy greater autonomy with working hours and establish a greater work-life balance, while organizations benefit from greater productivity, performance, profitability, and employee retention. The environment is afforded the additional impact of reduced carbon emissions and GHGs since remote work would see fewer commuters in personal vehicles or on public transportation. With fewer disturbances and interruptions in remote work, employees are more

likely to perform better than their office counterparts. While many organizations are concerned with the possible negative outcomes of offering remote work, it is important that these outcomes be weighed against the possible advantages before dismissing this model of employment as virtually impossible.

References

Allen, T. D., Golden, T. D., & Shockley, K. M. (2015). How effective is telecommuting? assessing the status of our scientific findings. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *16*(2), 40–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100615593273

Dave, P. (2022, May 5). *Factbox: How Companies Account for remote work in their carbon footprints*. Reuters. Retrieved February 16, 2023, from https://www.reuters.com/business/sustainable-business/how-companies-account-remote-work-their-carbon-footprints-2022-05-05/

Farrer, L. (2022, October 12). *5 proven benefits of remote work for companies*. Forbes. Retrieved January 4, 2023, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurelfarrer/2020/02/12/top-5-benefits-of-remote-work-for-companies/?sh=2b29684716c8

Gaskell, A. (2022, November 9). *How eco-friendly is remote working?* Forbes. Retrieved February 16, 2023, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/adigaskell/2021/10/21/how-eco-friendly-is-remote-working/?sh=70d2f8cf1864

Golden, T. D. (2006). Avoiding depletion in virtual work: Telework and the intervening impact of work exhaustion on commitment and turnover intentions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *69*(1), 176–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2006.02.003

Golden, T. D. (2006). The role of relationships in understanding telecommuter satisfaction. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *27*(3), 319–340. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.369

Miller, A. (2022, January 20). *6 surprising environmental impacts of remotely working from home*. Earth.Org. Retrieved February 16, 2023, from https://earth.org/environmental-impacts-of-remotely-working-from-home/

Mint. (2022, June 30). *Pros and cons of working from home: Is it better for you and your wallet?* MintLife Blog. Retrieved January 4, 2023, from https://mint.intuit.com/blog/remote-work/pros-and-cons-of-working-from-home/

Pelta, R. (2022, November 28). *Survey: Productivity, work-life balance improves during pandemic: FlexJobs*. FlexJobs Job Search Tips and Blog. Retrieved January 4, 2023, from https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/survey-productivity-balance-improve-during-pandemic-remote-work/

Shepherd-Banigan, M., Bell, J. F., Basu, A., Booth-LaForce, C., & Harris, J. R. (2015). Workplace stress and working from home influence depressive symptoms among employed women with young children. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, *23*(1), 102–111. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12529-015-9482-2

Spiggle, T. (2020, October 15). *Coronavirus silver lining: A better work-life balance?* Forbes. Retrieved January 4, 2023, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomspiggle/2020/10/14/coronavirus-silver-lining-a-better-work-life-balance/?sh=d8502b61fc29

Wöhrmann, A. M., & Ebner, C. (2021). Understanding the bright side and the dark side of Telework: An empirical analysis of working conditions and Psychosomatic Health

Complaints. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, *36*(3), 348–370.

https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12208

Reflection Questions

01. How much time did you spend revising your draft? What revision strategies did you use, and which worked best for you? (2-3 sentences)

I spent about 3 hours revising my essay. The most impactful strategy was using the feedback I received from the grader. After it was recommended that I include a paragraph on the climate impacts of remote work on the environment, I revised my thesis statement and conclusion to reflect the inclusion of this paragraph.

02. List three concrete revisions that you made and explain how you made them. What problem did you fix with each of these revisions? Issues may be unity, cohesion, rhetorical appeals, content, or any other areas on which you received constructive feedback. (4-5 sentences)

Using the feedback from the grader, I began by reformatting my citations so that they included a paragraph or page number. I made sure to revise my topic sentences to include a transitional phrase related to my argument. I also included a paragraph on the climate impact that remote work has on the environment.

03. What did you learn about your writing process or yourself as a writer? How has your understanding of the research process changed as a result of taking this course? (2-3 sentences)

I learned that writing an argumentative research essay is much more interesting when you choose a topic you are interested in. I also learned that the writing process is not as

difficult as I had imagined it would be. Writing a research paper has always seemed very

daunting, but this course proved otherwise.

Touchstone 4 Rubric and Feedback

Rubric Category	Your Grade
Revising (40 points) - 27%	Advanced (100%) - There is evidence of comprehensive re-visioning of the draft composition, including adjustments to organization, focus, clarity, and/or unity where needed or appropriate.
Editing (40 points) - 27%	Advanced (100%) - There is evidence of comprehensive edits to the draft composition, including adjustments to word choice, sentence completeness, sentence variety, and/or style where needed or appropriate.
Source Integration (20 points) - 13%	Advanced (100%) - Introduces sources smoothly and effectively through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary.
Cohesion (20 points) - 13%	Advanced (100%) - Sequences ideas and paragraphs logically and uses smooth transitions (within and between paragraphs) such that the reader can easily follow the progression of ideas.
Conventions and Proofreading (20 points) - 13%	Advanced (100%) - There are few, if any, negligible errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, formatting, and usage.
Reflection (10 points) - 7%	Advanced (100%) - Demonstrates thoughtful reflection; consistently includes insights, observations, and/or examples in all responses, following or exceeding response length guidelines.

SCORE: 150/150

Nathan,

I can tell that you took the feedback from the rough draft seriously, and you included several meaningful revisions and edits to this final touchstone. I have enjoyed reading your work in this class, and I wish you the best of luck with your future! - James