

The Future of Remote Work

By Amardeep Atwal

The global pandemic induced by COVID-19 has subjected employees across the globe to work in a digital environment. However, with the recent release of vaccines, corporations must begin to ask themselves whether they should continue to have employees work virtually post-COVID.



Over the past few years, many companies such as AT&T have begun to implement what is known as an alternative workspace (AW). According to the Harvard Business Review, an AW integrates unconventional work practices, settings and locations to supplement traditional offices. In consideration of the global pandemic, most companies that have now elected to use this concept in the workplace have done so through having

employees telecommute or work from home entirely. This is highlighted by the fact that within the United States alone, between 30 and 40 million citizens work through one of these methods. However, many workplaces are now adopting an AW for reasons other than the pandemic. For instance, imposing a digital work environment allows companies to significantly reduce their costs. It also enables workers to fulfill their primary job duties in a more productive manner since by nature, they are spending less time on routine tasks. The following factors serve to predominantly benefit corporations. With this being said, another implication that can be considered is that using an AW can help companies retain their workers. This stems from the fact that employees heavily value flexible work arrangements to achieve a work-life balance. So overall, retaining workers through the use of an AW serves to benefit both companies and workers themselves. However, corporations must determine if having flexibility in regard to work arrangements outweighs the lack of human interaction in a digital environment for employees. This is the case because in this day of age, employers are essentially obligated to support the mental health and wellbeing of their employees indefinitely.

Many disadvantages of remote work have been made prominent as a result of the global pandemic. One major drawback is that most employees are subjected to work at their home, which likely decreases their efficiency. This is because virtually all professionals have obligations outside of work, such as the responsibility to take care of their children or other family members. Such responsibilities can become very time consuming and require a lot of energy, which is not ideal since companies generally expect that level of time and energy to be directed toward work duties. With the unknown circumstances being faced by workers, it is difficult for employers to have any high-level expectations regarding the completion of a given task. Another drawback of working remotely is that companies may lose the workplace culture that they previously strived to create. This is concerning, considering that workers are beginning to further value companies that offer a diverse workplace that supports innovation and creativity. It is also important to consider that trying to reinvigorate a workplace environment through the use of a digital platform is a very difficult task, given that there is an absence of true human interaction. Another flaw of remote work is that it inherently hinders the opportunity for employees to network. This makes it hard for workers to meet new people, which ultimately limits their ability to seek opportunities to grow from both a personal and occupational standpoint.

All in all, it is likely that remote work will continue to exist post-pandemic and will be used to complement traditional work environments. Although companies experience a major cost advantage from having employees work virtually, these employees are often unable to complete their best work in such a setting. It is also important to consider that many jobs cannot be performed remotely.

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