# "Work from Home": Changing Workplace Reality

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Organisational environment is constantly undergoing rapid changes with increasing diversity in workforce, rise in employee cross- functionality, growingreliance of HR departments on data analytics, focus on behavioral aspects of employees rather than their skills, improving IT infrastructure in such a way that enables more real-time connectivity of an employee from wherever he/she is physically present. With these changing dynamics in the workingof an organisation, it has been observed that corporate industry is slowly moving towards this trend.This provision was originally put up in 2010. Prior to this, such a flexibility was only given in certain situations like if the employee was ill, but could not be availed easily.

To almost every professional, "Work from home" is no more an HR incentive or privilege offered just to women workers during their maternity leave or a few others. Rather, it has now become an integral part of workings in almost every organization. Though 64% of this trend is explained by the IT industry alone, other giants too are slowly following this trend. Taking the example of big IT giants like Microsoft and IBM, Microsoft provides its employees flexible working options even upto a few years now, whereas almost 38% of the workforce employed at IBM does not have an officially assigned workstation.

While ensuring that any of their employees are not working completely in isolation, companies make sure that the KRA's of the employees are so designed to complement the practice and expecting them to attend regular meetings and trainings to ensure adequate interactions with their co-workers and superiors. Flexjobs, a firm that serves potential workers looking out for easy and flexible working options, has recently released a list comprising of top 100 enterprises that offer highest number of remote working options, whereinAppen has topped the list andAmazon finding its place at third rank and IBM being at the 22nd place. In its report, FlexJobs also showed tha

What started as a cost saving technique on the part of the corporate world has gained momentum over the last few years as they believe that apart from being an economic approach (savings on account of maintaining

infrastructure, no rent, no overheads and no office supplies), it actually leads to a rise in productivity, low retention ratio and most importantly, a satisfied workforce. It just requires a personal computer, asoftware enabling real time connectivity with the server and a job role that complements the practice. For the employees, work from home means a cut down on the transportation costs by almost 40% if they are provided with "WFH" only twice a week, saves their travel time, and the stress of to and fro travel everyday. It also means working at their own pace away from the constant supervision of their superiors and makes them more comfortable thereby resulting in enhanced productivity.

Research carried out in this regard suggests that people are increasingly looking out for opportunities that enable them to work remotely from anywhere and this has boostedtheir output. A study conducted by Nicholas Bloom and James Liang where half the employees of their own call center "Ctrip" were allowed a work from home for nearly nine months while the other half were asked to operate from their official work station. It was expected that the experiment would only lead to savings on account of space and furniture which would definitely be outweighed by a drop in productivity per worker. However, the results of the study revealed that worker productivity rose in such a way that their extra work was found equivalent to an additional one day's work in the week.

Also, workers working at home were rated higher on parameters like happiness, satisfaction and commitment while they were also less likely to quit their job as compared with their counterparts working in office which was completely contrary to what was expected. Another research conducted by TimesJobs on the contrary suggested that 70% employers feel that worker productivity declines when they work from home as they start working on their own pace and thus, lose focus. In India, the number of workers using the flexi work options are relatively low as compared to what has been observed in U.S and U.K but this trend is on the rise. One of the reasons for a low count is that managers and seniors feel that it is hard to control and guide workers operating from remote locations

and in the absence of progress tracking programs and mechanisms they feel handicapped.According to the findings of a survey conducted in India, it is found that resistance from top management in promoting and implementing work-from-home strategy is another big challenge as cited by 30 percent of the organizations chosen for this survey. The survey also reported that 30% of the employees feel that their jobs are not designed in a way to support such an option, while at least 5% of the employees state lack of interest for work from home option as a cause.However, this new phenomena is finding more and more acceptability both from the employers as well as employees. Corporates view it as an opportunity in boosting their brand, fostering a new work life balance for their employees, and improving retention ratios in the organisations while workers view it as a means to break conventional monotony at workplace, work at their own pace with more flexibility and aiming at increased output and efficiency.Looking at the current pace of digitalization in India, it is hoped that this concept will prove to be a boon for the corporate industry.

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