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Telecommuting: Beneficial or Detrimental to Businesses

Telecommuting is best known as an arrangement between the employer and employee to work outside the office, such as working from home. “Telework” or “remote work” has become a controversial topic, weighing in on whether or not it is benefiting or harming businesses. Over the past few years, technology has permitted employers to distribute work amongst employees in remote locations. Databases have been created to track the productivity of the work being performed by their employees. U.S. state and federal governments have pushed this work arrangement through legislation. In 2010, the Telework Enhancement Act was implemented in legislation to authorize employees the ability to telework. Telecommuting has become widely popular among businesses in the 21st century however, there are concerns that the overall productivity of employees has declined. Their trepidation is that the productivity of employees - is declining while being able to work from outside the office. If telecommuting were offered, would the benefits outweigh the possible side effects?

Some employers and employees say that telecommuting is beneficial for businesses and themselves. These people believe the benefits of allowing employees to telecommute gives advantages to both the employer and the employee. Giving employees the ability to telecommute allows flexibility within their work hours, as long as the tasks are getting done. “It’s also about when work gets done. Here again, a large majority (72%) say they will implement more flexibility in terms of hours – such as flexible scheduling and compressed work weeks (e.g.,

working 10 hours a day for four days a week)” (Sahadi). This allows employees the opportunity to work during times they will be the most productive. Employers see this beneficial because if their employees are working during hours, they know more work can be done, than times when their undivided attention is not focused on work – they will have a higher turnover in work.

An additional benefit to businesses utilizing telecommuting is the potential savings from not investing in physical infrastructure such as office space or administration centers and the overhead cost associated with these investments. The potential savings from telecommuting is also shared with the employee by not spending earned money on gas, tolls, and other common commuting cost. Telecommuting allows employers to save more money for their businesses. In 2014, a travel agency estimated that each employee who worked from home saved the company \$2,025 (Komisar). Overhead cost is reduced for the employers by saving them money on, mortgages, utilities, supplies, etc.

Employers also benefit by now having the ability to hire a wider selection of top candidates from virtually anywhere. “The trend is creating a much larger supply of top job candidates for employers as well as more openings and lifestyle options for workers, many of whom are reluctant to move to a different city or state because it could disrupt a spouse’s career or a child’s schooling.” (Davidson). This benefits the employer because they have the opportunity to select from candidates from across the United States, and for the employee because they have the opportunity to continue living wherever they may be and not have to uproot their lives or family.

The opposition to telecommuting base their claim on the belief that even though the business benefits, the individual employee does not benefit and is harmed by telecommuting. The main issue presented by the opposition is that employees become disconnected from

workplace culture resulting in a decrease in productivity, morale, and compliance. The opposed believe that employees take longer when completing task at home compared to being in a physical office. Businesses have started to realize that work that was originally being completed in the office was taking much less time than work being completed while employees are telecommuting (Cutter). Additionally, the opposition raises the issue that not every task or function of an employee can be executed by telecommuting and creates a divided workforce. The task of some companies is nearly impossible to function when their employees are telecommuting (Cutter).

An additional belief held by the opposition is that telecommuting disconnects the worker from office culture fostering no sense of teamwork and leaves the employee feeling isolated. This isolation at work compounded with social isolation outside of work is claimed to be a dangerous combination. Some employees that are working from home are now considering their lives to be socially isolated and are feeling lonely (Temko). Employees are not having to communicate with one another as much because they are physically disconnected because of teleworking. When employees are working within the office, they are not always conversing with one another, but they can when they need something or just need to talk to one another. While the employee is teleworking, they are unable to build relationships with co-workers, disconnecting the team and causing employees to feel isolated.

The acceptance of utilizing telecommuting by businesses is currently unknown. A majority of America's workforce has recently experienced either a taste of or has transitioned fully to telecommuting. In order to adapt to our current situation, both parties must join together in an attempt to discuss their beliefs and identify solutions crafted by shared concerns for telecommuting. The two sides must reach a common ground or cause harm to certain industries

that may foster thru telecommuting, keeping in mind others may not. In an attempt to find middle ground, both sides should remember they share the same pride of working at their companies and the culture of these companies attracted them to start working there in the first place.

Additionally, they both want to see their companies succeed and take pride in their own work product and company as a whole. A consensus can be reached by allowing the employee to decide whether or not they want to utilize telecommuting as their workstyle. This flexibility would allow the employee to feel included in the decision-making process while also allowing employers to meet service needs. Every employee has a different style of working, and this does not mean that their way is any less effective than the next. Employers will continue to monitor the progress and productivity of their employees work and can make adjustments with the working arrangements if needed. This will allow for the employers to benefit on a full scale, to make sure that their company succeeds.

Telecommuting continues to be a highly debated topic among many in the workforce during the 21st century. Despite their oppositions, there is a mutual agreement that the workplace should allow everyone to feel comfortable and at-will. It's safe to say no one wishes to see their employees or company fail. Every individual has a different work style; some may or may not have the work ethic and will to maintain productivity under little to no supervision. Productivity and success are a shared value among all that work together. As a courtesy, every employee and employer should be able to have discussions regarding brick and mortar versus telecommuting. This creates the opportunity and consideration to choose, while allowing each side to disclosing policies, expectations, and concerns. Although there is disagreement between both sides on how or where to complete their work, they must realize that they share the same goals and results as one unified business.

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