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## TELECOMMUTING: TRENDS, CONSIDERATIONS, PROS AND CONS FOR EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS

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### ABSTRACT

*Telecommuting is rising as a model for alternate work arrangement in the globalization era in which employees' perform their job off-site. Information technology and communication has transformed on work design & work alternative arrangements like flexitime, compressed work weeks, shift arrangements, part time/ reduced hours schedule, tele work & telecommuting etc. Telecommuting is consent for people to work at home. This paper tells about the latest trends, considerations, advantages & disadvantages of telecommuting in terms of financial, operational, environmental & psychological perspectives of employees, employers & society.*

**KEYWORDS:** Flexible timing, Tele workers, employees, Information technology

**JEL:** O15

### INTRODUCTION

Telecommuting can be defined as a "work arrangement in which employees' performs their regular work at a site other than the ordinary workplace, supported by technological connections." (Fitzer, 1997).<sup>1</sup> Telecommuting represents an expansion of the places and times considered auspicious for work. Three principal components of telecommuting can be identified (Pinsonneault and Boisvert, 1996)<sup>2</sup>: utilization of information technology (IT), link with an organization, and de-localization of work. Telecommuters strive for telecommuting to manage work life balance. It is very difficult to manage conflict between work & job related roles. Huws et al. (1990)<sup>3</sup> find interest in telework to be stronger among couples with no children than among couples with one to two children.

### Telecommuting V/S Tele work V/S Remote workers V/S work anywhere:-

All the terms are closely related and used interchangeably but there is difference between all of these. The tele work is a broader term than telecommuting. Tele working means working from distance.

- **Tele work** includes following dimensions different from telecommuters:
  1. Tele work has more utilization of Information&CommunicationTechnology.
  2. Tele work has more daily commuting but telecommuters need not require not going outside on regular basis.

- **Remote workers** work out of the geographical area. Remote workers are not very often expected to present in the office but tele workers may be expected to be present for some office work.
- **Work from anywhere** jobs can be done from anywhere.

## TELECOMMUTING PRACTICES IN INDIA

Work culture in Globalization scenario is experiencing a dramatic move to telecommuting practices in India also. Each and every organization wants to take advantage of telecommuting like healthcare, IT, government, education, arts etc.

- In **Infosys**, the telecommuting policy permits employees to attend to family emergencies and duty policy facilitates working mothers to prioritize their work life matters.
- **TeleTech, Convergys, Sutherland Global Services and Amazon** head this year's top 100 companies for telecommuting and remote jobs from FlexJobs, a job-posting service specializing in remote and flexible job opportunities. (Chad Brooks, 2015)<sup>4</sup>
- Not every company has realized this awesome secret but many have. The work culture at **Dell** is based on the company's "Connected Workplace" initiative, which offers flexible work options including remote work, flextime, job sharing, part-time work, and compressed work weeks. (Meredith Lepore, 2014)<sup>5</sup>.
- **Google** offers employees in India flexible work timings and the authority to define their own schedule and type of work. **SAP's** rulebook allows employees to work one day a week from home. Some have formal work-from-home policies, but with the condition that employees have to work out the execution of it with their manager. Some do not have formal policies, but have become flexible enough to allow managers to take a call on it (Sujit John, 2012)<sup>6</sup>.
- **Genpact** sees telecommuting benefits in terms of employee satisfaction and thus, retention (Tejaswi Shekhawat and Virat Markandeya, 2009)<sup>7</sup>.
- The average **Cisco** employee works from home two days per week. Examples of Cisco telecommuters include voice engineers, network engineers, and sales representatives (Jocelyn Lincoln)<sup>8</sup>.

## REASONS FOR GROWTH OF TELECOMMUTING

- Organizations are downsizing to become cost effective
- Up gradation in IT & telecommunications
- Decentralized approach of companies
- Increase in work autonomy and mobility
- Priority to work life balance rather than job security or social interaction with colleagues.
- The work is based on knowledge & accomplishment of targets so there is less need to work in offices.
- Telecommuting is also a great tool to stroke luck for underutilized but talented employees.

## TELECOMMUTING TRENDS

1. Telecommuting is on the rise year after year
2. Telecommuting perk up personal, financial & environmental benefits
3. Telecommuting is the foremost component of corporate policies and strategies
4. Telecommuting is best prospective for organizations
5. Telecommuting go parallel with Green HR & sustainable development
6. Telecommuting is also well suited for international business.
7. Telecommuting does well to every section of the economy.

## Considerations for employer:-

- Employees have lower level of social need is well suited to Telecommuting.
- There must be vigilant process to choose workforce so that personal, organizational and societal goals will be fulfilled.
- Goal setting process should be made by mutual discussion between employer and employees.
- Make employees well informed about the organization, job & job roles.
- Proper talent management should be done to make employee aware about latest technologies & skills.
- Proper job description & specifications about job duties, responsibilities & employee qualities should be prepared.
- Management must show clearly the performance indicators, job measures & incentives.
- Employees should be provided with proper furniture, equipments, computer, telephone, printer, scanner, fax & proper internet connectivity.
- -Only the trustworthy & high morale employees who are willing for telecommuting can be selected.

- Timely feedback about employee's achievements, problems and work is necessary.
- Jobs that do not involve strict control and supervision are paramount for telecommuting.
- Make telecommuter to be an important part in the decision making process so that he/she may also feel that they are also part of the organization.
- Training to telecommuter & management can make the telecommuting program more effective.
- More alternate work arrangements like job sharing, part time, etc can also be provided to telecommuters.
- Managers must be certain that telecommuting program will be beneficial & suitable to that particular job & employee.
- Efforts may be done on ergonomics for each telecommuter.
- Business strategies as well as HR policies must be drafted according to job, employee & that particular location.
- Trust on telecommuters is necessary in order to make work effective.
- Virtual communication can be made to maximize team management.
- The organization must be clear about the objectives of telecommuting.
- An experienced employee who is well about corporate culture can be better for

telecommuting or proper mentor program for new employees in the company is essential for telecommuting.

- The employers can't take telecommuting as a penalty for telecommuting.

#### **Considerations for employees:-**

- Periodical meetings & visits in the corporate office
- All the data should be easily access electronically
- Self-discipline is imperative for telecommuting
- Employee has to be strict with the deadlines of the project
- Following the proper time table is must
- Honesty , commitment & integrity towards work
- Management to handle home distractions
- An employee should be expert in stress management skills, communication skills & time management skills, ability to read people
- Proper reporting about daily progress can lead to recognition of work & success in career
- An attitude to adjust with the environment is crucial

## Telecommuting for organization

### Operational Perspective

### Financial perspective

### Environmental Perspective

### Psychological Perspective

## PROS

1. Broader global reach
2. Telecommuting increases overall organizational productivity as telecommuters have lot to do in their jobs
3. A tool for talent retention
4. Lower absenteeism

No major & heavy financial investment

1. Best tool for talent retention
2. Less interruption for organizational politics

Less panic among members

## CONS

1. Lack of observation leads difficulty in performance appraisal
2. Forming & implementing common standards is difficult due to scattered workforce
3. Some jobs require confidentiality of data but it is difficult to maintain it due to scattered workforce

High training investment

1. Inculcating company's culture is difficult among employees
2. Sometimes ,the jobs require physical presence, not all jobs are fit for telecommuting
3. Sometimes, the feeling of jealousy arise between telecommuters & non telecommuters

One of the biggest problem for managers & staff involved with telecommuting is how to monitor the work done by employees(Dudman, 2001)<sup>9</sup>

## Telecommuting for employees

Financial perspective

Operational Perspective

Environmental Perspective

Psychological Perspective

### PROS

Cost savings related to travel & formal attire

1. Increased Employee Productivity
2. An telecommuter can be consultant to many companies

Enjoy sense of independence

1. Better quality of life
2. Learning of decision making skills
3. More flexible timing

### CONS

1. Increased overheads like electricity, supplies etc.
2. Cost of Setting of office
3. Lack of recognition & promotion barriers can also cause financial losses

1. Less contact
2. Technical difficulties come in the way of telecommuters.
3. Difficulty in work life balance
4. Online communication is not as satisfactory as face to face communication
5. Loss of synergic effect
6. Difficulty in signifying workload
7. Lack of learning by mutual experience

1. Telecommuter can be disturbed by guests arrived at house, babies, family functions, televisions, home chores etc.
2. Missing of social get-togethers with colleagues like birthday parties, farewells etc.

1. Very difficult to realize the emotions of boss on e-mails, social networking & telephones due to absence of body language
2. May have adverse effects on home life
3. Loss of leadership, motivation & direction from seniors
4. Sometimes, employee may feel less disconnected with the companies & can also feel lonely & missed camaraderie.
5. Place of posting of telecommuter is not satisfactory, the employee may feel dissatisfied

## Benefits of Telecommuting to Society:-

- Pollution control & conserving energy which helps to solve global warming. Telecommuting is environment friendly.
- Low traffic congestion
- Good chance to handicapped, disabled, mothers & for those people who don't want or unable to travel
- Increased economic development by providing employment opportunities by mobility of people
- Attraction of large & diverse talent pool
- Telecommuting is a great initiative towards Green HR.

## CONCLUSION

Global scenario, technical advancements and modification in management structure have dream up the telecommuting but the telecommuting program must be handled carefully in order to gain maximum benefits. Mutual trust among employee and employer can pave the way to success.

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