

Pros and cons of working from home

By [Nick Durrant](#), issued by [Bluegrass Digital](#)

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An unforeseen work-from-home revolution has caught many companies by surprise as most employees have now been forced to work from home. The likelihood of returning to the office any time soon seems very unlikely. So what are the pros and cons of working from home?



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Working from home usually provides employees with greater autonomy over how and when they work, and also how they manage their lives and other responsibilities. Remote working also provides better job satisfaction, increased loyalty, lower absenteeism and less staff turnover.

Increased productivity

Remarkably, <https://www.airtasker.com/blog/the-benefits-of-working-from-home/shows> that there is an increase in performance for employees working from home. Airtasker surveyed about 1000 full-time employees in the US of which 50% worked remotely. They compared everything from their productivity to health and even their spending habits to determine whether working from the home or from the office is better.

The study showed that on average remote employees worked 1.4 more days per month or 16.8 more days per annum, than those who worked from an office. More importantly, they spent more time getting things done on those extra work days.

Take breaks

Management should encourage their home workers to take breaks throughout the workday, especially when they feel drained or distracted. They can call a friend or take a walk in the garden or just grab a healthy snack and relax.

While remote workers normally take more breaks than office staff, research shows that taking breaks actually leads to increased productivity. According to the study, office workers spent an average of 37 minutes each workday not getting work done - excluding lunch and tea breaks. Remote workers only lost 27 minutes a day to distractions.

Maintain a good work-life balance

Working from home could be more stressful than working at the office. The study found that about 30% of remote workers said they found it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Only 23% of office workers reported the same challenge.

Fixed working hours

Business owners should also encourage their employees to have fixed working hours in order to stay productive at home. They should try to maintain the same schedule as when they worked from an office, this routine will help them feel more structured and efficient.

Task list

The survey also shows that 30% of home workers that kept track of their tasks with a to-do list, were more productive.

Management should encourage their remote workers to keep a task list and clearly define what they wish to accomplish each day.

Communication

Communication is more critical than ever when working remotely. Management should insist on set daily or weekly meetings so that the team can discuss and prioritise projects, and set deadlines to ensure everyone stays on track.

Distractions

Home workers will experience more disturbances than office workers. This could include children, pets, phone calls, text messages and social media. They should try to work in an office-like space rather than a bed or couch. Furthermore, they should consider silencing their phones and certainly stay away from areas in the home that could tempt them to direct their attention elsewhere.

The survey found that even though they spend more time working, home workers lost 27 minutes per day on distractions. Office workers lost 37 minutes a day on distractions. It also found that 8% of remote workers and 6% of office workers found it difficult to focus on their tasks.

Cost savings

Not having to commute is one of the biggest benefits of working from home. According to the survey, commuting has led at least 25% of staff quitting their jobs and many of the respondents said they would do anything to end their commute.

The average office worker spends at least 30 minutes commuting each day and this time on the road means increased fuel expenses, maintenance and repair costs. Airtasker says the average remote worker in the US saved more than \$4,500 (R80,000) on annual fuel costs. The environmental benefits are also enormous.

Besides the enormous cost savings, home workers have more free time. On average, they managed to save 17 days free time from not commuting. According to the survey, this time was largely used for increased physical exercise.

Improved health

People are now more conscious of health issues than ever before and illnesses spread far quicker when offices are packed with staff. Allowing employees to work from home also helps stop the spread of diseases like Covid-19.

Relationships

According to the research, 70% of the people considered maintaining relationships with their co-workers just as important as their jobs. However, remote working unfortunately has some negatives, especially when it comes to maintaining relationships.

Reduced interaction with co-workers and knowledge sharing is a key barrier to the acceptance of remote working and working from home for long periods could leave employees feeling professionally and socially isolated.

Management should create opportunities for staff to interact socially via videoconferencing to encourage a team spirit. However, they should also not do this too much, it could affect performance. The survey found that such relationships can be a distraction because office workers spent an average of 66 minutes per day chatting about non-work related matters. Home workers only spent 29 minutes doing the same.

The future

With the current pandemic, many businesses have been forced to develop and implement work-from-home policies to ensure business continuity. If companies embrace this new norm, both employees and employers will benefit in future, especially if they can get the balance right.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nick Durrant is the CEO of Bluegrass Digital.

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