

The COVID-19 Outbreak – Working from Home Series:

Benefits of Remote Work for Employers

Many employers are anxious about employees working from home. *How do we set performance expectations? Will employees lack commitment? Will there be a drop in performance and productivity? How do we maintain a high level of engagement? How do we preserve our workplace culture?* These anxieties are reasonable, however, studies have shown that remote work can positively benefit organizations.

Here are five reasons to embrace remote work:

1. Remote work reduces distractions.

On-site work is great for developing teamwork, company culture and employee visibility. It can also be distracting. The average person is distracted at work between six and eleven times each hour. Unfortunately, it can take upwards of 25 minutes to regain total focus on the job, according to a University of California Irvine study. Employees who work from home note they can maintain focus for longer periods of time, increasing their productivity. A two-year study from Stanford University found that employees who work from home were more likely to work a full day—meaning they produced more work than their on-site co-workers. Remote working employees have been reported to go beyond their regular hours to get the job done, as they can balance hours out at another time. This flexibility on both sides of the employment relationship increases the agility of the business to respond to customer needs and expectations.

2. Remote work reduces employee stress.

Employees can easily control the noise level in their home-work environment and can personalize their workspace, e.g., adding plants, playing music, adjusting temperature/lighting to suit their needs. Personalizing the workspace adds comfort, putting employees at ease and keeping them relaxed and capable of maintaining focus. Lower levels of employee stress and depression are reflected in reduced employer insurance benefit claims and costs (The Business Case for a Healthy Workplace, Health & Safety Ontario). In addition, employees are able to steer clear of office politics, lessening the impact of toxic workplace cultures. Harassment and bullying incidents and complaints are lessened, which reduces the organization's liability and mitigates the risk of incurring costs related to workplace conduct investigations and litigation.

3. Remote work reduces lateness and absenteeism.

A 2019 Forum Research poll indicates the average commute to work in Toronto is 42 minutes (each way), leaving many employees physically and mentally drained by the end of the workday. Stressful commutes can increase blood pressure, the risk of heart attack and depression. Almost two-thirds of commuters (60%) agree that the time they spend commuting reduces their quality of life. Remote workers—even those who avoid the commute one or two days a week—report higher overall workplace satisfaction and lower levels of stress. They are also known to start work earlier and work longer hours because they don't lose time

travelling. The Stanford University study showed that remote workers take shorter breaks, use less sick time and take less time off, as well.

4. Remote work is less expensive than on-site work.

In large cities, the cost of renting office space can be immense, particularly if a company is hoping to set up in an easily accessible district of a major city's downtown core. The cost per square foot for office rental space in the last quarter of 2019 in Toronto sat at \$37.06; in Vancouver it was \$44.00. Setting up hot desks or other co-working areas in your location for workers who work remotely even part of the time, could result in major cost savings.

5. These are challenging times - be flexible.

A WFH option is key to employee attraction and retention strategies, largely due to the flexibility that it provides employees seeking balance in their busy lives. It will help your organization attract top talent, because removing commuting constraints broadens the available talent pool and creates opportunities to hire a more diverse workforce. In addition, remote work makes it easy to hire outside of regular commuting distances. This is particularly beneficial for companies that need to recruit employees with special skills that can be difficult to find in a single marketplace. Easier access to remote work technology means organizations can tap into talent markets in other cities, provinces, or countries. In addition, younger workers tend to be attracted—and show deeper loyalty—to larger, more stable employers with more appealing HR policies. After the COVID-19 crisis ends, the trend of employees seeking job stability is sure to continue. And let's not forget that WFH policies are a great bargaining chip for smaller businesses looking to bring in younger employees who may be more likely to accept job offers that include flexible work opportunities. Another bonus: they may also increase long-term commitment to the organization (reducing turnover and recruitment costs) because workers value that aforementioned flexibility in work location and hours.

To learn more and for assistance, contact Flashrock HR.



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