

Teleworking and the jobs of tomorrow

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ABSTRACT: Teleworking's popularity as a flexible working arrangement has been on the rise. Today, it is a hot topic of discussion among employees and employers alike. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the popularity of this trend and has convinced many that teleworking is here to stay. This review article aims to describe the characteristics of teleworking pre- and post-pandemic and shed light on future challenges and opportunities. Empirical evidence promotes a favourable association between teleworking and benefits to employers' profitability and employees' health and well-being. Nevertheless, some employees have experienced a negative impact on their health due to teleworking, primarily due to ergonomics, and higher levels of stress, anxiety and loneliness. The overall conclusion shows that with proper job design, leadership and organisational support and adequate information communication technology (ICT), teleworking will be central to the future of jobs.

KEYWORDS: employee well-being, flexible work, future of jobs, human resources, hybrid work

Introduction

Flexible working arrangements, offering flexibility over where and when people work, are more and more necessary and in demand by employers and employees alike. Employees today have different work expectations, yet many organisational policies and procedures have not fully adapted to accommodate this change (Ayling, 2021; Tabet, 2020).

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), flexible working arrangements include but are not limited to: part-time working, term-time working, job sharing, flexitime, compressed hours, annual hours, working remotely regularly, career breaks, commissioned outcomes, zero-hours contracts and remote work or teleworking (Ayling, 2021). Many employees argue the importance of flexibility and the desire to work remotely (DeMicco & Liu, 2021; Dmitrieva, 2021).

Researchers agree that flexible working arrangements are beneficial to employers and employees alike. Flexible working arrangements help lower employees' stress levels, increase job satisfaction, improve loyalty and commitment and reduce costs for employers and employees alike (Garad & Ismail, 2018; Johnson, 2011; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Lewis et al., 2000; Ramakrishnan & Arokiasamy, 2019; Xiang et al., 2021).

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospitality industry suffered from many restrictions. Many establishments had to shut down, and many employees lost their jobs. The hospitality industry lost 5.9 million jobs by April 2020 (Maze, 2020). When the hospitality industry began to recover in 2021, the recovery was hindered as the industry could not find enough employees. Post-pandemic research shows that many employees who left or lost their jobs refuse to return to the industry (DeMicco & Liu, 2021). A survey

by Bloomberg shows that half of the hospitality employees who lost their jobs in the USA do not want to return to their previous jobs. Many of these employees are asking for better working conditions, better compensation and benefits, additional flexibility and the desire to work remotely (Dmitrieva, 2021). Today, the hospitality industry faces existential environmental forces causing a rapid job transformation (Sethi et al., 2021). It is imperative to employ a variety of creative approaches to secure staffing needs reliably. With the increase in demand for more flexibility, hospitality establishments must consider flexible work arrangements as part of their retention strategy. Even though some hospitality employees already worked remotely during the crisis, service staff working on shift-based rota must present on-site. However, hospitality employers must create flexible and hybrid working models to fit individual needs (Cresswell, 2021).

What is teleworking?

Remote work or teleworking refers to an agreement created by the employer and the employee to enhance the latter's work-life balance while fulfilling the organisation's requirements through information communication technologies (ICT) (Beauregard et al., 2019; Gutierrez-Diez et al., 2018). Teleworking found its origin in the US state of California in the mid-1970s to substitute for the daily commute through telecommunication technology (Nilles, 1994). In response to the energy crisis of 1973, employees could not commute to work frequently, thus, organisations had to develop appropriate alternatives (Torten et al., 2016).

Scholars' first description of teleworking is outdated by today's standards. The early concept was associated with work done through fixed telephones, fax machines and giant stationary

computers (Makimoto & Manners, 1997). Other scholars tried to classify teleworking with other forms of work arrangements without connecting it back to its historical roots. It was classified as one of the forms of flexible work together with part-time work, flexi-time and others (Kossek et al., 2011). Historically or typologically, scholars did not connect teleworking with modern ICT. The absence of ICT limited teleworking's definitional potential and limited the possibilities to study its development over time. Thus, teleworking faced stagnation in its early conceptual understanding and even declined in the following years (Hjorthol, 2006; Brenke, 2014). On the other hand, ICT continued to evolve rapidly.

Craipeau (2010) was the first scholar to connect teleworking to modern ICT, describing ICT advancements as the primary enabler and main contributor to its development. Building on Craipeau's evolutionary approach, scholars developed teleworking's progression from the home office and the mobile office to today's virtual office and beyond (Messenger, 2019).

Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented changes to the world of work as we know it. The pandemic has prompted governments worldwide to put in place rules and regulations to prevent the spread of the disease, forcing many businesses to continue operating through teleworking arrangements (Amirul et al., 2021; Béland et al., 2020). In 2020, 47% of employees in Australia, France and the United Kingdom teleworked. In Japan, teleworking increased from 10% to 28% between December 2019 and May 2020 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021). In 2020, estimates suggest that 40% of employees in the European Union started teleworking full-time; the highest rates were found among teachers, ICT professionals and managers (Ceurstemont, 2020).

Several governments officially endorsed teleworking and offered employee and employer advice; for example, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands offered a tax exemption for home office costs. On the other hand, the USA offered a complete guide to telework and provided resources to employers and employees. Working from home was one of the most effective ways to reduce exposure to the virus, according to the UK's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE, 2022). Even though working from home has gradually increased in the past decade (Eurostat, 2018), the pandemic and the lockdown have fast-tracked many employers' adoption of teleworking modalities (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2020). Nevertheless, the transition was not an easy one; evidence today suggests that the massive implementation of teleworking happened prematurely and without much consideration due to the nature of the pandemic (Ahrendt et al., 2020). The traditional work setup has swiftly shifted from the office setting to a permanent online presence; thus, working from home has quickly become the new normal (Bajarin, 2021; Dickler, 2021; *Economic Times*, 2022; *NL Times*, 2022; Melin & Egkolfopoulou, 2021; *UN News*, 2022; Zeidner, 2020).

During the lockdown, many factors influenced teleworking, from the firm's size to the employees' qualifications, job characteristics and even gender. Key findings from a study published by the OECD (2021) concluded the following: i. over 50% of employees were working in highly digitalised industry teleworked; ii. teleworking was higher among employees of large

firms; iii. employees with higher academic qualifications were more likely to telework; and iv. in most countries teleworking was higher among women than men (OECD, 2021).

Teleworking post-pandemic

The year 2022 began with the gradual lifting of different COVID-19 restrictions, with the advice to work from home as much as possible amended. Nevertheless, similar to how 9/11 changed the world of travel forever, the COVID-19 pandemic will have a long-lasting impact on the future of work. It is expected that many organisations are likely to rethink the locations from which their employees can effectively, efficiently and safely fulfil their work roles and responsibilities (Fleming, 2020). Big tech companies are pioneering the push in post-pandemic teleworking and smaller companies will soon follow suit (Hatamleh & Tilesch, 2020). For example, Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta, expects 50% of Facebook employees to be working from home by 2030 (Friedman, 2020). Twitter's CEO, Jack Dorsey, confirmed that his employees could work from home permanently or wherever they feel the most productive and creative. Microsoft will adopt a hybrid model (both at-home and in-office), while Google will remain open to all options. On the other hand, Amazon will decentralise work arrangement decisions and white-collar office employees will have the freedom to work remotely or adopt a hybrid model (Kelly, 2022).

FlexJobs, a leading job search site, lists the top career fields for remote work in 2022. The list includes the fields of accounting and finance, marketing, medical and health, project management, customer service, HR and recruiting, sales, administrative, education and training. The site also analyses the job posting history of more than 57 000 companies. Since 2014, it has published an annual top-company list with remote jobs to watch. Flexjobs saw a 12% increase in listings for teleworking jobs between 2021 and 2020. The majority of these listings were for professional and managerial roles. The list of Top 100 companies in 2022 includes a record number of new companies and various titles, confirming that the shift to remote hiring and teleworking is here to stay (McGregor, 2022; Pelta, 2022).

Many employees have realised that working from home is not only for the short term, but will also continue post-pandemic. The realisation enticed people to invest in their home offices. Some even invested in bigger homes that could accommodate a home office. A survey conducted by the World Economic Forum in 2020 shows that 98% of general employees want to continue teleworking after the pandemic (Dunn, 2020). A report published by McKinsey Global Institute on the future of work in 2021 also confirmed that the pandemic has accelerated trends in teleworking. Trends like remote work and virtual meetings are likely to continue post-pandemic. The report presented a survey of 278 executives that believed that office space would be reduced by 30% post-pandemic (Lund et al., 2021). According to Gallup, an American analytics and advisory company, more than 90% of US employees did some remote work during the pandemic. Nine out of ten of these employees want to maintain remote work to a certain degree. Equally, 40% are willing to quit and look for another job if their current employer does not offer this option (Saad & Wigert, 2021). Global Workplace Analytics, a California-based business management consultancy firm, estimates that 56% of the US workforce already holds jobs compatible with teleworking. The firm also forecasts that 25 to

30% of employees will continue teleworking one or more days per week post-pandemic (Lister, 2022).

Research from 1 515 Dutch employees shows that job characteristics played a crucial role in adapting to teleworking during COVID-19; office employees and teaching staff were more likely to work from home. According to the study, office staff in the Netherlands are most likely to continue working from home post-pandemic. The positive experience, higher productivity, employers' support and good ICT contribute to this decision (Olde Kalter et al., 2021). More than 50% of participants in a research project that analysed teleworking in Saudi Arabia advocated continuing teleworking beyond the pandemic due to its benefits on their social and work life (Zalat & Bolbol, 2022).

Technology and teleworking

Over the past decades, the technology supporting teleworking has improved remarkably. Today, technology and artificial intelligence (AI) influence how people lead their lives and run businesses. Literature on new ICT and teleworking is often outdated and inapplicable in the rapidly changing technological environment. Ongoing technological advances are impacting organisational strategies and the world of work. Adapting to the incredible pace of technology change adds to the challenge of managing today's workforce. However, researchers agree that companies embracing new technologies will enjoy a competitive advantage over those that do not (Edwards, 2017; Kozielski & Sarna, 2020; Lee & Grewal, 2004; Lupşa-Tătaru, 2019).

The traditional nine-to-five mentality has undergone a swift change in a highly technological era where employees can work from anywhere and at any time through different electronic platforms. In the past, individuals could not work when their physical working space was closed during holidays, weekends, evenings, or at night. Today, depending on the working culture, employees can and are expected to access their work remotely and respond to requests regardless of the day and at any time (Von Bergen et al., 2019).

Through clear and well-defined processes and ICT infrastructure, employees are more capable of working remotely and producing results. Many companies will deploy AI to assist in the transition to teleworking, especially in monitoring employees working remotely. Existing surveillance technology (Booth, 2019) will be widely deployed. More sophisticated technology will be used to monitor employees' progress and productivity. Companies will also have to strengthen their cybersecurity. Working online during the pandemic exposed many vulnerabilities, leaving companies prone to cyberattacks (Ceurstemont, 2020).

Leadership, work culture and teleworking

A new management paradigm and a leadership approach enabled teleworking; doing the work became more important than where the work occurs (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020; Tokarchuk et al., 2021). Trust is a critical component that makes it possible for leaders to create the right conditions for employees to excel and positively fulfil their job requirements remotely. According to Frei and Morriss (2020), leaders should identify their strengths and weaknesses regarding the three core drivers of trust: authenticity, logic and empathy. These core

drivers should be developed further and be part of a leadership style compatible with teleworking.

Research conducted during the pandemic shows that many managers struggle while managing their employees, who complain of feeling untrusted and micromanaged (Parker et al., 2020). Many managers suspect that employee productivity and performance decrease when working remotely. While, at the same time, senior leadership confirms that productivity was maintained and increased when employees were forced to work remotely (Mariniello, 2021). Successful implementation of teleworking depends significantly on the degree of autonomy employees are granted and a presumed culture of trust and compassion that organisational leaders can create (Bérestégui, 2021). Simply telling the managers to trust their employees is not enough. Parker et al. (2020) recommend supporting managers in developing delegation and empowerment skills to enable their teams' motivation, health and performance.

With a clear vision of success and the ability to determine a suitable course of action, employees can work from anywhere. Organisational leaders must first identify the desired outcome and support employees with the right processes, infrastructure management, oversight and results. An honest discussion on how teleworking will impact administration and costs should also occur (Fernandez, 2021). Organisational support to teleworking employees is essential. Bentley et al. (2016) emphasised that adequate organisational support positively impacts employee well-being and job satisfaction and reduces psychological strain and employee isolation while teleworking.

Before the pandemic, 85% of European employees never teleworked or considered that their job could be done remotely (Milasi et al., 2021). The transition from a well-defined structure to a very fluid one was not without stress and anxiety. Parker et al. (2020) highlighted the impact of job design on employee stress, anxiety, depression and burnout, stressing the importance of having an appropriate job design to facilitate and support employee productivity. Organisational leaders must impact employee well-being and help avoid emotional exhaustion due to the sudden and drastic changes. Leaders must reduce exhaustion while teleworking by ensuring employees understand their role, are self-efficacious and have task interdependence (Mihalca et al., 2021). According to the World Economic Forum's *The Future of Jobs Report 2020*, a third of all employers are likely to take initiatives to create a sense of community, connection and belonging for teleworking employees through digital platforms. These actions aim to address challenges posed by the shift to teleworking (Zahidi et al., 2020).

The legal framework

The pandemic has accelerated pre-existing trends towards more flexibility and the digitalisation of work. As time goes by, flexible working in general and teleworking will likely become a prominent and more permanent feature. Today, governments are scrambling to review and upgrade legislation to facilitate a transition to safe teleworking.

A report published by the European Agency for Safety and Health at work (EU-OSHA) in March 2021 confirmed that Italy, Luxembourg, Latvia, Slovakia and Spain have already implemented legal changes. Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia have reviewed their legislation. According

to the report, changes in legislation related to teleworking are focused on four areas: i. the definition of teleworking and the distinction between occasional and permanent teleworking; ii. the right of employees to disconnect; iii. the right to telework; and iv. occupational health and safety provisions (Sanz de Miguel et al., 2021).

In the US, the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 was signed into law on 9 December 2010. The legislation organised teleworking for eligible employees and transformed federal telework in many ways. The new legislation opened the door to new research on teleworking by the private and public sectors. It identified and recommended best practices to the federal government. The Enhancement Act of 2010 also obliged the government to review the impact of increased teleworking, including energy consumption, traffic, job creation and availability (Sarbanes, 2010). In 2020, the US Senate introduced the Pandemic Federal Telework Act to allow eligible employees to telework full-time during a public health emergency (Van Hollen, 2020).

Teleworking, challenges and opportunities

Researchers outline the many benefits of teleworking for both organisations and employees, such as reducing environmental damage, saving costs, flexibility, autonomy and work-life balance. Nevertheless, research also highlights potential drawbacks ranging from higher ergonomic risks for employees to extended availability, transition to new work modalities, costs for organisations and increased workload leading to work-life conflict, stress, depression and isolation (De Macêdo et al., 2020; Harpaz, 2002; Sanz de Miguel et al., 2021; Tavares, 2017).

Some of the top benefits associated with teleworking are employee loyalty, satisfaction and higher employee retention and attraction rates (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Teleworking allows employees to balance work and personal life, maximise the time spent on work and leisure, and reduce stress, fatigue, travel time and costs (Major et al., 2008). Employees tend to respond with a higher commitment to an organisation that offers them the flexibility to fulfil their personal needs (Golden, 2006). A study of 413 teleworking employees in Saudi Arabia identified many benefits and health problems associated with telework. Benefits included saving time and money and improving the work-life balance. In contrast, musculoskeletal and work-related stress were telework-associated health problems (Zalat & Bolbol, 2022).

On the other hand, a theoretical model by Taskin and Bridoux (2010) draws on the literature to identify the determinants of effective transfer of knowledge between teleworkers and non-teleworkers. The authors concluded that teleworking is likely to negatively influence cognitive and relational components of organisational socialisation, a key facilitator in knowledge transfer. Research studying the benefits of teleworking in the Dutch public sector found that public servants have experienced teleworking negatively. Their experience was characterised by high professional isolation and low organisational commitment when fully working from home. The research also found that teleworking had no positive impact on employee engagement (De Vries et al., 2019).

Teleworking in the hospitality industry

Even though there are many advantages offered by teleworking, some believe that the hospitality industry will be slow to

embrace this trend. Only a few employees from the industry will be able to telework, perhaps the top performers in sales or accounting where daily face-to-face meetings are not needed (Whitford, 2000). Nevertheless, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some roles in the industry were less likely to be eliminated. Those in technology-based roles were often lucky to keep their jobs to support staff working remotely, in many cases for the first time (Pendlebury, n.d.). The hospitality industry is not exempt from the new workplace trends, including the drastic shift from traditional office to hybrid work. Teleworking did not spare hotel executives, administration staff, sales and marketing professionals and many others who were obliged to work from home during the pandemic. Whether teleworking is the future of work or just a temporary arrangement due to the pandemic, many hospitality employees worked and will continue working from home, at least for the foreseeable future (Mamaysky, 2022). Like employees in different industries, teleworking hospitality staff had to deal with similar challenges, from ensuring collaboration and cooperation between teams, tracking deliverables, managing home distractions, avoiding overwork, alienation and loneliness. Hospitality teleworkers also enjoyed similar benefits of a healthier work-life balance.

Before the pandemic, hospitality staff who spent practically most of their time at work finally discovered a new work-life balance model. Employees and employers alike realised that they were still doing the same work and producing the same results from behind the laptop, whether at home or in the office. Also, how much money, time and effort were saved and how many carbon emissions were cut by not commuting every day to the office (Singh, 2021).

Conclusion

The world has changed post-pandemic, and the popularity of remote work or teleworking is increasing worldwide. After being forced to work from home during the COVID-19 lockdowns, employees see the benefit and are choosing to continue in this work form. Teleworking has improved employees' work productivity and boosted their social and personal life by promoting a healthier work-life balance. Deciding where the work is done is slowly slipping away from the control of companies as more employees demand additional flexibility. Nevertheless, teleworking has particular characteristics and requires specific conditions to do the job successfully. Employees' personality traits, job design, leadership and organisational support and the proper ICT setup will dictate the pros and cons of remote work.

A paradigm shift in managing hospitality jobs is in desperate need today. Now that many researchers have underlined the benefits of teleworking for both employers and employees, it is time for the hospitality industry to test this system. The pandemic has shown that much of the office space can be released, and savings can be invested in employee well-being. Teleworking also eliminated the need for middle managers. The need for people who can do the job became much higher than those who can manage it. The future of hospitality jobs should focus on flexibility and profitability. As a first step, save on office rent, remove geographical limitations to working and hiring, and trim unnecessary fat.

As teleworking in the hospitality industry remains scarce, future research should continue studying the effects of teleworking and hybrid work forms and the impact on employee

health and productivity in the hospitality industry. A new line of research could be investigating the impact of telework and hybrid work forms on attracting and retaining talent.

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