

Spring 5-6-2021

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The Impact on Organization Behavior in a Telecommuting World and
the Potential Impacts on the Business

A Project Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By

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In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master Business Administration with Healthcare Management

May 2021

Moorhead, Minnesota

Abstract

Local and national COVID-19 restrictions have caused many organizations to transition their employees to working remotely, a practice previously not considered or widely adopted. Global pandemics happen so infrequently that much of the world's population has not lived through or experienced such an event. There were little to no protocols to prepare organizations and individuals mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially for the challenges that the pandemic would bring. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique opportunity for more employees who previously did not have that opportunity to work from home. This shift created a much larger sample size to study the effectiveness and impacts that telecommuting has. This study discusses the benefits and negative aspects of work from home and its implications on organizations, employees, and organizational behavior. The study established that telecommuting provides many benefits to both the employees and organizations, but the negative aspects need to be acknowledged and addressed to remain a successful practice.

Keywords: Telecommuting, work from home, COVID-19, pandemic, organizational behavior

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to the economy, workforce, families, and peoples' everyday lives worldwide. To comply with local government mandates/regulations, such as stay-home orders have been implemented to reduce the risk of exposure and spreading the virus. This has forced businesses to quickly adapt a work-from-home policy (Faulds & Raju, 2021). Although many companies and employees were under the impression telecommuting would only be short-term for the duration of the stay-home orders, it has developed into a new norm for many and will continue past the pandemic.

Although previously studied, telecommuting is new for much of the working population (Arntz et al., 2020). Companies have previously offered telecommuting to high-performing employees, including executives, managers, and professionals (Wang et al., 2020). Before the pandemic, "less than 4% of people in paid employment always worked from home, while about 11.5% worked from home at least frequently" (Arntz et al., 2020: p 383). Currently, studies estimate that just over 30% of employees can perform their jobs at home (Arntz et al., 2020). The pandemic split the workforce into essential workers and nonessential workers. This further separated the workforce into those who could work from home and those whose industries shut down or furloughed. Positions and industries that had the capability to work from home included management, administrative support, "financial activities, professional and business services, and public administration industries" (Dey et al., 2020, para 10). Positions and industries that are not feasible to telecommute include hospitality, agriculture, construction, retail, healthcare, transportation, and those involving operating equipment or interacting in person with the public (Dey et al., 2020; Wong, 2020). Industries that shut down included travel, hospitality, sports, and entertainment (Kniffin et al., 2021).

Therefore, telecommuting is not a new concept; working from home during a global pandemic is uncharted waters. Since most of those working from home throughout the pandemic did not work from home prior, people and businesses were not familiar and unprepared for all it entailed. Some of those are children being home from school/daycare, many household members also working or schooling from home, as well as financial concerns and the general stress of living through a global pandemic. The changes and stress have weighed heavily on businesses and individuals, making significant changes to how companies operate and their organizational behavior. Organizational behavior is the study of how individuals and groups interact with each other within an organization. Technology plays a significant role within individual's everyday lives as well as within organizations. Technology allows for constant communication "with cell phones, emails, video conferencing, people are readily available at any time of day or night" (Lumen, n.d., para 2). In the COVID era, this is more crucial than ever for organizations to not only operate but hold on to the business culture they had created. The contents of this paper will discuss: the drivers of work from home, negative aspects of telecommuting on businesses, employers, and employees, benefits of telecommuting on business, employers, and employees, and how they impact organizational behavior.

Drivers of Telecommuting

Employer Driven

Before the pandemic, telecommuting was an employer-driven luxury benefit. It was a benefit that was primarily available to and utilized by higher-income earners and white-collar workers, including executives, managers, or professionals. "Over 75% of employees who work from home have an annual earning above \$65,000" (Wang et al., 2020: p 17). Additionally,

women, parents, and those with university degrees are more likely to have occupations that allow telecommuting (Arntz et al., 2020).

COVID-19 Pandemic Driven

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant shift from in-office to telecommuting to comply with state mandates such as stay home orders and reduce the risk of exposure and spreading of the virus. Many employers had previously thought telecommuting was not feasible for their business, but when shutdowns occurred due to COVID-19 in early 2020, they had no choice but to move their employees to work from their homes. In general, the stigma surrounding work from home being less productive, among other concerns, has proven to be false. Moving forward past the pandemic, the desire to telecommute is employee-driven but supported by employers due to the increased desire for increased flexibility, productivity, work-life balance, and job satisfaction.

Employee Driven

Previously, working from home was not an option that many employers offered. Now that telecommuting is the new normal, approximately 20% of employees will continue working from home (Faulds & Raju, 2021). Employees want to work from home due to the work/life balance and flexibility it provides. Being able to have work cater to their personal life and complement the time of day and place they are most productive.

Negative Aspects of Telecommuting for the Business

Organizational Behavior, Relationships and Culture

As does working in an office, telecommuting has negative aspects. Depending on many factors, such as the specific business, industry, and work culture, the impact that telecommuting has on the company can vary (Hyken, 2020). In a world without an active pandemic, businesses

determine if and when working from home is possible for employees. During a pandemic where infection rates are high and, stay-home orders are in place, working from home may be the only option to keep the business running.

Businesses work diligently to create a work culture which "is the holistic and somewhat mysterious force that guides actions and interactions in the workplace" (Howard-Grenville, 2020, para 6). Even the most mundane activities, such as small talk in passing or in the break room, are essential for creating and maintaining organizational culture. These are interactions that many people long for while working from their kitchen table during a pandemic. Work culture is not supported or built only by verbal communication and presence but through "body language, emotions, and embodied experiences," which is significantly different from telecommuting (Howard-Grenville, 2020, para 4).

Relationships

Telecommuting adds difficulty when needing to or wanting to communicate with coworkers and maintain workplace relationships (Kniffin et al., 2021). Rather than stopping by a supervisor's office or a coworker's cubical to ask for help or assistance, working from home adds a hindrance by communicating via phone, email, or video conference. Although people are typically willing to help others, telecommuting may reduce helping behavior among employees due to discomfort or embarrassment (Kniffin et al., 2021). Telecommuting requires employees to communicate their needs and concerns differently than working in the office. Coworkers and leaders may not see that individuals struggle working remotely due to nonverbal cues and body language.

The loss of social and intimate interactions has resulted in loneliness and unmet social needs (Kniffin et al., 2021). Loneliness among employees has "been shown to have strong

negative relationships to employees affective commitment, affiliative behaviors and performance" as well as communication, relationships with colleagues, knowledge sharing, and innovation (Kniffin et al., 2021: p 68). This is particularly challenging during a pandemic. Many employees are likely not receiving social interactions outside of those who live in their household, which is even more concerning for employees who live alone.

Team Collaboration

Due to the lack of in-person conversation, impacted aspects include team collaboration, innovation, and creativity. Knowledge transfers are an essential process among employees and are "critical to the development of social capital and organizational effectiveness" (Alen et al., 2015: p 53). Remote interacting can inhibit creative benefits and ease collaboration with colleagues that occur with face-to-face communication. Discussing and sharing ideas is more challenging when working from home and through video conferencing due to less communication taking place at a given time (Faulds & Raju, 2021). Research by Nicholas Bloom, a Stanford economist, "has shown that face-to-face meetings are essential for developing new ideas and keeping staff motivated and focused" (Gorlick, 2020, para 13). Telecommuting provides its own set of distractions. According to Bloom, the three "greatest enemies" for telecommuters include the fridge, bed, and TV (Bloom, 2020).

Employee Retention

Telecommuting can positively and negatively impact employee retention depending on the individuals' employees' social needs. Employees who need more face-to-face social interaction and social connection with coworkers, needing to work from home may drive them to find a different job that meets their social needs. According to Faulds & Raju (2021: p 31), "employees who work from home are drastically more likely to quit than employees who

routinely work in an office environment." Those who predominately telecommute have a different outlook on job opportunities. With more positions available to work from home, it can be easier to switch jobs. They are leading to higher turnover and less loyalty (Faulds & Raju, 2021).

Depending on the specific business and employees, telecommuting can be very successful. Although businesses cannot assume that each employee will thrive the same in an unfamiliar workplace, such as the switch shift from office to home, the pandemic caused. Every employee has different needs. It is up to the business to determine what will be best for the business and what will be best for the employees who are essential to the business operations and maintain the organizational culture previously established.

Negative Aspects of Telecommuting for the Employee

Telecommuting is a new concept for many employees as it was not an option previously offered through their employer. Due to the speed at which employees transitioned to working from home at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were not company policies in place, appropriate resources provided and established workspaces within homes. Resources lacking include productivity, work culture and employee relationships, work/life balance, and mental health resources.

Work/Life Balance

Telecommuting can cause blurred boundaries when working and living in the same space that the COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated. Before the pandemic, things that separated work and home included working within an office and commuting home to create a transition between the two domains (Kniffin et al., 2021). Even within employee's homes, there can be a lack of division between a working space and a living space such as an office. They may

not have extra space, equipment, or the funds to establish a productive workspace.

Telecommuting has caused an increase in the length of the workday and the number of virtual meetings (Faulds & Raju, 2021). Partly due to the rise in interruptions, "activities at work interfering with home demands even after work hours" and "activities at home interfering with work responsibilities during work hours" (Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020: p 66).

These interferences can lead to decreased satisfaction and job performance. House chores and activities may provide a diversion from one's work, reducing productivity (Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020). Technology plays a prominent role through the pandemic; employees are readily available day or night with cell phones, emails, and video conferencing. A continuous connection to work can be beneficial, but it can also diminish work-life balance (Lumen, n.d.).

Working from Home with Children

For parents whose children are also home doing virtual schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic, telecommuting can cause even more disruptions to the workday. The pandemic has caused a merge of full-time work and full-time child care with a minimum level of home-schooling, which has significantly impacted parent's work productivity (Arntz et al., 2020).

Working remotely during a lockdown where most household members are home can increase the conflicts between work and family needs (Arntz et al., 2020). Family status (single and living alone, with others, or with young children) adversely impacts how the COVID-19 pandemic impacts home and work life (Kniffen, 2021).

Working While Sick

Before the pandemic, many employees continued to work when ill, especially when sick leave is not mandated. The COVID-19 pandemic will likely change in-person workplace sick leave moving forward. Telecommuting provides the ease of working while sick because one does

not need to worry about potentially infecting colleagues. However, it does not encourage employees to take the necessary time to allow their bodies to rest and recover. Companies should evaluate their policies regarding sick leave "to ensure there are not incentives for coworkers to pressure each other to attend work while sick" (Kniffen et al., 2021: p 68).

Burnout

Long workdays and high levels of stress while telecommuting are causing employees to experience significant levels of burnout compared to those working in the workplace.

"Microsoft's Work Trend Index showed that 33% of the global workforce is experiencing burnout" and "about 41% of employees working from home have reported extremely high levels of stress compared to 25% of employees who reported similar tendencies working in the workplace" (Vasudean et al., 2020: p 1). The reason for stress in Microsoft's Work Trend Index was due to "diminishing work-life balance, feelings of isolation, disconnect from coworkers, worrying about getting COVID-19, long work hours, and unimaginable workload" (Vasudean et al., 2020: p 1). The increase in hours that employees put in during the pandemic and concerns surrounding productivity raise concerns surrounding burnout and overall employee mental well-being (Maurer, 2020).

Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many to suffer from their mental health. Past studies before the pandemic "found that high workload with unrealistic deadlines, work-family imbalance, and job insecurity are the main stressors for employees" (Sahni, 2020, Introduction section, para 2). With closures, telecommuting, unemployment, stay-home orders, financial concerns, media speculation, and the added fear of contracting or carrying the virus, people's lives significantly impacted mental well-being. Triggers of stress related to work, other than fear

of infection, include "'fear of unknown,' 'communication issues,' 'technology-related issues,' 'incompatible timing preferences,' 'lack of clarity & direction' and interruption during [work from home]" (Sahni, 2020, Abstract section, para 1).

Experts predict a "tsunami" of psychiatric illnesses and imminent mental health crises (Vasudean et al., 2020). Less control, higher demands, lack of support mechanisms, and a disconnect and isolation from coworkers and the office setting lead to increased risk of depression and even death (Vasudean et al., 2020). Stress has negative impacts on the immune system, making people more vulnerable to COVID-19. "Prolonged stress has been associated with many reasons of death like heart attack, cancer, suicide, etc." (Sahni, 2020, Introduction section, para 3).

Employers must recognize the challenges of working from home during a global pandemic and provide resources and training to handle work and family pressures. Job security is a significant concern. Organizations must discuss future business plans with employees to provide a sense of job security. Leadership should "create an online support system and regularly counsel the employees to ensure their mental and emotional well-being" (Vasudean et al., 2020: p 1). Other beneficial actions to ensure the mental well-being of employees include collaborating with mental health professionals to provide employees with interventions and remedies and leveraging online tools (Vasudean et al., 2020).

Inequalities

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an endless amount of changes to all aspects of the workforce and the economy. Analysts expect inequalities to increase during the pandemic, similar to the 2008 financial crisis (Kniffin et al., 2021). Those already disadvantaged in the labor market are more likely not to hold positions where telecommuting is feasible. Those

disadvantaged include racial and ethnic minorities, young workers, and single parents (Kniffin et al., 2021; Holgersen et al., 2021). Workers of migrant backgrounds have a 32% less chance to have the opportunity to have work-from-home jobs compared to native workers at 40% (Holgersen et al., 2021). It is less feasible to telecommute for those holding part-time positions, working in non-metropolitan areas, and having less education (Dey et al., 2020).

Stanford economist Nicholas Bloom believes the shift to working remotely "could lead to worsening inequality as educated, high-earning workers are far more likely to be able to work remotely and thus continue to advance their careers" (Siripurapu, 2020, para 7). Those who cannot work remotely due to their careers or lack appropriate facilities are left behind (Wong, 2020). Many jobs and industries cannot work from home, such as healthcare, transport, customer-facing services, hospitality, agriculture, and construction (Siripurapu, 2020; Dey et al., 2020). Telecommuting positions are typically feasible for those in "management, professional, and administrative support jobs... the information, financial activities, professional and business services, and public administration industries" (Dey et al., 2020, para 10).

Many individuals lack the appropriate facilities to telecommute and do not have sufficient internet capacity to do so effectively. Various other situations regarding the home environment also have a significant impact, such as "marriage status, kind of family, noise and other distractions, and factors that facilitate work" such as "electricity, Wi-Fi, dedicated laptop with the required software," etc. (Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020: p 2). "Only 65% of Americans [surveyed] reported having fast enough internet capacity to support video calls," and the other 35% surveyed have inadequate quality internet capacity or no internet, which prevents them from telecommuting (Wong, 2020, para 13).

Many Americans currently telecommuting are working in shared rooms with other household members or out of their bedrooms. Due to the pandemic, other household members may also be telecommuting, doing virtual schooling, or are currently unemployed. Parents telecommuting during a pandemic with children at home has significantly impacted their productivity and stress, despite the benefits of flexibility and work-life balance. Although "an increased availability of working from home may provide a chance for women to catch up with their male counterparts" in salary, the "need to simultaneously care for children during the COVID-19 lockdown may also revive traditional gender roles, potentially counteracting such gains" (Arntz et al., 2020: p 381). Even with both parents home with their children during a lockdown, "mothers devoted almost three times as many hours on childcare during a weekday as their male counterparts" (Arntz et al., 2020: p 384). Mothers also spent "almost twice as long as fathers on housework during a weekday" (Arntz et al., 2020: p 384).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more women preferred to work from home than men, with "about 25% of mothers with children under 13 years of age reported...they would like to work from home but were not able to" (Arntz et al., 2020: p 382). As regulations and restrictions surrounding COVID-19 lift, many businesses utilize surveys to determine how many, who, and what terms employees want to return to the office. Likely 20% of the workforce will continue to telecommute full time, whereas others will return to the office or work a hybrid model (working remotely and in-office) (Faulds & Raju, 2021). Survey results show significantly more men than women wanted to return to the workplace, and men wanted to return earlier than women did (Faulds & Raju, 2021). If more men than women return to the office, "this could negatively impact both the quality of the work environment and the promotional opportunities for those individuals" (Faulds & Raju, 2021: p 33).

Benefits of Telecommuting for the Business

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many difficulties for businesses, but it has brought some experiences that likely would not have taken place or evaluated had the pandemic not occurred. Telecommuting has forced businesses to adapt quickly and provide enough resources to employees to do their job effectively from home. Although not all employees thrive in a virtual environment, businesses could collect a lot of data. Many were able to determine that telecommuting for their employees was a possibility. A hybrid virtual model is a mixture of some employees working on campus while others work from home. This model shows promise of "greater access to talent, increased productivity for individuals and small teams, lower costs and more individual flexibility, and improved employee experiences" (Alexander et al., 2020, para 1).

Increased Productivity

Productivity depends significantly on personal motivation and the home environment. Research shows that employees who telecommute are 20% to 25% more productive than their office counterparts (Wrike, n.d.). It is impressive that most workers, amid a global pandemic with added stress, nonideal work conditions, and some having their children at home, were still able to be just as productive or increase their productivity (Maurer, 2020).

A California-based company tracked its employees and found that 47% of employees were more productive when telecommuting (Westfall, 2020). The pandemic has caused a shift where employees view work as more worthwhile and rate things they do as valuable to themselves and their employers (Birkinshaw et al., 2020). Evidence suggests that telecommuting during lockdown has helped employees prioritize work (Birkinshaw et al., 2020). A survey done by Airtasker sampled 1,004 full-time employees throughout the United States (505 remote

employees) regarding their work habits and productivity. The survey showed that telecommuters work an additional 1.4 more days per month, total 17 additional days per year, take longer breaks but work 10 minutes longer per day, and spend 10 minutes less time per day being unproductive than office colleagues (Peek, 2020).

Ways to increase workers' productivity include getting comfortable, building boundaries, and creating ways to communicate and develop coworker relationships (Westfall, 2020). Have a comfortable workspace, whether a standing desk, a comfortable computer chair, yoga ball, or treadmill desk. Workers should feel comfortable in their workspace, and it should cater to their productivity. Creating boundaries surrounding work, such as the specific hours, where they work, and checking email off the clock, is essential to separate work and home. It can be challenging to separate work and home life in a technologically connective world without transition, such as a drive home. Creating and encouraging the separation can create a more productive environment.

Employee flexibility to consistently or occasionally work from home allows businesses to keep their employees working even through events such as an employee needing to stay home with a sick child, weather events, car troubles, or other emergencies (Allen et al., 2015).

"Telecommuting can be part of a risk-mitigation strategy that enables organizations to ensure the continuation of vital services during disasters" (Allen et al., 2015: p 57). The added flexibility, fewer social distractions, more opportunities to take necessary breaks increases overall performance, motivation, and creativity (Wrike, n.d.).

Wider Talent Market

Employers offering positions to be fully remote provide a wider talent pool to recruit and hire. They can pull from various geographical areas, even if they are less desirable for

candidates, "which means they have a far greater chance of finding someone with the exact skills, experience, and personality to fit best within the organization" (Wrike, n.d., para 10). This is an excellent benefit because, without a telecommuting option, they would otherwise not have had access to the thicker labor market (Faulds & Raju, 2021). Further, allowing employees to work when is most convenient for them will help employers keep top talent. A defined telecommuting policy is critical to ensure they have the appropriate expectations, hiring process, and onboarding. Goldberg (2020: p 1) shows in his study that:

"Recruitment screening will need to include a whole new level of vetting for personal responsibility and ability to work independently. Performance management would have to stress the quality of work, initiative, creativity, and deadlines while ignoring the time clock. And all of these will impact the culture in a very big way".

Employers would also be able to pull talent from different time zones and countries, which can benefit them to "hire native speakers, bring perspective from other countries and cultures, and create a well-rounded group of professionals" (Wrike, n.d., para 10).

Financial Benefits

The increase in employees working remotely through the COVID-19 pandemic and the decision many companies make to have at least a portion of their employees continue to work remotely decreases the need for the amount of office space pre-pandemic. The decision of what to do with the extra space can be difficult. Should it "be redesigned to build corporate culture, engage employees, enhance employee collaboration, or facilitate innovation," or do they utilize the space as a showcase for customers (Faulds & Raju, 2021: p 30). By decreasing the real estate footprint, a business will save about 20% per employee cost (Faulds & Raju, 2021). Research

estimates that telecommuting half the time can save employers about \$11,000 per year per employee working remotely (Hyken, 2020).

Benefits of Telecommuting for the Employee

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided the opportunity to telecommute to many employees that would likely not have been available had the pandemic not occurred. As previously stated, previous work-from-home opportunities offered by companies were for high-performing employees, including executives, managers, and professionals (Wang et al., 2020). Autonomy in their decisions, wanting less guidance from managers, and being more productive are the employee advantages of telecommuting (Faulds & Raju, 2020).

Work/Life Balance

Telecommuting provides employees with flexibility and balance. All telecommuters benefit from work from home, even those who thrive better within an office setting. It can allow them more time in a day due to decreased preparation for work and commute and will enable them to spend that time with their family or however they please. Many parents, primarily mothers of young children, prefer telecommuting (Arntz et al., 2020). If employers offer employees to cater their working hours to when works best in their schedule or when they are most productive, this removes the traditional 9 am-5 pm work hours that do not cater to all employee's needs.

Cost Savings

The ability to work from home provides employees significant cost savings to live further from their employer, such as suburbs versus metropolitan areas and decreased travel and associated costs such as gas, transport, and vehicle expenses (Faulds & Raju, 2020). More telecommuting could lead to more urban sprawl. "In a simulated mid-sized city where every

worker teleworks at least one day a week, transportation costs decreased 20% (Merrefield, 2020, para 42). For individuals who work in a tier-1 city, the cost of transportation can total \$6,000 per year or more (Faulds & Raju, 2020). Other potential cost savings associated with decreased commute include "reduced child care expenses, dry cleaning expenses, and eating out" (Faulds & Raju, 2020: p 33).

Flexibility

To have space and the means, they can customize their workspace to best suit their personal and workstyle needs. Including ergonomic preferences such as a standing desk, designing their space to reflect their personality and personal preferences, and features that will cater to their productivity needs. Flexibility within a workday can significantly benefit those who have health conditions, care for children or relatives, attend frequent medical appointments, and need therapeutic treatments (Schur, Ameri & Kruse, 2020). Flexible work arrangements, such as those that allow employees to determine the hours they work rather than the standard 9 am to 5 pm, allow employees to cater their work schedule to when they are most productive. It increases self-discipline and productivity, less boredom, and reduced procrastination (Wang et al., 2020).

Persons with Disabilities

The increased availability of telecommuting provides a great opportunity, a silver lining, for employees with disabilities. "The pandemic [has] shaken up traditional workplace structures and [caused] employers to rethink how essential tasks can be done, which may broaden their views of workplace accommodations" (Schur, Ameri & Kruse, 2020: p 1). The increase in telecommuting positions will provide greater access to jobs for those who "have environmental sensitivities, episodic symptoms, mobility impairments, and/or chronic pain or fatigue

conditions" (Allen et al., 2015: p 57). It is also a form of reasonable accommodation under the ADA (Allen et al., 2015). Flexibility within a person's employment allows employees to take the necessary breaks during the workday for therapeutics at home, attend medical appointments or other issues that make consistent hours difficult, particularly for those with mental or physical impairments, health conditions, and those who care for children or relatives (Schur, Ameri & Kruse, 2020). The availability of work from home can be very beneficial to those with disabilities and the businesses to diversify the workforce and provide representation within the organization.

Overall Job Satisfaction

The benefits of telecommuting are known to increase overall job satisfaction. Factors that are positively related to job satisfaction include by Allen et al. (2015: p 48):

"amount of technical and human resource support provided by the organization, manager's trust in the teleworker, amount of telework training others in the workplace has received, and minimal distractions from family members during work time."

Job satisfaction is also correlated with performance levels and motivation within the workplace while having the same or increased level of productivity as previously discussed (Bhattacharya, 2020). Employees who telecommute have more autonomy, cost savings due to less commute, and increased flexibility in their work and personal lives, creating a better work-life balance. The COVID-19 pandemic has put employees and employers through significant changes and added stressors to various aspects of life. Despite this, employees enjoy the benefits and flexibility that telecommuting provides. Due to this, telecommuting will be able to continue for many following the pandemic.

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a unique opportunity for many employees to experience working from home that they likely would not have been able to experience otherwise. The drivers of work from home have shifted from employer-driven to COVID-19 driven. As the pandemic subsides, employers gain insight from employees regarding their thoughts on returning to the office and their preferences. A large portion of them would like to have the option to continue telecommuting. The significant shift to telecommuting was not without its challenges, as it occurred during a global pandemic that created much uncertainty and disrupted everyone's "normal." Many employers' new "normal" will now include telecommuting or a hightbred model allowing employees to split their time between home and the office.

The negative aspects of telecommuting and primary concerns for the business include; maintaining the established organizational culture, establishing and maintaining relationships among coworkers, team collaboration, employee mental health and feelings of isolation, and employee retention. Organizations work hard to establish their culture and way of life within the organization. Moving to a completely remote or partially remote workspace significantly impacts how coworkers work together, help one another and build relationships to feel a sense of belonging. The negative aspects for the employee include; work-life balance and boundaries, working from home with children and other household members, not having appropriate workspaces established, and inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic is primarily responsible for feelings of isolation, employee mental health, and stress levels. Due to restrictions, employees were not meeting their social interaction needs in their personal lives or their work lives. The benefits have prevailed as many employees want to continue telecommuting as local restrictions and businesses allow offices to reopen. The benefits for businesses include greater access to

talent through a larger geographical area, increased productivity, employees working more days per year, and the financial savings of decreasing real-estate footprint. The benefits for employees include; autonomy, reduced travel and increased cost savings, greater flexibility regarding when they work and where they live, and greater access for those with disabilities. The added benefits such as financial, autonomy, flexibility, and work-life balance have made it a very attractive way of working that is here to stay.

Telecommuting significantly impacts the established relationships within an organization, especially in high-stress situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations are continuing to learn and meet the needs of their employees and how to maintain healthy work relationships and organizational culture. How each organization chooses to strengthen its relationships and organizational culture will vary. For some, this may be multiple virtual or in-person meetings per day/week. For others, this could be team outings and bonding activities to foster and strengthen relationships outside of the office. It will be necessary for businesses to have clear telecommuting policies and resources to foster employee success. This includes resources and training, best practices, mental health support, communication, and “reassurance through a balanced mix of optimism and realism regarding the future” for telecommuting to remain successful (Kniffin et al., 2021: p 67). Additional mental health support that is needed includes; providing resources such as employee assistance programs, incorporate mental health benefits into health benefits, encouraging employees to take their paid time off, and creating boundaries surrounding work and life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many challenges and learning opportunities that likely would not have occurred otherwise. Organizations and employees have learned to adapt, work together, understand people's individual social and work needs, provide compassion,

and remain flexible. Although the COVID-19 pandemic will eventually subside, telecommuting will have a lasting impact and allow organizations to have an open mind regarding the practice for many years to come.

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