18 Worst Disadvantages of Remote Work That You Shouldn't Overlook

Story by John Harding (September 2024)

Every Brit can agree that the transition to remote work since COVID-19 has been transformative. Many companies now offer employees the chance to work from home or adopt a hybrid model, where they visit the office only a few days a week. Although there are advantages to working remotely, it hasn't been entirely beneficial for society as a whole. Here are 18 reasons as to why that's the case.

Dependency on Technology

Remote work heavily relies on a stable internet connection, and sometimes this isn't possible! The Observer Research Foundation supports this, writing, "Imagine the feeling you get when your internet connection stops working just as your webinar is about to start - or worse, you are bumped off your webinar because your app has chosen that exact moment not to cooperate."

Lack of Proper Work Environment

Many remote workers don't have a dedicated workspace. Working in unsuitable areas, such as a sofa, can lead to health issues as muscles become affected. A home environment may not be the best place for some people to focus, and this can cause productivity to fall.

Deterioration of Company Culture

Remote work changes the norms that are known by the company. Gallup backs this by writing, "The common threads and social norms that previously brought your people together aren't the same now that a lot - if not the majority - of employees are working from home." You can feel less connected with the company through remote work.

Increased Economic Inequality

Office-based workers or those in higher-paid jobs are able to work on their careers from the comfort of their own homes. Retail, hospitality, and any other types of service jobs are usually lower paid and without the luxury of progressing their career from home. Remote work contributes to a widening economic gap between classes.

Impact on Mental and Physical Health

The RSPH writes, "People who switched to working from home as a result of COVID-19 had experienced health and wellbeing impacts." Working from home led to people feeling isolated, with sleep disturbances and less exercise. This included increased issues with muscular problems due to work setups at home.

Decreased Engagement

Remote employees would often express feelings of isolation to their employers, saying that it feels as though they're being cut off. A lack of close contact with colleagues can negatively

impact feelings of trust and connection. Remote work can easily intensify office politics and create anxiety among employees.

Challenges in Team Spirit
It's hard to maintain a team spirit digitally, especially when it comes to working on projects together. Klaxoon supports this by writing, "Managers worried that remote working would lead to a decrease in communication and collaboration among colleagues, which could negatively impact teamwork and the ability to work effectively on projects together."

Decreased Opportunities for Relationship-Building

There's less opportunity for critical relationship-building when working from home. If employees are working away from their managers, then it can be harder for them to feel valued and recognized. If an employee doesn't feel valued, this can have a negative effect on the company, as there may be a lack of motivation or a higher turnaround.

Misunderstandings

Balkan Bros writes, "The digital realm often lacks the richness of face-to-face interactions, making it fertile ground for misunderstandings and false assumptions." Relying on digital communications can lead to misunderstandings. Instant feedback is often missing in remote work, which can leave an employee unsure of how to proceed with a project.

Reduced Creativity

There's a lack of office encounters when working from home, and sometimes it's these encounters that can spark the most creativity. Remote work environments stop spontaneity from occurring as employees can't bounce off one another. If video call meetings are limited, then it can hinder the brainstorming process.

Difficulty in Separating Work and Personal Life

There can be a blurring of work and personal boundaries when you work from home. The Muse reflects this by telling us that, as there's no commute and your work laptop is always in sight, it can be hard to know when to switch off from work. Finding it hard to switch between work and home life can cause stress and burnout.

Increased Workload

There's a tendency for remote workers to work longer hours, sometimes without even realizing it. Some workers may find it difficult to establish clear work hours, and this will negatively affect their work-life balance. Some employees may also feel the need to be constantly available, and this can lead to increased stress levels.

Challenges for Working Parents

If parents work from home and there are school closures, then this can put an extra burden on remote workers. It can become overwhelming trying to balance a job while also being a caregiver at the same time. A lack of support for parents working from home can mean a decrease in productivity.

Security Concerns

There's an increased risk of security and data breaches when working from home. An employee always needs to ensure secure and private communication methods when they're away from the office. They will become dependent on personal devices or network settings that may not be secure.

Challenges in Maintaining Workforce Diversity

Working remotely can cause a lack of employee diversity and inclusion across the workplace. A lack of face-to-face interactions can make it harder for someone to understand diverse perspectives. There may also be difficulty in ensuring equal participation during video meetings, especially when you can't see everyone.

Impact on Local Economies

A career expert at Indeed told Business Insider, "Small businesses have really been hit hard in metropolitan areas where they used to have thousands of employees go into work every day and buy lunch or buy local goods." The decreased foot traffic in business districts has also greatly affected urbanized areas.

Sustainability Concerns

Offices would have a responsibility to ensure they were sustainable; now, Greenly says, "sustainability no longer becomes contingent on the employer – but the employee." There can be impacts on the environment due to more electrical devices being used and increased energy consumption at home.

Reduced Access to Training

Remote workers will have less access to hands-on training, making it harder for them to develop professionally. It can be hard to create an interactive training session digitally, which may also hinder an employee's motivation to learn. Sometimes, training occurs naturally in an office environment, and this isn't possible for remote workers.