

## Employees Demands For Remote, Online Work. Post Pandemic Changes

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### Abstract

*In the recent years, the labor market has undergone many changes in terms of work location, work program and work conditions. If until the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the classic option of working in the office was preferred among employees, with the outbreak, working from home has become the new normal. This way of working has also become extremely useful post-pandemic, so that many companies choose to continue with fully or partially remote work. Along with these changes in the labor market, the preferences of employees for the rewards received from the remote work have changed, and they put accent on purchases necessary to work from home, payment of utility expenses, even on more free time. Employees also expect surprises from companies, such as: lunch sent directly at home or other surprises that will make them happy. This paper analyzes from a theoretical point of view what are the requirements of employees that work from home, online. The analysis is not carried out under the pretext of the past pandemic, but presents a post factum analysis.*

**Key words:** online environment, remote work, rewards, happy employee

**J.E.L. classification:** H12, J53, M54, O15

### 1. Introduction

Before the pandemic caused by the Sars-Cov-2 virus, employees were not very oriented towards working from home, online. During the pandemic, both employees and employers had to make working remotely as efficient as possible. After the pandemic, the requirements began to stabilize and focus on one thing: employees want to balance their schedules most of the time through hybrid work. Hybrid work brings out the best of the work done at home mixed with the work done at the office (Babapour Chafi *et al.*, 2022).

Nowadays employees are analyzing in details what they want from their careers, while employers reconsider the way the work is done, to respond to the employees desires (Raman, 2021). With this pandemic, managers understood that work means a set of task made on any device through artificial intelligence (Yadavalli, 2020). Moreover, the analysts appreciate that digital workplaces has become the new normal, and estimate the market to grow in this direction up to \$40 billion by 2025 (Yadavalli, 2020).

### 2. Literature review

The pandemic was a pretext for unlocking the remote work, which brought higher productivity, geographical mobility and lower costs (Bick *et al.*, 2021). Even if the remote employees work from home or from another location, they have the same rights as those who work from the offices (International Labour Organization, 2020). To support the hybrid work, employers are expected to redesign the fizical and the digital workplaces (Babapour Chafi *et al.*, 2022). The remote work was perceived in a positive manner, but has demonstrated its own leadership challenges (Babapour Chafi *et al.*, 2022). Thus, trust can be used in such situations, and it can be managed from the very begginging (Clipa *et al.*, 2019).

The remote work brought to Microsoft less interconnected groups (Yang *et al.*, 2021). Also, this type of work made individuals to spent less time with the weak ties, which provide new information in organizations (Yang *et al.*, 2021). This type of work brings also negative aspects, such as: more static networks, and poor communication, which has become more asynchronous than synchronous (Yang *et al.*, 2021).

In a study made on 129 interviews was demonstrated that the positive effects (work-life balance, cost savings) of the remote work are more important among employees than the negative ones (management problems, communication, technical problems) (Ferreira *et al.*, 2021). In another study, after a year of remote work, employees pointed out job satisfaction, with the comment that they faced significant job stress despite the good productivity obtained (Shakti *et al.*, 2021).

The adoption of the remote work has many lackings, so the research has to continue in this area (Ferreira *et al.*, 2021). However, there are several advantages of this type of work: business continuity plans, cost savings, competitive advantages (Ferreira *et al.*, 2021). Disadvantages of e-working were found in another study: affected well-being due to over loading and the missing time for recuperation (Grant *et al.*, 2013). For these problems, trust and style of management were found as key solutions (Grant *et al.*, 2013). The human resources policies are overcharged with the remote work, putting much stress on well-being, leave and compensation (Shahriar *et al.*, 2022).

### ***So what the “new normal” means? What it can be improved post pandemic?***

According to a post pandemic study, nowadays, 92% of people see flexibility extremely important, 38% of people want to choose when to start and to end the work program, and 17% would like to choose a four-day work week for less pay (Manpower Group, 2022). Further, flexible work arrangements and proper compensations bring a better chance of attracting and maintaining workforce post pandemic (Workforce Challenges: Pre- and Post- Pandemic, 2022). A strong culture would increase the employees adaptability, while opportunities offered by leaders would increase engagement and interest (Workforce Challenges: Pre- and Post- Pandemic, 2022).

The main post-pandemic trends are the following (Raman, 2021):

- Offices will serve especially for collaboration, learning and innovation (not for working).
- Artificial intelligence will be soon adopted by companies.
- There will be an emphasis on employees wellbeing, diversity, equity and inclusion; flexibility in terms of location (work from offices and from home) is desired by employees.
- There is a movement from performance monitoring to performance coaching.
- There will be an increased attention to culture.

Many challenges have occurred since the pandemic ended: the workplace has become more flexible, employers are concentrated and focused on well-being and employees health, management strongly needs contingency plans, and workforce is more demanding because of the worldwide remote offers (Infraspeak, 2022).

### **3. Research methodology**

This research is based on a qualitative analysis of specialized studies related to the subject: post-pandemic changes for working from home, online. In order to carry out this study, several studies were analyzed, and in the results section were presented the challenges encountered, the authors who recorded these challenges, and future possible solutions.

### **4. Findings**

The analyzed literature conducted us to a syntetic table, which presents the main challenges that appeared post pandemic, the authors that named these challenges, and proposed solutions. Data is presented in the Table no.1.

The solutions proposed for the challenges related to the remote work do not have a quantitative foundation, but are only starting points for future detailed analysis of the problems.

Table no. 1 Challenges and solutions proposed for the remote work

Nr. crt.	Challenges found in the remote work	Authors of the challenges found	Post pandemic solutions proposed
1.	Leadership challenges	Babapour Chafi <i>et al.</i> , 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Managers/ leaders have to maintain a continuous informal communication with the employees that work remotely.</li> <li>✓ Showing managers/ leaders availability for solving problems in front of the employees could be a plus.</li> </ul>
2.	Technical problems	Ferreira <i>et al.</i> , 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Training on the specific technical problems.</li> </ul>
3.	Employees are analyzing in details what they want from their careers	Raman, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Employers have to re-design the jobs and to bring attractive structures for these.</li> </ul>
4.	Increased stress	Shakti <i>et al.</i> , 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Training on stress control.</li> <li>✓ More free time offered to the employees.</li> <li>✓ A free day weekly.</li> </ul>
5.	Less interconnected groups	Yang <i>et al.</i> , 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Short informal meetings at the beginning of the program.</li> <li>✓ Physical team buildings.</li> <li>✓ Weekly physical meetings with topics different than the professional area.</li> </ul>
6.	More static networks	Yang <i>et al.</i> , 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Weekly physical meetings.</li> <li>✓ Online interactive meetings.</li> </ul>
7.	Asynchronous communication	Yang <i>et al.</i> , 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Well established online meetings.</li> <li>✓ Communication via messages.</li> </ul>
8.	Affected well-being	Grant <i>et al.</i> , 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ More free time offered to the employees.</li> <li>✓ A free day weekly.</li> <li>✓ The hybrid work.</li> </ul>

Source: Challenges synthesized after the authors in the third column.

Although at first glance, remote work seems to bring a balance between personal and the professional life, unfortunately, problems appear even on this aspect. The solutions we propose to counterbalance this imbalance are: more free time, one free day per week, or alternating work from home with work at the office. The static networks and the less interconnected groups are occurring because of the lack of the face to face communication. Thus, we expect more events with physical interacting between employees and online interactive meetings. The poor communication is the root of any problem related to interaction. The asynchronous communication could be avoided through a well established meetings program and by using more text messages.

Leadership challenges are the most difficult to be managed in the remote environment. Thus, we expect that leaders/ managers to promote trust, availability to employees in solving problems, and to use the informal communication even in the online environment. Technical problems are a urgent priority. For the remote employees who encounter such problems, we expect specific trainings. For the increased remote stress we proposed training on avoiding and managing stress, and more free time for relax.

Finally, when employees are analyzing in details what they want from their careers, employers could adapt the offer of jobs and could make them to be more attractive.

## 5. Conclusions

Post pandemic times brought us common digital workplaces. Post-pandemic trends are saying that offices will serve especially for collaboration, learning and innovation, not for working, and that artificial intelligence will be soon adopted by companies.

In this paper we have synthesized from literature the main problems that have occurred since the pandemic ended. We have found 8 major challenges: leadership challenges, technical problems, increased stress, less interconnected groups, more static networks, asynchronous communication, affected well-being and the fact that employees are analyzing in details what they want from their careers. For each problem encountered we proposed possible solutions, which are starting points for future detailed analysis.

The main limits of our study are: the number of references is limited to the topic, and the extraction of the main challenges of the remote work was done randomly. Future research directions about post pandemic problems found in the remote work can be conducted in the future.

## 6. Acknowledgement

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