

Work relationships: Telecommuting is the future but be careful

Posted by [Aki Tatsakura](#) On 01/11/2018

The alarm goes on. It's 7:45 am. A man wakes up, turns on his coffee machine and computer. He goes to his bathroom for a quick shower, puts on a t-shirt, shorts and doesn't reach for his shoes. He grabs his coffee. It's 8 am and he's all set for work, sitting at his desk, answering an email from his boss who is 2,543 miles away. This is globalization at its finest and the world is becoming one big market place.

With the improvement of communication many companies and their workplace relationships are expanding all over the world. Instead of opening offices, they recruit local workers and offer them the option to work from home. For example, a company in Mayfield, GA can recruit a great designer who lives in Phoenix or in Bangkok. This is evidence working remotely is easier than ever and it's the perfect model for improving workplace relationships. Look at it from this perspective: Companies are happy because they can grow with little infrastructure and they have the privilege to select workers from anywhere in the world.

Employees are happy because they can work from their home town while pursuing exciting work opportunities thousands of miles away. Even those living in the same city as their employer are happy with having a work from home option as they save many hours of their work day by reducing the time commuting from home to office and back. It's a win,win situation for workplace relationships because workers are happier and companies can better control their costs. Numerous of studies have shown us employees have more availability, less stress and more work flexibility because of [remote work options](#). In most cases, work productivity can increase up to 13.5 percent.

The only issue with remote work is not every employer or employee likes telecommuting as they feel they need a face-to-face social interaction which comes from an office environment. People are social beings and need some type of interpersonal interaction to feel connected to an employer. In some circumstances, telecommuting can make that interaction more difficult because it's hard to build a healthy company culture with little to no face-to-face interaction. This is the reason companies like Yahoo moved their people together in interactions to strengthen the company work culture. As Anna Sarad , Founder of [WritePaperForMe](#) website states:

"When you are not physically seeing a person, it's more difficult to get to know the person and what makes that person tick. There's less chit-chat. You don't find someone on the elevator, in the corridor or the restroom, so you have fewer opportunities to interact. When you do, it's normally work-related."

It's harder to know when someone is having a bad day and more difficult to connect and motivate people because you cannot pick up on non-verbal cues. A specific worker may put up a big happy face during a virtual meeting, even when he or she is having a really bad day. At an office environment it's more difficult to do this because you are seeing the person throughout the day. But there are ways to improve the telecommuting experience by being aware of the differences and making an effort to get to know other people. Tools like [Slack](#) and [HipChat](#) can help you do this.

As a rule of thumb, employees who telecommute should be vocal about their feelings about anything important going on with them or work-related. It's also recommended to have work retreats. Joel Gascoigne, Founder from Buffer, explains having three international retreats every year helps them get to know each other and feel more like a team. As he puts it:

"Something magical happens when you meet in person. In a retreat setting, it's even more powerful because we have casual meals together and do activities on off days. We can learn about what makes each other tick and what our true passions are."

When your time is not together, communicate through video and voice applications, relying less on email because the applications will help you pick up on nonverbal cues while making telecommuters feel less isolated and more part of the team. For example, you can turn on your laptop camera and pretend your employees are sitting next to you to make telecommuting feel more natural when they cannot meet with you in the flesh. Last but not least, you can work from a coffee shop to help you feel less isolated by being in an environment where people gather. It's a great way to feed off of social energy as you work. Like it or not, telecommuting is popular and it's not going anywhere. By being aware of where it can go wrong and fixing those situations, everyone can benefit from telecommunications and remote work.

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