

Six factors that determine success when working from home

April 26 2021



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The pandemic has placed a focus on new ways of organizing work. More and more companies and organizations around the world are considering how to meet their employees' demand for flexibility while at the same

time reducing their office space and expensive rents.

There are advantages and disadvantages to working from home, and many factors that affect the peoples' experience of it, such as their job function, age and seniority, whether they have children, whether they are a manager or employee, etc.

Researchers from DTU Management have identified six main areas that company managers should focus on when developing strategies for remote work in future.

Associate Professor at DTU Management Christine Ipsen, one of the researchers behind the study, explains:

"We've examined the pros and cons of working from home among managers and employees in knowledge jobs in eight European countries. We carried out the study at the start of the pandemic, and identified six main areas that are essential for how different people experience remote office work."

"Most people felt that working from home provided benefits in terms of better work/life balance, increased efficiency, and more control over their own work. For most people, these three advantages outweighed the three main disadvantages: the inevitable shortcomings of the home office, the greater uncertainty when you don't meet physically with your boss and colleagues, and finally the reduced access to necessary work tools that are normally available in the office."

A management tool that creates an overview

Although most of the subjects in the study felt that the pros of working from home outweighed the cons, there was also a large group that did not see the benefits.

"Before companies and organizations make new plans for the scope of remote work, it's important to remember that people experience the pros and cons very differently. In other words, it's not a given that everyone feels positive about working from home, or have the same challenges. By analyzing the employees' experiences based on the six factors we identified, management can get an overview of what to keep in mind and when to take action in relation to different employee groups," explains Christine Ipsen.

The researchers' study found that [young people](#) aged 18 to 30 scored higher when it came to "work/life balance" than employees over the age of 31. On the other hand, young people had more problems with "uncertainty about the work" compared to older generations, who perceived "inadequate tools" as a bigger problem.

When it came to comparing managers and employees, many differences emerged:

"For example, employees rate their efficiency and work/life balance more positively than managers, while managers report less uncertainty about their work and less lack of important work tools compared to employees," says Christine.

Focus on the pros, minimize the cons

By using the six factors as reference points in analyses of the organizations' different employee groups, management can gain a better understanding of how to organize remote work in the future. Moreover, the six factors can be used as a tool for ongoing evaluation.

"There have been many analyses of people's experiences during lockdown and working from home, but this is a concrete tool that can be used to identify and engage in dialog about pros and cons when

developing and implementing new strategies to promote both efficiency and well-being."

"It's about minimizing the disadvantages, because the trend we're seeing shows that people will work more from home in the future—even when corona no longer dominates society," says Christine Ipsen, who also points out that our experiences of remote work may change.

"So more studies are needed to look at the six factors over time and in more industries."

Three advantages and three disadvantages

The six main factors can be used as a tool for analyzing which disadvantages should be minimized and which groups in the workplace benefit most from working at home.

Advantages:

1. Better work/life balance
2. Greater efficiency, partly due to fewer disruptions, fewer meetings, less wasted time
3. More control over one's own work, breaks whenever needed, less interference

Disadvantages:

1. Limitations of remote work—e.g. isolation, more time in front of the screen
2. Uncertainty about the work—e.g. which tasks need to be solved, unexciting tasks, less meaningful
3. Insufficient tools—limited access to documents, data, printers, etc.

By circulating questionnaires in eight European countries, DTU researchers have examined the experiences of knowledge workers who have worked from home during the corona-related lockdown from mid-March to mid-May 2020.

The aim was to identify the pros and cons of remote work and the conditions that promote efficiency and well-being when working from home.

The following countries participated in the study:

- DK
- Austria
- Finland
- Germany
- Italy
- Spain
- Sweden
- Netherlands

More information: Christine Ipsen et al. Six Key Advantages and Disadvantages of Working from Home in Europe during COVID-19, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2021). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph18041826](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041826)

Provided by Technical University of Denmark

Citation: Six factors that determine success when working from home (2021, April 26) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-04-factors-success-home.html>

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