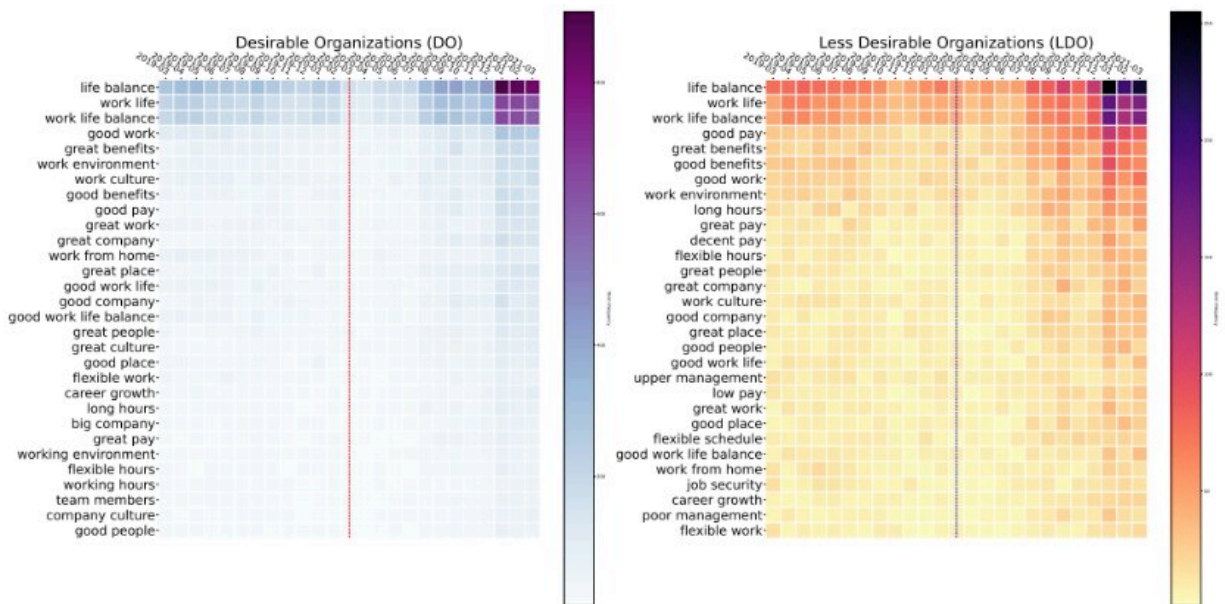


# Flexible, supportive company culture makes for better remote work

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Frequency heatmap presenting the net occurrences of 30 most popular phrases in the review sections of DOs (Left) and LDOs (Right), aggregated monthly between 1st March, 2019 - 1st March, 2021.

Frequency Heatmap for the most popular 30 terms in the Desired and Less Desired organization reviews. Credit: Georgia Tech

The pandemic made remote work the norm for many, but that doesn't mean it was always a positive experience. Remote work can have many advantages: increased flexibility, inclusivity for parents and people with disabilities, and work-life balance. But it can also cause issues with

collaboration, communication, and the overall work environment.

New research from the Georgia Institute of Technology used data from the [employee](#) review website Glassdoor to determine what made remote work successful. Companies that catered to employees' interests, gave employees independence, fostered collaboration, and had flexible policies were most likely to have strong remote workplaces.

"One of the biggest changes during the pandemic for all of us, for better or worse, was remote work," said Munmun De Choudhury, an associate professor in the School of Interactive Computing. "The motivation for us in this research was to understand what makes some organizations more suitable for remote work and others not. We found that cultural aspects matter the most."

De Choudhury and her Ph.D. student Mohit Chandra presented the research in the paper, "[What Makes Some Workplaces More Favorable to Remote Work? Unpacking Employee Experiences During COVID-19 Via Glassdoor](#)," at Proceedings of the 15th ACM Web Science Conference.

## **Data discovery**

Glassdoor made for an ideal dataset because employees can post anonymously, leading to more authentic reviews. Although review sites are known for attracting people with strong views, this bias worked in the researchers' favor—they were looking for people with strong opinions on [company](#) culture.

"We are missing the people who are in the middle, but it also actually works in our favor because we really were interested in those positives and negatives," De Choudhury said. "We recognize the bias, but at the same time, it was still a pretty good data set for us to know the extremes

of how people felt."

Ultimately, they collected more than 140,000 reviews from current employees at 52 Fortune 500 companies that allowed remote work from March 2019 to March 2021, which overlapped with the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these companies included Verizon, Walmart, and Salesforce. Their textual analysis mostly focused on the pros and cons section of the Glassdoor reviews.

To analyze the data, the researchers created an algorithmic prediction task to identify which cultural attributes a company had prior to the pandemic would lead to favorable remote work environments. Their model used statistical and deep learning methods and correctly predicted a company's favorable remote work environment 76% of the time.

Using organizational behavior theory, the researchers divided company culture into 41 different dimensions categorized into seven subgroups: interests, work values, [work activities](#), social skills, job structural characteristics, work styles, and interpersonal relationships.

## **The company culture curve**

Companies with a positive culture for remote work excelled in three main categories:

- **Interests:** Companies that empower employees to pursue their own goals, interests, and how they conduct their work were viewed more favorably.
- **Work values:** Companies that give their employees freedom to make their own decisions and work in a collaborative environment led to more satisfaction.
- **Structured job characteristics:** Companies with flexible remote work and hours were more likely to entice employees.

"We found these keywords in reviews like '[work-life balance](#)' or 'flexible work' occurring frequently in the pros section of good companies," Chandra said.

Conversely, companies with toxic cultures frequently failed to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts; made workers feel disrespected; and acted unethically.

Ultimately, the researchers believe these results reflect generational differences in what's most valuable to employees.

"There are a lot of reports of quiet quitting and the great resignation because millennials or Gen Z value culture a lot, in contrast to previous generations like Baby Boomers, for whom job satisfaction was largely about compensation," said De Choudhury. "Younger generations might say they're OK with an average salary if they can have that flexibility in work hours, and that's what makes these companies more favorable to [remote work](#)."

**More information:** Mohit Chandra et al, What Makes Some Workplaces More Favorable to Remote Work? Unpacking Employee Experiences During COVID-19 Via Glassdoor, *Proceedings of the 15th ACM Web Science Conference 2023* (2023). [DOI: 10.1145/3578503.3583602](#)

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