How to improve employee experience whilst working from home

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The side effects of Covid 19 are not just physical, even those who have not been infected are affected particularly at work. Covid 19 has led companies into making changes to the working environment of millions of employees, the most common being teleworking. Whilst teleworking is fast becoming the norm its impact work has resulted in psychological factors affecting the employees.

Working from home has created a blurred line between work and home. It has made the boundaries of home life and work-life unclear. As a result, this can negatively impact an employee's mental and physical health due to extended hours, lack of or unclear delineation between work and home, and limited support from organisations. Most work from home situations are mandatory and they have an impact on the employee's mental health and wellbeing.

Working from home can have different outcomes depending upon certain situations. It can either be positive or negative. The demands of the home environment, level of organisational support, and social connections external to work are all vital to how employees can maintain a good work-life balance. If it is not handled correctly it results in a foggy situation in which their home life comes to be associated with the work role, with work physically and psychologically intruding upon their family. Habits and norms form that induce remote workers to be preoccupied with work when home (This is according to the study "Toward Understanding Remote Workers' Management of Work-Family Boundaries: The Complexity of Workplace Embeddedness")

This meshing of work and home has the repercussion of creating an inability to disengage from work which increases work-to-family conflict. This disengagement was found to affect female remote workers more than males. Studies also found that working solely from home encourages remote workers to overwork and to allow their work to infringe on their family role.

Whilst working from home affects employees differently the common factors which can ease the strain on them are access to technology, ability to work flexibly and individual competencies. Employee well?being, due to over?working and a lack of time for recuperation is also a cause for concern whilst trust and management style were found to be key influences on remote worker's effectiveness. The positive effect of telework revolves around reduced work pressure and role conflict and increased autonomy whilst the negative effect of telework is expressed through increased role ambiguity and reduced support and feedback. Generally, a negative correlation exists between working from home, exhaustion and job engagement and that job demands and resources positively influence these relationships.

The following were identified as common findings in studies around working from home and the employee impact:

- **Organisational support**

Organisational social support was associated with positive wellbeing outcomes. Working from home creates uncertainty for employees, warranting regular communication to ensure clarity around role expectations, clearly defined performance measures, appropriate workloads, and access to human resources support. Systems to support and implement this need to be available. Managers also need to be trained on how to supervise remote workers effectively.

- **Coworker support**

Working from home can be isolating with employees feeling disconnected from their managers and colleagues. This is why systems which facilitate effective formal and informal coworker support are needed.

- **Teleworking support**

Teleworker support was associated with increased job satisfaction and reduced psychological strain. Effective remote working requires the provision of appropriate equipment and high-quality technical support in conjunction with training in the necessary software and systems needed by an individual.

- **Boundary management support**

To facilitate boundary management, clarity is required concerning the expectations of working hours to prevent employees feeling as though they are 'on call 24/7' Strategies to facilitate this could include education of employees and managers on how to more formally develop boundaries between work and family.

People can achieve great results, even when working from home. But the spikes in anxiety, stress and mental health issues created by the virus need to be mitigated by making that process as smooth as possible. This is why employee well being needs to be a priority.

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