

Advantages and Disadvantages of Working from Home (WFH)

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Working from home (WFH) allows employees to perform their duties outside a traditional workplace - usually with the support of digital communication tools. It can certainly provide greater flexibility and reduce commuting, but its effectiveness depends on the job, the employee's circumstances, the home environment and the organisation's management practices. Considering both the advantages and disadvantages is a useful starting point in the discussion.

The context

The shift to working from home was, for most organisations, unplanned. What began as an emergency arrangement has since settled into something more deliberate - and rather more contested. Employers who once assumed that productivity required proximity have discovered that a good deal of work travels quite well; employees who once accepted the daily commute as unavoidable have recalculated what that time is actually worth. The conversation has moved on from whether working from home is possible to how it might be arranged sensibly.

That shift matters because the arrangement is no longer improvised. Position descriptions now specify location expectations, enterprise agreements address them, and recent legislative attention to matters such as the right to disconnect suggests that the boundary between work and home is being drawn more formally than it once was. Sectors differ markedly - professional services, education and administration have adapted readily, while health, construction, hospitality and manufacturing largely have not. Within a single organisation the picture is equally uneven: two colleagues doing similar work may find the same arrangement liberating and limiting respectively. Any list of advantages and disadvantages needs to be read against that variability rather than in search of a single answer.

Advantages

The advantages include -

Greater flexibility: Employees may have more control over when and where they complete tasks, making it easier to manage personal responsibilities.

Less commuting: Avoiding daily travel saves time and money - and may reduce stress.

Improved concentration: A quiet home workspace can provide uninterrupted time for tasks that require sustained focus – this issue is critical.

Potentially better work–life balance: Time previously spent travelling can be used for family, exercise, rest or other activities.

Wider employment opportunities: Remote roles can connect workers and employers across different locations – this includes working interstate or overseas.

Lower operating costs: Employers may need less office space, while employees may spend less on transport, parking and work clothing.

Disadvantages

The disadvantages include -

Social isolation: Reduced face-to-face contact can make some employees feel disconnected from colleagues and workplace culture.

Communication difficulties: Online messages and meetings may be less spontaneous and can sometimes lead to delays or worse, misunderstandings.

Blurred boundaries: Without a clear separation between work and home, employees may work longer hours or find it difficult to switch off.

Home distractions: Family responsibilities, household noise and limited space can interfere with concentration and reduce productivity.

Health and safety concerns: An unsuitable desk, chair or screen setup may contribute to discomfort, while long periods without movement can affect wellbeing.

Unequal suitability: Not every occupation, household or employee has the equipment, internet connection or space needed to work effectively from home.

Reduced visibility and development: Remote employees may have fewer informal networking, mentoring and learning opportunities.

Making it work

If there is a common thread running through both lists, it is that most of the disadvantages are manageable and most of the advantages are conditional. Neither is automatic. Isolation is far less likely where teams meet regularly - and where those meetings have a purpose beyond attendance. Communication difficulties diminish where organisations are explicit about which matters warrant a conversation and which are handled adequately in writing. Blurred boundaries respond to clear expectations about availability, and to managers who model the behaviour they ask for rather than sending messages at ten o'clock at night.

Much the same applies to the physical arrangement. A suitable chair, a screen at the right height and a workspace that can be left at the end of the day are modest investments against the discomfort and fatigue that follow their absence. Employers retain work health and safety obligations regardless of where the work is performed - and the more considered organisations now approach the home workstation as they would any other, with a checklist, a conversation and, where necessary, a contribution to the cost.

The developmental question is the more difficult one. Mentoring, observation and the incidental learning that occurs alongside experienced colleagues are hard to schedule and easily lost. Early-career staff appear to carry most of this cost, often without recognising it at the time. Deliberate structures - assigned mentors, scheduled onsite days, project work that pairs junior and senior staff - go some way towards replacing what proximity once provided informally.

None of this is complicated, but it does require attention. The organisations that manage working from home well are rarely those with the most elaborate or generous policies; they are usually those that have thought carefully about which work genuinely benefits from being done together, in the same room and at the same time - and have then said so plainly.

Working from home can be highly effective when employees have suitable technology, an appropriate workspace, clear expectations - and regular contact with colleagues. However, it is not equally suitable for every person or role. For many organisations, a hybrid arrangement can combine the flexibility and focus of home-based work with the collaboration and social connection of the workplace.

Also worth reading –

Working from anywhere (WFA) and the digital nomad (DN) - [Working From Anywhere Formatted](#)

The implausible dream - [6113ad_f6e729eba5724f96a82be6265051f1ef.pdf](#)

On being a digital nomad - [6113ad_7a1d443b085541debced48ed7d3a254d.pdf](#)

The working from home (WFH) debate and proposed legislation - [6113ad_3112f62365ec466b8d770e91dfdf7192.pdf](#)

A greying digital nomad in the hybrid work world - [6113ad_e6a184173570416bba6754b2d7468722.pdf](#)

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