Prodoscore

The Remote Working Revolution

by Gordon Benzie

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About the Author

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Is Worker Productivity Declining?

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that future interest rate increases might be deferred based on steadily declining worker productivity over the past decade (see article here). This chart paints a dire picture of what has happened to US worker productivity over that period.

Couple of points to clarify...average worker productivity has improved by an average of about 2 percent from 1975 through 2016; the past decade is an atypical period of decline. Enormous gains were achieved from technology innovation launched during the late 1990s through the early 2000s; those periods of high increases are now leveling off.

So what is really happening with worker productivity? Should we be worried? The slowdown in recent quarters has likely been reinforced by weak business investment in new equipment, software and facilities. The global financial crisis clearly has impacted these investments, as we are not yet completely out of the global economic crisis that began back in 2007-2008.

Given these declines, companies now face new challenges when seeking to improve their worker's productivity.

It's Time for A New Approach

One of my favorite expressions is the definition of insanity: Doing the same thing and expecting different results. Managers pursuing the same productivity improvement strategy while expecting different results fall into this definition. Now is the time to rethink how productivity can be improved, which starts with examining how it can be measured. First, let's take a look at what has changed over the past decade, to then better understand what might be causing a steadily declining rate of worker productivity gains.

The Changing Work Environment

During the mid- to late-1990s, several new worker productivity tools were introduced or came of age, including the Internet and the Personal Computer or PC. While these tools came with a learning curve and the resulting need to invest in new education, the performance improvements that followed were significant. Better collaboration and communication between workers – especially those separated by widely distributed geographies – has been widely documented. Online distribution models were adopted resulting in significantly expanded distribution models and new levels of efficiency and sales productivity.

At the same time, the Internet has given workers considerable flexibility on where to work, including from home, on the beach, from a plane or just about any other location. A detailed discussion on this topic can be read here "Are Remote Workers Productive?"

Those working in the office are likely to work in a different environment too, when compared to 20 years ago. Many workplaces now feature open spaces and smaller, and often shared, workstations. The strategy behind this move was likely to promote collaboration, as well as to save some money on office rent. The reality is that many more distractions now exist, making it harder to stay focused.

Social media is another significant factor that has impacted today's working environment. Most employees are on at least one social network, which has created a virtual environment to stay current with personal (and work) activities. While some employers block access to Facebook or Twitter on their corporate networks, nothing can be done to stop access from a mobile phone. The same is true with how workers now access news. Today, it is possible to get a news update from anywhere, at any time – another distraction that can potentially hurt worker productivity.

A Wall Street Journal report suggests that future interest rate increases might be deferred, based on steadily declining worker productivity over the past decade. Several factors have changed how we work in the 2010s, part of which has been driven by technology advances now a dominant part of our lives, namely Personal Computers, the Internet, remote working, social media and smart phones. Let's take a close look at what social changes can be attributed to smart phone technology.

Do Smart Phones Make us More Productive?

Of all the technology advances I have seen over the past 30 years, I think the smart phone may be the one that will leave the most lasting impact on social pattern changes as well as how we work. No other device has blurred the lines between work and play that the iPhone revolution. The processing power in an iPhone 6 today dwarfs what was possible just 10 years from a hand held device. To start, more people are now accessing the Internet through their phones than PCs, as validated by Google's recent algorithm update to penalize website rankings if not mobile friendly.

More importantly, however, it the blurring of the lines the lines of work and play. As a business professional, when you go to lunch, is that your time or the company's? If you are frequently checking your phone for work emails, it could be considered you never really took a break. Alternatively, if you are texting with your significant other while on a work call, are you really 100% engaged? Some of us have had a text that is disturbing, such as "your child is hurt – come pick her up now." Trust me, you are no longer engaged with whatever work activity that was going on before that text!

What has resulted, however, is a "give and take" mental game we now all play. In our minds, we realize that jobs are not measured by what output was generated from 9-5. If we have a day where some personal activities must be tended to, we know that at other times we may work in the evening to get a proposal completed, or to be prepared for next week's meeting with a client. In the end, we are all juggling competing priorities, hoping to please everyone and not miss any critical deadlines – personal or work related.

Good Intentions Gone Awry

While we strive to achieve the perfect balance of work and play, the reality is there are other factors. For example, a sour encounter with a co-worker might just tip the scales to do more personal items during that day than others. And, over time, the pattern in your mind of what is the "right" balance might also get skewed towards more of a balance that favors personal over work – especially if you are not 100% engaged with your current work situation.

The concept of multi-tasking is another that is easy to "hide" behind, but the reality is that we really can't do two competing tasks at the same time – we think we are, but what occurs is the sequential completion of one task followed by another, with downtime often occurring to get "back on track" to what the first competing priority was. What this means is that we have set ourselves up to work like a computer algorithm, when in fact, we forget that we are still human.

Time for a New Approach

What is needed is a new way to help manage and quantify what time we are spending on tasks – whenever it is we are doing them, despite all the interruptions. We need help to identify what our "baseline" of work productivity really is, at which point we can start considering how to improve upon it.

Here is a situation where a solution such as Prodoscore can help. Operating in the background, tabulating the time we are spending doing various work tasks, gives you a score that is a quick and easy snapshot of what our productivity was for that hour, day or week. With real-time access to our productivity – much like what a Fitbit wrist device can do – it is much easier to gauge what balances we should apply to our work / play allocation today, to hopefully end up with a productive work week by Friday, to then start the juggling process all over again.

The Remote Worker Revolution is Here

There is a remote worker revolution occurring today – one that has been quietly growing over the past several years that not everyone is aware of. I am talking about the transformation occurring whereby an increasing number of work is being performed remotely. Being a remote worker is now gaining critical market momentum. Gone are the days when remote working was a "boondoggle" or an opportunity to have a day on the golf course vs. working in the office.

The truth is in the numbers. Take these, for example:

- 50% of the US workforce holds a job that is compatible with at least partial telework and approximately 20-25% of the workforce teleworks at some frequency

- 80% to 90% of the US workforce says they would like to telework at least part time. Two to three days a week seems to be the sweet spot that allows for a balance of concentrative work (at home) and collaborative work (at the office)

- Fortune 1000 companies around the globe are entirely revamping their space around the fact that employees are already mobile. Studies repeatedly show they are not at their desk 50-60% of the time

(source: GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics.com)

The second bullet is critical to understanding what is going on. As today's workforce has transformed over the past 15 years, work responsibilities have shifted. Some work requires collaboration, best done face-to-face. When doing this type of work, the best place to do business is in the office, at the customer location or onsite, at an event such as a trade show, industry gathering or user group meeting. The rest of the work we are responsible for can be done virtually anywhere.

How Did This Change Happen?

Technology has had a large part. So too has the increasingly global nature of our workforce. Early labor cost advantages opened new markets in India, Poland and China, just to name a few. The reliance upon these "outsourced" labor locations forced new ways to communicate. Business interactions now were forced to occur over conference calls, video chats and email.

Over time, this type of communication was improved upon – with one critical outcome. It soon became apparent that being in the same physical location was no longer necessary to conduct business.

Advanced smart phones, computers and internet access amplified what began in the 1980s with outsources to developing countries. Now the possibilities are virtually endless.

Meet the New Telecommuter

Per Globalworkplaceanalytics.com, the profile of an average telecommuter is a person who is college-educated, 49 years old, and earns an annual salary of $58,000 while working for a company with more than 100 employees. 75% of employees who work from home earn over $65,000 per year, putting them in the upper 80th percentile of all employees, home or office-based.

The number of people who now work at home, among the non-self-employed population, grew by 103% since 2005, based on research conducted by Globalworkplaceanalytics.com. In total, there are 3.7 million employees (2.8% of the workforce) that now work from home at least half the time.

The overall employee population grew by 1.9% from 2013 to 2014. During that same time, the employee population who telecommutes grew by 5.6% – a rate of increase nearly triple that of all employees. A revolution is now in full swing.

How Will This Impact Your Business?

If you already have a work-from-home policy or work at a company with one, then congratulations! Your employee work policies are current and up to date. For the rest of you, I suspect there may be some hurdles that have hindered a roll out of an official policy. Perhaps some of the figures in this article will help shed light on a way to proceed forward.

As you consider the impact of this revolution, here are a few more facts about what today's teleworker looks like. This profile should help to visualize what a remote worker is today (again, thanks to Globalworkplaceanalytics.com):

- Using home as a "reasonable accommodation" per the Americans with Disabilities Act, a total of 463,000 disabled employees now regularly work from home (7.1% of the disabled)

- Non-exempt employees are far less likely to work at home on a regular or ad hoc basis than salaried employees

- Larger companies are more likely to allow telecommuting than smaller ones

- The more global a company's business is, the more acceptable it is for remote working

- Non-union organizations are more likely to offer telecommuting versus those with unions.

A few companies have embraced this revolution to the point that it has directly impacted their business model. One reason are the potential cost savings from engaging with a remote workforce. Other benefits such as delivering better customer service and having happier employees also exist, which I'll explore in a future section.

Teleworking vs. Remote Working Trends

Many articles have been written on this blog about the concept of remote working, including what is driving its popularity, the challenges and how to best engage with a remote sales team to drive improved performance. This post will look at trends tied to teleworking or telecommuting – which is different than remote working – although many use the terms interchangeably. We'll define the terms here, and then explore how this trend is impacting work environments and employment packages while presenting unique challenges on how best to manage this type of workforce that can literally work at any time, in any place.

Defining Remote Working

First, let's define these terms, at least how I will use them in this article to avoid ambiguity. When I refer to "remote working" this is a more permanent situation. An employee that works remotely has a home office. And, more importantly, they don't come into the office.

Remote workers likely don't have an office or cubicle assigned to them, as it is expected they will either work from home, or work from the road while travelling. This is very typical with sales professionals, especially those working for companies that sell across regions or the world.

Under these types of scenarios, the company will likely pay for a computer, cell phone and supplies for that employee to use at home. This cost is an offset to the fact that the company won't be paying the costs traditionally part of the cost of hiring an employee to work in an office.

Remote Working vs. Teleworking

Teleworking is less permanent, in so far as a teleworker likely has a corporate office they also work from. For example, this might be an employee that works a day or two from home, to avoid driving into the office to save time and cost. Other benefits might be to arrange for services at one's home, to watch a sick child or elderly parent, or to perhaps work on an intense project that could benefit from a quieter work environment.

I fall into this bucket, working one day a week from home. I find that my productivity is at or better than when I go into the office. It also affords me a different perspective when

Benefits of Teleworking are numerous. According to the latest PGi Global Telework Survey published on April 24, 2017, the following advantages (at an aggregate level) of teleworking are possible:

- 35 billion fewer miles driven in the U.S.
- 73 percent of employees surveyed said they eat healthier when working from home
- 43 percent of remote workers produce more business volume than in-office counterparts

Not all teleworkers are created equal. Jobs with the highest telecommuting rate (half time or more) include computer and mathematical occupations (8.2 percent), military-specific occupations (7.2 percent) and arts, design, entertainment, sports and media occupations (5.9 percent) (source).

Global Workplace Analytics also calculated that 56 percent of all jobs are telework-compatible. If 85 percent of people in those jobs wished to telecommute at least some of the time, the collective savings would total over $750 billion a year nationally.

doing creative tasks such as writing or other marketing-related activities.

According to Global Workplace Analytics, about 2.9 percent of U.S. workers (3.9 million people) consider the home a primary place of work – the remote workforce – compared to 20 to 25 percent of U.S. workers that telecommute at least once each year (source).

Clearly, teleworking has gone mainstream.

Who Teleworks?

To start, teleworkers are more educated than non-telecommuters – 53 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher and 72 percent have some college or higher. Teleworkers tend to be older. A greater proportion of older employees telecommute relative to total population – 50.3 percent of people over age 45, compared to 41.3 percent of the total workforce (source).

Teleworking is not just happening in the U.S. It is alive and well across Europe and the Asia Pacific regions. One thing is consistent across regions. Most teleworkers work one day or less a week from home. Asia Pacific teleworkers are most committed, with 68 percent working one day or less a week; North America workers are next at 58 percent, followed by Europeans and 51 percent (source).

What is Better – Remote Working or Teleworking?

Of course, the answer to this question lies more in what is the desired objective, and from what perspective you have. We all read about IBM's recent announcement to stop all remote working, a proclamation that began with their marketing department and has spread to other departments. This announcement has been billed as the end of Remote Working. Employees must now work from a corporate office, reporting into the office each day. The question that has gone unanswered is if Teleworking will be allowed? I would suggest that the likely answer is "no," however, the blurring lines between what work is done at home and what is done in the office might reveal a different "truth" about what will result as the new norm at IBM.

One thing is for certain. Technology has enabled a new norm with regards to what work can be done where – it is unlikely this trend will just go away. Rather, it will likely continue to accelerate. The Wall Street Journal recently published an article titled "Why Remote Work Can't Be Stopped." In this article, the author explained that the proportion of Americans who only worked remotely rose to 20% in 2016 from 15% in 2012, according to a recent Gallup survey. This is a higher figure than reported in other surveys – I suspect that both teleworking and remote working were blurred in the results.

The article also mentioned that when Dell recently surveyed its 110,000 employees

about their work habits, it discovered something surprising: While only 17% of Dell's employees were formally authorized to work wherever they prefer, 58% were already working remotely at least one day a week. Fortunately, the company is fine with it, citing that this was a company policy to encourage this choice. This is either a good public relations commentary, or, Dell considers the benefits outweigh the costs.

Regardless, my conclusion is that the best option is what works for you and your company. A balanced approach is likely a good strategy. Only working from one's home might be good for some positions, where travel is so frequent, that it really doesn't matter where you are. As long as some of that travel involves going into the corporate office, this strategy should work just fine.

Alternatively, if you can strike a balance to telework one or two days a week, and can still find the time to stay connected with your co-workers, be present for all hands meetings and contribute to those collaborative projects, then that sounds like a win-win scenario to me.

Immediate Benefits to Remote Working

Articles

- What are the advantages of working from Home?

- Open Space or Remote - What's the Best Work Environment for You?

- How a Remote Working Maturity Curve Can Assess Competitive Risk

- 5 Reasons Why Now is the Right Time to Have a Remote Workforce Policy

How Productivity is Calculated

You can't improve what you don't measure.™ Measure sales performance and engage your team to maximize your sales output!

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The topic of remote working has recently become a hot subject. The recent IBM announcement to eliminate remote working has been talked about a lot. What underlies all the discussion is a remote working revolution now in full force. What led to this transformation? Should you consider this as an option for your team or work schedule? Let's start with gaining a deeper understanding to the question of "What are the advantages working from home?"

First, it is important to understand the differences between teleworking and remote working. A remote worker will typically not commute to an office. They work at home 100% of the time, between travelling to customer locations, team meetings or other travel requirements. This type of worker might be in a sales, marketing or customer service type of field where the job they are trying to do is very closely related to how productive they are at their craft.

The answer to the question "What are the advantages working from home?" really depends upon what your role is within the organization. Different benefits apply to different positions. I have summarized a few of the more common "personas" to provides insights into this question.

Advantages of Working from Home:
For A Remote Working Sales Professional

For this type of person, the first and foremost benefit is improved sales success, higher quota attainment or greater efficiency. To a professional that is very closely measured and compensated on getting sales closed, the window of what motivates behavior and decisions is typically closely tied to their bottom line.

How can remote working help improve sales performance? To start, a benefit could be more focused time to work on building and managing their sales pipeline. This type of remote worker might not be as engaged in office politics, lunch meetings or the conversations that occur around the proverbial water cooler. Being highly motivated to close deals, this type of worker may appreciate avoiding ad-hoc meetings on ancillary topics or projects that would take away time from closing deals.

Lastly, another benefit might be that it is easier to justify jumping on a plane to visit a customer or prospect, as part of closing the deal. As a remote worker, they are not commuting into the office every day, potentially spending an hour or so each way in a commute. Remote management tools now exist such that sales managers can easily understand what activities are being performed by their remote teams – given the potential options that now exist. This freedom of choice could lead to the potential for future process improvement – taking a best practice and sharing with the rest of the team. Or, to identify an employee that is perhaps not putting as much effort into their sales efforts as necessary. Regardless, with the visibility now possible, the choice of where to physically sit to do work is now effectively much greater, helping to unlock new options for sales team staffing.

Advantages of Working from Home: For A Creative Marketing or Advertising Professional

This type of worker might not be the best fit to work remotely 100% of the time, at least as a remote worker. Instead, teleworking one or two days a week might be the right balance, offering benefits that help achieve greater productivity or creativity as well as unlocking more time in the day for these exercises. For example, for those tasked with creating new ad copy, marketing campaigns or content, anything that can be done to break up a normal routine can do wonders to drive new creativity.

A person who teleworks can effectively disrupt the typical "Monday through Friday" routine by working different days in a different location. They can explore different places to work beyond their home office, to further amplify the potential for new creative ideas. A walk to a local coffee shop to write a new blog post is a great example.

Time is another variable that is easier to shift when working remotely. For example, it maybe that at 11pm in the evening is when a marketer is most creative, potentially coming up with new ideas for a new project. As a remote worker, this type of person might be able to capture more of these potential "inspirational moments" when not locked down to a steady schedule and the thought that work takes place only in the office.

Advantages of Working from Home:
For Working Parents

We all know raising a family is a difficult, time consuming and expensive. Of course, the rewards and fulfillment can be extraordinary – but no one will argue it can be a lot of work! For this type of worker, the option to work either remotely or as a teleworker could mean the difference between having a job or not. Those working to just make ends meet are highly focused on what can be done to avoid expenses.

What are the advantages working from home, as a working parent? Child care, transportation costs (gas, train tickets, bus passes, etc.) can all theoretically be cut out with a remote working position. Or, at least reduced when tele-working a day or two a week. Even little things like eating out for lunches can be a cost that is cut. Lastly, it becomes more cost effective to work part-time if you are a working parent. In this type of scenario, it might not make sense to hire daycare for a part time job (as you might need to commit to weekly schedules), instead of working a few hours at a time, based on when is good for your schedule – even in the evenings.

Advantages of Working from Home:
For Employers

Not each of the advantages working from home are captured by the workforce. There are several benefits employers stand to gain. For example, by considering a position that is occupied by a remote worker, the pool of potential candidates expands significantly – certainly to within a time zone or two from where your office is.

Take a company that operates in the metropolitan region of Dallas / Fort Worth in Texas, approximately in the center of the US. This company could consider candidates from either coast and in between – across the entire US – as potential job candidates, with no more than a 2-hour time zone difference. Some knowledge workers could even be considered on a global scale. This scenario creates considerably more options, especially when filling a difficult to staff position. This strategy could make it possible to hire employees with better skills, or perhaps a candidate with skills that simply doesn't currently exist at the time you are hiring, when restricted to a search of candidates located within an hour or so drive from your office.

Advantages of Working from Home: For Global Economy Workers

In the words of Thomas L. Friedman, the world is indeed flat. What he meant is that the competitive playing field between industrial and emerging market countries is leveling. Individual entrepreneurs as well as companies, both large and small, are becoming part of a large, complex, global supply chain extending across oceans, with competition spanning entire continents. This transformation has been occurring for the past couple of decades.

As an employee of a global organization, one thing that quickly become apparent is that at any time of the day or night, someone is working, a customer might need help or an action may need to be done. This demand on global economy workers really would have

been quite painful in the 1990s, given the level of technology sophistication was quite rudimentary. Voice calls overseas were expensive; Internet access was in its early, nascent stages. And, if your communication was targeting a developing nation, coverage was spotty at best.

Today, amazing breakthroughs in VoIP communications and email such that it is now possible to communicate from anywhere in the world, and do so with decent sound quality and network throughput. In this case, the advantage of teleworking or remote working is the fact that you don't have to go into the office to take an evening call to the other side of the world. Or, conversely, an early morning call can now be accomplished from a home office, creating a huge advantage best described as leading to a better quality of life.

Those in relationships can attest that we all need to strike work-life balances. Doing so is the difference between making relationships work, keeping family ties as well as leading a fulfilling life. With regards to what are the advantages working from home for a global economy worker, it can literally be the difference between success and failure of achieving life balance. This benefit could far outstrip any of the other advantages discussed in this article.

Open Space or Remote - What's the Best Work Environment for You?

Those of us who work in an office have seen a lot of change over the past fifteen years. As I recall, Google was an early disruptor on what the inside an office could look like. HUH Magazine wrote a story when Google opened an office in Ireland, and included a few pictures, including the one above. The question I have is if this is the best work environment? Did their investment payoff?

As I understand, these types of work spaces were created to help foster innovation, collaboration and teamwork. Google has become famous for creating such environments to help come up with new ideas for new business models. The concept behind this strategy is to create large, open work environments where employees can readily collaborate and work together to solve problems. Below is a picture of Samsung's recently opened office in the Silicon Valley, as shared on their website.
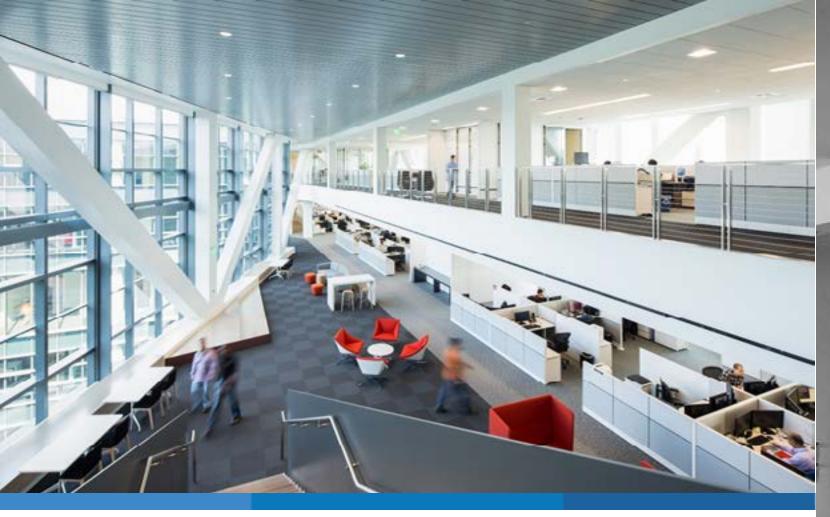
Facebook will soon put several thousand of its employees into a single mile-long room. Wow. I hope they include bicycles to get around!

Is Open Space the Best Work Environment, and the Future for all Offices?

According to the Harvard Business Review, emerging evidence suggests that chance encounters and interactions between knowledge workers actually does increase engagement and interactions (source). But, there is also a cost: distractions. According to research referenced in an article in the Wall Street Journal, the activity or movement around the edges of an employee's field of vision can erode concentration and disrupt analytical thinking or creativity. What is going on here?

The article referenced Sabine Kastner, a professor of neuroscience and psychology at Princeton University. She has been studying how the brain pays attention for 20 years [seems like a long time ... maybe she got distracted?]. Her conclusion is that unpredictable movements around the edges of a person's field of vision compete for cognitive resources. Seems logical.

Here is the challenge – people differ in their ability to filter out visual stimuli. For some,

Perhaps the best strategy is to create hybrid environments or schedules? Office workers could rotate through various types of work environments based on what needs to get done that week. Remote working is a great place to work on projects that require high concentration and minimal distractions. Open space offices could be leveraged when collaborative activities need to be done.

What do you think? I suspect there isn't just one answer. Regardless, what we consider the "new" normal today will soon be "old school" tomorrow, as the cycle will likely continue in search of the perfect work environment.

a loud or cluttered office can make it nearly impossible to concentrate. Similarly, in an experiment with Chinese factory workers, published in 2012 by Ethan Bernstein, an assistant professor of leadership and organizational behavior at Harvard Business School, validated that teams were 10-15% more productive when they worked behind a curtain, which shielded them from supervisors' view.

What is the Best Way Forward?

Organizations now recognize that a large, wide open format may not be best work environment for all workers. As a result, companies are making changes. Some are easy to accommodate, such as adding large plants and private workspaces to shield employees from passersby. Boston Consulting Group installed 500 oversized, curved computer monitors at employees' desks to help shield the line of site view seen by office workers.

One size seldom fits all. The same can be said of office environments. Some people work great in a highly collaborative environment – others are challenged. Interestingly, the growth of remote working could in part be attributed to a backlash against the open workspace strategy. Remote workers don't have to worry about unpredictable movements around the edges of their field of vision – but these workers might not get the same advantages of working in a high collaboration environment.

How a Remote Working Maturity Curve can Assess Competitive Risk

Based on its major impact on jobs and the economy, I propose the remote working revolution should be classified as a megatrend. Given its significance, it is wise to take an "outside in" perspective to assess where your organization is vis-à-vis the competition, to then do a risk assessment to avoid surprises. A great way to accomplish this is to define a Remote Working Maturity Curve, which then can be used to measure where you stand, and what needs to be done to make progress.

What is a Megatrend?

According to Frost & Sullivan, Megatrends are global, sustained and macro-economic forces of development that impact business, economy, society, cultures and personal lives to such a level that they define our future world and its increasing pace of change. Remote working satisfies these defining attributes. It is a global trend, is now impacting how staffing is done and managed at many businesses today, and is now part of our culture and values, at least with regards to how we define "work."

Mike Elgan, a contributing columnist at Computerworld recently wrote an article challenging his readers that the term "remote working" may soon fade away from our vocabulary. In his words, when everyone is already working remote for at least some of the time, the whole concept of a remote worker no longer really applies. It is just "working."

His article suggests that a significant change in the demographics of our workforce has been one of the factors that is driving this change ... and it is tied to that "M" letter word. The Millennials are now a dominant part of our workforce. Just like the baby boomers of the past, and how they defined so much of our popular culture, traditions and attitudes over the past few decades, the Millennials are expected to take over and place their signature on our world – which will be a global trend.

Millennials are Driving Remote Working

When you can reply to email at any time of the day or night – you no longer must be in the office to perform work. With this blurring of lines, we are all working remotely, whether we want to admit it or not!

Further, with the rise of social media, the communications occurring in any given physical space or room is not necessarily with those who are also in that space. You could be posting comments on Facebook that will be read by relatives living halfway around the world – while sitting next to your best friend visiting from out of town. This further reinforces the cultural shift behind remote working. Communications no longer require sharing an immediate vicinity.

Taking these trends to the next level, Millennials are now starting to ask themselves why they need to be in a specific city for a job, especially when those cities come with such a high cost of living.

With increasing competition for the right job candidate, highly sought-after employees are feeling empowered to be bolder with their job requirements. Some are now saying: "Give me a better work environment that includes remote working, or I'll find an employer who will."

This transformation is occurring now. Those employers not paying attention to this change are due for a rude awakening. Others are being proactive and using this as an opportunity to lure new employees and position their firm as one where Millennials wants to work.

Mike's article included some pretty amazing statistics. "A whopping three-quarters of those surveyed (74%) said they would quit their job to work for an organization that allows them to work remotely more often. And 85% said they expect their employers to provide them with the technology that allows them to work from anywhere."

If this isn't a wake-up call to consider remote working options, I am not sure what is!

Remote Working Maturity Curve – a Tool to Plan for Change

A maturity curve can be a helpful assessment tool to evaluate options, perform competitive comparisons and identify next steps. To avoid falling behind what is quickly becoming one of the most significant changes of how work gets done in the 21st century, it might be helpful to have a framework to assess your risk of obsolescence and viability as an employer of choice.

Forrester Research wrote a recent report on the digital transformation that is occurring in our world today. As part of that research, they identified a digital maturity model that can serve as a framework for building our Remote Working Maturity Curve.
For the purposes of this discussion, we will focus on Remote Working, and not consider Teleworking. See this article that defines these terms, and how they differ.

Several factors must be considered when evaluating the viability of Remote Working at an organization. These include those that cover the organization's culture, the technology available and how remote working might impact workflows and the resulting "output" generated by the company. Some examples of questions that must be asked within these categories include:

- Must face-to-face interactions be accommodated?
- Do data security circumstances exist such that information must be locked down locally?
- Do worker safety factors exist during travel to and from work?
- Do regulatory constraints limit remote working?
- Is a sufficient technology architecture in place to support such a migration?
- Do digital communication tools exist, and are they well adopted and standardized?
- Are managers empowered to accurately assess worker productivity and job assessment?
- Will the culture of the organization support a shift to remote working?
- Is management in alignment with this strategy? Is there an executive sponsor?
- What might be the resulting impact on customers?
- What regulatory compliance issues exist, and how might they vary by country?

Maturity	Description	Strategy to Grow
Disruptor	Challenges business models, customer and partner engagement to redefine business	Engage in multi-function workshops to explore new potential for value generation w/ management
Innovators	Available to all positions, in every location; actively seek how to improve	Identify best practices, and then share across departments
Early Adopters	Applied to select, specific positions, at some locations	Explore what attributes led to best success and expand upon them
Skeptics	Don't see need for remote working	Experiment in limited roles, locations, etc.

Once these questions have been addressed, it is then possible to place your organization somewhere on the below table, as a starting point to evaluate where you are at in your ability to embrace remote working. The resulting maturity descriptions reflect a relative maturity benchmark with which it is possible to assess your remote working adoption rate versus the industry.

Will the Term "Remote Working" Soon Be Obsolete?

In the words of Heraclitus, an early Greek philosopher, "Change is the only constant in life" (source).

One only needs to look at another transformation in the business world to see a similar change to that of remote working. The term "secretary," which until about 15 years ago was a critical part of an office staff, has since been eliminated. Today "virtual" assistants perform the task of reminding us when we have meetings, sending confirmation of attendance to calls, and responding back to voice mails. Interestingly, the term "secretary" is now considered by some as derogatory or sexist.

Just how the "Secretary" term has been retired, I predict the term "remote working" will soon go by the wayside, as seen as a redundant term not worthy of inclusion in conversation. In an increasingly service-based economy, work will be considered done when the client is satisfied. The success of that completion will have nothing to do with the physical location of where that work was completed.

Until that time comes, I'll keep working remotely as often as possible.

5 Reasons Why Now is the Right Time to Have a Remote Workforce Policy

Now is an exciting time to be in the workforce – new technology breakthroughs seem constant, new business models appear every year and the potential to make a change in our world has never been more possible. But, with all the opportunities to make a difference and embrace these changes, there is an equal chance of letting fear of change or concern of the unknown let you completely miss out.

Take the PC as one example. Perhaps you know someone (likely an older person) who is not comfortable working on a computer. They might have one, and are likely on email by now ... but not by choice. Not being able to take advantage of all the information on the world-wide web today would seriously diminish what shopping, communications and decorating ideas (just to name a few) you might never have even considered.

The same can be said of a remote workforce. If you still believe the best worker is one who is sitting in front of you in an office, then you might be that person who felt computers were a waste of time back in the 1990s.

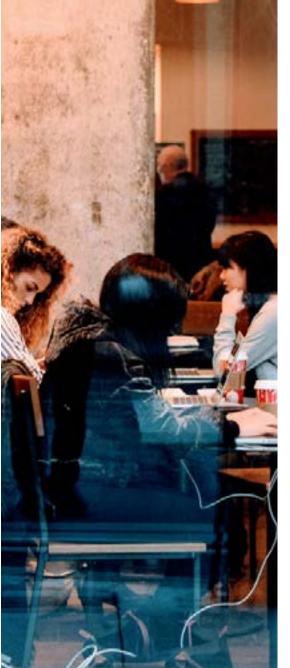Based on recent research, of those who work from home:

- 91% feel they get more work done when working remotely
- The happiest home workers work 7 days a week (with shorter hours)
- 92% are happy in how they receive feedback

Given the difficulty to learn a new skill and catch up a decade's worth of learning and education overnight, perhaps now might the right time to consider starting a remote workforce policy? Of course, this type of program may not be applicable for all workers, but knowledge workers and sales personnel engaged in complex sales can likely do their job just as easily inside or outside of the office.

To that end, here are five factors to consider that might change your perception of remote working – to be the catalyst to start your new pilot program.

1) Time spent working from home is no less productive than in the office. In the category of distractions, they exist everywhere. From the office conversations that occur at the coffee machine to searching online to buy something. As a parent, these distractions can be never ending, and include homework follow up, after school activities and other issues that need to be solved. These interruptions can occur anywhere – at home or at work – so why not gain the advantages of a work-from-home sales force if the level of distractions is a constant?

2) In the office, the smart phone may be the biggest distractor. Based on a survey conducted by CareerBuilder, employers cited that the biggest productivity killers in the workplace were cell phones/texting, the Internet and the workplace. On the road, however, a smart phone becomes a productivity tool. It connects you to customers, co-workers and your boss. It reminds you of pending appointments, tells you when to leave by to arrive on time and is an excellent administrative assistant. The same tool, but two completely different perspectives. Turn a negative into a positive by encouraging work from the road.

3) Remote workers are happier, so are more pleasant when engaging in work activities, sales calls and customer inquiries (Source: TINYpulse https://goo.gl/2ZCMZI). Given the personal nature of sales in the developed world's service economies, the relationships that are built right are the ones that deliver better sales results. No one wants to be sold, but everyone wants to have problems solved with a trusted advisor. Having the right state of mind is a critical step to achieve service differentiation. If the competition has a happier remote sales team, what do you do differently to compete?

4) Expand the pool of available job candidates by removing geographic constraints from the search. Do you work in an industry where it is difficult to find and retain your best workers? Select cities have incredible competi-

tion to hire staff. Bidding wars have been known to break out in locations such as the Silicon Valley, when a never-ending demand for engineers and sales engineers has made it nearly impossible to attract and retain top candidates without paying dearly in salaries, bonuses and other job perks. A remote workforce can be sourced from a far larger region, opening new options to locate your next ideal employee.

5) Productivity management tools now exist.
Just because remote workers are out of the office doesn't mean their work can't be tracked, managed or documented. Given the reliance upon smart phones, email and other digital tools, activity spend during these activities can be readily collected, analyzed and compared to easily reveal which workers on your team are the most productive, and those that could use with some coaching.

Changing times call for changing strategies. The challenge is that sometimes these changes are not always understood until after the transformation. Companies are expected to stay competitive and maintain or expand market share. But, this isn't possible by resting on your laurels. New techniques must continually be evaluated and tested. This strategy applies to technologies, IT systems, management styles and remote work policies.

If you don't yet have a remote worker policy, perhaps now is the time to consider. For those that do have a policy, have the results been quantified? Do you need better visibility, or do you know enough to consider your program a success? We all can benefit with continued education. The classroom may be right outside your office, or, perhaps across the cyber-reaches of today's remote sales teams.

Advice for Managing Your Remote Workforce

Articles

- How Do You Manage a Remote Team?

- 5 Tips to Best Manage a Remote Team

- 3 Tips to Keep a Remote Workforce Engaged

- 3 Remote Working Challenges - And How to Overcome Them

How Productivity is Calculated

You can't improve what you don't measure.™ Measure sales performance and engage your team to maximize your sales output!

Prodoscore™ calculates your employee productivity score based on our secret sauce and time spent in G Suite applications like email, calendar, docs and hangouts and other tools such as your CRM.

A single metric acts as your team's Northstar for improvement.

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How Do You Manage a Remote Team?

As a manager in today's workforce, it's likely you will remotely manage at least one member of your team. Remote managing takes a different skill set than simply being a good leader. An entire training industry has emerged that offers courses on how to best relate to diverse cultural and geographically disbursed teams. But we wanted to go ahead cover important highlights of what it takes to manage a remote team.

There are three key factors to consider when you manage a remote team. Master these factors, and you will be on a path to being a great manager of remote workers.

1. Need the Right Team

It doesn't matter how great a manager you are – there will be no way you can create and manage an all-star team if you don't have the right people in place. A good manager understands the strengths that each team member brings to the table, and then encourages and coaches that attribute to be the best it can be. Of course, easier said than done.

The first step is to observe what skills and knowledge everyone has on your team. People will tend to fall into roles such as "the organizer," "the creative force" or "the doubter." Each role has a place, which when combined can create a high-performance team.

When managing a remote team, the same factors are in play. The difference is that you are not always in the same room so you miss the naturally occurring "hallway" conversations – a great way to stay caught up and to coach problem solving or providing support. If members on your team work remotely, you will need to be more proactive on how these conversations happen.

Trust is a key component in building any team – remote teams are no different. In the words of Richard Branson, as stated in this interview, "Companies should trust people to work at home more. Commuting kills so much time and energy that could be spent creating."

Effective teams are led by managers that trust each person on the team is doing the best they can to achieve a common goal. A feeling that all belong is critical – it won't matter as much were someone works versus what they are doing. To that end, when you manage a remote team it is critical to be able to communicate quickly to address issues or challenges as they arise. Challenges need to be shared, as do successes, regardless of where members of your team are located. This brings me to the next factor.

2. Need the right tools

To achieve near real-time collaboration when working on a group project, you need a common technology standard for communications. Fortunately, there are many to choose from today. In fact, the biggest challenge is standardizing on one platform. For startups, this can be a challenge since funds may not be as readily available. Employees might need to use what they already have. Several free (or very low-cost options) work great.

Large organizations have different challenges. For example, larger companies often grow by acquisition. This means every time a new company joins the mix, they bring with them a potentially different set of email applications, phone systems and telephone numbering hierarchies. This is a bigger challenge than overcoming budget restrictions since bureaucracies can make it very difficult to implement change and standardize communications. Sometimes a short-term solution is needed until a long-term standard can be established and rolled out.

For communications, a conference calling service, ideally with video capability, is a "must have" when managing a remote team today. The benefits of easily setting up a group call to discuss an urgent matter must be easy to do and quick to set up on the fly. Voice Over IP telephone systems are cost effective, and are loaded with features that include chatting / instant messaging and the sharing of documents for group discussion.

For coaching, in the absence of walking down the hall to see how one of your staff is doing on any day, it can be very difficult to see the "telltale" signs of when an employee has mentally checked out, or, if they are struggling with overcome a specific challenge. For those employees that might now be frustrated, and at risk of leaving, you need a way to be made aware of this potential before it is too late. If this person could be coached on how to improve their performance or on how to overcome a challenge they previously felt was unattainable, they might get reengaged with your team.

Once again, there are applications available that can help provide this type of visibly when your team works remotely. Applications such as Prodoscore provide excellent visibility on how employees spend their time, what types of communications occur, and what timeframe they are doing them. This information can be valuable to gain insights and be a more proactive manager.

3. Need the right set of processes

The final factor is all about the process. Once you are sure you have the right members contributing to your team, and you have the right tools to collaborate, communicate and coach improvement, the next step is to ensure everyone is working with best-practice processes that are efficient, provide necessary checks and balances, and can contribute to a high-performance team.

When working remotely, employees need to know how to handle the processes that are part of their positions. What role must legal be involved with closing sales contracts? How are customer service requests processed? Who is the person to approve travel requests? These are just some of the basic processes that must be clearly identified and explained.

The last thing a remote manager wants is for their remote workers to spend hours trying to figure out who is the person to approve what, or how to do administrative process. Those working in an office might simply go down the hall to ask an administrative assistant or other "go-to" person a quick answer to these types of questions, but remote workers don't have this luxury.

Processes evolve over time. However, it is easy to forget about the team in the field and not communicate changes, or take time to train and coach. Sometimes there are the "untold" rules necessary to get business done – these are not often documented, but are just as important to ensure a smooth set of standard processes on how you run a team.

In conclusion, great managers will do well – regardless of their team. These professionals know how to bring out the best in their team, encourage collaboration and create a group of workers that are greater than the sum of their parts. Remote workers are not always visibly present, so extra effort must be applied to keep them in the loop, get them in the corporate offices (monthly / quarterly meetings) and establish opportunities for teamwork and team building so they too can be a viable, contributing member of your team.

5 Tips to Best Manage a Remote Sales Team

Research validates remote sales workers are productive, as explained in this article: "Are Remote Workers Productive?" Of those surveyed, 77 percent reported greater productivity while working offsite; 30 percent said they accomplished more in less time and 24 percent said they accomplished more in the same amount of time. These are all very encouraging productivity metrics for remote workers.

Per Gallup, 37% of U.S. workers say they have telecommuted, a big increase from the 9% who said the same back in 1995. This is a significant transformation in how people work.

So, remote working is productive and is steadily increasing. Interestingly, overall worker productivity gains have declined over the past decade (see "Is Worker Productivity Declining?). Despite seemingly contradictory findings, a transformation is underway on how workers earn a living. Those seeking to reverse the decline might now be more open to considering a team of remote workers, to do sales, operations or any other functional discipline. One thing is for certain – remote working looks like it is here to stay.

Silver Lining
There is good news here for sales managers that understand how to best manage a remote sales team. Their workers can not only be highly productive, but can also feel happier and more valued – provided they are managed effectively. These findings are based on recent survey results from TINYpulse (see research report here). Happy workers treat customers with greater respect, are less likely to find a new job and are just better to have on your team.

I thought it might be helpful to share a few tips I discovered as part of writing this article, as well as based on personal experiences. Learn to master these productivity strategies, and you have the potential to lead an all-star team!

Five Ways to Improve Productivity of Remote Sales Teams

1. Recognize Remote Sales People are Productive
Treat your team as a highly productive asset, acknowledging that the myth of remote working being a "boondoggle" isn't necessarily true. Don't question decisions or activities with suspicion just because they're not in your physical sight. Ironically, per the research, the more freedom you provide, the better they will perform.

2. Promote Flexibility
In the "counter-intuitive" world or remote sales team management, try to accommodate as many requests as you can, regardless how non-traditional they may appear. The theme with remote working is freedom to work where, when and how an employee wants. This flexibility can be powerful to enhance creativity, pursue prospect opportunities or address customer requests. Shy away from standard 8-5 hours, or even a Monday to Friday schedule.

3. Spend Time Connecting
You won't spend as much face-time with a remote worker as an office co-worker. Don't try to. But, do try to check in through Instant Messaging, email, texting or occasional calls. These don't need to just be work oriented. One of the shortfalls of remote working is missing out on the "water-cooler" discussions. If something is being talked about in the office, such as a new customer win or promotion, don't forget about keeping your remote team in the loop. It really comes down to respect – give your team the same respect as those working in the office. Quality communication trumps quantity.

4. Invest in Management Tools

Despite the need to provide remote sales team the benefit of the doubt on what they are doing and how productive they are, it is still necessary to have the right tools to do your job. These tools include Instant Messaging, ideally with "awareness" capabilities. Lync shows you as "green" when available at your computer, meaning it is an acceptable time for a quick chat. This is akin to having the door open in an office – it invites communication, and can really help when quick questions need answering. Time tracking remote worker applications such as Prodoscore can really help, which offer reporting metrics and can be a source of coaching process improvement.

5. Over Communicate with Your Leadership Team

As a manager, you work closest with your remote sales team. You understand when personal issues or market challenges come up, and likely work very closely with your team. But, your superiors don't have that luxury. If sales dip or questions arise, you will likely need to over-explain why your team is doing well, or, if there is a problem, that you have visibility into sales team performance. The burden is on you as the manager to provide reporting to your superiors that your team is productive and is getting the job done. Without the extra visibility, you will be at a disadvantage that others managing "on premise" sales teams.

In conclusion, the decision to manage a remote sales team means the potential for above average performance, and very happy workers. With overall worker productivity gains declining, doing the same thing will result in less productivity tomorrow. Just remember that the remote work experience is dynamic. Do your best to approach challenges with an open mind, and be willing to try new processes that can help provide greater freedom for your workers. Invest in tools for remote visibility, such as Prodoscore, to help address any concerns of substandard performance or effort. Your reward and payback can be substantial.
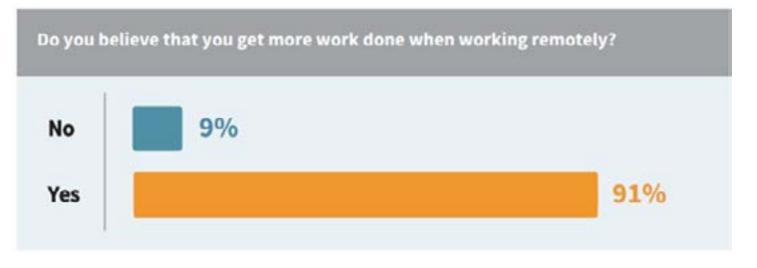
3 Tips to Keep a Remote Workforce Engaged

Did you know that 37% of U.S. workers consider themselves teleworkers? This is a 300% increase from 1995, according to a survey conducted by Gallup. Like it or not, today's managers must now deal with keeping remote workers engaged and productive.

Fortunately, this task is much easier today that it was back in 1995. First, the boom of mobile telephone capabilities has made the smart phone into a virtual assistant. Remote workers can't help but stay connected and be reminded of what calls or meetings they need to attend. Instant Messaging applications have come a long way since the 1990s too – and are now part of most enterprise IT department standard "builds" for laptops.

Given this workforce transformation now well underway, I thought it would be helpful to provide a few tips for those managers still nervous about how to manage requests by their team to work remotely, which hopefully will help calm any anxiety that might exist.

1. Recognize that the option to work from home is seen as a positive job benefit, so will therefore generate a positive reaction and appreciation.
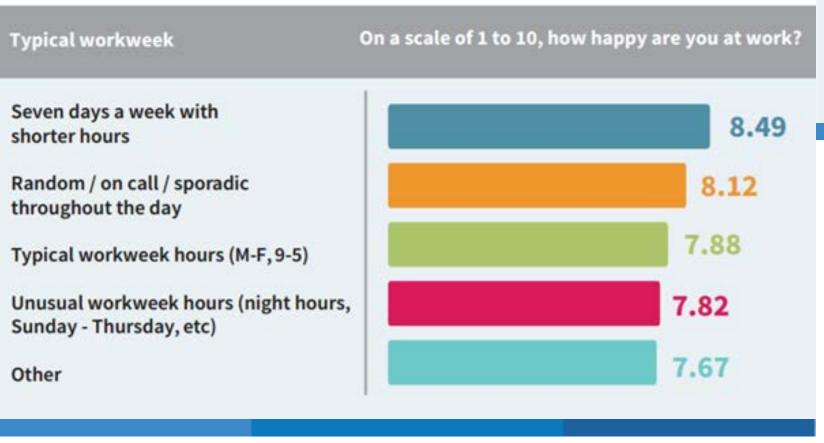
Employees who can work from home see this as a job perk. To start, remote workers feel they are more productive, based on a survey conducted by TINYpulse (source). See the chart below … a whopping 91 percent feel more productive when working remotely. Chances are, if this group feels more productive when working remote, then they will likely have a better attitude while doing their work and be more effective, which is good news for your team's overall performance.

Source: TINYpulse https://goo.gl/2ZCMZI

2. Flexibility of schedule is seen as one of the best benefits for remote working, but that doesn't mean working less – the happiest workers work seven days a week.

Flexibility is something highly valued by today's work from home professional. The reasons are numerous, including those who are parents with young children, or with aging parents needing medical or other assistance. The ability to schedule work in between personal or family commitments is deemed to have high value. In exchange for this flexibility, your staff will return the favor by working more days – and are the happiest when they can work every day!
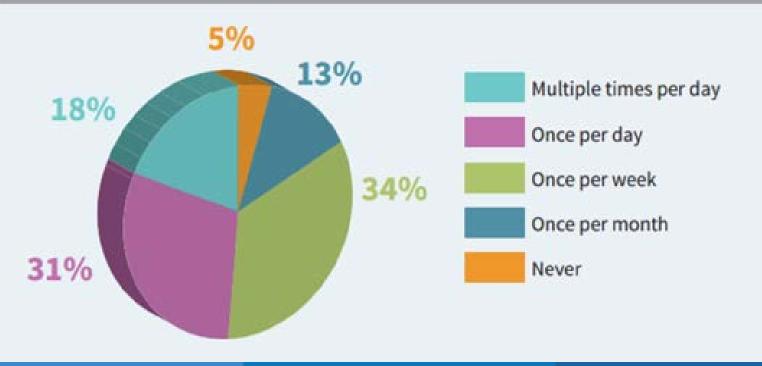

Typical workweek — On a scale of 1 to 10, how happy are you at work?

Typical workweek	
Seven days a week with shorter hours	8.49
Random / on call / sporadic throughout the day	8.12
Typical workweek hours (M-F, 9-5)	7.88
Unusual workweek hours (night hours, Sunday - Thursday, etc)	7.82
Other	7.67

Source: TINYpulse https://goo.gl/2ZCMZI

3. Be sure to communicate or provide feedback either once a day or once a week, to remain engaged and to provide guidance for improvement.

Digital communications can be effective to stay current and collaborate to solve problems, but some sort of conversation is still helpful to stay engaged with a remote workforce. Based on survey results, two thirds of the surveyed remote workers prefer to be contacted either daily or weekly, a goal that can be seen as mutually beneficial to achieve.

How often would you like to have contact with your direct supervisor?

- 5%
- 13%
- 18%
- 34%
- 31%

- Multiple times per day
- Once per day
- Once per week
- Once per month
- Never

Source: TINYpulse https://goo.gl/2ZCMZI

For those who are able, offering the potential to work remote will be seen as a job perk. Those offering the ability to work remote stand to benefit from a more engaged and productive workforce. This workforce will recognize and appreciate the benefits of this work option, and will return the favor through willingness to work any day. Through daily or weekly coaching, it is possible to achieve greater effectiveness and productivity, helping to provide you with a high performance team.

3 Remote Working Challenges -
And How to Overcome Them

Many articles have been written about the benefits of remote working, as well as the transformation remote working has had on the work force, unemployment rates and job satisfaction. Nothing is perfect, though. So, what about the downside and what can be done to overcome remote working challenges?

Here are three common issues, with suggestions on how to best overcome them.

1. Working too Much

This may not appear to be a downside from an employer's or supervisor's perspective, but job burnout is a lose-lose scenario. Burnout arises in large part because the lines blur when working from home. Are you on "personal" time or "work" time? It is easy to err on the side of working too much, which can lead to an out-of-balance lifestyle, too much stress and a loss of productivity.

One way to overcome this challenge is to set appointments for non-work activities on your calendar, just like you would do with a client appointment. This helps to ensure you spend time on "non-work" activities, and don't work all day and all night. Perhaps you like going to the gym, in which case, set up a recurring appointment on your calendar to make sure you go. As a bonus, you can take advantage of going in the morning when the gym isn't as busy. Then, if you work later that evening, it all balances out.

Another factor to consider is that you are productive for only 90 to 120 minutes at a time, after which time you effectiveness drops off. This has been scientifically proven, leading to the emergence of "burst" work schedules. Take a 15-minute break after working for a couple of hours. Take a walk; grab a coffee or catch up on the news. These

mental breaks are important to help you re-group, and can often lead to creative ideas on how to best address a challenge you are working on. And, if you were in the office, you would take these anyway; treat your home office in the same way. Then, when you go back to your work, you will be more focused, productive and effective.

2. Avoid the Trap of "Where did the Day Go?" Syndrome

We have all had these types of days. It seems like we were busy all day, but in the end, we really didn't seem to get anything done. And, when working remotely, there are greater expectations on documenting or "proving" you have been working all day – even if it isn't said. This is really a time management issue – a challenge that can certainly impact you whether you are a remote worker, or if you work in the office. The key is to realize that the big tasks need to be tackled first (even if they are the unpleasant ones). The best way to get them started is to hit them early in the day, setting the stage for a successful day. Identify 2-3 things that you want to get done today, and set aside the time to make it happen. Then you are halfway there to having a successful day.

Here is a video that captures this point very well, so worth watching: VIDEO LINK HERE

3. Minimizing Unplanned Disruptions

We all get interrupted during the work day – supervisors more than others. This is just part of the job. We need to expect that some of the day will be spent on unplanned calls, unexpected visitors and "must do tasks" that suddenly drop on your desk. Speaking of unexpected visitors, those with young children in the house can appreciate the delicate balance of wanting to have a close relationship with your kids, but at the same time, having a way to

ensure you have your "place" to work as needed. Just as you wouldn't bring your children into the office every day, the same can be said of the home office. The same applies to other distractions such as pets, house guests or roommates.

Those of us who have kids and work from home can empathize with this viral video of a live interview broadcast on the BBC gone wrong: VIDEO LINK HERE

To Professor Robert Kelly's credit, he had a system in place that involved locking the door to his study to avoid unplanned interruptions. The problem was that on this day the lock didn't quite get set right, resulting in his children joining him for his interview on a live, televised broadcast.

The way to avoid this type of situation occurring is to have clear boundaries on when it is ok for your kids to visit with you, or other interruptions to occur. If you are a parent working from home, you will likely need to hire daycare services or a nanny for at least part of your day.

Millenials and Remote Working

Articles

- Remote Working: Perk to Attract (And Retain) Top Workers

- Attract and Retain Millennials in Your Remote Workforce

- Establish a Flexible Work Schedule to Address Millenial Needs

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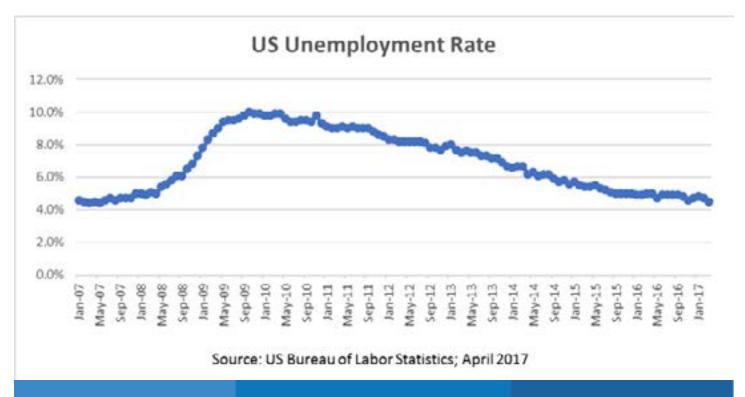
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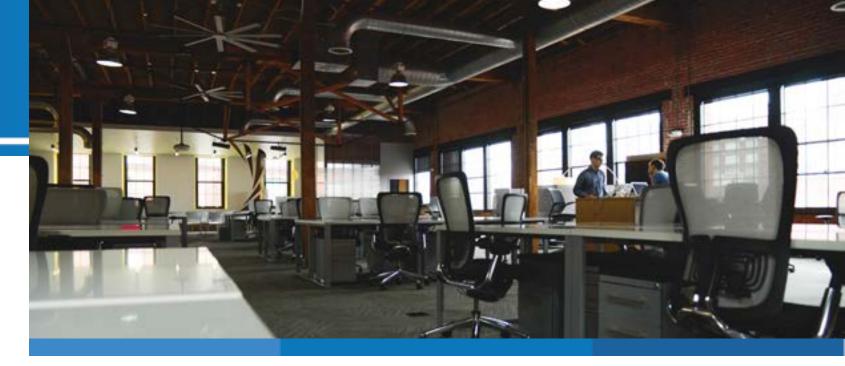
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Remote Working: Perk to Attract (And Retain) Top Workers

If you turn back the hands of time to 2007-2008, the world was a very different place. Here in the US, we were looking at the start of a new presidency with the first African American to have ever held that post. There was optimism for change, but also, big concerns about how deep the recession was going to be amid a global financial crisis that impacted the entire global economy. Those who had a job were thankful, and willing to put up with working longer hours for the same or less page. Remote working as a perk was not common, and certainly not something expected as part of a job opportunity.

The chart below helps show what happened in the eight years that followed the global meltdown, at least in the United States. Unemployment rate exploded from about 5% to about 10% in a period of 18-24 months. And, the rate that it grew was alarming. The world was bracing for a depression.

Today, the employment rate outlook in the US looks much better – at least as of April 2017 at the time of my writing this post. The country is at full employment, real estate markets across the country are experiencing a building boom cycle, and even the stock market has completed its recovery from the dark days of 2007-2008.

Worker Shortage

What this means for employers, however, is another story. Signing bonuses are back! So too are the hiring wars we remember hearing about back in the 1990s. Interestingly, in October 2016 there were 322,000 job openings in manufacturing – about the same level as in 2007. That figure tripled since hitting a low of 99,000 during the recession in 2009 (source: CNN). And, with President Trump now in office with a top objective of bringing "back" manufacturing jobs, sure to put more pressure on employers to attract new hires.

We have a crisis to fill all the open job positions, which likely can be primarily addressed by increasing wages and stoking the inflation engine. Recent Federal Reserve rate increase and the signaling that now is the time to begin liquidating purchases made during the Quantitative Easing period are sure to follow.
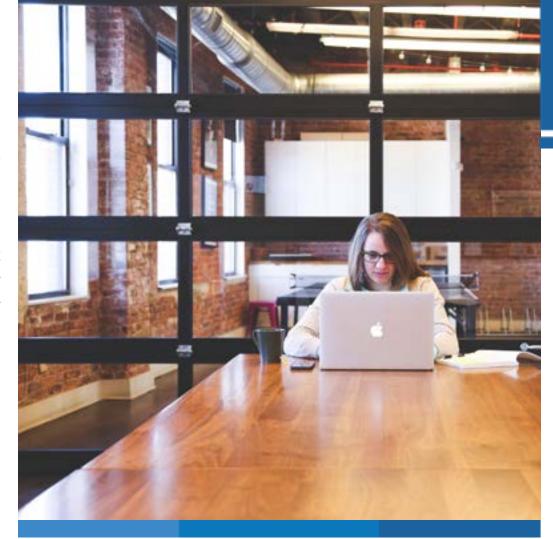
What Matters to Workers?

Inc. Magazine's article "6 Employee Perks That Matter" offered insights as to what today's workers is looking for in a new job – insights that might now be worth exploring in greater detail. Their conclusion? That beyond the basics, a handful of benefits can make the difference between a company that attracts top talent and those people going elsewhere.

I found it interesting that the TOP perk listed in the study was the ability to have flexibility around one's work schedule and location. An example was provided in the article about AgileCraft employees, which are spread over three countries, 14 U.S. states, and

six time zones. Apparently, more than 80 percent of the company works remotely. People are hired based on talent, not location. It isn't hard to see that if you have a worker shortage in one geographical region, then a great way to overcome that challenge is to expand your talent pool to be a larger region – or even the world, if you can figure out a way to manage it.

This change of expectation is well documented in a Korn Ferry article, which states that technology has been a key contributor to the rate of workplace change in the last 20 years. More recently, advancement in personal technology and mobile devices has made us all more mobile than ever. Generation Y are the first employees to work exclusively in a setting with email instead of fax, social media instead of printed media, and more importantly – where mobile is king. A mobile workforce is not just something Gen Y's want, they demand it (source: Korn Ferry).
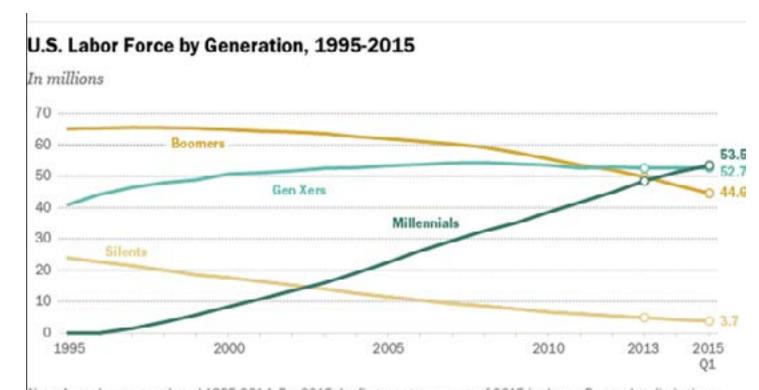
As you consider your hiring challenges for the year, and begin exploring what perks could be considered to help attract (and retain) top talent, perhaps there is a role for flexible and remote working that could play an important role in helping you to achieve your sales and growth targets with a minimal (if any) cost.

Attract and Retain Millennials in Your Remote Workforce

A significant workforce transformation has been gaining momentum over the past few years – yet many people are unaware of this change. Millennials have already become a dominant factor in the office and remote workforce.

In 2015, Millennials Became the Largest Generation of the U.S. Workforce. Having steadily come of age during the 2000's, this group today now comprises more than one-in-three American workers (adults ages 18 to 34 in 2015). In 2015 they surpassed Generation X to become the largest share of the American workforce, according to new Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data (source). By 2025, Millennials will make up 75% of the global office and remote workforce.

U.S. Labor Force by Generation, 1995-2015

In millions

Boomers — 53.5
Gen Xers — 52.7
Millennials — 44.6
Silents — 3.7

Note: Annual averages plotted 1995-2014. For 2015 the first quarter average of 2015 is shown. Due to data limitations, Silent generation is overestimated from 2008-2015.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of monthly 1995-2015 Current Population Surveys, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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Communicating with Millennials in the Workforce

Given this demographic now comprises a third of the workforce, it is now mandatory to consider their impact on how business is conducted. What does this mean? To start, it is a good idea to understand how Millennials live, to then best manage this group of unique workers. Here are a few stats to gain clarity on this demographic:

- They only know the concept of being available 24 x 7 x 365, with regards to work or play

- Social media has always been a part of how they communicate – typically on a smart phone

- 80% sleep with their phones next to their beds

- 55% say flexible working is very important

- 23% of Millennials want an even mix of office / home working

- 96% of Millennials say the reputation of the company they work for is important to them

Remote Working Ideal Complement to Millennial Workforce

Given the above insights into how a Millennial lives their life, it should come as no surprise that there is an expectation of being able to work remotely, whenever possible. Do you have a work-from-home policy already? If not, this article might be worth reading: 5 Reasons Why Now is the Right Time to Have a Remote Workforce Policy.

Expectations of Privacy

One byproduct of growing up as a Millennial is there is little expectation of privacy. Online, cloud-based applications are a given, as is texting or messaging

through Facebook as the best way for real-time communications. Email is used reluctantly, given all the spam that comes through in any given day. Growing up in an all-digital world means that it is understood that anything that is posted can be read by anyone. If you offer a Millennial the opportunity to work remote, with the caveat that a time management tracking program is necessary, there will be little resistance or objections – it is simply a given that any activity can likely be tracked by so many different programs, it just doesn't matter.

Cloud-based Applications

The ease of not worrying about storing programs or files locally is attractive to a Millennial. Therefore, it would be a good idea to invest in cloud-based applications – and having the flexibility to work with Google Docs and their other web-based work applications (or offer equivalent alternatives) as part of their work experience. When all files and applications are online, it makes it easy to work anywhere – if an Internet connection exists.

Short Tenure of a Millennial

It would be a good idea to move quickly to address the items discussed in this article. Millennials are not a patient bunch – they want to get ahead, and are not afraid of jumping jobs quickly to move up. Thus, the average tenure of a Millennial employee is just two years. In the span of a professional career, two years seems like nothing. In comparison, the average tenure for Gen X employees is five years and seven years for Baby Boomers. One of the primary reasons Millennials are more likely to change jobs is because they are not willing to stick around if they do not believe they are receiving any personal benefit or growth.

Here is another reason why cloud based applications and remote work options make a lot of sense – cloud-based apps can be deployed quickly, and offer intuitive menu options (at least in the mind of a Millennial) and can help accelerate the time required to train new employees. With Millennials being "on" 24 x 7 x 365, remote management intelligence applications can be a real benefit to help coach and identify process improvement across the team. This scenario affords the manager of a Millennial to spend more time with strategic visions and sales execution strategies – only if existing systems are so well received and understood that productivity is instantly achieved.

Establish a Flexible Work Schedule to Address Millennial Needs

The workforce is going through a significant transformation – both in the US and across the globe. By 2020, employers will be tasked with attracting top talent that places a high value on whether or not employers offer a flexible work schedule. Are you ready for this change?

I just wrote an article that explored how organizations can best assess competitive risk, based on where they stand with their remote working policy. This is a pretty significant topic – one worthy of further discussion.

In my last post I quoted Mike Elgan, a contributing columnist at Computerworld. He recently wrote an article challenging his readers that the term "remote working" may soon fade away from our vocabulary. His rationale was based on the increasing impact Millennials are having on workplace demographics.

Millennials Impact on the Workforce

According to a recent PWC report, the millennial generation, born between 1980 and 2000, is now entering employment in vast numbers, to a point that will permanently change the workforce. Attracting the best of these Millennial workers will be critical to the future of every business, ultimately impacting their ability to grow and thrive, or per-ish and fail. Millennial career aspirations, attitudes about work, and knowledge of new technologies will define the culture of the 21st century workplace (source).

The PWC report explains that millennials matter because they are not only different from those that have gone before, but that they are also more numerous than any demographic group since the soon-to-retire Baby Boomer generation. By 2020, millen-nials will be 50% of the global workforce. That figure is forecast to grow to 75% globally by 2025.

These are truly shocking figures. A single demographic group quickly become the dom-inant part of the workforce. Those organizations that are not adequately prepared will be impacted in many ways, some of which might be a surprise:

• Hiring workers to fill open positions or grow the business will become increasingly more difficult and costly

• Employee turnover will likely increase – unexpectedly – costing much time and effort to try and understand and fix

• Finding new customers could potentially become more difficult, given the importance placed on mission statements and the vision of what companies stand for vis-a-vis the purchase process
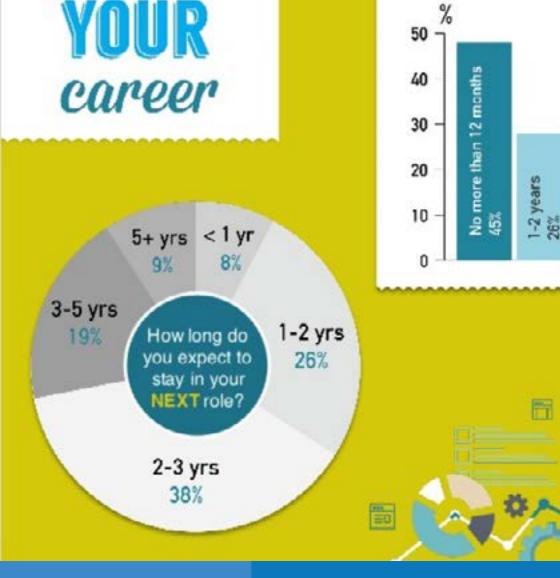
The Millennial Mindset is an organization led by Adam Henderson, a prominent writer, speaker and subject matter expert on the Millennial workforce. He has published some very interesting research findings on his website.

Source: Understanding the attitudes of a professional Millennial (Gen-Y) Workforce

The following infographic he prepared illustrates that almost 50% of the workforce will have an expectation that their current role will not last more than 12 months, before being promoted. Fortunately, expectations are extended for the second role.

This is a different set of expectations than what the Baby Boomer considered normal, so is likely to lead to potential conflict and misalignment with career expectations and human resources departments.

Another interesting attribute of Millennial expectations is that of flexible work, which correlates directly with achieving the right work/life balance. Millennials see this as a very important job requirement. But, their employers have not been able to successfully deliver upon this promise. According to the PWC report, 28% said that the work/life balance was *worse* than they had expected before joining.

The Importance of a Flexible Work Schedule to Millennials

Here is where remote working comes into play. But, in the eyes of the Millennial, it isn't that they all want to telework. Just the opposite. They want the choice to be able to work where and when they want, to help achieve a better work/life balance.

A better term to describe this need is "flexible" working. Adam Henderson commented on this topic in his article If you can't trust your employees to work flexibly, why hire them in the first place?

In his article he commented that 91% of the Millennials he surveyed said flexible working was important, and that 92% said they wanted the option to work from home. Note the importance of having the choice. Millennials are not saying they all want to work remotely from home. In fact, just the contrary … 66% said they would prefer to work more in the office than at home. No one wanted to work exclusively from home.

To the right is another infographic that helps to visualize this concept (source).

Source: Understanding the attitudes of a professional Millennial (Gen-Y) Workforce

Just over 90% of Millennials surveyed said that it was "somewhat" or "very" important to have flexible working. Doing the math, this means that in just three years' time, 45% of the workforce will place a significant importance on employers offering flexible working.

What is a Flexible Work Schedule?

A flexible work schedule is an alternative to the traditional 9 to 5, 40-hour work week. It allows employees to vary their arrival and/or departure times. Under some policies, employees must work a prescribed number of hours a pay period and be present during a daily "core time." The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) does not address flexible work schedules.

Alternative work arrangements such as flexible work schedules are a matter of agreement between the employer and the employee (or the employee's representative). The Department of Labor has conducted numerous surveys and published articles and reports on the subject.

Here are some examples of how a flexible work schedule can be seen as a significant employee benefit:

- A husband and wife working for the same employer enter into an arrangement to ensure their shifts are staggered so that they will have child-care coverage for their three children

- A worker who cares for an elderly mother during the evenings enters into an arrangement with the employer ensuring that he/she will not have to work the evening or overnight shift.

- A worker may be authorized to swap a shift with a willing co-worker

- A worker with diabetes is allowed to set his/her own break schedule in order to ensure an opportunity to eat snacks and meals every three hours

- Workers may request scheduled time off in advance of schedules being prepared

Just as many companies shifted to a 40 hour work week, 9-5, based on worker demands, expect another shift to flexible scheduling over the next decade.

Future Impact of Remote Working

Articles

- Beat the 80/20 Rule to Improve Remote Sales Performance

- Tax Consequences of Remote Working

- Can Remote Working Solve Geographic Wealth Disparity?

- Coming Soon - Artificial Intelligence as a Remote Worker Assistant?

How Productivity is Calculated

You can't improve what you don't measure.™ Measure sales performance and engage your team to maximize your sales output!

Prodoscore™ calculates your employee productivity score based on our secret sauce and time spent in G Suite applications like email, calendar, docs and hangouts and other tools such as your CRM.

A single metric acts as your team's Northstar for improvement.

Beating the 80/20 Rule to Improve Remote Sales Performance

Most sales professionals know and understand the 80/20 rule, often referred to as the Pareto principle or the law of the vital few. So too do their managers, at least the good ones. Simply stated, this rule states that roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. In the world of sales, 80 percent of a team's success comes from a select group of higher performers – and that group will typically be about 20 percent of the team. The percentages may vary to 70/30 or even 60/40, but there will always be a disproportionate amount of success when working to improve remote sales performance, which comes from a disproportionately smaller subset of the population.

The question then becomes "What can you do about this rule?" Can it be overcome? If everyone is aware of it, why can't it be overcome? The math is straightforward. If you can double the 20% who are your high performers to then become 40% of your team, then theoretically, overall quota attainment and sales performance would double too. Coaching 20% of your team to become leaders could double overall sales performance. Seems like a worthy goal.

First, let's take a closer look at what is going on with the 80/20 rule and how widespread it is. It turns out, the rule has many applications in the world of business. Here are a few:

- 80% of problems can be attributed to 20% of causes

- 80% of a company's profits come from 20% of its customers

- 80% of a company's complaints come from 20% of its customers

- 80% of a company's profits come from 20% of the time its staff spent

- 80% of a company's revenue comes from 20% of its products

- 80% of a company's sales are made by 20% of its sales staff

Given the preponderance of the rule, one might conclude that it is at a level equal to the law of gravity. While I am not aware of the specific details on how to prove it really does work – let's assume it does. What can be done to best take advantage of it?

Applying the 80/20 Rule to Remote Sales Performance

Sales professionals will typically approach new clients in different ways, with various offerings. These approaches will then have varying rates of success. Inevitability, one approach will work better than others, leading to a high performer. This is most obvious in a new market or startup environment where much experimenting is performed trying to learn what strategies work best to improve sales performance.

Over time, the high performers will continue to master their technique, putting further distance between their performance and quota attainment and everyone else's. The challenge is that these sales professionals are not usually eager to share their success, at least not initially. And, many work remote, so monitoring their sales performance can be difficult. To start, they likely don't know if they are "on" to something, or not. So, who wants to tout they have found the right strategy before they really know it is true? Secondly, the world of sales is competitive – there are always winners and losers. Keeping a few "cards" up your sleeve that will help you do better than the team is a smart strategy to ensure consistent quota over-achievement.

Hence, the seeds of the 80/20 rule are planted.

Changing the Status Quo

Here is where remote monitoring can lead to sales improvement. By automatically collecting sales activity data, managers can then convert it into insight into what's working and what isn't, and then share these results with the rest of the team to help broaden the overall group's success. There are now several software solutions that allow you to do this seamlessly.

If just an additional 5% of the team can be converted from "average" performers to "high" performers, that could be the difference that changes your team from being average to being exceptional, which are numbers you can take to the bank.

Tax Consequences of Remote Working

During a time of transformation, technology and cultural norms often move faster than the supporting legal infrastructure. Several examples exist where the law is playing "catch up" to technology innovations. Take e-books, for example. Understanding what rights a buyer of an eBook has are blurred – sharing your purchase legally can be a difficult task versus lending a paperback to a friend. Similarly, the tax consequences for remote working can be confusing.

A remote worker that performs freelancing or services for clients operating in different countries faces a challenge when it is tax time. How should this activity be taxed? Are income taxes based on the location you physically reside, or where your employer is incorporated? How should double-taxation be avoided? Who is responsible for ensuring these calculations are performed correctly?

Taxation is a complex area that governments, companies, and individuals are struggling to address as workers become increasingly mobile. Tax consequences for remote working has simply not caught up to the reality of individuals participating in a globalized workforce.

Kavi Guppta prepared a Question and Answer discussion on this topic, which yields a few fascinating insights on how to best create a contingency plan. In his article from last November, he interviewed a representative from a Canadian CPA firm, who had these 5 tips to offer as advice.

1. Keep Good Records

One of the challenges remote workers and freelancers face is record-keeping and transparency over their numbers. When working remotely, you can quite often be on the move, so it is can be difficult to keep track of and retain important documents and receipts. Regardless the taxing authority you submit a tax return to, retain these documents as proof of what expenses you incurred and what revenue was collected.

2. Detail the Address Where You Live, and for How Long

Quite often one of the criteria used to determine what income taxes are owed is based on what residency applies during that year. For example, if you choose to live in Nevada for 7 months of the year and California for the other 5 months, you might have a compelling case to avoid paying state income taxes, given most of your residency was spent living in a state without state income taxes. You should consult with an accountant to best understand what the specific tax codes might apply based on your living arrangements.

3. Leverage Time Tracking Technology Whenever Possible

A wealth of information is now on the Internet. If you have specific tax questions, chances are someone else does too, so the answer to your question might already have been answered. Advanced time tracking and management programs can be used when preparing monthly invoices, to document actual time spent on a client's behalf, as well as what activities were performed. These programs can not only provide more accurate visibility into how your time was spent, but can be a useful tool to identify and implement process improvement initiatives.
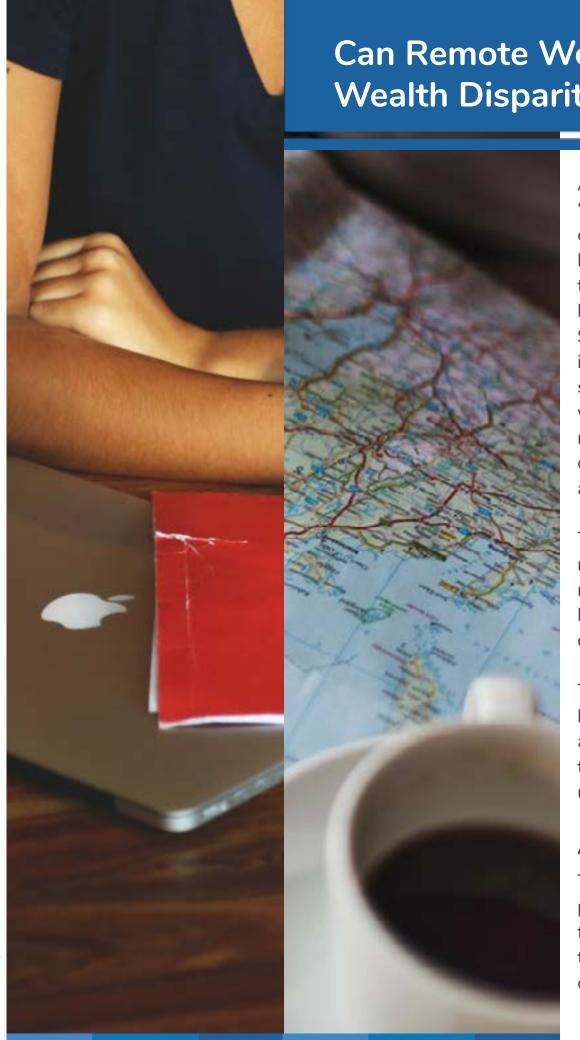
4. Know what Jurisdiction Applies to your Tax Liability

Remote workers and freelancers may work in several different locations on any given year. There may be some confusion surrounding which tax authority to submit and pay taxes to. Different state and foreign country tax authorities can have widely differing rules, as well as what constitutes a business expense. If you were required to re-locate as part of your job, it's important to document your expenses, since they might be tax deductible.

5. Leverage the Cloud for Data Storage and Application Hosting

Working remotely can pose a challenge for keeping track of your documents. Cloud based productivity applications like G Suite are a great solution. Since all your documents are stored in the cloud you know that you always have access to the latest version no matter where you are.

Intent is an important attribute that separates tax avoidance with tax fraud. We all need to pay taxes – the amount should be tied to the output that was generated, less the cost incurred to produce that output. Over time, the tax consequences of remote working with be better substantiated with clearer legal guidelines and regulatory tax rulings that will achieve better consistency across states, and even countries. Meanwhile, the remote global workforce continues to expand its scope.

Can Remote Working Solve Geographic Wealth Disparity?

As has been attributed to a traditional Chinese proverb, "May you live in interesting times." I believe that to be the case today, given the incredible technology advances that have occurred over the past two decades. We are privileged to live in such interesting times – yet not everyone has experienced the same levels of wealth opportunities. Standards of living, resource availability and health insurance disparately all contribute to a world where some are privileged, and others are not. Could remote working solve geographic wealth disparity, or at least help reverse some of this inequality between different regions of the US? Or, must we simply accept that life is not fair, as recognized by Bill Gates, among others?

The truth is that evolution or change is never consistent, nor fair. Survival has always been of the fittest, which means there will be winners and losers. Some will be better at adapting and reap the rewards of change while others won't.

The hope is that in aggregate, overall levels of wealth, well being and opportunity can be increased for all. With the advent of remote working, there is a chance for regions that have been left behind by economic growth to catch up with the rest of the country.

A History of Prosperity in the United States

Today, the United States holds 4.5 percent of the world's population yet produces 22 percent of the world's output—a fraction that has remained consistently stable over the past two decades, despite growing competition from emerging countries (source). Per Capita income in the US was about

$53,000 in 2016, a figure that few countries can beat today. Even back in the early 1800s, the US was a global leader in this measurement.

The City Journal suggests that this leadership in wealth creation was a byproduct of strong intellectual property rights. As Thomas Jefferson observed, the absence of accumulated wealth in the new nation meant that its most important economic resource was innovation, which America's laws encouraged, and that helped drive innovation. Over two centuries later, the United States has more patents in force—1.8 million—than any other nation (Japan, with 1.2 million, holds second place).

Another factor that has contributed to the wealth aggregation in the United States was the vast territory of available land coupled with a scarcity of population. This disparity created a drive for innovation, which pushed up early labor costs. With American wages being significantly higher than those in Europe, American businesses were forced to improve productivity, automate tasks and ultimately help drive the first industrial revolution.

The Southern states made a choice to bypass much of the industrial automation strategies, at least initially, which led to income disparities that to this day have never truly caught up.

Similar inequities resulted when the third industrial revolution gained momentum – the implementation of technology and computers to run production environments. In this case, the wealth from the central, manufacturing-focused regions of the US shifted to the coasts, where investments in technology companies became a leading source of business value creation, high paying jobs and significant capital investments.

The Inequality of Prosperity – Could Remote Working Solve Geographic Wealth Disparity?

Median US Household income from 1999 to 2016 was essentially flat, eking out a minor gain from $58,665 in 1999 to $59,039 in 2016. This period witnessed a massive, global financial meltdown whereby standards of living declined, household income dropped significantly, and many businesses closed their doors.

These figures however, are misleading. While in aggregate the US has recovered to the same prosperity as 1999, when the recovery is examined on a more regional level, a different story emerges.

According to Bloomberg, in the Northeast and West, median household incomes are now markedly higher than they were in 1999 and 2000. In the South, the median income is about the same. In the Midwest, it's still well below its 2000 peak. Over the long run, the Midwest has gone from being similar in affluence to the Northeast and West to significantly poorer. The South is a little bit further behind the coasts now than it was in the mid-1970s (source).

Nowhere is this more pronounced that in real estate prices. The West and Northeast now have some of the most expensive real estate prices in the nation, a trend that has been fueled by the record amount of income that has been generated by the technology transformations now impacting our world in the way we socialize, consume goods and services, and earn a paycheck.

Change is The Only Constant

A pattern should by now be clear. Growth is seldom even, predictable or linear. Innovation, hard work and ingenuity have led to spectacular history of sustained growth in the US (and other countries).

But, to continue to fuel growth, change must be embraced to think differently, find new opportunities and move to where new jobs are being created. For economic progress

to occur, obsolete activities and technologies must disappear, and capital must shift from old uses to more productive ones.

Both government efforts to save or bail out companies that stick with outmoded products, services, or management methods and corporate monopolies protect the existing order at the expense of innovation, growth, and future jobs. This, in its core, is the fuel behind a Capitalistic economy.

A free-market economy that can readily allocate resources based on where the market deems the best ROI on these resources will lead to the highest, and most sustained growth. Centrally planned societies led by a group of individuals (whether the government or small collection of corporations) can never perform with as great a consistency or efficiency as the open market.

This same concept applies to where people live, or how readily new labor can be harnessed to work on the next "big thing."

Interestingly, the advances of remote working – and the willingness of employers to embrace it or block it – might have a profound impact on not only the choices companies make, but in the surrounding geographic regions where they operate or have offices.

Remote Working –
An Instant Allocation of Scarce Resources

Ironically, the embracing of remote working could just trigger the next real estate "land grab" or income equalization at a level we have witnessed over the past two decades. With this model, remote workers need not relocate to apply their skills to a new employer or industry – regardless of where that employer resides.

This is a paramount shift in what could happen with migration patterns, and of course, real estate prices. If new demand for housing is not driven directly by local labor requirements, it will be possible for real estate values to become more standardized or normalized, at least over a period.

We could also see a spread of wealth throughout the country as remote workers spend more locally and boost their region's economy. We'll have to see what happens in the next 15-20 years, to see whether this trend does indeed materialize.

This could be an opportunity for those regions in the US (and other parts of the world) that missed out on the last economic or real estate boom, to play catch up. Those taking up residence in a low-cost geographic region, yet having access to higher paying, remote working opportunities, could be the impetus to drive new wealth creation across the US and world.

What is important to recognize is that any time a resource can be more readily accessed with less barriers to that access, better efficiency will result, and a new baseline of wealth transfer will have been set. It should be interesting to see how this next chapter plays out. Yes, indeed, we live in interesting times.

Coming Soon - Artificial Intelligence as a Remote Worker Assistant?

It is always fun reading future predictions, especially when they are written by industry analyst firms. Compelled to try and identify new trends before they become mainstream, these types of predictions can sometimes have accuracy. The timing may be off, but often the concept behind these types of productions has merit. I found myself reading one of these predictions, published by International Data Corporation (IDC) recently, on the future of Artificial Intelligence (AI). As I read the story, I thought about the concept of AI becoming a virtual assistant for remote workers.

AI technology has existed for years – the challenge has been to harness sufficient computing power to make it a reality. The growing use of the cloud as a distributed computing architecture has the potential to finally overcome this challenge, creating significant disruptive opportunities for new, innovative ways to leverage artificial intelligence to boost productivity, gain intelligence and to provide decision support at a level never seen before.

Predictions on the Future of Artificial Intelligence

IDC regularly publishes predictions at the end of every year on the various technologies the firm's analysts cover, with the objective of providing their clients with insights into where a technology is heading. During their most recent group of predictions, IDC published this FutureScape report, "Worldwide Analytics, Cognitive/AI and Big Data 2017 Predictions" (source).

IDC forecasts that by 2018, 75% of enterprise and Independent Software Vendor (ISV) development will include cognitive/AI or machine learning functionality in at least one application, including all business analytics tools. That is a pretty bold assumption – 75% is a big number. This prediction is so big that IDC is suggesting that enterprise application upgrade cycles may accelerate because of this transformation. Wow.

Artificial Intelligence as the Ultimate Remote Worker?

If these predictions come true, then AI is about to go mainstream. With access to all this computing power and deductive reasoning embedded within applications, one can quickly see many new use cases for this type of capability. One might be that the concept of a virtual "assistant" might now be possible.

Today, every iPhone user has Siri, which can be helpful when you need to be hands free.

Voice commands are nice, but AI is more than Siri.

Remote workers are often working solo out in the field, or are travelling to a client or prospect location. Imagine the productivity an assistant might provide – especially if they could start thinking on their own? Of course, thee right expectations would need to be established, and sufficient security measures would need to be put in place.

Imagine if you had an assistant that could process hundreds of thousands of data points to help pick the best time to make a call to a specific individual and speak with them live on the phone? Or, what about the right time to wait for a follow up engagement with a prospect? Or, insights into what is leading a customer to consider a future project or implementation timeframe? Some of the "guessing" game we all do when making decisions based on "hunches" might be reduced, replaced instead with a decision support model based on highly accurate calculation to improve the likelihood of a desired outcome.

One can see that in the world of Artificial Intelligence, the "co-worker" I am suggesting is virtual, living in the cyber world. This type of "worker" is similar, in some ways, to remote workers. They both exist, but might not be physically present or visible – but, their work matters, as measured by the output generated. Maybe now is the time to start taking remote working seriously, given the increasing virtual world we are living in today, and how that world is set to change drastically over the next two to five years.

4 Essential Tools for Working and Managing Remotely

The freedom to work from anywhere enables stronger workplace engagement, increased productivity and satisfaction, and confidence in the abilities of employees. Working and managing remotely has never been easier than it is now, thanks to some of the incredible tools available on the market that allow for instant communication and collaboration between your entire team. If you're planning on working or managing remotely, we recommend these four tools for your team.

1. G Suite

Google's G Suite is the ultimate easy-to-use cloud-based productivity suite for your team. G Suite allows users to access Gmail, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Drive, Hangouts and other useful Google exclusive tools that will allow your users to communicate and collaborate in real-time. These tools can be accessed and used at home or on the go, allowing your team to work when they want, how they want.

All of your emails and files are stored in one secure cloud-based space, allowing for easy and reliable access. Remote management is also possible through G Suite, using the many admin tools at hand such as controls, insights, and user auditing. All these versatile features are available at an affordable per user cost.

2. CRM Solutions

Any remote sales team wouldn't be complete without a tool that helped to organize customer relationship management (CRM). Luckily for remote teams everywhere, there are some great CRM tools currently available.

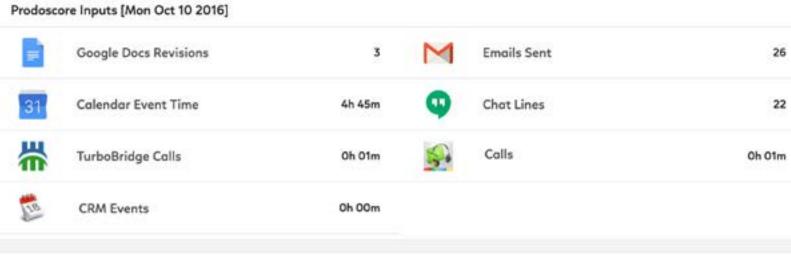Most CRM tools come complete with seamless G Suite integration, designed to work with productivity tools like Docs, Sheets, Slides, and Gmail. These customer relationship management tools allow you and your employees to work right from their inbox, cutting out the need for additional software and raising productivity – your inbox is turned into a one-stop shop that will benefit your clients, leads, and sales in the long run.

G Suite integration eliminates the need for manual entry – automatically linking to company-wide emails, files, and events. These tools help your remote team to add contacts, track email opens and views, and more from the comfort of their inbox. Employees will be able to stay on top of clients and potential leads through features like automatic alerts, syncing with your established Google contacts, and custom report building that provides your entire team with easy to use data straight from Google Sheets.

CRM solutions are the perfect tool for managing customers and for keeping detailed files on all past, present, and future clients. You'll be able to capture emails between your entire team and one client with your CRM, allowing for complete workplace transparency. Filters and actions can also be triggered based on established email filters, which can be used to notify other staff.

With a fully integrated CRM solution, email and call records can be retrieved by your entire team immediately by searching through customer records. Calendars can be shared across your organization, allowing management to keep track of what their employees are focusing on, and narrow down potential areas of improvement. An integrated CRM removes the burden of managers having to constantly check in on employee activities, instead providing reports and client files at the touch of a button.

Prodoscore Inputs [Mon Oct 10 2016]

Google Docs Revisions	3		Emails Sent	26
Calendar Event Time	4h 45m		Chat Lines	22
TurboBridge Calls	0h 01m		Calls	0h 01m
CRM Events	0h 00m			

Prodoscore throughout the day

Some excellent CRM solutions include Salesforce and Zoho, both of which can be easily integrated with Google's G Suite, maximizing the productivity of both management and remote employees.

3. Prodoscore

Prodoscore is a must-have tool for effectively managing your team remotely. It allows users to reliably capture and measure real-time data about the productivity of your sales team, assigning unique scores to each member of your team. Prodoscore allows efficient management by giving you insights about where and how your team can increase productivity, establish new workplace goals, and identify opportunities for future improvement by monitoring tasks performed in G Suite and your CRM.

A productivity score is calculated daily for each member of your team, allowing management to easily recognize patterns and address issues in a proactive manner. Prodoscore also integrates with most software solutions such as G Suite, VoIP phone systems, and CRM solutions, allowing for accurate and comprehensive transparency into what your remote team is doing.

4. VoIP System

An effective VoIP system allows for better communication with your entire team. Some VoIP systems feature the ability to integrate your VoIP phone with workplace software like G Suite and various CRM solutions. One of VIWO's preferred VOIP partners, Vonage Business, offers a VoIP systems that allows employees to make calls directly from Gmail, view individual call records through your CRM solution, and transfer calls from your mobile phone to your workplace handset.

Vonage Business offers full G Suite integration with gUnify, enabling your team to integrate VoIP systems with G Suite and your other software solutions. This allows remote employees to make calls at the touch of a button, create call notes within your CRM, and instantly add contacts through G Suite's Contacts app. An integrated VoIP system with Vonage Business is perfect for tying together productivity suites like G Suite and CRM solutions, creating a truly unified workplace no matter where employees are working from.

We live in a time where managing a remote team and working from anywhere has been made possible without the risk of decreased productivity or communication between you and your team members. With tools such as G Suite, integrated CRM solutions such as Salesforce or Zoho, comprehensive monitoring tools like Prodoscore, and easy to use VoIP phone systems, working and managing from anywhere has never easier or more attractive.

Use Machine Learning to Increase Your Sales Team's Productivity & Engagement

Prodoscore™ lets you capture and measure accurate real time data about your sales team's productivity and engagement.

Workers learn where they can improve. Managers can discover and improve on team weaknesses, and HR can receive alerts for at-risk employees.

- Measure and Improve Your Daily Workflows
- Improve Team Management and Employee Engagement
- Monitor Daily Efforts of Remote Workers
- Receive Alerts for At-Risk Employees
- Use Prodoscore Correlations™, Our Machine Learning Engine, to Maximize Your Success

Learn more about Prodoscore

G Suite

TurboBridge   salesforce

Vonage

SUGARCRM   ZOHO

RingCentral®

PROSPERWORKS