

The working-from-home revolution

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

Many people are now working from home. Which of these jobs could be done from home and which cannot?

banker construction worker journalist teacher
computer programmer driver doctor lawyer police officer pilot

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers will help you.

restriction lockdown shift pandemic senior executives

1. A _____ is a disease that affects many people across the whole world. (para 1)
2. A _____ is when people are not allowed to leave their homes. (para 1)
3. A _____ is a rule, action or situation that limits or controls someone or something. (para 1)
4. A _____ is a change in something. (para 1)
5. _____ are people at the highest level of management in a company. (para 2)

productivity impact adapt permanent remotely

6. _____ is the rate at which goods are produced. (para 4)
7. If you work _____, you do not go to a workplace but work from home on a computer. (para 4)
8. When people _____, they change their ideas or behaviour so that they can deal with a new situation. (para 5)
9. If something is _____, it is happening or existing for a long time or for all time in the future. (para 6)
10. An _____ is the effect that something has. (para 9)

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. What percentage of the UK workforce worked from home before the coronavirus pandemic?
2. How many people work in the UK?
3. What kind of company is WPP?
4. How many people does Jellyfish Pictures employ?
5. According to three-quarters of US chief financial officers, what percentage of their workers will become permanent work-from-home employees?
6. What percentage of CFOs believe that half their employees will become remote workers?

The working-from-home revolution

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

From boardroom to spare room: the working-from-home revolution

Mark Sweney

18 April, 2020

- 1 Before the coronavirus pandemic, 1.7 million people mainly worked from home in the UK. That's about 5% of the country's 33 million workers. Since the pandemic, millions more have also started working from home. And there have been warnings that some lockdown restrictions could remain into 2021, so there will be a sudden cultural shift in how we work.
- 2 Mark Read, the chief executive of WPP, the world's biggest employer in the marketing and advertising sector, welcomes a working-from-home revolution but says it is not right for everyone. "One of the most common questions is about working from home longer term. There is interest in it, but there is also a demand to come back to an office. Junior employees and those in shared accommodation find homeworking much more difficult than senior executives with houses and gardens."
- 3 For one London business, Jellyfish Pictures, working from home has been a surprise success. Jellyfish, which employs about 250 staff, has continued to work on projects despite shutting its five UK studios at the beginning of March.
- 4 "We have learnt from this that there hasn't been any reduction in productivity," the Jellyfish founder, Phil Doree, says. "Some things have improved, such as communication, which is actually more regular and efficient remotely. In the office, meetings often continue for hours, or people don't communicate enough – now they do."
- 5 The speed with which Silicon Valley companies such as Google, Facebook and Twitter ordered their employees to shift to homeworking in late February and early March makes it look easy. "Most Facebook employees are lucky to be able to work from home," the company's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, said. "We know that most people can't work from home as easily as many of our employees can." The companies that are most able to adapt to homeworking are sectors such as media, tech and financial services. For others – airlines and car manufacturing, for example – it is impossible.
- 6 But change is happening. A US survey found that three-quarters of chief financial officers believe that at least 5% of their workers – who worked in company offices before – will become permanent work-from-home employees after the pandemic ends. 17% of those CFOs believe a fifth of staff will move to working from home, and 4% believe that half of employees will become remote workers.
- 7 Jamie Ross, of Henderson EuroTrust, says, "Remote working has gone much more smoothly than many companies feared. We will see more people working from home, smaller office spaces, more online meetings and less business travel."
- 8 In that situation, the probable long-term losers are airlines, hotels and the office property sector. It will also change some industries that have been under pressure but can adapt. The publishing industry has had the technology to allow many staff to work from home for years, but many companies have not liked the idea.
- 9 The impact of the coronavirus has increased the long-term pressures on publishers, so the money saved from reducing office space could be attractive to them.
- 10 James Wildman, the chief executive of the *Cosmopolitan* owner, Hearst UK, adds, "Office space is expensive and high density, and a lot of people will be uncomfortable with that even after the virus. Some managers were already encouraging flexible working, but in more traditional industries, like newspaper publishing, there has unfortunately been a delay."
- 11 City banks were some of the first to send thousands of staff to work from home. John Cronin, a financial analyst, says bosses will soon realize that most banking roles – including research, trading and sales – can be done from home. "This will be a revolution in how we work," he says. "There's a lot of waste. A lot of people travel abroad for one meeting, and I think those days are over."

© Guardian News and Media 2020

First published in *The Guardian*, 18/04/20

The working-from-home revolution

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

4 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings and endings to make statements about the text.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic ... | a. ... is attractive because it would also reduce costs. |
| 2. For one company, remote working has ... | b. ... at least 5% of their workers will become permanent work-from-home employees. |
| 3. Sectors such as media, tech and financial services ... | c. ... more and more companies are asking their staff to work remotely. |
| 4. Most US chief financial officers believe that ... | d. ... could be over. |
| 5. For publishing companies, the idea of reducing office space ... | e. ... made communication more regular and efficient. |
| 6. The days of travelling abroad for just one meeting ... | f. ... have adapted more easily to remote working than other sectors. |

5 Chunks

Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

- the March of beginning at
- home can from be done
- 5% workers about of
- most homeworking to adapt to able
- the questions one common of most
- how work revolution we in a

6 Two-word expressions

Match the words in the left-hand column with the words in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. chief | a. working |
| 2. long | b. publishing |
| 3. financial | c. term |
| 4. newspaper | d. manufacturing |
| 5. car | e. executive |
| 6. remote | f. services |

The working-from-home revolution

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

7 Word-building

Complete the table using words from the text. All the answers are terms for people or companies.

	verb	noun
1.	found	
2.	publish	
3.	employ	
4.	employ	
5.	analyse	
6.	own	

8 Discussion

- Should more people work from home in the future? Why? Why not?