

Reading Lesson

B2 Business: Trends at Work

Reading

Read the blog. Is working remotely for everyone?

Trends at Work

It's the year 2030. You work for a large global company, and the corporate headquarters exist only in the cloud, in cyberspace. Like all the other employees, you work remotely from your home. It's now 8:45 p.m. By 9:00, you will have been working for 14 hours. Furthermore, by the end of the day, you will have worked six days this week. Your housemates have gone to a party, but you don't mind because the apartment is quiet, and you're getting lots of work done. You've heard your parents talk about having to commute in traffic to a distant office, but you love the flexibility of the modern work structure.

The Job Search Tips & Blog on flexjobs.com cites a survey in which 74% of respondents think that flexible working is already "the new normal." In a flexible working situation, employees may work part time in an office and part time from home, or office hours may be different for different employees so that some come to work earlier and leave earlier. In other cases, at least some employees may not work in an office at all. According to the article *Remote Work Statistics: Shifting Norms and Expectations* on flexjobs.com, a study showed that remote working in the US increased 159% from 2005 to 2017. It is reasonable to conclude that by the end of the decade, the number will have increased greatly, both in the US and in other countries.

There are a number of advantages to remote working, or teleworking, for both companies and employees. First, according to flexjobs.com, productivity increases when employees can work flexible hours. Many people do their best work early in the morning or late at night, and they may not work as efficiently if they are forced to be in an office at certain hours during the day. Another reason for increased productivity from remote working is that employees have fewer interruptions at home than in an office. Second, many employees who work remotely say that they are happier in their jobs and suffer less stress than when they had to keep specific office hours. They don't have



to deal with office politics, constant interruptions, or commuting to work, and they are working in a home environment that is quiet and personalized.

However, there are also a number of disadvantages to remote working. Many people who switch from working in an office to working from home say that they feel very lonely and find it difficult to stay motivated without interaction and input from colleagues. Of course, companies frequently conduct online meetings, but that is not the same as being able to stop by someone's desk to chat for a moment or take a lunch break with colleagues in the company break room. Another problem for some remote workers is organizing their time. They say they either spend too much time away from their desks doing laundry or other housework, or the opposite happens and they work longer hours at home than they would in an office.

There are several things you can do to avoid some of the problems related to working remotely. The article *How to Avoid the Negative Psychological Effects of Remote Work* on Inc.com makes several suggestions. If you make nonwork appointments like going to the doctor or dentist, try to go early in the morning. This means you have to get up and start your day early. This is also a good idea for work appointments or online meetings. If you have to do something early in the morning, you won't be tempted to drink coffee in your pajamas for a

Reading Lesson

couple of hours before getting started. Staring at a computer screen and not talking to anyone can make you feel tired and bored, so it's a good idea to go out to lunch or take a walk during your lunch break. Since you're not having social interactions at work, be sure to make time in the evenings or on weekends to see friends and go out and do things. One of the biggest problems with working remotely is loneliness. At home, create a designated space for working. Even if you don't have a whole room to use as an office, use a corner of a room as your office space. Put in a nice desk and a comfortable office chair, and decorate your office space to make it attractive and personal. Having a nice work environment can increase your productivity. Finally, consider adopting a pet if you don't have one. This may seem like a strange suggestion, but a pet is

good company and will keep you from feeling lonely during your workday!

Working from home isn't for everyone. So if you find yourself in "the new normal" of working remotely, remember to make some changes to make it work for you—decorate your office space, set a schedule and keep to it, take walks or other breaks. Whatever it takes, do it! With these simple ideas, you can easily make the change from office life to working happily from your own home.

be tempted (v phr): to want to do or have something that may not be good for you

cite (v): to mention something as an example, explanation, or source of information

commute (v): to travel to and from work

Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with the words or phrases from the box.

commute conduct deal with headquarters work remotely

1. I don't have to go to an office. I _____, and I have a small office in my house.
2. My job is pretty stressful because I have to _____ a lot of problems and solve them as quickly as possible.
3. I wish I could work from home because I have to _____ to my office every day, and the trip is about an hour each way.
4. The _____ of my company is in New York, but we have a small office in my city.
5. The managers of my company _____ a lot of meetings online because there are employees in a lot of different cities.

Reading Lesson

Comprehension

Choose the correct option.

1. A survey showed that a majority of people think that ... is "the new normal".
a flexible working **b** commuting to work **c** working long hours
2. One advantage of working remotely is ...
a less social interaction. **b** greater productivity. **c** more time to do housework.
3. Many people who work remotely say that they feel ...
a happy with their jobs. **b** lonely. **c** both happy with their jobs and lonely.
4. If you work remotely, it is a good idea to have appointments ...
a in the morning. **b** at lunchtime. **c** in the afternoon.
5. One way to feel less lonely if you work from home is to ...
a take coffee breaks with friends. **b** have a lot of online meetings. **c** get a pet.

Thinking

Do you think your personality makes you more suited to working remotely or working in an office? Why?