



Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace
Module Assignment Submission

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Introduction

Since Covid-19 remote working has become somewhat essential, as many jobs in present day are done in the home. Advancements in technology now allows for employees to work from any location with an internet connection. Remote work first began as an option for employees but has outlasted the pandemic and still being used today, due to employees wanting more flexibility, save money, a better work life balance and many other benefits that come with remote work. A Pew research Centre survey found that 46% of remote workers would be willing to look for other jobs if they had to return to full time at the office (Parker 2025, para 2). In 2024, more than 75% of US workers worked remotely, an increase from 63% in previous years when remote work began gaining traction. The global co-working market has grown to \$14.91 billions with expectations to grow to \$15.7 billion (Grand View Research 2023).

This report aims to depict the effects of remote work on businesses and its managers and employees. It looks through the pros and cons for each group managing remote work. For remote work benefits this study looks at employees with a better work life balance and flexibility and for managers a wide recruitment pool and increased productivity. For issues with these groups, employees with matters such as productivity and isolation, managers learning the issues involved in managing colleagues whilst reinforcing a positive working environment. This report will also zoom in on the overall impact of remote work on the company such as their culture, financials and daily operations.

Employee Perspective

The main benefit of working remotely is that it allows for people to have an easier management and blend of their work and personal lives. This section focuses on explaining the pros and cons of remote work with results from the employee survey included. Remote work has altered the workplace, leading to benefits for employees, but also creating some unique problems (Haque 2023). The main benefit of remote work is that it allows to have a better work, life balance. The Kelly (2025) suggested that in future, almost half of virtual employees would likely consider leaving their jobs if told to return to an office 5 days a week. Finding on the employee questionnaire, around 40% of participants think that a better work, life balance is the top advantage, then leading to greater job satisfaction. Remote work often boosts a team's productivity, Harter (2025) reported in 2024 that working from home boosted the productivity of 51% compared to their work in an office. According to the questionnaire 26.7% say that they are now able to work significantly more productive. By working from home employees are avoiding a long commute with more energy reserved for concentration therefore building efficiency. Franken et al., (2021), Flexibility in working hours is another major advantage, based on the questionnaire 27% of employees considered it valuable to form their working hours around their personal schedule, this flexibility enables and encourages a better well-being.

Alternatively remote work does have its disadvantages, the standout and important issue being social isolation. The report from Buffer (2023) claims that 1 in 5 remote employees experience loneliness and disconnectedness when working from home. Similarly, 20% of participants mentioned isolation as a hurdle. When interactions in person do not occur, it can cause employees to feel and be disconnected and uninvolved with their colleagues and their companies' values. Communication is also a serious issue; it was discovered from the

questionnaire that nearly a third of employees have trouble connecting with colleagues during virtual work. Whillans et al., (2021), issues and waits can occur with digital tools reducing teamwork, reducing efficiently. 30% of remote employees revealed difficulties with communication. It's also a challenge for employees working remotely to maintain their motivation. Together 26.7% of employees polled that it's hard to stay motivated when working from home, as working from home can tempt some to be distracted or procrastinate.

Recommendations for employees

- Employees must come up with and practise a mix of tactics to get the maximum out of remote work and overcome their hurdles
- Bergefurt et al., (2022) stated, the first thing is to create structured work environment there is also ways to set up a dedicated workspace which is free from distractions. Employees who have set up a separate work desk whilst they worked were more productive and could still have a better work, life balance.
- Time management is also very important, employees can prioritise their workload according to time and date of deadlines.
- Remote workers should do their best to connect with their colleagues through virtual meetings or informal check ins as 26.7% said that organizing social activities helped reduce feelings of social isolation.
- Its up to employees to ensure that their technology is reliable, such as a reliable internet connection connected to proper software will help to mitigate technological issues and allow workflow to run smoother.

Manager Perspective

Remote working has massively changed the way managers deal with their team. Afzal, (2024) believes managing remote teams gives flexibility and cost saving but presents challenges that need overcoming. Remote working has a key flexibility benefit for managers to observe teams, when teams are working remotely managers aren't tied to rigid work hours or office locations. This flexibility allows managers to focus more on results they receive from their team rather than day to day inspections. A Gallup (2024) study identified that 56% of managers were happy with this autonomy out of managing performance remotely which made delegation of tasks easier. Another advantage from remote work is productivity monitoring, according to Pumble (2022), around 70% of managers actually said that remote teams are more productive compared to when working in an office. This also ends a commuting time for managers too and enables employees to create a work environment of their liking which then in turn enhances efficiency. Remote work also allows for managers to access a broader talent pool, they can recruit the best without geographical constraints. In the Microsoft, (2022) 85% of managers said remote work helped them hire more diverse teams and it introduced them to new perspectives and skills. However, remote team management comes with a set of challenges. One being a communication gap, Tsipursky (2023) reveals that 30% of managers struggle with effective communication between their remote team. The spontaneity of digital tools doesn't carry the same level clarity as in person interactions, in person misunderstandings and delays are easier to be dealt with. Secondly, there is no direct supervision which gives a greater challenge to observing performance and progress. According to ActivTrak (2023) 85% of managing employees found it challenging supervising remote employees which impacts

accountability. Moreover, remote management is complicated with technological problems, especially the absence of these tools can interrupt work. According to the Gartner (2023) 77% of managers are challenged by not being able to provide the right tools for efficient work.

Recommendations for managers

- To successfully manage a remote team, they must put a few strategies in place. There must be clear expectations in order to stay on track goals and deadlines need to be clearly defined.
- Regular check ins are important, with progress being regularly reviewed which created an opportunity for feedback with weekly or biweekly check ins. The survey added that remote teams got better checks from managers as it created trust and accountability.
- According to Jackson et al., (2022), Slack or Microsoft Teams should also be used by managers as a tool for communication to improve communication and help with time collaboration. These tools give enable power to share ideas, ask questions and collaborate effortlessly from anywhere in the world. To maintain the communication the project specific channels or talks can be set up between the team members.
- Issues related to technology must be resolved. Furthermore, Nayal et al., (2021) states that managers should ensure employees have available to them reliable Internet channels and needed tools and they should provide technical support to the employees needed. It is possible to minimize technology related challenges by providing training on the digital tool.
- Lastly, it is important to engage the team in team building activities so that morale is high. Working remotely can make people feel isolated so managers should make their workers feel connected and should encourage virtual social events such as online coffee break and team building exercises. These activities help to enhance dynamics of team and brings people altogether.

Company/Organizational perspective

Workplaces are increasingly becoming remote, so companies with global offices need to meet these demands, their place in the global market requires flexibility to help employees be productive, support new ideas and promote wellness. The benefits, barriers and recommendations for Unilever for remote work will be discussed in this section.

Reducing costs is a standout benefits for remote work, they have afforded their employees to remotely work therefore saving significant costs such as space, utilities and commutes. In Global Workplace Analytics, (n.d) report, it was found that businesses can save up to \$11,000 per year per employee for remote work. Companies with a global workforce makes these savings more crucial since they can reinvest these savings in other critical areas like innovation, employee development or sustainability projects. Remote work also allows companies to access a wider talent pool, they are also an advocate for diversity and inclusion and these two objectives go hand in hand. This is very valuable as this global talent for remote work companies as they require specific skills and perspectives which come in various parts of the world. Remote work can help diversify a workforce to the extent that they are able to recruit the best from any location. Flexiadao.com, (2024) showed that 36% of remote workers at Unilever felt that the companies remote work increased the way the

employees are valued and empowered to contribute their unique skills. Employee retention is also another benefit. Flexible working options are increasingly becoming the deciding factor for employees to stay at the employer. Degnan (2025), discovered 46% of remote workers would quit their jobs if forced to go back to the office. Since Unilever has a strong focus on their employee's well-being and work life balance it used remote work to retain top talent, especially in geographical regions where flexibility is key in employment decisions.

Whilst its beneficial, it comes with its complications. A major issue is keeping company culture alive which is crucial for its smooth running in terms of targets and success and employee and manager satisfaction. Remote working, however, makes it difficult to maintain these values when employees are not physically present, 30% of employees. Lynch (2023) reported feeling disconnected from their organization when working remotely, a problem that needs confronting to ensure that employees feel engaged and aligned with the company's mission and values. Another challenge is being able to keep defined objectives for the year and their effect on employees. Monitoring and evaluating employee performance is complicated in remote work and even worse when a company has a diverse team in different time zones. As stated by Vasudevan & Senthil Kumar (2025), remote tracking of team performance has been difficult for managers in global operations. Digital tools that help a team communicate with one another don't provide the immediacy of in person feedback which directly affects employee productivity and motivation. There is also a technological barrier, whilst companies can invest into robust digital infrastructure, providing connectivity and easy access for the right tools for remote workers remains a challenge, as 22% of employees reported technical problems like unreliable internet connections and troubles using digital tools. This is because technology is not perfect no matter how much is invested into it and there will be some bumps in the road when its so heavily relied on because of remote work. When problems do arise it can cause set backs for the whole companies such as delayed work and targets.

Recommendations for Companies

- To overcome these challenges and maximise remote work opportunities, first presented by Varshney, (2022) it's important to strengthen communication at all levels. It'll help maintain employee engagement and help strengthen communication on all levels. It will maintain employee engagement and make employees and managers to feel connected to the company, by having regular virtual check-ins. Unilever's leadership can encourage team building activities and virtual social opportunities to encourage relationship formation amongst remote workers and maintain their brand.
- There should be aims to create clear, defined work policies, such as standard work hours, message protocol and performance expectations to check employees are pulling the same string. It'll also contribute to fairness and inclusivity amongst a global workforce (if they have one) as it puts in place transparent remote work policies.

Conclusion

This report seeks to examine the impact of remote work from all perspectives with its advantages and disadvantages including an example case of Unilever.

From an employee's point of view the benefits include a better work life balance, productivity and flexibility. But there were some challenges like social isolation, communication issues and motivation. From a manager's perspective the benefits include flexibility and access to a wider talent pool, but on the other hand makes communication evaluation and maintaining a team dynamic a problem. Finally, from a companies perspective, Unilever reaps cost savings, a wider talent pool and increased employee satisfaction and retention but has to deal with losses of a company culture, employee performance management and technological barriers.

The lesson learned is that remote work requires drastic changes to the management practises, technological infrastructure and the organisational culture. To minimise this stress of the remote work transition, and the challenges that emerge with it. Companies must take initiative and make the space that supports communication, accountability and employees involvement. Unilever is advised to invest more into digital tools that will enable for improved remote working strategies for better remote working experience and collaboration. Performance management systems that must be in place to ensure clear and check performance on a regular basis with proper feedback loop in order to hold people accountable. Moreover, establishing remote work structure policies will help employees stay connected with the company and its values by contributing to clarity on what they are expected to do, their responsibilities and so on. With these areas addressed, Unilever would be able to further perfect their remote work practices, keeping their workforce productive and involved. And above all be consistent with their strong commitment to diversity, inclusion and innovation.

Reflection

In reflection of this essay, the Covid 19 pandemic has rapidly changed the way we view and feel about our working lives through remote work. Remotely working was a response to a worldly change and has remained post covid. This is mainly because of the advantages it provides such as flexibility and employee satisfaction, but as a whole has come with its downsides. Remote work is largely a benefit for employees with managers and the company itself such as Unilever taking more of the disadvantages onto their plate. However, the reason that companies have allowed remote work to stay must be because they see real benefits from offering it such as money saving. Alternatively, when you have employees who have had the experience of working from home it may prove a challenge to get them back into an office. With studies like The Kelly (2025) that suggested that in future almost half of employees would likely consider leaving their jobs if told to return to the office. Upon reflection through my research and writing I believe that the push for remote work remaining today has been mainly a push from employee. Even though managers and the companies itself do see a benefit and employees do experience a downside to working remotely for example isolation. Remote work is largely for employee satisfaction in both their working life and greater satisfaction in their personal lives with remote work enabling them to have a greater work life balance.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Demographics:

1. Age:
 - 18-25
 - 26-35
 - 36-45
 - 46-55
 - 56 and above
2. Role/Position:
 - Employee
 - Manager
 - Senior Manager/Executive
 - Business Owner
 - Other: _____

Main Questions:

3. How long have you been working remotely
 - Less than six months
 - Six months – one year
 - One to two years
 - Two to five years
 - More than 5 years

4. What do you consider the biggest advantage of remote working for employees?
 - Better work life balance
 - Increased productivity
 - Flexibility in working hours
 - Reduced commute time
 - Other: _____
5. What's the biggest challenge you have faced whilst working remotely?
 - Communication and collaboration issues
 - Lack of motivation or engagement
 - Difficulty in work life balance
 - Technological issues
 - Other: _____
6. For managers, what's the most significant difficulty in managing a remote team?
 - Lack of face-to-face interaction
 - Ensuring accountability and trust
 - Technological issues
 - Providing feedback and support
 - Other: _____
7. For managers, how does remote work impact the overall productivity of employees?
 - Significantly increases productivity
 - Somewhat increases productivity
 - No change in productivity
 - Somewhat decreases productivity
 - Significantly decreases productivity
8. What tools or software do you use for management of tasks or communication while working remotely?
 - Zoom/teams/skype
 - Slack
 - Email
 - Project management tools (such as Trello)
 - Other _____
9. How often do you feel the need to engage with team building activities or social interactions while working remotely?
 - Frequently
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
10. What recommendations would you give for improving remote management practises in your workplace?
 - More structured communication

- Better work life balance support
- Providing more professional development opportunities
- More team building activities
- Other: _____