



WORK FROM HOME

A POLICY PRESCRIPTION

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ABBREVIATIONS

BPM.....	Business Process Management
COVID-19.....	Corona virus Disease-2019
EFI.....	Employers' Federation of India
FTEs.....	Fixed Term Employees
HR.....	Human Resources
NASSCOM.....	National Association of Software and Service Companies
IBM.....	International Business Machines Corporation
ICT.....	Information and Communication Technology
IMF.....	International Monetary Fund
IT.....	Information Technology
I-T.....	Income Tax
MD.....	Managing Director
PTEs.....	Part-Time Employees
REs.....	Regular Employees
SIEPR.....	Stanford Institute For Economic Policy Research
TCS.....	Tata Consultancy Services
US.....	United States
WFH.....	Work From Home

Preface



The outbreak of the newly discovered Coronavirus and the subsequent lockdowns and work from home imperatives led to a strong disruption across all sectors and gave a hard time to all the stakeholders involved in the economy be it Government, Employers or even Employees. As the world of work came to a standstill after the pandemic struck the globe, Governments, Employers as well as Employees scrambled over thoughts of possible measures to contain the virus and at the same time ensure continuity of work. Since the disease is highly contagious, Ministry of Corporate Affairs advised all the corporates to implement WFH policies and limit the spread of Covid-19. As the

continuation of work is important to keep the economy bustling, in such endeavors employers started rolling out work from home for their employees to facilitate a smooth transition from office based work to virtual collaboration.

It has been more than 4 months since the country went into lockdown and it is plausible to assume that WFH is going to stay here. Bearing in mind the change and turmoil since past few months, EFI is ever committed to improve collaboration, networking and helping its members in every way possible, so we come out of this economic storm stronger than ever.

In line with priority at hand and work disruption that many are facing because of remote working, EFI presents to its members a WFH document which is a policy prescription designed to help our members to effectively implement WFH arrangement for a longer duration in their respective organization and to ensure their operations are disrupted to a minimum. This policy document will help our members to lay down relevant guidelines in the interest of both employers and employees. We have tried to inculcate all the key and major areas to be looked after to the best of our knowledge and efforts at the same time seeking an idea from ILOs WFH document.

It gives us immense pleasure to note that EFI has been able to produce such a policy prescription. This is the result of immense efforts made since the onslaught of pandemic, seeking secondary data, evaluating multitude of research papers and analysis done on the subject. In this report we present benefits as well as concerns arising out of WFH arrangement. Although, few studies on the subject have been done in the past but those results do not entirely extend to the current context. In this regard, we have tried to incorporate some of the recent changes and responses being available out there in the public domain to make the document more robust.

I take this opportunity to extend my admiration to the team involved in developing this document in a timely manner when it is highly relevant.

M. S. Unnikrishnan

President EFI

1. INTRODUCTION

The world has witnessed, and continue to do so, a once in a century crisis in the form of Covid-19 pandemic. It has not only resulted in unprecedented fatalities and infections among people of almost all nationalities but also wreaked havoc in every sphere of life, including business. In the absence of a vaccine and highly infectious nature of the pathogen of Covid-19 coupled with the strict guidelines issued by World Health Organisation had forced the governments to take some of the sternest measures in the form of nationwide lockdowns to arrest, as far as possible, the spread of the virus so to save maximum lives.

Restriction on movement and the necessity of maintaining proper physical distance among people to prevent the spread of the virus has ensured that businesses during the lockdown period were and post unlocking phase will not be as usual. Nearly every organisation is caught unprepared to respond to this extraordinary challenge. Many employers, if not all, are trying to explore the Work From Home (WFH) as a potential substitute to prevailing work arrangements in foreseeable future. Hence, Employers' Federation of India (EFI), which is serving the cause of Employers' since 1933, decided to come up with a document on WFH to facilitate its members, clients and partners regarding WFH to respond to the prevailing crisis or for those who see the same as an opportunity to replace the current jobs or co-opt WFH along with the current working pattern as a hybrid model.

2. WHAT IS WFH?

The unprecedented crisis of Covid-19 has ensured that be it, employers or employees, everyone has some sort of idea about WFH, however, it largely varies based on different perceptions. In academics also there is no consensus over one definition of WFH. WFH is often interchangeably used as Telework, however, there lie some inherent differences between the two. WFH can be construed as a subset of Telework, as telework not only includes the work performed from home but also the work which can be performed while travelling.

WFH is an alternate way of organising task that may be defined as the work which can be performed from home (away from the traditional workplace such as factories or offices) and enables employees to access their labour activities through the use of information technology. (Nilles, 1997; Perez et al., 2003). It may be for a temporary period or for the long-term durations as an alternate to the traditional way of doing work.¹

¹ https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_745024/lang-en/index.htm

We should be clear with one fact that WFH is not a new concept, despite its current popularity, especially after the onslaught of the prevailing pandemic. World of Work is dynamic, and it goes through transformation regularly. However, there are some epoch moments which revolutionizes the process of work and brings a tectonic shift in the way the work was done before. One such moment was the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Before the Industrial Revolution, works were mostly family enterprises and were performed mostly at home. India's world-famous handicraft, jewellery making of stones, carving work in ivory, wood, stone and marble, work of ironsmith, spice production all were family enterprises and hence performed at home.

Post Industrial Revolution, the production process shifted from household to big factories and workers moved from their home-based enterprise to the factory shop floor. This phenomenon continued for over 200 hundred years.

Another watershed moment came in the world of work after the introduction and widespread use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that allowed the reversal of the process which had started during the Industrial Revolution and people again started turning towards home for work.

3. BENEFITS OF WFH:

Even before many companies were forced to implement WFH in an unprepared manner, others had some sort of experience before the pandemic. Service-based companies especially the IT and Software firms such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, International Business Machines (IBM), and Cognizant etc. have already used this measure since quite some time. However, they were not entertained as a right or entitlement to the employee rather largely conceived as a privilege and was granted under appropriate circumstances to employees whose job responsibilities were suited for such an arrangement.

There have been studies to substantiate that working from home can benefit the employees, employers and to the society as a whole (Perez et al., 2003; Buciuniene et al, 2001).

Some of the prominent benefits are:

Benefit for employers

- WFH can result in improved productivity than the conventional working style (Fonner and Roloff, 2010; Golden and Veiga, 2008; Bloom et al 2014)
- Reduction in turnover rate (Stavrou et al, 2010; Bloom et al 2014)
- Reduction in organisational cost (Choudhury et al., 2018)
- Employees can be hired from a wider talent pool as WFH will be unrestrained from geographic conditioning.
- In case of some undesired event, such as any natural calamities, distributed workforce ensures continuity in operation and hence reduces the risks.

Benefit for employees

- It helps in reduction of commuting time: This is specifically important in the Indian context as its people spend on average 7% of the day in commuting² (Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012);
- Reduced travel and other associated costs (Morgan, 2004)
- The lower level of stress in employees and better work-life balance (Fonner and Roloff, 2010; Bloom et al 2014)
- Increased autonomy for individuals (Harpaz, 2002)
- Increased family and leisure time (Ammons and Markham, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007)
- Increased job satisfaction (Gurstein, 2001; Pratt, 1999)
- Less distracted by co-workers (Golden and Veiga, 2008)

Benefit for the society

- It helps in mitigation of air pollution (Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996). It holds special importance in Indian context as 21 of the world's 30 most polluted cities are in India and vehicular pollution constitutes a major chunk of it.³
- Less Traffic congestion: Indian roads are notoriously known for heavy traffic congestion. In many of its many major cities, the average time taken to reach to the workplace is highest in the world.⁴

²<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/indians-spend-7-of-their-day-getting-to-their-office/articleshow/70954228.cms>

³ <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/21-of-the-world-s-30-most-polluted-cities-in-india-says-new-report-11582637143751.html>

⁴ <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/bengaluru-four-other-indian-cities-in-world-s-worst-traffic-list-11580365873632.html>

- Less pressure on Metropolitan Cities: Migration towards big cities has resulted in overcrowding and unplanned development. WFH will help to reduce the pressure on natural resources, services and amenities from big cities due to reverse migration.
- Better inclusive society: WFH arrangement will provide a unique opportunity for women as well as specially abled section of population, hitherto not fully integrated in the workforce, which will make society more inclusive.

Voice from industry

“Unlike an office environment, there is no “one-size-fits-all” when it comes to WFH as each person has some unique set of challenges and sometimes advantages too. It’s important to be mindful of the similar situation that others in the team might be facing and be prepared to creatively adapt to situations as they emerge”.

- Mr. R. NANDA (CHRO, Tata Chemicals Ltd.)



4. CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH WFH

In the time of pandemic, WFH has become increasingly popular and also seen by many as a long-term alternative to the traditional way of doing work. However, there can be numerous pitfalls associated with it. Nicholas Bloom, a senior fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR), has alarmed the world that “This will create a productivity disaster for firms”⁵. As per him, WFH needs to have certain basic prerequisites and necessary conditions to make it effective and successful. Challenges will be faced at both ends i.e. Employers as well as Employees end. Some of the major concerns will be:

⁵ <https://news.stanford.edu/2020/03/30/productivity-pitfalls-working-home-age-covid-19/>

Concern for employers

- Data Security, a threat to Intellectual Property Rights and issues of Cyber-security are among the major concerns for the industries considering WFH arrangement.
- Measuring productivity and performance management is also going to be changed in case of WFH arrangement. The prevailing notion among managers is that if they can't directly observe their subordinates while working, evaluation and giving constructive feedback will be seriously hampered (Kurland & Bailey, 1999). Therefore, Companies need to invest in managers to equip them in measuring performance and giving feedback to their subordinates. This will be an added cost initially for the organisations but in the long run, it will foster growth and higher productivity and engagement.
- Trust, synergy innovation and problem-solving: Pioneer research of Nicholas Bloom suggests that face-to-face meetings are essential for developing new ideas and keeping staff motivated and focused. (Bloom et al, 2013)
- Induction program will be a challenge for new employees.
- The business process management (BPM) firms use the same system/computers etc. in different shifts. This will not be possible in case of WFH. This will lead to increase in cost.

Concern for employees

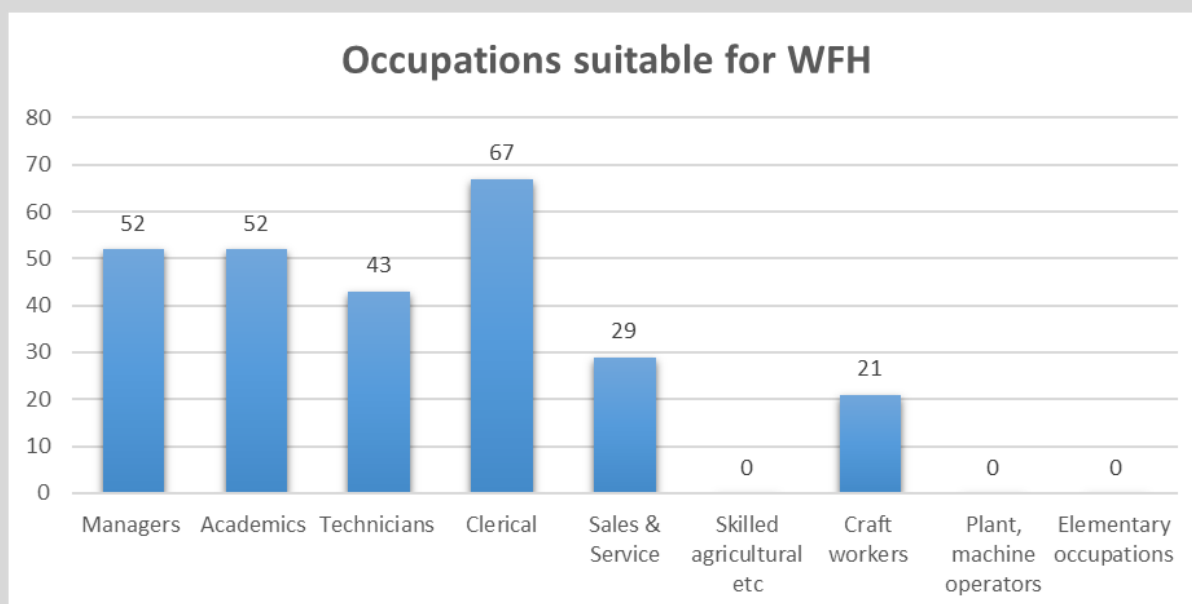
- Internet connectivity and interrupted power supply.
- Issues associated with Female Employees in India: In laws, sick family members, household chores need additional attention.
- Managing younger kid: Perhaps the most challenging aspect of working from home for parents with younger children is managing their kids. The closure of schools and transition to “distance learning” for students has forced many working parents to take on the additional job of a full-time teacher. One requirement for a successful work-from-home program for any business is the requirement that children are in school or daycare, Bloom says.
- Difficulty in distinguishing between work and home time.
- Feeling of loneliness, anxiety and depression due to social isolation.
- Some employees may be reluctant to telecommute because of the perception that working remotely hinders promotional opportunities (Chapman et al., 1995).

Concern for society

- Domestic violence: Although WFH provides immense opportunities for women to get integrated in the workforce, however, there is a surge in domestic violence cases when they work from home.⁶
- Increased isolation: One of the negative consequences of working from home is that the social connect among employees are missing and staying indoor can aggravate the mental health issues for many.

5. JOBS SUITED FOR WORK FROM HOME:

Due to several limitations associated with nature of the job, it is evident that not all work can be performed from home. In research as well as in practice there are not many studies to show how many fractions of the total workforce can perform their task by WFH arrangements. However, there has been some recent development in this direction and through newer research, we can do some predictive analysis. One of the studies was conducted by the economists from the University of Chicago. Their research was based on the American Work Force and according to their estimation, 37% of the jobs of the US can be performed effectively from home. A similar study was conducted by some Norwegian economists and they almost came with the similar number and as per them 36% of the total work can be done through WFH, however, there was significant variation in each category of work.⁷



⁶ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/health/covid-19-highlights-need-to-protect-domestic-abuse-victims-help-get-their-lives-on-track/story-NnWPBo5dYhZEn2Or6ECarM.html>

⁷ <https://news.stanford.edu/2020/03/30/productivity-pitfalls-working-home-age-covid-19/>

It is apparent from the study that Managerial, Academics, Clerical jobs are most suited for WFH whereas skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, plant, machine operators, and assemblers have almost no scope for WFH.

We have to be very careful that these data are from high-income countries and can't be replicated in the Indian context in entirety where all the necessary infrastructures for WFH have recently started to evolve. However, at least, we can draw some parallels.

6. CASE STUDY

One of the pioneer research work, to demonstrate that WFH arrangement is not only more productive than the conventional way of doing work but also employees in WFH arrangement are more satisfied and less likely to change their jobs, has been published by Nicholas Bloom.

What was the experiment?

The research was conducted in a Chinese Travel Company "Ctrip" and performed on its Call Centre employees. The research period was for nine months in which half the volunteers were allowed to WFH and the rest continued in the office as a controlled group.

Findings of the research:

- Those who were working from home performed 13.5% more calls than those who came to the office, which is tantamount to an extra workday per week!
- \$1,900 per employee for the nine months was saved by Ctrip on furniture and space-related cost
- 50% drop in attrition rate.⁸
- Mr Bloom attributes to the rise in productivity to several factors. According to him "...One-third of the productivity increase, we think, was due to having a quieter environment, which makes it easier to process calls... The other two-thirds can be attributed to the fact that the people at home worked more hours. They started earlier, took shorter breaks, and worked until the end of the day. They had no commute. They did not run errands at lunch. Sick days for employees working from home plummeted."⁹
- This experiment was stretched for almost nine months and hence, Mr Bloom says that "it wasn't driven only by some initial burst of enthusiasm."

⁸ <https://news.stanford.edu/2020/03/30/productivity-pitfalls-working-home-age-covid-19/>

⁹ <https://hbr.org/2014/01/to-raise-productivity-let-more-employees-work-from-home>

- Those who have established social life such as older workers, married workers, parents prefer WFH over those who are young, newer generation feel that their social life is more connected to the office.
- Work from home is not for everyone. At Ctrip, 1000 employees were given the choice to opt for WFH. Half of them opted for it and once when the nine-month period got over, half of those who had volunteered withdrew from WFH option and were willing to return to the office.
- Video call is a more effective way to communicate than the voice call.

However, we must be careful that on the surface level results look very encouraging for WFH, we cannot oversimplify the findings in the entire gamut of industries.

Reasons:

First, Ctrip is a service-based industry, a call centre, where measuring productivity is easy.

Second, the WFH option was given to those employees who had a separate home office where any other person, apart from the employee, was not allowed to enter during official hours. In India, to have that much of space in the house, especially in congested and expensive cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, etc is very rare.

Third, in the later interview, Mr. Bloom also pointed out that many employees who opted for WFH “...reported feeling isolated, lonely and depressed at home...”. This suggests that an extended period of work can also bring Mental Health Crisis among employees.

Fourth, it was not absolute WFH as at least one day in a week, employees were expected to visit the office premise.

Hence, we have seen both sides of spectrum of this experimentation and terming WFH gainful or detrimental to organisation without looking in the context will be naïve. Each industry is different with different business models. Generalisation will be futile.

7. POLICY PRESCRIPTION FOR WFH

Covid-19 has brought most of the economic activities at sudden standstill barring some essential services in India, hence WFH, for many of the companies, was not a voluntary choice, rather a compulsion. Human Resource departments did not have detailed policies for WFH. Business Managers were untrained and inexperienced to perform their tasks of implementation and evaluation. Caught unprepared, most of the organisations tried to devise ad-hoc arrangements to implement WFH. However, in the long term to reap the maximum benefits out of WFH, companies need to be strategic, in compliance with the law/ principles arising thereof, transparent and fair that too without compromising the productivity.

Hence a sound policy formulation is a sine qua non. Here at EFI, we have members, clients and partners from nearly every sectors of industry and the policy guidelines suggested by us will be generic in nature. Organisations need to tailor out what suits best to their requirements based on the ground realities. Every company must have a policy document, formulated by HR based on consultation with different business functions, which can be a guiding principle for WFH. Followings could be some of the essential elements which should find its place in WFH policy document.

Applicability, Eligibility and Exclusions:

It is expected that WFH will be new necessity in many areas of the business in the post-pandemic period and companies need to decide which section of the workforce will be eligible for WFH. It is an absolute fact that not all employees will be allowed to WFH and companies will mostly choose a hybrid model. For example, companies can keep WFH option reserved for Regular Employees (REs), Part-Time Employees (PTEs) or Fixed Term Employees (FTEs) at the same time third party contractual employees can be excluded from this benefit. Since the nature of work is continuously evolving and the emergence of newer forms of service providers such as- online platform workers, on-call workers, freelancers or the gig workers are on rise, hence organisations need to devise policies for WFH to cater to these categories of workers based on nature of the jobs and confidentiality concerns.

Types of WFH arrangement:

To meet the different objectives, WFH can be categorised in the following sets

Need-based WFH

This arrangement can be availed by the employees on need basis. For example, to meet a health situation where an employee needs to attend his/her family member at home and simultaneously they can perform their tasks. However, this can't be extended beyond a threshold limit. The threshold could be 2 days to 5 days without the prior approval of their managers.

Prolonged WFH:

In this arrangement, an employee can work from home for an extended period of time. This extended period can be more than 4 weeks or so.

Regular WFH:

In this, employees are given the option to continue WFH on a regular basis.

Working Conditions and hours of work

This can be one of the most important constituents for the policy document of any organisation concerning WFH. It is recommended to establish a defined and consistent WFH schedule, which includes the number of days and hours of work in a week. Having some software tools or web applications for timekeeping of employees is highly desirable and employees should ensure that it must be updated on daily basis or maybe at the end of the week depending on what organisations deem fit to implement. Since there can be many disruptors at home, the organisation can ask the employees for a workspace free from background noise, household interruptions and distractions. The employee working from home must be medically fit to work and they have to be absolutely clear that it is not an alternative for medical leave or any other leave.

Data Security and confidentiality guidelines:

Working outside the physical boundaries of the offices/factories will surely increase confidentiality and information security risks. In a blog "*Estimating Cyber Risk for the Financial Sector*" former MD of International Monetary Fund (IMF), Christine Lagarde had warned that "The average potential losses could reach half of banks' net income in extreme

cyber-attacks”¹⁰. What is true for the financial sector is also valid for other sectors. This is one of the prime reasons why companies have some reservation with regards to WFH.

However, a sound set of guidelines can mitigate the risk of information security. Generally, all the organisations have a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement signed by the employees and it is expected by them to abide by it. All those confidentiality clauses can remain in force even during WFH and some additional clause, based on needs, can further be added as enhanced security measures. Few of them could be:

- Employees should work only in a private, secured work area and they should abide by all data encryption, protection standards.
- They should not send any confidential data of the organisation or clients through personal email.
- Employees should not use unauthorized software particularly for the storage, processing, or transmission of confidential data.
- Price sensitive information should not be disclosed to any third party.
- Desktop/Laptop screen should not be left unattended even at home.
- In case of any potential security breach or loss of information, employees should immediately inform the information security officer or other concerned designated person of the organisation.
- If any family member of the employee is working in a competing organisation, the employee should inform the same to HR. EFI recommends that policy should be formulated in such a way that bars employee for WFH if any of the immediate family member is working in competing organisation.

Factors to be considered for rewarding WFH

WFH arrangement is an alternative to the traditional way of working, however, one should keep in mind that this arrangement should not deter productivity of the organisation and hence some defining factors should always be considered before implementing WFH. Few questions can be asked in this regard:

- Can the work be performed remotely, or does it need the employees to be physically present at the office/factory?
- Does the work require physical observation by a manager?

¹⁰ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/estimating-cyber-risk-financial-sector-christine-lagarde/?midToken=AQGosYrDcE4dGw&fromEmail=fromEmail>

- Currently are there any concerns regarding employee's performance, productivity, attendance and reliability?
- What is the track record of employees when they were given WFH?

Communication:

This is one of the most critical aspects to be looked at while formulating policies for WFH. It can be a make or break for any organisation. Productivity and efficiency can be maintained only when the objective of the organisation and the employees are aligned and this alignment should always be measured, modified, monitored through continuous feedbacks of the performance based on some measurable outcomes. It should be informed to the employees that they should remain available on emails and on phone calls as required during the office hours and should alert the manager in case of unavailability. They should also check all official communication channels to remain updated. Setting informal channels of communication within employees can be a means to improve team spirit. Proper guidelines should be devised by the management and shared with the employees for matters concerning the interval of time for replying to emails, the lingua franca and modes to be followed for official communiqué. Firms should also issue guidelines that improper, harsh and explicit words along with religious, sexist, castiest, racial aspersion must be avoided.

Ensuring enabling infrastructure

Remote working is exceedingly dependent on many physical infrastructures such as seamless internet connectivity, uninterrupted power supply, availability of the Laptop/Desktop etc. It's for the organisation that they should either provide or should reimburse for these basic amenities to their employees. As the onslaught of pandemic unfolded, many organisations have adopted benevolent character and changed the landscape of HR policies. Few of them provided Air Conditions¹¹ and ergonomic chairs and table to their employees which is win-win for both the stakeholders.

It is recommended to employers that they need to be more accommodative in dealing with infrastructural requirements.

¹¹<https://www.thehindu.com/business/new-additions-to-the-hr-lexicon/article31903504.ece>

Performance

As WFH employees will be away from the sight of managers, as discussed earlier in the document, many supervisors will find it difficult to measure their productivity as well as provide them with an appropriate feedback. However, it is extremely important that managers do their best in analysing performance in justifiable, objective, and empathetic way because if performance is not evaluated justifiably it may be the source of discontent and can result in potential turnovers and loss of business. Performance reviews are also used to support decisions related to training and career development, compensation, transfers, promotions, and reductions-in-force or employment termination.

Hence, clear policy guidelines for both managers as well as for employees are necessary to avoid confusion. Companies can define that pay, policies surrounding compensation, benefits, eligibility for promotion, expense and travel policies remain the same as usual or different as they may deem appropriate than the existing policies.

To embrace the change, organisations need to innovate, improvise, and have to be agile in their model of dealing with employees. A paradigm shift from Control to the Empowerment management model led by trust between employer and employees is essential to enhance the performance of employees. Organizations need to get creative to develop policies that will work best for them.

Such objectives set by the management should be SMART- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Organizations should first decide what they want to measure in quantifiable metrics depending upon the nature of work like in case of sales and marketing possible metrics could be call volume, sales per respondent. Setting these “Key Performance Indicators” and communicating the same to the employees reduces the uncertainty as employees will be aware of what is expected of him and will be rewarded accordingly. At the same time qualitative aspect must be taken care of. For example: if companies believe in fair, transparent and ethical business conduct, then taking or giving bribe on quid pro quo basis by employees should be condemned and penalized, and provision for which should be mentioned in policy document.

Employee Engagement:

The sudden and abrupt transition from physical to remote working is difficult and employees are bound to feel little lost and demotivated which can significantly hamper the internal communication of the organization and its effectiveness. The lunchtime and tea/coffee breaks, which facilitated impromptu, yet powerful informal communication and small talks among employees, had a vital role to play in team and trust-building. Now that this forum will be absent in WFH, companies need to devise substitutes for those informal talks and discussions. Although, there are several reports which show that employees working remotely have shown better collaborative score than those working in the office premises, but none of those researches were done in the context of a global pandemic.¹² However, organisations by adopting newer ways can at least maintain a flow of communication and relation among employees, if not fully replicate it. At the same time organisations need to be keep in mind that employee engagements should be formulated in such a way that it caters to the requirement of different demography and various roles of the workforce.

Some of the measures that organisation can take to enhance employee engagement-

- Virtual meetings should be conducted periodically within inter and intra functions.
- Mentorship program can be a method to engage employees. In this, a set of mentors can be defined under whom mentee will be assigned.
- Achievements of the employees should be published in different communication platform. This helps in boosting the morale.
- Arrange regular virtual sessions, may be monthly or quarterly, with senior management. This will help in connecting and motivating the employees at all the levels.
- Grievance redressal mechanism should be properly placed, where individuals can lodge their complaints without hesitation.
- Develop blogs and newsletters to update the team about what organisation is up to.
- Organisations can also conduct periodic surveys to get the pulse of employees thinking, feeling, and sources of motivation, however survey should be objective, short and not too frequent.
- Online fun games, quizzes, online courses can help in filling those gaps.
- Send physical presents/gifts such as coupons etc. whenever possible.
- Make a dedicated group on any social media platform where employees can share their thoughts, photos, blogs, and the occasional contest could also be organised.

¹² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/scottedinger/2020/06/20/how-leaders-can-increase-engagement-while-people-are-working-from-home/#4d712f24a5e5>

- Send breaktime videos occasionally to encourage employees to take a pause from work and enjoy the video.

Health Insurance

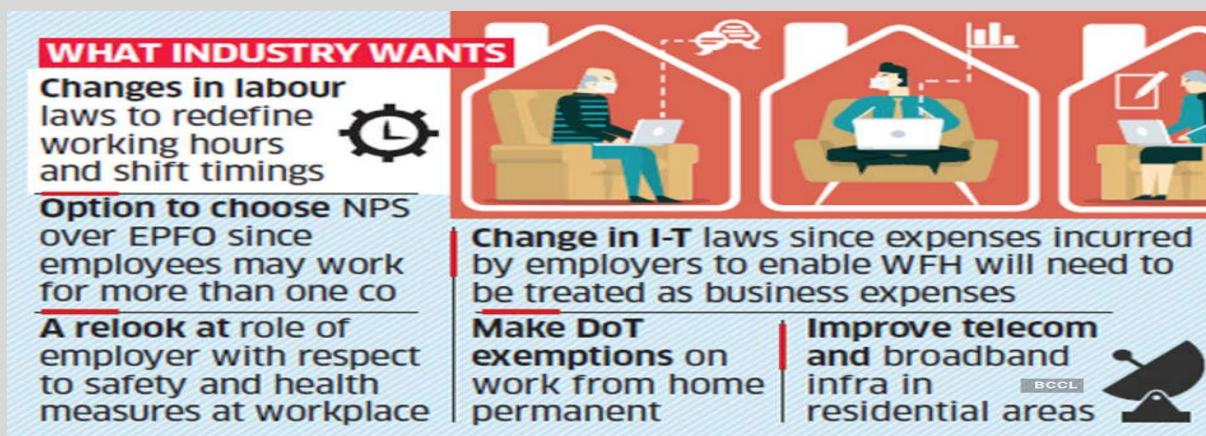
Although employees will not be at the premises of the organisations regularly in WFH arrangement, however for employers it is pertinent to medically insure them. Companies can continue the existing health policies or can change according to the requirements to meet the need of the new landscape.

8. EXPECTATIONS FROM THE GOVERNMENT

Government will be a key stakeholder if India is seriously thinking about future of work and WFH arrangement and the success or failure is highly dependent on how it responds. There are two major reasons for this

1. Government is the largest employer in India
2. The task of policy formulation and compliance regulation lies with them

There has been enough debate on how Indian laws are colonial, rigid, bureaucratic, difficult to comply, business unfriendly and out of sync with current realities. The much touted and newly introduced labour codes were seen as an answer to these criticisms. However, unfortunately they are also silent on WFH. There are several measures that government should take to encourage WFH and some of them has been recommended by the NASSCOM and can be seen through infographic.



Source: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/ites/it-seeks-changes-in-laws-as-work-from-home-set-to-become-norm/articleshow/75684748.cms>

Hence government plays a pivotal role in making WFH a success story. Too much bureaucracy and red-tapism will discourage the WFH.

9. CONCLUSION

The vicious web of Covid-19 is far from disappearing anytime soon and this public health emergency has already resulted in the economic downturn in almost all the nations. However, as every economic shockwave leaves its legacy, this financial jolt induced by Covid-19 will surely leave its deep footprint. The massive experimentation on WFH and learnings out of it will be one such thing to be looked after. How demonetisation, which was also disruptive and came out of the blue and led to upshot in the digital transactions, we can also expect similar kind of watershed change, or at least initiation of important change, in the form of WFH when the dust of pandemic will settle. If tapped properly, it will create tremendous new prospects for the businesses. According to one Deloitte report¹³ Female labour force participation in India is just 26%, which is abysmally low in comparison to even some South Asian countries. Unemployment rate¹⁴ among differently abled persons in India is more than 70%, which is very high. WFH provides a unique opportunity for the organisations to make their workforce more inclusive by increasing the participation of the left-out group.

The success of WFH will largely be dependent on the collaboration of different stakeholders. Employers have to define clear objectives and expected outcomes from employees. They also need to formulate suitable policies to implement it. The need for remote working will raise the demand for automation, collaborative tools and cloud computing. It is essential to keep employees motivated and enthused to achieve this future together. This could mean adjustments and modifications in recruitment practices, rewards and recognition policies, engagement initiatives, exit processes, and other different processes.

Employees have to be more proactive than ever before to deliver in this arrangement because the talent pool in WFH will be tremendously large, varied and extremely competitive.

Lastly government has to play most significant role by providing WFH friendly policies and by enabling infrastructure across the length and breadth of the country.

¹³<https://www.thehindu.com/business/female-labour-force-participation-in-india-fell-to-26-in-2018-report/article26467857.ece>

¹⁴ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/india-inc-has-long-way-to-go-in-employing-disabled-people/articleshow/72449585.cms?from=mdr>

Adopting new work model will need a lot of improvisation and changes. However, it is well-established fact that generally change is being resisted by humans as it makes them uncomfortable. Yet, successful organisations or individuals are quick to adopt it. Finally, to quote Mark Sanborn, past president for the National Speakers Association, US - “Your success in life is not based on your ability to simply change. It is based on your ability to change faster than your competition, customers and business.”



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