

Work from Home should be assimilated as routine part of our work-life; Here's why

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Written by [Guest](#)

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Imposed work-life patterns during COVID could provide insights to change work policies for a win-win situation.

By Dr. Neetu Purohit,

Amid all the pessimism that COVID-19 generated, it also provided optimism by dispelling many myths about possible ways of living and working. The lockdowns and containments halted us in homes but there was no halt in the delivery of the work assignments. It made us realize that the limitations were more in mind and imagination and gave us an opportunity to experiment new work ways which were never thought of as a possibility.

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People were truly able to enjoy family-life, married women could stay with parents in some other town for longer without worry of office and leaves; away from the hustle-bustle of cities, grandchildren could get exposure to family rituals, customs and values with their parents and grandparents in their small hometown. People were able to pursue their spiritual interests, learn new things, revive their almost forgotten hobbies- all simultaneously with the work. More than lockdown, it was lock-down driven work from home which facilitated this aspirated experience.

It is perhaps true that work from home/anywhere cannot be the dominant way of working for most professions, particularly those with direct public dealing. The point is whether exposure and experience of work possibilities which were earlier not thought of holds any possibility of continuation in some measure even when COVID scare settles. Can there be an integration of old and new styles of working? Work decisions are personally determined but organizational policies related to office personnel influence them to a great extent. It's common knowledge that many women leave, rather forced to quit their career due to family-related responsibilities and lack of organizational policies to support women in continuing work; some people take early retirement to serve their elderly parents.

Imposed work-life patterns during COVID could provide insights to change work policies for a win-win situation. Organizations need optimum work and that is possible from motivated staff, an employee friendly move is going to motivate staff and increase commitment. Based on the experience, some policy level planning could be done for allowing the employees to work from home/anywhere for some period per month or yearly basis. This will be a favour for people who wish to provide care to some ailing member of the family-children, spouse or parents or spend time with their elderly parents or some other pressing thing. With a growing elderly population, this will bring peace into the lives of so many working professionals who want to take care of their parents, when they are unwell and need support. This might also positively check loss of experienced and competent staff to home responsibilities.

With inability to distinguish between common cold and COVID-19 till a test is conducted, quarantine is recommended, regular work and office life would mean either taking leave or taking the risk of infecting many others to save one's leaves. However, if the system of on-line teaching and working from home is continued /allowed for some days in a year, such issues would be appropriately handled without unnecessary risk of transmission.

Long before [COVID 19](#), Finland had floated the idea of reducing the week to 4 days and a few experiments across the globe supported it. [Microsoft](#) Japan tested 4-day weeks and productivity shot up by 40%. A study by Henley Business school reported that 77 percent of the workers reported that a 4-day week improved their quality of life. The studies conducted for the lockdown period also did not report great loss to productivity. All these studies support a policy level change in favour of work from home in this part of the world too. To begin with, it might seem radical for a country like [India](#) where systems are not streamlined and a fair assessment of expected output in a day in different sectors is not available. While it should not be forgotten that even without any concrete assessment system, work was delivered, this is the time when willing organizations could develop some framework to assess the expected output on a working day, irrespective of the place of work and work-from-home or rather work from anywhere could be allowed. This will also facilitate implementation of flexi hours in office, which too is not a reality for most offices in India. The need of the hour is to broaden the perception for developing HR policies in such a way that work does not suffer and those who are not required to be necessarily at their workstations at predetermined times to deliver work could be allowed a greater fulfilling work life.

(The author is Associate Professor, of IIHMR University. Views expressed are personal and do not reflect the official position or policy of the Financial Express Online.)