

5A Lam Chin Pang, Steven

Working from Home: A boon or a bane?

Struck by the uncontrollable COVID-19 pandemic, many companies across the globe have implemented a "Work from Home" policy so that their employees' health can be better protected. Some even predict that the mode of working from home will prevail in the foreseeable future. And here comes the question: Is working from home a blessing or a curse? Working from home, in my opinion, is not that ideal for several reasons.

First and foremost, the cosy working environment that working from home provides inevitably results in employees' low productivity. Recent research by Reverie found that 80% of telecommuting professionals work from their beds. Imagine completing all your tasks without ever leaving your bed or changing out of your pyjamas every day. Can you switch to the so-called "work mode"? That aside, surrounded by TVs, your adorable pets, and your crying babies. There are numerous distractions which will make you find it difficult to concentrate on your work.

On the contrary, traditional offices offer a comparatively serious working atmosphere, with everyone else focusing on their work and, most importantly, your boss monitoring you. It is therefore rare to find anyone slacking or producing work of poor quality in offices. If you were the CEO of a company, would you still allow your employees to work from home? I am sure you all will make a wise decision.

Aside from low productivity, working from home also leads to low team spirit in a company. With everything online, you can only communicate with your colleagues through texts or emails. There is very little face-to-face communication, not to mention any meal gatherings or activities for colleagues. As a result, colleagues cannot form close bonds with each other. When collaboration and unity are essential for good projects, it is hard for employees to work on the same project together and produce quality work when they lack camaraderie.

On the other hand, you can exchange inside jokes and juicy gossip and chit-chat with your co-workers when working in offices during lunch hours. Esprit de corps can be quickly built in the company and employees' bonds with one another can be strengthened. Employees, as a result, will be able to collaborate better and create work of a higher calibre. Compared to working in offices, the drawbacks of working from home are made apparent.

Not only does working from home take its toll on a company's esprit de corps, but it also affects employees' mental health. Clinical psychologist Ryan Hooper recently researched the mental well-being of employees who worked in offices and those who worked from home. His research revealed that working from home increased the risk of various types of mental disturbance by 47%. Sitting in front of your computer the whole day with nobody around you creates a feeling of isolation and loneliness and leads to detachment from social interactions. Everyone craves face-to-face communication. Our mental health will be negatively impacted if we lack it for a prolonged period, and a series of mental issues like depression will be triggered.

Some may claim that working from home creates flexibility for employees and gives them more time for household chores. Yet, the situation is not that perfect. When you are preparing lunch for your kids, but suddenly there is an urgent Zoom meeting, you are forced to drop everything and end up leaving everything in a mess.

Traditional offices first emerged during the Industrial Revolution, and they have been flourishing for hundreds of years. There are some reasons for their long-lasting existence. Hopefully, everything will return to normal soon, and employees can enjoy the most conventional and ideal working method.