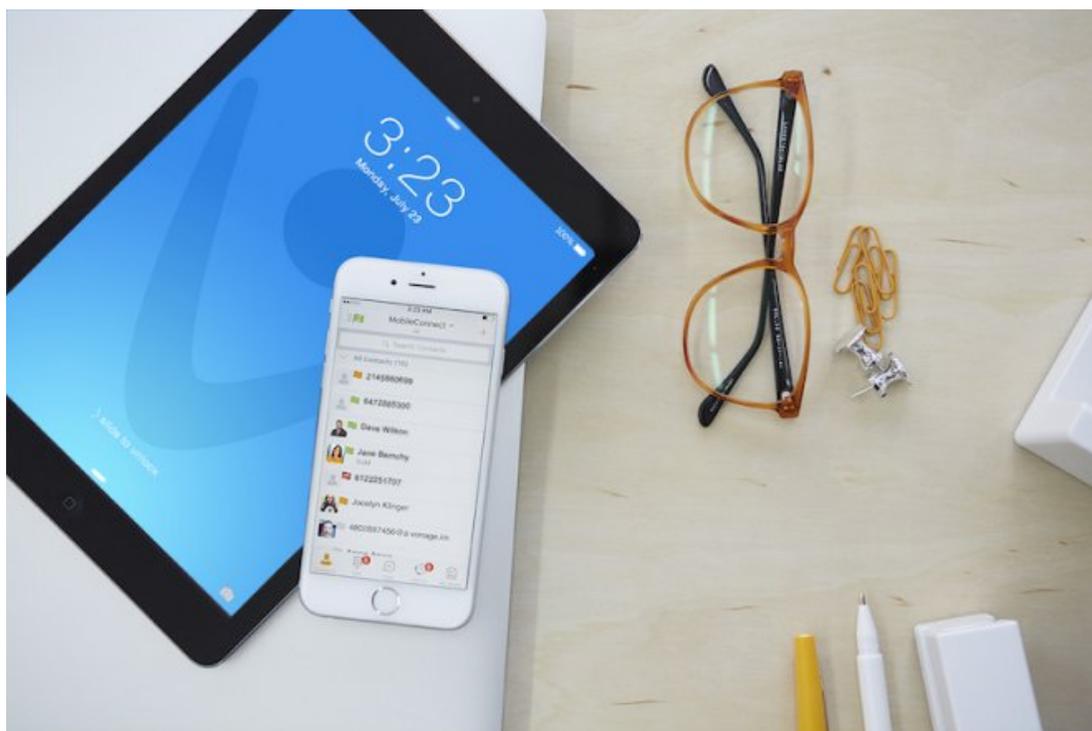


4 Reasons Remote Worker Productivity Is Higher Than You Think



By ROSE DE FREMERY - Contributor

When considering whether to allow employees to work from home, business owners often wonder whether remote worker productivity will be sufficient to advance the company's goals. With no supervisor physically present to ensure the work gets done, how can the company really be sure that its remote workers will be focused on the task at hand? Will the temptation be too great for them to end up just playing Xbox all day?



Statistics indicate that remote worker productivity is much higher than many realize.

With telecommuting on the rise — Gallup recently estimated that 37 percent of American workers have now worked from home — some business leaders may be concerned about how to best address this growing trend while ensuring productivity doesn't take a hit. Fortunately, statistical data indicates that remote workers can often be incredibly productive and satisfied at work, sometimes even more so than their in-office counterparts. Companies may be able to reap the benefits that work-from-home arrangements deliver for the four following reasons:

1. Fewer Interruptions Mean Greater Focus

According to a recent survey from TINYpulse, 91 percent of teleworkers report they are more productive when working remotely. With fewer interruptions throughout the workday, they can settle into a state of sustained concentration and work more effectively on their projects. Compare this with the traditional office setting where, according to The Washington Post, each office worker is interrupted or switches tasks every three minutes and then requires an additional 23 minutes to regain their focus. This de facto interruption culture can negatively affect the morale of office workers, who might mutter into their cups of coffee about how they can't get a moment's peace. This is not so with teleworkers, however, who may enjoy a greater ability to concentrate on their work and tend to make the most of it.

Additionally, a flexible working environment and increased autonomy help workers optimize their productivity. Teleworkers may be able to arrange their tasks in a way they find most effective, cycling through their to-do lists with ease. Although it is true that telecommuting newbies working from home must contend with distractions in their environment and learn the ropes of working well in that setting, by and large, they are able to stay on top of their work and meet deadlines.

2. Remote Workers Understand the Importance of Collaboration

Perhaps partly because they are not located in an office where collaboration opportunities are automatically woven into the workday, many employees who work from home understand the importance of proactive collaboration and accountability as active team members. Remote workers say that they regularly stay in touch with their supervisors, if on a somewhat less-frequent basis. A generous 34 percent of respondents to the TINYpulse survey report that they are in touch with their supervisor once a week, while 31 percent say that they check in once per day and 21 percent note that they check in multiple times per day. This actually lines up pretty well with how frequently most remote workers say they would prefer to be in touch, so it appears they may be satisfied with this arrangement.

Remote worker productivity is typically highest in cases when both the supervisor and employee have a clear, shared understanding of what needs to get done and fewer check-ins are needed to keep the work moving. Interestingly, 92 percent of teleworkers say they are happy with the way they receive feedback from their supervisors, so it seems both remote workers and their bosses are communicating effectively in this setting and likely use a variety of tools to do so, from video conferencing to email.

3. Remote Workers Feel More Valued at Work

When employees have the ability to work from home, they may be able to more comfortably balance their professional and personal obligations. For example, parents might find it easier to get their children to doctor's appointments and caregivers may be better able to tend to older relatives. When employees experience greater independence and improved work-life balance, they typically report higher levels of employee satisfaction.

According to the TINYpulse survey, teleworkers say they are happier at work compared to their in-office colleagues. They frequently also feel more valued at work. Increased job satisfaction contributes to greater employee retention in the long run. Employers, who know well that it costs more to hire and train a new employee than it does to retain an existing one, should find this metric attractive when considering their ability to keep top talent and preserve their budget.

4. Inclement Weather Isn't an Obstacle

Companies offering teleworking programs may be able to stay productive in the event of inclement weather, since nothing prevents employees from taking care of their work safely from home, even if a storm is raging outside or the public transit system is experiencing issues. This reduces liability for the company while simultaneously creating opportunities for productivity that simply did not exist before.

Yes, teleworkers are going to have to stay home and actually work on those TPS reports instead of running outside to pelt their friends with snowballs during a major snowstorm. However, those same employees will likely appreciate not having to experience the frustration (not to mention wasted time) involved with a difficult or treacherous commute. Instead of bundling up and trudging out into the elements, they can simply make a cup of hot cocoa, sit down, and get to work.

Teleworking may be a new frontier for some companies, but it's one that may offer significant promise in the form of greater productivity, increased job satisfaction, and more proactive communication among staff. Company decision-makers who have not yet explored the benefits of allowing their employees to work from home might find that it is not only worth their while, but also takes their business to a whole new level.

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