



TELECOMMUTING ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING STATE DEPARTMENT IN NAIROBI COUNTY

Gacheri, S. C., & Kiiru, D.

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¹ Gacheri, S. C., & ² Kiiru, D.

¹ Student, School of Business, Kenyatta University [KU], Kenya

² Lecturer, School of Business, Kenyatta University [KU], Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In the present-day challenging environment of doing business, organizations have increased pressure for performing better as compared to before. Consequently, organizations are inspired towards creating better working schedules for their employees in order for them to increase and improve on their performances. Firms globally are laying plans on ways of boosting employees' enhanced performance. Employee motivation by recognizing the benefit of work-life balance is gaining ground. To contribute to this never-ending debate this, the objective of the study was to examine the effects of telecommuting on employee performance in the Vocational and Technical Training State Department in Nairobi County. Signalling Theory, Spill over and the Social Exchange Theory anchored this research. This study targeted all 935 employees drawn from the State Department and a sample size of 252 participants consisting of 5 directors, 13 managers and 234 staff was picked randomly. A questionnaire with both close ended and open-ended questions helped in gathering data. Validity and reliability of the data collection instrument was ensured. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. The researcher also ensured that those participating were aware of the study's objective and how confidential the gathered information would be. The study revealed telecommuting positively and significantly affected employee performance. The study concluded that in telecommuting allow employees to be employees to be productive, happier, and less stressed, whereas firms are gaining from good personnel retention, increased output, and lower absenteeism. The study recommended that the organization need to make sure pertinent information is easily and frequently communicated. The organization should split the roles as effectively as possible in order to attain a higher overall quality of performance, which will likely result in more motivated staff. The study recommended that to allow workers to operate remotely, some level of technology may be required. This can be accomplished through simple methods like an instant chat app or platform, telecommuting, or email.

Key Words: Telecommuting, Employee performance

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INTRODUCTION

Employee performance and productivity is a key concept in many world economies. Research on employee productivity however, indicates that South Asian and Africa nations with an exception of India do not have an encouraging labour productivity. For example, as compared to other African regions, low labour productivity rate was experienced in Sub-Saharan Africa (Choudry, 2017). Flexible work arrangements allow workers the freedom of working outside standard work plans. These flexible work arrangements are of diverse forms that constitute work schedules enabling workers to work past the actual working day (Rau, 2013). According to Tang and Dermid (2018) in their research, discovered that of the taskforce, 87% had a preference for flexible working and it may be prioritized when searching for new jobs. Institutions are more alert and seeking creative worker engagement hence looking for means and ways to attract workers. Perrin (2014) notes that flexible work arrangements (FWA) are organization strategies' crucial element which ought to be geared towards retaining a workforce that is motivated. Both developed and developing countries have practised flexible work arrangements and the employees and employers have experienced the benefits.

Human resource managers in Africa have paid less attention to the flexible work arrangements concept. Most employees, according to Mordi and Ojo (2011), have work-life conflict. Employees in Nigeria are forced to disturb their family lives for the sake of the organization's profitability and growth due to a lack of jobs and an overburdening work environment. Patel et al. (2016) found an increasing conflict between the two in a South African study that looked at the association between work-family conflict and job performance. In comparison to their male colleagues, women were affected most, since expectations for home life and obligations clashed with their work commitment (Brink & De la Rey, 2017).

Employers in Kenya have acknowledged the need of having flexible work arrangements policies in place in response to the current scenario. To help employees establish a work-life balance, the Kenyan government pushed private enterprises and social services to implement family-friendly regulations in the workplace. The Kenyan government has successfully implemented a five-day work week arrangement (Njiru, 2017). According to the literature, if there is no supportive corporate culture, official family-responsive policies might not possess the expected impacts (Kossek & Ozeki, 2016). As a result, if the research findings demonstrate a lack of supervisor and organizational support, organizations adopting family-responsive policies should take steps to establish a corporate culture that appreciates or at least recognizes the policies' necessity and possible long-term advantages. Work-life policies are frequently recognized as a crucial facilitator or obstacle due to organizational culture.

Flexible work arrangements, according to (Rau & Hyland, 2012), are an alternative to the traditional work day. It usually focuses on organizational initiatives that give workers more flexibility in terms of when and where they work, as well as other policies that govern the hours they work. Flexible working arrangements have become more popular as a result of developments in the economy, technology, society, and family. flexible holidays, limited meeting schedules, extra vacation days, telework, reduced schedules, compressed work weeks, absence autonomy, flexitime, and sticking to the schedule (employees are working the legally required eight hours per day and would not stretch their routines longer) are all examples of flexibility arrangements. Employee performance is the values and cumulative gains an institution gets from a worker in a particular time (Hossain, 2012). Employee performance will also refer to the behaviour of employees towards their work. In determining how people are behaving towards their work, varying criteria is used depending on the task. Even though the criteria has more than an

individual does what their work contains, workers are gauged generally based on how best they carry out the tasks in comparison to allocated standards outlined by the employer (Al-Rajudi, 2012).

In Kenya, employees working in various institutions are entitled to a minimum of twenty-one (21) working (The Employment Act (2007) Laws of Kenya). This allows workers duration to rejuvenate and take care of different aspects of their life in order to create a productive and healthy work life integration. The days may be used by workers to rest from stressing environment of work or for recreational activities. Recreation leave results to improved worker performance as it allows workers to unwind, relax and resolve personal problems that may otherwise impact the work performance (Carlson et al., 2009). Recreational leave entitlements are not taken advantage of by majority of Australians because of a high work-life interference especially for parents and women (Renda et al., 2009). An employee's capacity to focus and improve their work performance is crippled by work-life interference (Brough et al., 2009).

"TVETA is a public corporate agency established under the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Act No. 29 of 2013 to regulate and coordinate training in the country." TVETA is a regulatory body mandated with regulating and coordinating TVET be accrediting trainers, programs and institutions and assuring relevance, equity, quality and access in training and education. TVET's main developing a harmonized and well-coordinated TVET system able to produce skilled human resources with right values and attitude needed for various economic sectors' prosperity and growth (Ministry of education, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Despite gains in gender parity, completion rates, quality, retention, and access in education and training, the TVET industry still faces numerous obstacles. Restricted industry participation, a lack of trainers with the needed CBET trainers' ability, and inadequate research support services are among

them. Other issues include an unwelcoming environment for people with special needs, low female enrolment in Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET) related courses, a negative view of TVET, and a lack of geographical distribution and location of TVET institutions. Furthermore, students are admitted to TVET institutes in an unorganized manner. Due to a lack of awareness and high expense of technical training, TVET colleges have a low enrolment rate. Consequently, a large number of trainees end up in low-cost alternative programs where graduates lack the necessary skills for the workplace (Njiru, 2017).

The technical trainer's occupational skills and CBET competency are critical to any quality assurance system's successful implementation. TVET trainers' registration and development does not always follow the labor markets' quality demands, and it has not always been led by any quality standards. Furthermore, no specific TVET managers' training and development on diverse elements of quality delivery and management has been provided. The development of strong leadership and management capacity in driving the whole system is also tied to the delivery of high-quality TVET. A training and an upgrade of skills should be done for TVET policymakers, professionals, and system administrators in order to confidently lead the system's different implementation structures, such as the accountability frameworks, quality assurance, inspection guidelines, accreditation standards and qualifications framework. (Njiru, 2017).

Study Objective

This study examined the effects of telecommuting on employee performance in the Vocational and Technical Training State Department in Nairobi City County, Kenya

The study answered the following research question

- What is the effects of telecommuting on employee performance in the Vocational and Technical Training State Department in Nairobi City County, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study was anchored on signalling and Social Exchange theories.

Signalling Theory

Spence proposed the signaling theory in 1973. Signaling theory has been utilized in explaining how flexible work schedules might contribute to positive views, according to Grover & Crooker (1995). "Organizations that provide flexible work schedules demonstrate their commitment to their staff well-being by giving them permission to sort their individual requirements like elder or child care, as well as health issues such as professional growth and exercise; Employees may feel better in control of their work–family demands if they feel supported by their organizations. As a result, employees will be more satisfied and committed to their jobs, resulting in increased production." Flexible work schedules, according to Randel and Stevens (2006), can contribute to a sense of control over work–family concerns, which might enable workers cope with work–family conflict.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory was developed by George Homans, a sociologist. It first appeared in his essay "Social Behavior as Exchange," in 1958. Homans studied small groups, and he initially believed that any society, community or group was best seen as a social system. To study that social system, it was first necessary to look at an individual's behavior, instead of the social structures individuals created. It was by studying small groups that Homans began to see the rewards and punishments each member of the group got from the group and other members. He developed a framework of elements of social behavior: interaction, sentiments and activities. These elements all had to be considered regarding a groups' internal and external systems. He used this framework to study several groups—a study he published in "The Human Group," his first book. Later, Homans began to explain further the most basic level of social situations, called

elementary social behavior, which is at least two people interacting, with one either rewarding or punishing the actions of the other. This idea reflects Homans adopting B.F. Skinner's behavioral psychology theories about human behavior as well as basic principles of economics. Homans suggested several propositions that theorize social behavior as an exchange of material and non-material goods, like time, money, effort, approval, prestige, power, etc. Every person provides rewards and endures costs. People expect to receive as much reward as they give to another and will choose actions that are likely to provide the greatest reward.

Empirical Review

According to (Gajendran and Harrison, 2017) "telecommuting is the arrangements between employees and employers that allow employees to work from home, or different locations apart from the office." A study on how management quality and telecommuting systems influence organizational perspectives competitiveness and work productivity in Jakarta's multinational firms in Indonesia was done by Soenanto, *et al.* (2016). The findings indicated a significant and positive connection between employee performance and reduced work options. Further, the findings concurred with the views of the social exchange theory that workers are probable of giving gainful work if they have a feeling that their needs are met the organization.

A research on 250 workers in Québec by Carlson, *et al.*, (2009) reported a positive correlation and high prevalence in staff value towards teleworking. Gudo and Olel (2011) argue that, in Africa the telecommuting concept has not taken root yet. The way workers can effectively work from home unsupervised has not yet been conceptualized by most managers. UN-Women (2015) however posit that in Africa, among the available facilities to employees, teleworking is mentioned. A crisis-induced telework adjustment framework was developed and tested by Carillo *et al.* (2020) developed and tested, this comprised of organizational factors (like organizational support), job (like work increase) and individual (e.g.,

personal stress) as telework adjustment's predictors. Further, non-crisis specific (e.g., job autonomy) and crisis specific (professional isolation, stress) factors are also distinguished by this model. The findings illustrated that professional and stress isolation had a positive impact on telework environment (equipment and adequate space) and a negative impact on telework adjustment, telework adjustment was positively impacted by workload. Contrary to expectation, adjustment was not impacted in any way by crisis-related organizational support.

A study on firm performance, change management and telecommuting adoption was carried out by Angel, Manuela, Maria & Pilar (2008). The study aimed at analysing how Human Resource (HR) commitment practice contributed to performance of firms through telecommuting practices adoption. 156 companies based in Spain were surveyed using structural equation modelling. The results showed that functional flexibility, telecommuting adoption intensity and firm performance positively associate and telecommuting adoption intensity, workers extent of accessing HR social benefits and commitment practices relate positively. It recommends that telecommuting and HR commitment practices relate indirectly.

Mahmoud & Paul (2003) studied organizational changes and telecommuting focusing on how

middle-managers perceive it in institutions. It sought to examine the views of middle managers regarding telecommuting programs introduction in the firm. Selected USA based telecommunication firms were examined. 25 participants were selected from the selected firms and multiple regression analysis deployed. Results reported that cultural change was perceived by majority of the managers as the hardest problem to resolve with the introduction of a telecommuting program.

An investigation to establish for effective telecommuting is to a company was done in US patent and trademark office (USPTO) USA by Brittany & Rhiannon (2012). The research aimed at integrating multi-disciplinary literature reporting how organizational outcomes are affected by telecommuting to provide a clear response on the effectiveness of telecommuting to an organization. Telecommuting was the study's independent variable, results of interest to organizations: performance, commitment, turnover intention, retention and productivity were the dependent variables. The study had 22 participants. The findings indicated that organizational outcomes and telecommuting have a small but positive association. It's believed that performance is improved, organizational commitment strengthened, retention secured and productivity increased by telecommunication within the company.

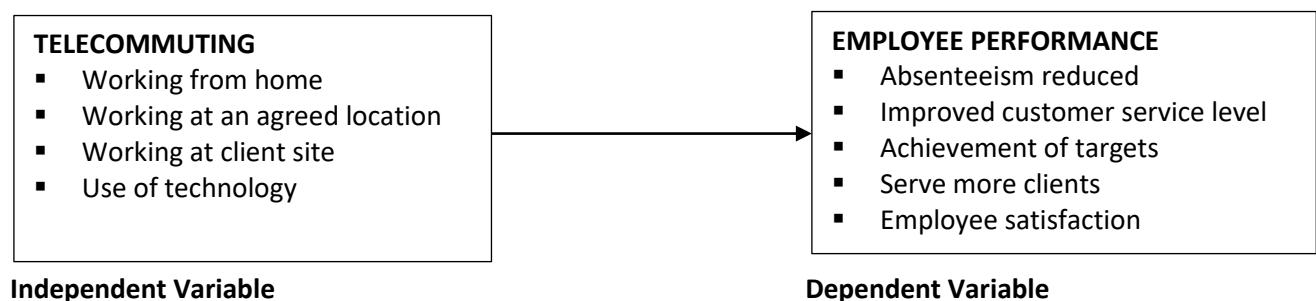


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Cooper & Schindler (2011) states that, “a research design is the plan and structure of investigation so

conceived as to obtain answers to research questions.” A descriptive research design was deployed by this study, it was cross sectional in

nature. The study population comprised of all 935 employees at the authority. The sample size consisted of 252 respondents consisting of 5 directors, 13 managers and 234 staff.

Primary data was gathered by semi structured questionnaires. The questionnaire had close and open-ended questions which was useful in obtaining detailed information from the respondents. Content validity, predictive validity and construct validity test were undertaken. "Predictive validity is the extent to which a score on a scale or test predicts scores on some criterion measure," (Chen, 2015). Supervisor and expert opinion were sought to help evaluate and refine instruments' constructive and predictive validity status. The instrument's internal consistency reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test using SPSS. Internal consistency is evaluated by Cronbach's alpha through the calculation of an equivalent to all possible split half

correlation's average. The reliability condition is adhered to if the coefficient value is above 0.7.

Data obtained was filtered, sorted and cleaned based on the study objectives. Coding was then done, and keyed in SPSS Version 25.0. Descriptive statistics was deployed in evaluating quantitative data. It's going to entail computation of the standard deviation, means, frequencies and percentages. Content analysis included theme creation linked to the variables of the study carried out on qualitative data given by the questionnaire's open-ended sections. Tables were used in presentation of the outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

252 questionnaires were administered 5 directors, 13 managers and 234 staff of department for vocational and technical training in Nairobi City County, Kenya which were duly filled and given back. Table 1 displays the information

Table 1: Response Rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Responded	225	89.3
Did not respond	27	10.7
Total	252	100

Source: Field Data. 2022

The results illustrated that the filled questionnaires added up to 89.3% and 10.7 % for the unfilled/unreturned ones. Based on Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), "a response rate ranging between 50 – 70 percent is adequate for data analysis. Therefore, a response rate of 89.3% showed an excellent response rate that allowed the researcher to carry on with further analysis."

The respondents' gender established that majority were accounted for by the male respondents (57.3%) and 42.7% was accounted for by females.

On respondents' education level, the respondents' education level established from the study was given in Table 2.

Table 2: Education Level of the Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate	20	8.9
Diploma	77	34.2
Undergraduate degree	108	48.0
Masters	19	8.4
PhD	1	0.4
Total	225	100

Source: Field Data. 2022

The results in Table 2 showed that the participants with education level of undergraduate degree accounted majority at 48.0%, followed by those with diploma at 34.2%, certificate at 8.9%, Masters at 8.4% and only 0.4% with PhD. Form the results, it is conclusive that the respondents had educational

proficiency's essential dimension to participate in the research.

The respondents' age bracket established from the study is given in Figure 2.

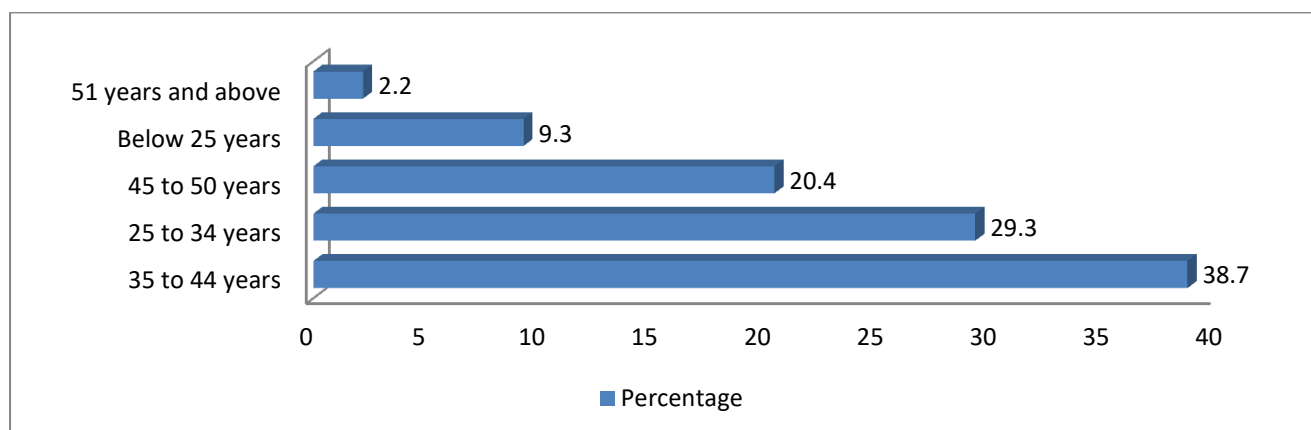


Figure 2: Respondents' Age Bracket

Source: Field Data. 2022

The findings demonstrate that participants aged 25-34 years old formed majority (38.7%), 25 to 34 years old accounted for 29.3% and 20.4% aged between 45 to 50 years, 9.3% below 25 years and those respondents aged 51 years and above

accounted for 2.2%. Implying respondents' good representation for all age brackets.

The length of work in years in the organization of the participants established from the study is given as below:

Table 3: Length of Work of the Respondents

Years	F	%
Less than 6	15	6.7
6 to 10	64	28.4
11 to 15	47	20.9
More than 15	99	44.0
Total	225	100

Source: Researcher, 2022

From the results, of the participants, 44.0% had worked for more than 15 Years, 28.4% had worked between 6 to 10 years, 20.9% for 11-15 years and less than 6 years accounted for 6.7%. The outcome affirms that the participants had adequate experience for the researcher to obtain important data for the study.

Descriptive Statistics Results

Quantitative data was presented descriptive statistics using standard deviation and means using SPSS 20.0. The results were given as follows:

Telecommuting

Objective one examined the effects of telecommuting on performance of employee in the Vocational and Technical Training State Department in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Table 4 displayed the results.

Table 4: Telecommuting

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
My organization supports telecommuting schedule which enables me to deal with other personal life issues	3.54	1.46
I utilize telecommuting arrangements	3.68	1.32
Teleworking working hours enhances my work performance working hours enhances my work performance	4.56	0.44
Telecommuting exposes me to family –work interference	4.23	0.77
Due to availability of telecommuting arrangements, I can work from home	4.61	0.39
I can work from my clients’ site	3.87	1.13
I can work from an agreed site other than the office	4.42	0.58
My organization has technology to support telecommuting	4.59	0.41
Average Score	4.19	0.81

Source: Researcher, 2022

The findings report that participants agreed that telecommuting had an effect on employee performance in the vocational and technical training state department in Nairobi City County, Kenya as illustrated by a 4.19 means score varying significantly as indicated by 0.81 SD. The respondents strongly agreed that due to availability of telecommuting arrangements they can work from home, their organization has technology to support telecommuting and that teleworking working hours enhances their work performance working hours enhances their work performance with a respective mean score of 4.61, 4.59 and 4.56 and 0.39, 0.41 and 0.44 SD respectively.

The results in Table 4 further indicate participants agreed that they can work from an agreed site other than the office, telecommuting exposes them to family work interference, they can work from their clients site, they utilize telecommuting arrangements and that their organization supports telecommuting schedule which enables them to deal with other personal life issues with a respective mean score of 4.42, 4.23, 3.87, 3.68 and

3.54 and 0.58, 0.77, 1.13, 1.32 and 1.46 SD respectively. These findings agreed with Soenanto, *et al.* (2016) study that focused on how management quality and telecommuting systems influence organizational perspectives competitiveness and work productivity in Jakarta’s multinational firms in Indonesia. The study results showed, a significant and positive connection between employee performance and reduced work options. The findings also correspond to the findings of Angel, Manuela, Maria & Pilar (2008) who studied firm performance, change management and telecommuting adoption and found that functional flexibility, telecommuting adoption intensity and firm performance positively associate and telecommuting adoption intensity, workers extent of accessing HR social benefits and commitment practices relate positively.

Employee Performance

This research tried to examined employee performance in the Vocational and Technical Training State Department in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Table 5 provides the results.

Table 5: Employee Performance

Statement	M	SD
Flexible work arrangements have reduced the rate of absenteeism at my work place	4.45	0.55
I rarely feel the need to ask for permission to be away from work	4.06	0.94
Flexible work arrangements have enabled me to give better service to my customers	4.03	0.97
Flexible work arrangements have enabled me to always achieve my targets	3.57	1.43
Flexible work arrangements have enabled me to serve more clients in a day	4.37	0.43
I have no intention of leaving the organization soon	3.94	1.06
I feel happy working for my organization	3.79	1.21
Average Score	4.03	0.97

Source: Researcher, 2022

The findings illustrated that the respondents agreed that flexible work arrangements had an effect on employee performance in the Vocational and Technical Training State Department in Nairobi City County as indicated by the 4.03 mean varying significantly as illustrated by the 0.97 SD. The respondents agreed that flexible work arrangements have reduced the rate of absenteeism at their work place, flexible work arrangements have enabled them to serve more clients in a day, they rarely feel the need to ask for permission to be away from work, they have no intention of leaving the organization soon, they feel happy working for their organization and that flexible work arrangements have helped to always achieve their targets as given by mean score of 4.45, 4.37, 4.06, 3.94, 3.79 and 3.57 respectively and 0.55, 0.63, 0.94, 1.06, 1.21 and 1.43 SD respectively.

These findings agreed with Rau and Hyland (2012) who states that flexible work arrangements, are an alternative to the traditional work day. It usually focuses on organizational initiatives that give workers more flexibility in terms of when and where they work, as well as other policies that govern the hours they work. The findings also agree with Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman (2011) who examined the extent to which flexible hours and flex location arrangement resulted in benefits for individuals, including a better family-work balance, and for businesses, like extended working time and

reported that employees who perceived flexibility in the location and timing of their job had less trouble achieving family-work balance when provided with a suitable work week, what they assessed to be 40 and 50 hours each week.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to examine the effects of telecommuting arrangements on employee performance in the vocational and technical training state department in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The research objective assessed the effects of telecommuting on employee performance in the Vocational and Technical Training State Department in Nairobi County and found that telecommuting positively and significantly affects employee performance. The respondents strongly agreed that due to availability of telecommuting arrangements, they can work from home, their organization has technology to support telecommuting and that teleworking working hours enhances their work performance working hours enhances their work performance.

The study concluded that in telecommuting allow employees to be productive, happier, and less stressed, whereas firms are gaining from good personnel retention, increased output, and lower absenteeism. Firms have office space; workers save money and tie by not commuting. Staff can reside wherever they want, and companies have a far huge pool of candidates to pick from. Both firms and employees gain from greater flexibility in work

arrangements and for the persons coming back to work after a disability or for the wounded workers, working from is s solution benefiting the employers and employees.

The study recommended that firms should ensure easy and frequent communication of pertinent information. Employees who are telecommuting should have a feeling of confidence that the

managers have a belief they will work hard like they would in a regular office, maintaining productivity, hitting deadlines and logging similar hours. Face-to-face meetings should be held by the company on a regular basis to bring the team together. The institution should boost team morale by bringing the entire team together in single physical location or at the very least in one large videoconferencing regularly.

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