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Remote Work: Its Impact on Employee Productivity and Service Delivery in Nigerian Organisations

Part One

1. Introduction

An organisation or office is a space where business transactions and services are conducted. Employees within the organisation perform their respective administrative tasks to support and achieve the specified goals of the organisation.

Traditionally, most employees commuted to centralized office locations, where they collaborated to achieve organisational objectives. In these environments, physical interaction and in-person communication were key factors in helping employees carry out their daily responsibilities.

However, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden shift in the economy, significantly reducing physical interactions among staff in an effort to curb the spread of the highly contagious virus. As a result, many organisations and businesses across various sectors were irrevocably affected.

To reduce the spread of the virus, staff movement was restricted, and governments, along with company directors, advised employees to stay home. Recognising the need for economic continuity, the Federal Government of Nigeria, along with organisations across all sectors, introduced remote work, or "work from home" (WFH) strategy, as a solution. As a result, most employees were provided with essential tools, such as computers and mobile phones, to facilitate seamless communication and workflow from their homes. This adaptation proved successful, allowing work to continue despite the restrictions.

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Remote work (WFH) has gained traction and remains prevalent globally. Many companies, particularly those in the technology, legal, IT, and government sectors, have transitioned to permanent remote work models, with the exception of manufacturing companies and healthcare organisations.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has driven one of the most significant shifts in workforce dynamics in Nigeria. Some companies now operate entirely without physical office spaces, offering employees full-time remote work options. Although still evolving, the concept of remote work/WFH continues to grow in popularity and shows no signs of abating.

Remote work/WFH is an alternative approach to task management, allowing employees to perform their duties remotely rather than in central office settings, using various technologies.

2. What is Remote Work/Work-From-Home

Remote work is an arrangement where employees are not physically present in an office but instead perform their tasks from home or any other suitable location. It allows employees to complete their duties from anywhere, without the need to report to a physical office. Whether working from home or another location—within the state or beyond—employees have the flexibility to choose where they can be most productive.

The main focus of remote work is not the location itself but maintaining a consistent level of productivity. It emphasizes how effectively employees meet their targets and goals rather than where they are physically based. This approach has strengthened relationships between employers and employees while also improving overall productivity. Rather than measuring the number of hours an employee spends in the office, employers assess performance based on completed tasks and key performance indicators (KPIs).

This concept has gained significant popularity in recent years, driven by advancements in technology and evolving office cultures.

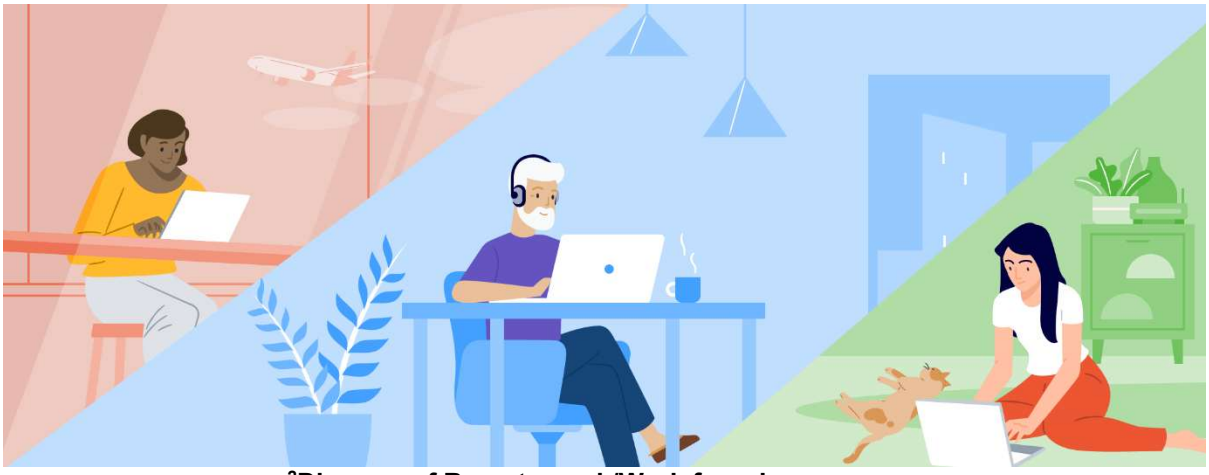
3. Differences between Remote Work and Work-from-Home

Remote work differs from working from home (WFH), though both involve working outside the traditional office environment. Remote work is more flexible and location-independent, while WFH typically implies working from one's home or residence.

Work from home (WFH) is generally a temporary or part-time arrangement where employees perform their job responsibilities remotely, usually from their own homes. Employees working from home rely on digital communication tools such as email, video conferencing, and mobile devices to carry out their tasks. While remote work

also involves employees working outside the office, it is a more flexible work arrangement that can occur from any location, not just from home, and is often a permanent setup.

Working-from-home (WFH) is a subset of remote work but is specifically an option for employees who would normally work in an office setting. Work from home models often incorporates a hybrid work structure by allowing employees work for some days in the office and some days from their homes. Remote work is a confirmation of globalisation in practice and how virtual the world has become, as a resident of Nigeria could be working for a company in the UK or US, for instance. In Nigeria today, many organizations have started implementing remote work policies to accommodate their employees' schedules and offer them more flexibility. Working from home is particularly beneficial for busy parents or individuals who live far from their offices and prefer not to make a long commute five days a week.



[2]Diagram of Remote work/Work from home
Culled from www. https://blog.1password.com/remote-work-tips

4. Key Benefits of Remote Work/WFH

Some of the key benefits of Remote work/ WFH include:

a. **Increased Flexibility:** Remote work is inherently flexible, allowing employees to set their own work schedules. This flexibility reduces stress by eliminating daily commutes, saving time, and promoting better mental health and work-life balance. Without the need to adhere to a rigid office schedule, remote workers have the freedom to organize their time in a way that suits their personal needs. Additionally, employees working remotely enjoy the opportunity to create a comfortable home office setup, which can enhance their well-being and

[2] See, <https://blog.1password.com/remote-work-tips/> accessed on 18th March 2025

productivity. This unique environment is tailored to their comfort, using equipment of their choice that suits their health and work preferences.

b. **Personalized Environment/Location Independence:** Remote work provides location independence, allowing employees to choose where they want to work. This is one of the major benefits of working remotely. Employees can access job opportunities that are not limited by geographic location. Moreover, remote work enables employees to avoid the high cost of rent in expensive areas, as they can work from any location they can afford comfortably. In fact, remote work allows employees to work from anywhere in the world.

c. **Minimized Office Politics:** Employees working remotely do not encounter the challenges that those working in traditional office environments often face, such as office politics and personality conflicts. They are not subjected to on-site rivalries, harassment, favoritism, or misunderstandings that can cause frustration in the workplace. Remote workers can focus on their tasks without being distracted by mental and emotional conflicts that can arise in an office setting. The office environment can sometimes foster “false positives” that lead to bias and favoritism, but remote work minimizes these issues.

d. **Improved/Better Work-Life Balance:** The flexible nature of remote work allows employees to start and end their day as they choose, as long as they are productive and meet deadlines. This flexibility creates a better work-life balance because employees can tend to their personal needs while still fulfilling their work responsibilities.

e. **Less Commute Stress:** Remote work reduces commuting time, eliminating the need for daily travel to an office. Employees no longer have to deal with the stress of commuting or business trips, as they work from home. This not only saves time but also reduces the physical and mental strain caused by long and often tedious commutes and waste of valuable worktime.

f. **Improved Inclusivity:** Remote work promotes diversity and inclusion by allowing organisations to hire employees from various socioeconomic, geographic, and cultural backgrounds. This avoids the challenges associated with recruiting staff from specific, restrictive locations that may not be suitable for all potential employees. Remote work also provides opportunities for people with disabilities or caregivers who need flexibility. Employees can build their careers without the need to commute to an office, working from a location where they feel comfortable and supported.

g. **Cost Efficiency/Reduced Expenses:** Employees who work from home save money compared to those working in an office. Costs associated with daily commuting, maintaining a car, wardrobe, and lunch are significantly reduced. On the other hand, organisations also experience savings as they no longer need to allocate funds for transportation allowances, lunch stipends, office attire and certain overhead costs.

h. **Impact on Sustainability:** Remote work contributes significantly to sustainability by aligning with society's long-term goal of fostering economic growth while minimizing environmental impact. It supports sustainability initiatives through the promotion of economic progress, reduction of inequalities, and encouragement of responsible consumption of goods and services across various communities. One of the most immediate and cost-effective benefits is the reduction in commuting, which has already led to noticeable decreases in traffic congestion and air pollution. These firsthand benefits serve as compelling evidence of remote work's positive environmental impact, potentially encouraging its broader adoption in the future.

i. **Increased Productivity and Performance:** Remote work minimizes interruptions such as noise, office politics, misunderstandings, and distractions that often occur in traditional office settings. As a result, remote workers have more time to focus on their tasks, leading to increased productivity and performance. Additionally, remote work fosters stronger communication and collaboration between business owners and employees, leading to a more efficient and effective work environment where tasks are completed on time.

5. Challenges of Remote Work:

a. **Isolation:** Remote workers often face a lack of interaction, communication, and friendly relationships with colleagues. This can lead to feelings of loneliness, social disconnection, and isolation. Without the camaraderie of a team, they may struggle to share burdens and collaborate effectively on problem-solving.

b. **Communication Barriers and Challenges:** Remote work frequently involves communication difficulties, especially in regions with unreliable electricity or technological infrastructure. Power outages and hardware issues can disrupt digital communication tools like video calls and emails. Furthermore, over-reliance on digital communication may lead to miscommunication, disconnection, or delays in information sharing.

c. **Reduced Motivation:** Without the physical presence of colleagues and supervisors, remote workers may struggle to stay motivated. Recognition and encouragement from management can be limited unless their productivity or performance is exceptional. Additionally, self-discipline can be difficult to maintain without the structure of a traditional office environment.

d. **Technical Issues:** Remote workers occasionally face problems with their devices, such as connectivity issues, hardware malfunctions, or internet outages and downtimes. Resolving these challenges can be difficult, especially when access to technical support is restricted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, employees who work from home or remotely should adopt these key practices to succeed in a remote work environment:[3]

a. Establish routines by creating a consistent daily schedule to maintain structure.

b. Stay organised by keeping track of tasks, deadlines, and priorities.

c. Set up an adequate home office by ensuring the workspace is comfortable and equipped for productivity.

d. Boost productivity by focusing on key tasks and minimizing distractions.

e. Take responsibility by being proactive in managing work and meeting goals.

f. Avoid overloading with multitasking by focusing on one task at a time to maintain quality, efficiency and ensuring completion of tasks.

g. Foster communication and networking by staying connected with colleagues and engaging in professional development.

h. Maintain balance by prioritizing both work and personal life to avoid burnout.

i. Leverage available tools by using computer programs and platforms to streamline work processes.

j. Get creative with remote teaching by exploring innovative ways to engage learners in a remote setting.

k. Explore remote research opportunities by taking advantage of digital resources and research platforms.

l. Learn from challenges by viewing obstacles as opportunities for growth and improvement.

[3] See <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32568161/> accessed on 24th March 2025

By following these steps, remote workers can enhance their effectiveness and thrive in a flexible work environment.

For further information on this article and area of law,
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