

Chapter 2

Our Changing World

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has dramatically changed our world in terms of telework specifically and remote life in general. We are still learning new things about balancing family and work; trustworthiness, performance, and accountability issues; important changes and discoveries about the way the world goes to work; and discussions of the dynamic ways people communicate. This chapter examines reasons for resistance to telework to shed light on how COVID-19 has changed us. The discussion that follows centers on qualitative interviews concerning telework, an evaluation of employee engagement now and in the future, and ideas and actions that should prove helpful to organizations. Analyzing the interviews reveals several common threads: distractions, fatigue, accountability, communication, productivity, technology, coping, work hours, resources, and plan approaches.

BACKGROUND

Take a step back and consider how our world has changed in 2020 and 2021. It can be challenging to keep up with all the new experiences we have faced: quarantine, social distancing, wearing masks (and later two masks), and reliance on communication technology. By the time you read this, the world will be moving through vaccinations, children will return to the classroom, employees will return to the office, masks and social distancing requirements will become the exception, not the norm. And that's all just the tip of the spear as we return to, a new normal.

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This chapter explores the large body of knowledge gained from the world's new experiences with telework specifically and remote life in general (Figure 1). Some common issues in discussions about telework are balancing family and work, LMX issues that involve trust, performance, and accountability, accepting changes and/or improvements in the way we work, and managing the ever-changing ways people communicate. These issues combine to demonstrate that people should resist the need to go back to the old way. If the current way is working, why not find a way to continue with the change? We should embrace current improvements. What are some reasons that organizations would resist continuing increased telework or embracing the new telework arrangement that COVID-19 created?

Figure 1. COVID-19 has had dynamic, direct effects on the world of work.



Telework Resistance Reasons

A review of relevant literature reveals at least 13 reasons that an organization or its leadership might resist the use of telework. My list is below, and I will discuss each one.

1. Most of our work is classified in nature
2. It will be hard to maintain our standards for secure operations

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