

Chapter 13

The Future

ABSTRACT

This book addresses understanding of and solutions to teleworking, trustworthiness, and performance issues. Overall, it suggests using a strategic approach that encourages participation and that is required to achieve, understand, and build buy-in for teleworking. The organizationally sanctioned program must exist. The use of LMX is beneficial in exploring the factors that contribute to motivating the target audience: employees. A culture of self-motivation is necessary to empower employees, but there must also be a culture of enforcement when needed. Finally, buy-in at all levels of the organizations is crucial to the success of a telework program. The parts of the strategic approach mentioned here will be enhanced with the resources provided in this book: how to develop leaders, motivating employees, increasing productivity, using EI, managing radical change, and learning from the research provided. Viewed through the lens of a management context, these components make the recommended strategic approach possible and can deliver an effective framework for results.

BACKGROUND

My great friend Leslie Krohn, who honored me by writing the preface to the book, exactly captures the challenge I faced with this project at the outset. “There are many issues to consider, many perspectives to address.” Whether organizations and leaders want to deal with telework or not, it is on the minds of a large portion of their workforce. Interestingly, there are varying beliefs

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about wanting a relief from working from home and getting back in touch with people, and about wanting to stay home and reduce costs and have more say in where they work. These are compelling issues that exist every day in part because of COVID but in part because of advances in technology and the discovery of how to eliminate or reduce brick and mortar costs.

Let us look at the issue of telework in a very basic way. Imagine you are the owner of a company that employs 10 people. You conducted a survey and 3 of your staff reported their productivity increased when they teleworked. Half of your staff reported that they favored telework. Half of your staff reported that they were job hunting and the top “want” on their list was work-life balance. Four members of your staff reported that they would change jobs if they could choose their work location at least part of the time. Would these telework numbers change your position on telework?

In much of my research, both quantitative and qualitative, I found that this type of information is not collected when telework decision are made. Of course, organizations must make financial and manpower decisions and there are considerations about whether the work can be done remotely. There is even the valid argument that in-person work situations allow a higher degree of feedback, visual cues, and spontaneity. However, would any of that be possible if your workforce goes elsewhere so they can telework? Also, can you be completely comfortable making decisions about telework without knowing the level at which people are committed to find a telework solution that improves their work-life balance.

One of the simplest ways to look at the issue is in terms of commute, but you must view it from the worker’s perspective, not the leader’s. I have endured the Washington, D.C., rush hour commute and the Hampton Roads Tunnel, Norfolk, Va., commute. Amid yet another 1-hour, 1-way drive to or from work, telework looks so attractive.

As we have discussed throughout, COVID forced the world into telework and people found old, new, and innovative ways to get the job done. Yes, businesses folded but many survived and some prospered. The world found a way to work from home and be efficient. Now, even if it was not peak efficiency, some hesitate or refuse to go back to the old way. There is a lot of talk about hybrid solutions that can work but using LMX Theory makes it simple. Do you know what work-life situation your current employees want? Do you want to keep them in your organization? You must know the answers to both, so that you can take the proper action. The action you take may be about telework, or promotions, or work assignments, but you must act.

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