PROSPER BACKGROUND RESEARCH

for the BUSINESS CASE ON HEALHY HYBRID WORK IN SMEs

Post Pandemic Empowerment Programme

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Chapter 1: Towards healthy hybrid working in SMEs

Definitions & forms of remote working

Starting with teleworking, the International Labor Office characterizes as "teleworker" "any ICT-using employee working outside of the main office on at least one occasion each month to perform work-related tasks" **(**Buomprisco, G., Ricci, S., Perri, R. and De Sio, S., 2021).

The term teleworking refers to decentralized office activities using information and communication technologies. The results of the work can be transmitted quickly using standard communication devices such as computers, faxes or telephones. Telecommuting workstations are fixed computer workstations set up by the employer in the private sphere of the employee, for which the employer has agreed with the employee on the weekly working hours and the duration of the installation. According to the Workplace Ordinance, a "telework place" is only considered to be in effect when the employer and the employee have agreed on the conditions of teleworking in an employment contract or an agreement and the required equipment, including furniture, work equipment, and communication equipment have been provided by the employer. "Mobile work", for example occasional work with a laptop in one's spare time or working from any location, such as on the train, is not covered by the term telework and is not subject to the Workplace Ordinance (VBG. 2017).

Different options can be possible when working from home such as a day off or split work 50/50 between home and office. Working from home means there is a location of 'normal' workplace and/or built-in flexibility in employment contract (optional: possibility of working remotely from different locations e.g., library, coffee shop, etc.), balancing company needs with employee's needs (e.g., office space reductions vs. individual preferences regarding working in the office/working from home), fixing office days or hours or decide on flexible handling of on-site working and respective modes on how to communicate this (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020).

"Telework places" are computer workstations permanently set up by the employer in the private sphere of the employees, for which the employer has specified a weekly working time and duration agreed with the employees. A telework station has been set up by the employer only when the employer and the employees have specified the conditions of teleworking in the employment contract or in an agreement and the required equipment of the telework place with furniture, work equipment including the communication equipment is provided by the employer or a person commissioned by the employer in the private sphere of the employee."

The work form of mobile working (also referred to as mobile teleworking or mobile office) has not yet been legally defined. Like teleworking, mobile working is based on a connection to the company via information and communication technology. However, this form of work is characterized by the fact that it is tied neither to the office nor to the workplace at home. Employees can do their work from any other

location via the mobile network. Thanks to powerful modern devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones, work can be performed independently of fixed working hours and fixed workplaces. Although mobile working is not explicitly regulated by law or regulation, this does not speak against the general permissibility of mobile working (Wissenschaftliche Dienste, 2017).

The possibility for telework is strongly dependent on the profession or occupation; in particular, employees who have a high level of qualification, perform intellectual activities, work at an office, and have jobs with a high degree of freedom of action use telework more often. These include many male-dominated occupations (e.g., IT and scientific service occupations) or occupations in which work is predominantly full-time work.

Telework is also used for work-life balance. Employees with young children are more likely to use telecommuting and more often would like to have such an arrangement more often. Also commuting times (especially very long commutes) can be reduced by telecommuting.

Employees who do not wish to telework more often attach importance to the separation of their private and work lives. Employees who telework more often more encounter time challenges more frequently (e.g., overtime and shortened rest periods).

Direct correlations between telework and work-life balance, recreation and health are not evident, which is due, among other things, to the simultaneous resources (more room for manoeuvre, lower commuting frequency) and stressors (lack of temporal boundaries, poorer quality of social of social relationships at work). Unregulated work from home is associated with poorer work-life balance and recovery (Wöhrmann, Backhaus, Tisch & Michel, 2020)

When referring to hybrid working what is implied is a type of flexible working (also known as agile working, remote working, split-working or blended working arrangement or patterns) where time is split between the workplace and a remote location, such as home or designated hub. It focuses on the location of work, rather than a permanent change to hours and patterns of work. This is normally an employer led initiative, incorporating the positives learnt during the pandemic, into their work practices for the future. The term 'flexible working' focuses primarily on the patterns and hours worked, and includes part time, job share, compressed hours, flexitime etc. It can also however include a request to work from home or to have a hybrid working arrangement. Employers will need to carefully consider the mechanism for bringing in hybrid working in that it may be much easier to pilot hybrid working with a view to a collective or workforce agreement in the future than having to deal with a raft of formal flexible working requests which are essentially looking for hybrid working but via multiple individual requests. This will invariably be difficult for the employer to manage.

The importance of hybrid working

For many employees, mobility is a crucial part of their everyday working life. Mobility manifests itself in different ways. Based on data from the BAuA-Working Time Survey 2017, the prevalence of different forms of work-related mobility is outlined. In addition, several working conditions associated with forms of work-related mobility are characterized, i. e. job

stressors and job resources. Stressors are rather demanding working conditions, such as work intensity and temporal boundarylessness (e. g. overtime or availability outside working hours). Resources are beneficial or supportive working conditions, such as social support, decision latitude and working time autonomy. In addition, correlations between work-related mobility and aspects of work-life balance, recovery, and health are examined.

The results show that the different forms of mobility vary in prevalence: 7 percent of employees are long-distance commuters (120 minutes or more commuting time per day), 12 percent have a teleworking agreement, 36 percent of employees are business travellers, and 28 percent report overnight stays away from home. For 25 per cent, mobility is a crucial part of their workplace characteristics; they work mainly at changing or mobile workplaces, such as professional drivers or construction site workers. In addition, around 10 percent of employees have a combination of at least two extreme forms of work-related mobility (e.g. employees with changing or mobile work places who also frequently spend the night away from home due to work-related reasons).

The forms of work-related mobility are accompanied by different constellations of job stressors and job resources. Many forms of work-related mobility are related to a higher work intensity or temporal boundarylessness (e. g. working from home). Some of these forms are accompanied by a high degree of decision latitude and working time autonomy (e.g. business trips and overnight stays away from home). Along with the mobility-related absence from the workplace, the sense of community and social support at work are often less pronounced.

In many cases, occupations and the associated tasks are crucial for the impact of work-related mobility on work-life balance, recovery, and health. According to analyses by the German Institute for Labour Market and Occupational Research, one-fifth of the surveyed group of employees who had previously worked exclusively in the office, worked at least occasionally from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected women significantly more often than men (28% vs. 17%). There are indications of major inequalities with regard to socioeconomic status, with higher earners and the more highly educated benefiting the most from working in the home office (Wöhrmann, A. M., Backhaus N., Tisch A. Michel A., 2020).

More and more companies are adopting remote work policies. Taking the example of Aetna Inc, which is the leading health care insurance company in the USA, after some relocation changes, it decided to promote remote work for its employees in an attempt to not lose them after the relocation. Many of their employees not only work remotely, but also have a mobile job. The overall aim is to gather people with great skills even if that means to work remotely which also means reduced real estate cost. More and more companies tend to adopt remote practices for their workers and will continue to do so. Not all companies have the same remote work rate as there are some use it almost completely and some others slightly.

Globalisation and digitisation are making the world of work even more flexible. Work 4.0 is becoming increasingly independent of time and place. Experts are already speaking of a 24-hour society. Flexible working hours with late, night and weekend work are becoming more widespread. In the public debate, more and more voices from industry, commerce and the skilled trades are increasingly calling for a further loosening of statutory working time regulations. This includes, for example, the demand that the daily maximum daily working hours are abolished in favour of weekly or monthly maximum working hours (BAuA, 2019)

In order to ensure a smart and safe environment, that is aware of the employee's activities and is following all safety measures, there is the need to identify stakeholders such as managers, employees, support staff as cleaners, security and visitors as suppliers and customers. (Zhang, H., Cai, Y., Zhang, H., Leung, C., 2020)

The benefits of remote work are more practical having to do with better work-life balance, telecommuting, increased productivity. Occupational doctors worldwide will face emerging workers' health problems linked to telework (Buomprisco, G., Ricci, S., Perri, R. and De Sio, S. 2021).

As far as the employees are concerned, the advantages of remote working have to do more or less with the less commute time followed by the free choice of place to live and more free time that can be dedicated to friends and family, the ability to control their own objectives and choose their availability and biorhythms.

The companies show organizational flexibility and increase their employee's productivity and motivation. Moreover, they have less costs, such as rental, and less middle managers. What is more, they gain from their employee's skill retention as they learn how to balance work and personal life etc.

Flexible working hours allow employees to be productive at different times on different days. at different times of the day. Flexible work locations determine the everyday life of commuting employees and those who work in a home office or in the field. In order to protect the health of employees in the process, good working conditions (manageable workload, room for employee initiative), guaranteed time for rest, clear procedures, rules and regulations as well as using bundled (company wide) measures should be considered (BAuA, 2020).

On the other hand, workers have less visibility and less career opportunities as they have also difficulties in participating in trade union activities. Moreover, they face more difficulties in trying to distinguish office from home which causes the feeling of invasion on their private lives, making them feeling isolated from the external environment.

There are some obstacles and grounds for resistance against hybrid work. Companies also face difficulties when it comes to remote working. For example, it could lead to potential damage to team working and organisational culture, new requirements due to remote management/leadership, reduction of training/learning on-the-job, data security concerns, challenges faced regarding inclusion and participation of dispersed workforce, risk of two-tier workforce, challenges to on-boarding procedures, managers' fear of loss of control (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020). There is an increase in expenses on telecommunication equipment and training and remote personnel management. Moreover, many changes in business processes and employments contracts are hard to manage and conflicts with middle leaders to deal with (Buomprisco, G., Ricci, S., Perri, R. and De Sio, S., 2021).

Different commuting types are considered based on total commuting time per day. For non-commuters or short-distance commuters, this is less than half an hour, for short-distance commuters between 30 and 59 minutes, for medium-distance commuters between 60 to 119

minutes, and 120 minutes or longer for long-distance commuters. In addition, weekend commuters and people who work on the commute are studied (BAuA, 2020).

Long-distance commuting is more prevalent among employees who work full time, who live alone and do not have children, who have a high level of education, and who and who are engaged in intellectual occupations (e.g., IT and scientific service occupations). Weekend commuters are more likely to be male and single. Working on the commute is most common among longer commutes, employees with telecommuting arrangements, employees with more intellectual jobs, and among managers. Long-distance commuting, working on the way to work, and weekend commuting are associated with time disengagement and higher work intensity. Long-distance commuters and employees who work on the way to work often have high (temporal) freedom of action. Among long-distance commuters, those with children in the household as well as women and employees with managerial functions feel particularly often more burdened. Long-distance commuters and employees who work on the way to work are more dissatisfied with their work-life balance, less rested, and have poorer health; the correlations with health are more evident for women than men (BAuA, 2020).

Strategies

An employer needs to keep certain things in mind when introducing hybrid working arrangements. Firstly, they need to consider well if hybrid working arrangements suit the company's needs. Then they are advised to conduct a pilot introducing hybrid working on a trial basis in orders to evaluate whether it is suitable for the company. They also need to consult employees before introducing the new working arrangements with respect to labour laws. For the introduction and implementation of hybrid working arrangements it is necessary to respect and follow current policies and adjust to them including guidelines on important aspects and amendments. What employers have to keep in mind is also that hybrid working arrangements are a continuous process and not a final stage so they need to be revised regularly. Hybrid working is a combination of days at the office and days working remotely, mostly from home.

In the short-term, employers are advised to consider introducing hybrid working on a trial basis, while at the same time considering longer term strategic decisions on more flexible forms of working. Employers should establish and communicate a plan for when employees will work on-site/remotely. All employees should spend some time in the office, so fixed days or varying days for the (home-)office should be decided. They should also consult with employees, representatives and take feedback on remote/on-site/hybrid working arrangements.

In the long term, there is no single best-practice approach to introducing hybrid working, as models will vary according to the individual's role, the size, structure, and nature of the organization and sector in which it operates. However, there are some tips that promote a long-term strategy and impact. Firstly, it is important to agree on overall strategic position on hybrid working & policy development and to support guidance reflecting this strategy as well as to define it with regard to specific organizational context. Engaging & consulting with employees via trade unions, employee representatives or engagement groups to ensure ongoing dialogue about hybrid working in practice and engaging with line managers to

understand their concerns, identify their training and development needs is quite important. What is more, there is also the need for developing a communication plan to share plans for new ways of working with employees in order to support effective collaboration and effective team working. Managers should also be prepared for resistance and changes in hybrid working so they should create strategies that respond to organizational implications having to do with technology, employee wellbeing, inclusion and fairness (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020).

A policy regarding hybrid working should be adjusted and incorporated to the current policies or developed from the beginning in order to correspond to the new needs. This policy has to include eligibility criteria for hybrid working, roles and responsibilities of hybrid workers and managers, rules for remote work such as working hours and caring responsibilities, arrangements for termination or revision policies as well as review of related topics.

Organisation should seek legal advice where appropriate on specific implications of hybrid working. When employees are hybrid working, employers are responsible for their health, safety and wellbeing both when they are in the workplace and when they work remotely, including working from home. Employees also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety at work. à Support employees in developing self-responsibility.

When considering the introduction of a hybrid working policy, the employer should look at the jobs and job roles within the organisation and identify those which are suitable for hybrid working. There may be some posts/roles which require the employees to be office based for some or part of the time. Where this is required, employers could consider offering other forms of flexible working such as part time working, flexible start and finish times, compressed hours, where possible.

As part of any hybrid working policy, the employer should determine what's needed to do the job, for example, a reliable and secure internet connection or a suitable desk and chair, who will provide or cover the costs of equipment and repairs, technical support for setting up any new equipment or technology and any insurance implications for the employer and employee (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020).

The inclusion of teleworking or mobile working -- may require an adjustment or amendment of the employment contracts of the employees concerned. If the possibility of teleworking was not contractually provided for from the outset, this requires an explicit agreement at a later date. In the case of both teleworking and mobile working, the legal requirements, particularly those relating to occupational safety, data security and health protection, must be complied with in each individual case. It would make sense to structure the legal relationship between employer and employee in such a way that the specific problem areas are anticipated as far as possible and adequately regulated.

In addition to that, it should be considered, with regard to the inviolability of the home guaranteed under Article 13 (1) of the German Basic Law, to make a provision in the case of teleworking that grants the employer and the persons who support the

employer a right of access to the home of the teleworker in matters of occupational safety or also data protection (such as company physicians, occupational safety specialists, safety officers and company data protection officers).

Particularly in the case of mobile working, it would make sense to regulate whether employees or employers provide the corresponding technical devices and Internet access (including maintenance and repair) or whether the use of private hardware and software by the employee is permitted.

Within the framework of the legal situation regarding working time outlined above, agreements may also be reached on distribution of working time, such as the performance of a certain proportion of the working of the working time at the company's workplace. Arrangements for the accessibility of the during teleworking or mobile working are also possible. Furthermore whether and under what conditions the employer has the right to require the presence of the employee at the workplace if necessary (Wissenschaftliche Dienste, 2017).

Some working time models are better suited to the needs of the company, while others reflect the needs of the employees. Companies are called upon to develop intelligent working time solutions that do justice to both sides of the equation and take into account as many interests as possible. After all, employees who can help shape their working hours are more satisfied with their work-life balance, are more motivated at work, are demonstrably more productive, and remain healthy for longer. In times of demographic change and shortage of skilled workers, these are advantages that should be exploited.

A suggestion of developing a flexible time model for a company actively involving their employees in 9 steps:

- Phase 1: Conduct preliminary meetings with staff
- Phase 2: Develop a plan
- Phase 3: Gather information
- Phase 4: Create specifications
- Phase 5: Select working time models
- Phase 6: Test model
- Phase 7: Develop improvements
- Phase 8: Evaluate working time model
- Phase 9: Take a decision

(BAuA, 2019)

Some of the key aspects of work from home that must be considered by an employer include: Legal aspects such as contracts, reimbursement of cost serving for the employee concerning phone or high speed internet, technical malfunctions and internet disruptions that may affect the work performed, insurance liabilities and data protection.

On the other hand, there are also organizational aspects such as checking basic requirements, distribution and location of working time, organization of work, ensuring flow of information, instruction and time management, responsibility and tasks for health and safety and occupational health care.

As far as workplace management aspects are concerned, work equipment, ergonomic design of the workplace, screen and input devices, software ergonomics, worktable and work surface, office work chair and positioning of the workstation, as well as lighting should be taken into account (VBG, 2017).

Employers who wish to introduce hybrid working to the organisation should consider which roles/jobs can be performed remotely. Consider how these could be incorporated into a hybrid working model. They should also consult meaningfully with recognised Trade unions/employee representatives and directly with staff and managers at the earliest possible time. Familiarisation with advice and information to inform decision making and production of a Policy which sets how hybrid working will be managed within your own organisation is really important. Introducing hybrid working on a trial basis will allow some time to determine if this approach works both for the organization and the employees. Carrying out regular reviews of policies to ensure they are working and fit for purpose and amendments as hybrid working becomes embedded in the organisation, in consultation with trade unions/employee representatives/staff and managers strengthens the procedure.

Many employers may wish to have the hybrid working practice as an informal one, but this needs to be clearly communicated in terms of what that means – trial with a view to evaluating, not wanting to give rise to worries over implied rights via custom and practice? Just keeping things flexible until the organisation can have time to future focus? Small business owners are often keen to ensure that "balance" does not simply relate to the employees' needs but also the needs of the business and look towards striking the sometimes-elusive balance for all. An employer may wish to communicate with staff to trial the practice and ask that to save staff from being disappointed with a refusal, not to put in a flexible working request as the individual approach could be counter-productive to the collective approach. An employer may also wish to express concerns, not in terms of excuses but rather fears, regarding the negative impact of being away from the workplace on – younger workers, new recruits, those who feel isolated and vulnerable and the impact on the business culture of teamwork and inclusive sense of identity and the impact on learning culture and team development/team productivity/team innovation.

Hybrid working will not suit every organization and most people will know, what lends itself to this type of working and what does not. Just because hybrid working has been in place for nearly two years does not make it an employment right to be exercised. it is clear that hybrid working is not an option for a number of small businesses. Some of the reasons for this may be due to a combination of – the nature of the work, the unsuitability of it being done remotely, the inability of the employer to supervise properly, inability of the employer to exert the necessary quality control in a remote setting, inability to meet the personal needs of all employees in a remote context and fears of creating a two-tier workforce and so on. It is

essential that employers manage the expectations of employees as there is a growing trend towards hybrid working especially in an office setting and that might mean that explaining why it does not suit the needs of the business and that the term "balance" also refers to the needs of the business as well as the individual who has a degree of certainty about the hybrid pattern but also is clear that the days at home are for working as opposed to, for example, child minding (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020).

A healthy relationship of trust and confidence between the employer and the employee should be built. There are some personal characteristics that someone should have in order to effectively be working from home. They should have good communication skills, self-motivation and self-discipline, ability to work from a distance, good time management and ability to meet deadlines, to manage working with others with a reduced face to face contact. Both sides should bear necessary caring responsibilities in mind and communicate about this openly; the stabler the e.g., childcare provisions are, the better longer-term planning can be made OR built in more flexibility if it works for both sides. Individual preferences should be taken into account as well as feasibility discussions (e.g., working flexible hours in order to work in the evenings, etc.). They should check regularly, if agreed conditions are still suitable or if changes are necessary.

In general, employers are responsible to take care of their employees' health, safety and welfare at work. This includes also the remote workplace. Also, employees have the duty "to take reasonable care for their own health and safety". Employers need to conduct health & safety risk assessment before granting and agreeing upon working from home incl. necessary equipment and agreement on cost bearing / sharing, suitability of work tasks for working from home arrangements, agreement on regular communication, regular feedback on current situation in order to identify necessary adaptions. Employer should take care that employee has necessary devices and equipment in order to perform their job. Clear responsibilities on who to communicate in case of IT problems or if equipment is needed (how, where, when to order, what is available, how to proceed if equipment needs to be changed in case of damage, etc.). Either if devices are provided or employees bring their own device, data security and protection needs to be taken under close consideration.

Apart from legal provisions in place for working time arrangements, expectations on availabilities should be communicated clearly incl. also possible flexibility in order to allow for sports, caring and household responsibilities.

The most successful working from home arrangements are those which have been carefully considered, discussed and agreed between the employer and employee and where there are clear policies and procedures in place to support them (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020)

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in Ireland prepared a National Remote Work Strategy that is built on three fundamental pillars which will be bolstered by underpinning conditions. The 1st pillar is focused on creating a conducive environment for the adoption of remote work. The 2nd pillar highlights the importance of the development and leveraging of remote work infrastructure to facilitate increased remote work adoption. The 3rd pillar is centred on maximising the benefits of remote work to achieve public policy goals.

Through progressing actions in each of these areas, the Irish Government will come to the realization of the vision of the Strategy – to ensure remote work is a permanent feature in the Irish workplace in a way that maximises economic, social and environmental benefits. Of specific interest to PROSPER, the Strategy puts a distinct focus on the issue of remote work and productivity, whereas digital wellbeing is observed within the context of challenges for employees related to their mental health (Government of Ireland, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021).

The Remote Playbook for SMEs has been designed by Grow Remote to help Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) with practical guidance and insights gathered from some of Ireland's leading remote-first companies.

The Playbook has 6 key sections concerning building a remote working policy, attracting remote talent, recruiting remotely, onboarding remote employees, communication in a remote world and creating a great company culture.

Building a remote working policy

The Remote Playbook for SME very usefully lists the key health and safety policies as one of the important sections that every organisation should include in their remote working policy. In Ireland, it is the employer's responsibility to ensure the health and safety of employees. If an employee is working from home, the employer is obliged to ensure the home is a safe place for them to work, as far as is reasonably practical. There are numerous pieces of legislation covering Health and Safety at work which can be found on the [Health and Safety Authority's website](). To help employers, the HSA has made a Home Working Risk Assessment Checklist available. Grow Remote has also made their [Working from Home Self-Declaration questionnaire]() publicly available.

Attracting remote talent

The Playbook mentions [research by the Pew Research Centre]() which uncovered that millennials, now the largest generation in the US labour force, prioritize work-life balance and employer benefits on an equal - or even higher - level to compensation. It's the companies who offer benefits around employee well-being and creating a healthy work-life balance that are more likely to beat the competition in attracting top talent.

Recruiting remotely

The Playbook highlights how remote working can be very isolating for people, so special attention should be paid to this during the recruitment process. Organisations should ensure their potential employees have a good social network to support them. Also, taking digital productivity in consideration, it must be noted that not everyone is a 'remote-fit'. During the interview, SMEs should assess for autonomy, initiative, self motivation, communication, adaptability, collaboration, and using remote tools.

Onboarding remote employees

The Playbook highlights that remote employers need to invest time in building a strong onboarding process, since onboarding can be challenging when done remotely. It can often

feel like new hires are thrown straight into work, without the more fun and exciting parts of the onboarding journey. A good onboarding sets the tone for the new hire's time at the company, whilst also helping them get up and running more quickly. Poor experiences go against a positive company culture, can drive attrition, and can also impact the company's brand and reputation externally.

The Playbook provides a detailed onboarding guide which can help SMEs to ensure their new team members feel welcomed and connected to the team before they start working, on their first day, during the first week, during the first 30, 60 and 90 days of their new employment.

Communication in a remote world

Meetings may have worked well in a traditional office setting, but in a remote world too many Zoom meetings can leave employees feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. Instant messaging apps like Slack may seem like a good replacement for dropping by a colleague's desk, but too many interruptions can be distracting and lead to employees feeling frustrated and unfocused. Overuse of these apps can lead everyone to expect instant answers and people to feel pressured to respond immediately. Just as it is distracting in an office environment when people constantly drop by your desk, so too is it impossible to focus on deep work when you are constantly getting notifications of new Slack messages.

Based on feedback from some of Ireland's leading remote-first organisations, the Playbook lists 4 key steps to successful remote communications for SMEs. By building, documenting and reinforcing communication guidelines, creating a 'single source of truth', over-communicating and making every meeting count efficient communication levels can be achieved.

Taking regular employee pulse checks to see how the team is doing and gather feedback is encouraged. There are plenty of free survey tools out there such as: SurveyMonkey, Typeform, SoGoSurvey, or Google Forms.

The Playbook on Remote Working for SMEs points out a common mistake that remote companies make – having too many ineffective meetings. It highlights that every meeting should be effective in a high-functioning remote company, so that no one's time is wasted.

Appointing a meeting chairperson is suggested in virtual meetings, to look out for those people who are less confident and less vocal and give them opportunities to share their ideas, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute. The chat function or 'hand raise' option should also be leveraged to bring in those who prefer to communicate this way.

Creating a great company culture

The Playbook suggests small actions which can have a big impact on a positive company culture (and consequently the remote workers' overall wellbeing). This can be achieved with highlighting positive contributions, e.g. a 'most valuable player' (MVP) of the month on Slack where people can nominate colleagues for their contribution during the month. In addition to that, arranging virtual coffees, virtual water coolers, Friday afternoon beers over Zoom, and simply remembering to say 'thank you' and encouraging everyone to do the same would be very beneficial (Grow Remote, 2022).

There are good reasons for someone to rethink their own company's working time arrangements against the backdrop of current developments in the labor market. In 2018, the number of people in employment once again reached a record level. At the same time, more and more jobs remained vacant for longer periods of time due to a lack of suitable skilled workers. For the applicants, attractive working hours have long been one of the most important factors for or against a potential work. Companies that can offer flexible and tailor-made solutions for the respective life situation of the applicants often have the edge. The life histories, wishes and needs of employees are more diverse than ever. While for some it is important to keep work and private life as strictly as possible, for others it is the ability to make use of flexible working hours and workplaces is indispensable.

Thanks to modern information and communication technology home office is a good alternative for many people instead of standing in traffic jams or waiting for a delayed train. More freedom also means that employees have to use it responsibly. Managers are also called upon to formulate expectations regarding when someone must be available and what response times to requests are appropriate. Despite the great scope for creativity offered by modern technologies, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that not all employees can benefit to the same extent from the new from the new flexibility in working hours.

In addition, greater flexibility in today's working also means higher operational flexibility requirements with regard to the wishes of customers. These customers are setting ever higher standards for response times and extended service times. These must be met in order to remain competitive in the international marketplace. More flexibility in working hours means more working time sovereignty for the employees, but is always a balance between operational and individual working time requirements. Even flexible working time models such as Flexitime or trust-based working hours must not lead to offices and factory premises are deserted on Friday afternoons, because overtime is preferably used for a long weekend. The situation won't be resolved without agreements in the work teams and company regulations.

Some of the motives for a modern working time organization include strengthening employer attractiveness for easier recruitment of skilled workers, promotion of healthy working with a view to an aging workforce and longer working lives, adaptation of operating and opening hours to changing customer requirements for availability, absorbing fluctuations in the levels of customer orders, tapping new potential through technological progress in information and communication technology and, lastly, shaping working time conditions as a **win-win situation** for both sides: better work-life balance compatibility of work and family, leisure time and voluntary work, resulting in greater job satisfaction and loyalty.

The duration of working time is far from being the only element for structuring working hours. Flexitime models allow employees to flexibly adjust the start and end of work. Interesting alternatives to the traditional five-day week are compressed workweeks that spread a 40-hour week over four days instead of five, or the "9/80 model," in which full-time employees can take a day off every two weeks (80 hours spread over 9 days). In addition, working time can be adjusted to seasonal and cyclical fluctuations and as well as to the personal situation of the employee. For questions on health-conscious design of working hours, the density of the work is essential. Sufficient breaks and recovery times must be ensured. The Working

Hours Act and the occupational health and safety aspects of the job are decisive here. So-called time hoarders who continue to save up their overtime ay not only jeopardize their health, but also harm the company. No employee can work productively and accident-free for a long period of time without breaks. Finally, autonomy plays an important role in the organization of working time. The question arises as to how much room for maneuver the employees are given and how the various time systems in the company can be synchronized with each other so that work processes run smoothly. But the synchronization of workload and working time is also more difficult with unregulated time credits.

Changes in the organization of working time in particular can intervene deeply in the behavioral patterns of employees. Helping manage employee expectations early on in the project is an important success factor. It must be clearly explained why a new arrangement makes sense or is necessary and, in the best-case scenario, how the individual can benefit from this change. This is the only way to obtain the foundation of a good change process: the willingness to change. The second important building block is the ability to change. Employees must be enabled, for example, to learn how to use digital time recording. A one-off training at the time of introduction is often not sufficient. Only with time do the pitfalls of new working time models become apparent. For this reason, it is often a good idea to set a pilot period in which the new solution can be tested. In larger companies, it can also make sense to first test new regulations at individual locations or in certain departments.

There is a wide range of possible working time models. Even if trend themes give the impression that working hours are developing uniformly in companies, practice shows a wide range of different design elements in use. These are primarily due to the activity requirements such as machine running times, response times for customers or the network of relationships at home and abroad. These are the requirements that every working time model must meet. But there is also an overarching framework that is more difficult to grasp: the corporate culture. This shows what the employer stands for or would like to stand for, and what the fundamental values are in dealing with one another. Trust-based working time is a good example of how working time organization is closely linked to the corporate and management culture. A trusting relationship and a high level of responsibility on both sides are the basic prerequisites for the successful introduction of trust-based working hours. If the trust on the part of management or the trustworthiness of employees, the model cannot work.

The difference between the presumed expectation of accessibility and the actual contacting is possibly an expression of the fact that employees are not always sure what is expected of them. It is important that not only managers, but also that the team colleagues coordinate with each other on what is necessary and sensible. An appropriate working culture is very helpful for innovative and productive teamwork. The feeling of always having to be available often arises when there is an actual or at least assumed expectation from management that employees must respond immediately to e-mails and calls outside of working hours. While collective bargaining agreements and work agreements offer the legal scope for shaping rules on compatibility, it is often the managers who, through their own through their own behaviour and (unspoken) expectations, influence the actions on the part of the employees.

Mobile working not only requires a change in the way individuals are organized, but also in the way teams work. Here it is up to managers to weigh up the interests of all employees and

to ensure that the functional times are covered. This often means a change in management style as well: Instead of controlling who sits at the desk, managers should empower employees to be more results-oriented and self-organized. A representative survey of HR managers and management in 2017 showed that more than one in three believe that the ability to inspire and motivate people to do their jobs will become a will become much more important as a leadership competency.

Under the new condition, the "agile working" organizational principles become ever more important and those principles concern a radically customer centric and self directed work, flat hierarchies and networks, high degree of decision making freedom and having a coach-manager. Moreover, there are agile principles/methods such as iterative and incremental which mean that the development processes are broken down into small work steps that can be can be developed and implemented independently. (Pre-) Prototyping illustrates the idea and show its most important features so that customer feedback can be obtained at an early stage. Fail fast principle means that the customer feedback can lead to incremental improvements, but also to the discarding of the idea. Cross-functional teams give different perspectives from different areas (e.g. research, production, sales, marketing) and promote new unconventional approaches to solutions.

Agile working tears down walls - in the mind and literally. Modern office concepts differ from traditional ones in many ways. For example, in newly built office buildings, there are hardly any long, narrow corridors with enclosed office spaces to the left and right. Instead, attention is paid to providing sufficient space for employees to exchange ideas and develop them away from the desk . The coffee kitchen is also a central design element of the room concept in many companies. But what does coffee have to do with modern workplace design? The chance meeting at central places in the company - such as the coffee kitchen - are important drivers of innovation, which promote the exchange of ideas among each other and strengthen social cohesion. In addition, walking to the coffee machine increases movement at the workplace and thus contributes to maintaining good health. Even in production, where there is often no room for conversation due to a lack of quiet corners, places of retreat and a social meeting place are important for the well-being and the professional and social exchange of the employees (Flüter-Hoffmann, C, Hammermann, A., Stettes, O., Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln e. V, 2019).

How has the pandemic affected hybrid working?
The use of Information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be perceived as resource (positive) or as demands (negative). Two surveys conducted in the prepandemic era in Austria and one that was conducted generally online during the pandemic give an idea about the impact of ICTs perception as resources/demands on burnout and work-family balance. On a positive note, ICTs are predominantely perceived as resources rather than demands. However, when it comes to draw upon ICTs as resource in order to positively impact burnout and work-family balance, only a weak effect could be found. In contrast, ICTs perception as a demand has a strongly negative effect. Work-family balance can mitigate negative effects. The strong negative impact of ICTs perception as a demand should be taken into consideration.

From a management perspective, a stronger emphasis should be given to health communication within the company in order to support and encourage employees to develop a healthier use of ICTs in their every-day working practices (e.g., through adequate 'health messages').

ICTs are considered one of the main influencing factors of employee health and work stress. Chronic work stress that is not successfully managed can cause burnout, a syndrome that has become a major challenge to employees' health and the performance of their organizations. Recent research indicates that burnout prevalence has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are investigations on how employees' perceptions of ICTs as both resources and demands impact employees' perceived level of burnout. The job demands-resources (JD-R) model is a work stress model that describes how various aspects of the job environment can have positive and negative outcomes for health and work performance and constitutes an overarching model that may be applied to various occupational settings.

Regarding ICT use in the occupational setting, [it has been] observed for instance, that workplace telepressure, a construct they defined as the extent to which employees feel to be occupied by electronic messages from clients, colleagues or supervisors, and the degree to which they feel urged to respond quickly, was associated with increased physical and cognitive burnout. Other studies have demonstrated that ICT-related stress, referred to as technostress, is associated with increased work strain, lower work performance, negative psychological responses and mental health impairments."

All data were collected among employees working in Austria. Workplace health promotion has become a particularly urgent topic on the Austrian political agenda, as since the amendment of the Austrian Occupational Health and Safety Act in 2013, Austrian employers are legally obligated to evaluate mental strains in the workplace and to protect their employees' mental health.

Research Assumptions (Hypotheses) & Findings

- H1: Perceived ICT demands increase burnout.
  "H1 predicted that higher levels of perceived ICT demands lead to greater levels of burnout. The path coefficient was significant and positive, supporting H1."
- H2: Perceived ICT resources reduce burnout.
  "H2 proposed that higher levels of perceived ICT resources lead to lower levels of burnout. The path coefficient was not significant, thus H2 was rejected. The results indicate that higher perceived ICT resources do not reduce burnout."
- H3a: ICT demands reduce work-family balance.
  "Considering work-family balance as the outcome variable, the results show that while higher levels of ICT demands led to reduced work-family balance, supporting H3a ."
- H3b: ICT resources increase work-family balance.
  University/Media: "higher levels of ICT resources did not lead to improved work-family balance, rejecting H3b."
  General sample: confirmation > "higher levels of ICT resources led to enhanced work-family balance. Contrary to studies 1 and 2, H3b is supported in the general sample."

- H3c: Work-family balance reduces burnout.
  "A better work-family balance was found to reduce burnout, confirming H3c."
- H3d: Work-family balance mediates the relationships of ICT demands and ICT resources to burnout.
  University/Media: "The results indicate that work-family balance partially mediates the influence of ICT demands on burnout." "The mediation hypothesis H3d is confirmed for ICT demands and rejected for ICT resources."
  General sample: "In contrast to the first two studies, in Study 3, work-family balance was found to mediate the ICT perceptions → burnout relationships. H3d received support."
- H4:   Burnout   reduces   job   satisfaction.
  confirmed

ICT   demands   &   resources   Items   used   for   survey:
ICT demands:

- I frequently feel great time pressure because of the use of ICTs.
- I am stressed by the possibility of constant accessibility granted by ICTs.
- My work processes are constantly interrupted by phone calls, text messages, or e-mail.
- Working all day with ICT is a strain for me.
- ICT creates more work for me so that I work longer hours at and away from the office.
- I find it difficult to manage the many different technologies, e.g., email, short messages services, social media.

ICT resources:

- ICT simplifies the coordination and communication of work processes.
- Thanks to ICT I accomplish more work in a shorter period.
- ICTs improve my productive capacity at work.
- ICTs help me to find innovative ways to perform my work.
- ICTs allow me the flexibility to access information at any time.
- ICTs allow me a constant accessibility to work so that I can stay up to date at all times.

Qualitative Part:

"Participants were asked to name and describe measures that could help to improve ICT use in their work life. three main themes emerged: (1) communication, (2) availability and (3) infrastructure.

- ad (1) communication subthemes: means of communication, email communication and corporate communication values. (p. 660)
- ad (2) availability subthemes: Expectations and self-responsibility. (p. 660)
  "Participants indicated the necessity to rethink and adjust expectations regarding availability for work in general and concerning email response times in particular. Regarding the latter, participants pointed out that email response times are

increasingly accelerating and requested a change in attitude and expectations." Participants stress self-responsibility & suggest it is duty of employer to encourage and strengthen personal responsibility. (p. 660)

- ad (3) infrastructure subthemes: technical equipment, IT support and physical activity and well-being. (p. 662)
  > (...) "ease of use was given more emphasis than the degree of innovation" (p. 662)
  > Participants expressed the need for IT support in the form of providing training; training measures that increase efficiency in the use of ICTs were most commonly mentioned. (p. 662)
  > "Regarding infrastructure more generally, participants suggested the implementation of measures, facilities and equipment that help to integrate physical activity as part of the working day and promote well-being." (p. 662)

In summary, reflexive thematic analysis of the qualitative survey data indicates that infrastructure was the most predominant theme overall. Participants' responses primarily referred to issues around the technical equipment, but IT support also appeared to be an important topic. Availability emerged as the second most prevalent theme; participants mainly stressed the importance of employees' self-responsibility while also criticizing expectations of constant availability and demanding a change in this regard. Communication occurred as the least frequent theme; improvements in email correspondence and transparent communication values at the corporate level were proposed in particular. Some aspects seem to have intensified by the COVID-19 situation, particularly the wish for clear corporate guidelines on availability expectations when working from home and the simple need for a stable connection.

An important finding in all three studies is that employees perceive ICTs more intensively as resources than as demands. However, while the studies unanimously show that employees' perception of ICTs as demands have strong negative effects – reducing the work-family balance, increasing the level of burnout both directly and indirectly through a diminished work-family balance, and with an adverse, indirect effect on job satisfaction – the effects of perception of ICTs as resources are mixed and less clear. (…) Even if employees perceive ICT as a resource, this perception does not necessarily lead to favorable outcomes for employees' health and work-related outcomes.
In line with the first two studies, the results of Study 3 indicate that ICT resources have no direct impact on burnout, but in contrast to studies 1 and 2, ICT resources were found to enhance work-family balance and to have a favorable indirect effect on burnout via improved work-family balance. Considering that studies 1 and 2 were carried out prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and Study 3 was conducted during the pandemic, this finding may be a result of the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Many employees experienced a sudden mandatory switch to working from home in response to COVID-19, and working from home may have given employees the opportunity to benefit from the possibility to continue working and to organize work in a more flexible way.

- "flexible work designs increase well-being through an enhanced work-family balance.
- Greater flexibility may also come along with greater autonomy, which may in turn improve well-being.

Although the results of Study 3 indicate that ICT resources may have become more beneficial during the pandemic, the detrimental impact of ICT demands is still present and much more pronounced than the beneficial impact of ICT resources.

The results support the notion that work-related technology use comes at the expense of employees' well-being and can be a predictor of health impairments. ICTs may play a crucial role in the development of burnout. ICT demands are clearly detrimental to individuals' satisfaction with their work-family balance. Work-related ICT demands per se obstruct employees in their attempt to balance their life domains. The results confirm the established burnout → job satisfaction link and demonstrate that job satisfaction is negatively influenced by burnout, to which the negative effects of ICTs contribute.

From a managerial perspective, findings suggest that organizations may want to raise employees' awareness about the possible negative effects of ICTs on their health rather than communicating the potential benefits that ICTs may bring to employees. Since the detrimental effects of ICT demands are rather strong while ICT resources have ambiguous effects, it may be more promising to take measures that help employees cope with ICT demands.

Valuable recommendations for action emerged from the qualitative findings. Survey responses indicate that employees do not necessarily demand permanent technological innovations but instead ask for reliable, secure and easy-to-use programs and devices.

Similarly, participants are not in favor of constant system conversions and innovations. Companies should implement new ICT carefully and its use should be the object of critical reflection. Moreover, technology should not serve as a total substitute for personal communication.

Companies may want to introduce clear guidelines relating to corporate expectations with respect to employees' availability. Taking a clear position on availability expectations on the corporate side may help to reduce possible uncertainties among employees and thus alleviate a potential cause of work stress. Guidelines relating to corporate expectations with respect to employees' availability are deemed particularly important, as remote work is likely to persist even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The qualitative findings let us further recommend that providing IT support, reliable technical equipment and training and workshops about dealing with ICTs are reasonable measures that may help to reduce ICT demands and contribute to a more favorable perception of ICTs.

Giving employees the opportunity to engage in activities that are not work related, for instance, access to physical activity, may also support employees in dealing with work-related demands. Activities that promote recovery from work are essential for attaining and sustaining employee health and performance.

In the context of attaining personal satisfaction, organizations may want to evaluate how to implement ICT-related workplace norms in a manner that promotes work-family balance."

"Promising results emerged; the presence of work-family balance reduced the level of burnout, and satisfaction with work family balance diminished the adverse effect of ICT

demands on burnout in all three studies. This latter finding underpins the importance of the work-family balance in the context of employee health and wellbeing.

It is all the more important that organizations raise awareness among their employees that ICTs bring additional challenges and to introduce possible ways of dealing with them. Promoting a sensible and careful handling of ICTs in the occupational setting is deemed particularly useful with measures that support employees in developing an ICT use in which ICTs are not perceived as a stressful demand.

The overall topic also deserves attention from the perspective of health communication. It could be revealing to test health messages that aim to encourage employees to use ICTs in a manner that helps to foster work-family balance, for instance, by encouraging employees to use ICTs more consciously and to engage in recovery processes regularly." Ninaus, K., Diehl, S., & Terlutter, R., (2021).

COVID-19 highlighted several weaknesses having to do with social, economic and geographical systems. The main challenges in working from home during the pandemic had to do firstly with the lack of technology or space, working alongside children, spouses and pets and with the risk for mental health problems, isolation, stress and dealing with uncertainty (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020)

The evolution of smart working after the COVID-19 pandemic. A classification of different ways of organizing work after the COVID pandemic is made. In reviewing how organisations are looking at the post-Covid workplace, it's possible to distinguish four kinds of approach amongst organisations that will retain a physical collective workplace or workplaces. These approaches concern unreconstructed working, controlled hybrid working, flexible hybrid working and smart maturity working.

- **Unreconstructed** – everybody back to traditional ways of working
- **Controlled Hybrid** – focusing on rules and roles, specifying days for home and days for the office, retaining the norms and practices of the office as the touchstone for working remotely
- **Flexible Hybrid** – having a framework rather than rules, focusing on tasks rather than roles, and enabling more autonomy and choice for employees
- **Smart Maturity** – as for Flexible Hybrid, but with a strong focus on transformation and innovation, rethinking work on "virtual first" principles and redesigning workplaces for maximal flexibility and choice, and for optimal interaction between people in the collective workplace and people working elsewhere. It emphasizes a focus on results and a culture of trust, rather than working practices based on presence or place.

The impact of Virtual Only organisations

While there are global companies in this field with very significant turnover, most Virtual Only organisations tend to be smaller – at least at the moment. They are not necessarily smarter. Some that operate more traditional home-based working, for example, can be very controlling with very limited autonomy for employees, remote surveillance, etc. But the newer wave

seems to be very focused on employee choice and wellbeing. These will be a focus for another article. But for the moment it's worth noting that for many people during the pandemic virtual working has been their only experience of work as they have entered the labour market. As Virtual Only companies grow and become a larger part of the landscape of work, people will be moving between such companies and premises-based or hybrid companies. What will their experience and expectations be? (Lake A., 2022)

Preliminary analyses of the prevalence of work-from-home in Corona crisis show that the share of the workforce who were given the opportunity to work from home at the time of the contact restrictions in the Spring of 2020 has increased significantly. Even in October 2020, before the second set of stricter contact restrictions, it remained high. In addition, about 42 percent of the establishments surveyed said that working from home at their establishments is possible in principle. This raises the question of how companies plan to deal with working from home in the future.

The majority of the companies that indicate that they have the possibility of working from home, plan to return to the previous level of work from home after the crisis (67%). Just under one fifth of companies plan to further expand the work from home (18%). 9% say they want to reduce the extent and a small proportion (5%) do not yet know what the situation will be in the future. However, large companies (250 and more employees) are significantly more likely to want to expand the home office than medium-sized companies (50 to 249 employees), small companies (10 to 49 employees) and very small companies (fewer than 10 employees).

The majority of companies that do not plan to expand home office, state that the activities of their employees are not suitable for working from home (63%). Another obstacle appears to be the more difficult conditions of working at a distance (55%). Companies that indicate that distance makes collaboration more difficult more often also have concerns about unequal treatment of employees. This is shown by bivariate correlation between the different reasons for obstacles. Corporate culture is cited in third place (39%). Other reasons include productivity losses, a lack of technical equipment, data protection or a lack of ability on the part of employees and employees and managers to work from home (all ≤ 25 %).

Companies that want to expand working from home were also asked about the reasons for the planned expansion. Overall, employer attractiveness appears to be the main driver for the expansion of work-from-home options. Over half of the companies assume that there is a direct connection between the expansion of home office options and employer attractiveness (54%).

Almost three out of four companies (73%) want to offer their employees more flexibility and a better work-life balance by allowing them to work from home. Both are often accompanied by the expectation of an increase in employer attractiveness. In addition, almost half (47%) of the companies mentioned a reduction in travel times for employees. For 46 percent, the avoidance of infection also plays a role in the wake of the SARS-CoV2 pandemic. Both are mentioned particularly frequently by establishments that state, that working from home works better than expected. For fewer establishments, the expectation of productivity (21%), the saving of office space (7%) or the possibility of extending accessibility times (3%) also play a role (BAuA, 2020)

The impact of COVID-19 on work, the workforce, and the workplace will persist after the health crisis has subsided. The pandemic has, for the first time, elevated the importance of the physical dimension of work. In this research, we define ten work arenas that group occupations according to their proximity to coworkers and customers, the number of interpersonal interactions involved, and their on-site and indoor nature (Lund S., Madgavkar A., Manyika J., Smit S., Ellingrud K., Robinson, 2021).

In order to ensure a smart (aware of employee's activities) and safe (following safety measures) environment, we should identify stakeholders such as managers/employees/support staff (cleaner, security)/visitor (suppliers, customers). Also, a 4-layer architecture in needed with IoT devices sensors and robots (cameras, temperature and motion sensors, 2d mapping detectors etc) -infrastructure layer- that collect data for analysis of actions, interactions and activities -data layer- which are processed by Artificial Intelligence technologies to solve problems through modules containing face recognition. Crowd-density detection and data mining -intelligence layer- and then be applied to provide smart solutions with identity verification, detection of abnormal activities, health monitoring and routine activities - application layer. However, ethical challenges can occur such as privacy, transparency and data protection (Zhang, H., Cai, Y., Zhang, H., Leung, C., 2020).

According to a EUROFOUND survey of 2020 close to 40% EU workers started to telework fulltime because of the pandemic. At least 1/3 of EU dependent employment can be performed remotely.

The transition made from traditional to remote work raised a number of challenges. These challenges have to do with equipping employees with the necessary electronic devices, ensure secure connections to business network and applications, develop remote working guidelines, make adjustments and adaptations regarding management and collaboration.

Depending on geographic regions, different trends regarding teleworking can be observed. For example, in Northern Europe, teleworking seems to be easier, faster and cheaper for companies, with an average of 30% of the workers having worked from home. What is more, SMEs had some difficulty to adapt to remote work changes as there was little experience and the technical challenges were greater. Firms with many employees accounted for a larger share of total employment in knowledge-intensive businesses, showed before the pandemic a larger share of teleworkers in that sector than countries like Italy and Croatia, where medium-large firms employed less than 15% of workers in that sector.

People who had experience in remote working before the pandemic seem to be more adaptable to these changes whereas others seem to feel less productive and satisfied.

Working from home increased significantly with the COVID outbreak. It is more common among self-employed even though it also increased equally for dependent workers. Telework was mostly common for people with high digital skills and therefore was increased in knowledge-intensive businesses and in IT and communication services.

before the outbreak teleworking was mostly reserved to experienced employees in high-skilled occupations, often employed in knowledge-based services. In 2018, less than 20% of ICT technicians and 10% of general keyboard clerks and other clerical support workers had

experienced some form of telework (JRC calculations from ad-hoc extractions of EU-LFS data provided by Eurostat.).

Other challenges faced in the transition to remote work had to do with the technical feasibility and the differences in access to telework across occupations which also depict the employee's autonomy concerning how close they can be monitored. In addition to that, employees' digital skills, that vary across EU members, play a crucial role in the remote working process. Therefore, it is important to provide training opportunities that upgrade these skills. There are fears of losing managerial control and difficulties in monitoring productivity. These may continue playing an important role in explaining companies' resistance to scale-up telework.

On average, it appears that pre-outbreak differences in the uptake of telework across EU countries primarily depend on different rates of telework in the same sector, and only secondarily on the different shares of employment in telework-compatible sectors. Differences in organizational and management practices are likely to have played a crucial role in determining the uptake of remote work before the pandemic.

The closure of schools and the transition to "distance learning" for students has forced most working parents to support their children during office hours. Many workers lacked a private room specifically designed for work, did not have adequate digital devices, and/or were not familiar with remote collaboration tools. Last but not least the adoption of telework depends highly on the legislative and regulatory frameworks as well as the ICT infrastructure (Milasi, S., González-Vázquez, I., and Fernández-Macías, E, 2021).

The pandemic has caused significant raise in the usage of digital technologies, and virtual learning and meeting as much as 40-60% during Spring 2020. This has caused a proportional increase of people having sedentary lifestyles. Persuasive technology such as reminders or wearables can be used as an intervention to reduce sedentary behavior. Moreover, tricks such as treadmill desks, standing or adjusted desks can be also used as a means to reduce sedentary behavior. Persuasive techniques may include reward strategies or self-monitoring strategies (Turner S., Audu O., Wu N., 2021)

Remote work statistics in the prepandemic era show that 11,8% of the workforce worked at least once a month from home in Germany. After the outbreak of the pandemic, most companies were forced to implement home office during lockdowns for the first time; some used it as a starting point for organisational development. Remote work needed the pandemic to be considered a feasible work arrangement in Germany because not every job is suited for remote work and because not every person/employee is suited to work from home or remotely due to a lack of skills and knowledge or to the working methods applied (Pöhlmann).

Chapter 2: Balancing digital productivity and digital wellbeing

According to recent studies, people are always connected to the internet through their phones. Mobile connectivity provides certain autonomy to the user. On the other hand, autonomy comes with a price. People are is some way always controlled and can be traced by a SIM card-mobile connectivity paradox. All this technology use causes distraction, procrastination, sleep and health problems as well as social exhaustion and anxiety. Moreover, it can cause dangerous and unpredicted behaviors. Many people also suffer from withdrawal syndromes when technology is removed as they become addicted. So, it can become problematic for an individuals' wellbeing when they lose control over it and therefore face functional impairment in their daily life. However, the medicalization of smartphone addiction seems to worry experts, who find the term not appropriate for occasional users that are being referred to as people with a disorder.

Even though the relationship between technology and people may often be problematic, there are occasions where it promotes positive feedback to the user through hedonic and eudemonic experiences. Hedonic experiences occur when the user derives pleasure from the use of digital media. Eudemonic experiences are described as those experience that add meaning to a persons' life, making it easier for them to achieve goals. Extensive use of the term and peoples' perception on digital addiction, often creates negative results to digital wellbeing. Constrains on connectivity can deprive users of positive aspect of technology (Mariek M. P. Vanden Abeele, 2021).

Definitions

Wellbeing It is a positive feeling associated with the use of technology striven by maintaining a balance between our real and online lives.

According to statistics, participants declared that they were less productive (39.2%) but less stressed (39.2%) and equally satisfied (51%) compared to the time of office working. Regarding MSK disorders, low back pain (LBP) was referred by 41.2% of home workers and neck pain by 23.5% of them. Neck pain worsened in 50% of home workers, while LBP did not exacerbate in 47.6% of cases. The home environment seems to be not adequate in the mobile worker population, with an increased risk for mental health and MSK problems, particularly affecting the spine (Moretti A, Menna F, Aulicino M, Paoletta M, Liguori S, Iolascon G., 2020)

Digital wellbeing refers to the balance in internet connectivity and often has negative connotation as it is connected to addiction having to do with extensive mobile use, absence of healthy behaviors and sedentary lifestyle. Wellbeing is an optimal psychological experience and functioning (Turner S., Audu O., Wu N., 2021).

Regarding the employees' wellbeing, there are certain aspects that need to be considered. There are quite a few risks that have to do with poor mental health, addressing specific concerns and anxieties incl. the return to the workplace, social isolation, loneliness and lack of colleague interaction, disconnection and loss of sense of professional identity, blurred boundaries between work and home. However, the opportunities created have to do mostly with increased autonomy around work schedules and more time for health and wellbeing activities as well as reduced commuting times. Companies that have remote workers need to provide training and support to employees on managing work-life balance in hybrid work settings as well as to offer training on digital wellbeing and healthy habits in relation to technology use and ongoing mental health support, resilience training and information for all employees They need to help managers understand potential wellbeing implications of hybrid working. Managers' awareness of potential symptoms & signs of poor wellbeing and mental health, knowhow to deal with them and provide sources of help and support for employees is necessary. Line Managers' training and development is a prerequisite for the development of effective hybrid management, e.g. remote communication skills, performance management, team and relationship building, collaboration in hybrid teams. Training on how to promote equality will ensure inclusion and fairness around work allocation, development and career opportunities. They have to know their team, its strengths and weaknesses with regard to hybrid working arrangements In order to be able to know what works for whom and what doesn't. Last but not least, there is the need to facilitate opportunities for social interaction between staff (online coffee break, competitions, informal group chats, social groups and physical activities to promote wellbeing.

Trust should be established through open communication, focus on outcomes and respect individual working modes/flexibility. Instead of valuing presence/observable behaviour, focus has to shift more strongly towards outcomes. The risk of unconscious biases leads managers favouring those who are physically present!

Additional care responsibilities and other duties of employees (often highly gendered) should be taken into account in hybrid working arrangements. Ongoing access to development and career opportunities have to be ensured, incl. fair allocation of work (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020).

Digital Wellbeing has to do with human relationship with technology regarding individuals, organizations and systems & policies. For the individual, it is important to create healthy boundaries around technology both physically and mentally. For example, it is necessary to use protective gear such as eyewear, taking breaks, use wireless connections and have clear working hours (Öste, H. F., 2020).

Digital wellbeing is a condition that can fluctuate over time. Therefore, the term digital addiction is introduced. Smartphone addiction has proven to be detrimental for an individual's personal and professional life. Digital addiction cannot be considered as a permanent and invariant state and restrictive measures should correspond to all. Properly designed IT enabled behavioral interventions effectively help users to mitigate smartphone addiction.

Aspects such as impulsivity or fear of missing out might create problems in digital users' wellbeing. In order to help users' digital wellbeing, intervention having to do with digital

detoxing programs have been developed and are adopted by large companies (Google and Apple). The extent to which connectivity is possible affect wellbeing. Digital wellbeing should be immediately linked to a balanced relationship between connectivity and dysconnectivity. There should also be interventions such as digital detox programs or screen time tools (Vanden Abeele, Mariek M. P. 2020).

Advantages and disadvantages of digital working

Home working can cause better work-life balance than usual work from the office because employees save more free time because daily commutes are reduced and usually homeworking is connected with flexible working hours. It has been shown that homeworking causes higher employee retention (HSA, 2020). Among positive effects the most expected are higher efficiency at work, better concentration, reduction of psychological stress, and a better family life (Moretti A, Menna F, Aulicino M, Paoletta M, Liguori S, Iolascon G., 2020).

Flexible working hours can offer significant advantages when done right. Concerning job security, companies with flexible working hours can better respond to fluctuations in orders. In terms of competitiveness, flexible working time models enable longer operating and machine running times and thus shorter throughput times. Qualified specialists like to work and make decisions autonomously, something that increases job attractiveness. There are also opportunities for further training as training is usually paid for by the employer and takes place during working hours. Small and medium-sized companies in particular often invest too little in training measures. Employees who have a say in the duration and distribution of their working hours and distribution of their working hours, are often more motivated and therefore more productive. People remain mentally and physically healthy above all when they are basically satisfied with their lives, if they are basically satisfied with their lives (BAuA, 2019)

It is listed that homeworkers and their employers are facing challenges. What can be connected to balancing between productivity and wellbeing is staying focused and avoiding home distractions, difficulty in monitoring performance, motivating employees, difficulty in building effective teams, team working relationships, and team communications, over-working, stress and isolation from co-workers leading to reduced staff morale and a decrease in productivity (HSA, 2020). Being in the same place all day creates more distractions as well as the feeling of "everyday is the same". There are also issues with remote meetings as there was little knowledge on these (Rudnicka, A., Newbold, J. W., Cook, D., Cecchinato, M. E., Gould, S., Cox, A. L., 2020)

Neck/shoulders pain and, overall, low back pain, are the main musculoskeletal symptoms reported. Workers are also exposed to threats outside work while telecommuting represented by the microclimate (sick building syndrome & those who work from home sick home syndrome). Very few interactions with coworkers causes psychosocial problems (Buomprisco, G., Ricci, S., Perri, R. & De Sio, S. 2021).

Every employee has to manage work-related stress, and this applies to homeworkers too. The Guidance finds out what can cause stress in this type of work and the lack of social engagement is the first cause.

Longer working hours may also occur more frequently when homeworking, as the boundary between work and home is not fixed. There may be a potential for a reduced work-life balance or a limited demarcation between work and home life (HAS, 2020).

A work-life balance is less possible - with negative consequences for health, performance, social commitment and thus for the cohesion of our society. Employees are already feeling increasing pressure to perform and meet deadlines. More and more tasks have to be completed faster and faster. The result are excessively long working hours, missed breaks, constant availability and work in the spare time. At the same time, the proportion of mental illnesses has increased sharply in recent years. Many employees are finding it increasingly difficult to reconcile the demands of their jobs with their private lives. Occupational medicine findings underscore the importance of the eight-hour day for well-being and health. They argue against extending individual daily and weekly working hours.

People who constantly work too long have been shown to put their cardiovascular health at risk. People who work excessively long days suffer more often from high blood pressure, cardiac arrhythmias and heart attacks. Gastrointestinal health is also at risk when working too long. Those who constantly work 50 hours and more a week risk stomach problems and even stomach ulcers. In addition, initial findings show that men and women with excessive working hours have an increased risk of diabetes.

Finally, the psyche also takes a beating when working too long. Mental exhaustion, sleep disturbances, the inability to switch off, stress and anxiety, but also burnout can be the result of working too long. According to available findings, constantly long night shifts of more than twelve hours are associated with a higher risk of burnout. In addition, long working hours prevent the excessive stress from being adequately compensated for by social, cultural and sporting activities, as there is not enough time for them.

Working long hours is not efficient. The longer the working time, the more fatigue increases, while performance and attentiveness decline, putting safety at risk. After the seventh hour of work, the risk of accidents increases significantly and after the ninth hour – once again, sharply. After the twelfth hour, the risk of an accident is twice as high as during a normal working day. Not only the risk of accidents increases, individual productivity per hour also decreases when working more than 40 hours per week. In this respect, there is a lot to be said against extending individual working hours. It makes more sense to distribute them wisely and to ensure sufficient recovery time - the keyword here is flexibilisation. The important thing here is flexible working hours must be designed in a way that is compatible with health and human needs (BAuA, 2019)

Research has identified the negative effects that remote work can have on workers' mental health, with increased feelings of isolation, loneliness and stress, the impacts of which can be different depending on where and how an employee is working.

Employees also experience difficulty with switching off and often feel obliged to work longer hours, since the advancements in technology have allowed employees to be constantly accessible in ways in which they never were before. The sudden onset of remote working has blurred the boundaries between people's professional and private lives. A worker's right to be able to disengage with work and refrain from engaging in work-related electronic communications, such as emails or other messages, during non-work hours and holidays is referred to as the 'right to disconnect'.

In Ireland, this area is governed by the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, under which the responsibility lies with employers to ensure employees are afforded sufficient time away from their workplace for rest. The Act details the breaks, consecutive rest hours, and annual leave that employees must be provided. The Act is enforced by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). Submissions to the Public Consultation on Remote Work Guidance indicated mixed views on this topic.

However, a common theme throughout submissions was that employees should not, or feel obligated to, work longer hours than they would have when based onsite. It was acknowledged that employees encountered difficulties in maintaining boundaries and switching off from work. Where submissions differed was on whether new specific legislation on the right to disconnect was required, since the over-regulation of remote working could undermine its flexibility and affect employers who operate across time zones.

The Irish Government is aware of the need to find the right balance. In order to ensure that employees are protected from overwork, the Government has asked the WRC to draw up a code of practice in this area for approval by the Minister. It will be possible to refer to the code of practice in disputes and adjudications (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2020).

Solutions on balancing digital productivity and digital wellbeing

A 4-layer architecture in needed with IoT devices sensors and robots (cameras, temperature and motion sensors, 2d mapping detectors etc) -infrastructure layer- that collect data for analysis of actions, interactions and activities -data layer- which are processed by Artificial Intelligence technologies to solve problems through modules containing face recognition. Crowd-density detection and data mining -intelligence layer- and then be applied to provide smart solutions with identity verification, detection of abnormal activities, health monitoring and routine activities - application layer. However, ethical challenges can occur such as privacy, transparency and data protection (Zhang, H., Cai, Y., Zhang, H., Leung, C., 2020).

Developed countries need to ensure workers ergonomic work equipment. Create intentional spaces for real connection. Use technology to encourage spontaneous meetings. Respect and define work hours. What can be suggested is adjustable seating and worktable, which can significantly reduce risks for health, make a list of daily goals, to create a space specifically reserved for work, and to reduce sources of distraction (Moretti A, Menna F, Aulicino M, Paoletta M, Liguori S, Iolascon G., 2020).

As for strategies, self-scheduling with breaking tasks and using calendar applications to accomplish tasks and milestones (motivation), as well as set digital and household boundaries and adopt remote meeting etiquette. A lack of transition between work and personal life was noticed which has to be handled with adequate workspace setup, even though there is lack of space. There is also lack of communication with coworkers which needs to be supported by social charts etc.

There is a need for policy changes to support remote workers long term and new avenues of research into the future of work and how remote workers can be supported: supporting focus, providing adequate setups for workers, helping workers develop work-life boundaries and helping distributed workers stay connected (Rudnicka A., Newbold J. W., Cook D., Cecchinato M. E., Gould S. J. J., Cox A. L., 2020)

Systemic considerations regarding digital wellbeing require the establishment of protocols and standards that have to do with ethical sustainability both from the side of the individual and the organization. The issue of trust is also important as transparency and data sovereignty should be guaranteed. The burst of the pandemic gave a view of how inadequate the system was to support these activities. Another important aspect is that strong internet connections ease the promotion of remote working (Öste, H. F. 2020).

In order to promote remote workers mental wellbeing, companies started launching toolkits such as "Google's Digital Wellbeing Toolkit". Digital wellbeing services and toolkits need to be inclusive and sensitive to the diversity in the socioemotional characteristics of users which depicts the degree to which an individual is capable of engaging in social activities. A wellbeing-aware design should be developed for those who can be easily influenced by peers and lack self-esteem in order to avoid negative thoughts and feelings. Design frameworks for inclusive digital wellbeing should aid designers in knowing how the diversity in the socio-emotional status inter-relates with design options and the context of use, and how to mitigate the negative impact. Those designs need to have a universal basis but also have specifications related to each case, as people have different characteristics and needs.

For a design to be inclusively wellness-sensitive, it needs to include physical, cognitive and socio-emotional parameters. The physical has to do with accessibility, the cognitive with usability and user experience and the socio-emotional status with wellbeing. Goal orientation and goal achievement gives the user satisfaction and therefore it optimizes their wellbeing (Reem S., Al-Mansoori, Naiseh M., Al-Thani D., Ali R., (2021).

Visual signals and notifications are not that effective for users who do not always have next to them their personal devices which means that they miss such alerts. Other senses, such as smell can be used as a reminder strategy not only to grab attention but also to sustain it. The combination of different practices may be the most effective strategy. Moreover, users generally prefer to be presented with choices when interacting with products as this gives them a sense of autonomy.

Instead of a chair, it Is recommended to use an orthopedic backrest that vibrates, buzzes and can be easily removed and adjusted to each user needs (Turner S., Audu O., Wu N., 2021).

eHealth applications are becoming more and more attractive. By utilizing users' data, companies can develop tools and applications. However, the data collected to enhance wellbeing can be also used to generate knowledge in the industry of how to grab attention and prolong and intensify digital use. By using pattern detection algorithms, companies can investigate and analyze stress factors. These efforts show potential for using digital footprints data to sense the degree of digital addiction.

There are barriers as it comes to the adoption of eHealth platforms in domains such as information exchange, social involvement and lifestyle monitoring services including uncertainty, lack of legislation and sustainable financial models (Almourad M. B., Alrobai A., Skinner T., Hussain M., & Ali R., 2021)

To reduce the stress employees should define their boundaries, ensure they have a clear role and know the employer's expectations, structure their day, leave the laptop after work is finished, directly talk about the problems, take breaks, plan exercises, and other restful activities. To ensure the well-being of their employee employers should retain a strong connection with employees.

The Guidance finds that is very important that the home office environment is adequate for working. Employees shout think about lighting, housekeeping, temperature, and electrical safety. There are more details in the Guidance about these conditions (HAS, 2020)

Almost every third German company allows for occasional working from home. But how do you create a healthy working environment?

What can be done in order to increase well being is to take into consideration 5 steps that have to do with screen, table, chair, atmosphere and distractions.

Screen - Look down at the screen from above in a relaxed manner, as if you were reading a book. The distance between the lower edge of the screen and the table surface should be as small as possible. Tilt the monitor back so that your gaze is perpendicular to it. Keep a viewing distance of 50 to 70 centimetres. Windows and light sources should not be reflected. Daylight comes best from the side. Backlighting is stressful.

Table - Hardly anyone has an adjustable table at home. Therefore: he or she should stand up and walk around. Table etiquette: Relax your shoulders. The upper arms should remain loose and form a right angle with the forearms, as should the upper and lower legs. Place your forearms horizontally on the table and your feet on the floor, if necessary with a footrest.

Chair - Edge sitters, beware: Your back will thank you if you use the full seat area. Even if it sounds like a fidgety person: change your posture often, it will relieve the strain. Treat yourself to an ergonomic chair that you choose according to function and comfort. The backrest should support you in all sitting positions, armrests should be at table level.

Atmosphere - Keep your workplace simple but homely. Create an area that you consciously enter and leave. The best way to do this is with a study, or if need be with room dividers. Make sure there is fresh Lu and daylight. Carpets are not only cosy, but also absorb noise.

Distractions - Put away the thriller, turn off the TV: only work items are allowed in your place. Clutter is distracting. Music on the side is a question of type, a podcast is rather unsuitable. You just wanted to get a cup of tea and suddenly you start a big cleaning? Against this helps:

strictly adhere to working hours, set goals and take breaks. Tip for the mood: Tighten your workout. Especially if you do not leave the house (VBG).

Increases in remote work productivity result from a quieter work environment which allows the workers to concentrate on complex tasks and a reduction in sick leave. However, adequate technology to enable and support remote work is necessary to improve productivity, such as basic collaboration and networking tools, mobile devices and supportive network infrastructure.

The Strategy suggested by the Labour Remote Agency Northern Ireland emphasises the mixed results that studies measuring productivity and remote work have had, both before and during the COVID-19 crisis. Of particular relevance:

- The University of Melbourne's (2012) and Stanford University's (2015) studies have outlined increased productivity in remote workers.

- Research from Japan (2020) has found reduced productivity for those working at home compared to the office.

- Microsoft's (2020) research polling 9,000 European large firms' managers and employees found that remote work productivity remained stable or increased for most companies.

- An employer survey by the UK Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (2020) found that there was little overall impact on productivity during the COVID-19 crisis.

- NUIG's Whitaker Institute and the Western Development Commission's national survey of employees from 2020 found most of them perceived an increase in their productivity.

Ultimately, it is difficult to measure the impact of remote work on productivity during COVID-19, since the transition has been involuntary for many and in many cases workers did not have the necessary infrastructure.

Furthermore, reported decreases in productivity can be attributed to multiple reasons including the switch to remote working occurring during a period of additional stress, parents looking after children being faced with additional pressures due to the closure of schools and early learning and care arrangements, newly remote-working companies that are not yet establishing a sense of community and ensuring a flow of communication.

Remote working has been widespread since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and is likely to be a permanent feature of the future working environment. Nevertheless, the effect that remote working has on productivity remains unclear (Labour Remote Agency Northern Ireland, 2021)

The German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health conducts research and provides advice with the aim of improving safety and health and making work more humane. Findings from occupational science show that the organization of working time plays a central role in this. A present bill to amend the Working Hours Act from the FDP parliamentary group

addresses (within the framework of collectively agreed regulations) the abolition of the maximum daily working hours in favor of a maximum weekly working hours (and thus a possible extension of the daily working hours) as well as a shortening of the rest periodswithout defining a lower limit. The motions of the BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN and the DIE LINKE parliamentary group are aimed in particular at strengthening the sovereignty of employees over their working hours and to protect them from excessive time and and quantitative workloads. The motion of the Alliance 90/The GREENS also addresses the strengthening of home office.

From the point of view of occupational science, the goal should be for employees to remain productive, resilient and (at best) satisfied with their work over a long period of time. Overall, the current time framework (8-hour day, 40-hour week, 11-hour rest period) represents a standard for a healthy and safe organization of work from the point of view of occupational health and safety. Already now, on the basis of the extension of working hours to up to 60 hours per week over a period of several weeks is possible, thus weeks and thus also offers a relevant framework in terms of flexibility.

Flexible working hours offer an opportunity for companies and employees if they take into account the limits of employees' performance under the condition of a high-intensity working and living environment and allow sufficient recovery times. As can be seen from the variety of company working time regulations, the Working Time Act leaves extensive and sufficient scope for flexible regulations and exceptions. In this context, it would be important to make companies aware of the possibilities that exist within the framework of the statutory regulations and of existing flexible models and to develop criteria for the design of "good" flexible models.

In summary, it can be seen that the daily limitation of working hours and the existing regulations on rest periods are of central importance for the occupational health and safety of employees. Predictability and plannability of working hours as well as the influence on the design of flexible working hours help to increase the compatibility of work and private life, the willingness to perform and the general well-being. The regulations of the ArbZG help to maintain the motivation, resilience and performance of employees and are of central importance, particularly in times of demographic change.

Even today, a not inconsiderable proportion of employees in Germany are confronted with mental stress in the work context. Nor can it be assumed that the digitalization referred to in the explanatory statement to the motion will ensure that work intensity will decrease to any relevant extent in the future. Extending working hours, especially in relation to the working day, and restricting rest periods risks reducing employees' ability to work and be employed in the long term.

Home office can contribute to a better compatibility of professional and private interests. Individual solutions make it possible to adapt the various needs and interests to personal living conditions. However, the possibilities for location- and time-flexible co-design of the working environment should also respect employees' need for separation of private life and work.

As can be seen from the variety of company working time regulations, the ArbZG leaves a lot of room for flexible regulations and also offers numerous exceptions. Furthermore, the ArbZG

authorizes the parties to collective agreements to make deviating regulations to a certain extent. From an occupational science perspective, it makes sense to evaluate the existing models of flexible working time arrangements and to identify criteria for "good" flexible working time models in order to support the desire for more flexibility on the part of employees and companies with scientific findings that promote health (BAuA, 2019).

Strategies

As for strategies, self-scheduling with breaking tasks and using calendar applications to accomplish tasks and milestones (motivation), as well as set digital and household boundaries and adopt remote meeting etiquette. A lack of transition between work and personal life was noticed which has to be handled with adequate workspace setup, even though there is lack of space. There is also lack of communication with coworkers which needs to be supported by social charts etc. (Rudnicka, A., Newbold, J. W., Cook, D., Cecchinato, M. E., Gould, S., Cox, A. L., 2020)

For the organization, they have to design systems. These new systems enable connection, knowledge transfer, innovation and networking through technology and make businesses who implement them more innovative and successful. Almost all business sectors had to adjust to the new systems. There are researches that show that many people would be willing to have a small pay decrease in order to keep working from home, and some others would rather choose hybrid work. Organization must provide guidelines ensuring healthy boundaries for remote/hybrid work in order to avoid their employees' overworking and isolation risks leading to mental and physical problems (Öste, H. F., 2020).

Guidance on Working from Home - for Employers and Employees has been published in October 2020 by the Health and Safety Authority to help employers and employees implement efficient and comfortable working from home by presenting a practical guidance. The Guidance is a practical guide for implementing working from home and it includes the following chapters:

- Introduction to homeworking
- Employer and employees' responsibilities
- Homeworking policy
- Home office/workstation requirements
- Workstation/display screen assessment
- Training
- Work-related stress
- Sensitive risk groups
- Risk assessment
- Communication
- Home office environment

Homeworking allows employees and the self-employed to work remotely from their main place of work on a full- or part-time basis and to set up a dedicated full-time workspace at their home. It is a very different type of work when it is compared to office work, so there are

a lot of f challenges, requirements, and possible problems that both sides – employees and employers should know. This Guidance helps both sides to prevent every single home working problem (HAS, 2020).

Chapter 3: Inclusive and sustainable hybrid working

Psychological safety is key for hybrid workplaces. Psychologically safe discussions around work-life balance issues are challenging because these topics are more likely to touch on deep-seated aspects of employees' identity, values, and choices. Sharing personal information carries real and significant risks, given legal restrictions. Management's responsibility is to expand the domain of which work-life issues are safe to raise.

What needs to be done is firstly to set the scene as everyone must be clear and transparent about the needs of the work and of the team and jointly own responsibility for succeeding, despite the many hurdles that lie ahead. Managers should lead the way by demonstrating with less words showing challenges and success. Taking baby steps in building trust and making small disclosures and welcome others should be included. Moreover, by sharing positive examples and explaining that disclosure has allowed to collaboratively come up with solutions that were better not just for the team but also for the employees has proven to be very helpful. This needs to be done with tact and skill to avoid creating pressure to conform. Lastly, managers should be inclusive and helpful, as a watchdog (Edmondson A. C., & Mortensen M., 2021)

Inclusivity

A distinction is made between employees with mainly fixed places of work, employees with mainly fixed places of work but mobile shares and employees with mainly changing or mobile places of work (changing on a weekly / monthly basis, different places of work within a week or daily, not tied to a specific place of work or workplace itself mobile). The latter form a very heterogeneous group - this should be taken into account in the interpretation of the average relationships.

Women and part-time employees are more likely to work at a fixed work location without mobile shares. Primarily fixed work locations with additional mobile portions occur more often among men working full-time and tend to go with intellectual jobs, high skill levels, office jobs, or IT and scientific service occupations. Often, employees in these occupations are able to work from a fixed location (e.g., office) using information and communication technologies (ICT) to work from any location.

Mainly changing or mobile places of work occur primarily in the construction, the skilled trades, and transport and logistics, so that men and full-time employees so that men and full-time employees are more frequently affected.

Work in changing or mobile workplaces is often accompanied by temporal overload, especially when employees do this work not only proportionally, but as a main job. The latter are also less likely to experience a sense of community at work and, in particular, employees whose place of work is themselves are mobile, have significantly less room for maneuver.

These comparatively low resources, coupled with high working time and job-related demands of employees with changing or mobile workplaces employees with changing or mobile places of work, contribute to an explanation for the for the poorer assessment of work-life balance and general health.

We should also take into consideration employees who report business trips or overnight stays away from home, as well as the frequency of these business trips and overnight stays away from home (one or two or more per month)

Business trips with and without overnight stays away from home are closely linked to occupations and activities. They are comparatively common among employees with intellectual or highly complex activities (e.g., in IT and scientific service professions) and with supervisor functions. Accordingly, business trips and overnight stays away from home are more frequent among men and full-time employees.

Business trips are particularly associated with occupations and activities that allow a high degree of freedom of action and time flexibility. At the same time, however, they are also associated with a higher intensity of work and increased temporal dissociation.

Employees with several business trips or overnight stays away from home per month find it more difficult to switch off from work and are also less satisfied with their work-life balance.

Business travelers (with and without overnight stays) rate their health better - presumably this is due to the comparatively high resources of these activities or occupations, to the occupational position, and also to a "healthy-mobile" selection effect. This effect can be explained by the fact that employees must be in a certain state of health to be able to go on business trips at all.

Employees who do not go on business trips but spend the night away from home (e.g., construction, security, transport and health professions) often have less room for maneuver

and at the same time a high degree of time constraint. The work-life balance, recreation and health of this group of employees are also rated less favorably.

The combination of highly pronounced aspects of work-related mobility are considered, as "extreme" forms. Extreme forms include a) long-distance and/or weekend commuting, b) teleworking more than one day a week, c) several business trips and / or several overnight stays away from home per per month, and d) work mainly at changing or mobile workplaces.

Since the different forms of mobility are accompanied by different stressors but also different resources, the present analyses can only provide initial indications of the extent to which the combination of different extreme forms of mobility is related to demographic characteristics, stressors, and resources at work, as well as with work-life balance, recreation, and health.

The combination of different forms of mobility is associated with a higher risk of time of temporal boundaries and is negatively related to recovery and work-life balance.

General health does not seem to be associated with the combination of extreme forms of work-related mobility (Wöhrmann, A. M., Backhaus N., Tisch A., Michel A., 2020).

Sustainability

Homeworking can be significantly greener than usual work from the office because employees stay at their homes and there is less traffic on the roads which leads to less air pollution. The significant energy save also comes from less stress on existing infrastructure, for example road/rail network as well as less use of office space and other facilities.

Remote work provides the opportunity to reduce the congestion on our roads, which will bring a reduction in transport carbon emissions over time. However, depending on patterns of remote working, such savings could be offset in the near term by increased emissions from buildings, in particular domestic dwellings.

Previous work in this area estimated average daily transport related emissions savings of approximately 2.6-2.9kg CO2 for each new full-time remote worker. The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) is currently in the process of updating this analysis to inform the development of new actions to support Ireland's emissions reductions to 2030 under Ireland's Climate Action Plan (Government of Ireland, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021).

The Playbook for SMEs mentions organizing a local volunteering day as one of the ideas for creating a great company culture. However, it is pointed out that it can be challenging for remote companies to organise in-person volunteering activities for their staff when they are located in different locations. Therefore, they mention a wide network of local community leaders at Grow Remote who would be happy to facilitate a local beach clean up or other volunteering activities for remote workers living nearby (Grow Remote, 2022).

Sustainability depends on changing work behaviours. There are different facets of sustainability with most obvious environmental and societal ones.

As far as environmental sustainability is concerned, the biggest component of the carbon footprint of work for most organisations relates to travel – primarily in the commute journey. Greening the office and greening the home count for little if at the end of the day we are still building and running too many offices and requiring people to make unnecessary journeys.

The table below depicts the average saving from avoiding commuting, according to UK research findings.

Annual savings 1.5 days per week 5 days per week
Distance 1175 miles 3915 miles
CO2 365 kg 1187 kg
Time 61 hours 203 hours

Growing an organization without growing its real estate is an important concept that is central to Smart Working. Smart Working environments mean that new employees can use existing shared spaces, eliminating the additional facilities costs associated with office moves.

As far as social sustainability is concerned, Working smarter can also bring benefits to society. This can happen by extending work opportunities into more remote areas and to disadvantaged groups, enabling people with disabilities or caring responsibilities to work in places or at times more suitable to them, indirectly supporting local communities and services by enabling people to work at or nearer to home, enabling people to dovetail volunteering activities with their work commitments.

These can also have benefits for employers, e.g. in retaining staff when they relocate, being able to recruit from a wider pool of applicants and being an employer of choice.

Potential wider impacts in the UK. It has been calculated that if the 40% of employees who could work from home did so for two days per week, the country could reduce road travel by 6.3 billionmiles/year, reduce green house gases by 6.2 milliontonnes/year and save the average commuter 11working days of travel per year – and over 4 working weeks for longer distance commuters (Lake A., 2011)

Diversity and Inclusion refer to the set of strategies, policies, and missions adopted by a company to create and encourage an inclusive workplace that attracts a diverse pool of talent from various cultural backgrounds. Diversity refers to the differences in individual characteristics, concept of bringing different people together in the same (work) place, achieved when recruiters aim towards heterogeneity and fight biases in the hiring process, relies on inclusion for successful execution

Diversity in the workplace refers to the workforce composition of an organisation/a company. There are different types of diversity in the workplace: internal, external, organisational, world view. In internal diversity types in general, no change is possible and people are born into it > race, age, ethnicity, national origin, cultural diversity. External diversity means the acquired personal characteristics in which changes are possible, such as: education, skills, interests, religion, geographical location, relationship status, socioeconomic status, experiences, citizenship. Organisational workplace diversity refers to the work location, job function, department, management status, level of seniority. World Views refer to the difference & diversity in people's world views e.g., political beliefs, knowledge of history, cultural events.

Inclusion depicts an achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization's success." (DEF Society of HRM). Inclusive workforce is a workforce that feels valued, seen, heard, respected which leads to innovation, higher cooperation, increased employee engagement. So, inclusion includes conscious efforts, behaviours, policies, and norms to make persons feel valued, strategies and methods for diversity work in an org, achieved when employees feel (psychologically) safe and included, is needed to achieve diversity that works.

There are certain activities that companies can do with their employees in order to achieve diversity and inclusion.

- <u>Diversity Briefings</u> (e.g., monthly discussion and design of diversity acts among team managers - exchange on different holy days/holidays among employees, differing cultural and historical knowledge),

- <u>Snapshot Board</u> of personal memories (Mementos) as ice breaker when taking about different experiences made

- <u>Office Happy Hours</u> (planned and with purpose),

- Creating a <u>web of inclusion</u> through internal communication tools (stories of real life incidents related to D&I or every employee writes one sentence and the next one relates to that but chips in another Diversity and Inclusion aspect. (Sharma V., 2020)

When it comes to inclusion, homeworking, if planned well, can provide significant benefits because recruitment does not necessarily need to be based in a particular location, so a diverse range of people has the same chance to work for a certain company. The benefits are also in a customised work environment for the homeworker, because some employees like people with disabilities, pregnant employees, post-natal women, breastfeeding women, or other sensitive groups are usually much more comfortable working from their homes than from the office.

The challenges that may be encountered are catering to sensitive risk groups who may have particular needs, difficulty in building effective teams, teamworking relationships, and team communication as well as stress and isolation from co-workers.

The Guidance refers that it is necessary to have a homeworking policy setting out employer and employee obligations. The policy should have a part that addresses communication, because isolation as a consequence of homeworking should not be ignored as it can lead to depression or other mental health issues. By having this policy in place, companies can prevent stress and team-related problems that come from reduced or no social interaction with fellow workers or customers.

Work tasks, working conditions, and the work environment mustn't adversely affect the health of sensitive risk groups such as pregnant, post-natal, and breastfeeding employees, night and shift workers, and young persons at work. In requesting an employee who belongs to one of the sensitive risk groups, or an employee with a disability to work from home, the employer should consider the suitability of the person for the work in the context of their homeworking space.

There is a list of conditions that the employer, in consultation with the employee, should consider, like the equipment necessary to complete the work, suitable workspace, adequate breaks, regular contact, emergency contacts, procedures, etc.

Working from home can result in employees feeling isolated, working longer hours, and blurring the lines between work and personal life. Employees must know they have support at all times during working hours. The Guidance has listed tips to prevent this problem for both sides, for employees and employers. The Guidance also refers the readers where they can find further information online on sensitive risk groups (HSA, 2020)

Concrete strategies put special focus on the significant potential of remote working hubs to assist with balanced regional development, allowing workers to live and work in a place of their choosing, and offering employers a chance to reduce their business costs, improve staff retention and access a greater pool of talent. In other words, remote working hubs can have a transformative impact on local economies and communities, facilitate a more equal geographical distribution of high-value knowledge economy roles, and result in increased regional employment.

There is a mention of a [collaborative study carried out by three Regional Assemblies, published in October 2020](), which quantified and classified the national hub infrastructure. The report noted that the development of co-working hubs with highspeed broadband has the potential to open up an array of economic and environmental opportunities and stimulate inclusive recovery across regions.

The increased adoption of remote working will support a wide range of national policy goals. There are already a significant number of remote working hubs across the country which are a national, regional and local economic asset. This provides the State with the opportunity to align these facilities with the development of electric vehicle charging, walking and cycling infrastructure. Alignment between remote working and town center regeneration, health promotion and community volunteerism also present great opportunities. Remote working, as an element of wider flexible working, presents significant opportunities in creating a more equal workforce.

As far as gender inclusivity is concerned, the Strategy highlights remote working as an opportunity to address some of the barriers to the full participation of women in the workforce. Those barriers have to do with the difficulty of balancing paid work and unpaid care work, of which women in Ireland disproportionately bear the burden: women average

almost 5, while men average just over 2 hours of unpaid work per day (OECD statistics). What has been observed is that there is scarcity of women's representation in senior positions.

Remote work can facilitate access to the workplace for people who struggle to manage caring responsibilities with a lengthy commute or physically working outside the home, as well as support policies which seek to ensure a greater balance in caring responsibilities.

Increased remote working can improve women's representation at senior level, since a lack of flexible working opportunities is cited as one of the reasons behind the scarcity of women in these positions. In turn, women's representation in senior jobs is an important aspect of addressing the gender pay gap.

Policy on remote working can support this by ensuring that remote working does not limit career development. Employers have a responsibility to ensure that the Employment Equality Acts are being adhered to regardless of whether an employee is working remotely or not. All employees must have equal access to career development, training and promotion opportunities. Employers should also apply a gender lens to decisions related to remote work to ensure no policies or procedures have a disproportionate impact on one gender. Employers should also encourage senior leaders to be role models and to manage their staff in an inclusive way.

There is also a disability and age-related inclusivity gap. Remote work also has the potential to improve labour market participation amongst people with disabilities or older workers. It offers a substantial opportunity for people with a disability or a chronic illness by removing a commute, allowing for a more flexible schedule, whilst creating a better environment for career progression. For older workers, remote working can act as a facilitator of sustainable employment or a way of easing into retirement, encouraging longer working.

According to the latest comparative research carried out by the European Disability Forum, Ireland has the lowest rate of employment amongst persons with disabilities of all European countries (32.3%), and the highest employment gap between people with disabilities and the general population (42%). These relate to the many barriers to employment that people with disabilities face, such as mobility, transport and physical access issues. Working from home for persons with disabilities in some cases is the only viable alternative.

One concern is that with higher levels of remote working people with disabilities' careers could suffer as a result of reduced office visibility and employers must include measures to avoid this. Persons with disabilities that are capable and want to work on the employer's

premises must enjoy the same right as persons without disabilities and allowances should be continued for those who wish to attend the workplace (Grow Remote, 2022).

The Playbook highlights advertising open positions without specifying location as the single most important step SMEs can take in their journey to being an attractive remote-first employer. Regardless of whether an organization maintains an office, rents a co-working space for a few days per month, or is completely office-free, being remote-first means their employees should be able to decide for themselves where they want to spend the majority of their working time.

According to the Playbook, research has found that remote work can positively impact diversity and inclusion in the workplace. With 83% of Gen Z candidates stating that diversity and inclusion is a key factor when choosing an employer, this is something that employers cannot afford to ignore if they want to attract the workforce of the future. Therefore, their careers page should include their diversity and inclusion policy.

The Playbook emphasises the importance of onboarding new remote employees, stating that "It's better to over-communicate with new starters, reminding them that they aren't isolated and giving them plenty of opportunities to ask questions if they need help."

The Playbook showcases a case study of Flipdish's remote 'buddy' process as a great tool for helping to onboard a new hire effectively, facilitating a personal connection between new hires and the organisation and helping to drive employee engagement and retention. A good buddy process is essential in a remote company, especially if the new hire is working remotely for the first time, in order to support them in their first few weeks at the organisation.

A company should be aware and recognize the importance of international and deliberate cultural planning. it is not just the big initiatives, but also the smaller actions that can have a big impact on enabling a positive and inclusive company culture (Grow Remote, 2022).

It is important to demonstrate that the reasons for refusing hybrid working are not simply about having a closed mind to it or it not being about not trusting staff to work without physical supervision, but rather the genuine reasons for it not being applicable whilst accepting on a macro level hybrid working helps the environment and local regional/town economies (Labour Relations Agency Northern Ireland, 2021).

In order to sustain productivity new or adjusted policies that support companies and workers in this transition phase are quite important (Milasi, S., González-Vázquez, I., and Fernández-Macías, E, 2021).

Digital wellbeing has attracted the interest of computer science and information systems researchers. Relevant apps entail self-monitoring, blocks and gamification with the aim to decrease smartphone use. For example, gamification encompasses features such as badges, points, rewards, punishments. The imposition of external incentives, such as in gamification, may not have the expected results in the long run. On the other hand, internal motivation and self-determination in combination with external factors is the best option for supporting digital wellbeing.

Self-monitoring features are the most usual features for digital wellbeing measurement as they help users track and visualize data and then regain control. Goal advancement and change user interface appearance might effectively help users control their addiction by keeping them motivated and by decreasing the appeal of the device. Block features may be restrictive and often linked to negative reviews. There is a preference in gamification features, even though they do not seem to be the most effective in controlling digital addiction (Santiago Walser R., De Jong A., Remus U., 2022).

Leaders can influence the choice and use of ICT in digital collaboration and thus promote team processes. A central management task in digital collaboration is to coordinate tasks and their distribution, as well as goals and strategies. Empirical results on various leadership styles show that a hierarchical leadership style in digital collaboration can have a negative impact on the performance of employees, whereas structural support offerings can stimulate the performance of team members. The extended delegation of leadership functions to employees can increase their flexibility and room for maneuver and thus promote motivation and health. This means that in digital collaboration with employees in the home office, managers are increasingly assigned a delegating and advisory role.

Results of scientific studies show that trust is an essential basis for digital leadership and collaboration. Trust is particularly important in digital collaboration and has a greater impact on performance, for example, compared to teams that work together on-premise. Factors for building trust in digital collaboration include task-related factors such as fixed availability times, transparent information flow, defined responsibilities and adherence to agreements or team-related factors such as proactive behavior (e.g. commitment, work engagement, personal initiative), promotion of loyalty, exchange of feedback and exchange of private information.

Due to the physical distance to superiors and colleagues, it is important for collaboration to maintain supportive social relationships and prevent a lack of feedback. Employees should

therefore be encouraged to engage in informal, non-task-related exchanges. Various online tools such as video conferencing can be used for this purpose, e.g. to set up digital coffee breaks.

In the course of work-related extended accessibility, e.g. through the use of communication technologies in the evening, effects with regard to the experience of stress are reported (exhaustion, stress, ability to recover or switch off). Conflicts between work and private life are also on the rise.

Therefore, from the perspective of managers, the importance of recovery and regeneration times in particular should be communicated. Concrete measures can include specified periods of non-availability, transparency of recovery and regeneration times, prioritization and substitution rules, and coordinated response times for e-mail traffic.

In order to be able to ensure health-promoting leadership in digital collaboration in the long term, managers should be trained in both employee leadership and self-leadership. Skills such as strong self-management, organizational ability, good communication and facilitation behavior, and empathy are the basic prerequisites for health-promoting leadership in digital collaboration and should be promoted accordingly through employer-initiated training programs.

Health-promoting leadership in digital collaboration can be implemented through clearly identifying areas of tasks and responsibilities and, through documentation, make them transparent and available, developing and agreeing on communication and accessibility rules with employees, scheduling regular employee meetings and feedback, expressing confidence in employees and increase their scope of action by delegating tasks and responsibilities, stimulating informal, non-task-related exchange among employees, e.g. in the form of "digital coffee breaks, communicate the importance of rest and regeneration periods and, if necessary, further compensatory and work organizational measures as well as becoming aware of a role model function for employees (Kordsmeyer, A., Rohwer, E., Harth, V., Mache, S., 2020).

Instruction is an important instrument of occupational health and safety. Employees receive general information, explanations and instructions tailored to their jobs and activities so that they can recognize hazards and behave in a manner that is appropriate to their health and safety. If employees do not work in the company or in one of the company's facilities, but in

a home office, for example, questions arise about the organization and implementation of the required training. In the home office, this usually involves PC workstations, i.e. VDU work.

The following also applies to work in a home office:

- Instruction cannot be dispensed with.
- The required training periods must be observed.
- Initial instruction is required before starting work.
- Instruction is to be carried out appropriately.
- The effectiveness of instruction must be reviewed.
- Electronic media can be used as an aid to instruction.
- Electronic media for instruction must meet minimum requirements.
- Instruction must be documented.
- Evidence of instruction must be be signed if this is required.
- A signature can also be provided electronically (QES) if necessary.

Essentially, the instruction should refer to the conditions in the home office, such as lighting and lighting conditions, room climate and noise, work table and work surface, seating, e.g. office work chair and arrangement of work equipment (in relation to each other and in the room). In the course of the training, the employees must also be made clear that in the home office they have a greater responsibility for safety and health at their workplace, as the employer has no direct influence on the the design of the workplace. This concerns the following boundary conditions in particular having to do with working time design in general, rest and exercise breaks, ergonomics, electrical equipment and general condition of the rooms (air quality and climate, lighting, etc.), condition of paths to be covered in the domestic area, psychosocial stress (DGUV, 2021)

In order for hybrid working to be sustainable, it is mandatory to develop certain reulations, policies and guidelines that have to do both with the employee and the employer.

Flexible working time and work location models. Companies can offer flexible working hours and regular teleworking from home.

Family-friendly personnel policy. Companies are called upon to involve the entire team as far as possible. This includes, for example, meeting the needs of weekend parents. Commute-related work planning. Managers actively support the needs of their commuting employees. This includes adjusting meeting times.

Giving credit for commute time. Taking into account the need for rest and recuperation can count commuting time, e.g., for work on the train, as working time. as working time.

Commit to good transportation links. Large companies can with local transport companies to achieve favorable connections. In business parks, companies can join forces for this purpose.

Involve employees when deciding on mobile working and leaving time for maneuver. Allow employees to make decisions and plan their time, e.g., with regard to timing, duration, frequency of travel, route planning, hotel reservations, local events.

Do not over-intensify work. Set realistic goals for mobility, allow for time buffers and recovery periods.

Build mobility management. Take stock of what mobility is needed and by whom. Strengthen the mobility Strengthen the mobility skills of those affected. Ensure that the conditions for mobility are appropriate to health.

Work in changing locations and improve general conditions. Good technical equipment is useful, specialized departments that relieve the field service, training courses, regular health checks, a company medical service, flexible working hours and a round table for mobile employees to exchange experiences.

Mobility-oriented management. Employee-oriented management, setting achievable targets, allow for time buffers, involve everyone in planning.

Minimum presence times. Regular presence in the company building makes it easier to communicate with superiors and colleagues.

Company should take measures for business trips. Good travel conditions. Choose airlines with better comfort. Book good hotels with quiet rooms. Inform travelers. Employees who travel frequently should be informed about exercise and relaxation techniques, healthy eating, jet lag problems, medical assistance, safety and crime abroad. Plan for transition periods. Employees who travel extensively as part of their position should be able to take breaks between travel and resuming normal activities. Consider crediting travel time. Travel time is work-related time and should be and, where possible, recognized as working time or paid for as such.

Flexible working time models have benefits for companies and employees The following working time models give employees more freedom. They can work more family-consciously

and recover better. Companies thus create attractive jobs and are better able to respond to economic fluctuations.

- Part-time. The individual working time is less than the standard working time agreed by the company. Advantage: Companies can absorb peak periods, and employees can better reconcile their private and professional lives.

- Job sharing. Two or more employees share a job or function. Advantage: Employees can better reconcile family or caregiving responsibilities with their jobs. The model makes it easier for companies to find skilled workers who do not want to work full-time.

- Flexitime. There is a core working time with compulsory attendance and flexitime periods in which everyone can start and stop when they want. Advantage: Flexitime is easy to introduce

  and is suitable for many workplaces in administration, production and the service sector.

- Functional time. Instead of compulsory attendance, there are functional times during which operating areas must be ready for work. The duration and location of individual working hours are determined by the team. Advantage: Employees can make independent decisions about their time. Self-management and entrepreneurial thinking are encouraged.

- Optional working time. Employees choose different working time blocks, e.g., from to clock, or weekly hours, e.g., hours one year, full-time again the next year. They must coordinate among themselves and cover planned staffing levels. Advantage: peak times are easier to absorb, for example in retail. Those with school-age children can start working later.

Recommendations for night and shift work can be made. As few night shifts as possible in succession. Many employees believe that they can get used to night work. However, scientific evidence proves the opposite. People's physical functions cannot fully adapt to night work. Therefore, as few night shifts as possible should follow one another. The recommendation is to limit the number of consecutive night shifts to three. Sufficient rest after night shifts. Night work is particularly stressful for employees. A sufficient rest period should therefore be granted after a series of night shifts. Start work as late as possible for early shifts. Shift workers cannot fall asleep significantly earlier before an early shift than on other days. Therefore, the recommendation is to start early shifts as late as possible. This helps avoid sleep deprivation.

Plan favorable shift sequences. A three-shift system includes early shift (E), late shift (L) and night shift (N). In long-rotation systems, shifts change less frequently (e.g., seven times E, then seven times L, then seven times N), and more frequently in short-rotation systems (e.g. E, E, L, L, N, N, Free, Free, Free). The latter are to be preferred, since the frequent changes result in longer rest periods and fewer consecutive night shifts. Forward rotation (E, L, N) is better for sleep and well-being than backward rotation (N, L, E). Avoid single interspersed workdays. Individually interspersed work days break up a longer block of free time and thus make recovery more difficult. Do not work excessively long hours. Many workdays in a row represent a greater burden. They should be limited, e.g., to a maximum of five in a row. Reliable shift schedules. Shift schedules should be predictable and manageable. This makes it easier for shift workers to plan family life and free time, which is often difficult for them anyway. A schedule is manageable if the shift cycle is short and the shift sequence is regular. Reliable rosters also apply to on-call shifts. Adjust shift duration. The duration of a shift must be adapted to the workload, for example, the amount of work, time pressure or psychological stress. To achieve a good fit here, activity and stress analyses are recommended.

Recommendations can be made for on-call duty. Long call duty sequences of a week or more should be avoided. Excessively long call duty sequences on weekends should also be avoided. In principle, it makes sense to keep the duration of on-call duty as short as possible. Each company should analyze on-call times and derive from them how much staff is needed. On-call times and work assignment times should be offset against the average weekly full working hours. This reduces the workload. In the case of high utilization, z. e.g. in the case of several nighttime assignments, days off may be taken, originally scheduled for rest after a call sequence. On-call time is usually compensated financially. From a work science perspective, the closer as possible in terms of time the compensation, the better. In order to comply with rest periods and promote the health of employees, binding regulations should be established, e.g., the start of regular duty or the granting of time off.

The organization should regularly review the nature of on-call duty; if there are too many calls or recurring tasks, introduce shift work or on-call duty if necessary. Distribute on-call duties among as many employees as possible. Employees should be able to be released from on-call duty, for example if they have small children or dependents. The handover of vehicles, work equipment and information should be well regulated. This enables frequent and rapid changes. Handovers to the next shift can shorten on-call time because those involved do not have to meet. When regional responsibilities are established, consider accessibility of residence. Small companies where on-call time must be distributed among a small number of

employees can join forces with other companies in the industry. This way, individuals have to provide fewer services and their workload decreases.

In industries such as skilled trades, using two workers at a time can be useful to reduce risks and increase the quality of work. Customers or patients should be informed about possible self-help and about emergencies. This helps to avoid unnecessary avoided.

Long-term and binding duty rosters, e.g. at the beginning of the year, provide planning security. Employees can adjust to this and plan their time off better. In addition, it must be possible to swap on-call duties at short notice and in a non-bureaucratic way. This avoids conflicts and improves the working atmosphere.

Wishes should be taken into account. When employees' wishes are taken into account, e.g. regarding duty rosters or further training, satisfaction and commitment increase. Enriching work. Work that is meaningful and conducive to learning is enriching and motivating. Help is needed in order to shape duty rosters. Employees should be able to help shape their duty rosters. This also increases motivation to work.

Employers must ensure that employees have sufficient skills as well as professional experience to act independently on call. By regularly exchanging experiences, employees can learn from each other and improve their skills.

There are certain characteristics of work-related extended accessibility. It takes place outside of regular working hours and work location, as distinguished from overtime. It is primarily enabled by information technology, such as Internet, cloud computing, smartphones, notebooks. In practice, it can refer to specific times, e.g., weekdays or weekends, but is not regulated. or weekends, but is not regulated. Therefore, according to the Therefore, according to the Working Hours Act, it should not exist.

Time-independent work must be recognized as working time. Corresponding overtimeis compensated by time off. Extended availability often occurs when the workload is too large and employees are overloaded. Work intensity and staffing ratios should therefore be regularly reviewed and adjusted. Rules should be agreed with employees on the following points: Hours of availability (on-call duty) and non-availability, postponable communication, exceptions for emergencies, usual response times, absence and substitution rules, handling of e-mails. The rules can be set out in a company or service agreement. Management and

executives make it clear that constant availability is not expected. Rather, a culture of healthy work with mutual trust and sufficient rest should be strived for. Managers are role models. They should not send e-mails late at night that put employees under pressure to respond quickly.

Employees must be trained to keep their private lives separate from their work. They should be able to consciously create space for themselves and not automatically offer extended availability. As a team, they can demand solutions if personal measures are not sufficient. Skills for dealing with accessibility can be trained. Suggested topics include: Rest periods, recovery, team communication, digital media. Individual offerings can include e-learning for mobile workers, talks on health and recovery, and activities with multipliers such as managers or experienced employees (BAuA, 2020).

Examples from company agreements and guidelines

- Between 6:15 p.m. and 7 a.m., no e-mails are forwarded from the server to service devices.
- Employees are not required to respond to e-mails after work.
- Supervisors and employees agree on times when they can be reached and times when they cannot be reached

An app that employees can use to plan and keep track of their time off could be offered. (BAuA, 2020)

Spatial mobility is a phenomenon that characterizes modern societies. It affects all workers, implies different forms and intensities of mobility and is associated with various opportunities and risks. A strong increase in mobile forms of work and new mixed forms of mobility and immobility is linked with questions about the effects and design of mobility. How do people cope with it, what consequences does this have for companies, for families, for health and well-being, for attachment and bonding: "Where we are at home?" How must mobile work be designed so that it does not impair the health of those affected?

There is a need for future research and systematically derives design recommendations. It suggests how the topic of spatial mobility can be connected to the political and social debate in the context of psyche and health.

The report conducted by the Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health in 2017 (BAuA) presents sociological and psychological models that can explain the complex

interaction of different forms of mobility as well as private and occupational conditions. Stress and health-damaging processes as well as positive effects of mobility on health and well-being are considered. Stress- and resource-theoretical mobility models are described. In addition, theories of spatial socialization and attachment are addressed, which can explain the social consequences of certain forms of mobility.

The following "initial hypotheses" preceded the expert opinion: Mobility can have negative and positive consequences for health. The consequences differ according to the specific living, working, and mobility conditions as well as personal preconditions and, depending on the form of mobility, can affect physical, psychological, and social health dimensions to varying degrees.

The report is based on a literature search that was conducted from February to May 2015 in relevant databases and supplemented by a hand search. Furthermore, contributions from an international symposium on "Internal Migration and Commuting in International Perspective" held in Wiesbaden from February 4 to 6, 2015, as well as own research results from the years 2001/2002 were included. Brochures and publications from non-scientific institutions were checked for relevance. A total of 156 sources, 54 of which were primary studies, were identified as relevant sources and used as the basis for this report.

As far as the outcomes are concerned, mobility is a necessary part of everyday life; within a biography, several mobility decisions are usually made. The mobility behavior of employed persons is not only a reaction to occupational mobility requirements, but often also the result of private and occupational coordination processes as well as multiple intergenerational dependencies.

Mobility forms can be differentiated into work-associated and work-related forms. Job-associated mobility is upstream and downstream of work and serves to coordinate job and non-job requirements (commuting, relocation). Job-related mobility results from mobility requirements of the job itself (business trips, on-site work, secondments). From the point of view of shaping mobility conditions, there are significant differences, since in the former case mobility is upstream and downstream of regular working hours and thus primarily the responsibility of individuals or sociopolitical institutions. In the case of job-related mobility, the organization of mobility conditions is clearly the responsibility of the company.

In addition to personal, occupational and private conditions, the intensity of mobility is relevant for health. This can be determined by the time spent traveling, the distances traveled

and the frequency of trips. Across all forms of mobility, control aspects and, above all, the predictability and plannability of mobility are considered to be health-protective resources. of mobility are identified as health-protective resources. In addition to traffic-related stresses such as traffic jams, delays or congestion in public transport. a high intensity of work and time pressure (at the workplace, but also for certain forms of mobility at home on weekends), as well as private and/or professional conflicts are named as the important mobility-relevant stresses. Central resources are the voluntariness of the mobility decision, the mobility intensity, the ability to plan and influence mobility conditions, as well as the functionality and individualized fit of technical aids.

Depending on the form of mobility, different demands and stresses are placed on people, with different consequences for physical and psychosocial health. The increased traffic-related commuting is linked to numerous physical and psychosomatic complaints on the part the mobile person. For weekly commuters separation from the family is associated with feelings of uprootedness and loneliness, and increased increased risks of separation. In the case of secondments, the accompanying family members are are sometimes more affected by the consequences of the posting than the posted person him/herself. In the case of on-site work, transport-related and psychosocial stresses come together and become multiple health risks, especially under conditions of high work intensity and multiple health risks.

Many studies also report positive effects of mobility on psychosocial health: mobility can promote detachment processes that have a restorative effect; the daily release from family obligations makes it possible for many mobile workers to do things at the place of work that could not be done at home. This opens up opportunities to learn about new things; feelings of freedom and autonomy, as well as an increasing sensitivity to the importance of partnership, are cited as further benefits of mobility. Against this background, job mobility can itself be a stressor or a resource, a moderator or mediator between family and work demands.

What they all have in common is that the issue of time sovereignty is of particular importance, but that very different problems and requirements arise in each form of mobility. Closely related to this is the issue of work intensification. A central finding of the report is that excessive work intensity limits or destroys all potentially positive effects of mobility on psychosocial health (BAuA, 2017).

Strategies

Since the pandemic, companies have adopted the technologies of virtual work remarkably quickly—and employees are seeing the advantages of more flexibility in where and when they work. As leaders recognize what is possible, they are embracing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reset work using a hybrid model.

To make this transition successfully, they'll need to design hybrid work arrangements with individual human concerns in mind, not just institutional ones. That requires companies to approach the problem from different perspectives concerning jobs and tasks, employee preferences, projects and workflows and inclusion and fairness.

A strong case for developing and designing new hybrid working strategies & policies for companies is implied, by taking into account the nature of the tasks to be performed and the different employees' perspectives and by offering insights into best practices by different companies around the world (e.g., Fujitsu, Eriksson, Brit Insurance) which are members of the future of work consortium. (Gratton L., 2021)

The Guidance, also mentioned earlier includes responsibilities from both the employees and the employers, instruction for creating homeworking policy, homeworking requirements and workstation assessment. There is also set of advice for implementing training and efficient communication, as well as to prevent work-related stress. The guidance especially focuses on sensitive risk groups and risk assessment, and in the end, the guidance concluded with instructions on establishing comfortable home office environment.

Homeworking allows employees and the self-employed to work remotely from their main place of work on a full- or part-time basis and to set up a dedicated full-time workspace at their home.

Homeworking is a very different type of work when it is compared to office work, and if planned, can provide significant benefits such as better work-life balance, less impact on the environment and makes companies talent pool bigger because recruitment does not necessarily need to be based in a particular geographical location.

Homeworking brings a lot of challenges, requirements, and possible problems that both sides – employees and employers.

Chapter 4: Drivers and barriers to digital wellbeing in SMEs

Drivers

There are some essential steps that every business should follow in order to establish and sustain SMEs digital wellbeing. It is essential to firstly set out rules and expectation that need to be followed. Daily basis communication is also vital in order to maintain progress. Regular one to one check ins with the team are essential for managers. Clear instructions, deadlines and updates are mandatory but should not become overbearing. Expecting feedback from employees helps identifying gaps and follow proper paths. Communication must be achieved through various channels, regarding the subject and its importance. Setting individuals goals increases productivity. The right equipment, such as software applications is fundamental for performing necessary tasks as well as ergonomic facilities. Flexibility increases team morale. Remote work enables working from long distances around the world. Collaborating with the team as well as sharing experiences is really helpful and supportive. Encouraging social interactions helps eliminate social isolation. A period of adjustment is always needed in order to get used to working remotely (View Sonic, 2021).

Cybersecurity plays a new and very important role in a hybrid working environment. In order to successfully shape the digital transformation, it is necessary to remove the known obstacles. Of course, this requires a defined strategy - this is now widely accepted - but at this point we would like to explicitly refer to IT security, which still leads a shadowy existence in many strategy papers. IT security is to be understood as a basic condition for a successful digital transformation and should be accepted as a decisive obligation and task by all those involved and affected. It should not be perceived as a cost factor, but as a decisive competitive factor.

The need for IT security solutions increases every year. New business models and personal user data are becoming more and more attractive for hackers, so that they will always find new opportunities and vulnerabilities to enrich themselves financially or in other ways. Likewise, the evolution of the internet shows the many new opportunities that are being opened up to criminals. Legal and regulatory requirements are also a significant factor in the increased need for IT security solutions.

It is important to understand security as a dynamic goal. When it comes to digitalisation, there is no preventive action in practice. Here, rapid implementation (due to the enormous pressure of digitalisation) is at the expense of security. New technologies are introduced even if not all possible security risks are known and adequately assessed in advance. This is where purely event-based action has its limits!

Fall back on known and proven solutions (second mover advantage). As is well known, the wheel does not have to be reinvented. With the help of risk analyses, the selection or decision to use a new technology in your company is easier. Here you should be clear about your requirements. You should also take compliance requirements into account at an early stage, as adapting technologies at a later stage is usually difficult and involves considerable additional effort. First and foremost, rely on the analysis your own processes and not on tools.

In the example of BSI, a media consulting company, it offers numerous documents, such as the IT-Grundschutzkompendium, to provide those concerned with initial assistance in implementing legal and regulatory requirements. Furthermore, the BSI's C5 requirements catalogue provides a basis for assessing the information security of cloud services. An established verification procedure is used, which means only a small additional effort for the cloud provider. The BSI's Alliance for Cyber Security also offers a good platform for exchanging information and networking on various IT security topics.

What is essential is to create awareness. Involving all employees in recurring training courses reduces the personnel and financial effort considerably. It is important here not only to give the IT users prohibitions, but also to involve them in the strategy as much as possible. If an employee knows how the IT requirements are designed, this makes an independent decision easier and more understandable for the employee. Employees must be put in the position of being able to assess the consequences of a decision and thus prevent misconduct to the detriment of the company through know-how and not through regulations (Król & Cremer, 2019).

Robust mental health benefits, including also e.g. preventive services such as mental health screenings should be introduced. In European countries, more assistance is available on a state-funded level and less by the employer.

One of the main problems companies still face with EAPs [Employee assistance programs] is their low utilization rates. A strong EAP program encourages utilization to ensure employee needs are met and that employees who require help are aware of, and can access, the services provide.

Aside from offering EAPs, employers may also provide other types of stress management programs designed to alleviate symptoms of stress and anxiety and improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels. As workplace stress is directly linked to safety, health, and well-being outcomes, employers are focusing more attention on organizational factors that induce stress and are developing programs to address these stressors.

Possible sources of work-related stress: heavy workloads, lack of autonomy and control, work-life conflict, increased technological demands [technostress, L.S.], unpredictable schedules. Ways to prevent and reduce stress include ensuring workload aligns with employee capabilities and resources, providing opportunities for career development, and improving communication and management support at the supervisor level.

Work-place policies and practices such as preventing and addressing accidents and injuries, sexual harassment, discrimination, workplace violence, and bullying/incivility is critical to creating a psychologically healthy and safe work environment. Toxic work behaviours can cause long-term distress from negative emotions. Policies and training can help reduce or eliminate such toxic behaviours in a timely manner. Including training on normative behaviours and consequences related to bullying, harassment, and discrimination in workplace orientation progress, and educating employees about their right to confidentially report these issues to human resources personnel.

Protective ergonomic factors include promoting health-conscious attitudes, co-worker support, reduction in repetitive work, and better work postures.

Availability of opportunities for stress recovery and mental recharge such as having quiet rooms on-site to rest in, as well as breaks from work including vacation days, work-free weekends, and ''real'' lunch breaks is found to be associated with positive mood, less fatigue and a decrease in employee burnout. Having healthy food choices in staff cafeterias and providing nutrition education. Subsidized fitness club memberships or conducting activity challenges.

There is a need for leadership support. The emphasis that leaders place on improving mental health in the workplace consequently shapes employee perceptions of the company's commitment to health promotion. Making mental health an integral part of corporate leadership is an important step in destigmatizing mental health issues. Leaders should consider also trainings and individual and team building. Implementing positive leadership practices can serve as a foundation for building and maintaining a positive organizational climate. Having workplace leaders take on roles of wellness champions can be encouraging to employees when they are facing mental health issues.

Outcome Measurement is crucial to measure employee mental health and wellbeing. No standardized guidelines on what is viewed as "success" metrics in a workplace mental health program. It is important that employers clearly state their overall goals and objectives for such programs ahead of time and continue to monitor the key metrics linked to those goals and objectives continuously throughout the life of the program. Concerns about disclosing mental health status are often related to 'fear of social exclusion, lack of opportunities for advancement, and over-inferring of mistakes to illness. Using simple assessment tools and surveys that determine employee overall well-being and the effectiveness of workplace interventions. The example for an organisational tool could be the CDC Health ScoreCard

Innovation can be perceived as the rise of tele-mental health. There is growing evidence that mobile platforms can achieve favourable results in delivering care. Companies should seek to address the issue of employee mental health in ways that are tailored to their specific organizational challenges and best fit the identified needs of their employees. The best program will be one that addresses the larger cultural issue of creating a work environment that supports employee mental health while providing services or benefits at low or no cost. Promoting positive mental health in the workplace is a complex process that requires collaboration across several leadership levels. While work can play a positive role in contributing to worker well-being, it can also become harmful and toxic when there is a lack of social support and unhealthy organizational culture (Wu A. et al, 2021)

Barriers

Remote work brings challenges that have to do with transparencies, decreased team spirit, communication and technical difficulties, blurring boundaries job-work, more self-discipline, feeling of having to be constantly available (24/7), non-availability of others, lack of spontaneous communication (lack of creativity and personal exchange with others), time-consuming on-boarding of new/other colleagues, lack of corporate culture (AVANTGARDE EXPERTS, 2020)

It is quite difficult for companies to support every aspect of remote work in terms of building a culture around it or measuring the amount of work and impact, especially if it happens informally. For employees working remotely it is hard to find professional and personal opportunities and they can easily become social isolated. Managers need to invest in communication between them and their team members and make efforts for networking. What is also necessary is to set clear expectations in order not to face work-life spillover challenges. Companies can provide remote mentors for workers, hold local events for bringing workers together and form network groups.

Another important challenge is building cultural acceptance among leaders and employees and securing leadership support. Managers often find it hard to trust goal achievement outside the office as they believe that employees should work together for overcoming challenges and reaching common understanding and innovation. Senior leaders should involve support teams, as well as themselves apart from employees. Moreover, small scale pilot programs can provide valuable data.

Managers should be provided with training in order to be prepared. There is the need to create understanding about how corporate culture influences the success of remote work initiatives and how those initiatives shape corporate culture (Bell, B.S. 2012).

There are acknowledgements of stress through working from home arrangements: from private environment and from boss/supervisor. Digital stress in the workplace can be counteracted with a variety of technical, organisational and social factors. This counteraction is also referred to as prevention. The Duden dictionary defines prevention as "prevention in relation to a disease". In this context, a preventive measure in dealing with digital stress is understood as a measure that reduces or eliminates the stress factors of digital work or the negative consequences of digital stress.

In general stress prevention, different types of prevention are distinguished. Primary prevention aims at mitigating stress factors. Secondary prevention aims to create framework conditions and opportunities for employees to reduce the effects of stress that has already arisen. Similarly, digital stress prevention measures a) establish organisational frameworks (e.g. technologies, work routines, social characteristics) to reduce digital work stressors (e.g. by implementing more reliable technologies), or b) aim to reduce the negative consequences of digital work stressors. (e.g. by training employees in their technology use and competence). While active stress management per se is not part of prevention, b) includes efforts aimed at improving coping skills.

Organisations can implement measures to deal with digital stress at three different levels: the technological level, the organisational level and the individual level. The measures tested in the case studies include:

1. Healthy digital leadership

The aim of this behavioural prevention measure of managers is to make them aware of their role as role model and creator, so that they can create healthy framework conditions for themselves and their employees in dealing with digital technologies and media.

The content could include:

- Leading in the digital world of work
- Successfully accompanying digitisation processes

2. Capacity building

If employees in the company understand how digitisation is changing the workplace, they can consciously engage with digital technologies and media and integrate them meaningfully into their daily work. Accordingly, Meta-competences in dealing with digital technologies and media should be taught.

The most suitable content would contain topics such as:

- Workplace of the future
- Mobile work
- Basics "Digital Media
- Choice of communication tools in the team
- Monotasking
- Self-reflection in the digital world of work

Key lessons learned from practice:

Acceptance through transparency: A key success factor for the implementation of preventive measures against digital stress is the broad acceptance by employees. Only if the majority of of employees view the measures introduced positively, it will be possible that technologies can be actively made healthier. Therefore, active and repeated communication of the overarching goal of the prevention measures, the interrelationships between the between the measures, as well as the approximate effort and and benefits of the measures is highly relevant for the success of prevention projects. This also includes expectation management in the sense of what prevention measures can achieve and what and what they may not be able to do.

Support from management: Active involvement management is also an important prerequisite. On the one hand, managers can underline the relevance of the topic for the respective organization by consciously promoting the project themselves. In addition, it also plays a role whether and to what extent managers give their employees time to actively participate in the prevention measures. This enables a more positive view of the measures, as they are no longer seen as an additional workload for them workload.

Internalization through routine: One-time implementation of preventive measures is a good way to raise employees' awareness of digital stress and bring about initial changes in behavior. it is also clear that digital stress cannot be eliminated in the long term with a one-off workshop, but that long-term commitment on the part of the organizations is required. Through repeated measures and refreshers on digital stress, employees can develop routines that represent a healthier approach to digital technologies.

Success through individualization: The prevention of digital stress is highly versatile. There are a large number of different measures that can be implemented on different levels of organizations. At the same time, however, organizations are also diverse in their structure, culture and way of working. Therefore, no completely standardized packages of measures should be implemented. Rather, the characteristics of the organization should be taken into account when selecting the measures (Gimpel, Lanzl, Osberghaus, Regal, Schäfer, Wischniewski, Tegtmeier, Certa, Kühlmann, Becker, Derra, Rath & Scheibe, 2021).

According to the Hernstein Management Report of 2021-2022, remote leadership poses a challenge for many managers. Those, who do not practice remote leadership consider it to be more challenging than those who do. The biggest issues that derived from the Hernstein Management Report of 2021-2022 are listed below:

- Communication: 27% for remote managers vs 37% for on-site managers. Communication and (spontaneous) contact to employees are considered to be the biggest challenges for remote leaders (27%). For leaders who do not work remotely the share is even higher (37%). Missing face 2 face interaction is considered as biggest hurdle by managers, especially by owner-managers.
- Coordination: 18% for remote managers vs. 8% for on-site managers. Coordinating tasks are perceived as more time-consuming. Managers don't fear a loss of power through remote work and remote leadership. For managers in HRM leading remote/hybrid teams is considered less challenging - 56% than for managers in administrative-commercial jobs.
- Loss of control: 12% for remote managers vs 26% for on-site managers. The bigger the company, the less the fear of losing control is reported.

Remote work also influences the company's culture significantly. The Hernstein Management Report of 2021-2022 states that almost 9 out of 10 see an impact of remote work on the company culture. Change is experienced rather negatively communication and remote work: continuous efforts are *partially* successful as regards communication. Regular phone and video calls with employees are necessary to maintain relationship. There are serious worries that informal communication suffers a lot.

On-boarding is more challenging in remote settings, 42% report it's rather difficult. Many companies have introduced new on-boarding procedures for remote work e.g., online-meetings, online tutorials or online training.

Videoconferences as central tool for remote working (Hernstein Management Report, 2021-2022).

Availability is often an informal phenomenon where it is unclear how many people in the company are affected and to what extent. Availability can be an expression of increased demands such as work and time pressure, but it can also reflect aspects of a performance culture in the company. A self-check by the employees can clarify the extent to which accessibility is widespread in the company, what triggers it and whether individual or company strategies for dealing with it already exist.

The self-check considers:

Accessibility typology. Employees develop certain ideas about how the interaction between work and private life should be structured. This can be either in the sense of a clear limitation of areas of life or with the idea of a fusion of areas of life (no separation of work and private life). On the other hand, the reality of the lived boundary-drawing practice of employees is considered and evaluated. For stressed boundary-pushers and driven boundary-delimiters, the personal desires for (non)accessibility do not coincide with the accessibility actually experienced. In studies, it is above all the group of stressed boundary-pullers that shows impairment of well-being and conflicts between work and private life.

Extent of accessibility

- Frequency of contact
- Unexpected enquiries to be dealt with immediately
- Time spent

Accessibility triggers

- Emergencies
- Accessibility culture
- Overload

Individual handling of accessibility

- Limitation of access
- Time limitation
- Prioritisation
- Technical limitation
- Preventive avoidance
- Compensation strategy

Common strategies for dealing with accessibility

- Handling contacting
- Handling response to contact
- Handling time off
- Employee-oriented flexibility

Possible consequences are related to irritation, not being able to switch off, wellbeing, work engagement and conflicts between work and private life (work-life balance)

The results of the survey should be communicated throughout the company. Recommendations for action can be derived and implemented "top-down", i.e. starting from the management or HR department, or - which is to be favoured - "bottom-up", i.e. involving the employees and building on the survey results, for example in the context of one or more design workshops. For the presentation and dissemination of results, the upper management levels as well as the works or staff council should be involved first. A short presentation of the results by the person(s) responsible for the survey usually provides a good basis for discussion of implications and further design procedures. It is important to communicate the results and the next steps to the employees who have contributed significantly with their answers. This communication can and should take place through various channels, e.g. company meetings, intranet, staff magazine, but also (again) in the context of possible employee workshops (Pauls, Pangert & Schlett, 2017).

When thinking of the challenges that remote workers face, their solutions should always be kept in mind. Social Isolation can be solved with the integration of online communication tools. Productivity levels can rise with clear target setting and balanced monitoring of activities. Physical discomfort in working from home can be fought with informing and

providing workforce with the proper equipment. Issues with collaboration can be dealt with software solutions. Limits to technological access may cause problems to remote workers that need to find cloud-based platform solutions. Security threats such as viruses and malware should be faced with updated antivirus systems and encrypted connections. The danger of sedentary lifestyle should be communicated with employees in order to set reminder about breaks etc. Monitoring aspects such as overworking or home distractions can help in balancing work and personal life. Misunderstandings or general problems in understanding tasks can be eliminated with proper and constant communication. The problem of reluctance to working from home exclusively can be confronted, by giving the employees the choice of hybrid work.

Chapter 5: Management skills for healthy hybrid working in SMEs

With the Covid-19 epidemic, many employees — and their managers — are finding themselves working out of the office and separated from each other for the first time. Fortunately, there are specific, research-based steps that managers can take without great effort to improve the engagement and productivity of remote employees, even when there is little time to prepare. First, it's important to understand the common challenges, from isolation to distractions to lack of face-to-face supervision.

Daily check-ins are proven to be very effective. Many successful remote managers establish a daily call with their remote employees (either one by one or in team). The important feature is that the calls are regular and predictable, and that they are a forum in which employees know that they can consult with managers, and that their concerns and questions will be heard.

Different communication technology options also help remote managers: Email alone is insufficient. Remote workers benefit from having a "richer" technology, such as video conferencing. There are other circumstances when quick collaboration is more important than visual detail. For these situations, provide mobile-enabled individual messaging functionality (like Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.) which can be used for simpler, less formal conversations, as well as time-sensitive communication.

It is important for a manager to set rules of engagement. Remote work becomes more efficient and satisfying when managers set expectations for the frequency, means, and ideal timing of communication for their teams. For example, "We use videoconferencing for daily check-in meetings, but we use IM when something is urgent." Also, if you can, let the employees know the best way and time to reach you during the workday (e.g., "I tend to be more available late in the day for ad hoc phone or video conversations, but if there's an emergency earlier in the day, send me a text.") Finally, keep an eye on communication among team members (to the extent appropriate), to ensure that they are sharing information as needed.

Ideally during the first online check-in meeting, managers are recommended to establish rules of engagement with employees. While some choices about specific expectations may be better than others, the most important factor is that all employees share the same set of expectations for communication.

Employees should be given opportunities for remote social interaction. One of the most essential steps a manager can take is to structure ways for employees to interact socially (that is, have informal conversations about non-work topics) while working remotely. This is true for all remote workers, but particularly so for workers who have been abruptly transitioned out of the office.

The easiest way to establish some basic social interaction is to leave some time at the beginning of team calls just for non-work items (e.g., "We're going to spend the first few minutes just catching up with each other. How was your weekend?"). Other options include virtual pizza parties (in which pizza is delivered to all team members at the time of a videoconference), or virtual office parties (in which party "care packages" can be sent in advance to be opened and enjoyed simultaneously). While these types of events may sound artificial or forced, experienced managers of remote workers (and the workers themselves) report that virtual events help reduce feelings of isolation, promoting a sense of belonging.

Managers provide encouragement and emotional support. Especially in the context of an abrupt shift to remote work, it is important for managers to acknowledge stress, listen to employees' anxieties and concerns, and empathize with their struggles. If a newly remote employee is clearly struggling but not communicating stress or anxiety, ask them how they're doing. Even a general question such as "How is this remote work situation working out for you so far?" can elicit important information that you might not otherwise hear. Once you ask the question, be sure to listen carefully to the response, and briefly restate it back to the employee, to ensure that you understood correctly. Let the employee's stress or concerns (rather than your own) be the focus of this conversation.

Research on emotional intelligence and emotional contagion shows that employees look to their managers for cues about how to react to sudden changes or crisis situations. If a manager communicates stress and helplessness, this will have what Daniel Goleman calls a "trickle-down" effect on employees. Effective leaders take a two-pronged approach, both acknowledging the stress and anxiety that employees may be feeling in difficult circumstances, but also providing affirmation of their confidence in their teams, using phrases such as "we've got this," or "this is tough, but I know we can handle it," or "let's look for ways to use our strengths during this time." With this support, employees are more likely to take up the challenge with a sense of purpose and focus (Larson, Vroman, Makarius, 2020).

Businesses should take into consideration that managers should grow their competences in order to achieve a healthy hybrid or remote working environment for their employees. Therefore, trainings for both managers and their teams can be crucial for hybrid working SMEs. These can be carried out through workshop sessions, webinars, self-help online learning and structured e-learning courses.

Training and awareness-raising for managers should include understanding the benefits of new ways of working, the flexible working options available, the linkages between new technologies and the possibilities for new working practices, how to involve and motivate staff to implement Smart Working, how to manage a dispersed workforce, how to manage by results rather than presence, new approaches to empowerment and trust as well as performance issues, equality and diversity issues, dealing with communication issues and understanding the pitfalls and issues that may arise, and how to deal with these.

Training and awareness-raising for teams should include being clear about the type of workplace culture that it is hoped to develop, understanding benefits and goals as well as roles and responsibilities, developing skills such as working with less direct supervision,

communicating with colleagues and partners, time management, monitoring and reporting arrangements and health and safety in new working environments. Moreover, it could include working in a 'non-territorial' environment – sharing space and resources and working with Smart Working technologies and understanding the processes for having issues resolved.

Prejudices having to do with working from home, such as low employee productivity and digital competences as well as communication suffers can be dealt with proper management. Managers are responsible to support the transition into remote working arrangements. Knowing the needs of your team/employees regarding remote work in order to strike a balance between trust and control, transparency and data protection, independency and team spirit.

Some people tend to be distracted quickly if no boss or colleagues are present (cyberslacking) or they tend to deal predominantly with private matters instead of performing work for the company which doesn't have to be intentional but is due to the home office work station and/or personal characteristics. Managers should implement a time tracking system (time sheets, digital solution, etc.) in order to support employees in managing their work time more efficiently.

There are certain challenges posed by remote leadership for a company. Employees have different starting points regarding home office arrangements (physical, working methods, family constellation). Self-discipline is important but a present and strong leadership is key for transitioning into remote work setting.

Employees need all necessary information in order to be able to perform their work. Managers should not neglect company culture and the working atmosphere. They should stay in contact and maintain active communication and support the exchange within the team as social integration is key for wellbeing and productivity of employees. Afterwork meetings could be arranged in order to organise regular exchange between your employees on a more personal level.

Adopting remote leadership styles can be an extra burden for managers at start, as they have to attend day-to-day work and, parallelly manage teams at a distance and thereby rely completely on their employees. If problems arise at the start, it is important to show empathy and understanding but at the same time establish clear ground rules and boundaries. Defining and communicating expectations and also those areas where everyone is willing to compromise e.g., working time arrangements, is key (Pöhlmann)

Remote leadership can be based on allowing flexible working time arrangements, stick to a shared vision also when working at a distance, deciding which tools are best suited (MS Teams, Google Drive, Zoom.), including all employees; key technical and digital competences are needed for everyone - organise training if needed, defining clear responsibilities, negotiating and fixing dates and deadlines, establishing rules for reachability and deadlines for response, allowing the adaptation of new situations and be brave to try out new ways of defining leadership, taking time to adapt to the new roles for both the managers and the employees.

What is more, managers should control a number of different things related to their employees. For example, they should be aware of the equipment and accessibility of their workforce regarding digital devices, hardware and software as well as their digital and technical know-how. They should make clear of everyone's responsibilities, individual and collective agreements, workload and expectations and be able to provide feedback. Regarding communication, rules should be set in order to set format, time, duration, platform and

regular communication tools. Protocols for data security and IT solutions should also be established (AVANTGARDE EXPERTS, 2020).

In order to find a longer lasting remote working mode, one has to try out new software solutions and tools, especially those, which support in keeping up and organising the communication flow.

Managers cannot opt for an all-in-one solution that help managing the business digitally. They should try out different tools in order to mix and match according to the manager and the team's needs (Pöhlmann).

Remote Leadership is the form of leadership that has to do with handling a virtual team and positive steering of employees (behaviour, motivation) at a distance without risking the company's targets and visions. It encompasses digitally-mediated supervision, cooperation, coordination and above all communication to and with teams. Since the pandemic, remote leadership and VUCA leadership skills (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) became a standard requirement for many leaders/managers.

Remote leadership requires advanced self-organising skills, the ability to motivate others, a strong persuasive power, trust in the team, rhetorical skills as well as empathy.

Only a leader who knows how to lead herself, can lead others well. A leader must be active and manage the ongoing change by trying to activate and convince employees to see the advantages and accept disadvantages.
The day should start with organising themselves efficiently. This can happen by structuring the day well and in an honest and keeping in close touch with HR and senior manager. The basis for future planning (team, projects, meetings) is adjust existing agreements on objectives if necessary. A leader should be reachable in order to set a good example and provide feedback to their employees. The most challenging aspect for remote leaders is staying close to the team in a remote setting.
According to researches, remote team members are more satisfied and healthier than their office colleagues BUT only if they don't feel like being under pressure by being permanently available. Clear boundaries between work and leisure should be set in place. Clearly defined structures, rules on availability (individual, team, organisational), and goals regarding time and scope, prevent employees from overload or the contrary, feeling underchallenged. By trying to define and implement necessary rules on availability as soon as possible, routines that tend to establish themselves can change.

Leaders should also focus on digital communication as it requires more attention and concentration than physical interaction and thus, is more demanding. For that reason, a respectful, open and cooperation-based culture of exchange and availability has to be established through morning calls or daily spotlights.

What is more, the more trust a team gets, the more productive it is. The key is to know the team in order to know how to cooperate, trust and rely on them. As most people are used to establishing trust through regular f2f-communication, efforts should be made to establish a company culture in which team members can interact physically (for a joint lunch break, celebration of successes). Establishing meetings and getting together in a physical spot could be mandatory for all.

An efficient remote leader should be equipped with charisma and sympathy. Knowing yourself and be critical on what your strengths and weaknesses are, asking others such as a coach, a colleague, a team member for feedback, undergoing training and coaching in order prepare with the necessary skills to perform remote leadership in a successful manner are some of the basic procedures. Other necessary skills include being able to motivate others, leading by example (self-management skills, open culture of self/failure), decisiveness (esp. regarding tough decisions), openness, trust and appreciation (trust your team, praise good performance), creativity and humour (integrate fun into the daily business).

In order to motivate a team from a distance, leaders should show trust and perform little or balanced control over them. When organizing personal talks and meetings, employees could have their cameras on in order not to feel isolated. Establishing social events for the team with the form of virtual coffee meetings, lunchbreaks and afterwork peer meetings, leaving enough room for the team for informal communication, digital energizers as well as mixing different communication tools helps in team communication and in team building.

New employees or those facing more difficulties adjusting to a digital working mode need to receive more time to adjust to remote working arrangements including tutorials if needed (AVANTGARDE EXPERTS, 2020).

According to the Hernstein Management Report of 2021-2022 with up to date data based on a survey conducted among managers in Germany and Austria, an emphasis is given to shed light on how managers perceive their role under conditions of widespread home office/remote working arrangements (for employees and themselves).

According to the report, remote work is a part of a manager's working life as 2/3 of managers have a remote working option and only for 5% this option is explicitly ruled-out. The higher the rank, the more time is spent in the office. Higher ranked managers consider remote leadership more challenging than lower ranked managers - e.g., 38% of owner-managers are of the opinion that remote leadership poses a big challenge. In DE reported home office shares are on average 10% higher than in AT.

In IT/telecom 95% and in finance 92% of managers can work remotely whereas in commerce/trade 51% and in health and social occupations 40% of managers can work remotely, having the lowest shares.

The report findings presented that before the pandemic homeoffice was at 15% and during the pandemic in increased to 50%. The ideal amount for the post pandemic era would be around 40%.

More than 50% of managers think that homeoffice is here to stay; with strong proponents in top-level management (2/3); IT/Telecom-Sector has the strongest affinity towards working from home (78%). More than half of the managers' see a high potential for savings through desk sharing and less-to-no business travels (Hernstein Management Report 2021-2022).

The Unternehmensberatung Axel Schröder gives us a detailed guide on how to start drafting an IT-Strategy for SMEs and why is it important.

Elements of a successful IT strategy and its impact

IT infrastructure: devices, their use and availability are clearly organised and adapted to the needs of the company. Employees know which channels to use for which tasks and thus ensure a transparent and clearly documented data processing & handling.

IT management: clearly defined processes ensure security when dealing with customers and allow for predictions and conclusions on data processing. Errors are easier to identify and the strategy can be adapted to new situations.

IT security: Which risks does the internet or the careless handling of devices and data bear? Protecting confidential data internally and externally through a useful IT security – if needed, with external support.

Impact for your company: The internal processes are being structured and optimised to allow for a structured flow of communication and data processing thereby minimising search time and optimising stock-keeping. Collected data allows for scanning the company's processes, minimising waste and adapting the stock-keeping. Without data collection, you're in the dark and are not in the position to formulate goals and pursuing those.

An IT strategy is part of information management or management of information systems and aims for the strategic alignment of IT resources used in the company for a 3-5 year horizon. In SMEs, it is typically the management / owner and/or the person in charge for IT / IT-manager who is responsible for drafting and supervising the IT strategy for the next 3-5 years (= strategic horizon). In this context, strategy means, which devices, media and channels are to be used during the aforementioned time span. As IT is a particularly fast moving sphere, new media, devices and channels of information transfer can appear during this time span which means that a certain kind of flexibility has to be ensured.

An IT management, infrastructure and security should be set up. IT security encompasses the following subcategories:

- Safety: can the system work without errors and disruptions? backup plan in place? Enough band with?

- Security: what are the weaknesses of my system and which measures can I take? Which threats I have to worry about and how do I prepare for possible attacks?

- Protection: do my employees know what places a threat for network security? Are the necessary guidelines communicated in a way to protect sensitive data?

- Privacy: What happens with data if devices are being stolen? Are necessary security measures in place and what is a safe password?

Every aspect that is related to communication and data organisation should be taken into account when drafting a digital strategy with the aim of simplifying processes, minimising search time and effective use of technology for business processes. Social media platforms, such as Xing, LinkedIn and Twitter should be at least mentioned, even if the decision runs against their use. It is not so much about how an IT strategy is formulated but about giving

thought to it in the first place. In the best case, strategic comparative advantages can be built by optimising IT.

In the crafts and trades, small changes often lead to innovation. A handyman, e.g. an plumber, can scan the situation onsite and check the company's stockpile on his mobile phone. He can reserve spare parts for his assignment or order directly via pressing the button on his phone. The process is kept short, he can fix the date for installation with the customer and unnecessary routes are being eliminated. Waste of time, resources and space are kept at a minimum and the customer receives a fast and efficient solution for his problem. To set another example, a bakery collects data on which buns are being sold in which quantities. After a few weeks, the bakery can use the data to optimise its purchasing of materials. Stock is being reduced and less ingredients go to waste.

Measuring helps to steer and manage: With enough data errors can be traced to the relevant sources and raw materials, which might be defective. Tilers work with error documentation as basis for their craft: Which manufacturer can offer the best tiles in which situation and how do certain materials behave on certain fundaments? This information helps with calculating and processing of materials, as well as with customer service, as it renders them traceable and verifiable.

A strategically planned IT infrastructure can optimise work processes. With the use of modern process management software, company processes can be depicted electronically. The interplay of programs used, fixed storage locations and communication channels and a documented hierarchy keep things in order. In case of employee turnover, tasks and activities connected to a certain role can be accessed with a few clicks which allows for shorter on boarding time.

An assessment of the current situation is necessary for an SME IT strategy. It is important to establish which channels to use for communication with customers, suppliers and employees and how traceable is the chosen form of communication. A mix of onsite and mobile work may work better. Businesses should have standardized file paths in order to minimize search and processing time as well as adopt a common calendar management system.

A specified IT strategy can help in offering different services and identifying problems beforehand. Standardised processes reduce no-load and search time and provide for data to measure success. Costs can be reduced and goals identified – target-performance comparisons are easier to conduct.

Regarding planning, a process management software allows for capturing the production and processing time of products. If customers ask for delivery times, you can draw on recorded empirical values.

Regarding the organization, time recording, which measures project duration, helps with error detection and optimisation.

Manual reorders or multi-level procurement processes for spare parts bind resources and thus can be optimised. If the company's software provides interfaces to the suppliers' software, reorders can be undertaken without much effort or even automatically.

Some companies don't need more than an old personal computer with well-functioning software, a landline phone and a mobile phone. If processes are defined and customer data finds its way to the right place, this is enough. An e-commerce business on the other hand,

needs a much more sophisticated equipment. An IT strategy means that you deal with IT demands and their strategic development. The organisation of hardware, software and data protection should be communicated clearly. If knowledge is lacking in this area, external experts should be consulted.

IT strategy example Heinzchen Müller GmbH

Heinzchen Müller GmbH (GmbH = Limited) has 2 PCs, 2 phones (in the office), 2 notebooks, 2 printers and five mobile phones. All devices are connected to the internet and data is being stored locally. All devices are property of the company and private use is forbidden. Additionally, the owner-manager "Herr Müller" set up a server for the company. There is no cloud being used. The 5 mobile phones and 2 notebooks are being used by the sales staff, the rest is located onsite and used by administration and bookkeeping staff.

This structure is typical for a microenterprise: both, portable and fixed devices are being used. Administrative and bookkeeping staff work primarily from the office and can only be reached there. Sales staff work remotely and use their mobile phones & notebooks to make and take calls, receive and write emails without a fixed schedule. For the owner-manager, this setup fits the needs of the company as sales staff are being enabled to work remotely and customers receive their offers right away.

But the company has no data backup in place and Herr Müller can hardly control, which data his employees save on their devices nor if they use them for private purposes. In addition, sales staff communicates among each other through WhatsApp and Threema. With customers, communication takes place via email, mobile and text message. As Herr Müller hasn't thought about the diversity of communication channels beforehand, every employee uses his or her own preferred channels of communication. There is no control over protection of sensitive data.

Herr Müller should install a cloud service on his own server in order to provide for a central data backup. This can be outsourced to IT experts in order to use his own time more efficiently. Employees should be informed right away when starting their new job on how the particular communication and information channels work in the company. If further changes are implemented, the relevant employees should be informed first. It is important to stay flexible and open to changes with regard to ongoing digitalisation processes, in order to adapt quickly if necessary.

Another important aspect is IT security, even if many SME do not have this high on their agenda. As cases of cyber fraud are increasing, companies should be prepared to protect their data, resources and processes accordingly. Here, prevention is better than reaction. IT security encompasses four dimensions.

The company doesn't work in an interconnected manner. As a notebook gets stolen, sensible customer and company data is at risk. The hard disk can't be deleted from afar. This shows that increasing mobility and interconnectedness poses a challenge for the security of IT systems (Schröder).

For a home office what is required is software licences and packages, hardware, IT support and remote VPN access, as well as data security guidelines. Employees are advised to fix a permanent workplace, plan their working times including breaks, stay in touch with colleagues and managers and develop efficient methods for working from home.

Below there is a checklist for the necessity of IT strategy in SME.

1-pager containing 10 questions on e.g., desire to map existing business processes electronically, to gather and interpret data, to organise projects more efficiently. The focus is given on IT-Management. If for more than 3 questions the answer is yes, than you should think about an IT strategy more intensely.

- ☐ You want to increase your capacity for innovation.
- ☐ The process from customer request to finalisation takes very long.
- ☐ Waiting times, exposure times or working times are too long.
- ☐ You seek to measure the quality of your products and spot weaknesses in a targeted manner.
- ☐ You want to have your processes depicted electronically.
- ☐ You want to minimise on boarding times for new employees.
- ☐ You want to improve and strengthen IT security.
- ☐ You want to collect and analyse data (e.g., on processing time).
- ☐ You want to organise your projects more efficiently.

Below there is a checklist that contains questions regarding security for Home Office.

1.Do you know which processes can be processed with which devices and applications? Who you can contact for queries, when and how? Clear regulations for the home office help to structure the processes and make them IT-safe. A sensible list of measures and the respective contact person protects your company data.

Is the home office clearly regulated in your company?

2. The current IT security situation is constantly changing. The coronavirus, which cyber criminals use as a hook to send phishing mails and launch other attacks, is also decisive for this. An emergency team or a crisis team for IT security helps to react quickly to the dynamic situation. If clear contact persons are named, your employees can also report abnormalities more quickly and, in case of doubt, avert damage caused by phishing e-mails, among other things.

Have the responsibilities for IT security been clarified?

3. Private end devices usually cannot access the organisation's IT security measures. There is no central management by your IT department. Instead, the company must rely on the employees to independently set up protective measures, such as anti-virus programmes or firewalls, and to install updates in a timely manner. If this is not the case, the employees' IT systems can easily be compromised. Various threat scenarios for the company are the result.

Do your employees use corporate IT when working in their home offices?

4. With the help of a virtual private network (VPN), numerous threat scenarios can be excluded. In particular, spying on information by reading data traffic is prevented.

Is employee access to the company network and internet secured via VPN?

5. Authentication mechanisms protect your data and systems from unauthorised access.

Are accesses protected by password or even by a second factor?

6. The risk of becoming a victim of a cyber-attack is increasing, not least due to the increased threat situation resulting from the coronavirus and the home office environment. The BSI is already observing an increased incidence of phishing e-mails that are intended to trick recipients into opening malicious files or handing over sensitive data under the pretext of Covid-19.

Do you have backups so that you can react promptly in the event of an incident?

7. Since it is not possible to "just ask" the colleague in the neighbouring office when business processes are shifted to the home office, the provision of additional communication channels, such as chats or messengers, is a good idea.

Do you offer employees additional communication channels?

What is really essential is equipping workers to manage daily stress and handle the inevitable challenges that affect their mental health costs money, time, and energy. But evidence shows that the cost of failing to support employees' psychological well-being is often far higher (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Possible Actions:

1. Train your managers to promote health and well-being (https://www.apa.org/topics/workplace/mental-health/train-managers)

Managers and supervisors who work directly with employees are key to implementing and sustaining policies and procedures and creating a generally supportive environment. Teaching supervisors how to support employees and recognize the signs of stress and mental health issues helps reduce turnover and absenteeism.

The impact of supervisor and manager training in employee wellness and mental health plays a significant role. Leaders with even three hours of mental health awareness training report improved attitudes about mental health and a higher motivation to promote mental health at work. Leadership training improves employees' personal and job well-being (increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions). Training managers in physical- and mental-health-promoting practices can also help them lead by example.

2. Increase employees' options for where, when, and how they work (https://www.apa.org/topics/workplace/mental-health/flexible-work)

Creating an environment of flexibility is not just a nice thing for employees. COVID-19 has brought unexpected responsibilities and unprecedented stressors into employees' lives, and the workplace must adapt accordingly.

Research has shown that providing employees with a degree of control over their work environments is key in order to increase motivation and performance and yields beneficial results for the organisation. This should be considered with regard to hybrid working options as the value of a remote or hybrid approach depends on many personal characteristics and circumstances.

Organisations that are investing in remote-friendly work are viewed as creating more psychologically safe and inclusive work environments. Workers with supervisors who prioritise family/work harmony experience greater job satisfaction. Flexible hours would help

their mental health. ~ 50% remote workers would like to divide their time between home and office

3. Listen to what employees need and act on it (https://www.apa.org/topics/workplace/mental-health/listen-employee-needs)

Research suggests that when employees feel they have a voice in organizational decisions, they're more likely to remain in those jobs. Nearly half of employees say lack of involvement in decisions contributes to stress in the workplace. The psychological benefits are great when leaders not only solicit employee feedback but use it to inform their decisions.

4. Take a critical look at equity, diversity, and inclusion policies (https://www.apa.org/topics/workplace/mental-health/edi-policies)

Providing an inclusive and equitable work environment is integral to fostering a psychologically healthy workplace and supporting the mental well-being of employees. Diversity is not just a nice to have but integral for a striving business as companies with high levels of diversity perform better (esp. when management is also diverse). When employees feel that they are treated equally, they'll be more likely to contribute meaningfully while at work.

5. Develop programs and policies that support employee mental health (https://www.apa.org/topics/workplace/mental-health/develop-programs)

There are several steps that can be taken. Offering mental health training to all employees can help managers and supervisors assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis. It helps in identifying, understanding and responding to signs of mental health issues and substance use challenges it equips the entire organisation with mental health knowledge and fosters empathy and understanding.

Businesses can Instil a sense of belonging for employees of all backgrounds by using inclusive terminology by being aware of unconscious bias in an organisation and starting to educate all employees on the importance of EDI initiatives by making sure efforts are sustainable by promoting team buy-in.

They can encourage employees to unplug Encourage employees to carve out time for their well-being not only protects their mental health but can also improve job performance Presentism is associated with worse health and lower productivity as employees tend to show up even sick and when feeling unwell as being present is of high value in the organisation. That's why it is important to create a culture where workers take their time off in case of sickness or when feeling unwell. It is important to think about introducing company-wide mental health days as a n opportunity to unplug on the same day and for employers to truly focus on their well-being, not having to worry about catching up the following day. It's important for the CEO/manager/owner-manager to communicate to all staff that the mental health day will only be effective if no one works or sends emails that day. They should encourage the use of vacation as CEO / manager / owner-manager by taking time off yourself and encouraging managers to do the same When you're off clock, lead by example. Be wary of sending emails outside working hours and on vacation or sick time and clarify ahead of time with your organisation what warrants a true business necessity for emailing outside of these windows (American Psychological Association, 2022).When managers build working from home programs, there are some key steps that need to follow in order to make it sustainable

and effective. Work Practice Change suggests a "four program development steps" that consists of the following:

1. Establish the rules:

A policy is essential for the success of any home-based work activity. A policy defines who qualifies, how frequently they will work at home, expectations for separating work and family, guidelines on expenses that can be incurred, what equipment and services will be needed, and the conditions under which the telework privilege can be revoked.

2. Set the expectations:

If you don't establish home-based working environment expectations, they will make likely it up. An individual with a home office should know and acknowledge they will be responsible to their manager for work accountability, productivity, professionalism, health, safety, & security, avoiding distractions, and separating work from family life.

3. Reduce the risks:

Working from home can introduce risks including injuries, theft, safety, security, overwork, data breaches, low performance, and more. The organization must provide each individual and their manager with the guidance, tools and processes to ensure risk reduction, plus remedies, procedures and reporting requirements for incidents.

4. Maximize home worker performance:

For a variety of reasons, worker performance can improve significantly in a remote work environment. Some managers discover the need to update their management skills, for instance, ensuring that team members are more accountable by measuring performance by work output instead of measuring 'desk time.' Mobile team members – and non-mobile team members – should be asked to track and communicate their work activities, milestones and accomplishments to make sure their manager is regularly up to date (Work Practice Change).

Chapter 6: Good practices and concrete examples

In order to achieve best practices, there needs to be adequate guidance and policies that educate leaders to set up strategies for diversity and inclusion, diverse hiring, culture add instead of culture fit, constant communication, diversity and inclusion training and check existing initiatives on a regular basis (Sharma V., 2020).

A series of concrete steps are provided for implementing smart working. It is vital that the move to Smart Working has strong support from the top. Without strong messages coming down, individual managers may resist or introduce compromises that will in the end lead to the failure of the project. So, the vision and the broad direction of the changes need to be clearly understood by everyone at the outset. The changes will involve close liaison between the leadership of the organisation and the Property, Facilities, IT and HR functions, working with the management of the teams undergoing the transition. It will be necessary to form an inter-disciplinary project team to manage the project.

Consultations through the Smart Work Network show that one of the biggest barriers to success is lack of engagement at the top level.

The following is a simple 'timeline' for implementing Smart Working:

1. Work with senior team to understand the possibilities, and agree the Vision;

2. Establish senior team to drive the change program forward;

3. Gather the evidence – desk occupancy, workstyles, travel, productivity, staff preferences, technology use, customer locations and needs (etc);

4. Consult staff, staff networks and Trade Unions;

5. Prepare the business case;

6. Identify and address any health and safety and equal opportunity and diversity issues;

7. Set targets and priorities;

8. Plan any changes to technology, working with IT team;

9. Plan any changes needed to the office space, working with the property and facilities team;

10. Run awareness raising and training sessions with managers and teams, working with the HR team;

11. Develop any specific local protocols for Smart Working;

12. Set up a fast-track pathfinder/trailblazer implementation to learn from, and make any appropriate modifications;

13. Roll out the changes to the rest of the organization;

14. Continue culture change processes and training;

15. Evaluate, and monitor progress for lessons learned as well as any necessary reporting;

16. Modify further in the light of evaluation findings (Lake, 2011).

Since one size does not fit all, It is important for managers and staff at all levels to be involved in the innovation, and not simply seek to replicate old ways of working with new tools in new work environments. However, it is important that the underlying and agreed principles of Smart Working are not subjected to a series of compromises and exceptions on the basis that 'we're special'. The success of the implementation depends heavily on everyone responding to the invitation to challenge old ways of thinking about work.

It is important to demonstrate or fast-track, rather than pilot. People need evidence to be convinced that what is propose can be better bringing benefits. A good practice could be of going and seeing how others did it. In this way awareness will be raised.

Training and awareness-raising should also be considered. Smart Working may fail to realize the full range of benefits if managers and staff are not properly prepared for working in new ways and for playing their part in developing a Smart Working culture.

When considering remote work, China sets a great example. Working from home became very popular in China with the outbreak of COVID-19., with more than 200 million people working from home within a few months. This came with benefits such as avoiding long commutes. However, changes were made in the duration of work as working hours increased. Home schooling made the process even worse, as multitasking between personal and professional life became hard to handle.

Depending on the way employers and employees handle remote work, it can boost productivity or it can be proven inefficient and demotivating/

Smaller cross-functional teams can be helpful, as isolated individuals may feel uncertainty as to how to communicate issues related to work. Providing clarity on what decisions to escalate and which ones can be tackled at team level helps drive progress.

Determining how people communicate is just as important as what's being said, and it needs to be done confidently, consistently, and reliably. Therefore, proper management that leads, inspires and directs the team is key.

Connecting on a personal level and instilling empathy within the culture is doubly important when working remotely. Offering a way to connect, promote inclusiveness, and create a sense of community and psychological safety is crucial. Creating outlets for sharing best practices, success stories, challenges, and water-cooler chat are vital to create a human connection.

Establishing robust working norms, workflows and lines of authority is critical. Challenges such as not being in the same room with colleagues can be overcome by organizing digitally facilitated meetings.

Choosing the right channel is critical to getting it right. Pulling employees from topic to topic, you'll interrupt their workflow and drive down productivity. Video conferences are great for discussing complicated topics in real-time. Chat based collaboration software is great for quick synchronization or easily answered questions (Bick, Chang, Wang & Yu, 2020).

According to an interview-based research from the Work Design Collaborative, employees who are denied the opportunity to work remotely might become resentful of the perceived inequity and file a claim. It is important to maintain a transparent documentation so as to limit legal conflicts.

Employing talents in remote areas who are unwilling to move to areas where the organization already has facilities is made possible by an efficient distributed work program. By permitting critical employees to relocate away from the main office while still being employed, organizations are able to keep them on board. During the next years, the lack of competent workers in vital sectors like local government, education, and healthcare will be a significant factor in the creation of formal distributed labour programs. Regarding external distraction, such as natural disasters, telework programs allow minimum interruption of operation.

With more and more people working from home, we now talk about managing whole remote teams and not just remote individuals. Therefore, what is needed is effective team and staff development.

Remote working also benefits the companies themselves which are located in urban areas with long and difficult distances. Geographic expansion is much simpler to manage once a business has a distributed work program and strategy. When a business becomes location-neutral, it helps the procedure for setting up new remote offices or facilities for workers. When seeking ways to reduce costs, businesses turn to distributed work programs. Moreover, it has a much more positive effect for the environment as there are reduced commutes.

There are some essentials as to effective distributed work programs. The program needs to be formal with specific description and outcomes. Managers and workers need to adapt to the changes and the needs of remote work. That means that they have to adapt to the business procedures, technologies and communication-collaboration between the team. Therefore, training is a fundamental part of each program. These programs need to be carefully planned and implemented in order to be successful.

There are some steps leading to innovation and success. Commitment to digital tools and avoiding paper consumption, using portable devices, learning new technologies, showing specific hour availability and knowing when to plug and unplug are to name a few of the practices for an efficient work shifting program.

Remote managers should be able to set clear goals, know how to distribute tasks to each employee and hot to set rules and expectations. Trust is the most essential tool to make distributed work programs function effectively.

Sometimes, there are problems coming in the way that have to do with lack of leadership and training schemes, technological and time/adaptability barriers.

Most of the practitioners involved with distributed working programs believe that flexible work was a foundation for retention and recruitment strategies. While attracting and retaining talent may not be a core challenge in the short term, flexible work is increasingly the norm. The rate of adoption of flexible work arrangements continues to be much slower than it should be. Most senior executives unwilling to undertake the effort needed to install new management systems, implement the right IT infrastructure, and redefine the way managers and staff relate to each other. The key is to trust the business and its people by hiring people to accomplish a specific task; measure and manage the outcomes and don't worry about controlling where and when they do their work.

Using technology can be vital in keeping everyone on track, but it's important to get the basics right by implementing a fast, stable, and secure internet connection, as well as setting up an ergonomic home office environment. Many companies created special applications to allow their front-line teams to remain effective during remote work.

It is important for employees to meet security requirements while investing in strong safeguards. Remote working can have serious consequences especially when they are not aware of safe practices and switch to unauthorized tools. What is also important is the ability to recognize and change what is not working (Ware & Grantham, 2010).

Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for Mental Health in the Workplace has provided a narrative review of best and promising practices for achieving exemplary mental health in the workplace. Research was drawn from peer-reviewed articles using the search terms associated with workplace mental health. Eight categories of best practices were identified: (1) culture, (2) robust mental health benefits, (3) mental health resources, (4) workplace

policies and practices, (5) healthy work environment, (6) leadership support, (7) outcomes measurement, and (8) innovation. The review provided the scientific backing to support criteria developed for the Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for Mental Health in the Workplace. By recognizing organizations that apply evidence-based practices in their health and well-being programs, the Mattingly Award may inspire employers to adopt best practice. It seeks to establish the criteria for the Mattingly Award (= Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for Mental health in the Workplace) & targets the U.S. but research findings can also be partly generalised to the use in companies in other countries and of different size, L.S.]

In 2016, a public health summit took place at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health on the topic of Mental Health in the Workplace. There, four recommendations were made to promote good mental health at workplaces. These recommendations referred to the development of a quantitative scorecard for measuring mental health in the workplace, the shaping of workplace cultures to value mental health and well-being, the enhancing of the dissemination and accessibility of workplace mental health information and the establishment of an award to recognize exemplary programs and incentivize employer participation in mental health initiatives.

Mental health and well-being of employees have become an increasing concern among employers, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional pandemic-related stressors, including high ambiguity and uncertainty, social isolation due to physical distancing measures, changes in both work and domestic responsibilities, and concerns regarding financial and job security, have further affected employee mental health. Increase in mental health symptoms heightened feelings of guilt, insomnia, irritability, sadness, and emotional exhaustion. Work is one of the leading causes of stress for adults in the United States and job-related stress is linked to poor mental health. These workplace stressors, including long working hours, poor social support, and unclear management and work roles. Employers are seeking guidance on actions steps they can take that are comprehensive, evidence-based, and cost-effective.

A case study of Glofox and their strong company culture is showcased in the Playbook as an example of promoting inclusivity and positivity in a remote world.

With over 130 staff across 21 countries, Glofox is a great example of a remote-first, midsized Irish company, which recognises the importance of intentionally and deliberately planning for a great company culture. They also understand that **it is not just the big initiatives, but also smaller actions can have a big impact on enabling a positive and inclusive company culture.**

This is reflected in Glofox's processes of:

- Hiring & Building connection and engagement

For example:

- They are always mindful of employees who are not living near their colleagues, and they build initiatives around connecting online.

- When a new person starts at Glofox, CEO Conor O'Loughlin always sends a welcome message via email or LinkedIn, highlighting the importance of the new employee's role and the impact it will have on Glofox's success. This small action can have a big impact as it makes the new team members feel immediately welcomed, engaged and valued.

- They plan to introduce 'Peer Culture Panel' interviews as part of their recruitment process, which will give a candidate a real feel for what the company culture is like.

- They recognise individual contributions through voting on MVP (most valuable player) of the month.

- They encourage their employees to be themselves without any judgement.

Every month the Glofox team takes part in a 'connectedness pulse check', a company-wide survey which asks employees how they feel about their connectedness to the team and to the wider company, if they feel a sense of belonging and if they understand and feel aligned to the company values

A case study on Axonista's relocation policy is showcased in the Playbook as an example of a successful remote working policy.

Axonista is an organisation which creates interactive video commerce for global brands, which has a fully remote team of 45 across Europe with its HQ in Ireland. They were one of the first companies in Ireland to enable their employees to relocate to other countries temporarily. Their Director of Finance and Operations, Emma Whelan said: "During the pandemic we recognised the impact isolation was having on our team, we believed by offering flexibility on location of work our employees could benefit from being closer to their families, or experiencing a different pace of life."

If an employee requests a longer term or permanent relocation, Axonista deals with this on a case-by-case basis. Ideally, they would like to avoid having people outside of the time zones in which they operate, as this can negatively impact the team in terms of communication.

A case study of Nearform and their practical communications initiatives is showcased in the Playbook as an example of keeping teams engaged, connected and collaborating effectively in a remote-first environment.

These are the 3 practical communications initiatives that Nearform have implemented and any small company can replicate:

- Monthly 'watercooler' chats & weekly knowledge sharing initiatives

- Asynchronous daily stand-up meetings

- Monthly newsletter (Grow Remote, 2022).

    American Psychological Association (APA)

During the Covid19-pandemic, APA started to ramp up internal communication that instilled a much-needed sense of belonging during the transition to remote work and continues to solicit employee feedback that informs organisational policies, programs, and procedures. For

example, the daily staff e-blast, APA Today, is now shared in video and text format, staff share fun personal photos through questions of the week, staff are given a few extra days off per year for strengthening mental health, and staff can share with each other socially through themed MS Teams channels and Coffee Connections meetups.

APA uses a cross-departmental approach to implement changes, in which experts in the areas of human resources, psychological science, employee well-being, as well as C-suite leaders, work together to communicate about employee and organizational needs and implement initiatives.

APA conducts regular "pulse" polls to survey employees about the level of support they feel from their managers and the organization and what they need to feel more supported, from computer hardware to more flexible working hours. Employees also have an opportunity to hear updates from and share concerns directly with APA's CEO in a biweekly, virtual chat.

APA also assembled a working group to use lessons learned during the pandemic and employee feedback to plan the future of the organization's workplace. Most employees (75%) participated, sharing their perspectives about the future of work via focus groups, conversations with leadership, pulse polls, surveys, or other forums. In response, APA is evolving its concept of the workplace rather than simply returning to pre-pandemic office norm and established a flexible work policy that allows employees to move to another city in order to work remotely, maintaining their current salary and same level of employee benefits no matter where they move.

In response to employees' desires to improve their work-life harmony, APA also implemented a Meet with Purpose campaign that encourages science-based best practices for all internal meetings. Each meeting needs to have a designated agenda, start on the hour or half-hour, and last for 25 or 50 minutes to ensure employees have breaks between meetings to tend to personal or family needs. Employees are also encouraged to consider and communicate to the team about whether video is required for a meeting or if it can be audio-only, since back-to-back video meetings can have a negative impact on employee well-being.

- Blackrock (international investment organisation)

As the organization pivoted to remote or socially distanced work, it conducted periodic employee surveys to gather feedback that would inform new policies and procedures.

To support employees with family responsibilities, the organization expanded the number of company-paid back-up care days, implemented more flexible work-from-home schedules, and encouraged the use of the existing flexible time off policy that allows all employees—regardless of title or tenure—access to paid time off as needed. To encourage employee collaboration, Blackrock also created online forums for sharing ideas and resources to support parenting and childcare.

Building on psychological research about the importance of manager support, Blackrock launched a series of enablement sessions to train supervisors in keeping their teams informed and motivated. The firm also created an intranet resource hub to streamline internal communications, so employees can quickly access information they need to do their jobs well and ask for help as needed.

- F5 Networks (tech company)

F5 Networks, a large technology company in the Seattle area, also uses employee surveys extensively to promote its "human-first, high-performance" culture. Along with regularly surveying existing employees, leaders also seek input from candidates who weren't hired, employees who left the company, and individuals who left and came back.

After learning how growth opportunities led to employee retention, F5 developed a company-wide mentorship program, increased its budget to allow employees to pursue continued education in their field, and created quarterly learning days on which employees have no internal meetings but instead focus on learning.

In response to an increased need for time off—without the stress of returning to an inbox full of emails—F5 also launched company-wide quarterly wellness weekends allowing all employees an extra paid consecutive Friday and Monday off.

- Ernst & Young

EY also works with a private vendor to offer up to 25 psychotherapy sessions for each employee and each person in their household per year. Because employees' family lives can impact their well-being and work performance, the firm extended the mental health benefit to include all family members in the household including children, domestic partners, and relatives, regardless of their age or whether they're on the employees' health care plan.

EY recognizes the role of psychological concepts like resilience in staving off stress and burnout. EY allows employees to access mental health coaching sessions to prevent issues that could interfere with well-being and work performance and increase overall well-being in their daily lives. Data suggest employees working with a mental health coach or therapist saw an 85% improvement or recovery from the initial reason they sought care.

For people who would rather use digital tools, EY offers a positive psychology-informed app that educates employees about coping with stress and promoting resilience through articles and activities. Similarly, a digital sleep resource provides personalized guidance for improving sleep. On average, people using this digital tool are getting an average of four more hours of sleep per week.

An internal initiative called We Care educates employees on important topics such as recognizing signs of mental health concern and addiction and best practices for offering support. Employees share their own mental health stories to destigmatize the topic. To encourage time away from work, EY also reimburses employees for vacations and travel; the company also reimburses for physical wellness-related activities, such as gym memberships, fitness equipment, and even mattresses.

- National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC), the non-profit advocate for municipal governments, is committed to supporting and nurturing a work culture that prioritizes the mental and physical health of its employees. It has done so through several targeted approaches.

As the pandemic evolved, NLC developed a hybrid model in which staff could continue to work remotely and also use the NLC offices for collaboration and other onsite work.

At the start and during the height of the pandemic, NLC gathered employee input. NLC surveyed employees in 2020 and 2021 to learn about their telework experience and hear their return-to-office concerns and suggestions. More than 90% of the staff participated. To determine the cultural norms for hybrid work, NLC used a dispersed decision-making method that employed focus groups to gather ideas from every employee in the organization. One resulting cultural norm the company has established, is that employees are highly encouraged to use their paid time off from work to unplug and refresh.

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