Working from Home: A Double-Edged Sword

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Introduction

Work and family could be said to be two of the most significant elements of human life (Toyin et al., 2016). Indeed, work/ family balance is one of the most challenging issues facing families in the twenty first century (Walker et al., 2008). The home plays a significant role in promoting and sustaining the well-being of individuals and of society. Friedman (2014, p. 12) highlights that to be effective one needs "to know what matters". He recommends an exercise called "Four Circles" representing the four domains-"work, home, community and self". He suggests modifying the sizes of the circles to reflect how much you value each. This helps reflect on the "values, goals, interests, actions and results" cultivated in each area and whether the latter are compatible or opposed to each other.

Technology has had a significant impact on work, making work from home and other locations possible (Grant et al., 2013). Work has turned into an "unbounded activity" to be carried out "anytime and anywhere" (Kurland and Bailyn, 1999). According to Toffler (1980, pp 204-17) the present forms of flexibility have the capacity to convert the pre-industrial cottage into a post-industrial electronic cottage, where people can achieve a balance between work and home. It is often challenging for employees to achieve a work/home balance (Kreiner et al, 2009; Mayo et al., 2011). Health issues and family difficulties can result from conflict between work and home (Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2011). For employers the consequences of work-home demands can manifest itself in higher levels of employee turnover, absenteeism and less productivity (Allard et al, 2011, Ford et al., 2007). Referring to leaders Groysberg and Abrahams (2014, p. 60) state that " They've discovered through hard experience that prospering in the senior ranks is a matter of carefully combining work and home so as not to lose themselves, their loved ones, or their foothold of success. Those who do this most effectively involve their families in work decisions and activities. They also vigilantly manage their own human capital, endeavoring to give work and home their due- over a period of years, not weeks or days". Hence the need to understand and support the area of work/home balance better in light of the pivotal role of the home in creating health and well-being for individuals and for society.

A new relationship has evolved between individuals and their working time since the Industrial Revolution and specifically the Scientific Management School pioneered by Frederick Taylor. A "quantitative and linear model" has resulted in contrast to a "qualitative and cyclical model" of working time. Linear time considers working time as a limited asset, the value of which increases as it becomes scarcer. The world of work is governed by linear time, which is punctuated by seconds and minutes. Within this time are a number of tasks to be produced or hours of intense work. We have inherited the perspective of Marx (2003) who highlighted the need to control both time and man in the production process. This follows on from Taylor in the Scientific Management School who advocated strict control of working time. In contrast cyclical time from an ontological perspective is basically subjective as a "network of meanings"; in the epistemological dimension, it encompasses units which are experienced as different, continuous and infinite and on a methodological level a multiple qualitative experience (Lourenco and Lourenco, 2016, p574, 575).

This paper will define teleworking, look at the uptake of teleworking in different parts of the world, examine the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking, look at some requirements for home working and finally emphasise the role of human resources for effective teleworking. The paper concludes by making recommendations for future research.

Definition of Teleworking

"Telework occurs when Information Communication Technologies (ICT) enables work to be accomplished at a geographical distance from the location where the work results are needed, or would have been traditionally carried out in the past. Typically, telework takes place in the home" Hynes, 2014 p281). There are various definitions of what makes up remote working (Sullivan, 2003, Madsen, 2011). Various studies refer to remote working as teleworking, telecommuting and e-working (Morgan, 2004).). E-work or electronic working, also referred to as teleworking, are terms used to describe work which uses communications technology to work remotely from the office location (**http://www.wdc.ie/e-working-what-are-the-trends/**). Nilles, (2007, p1) refers to the "e-worker" as "any form of substitution of information technologies (such as telecommunications and computers) for work-related travel: moving work to the worker instead of moving workers to the work". Nilles is of the view that "e-working" emphasizes the "location

independent aspect directly", while teleworking focuses more on "travel substitution aspects" (Nilles, 2007, p1).

Teleworking in different countries

Teleworking outside the EU

In June 2017, Global Workplace Analytics Research found that

- 50% of the US workforce holds a job that is compatible with at least partial telework and approximately 20-25% of the workforce teleworks at some frequency.
- 80-90% of the US workforce say that they would like to telework at least part-time. 2-3 days weekly seems to be the optimum time that allows for a balance of concentrative work (home) and collaborative work (in the office).
- Fortune 1000 companies around the world are revamping their space around the fact that employees are already mobile. Studies repeated indicate that they are not at their desk 50-60% of the time.

http://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/telecommuting-statistics

In a study of data obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Business Longitudinal Confidentalised Unit Record File 2006-2011, Kotey (2017) found that flexible work hours and flexible use of leave are available in SME's. Flexible working hours are characteristic of the informal work environment of micro and small-sized firms.

Culture and geographic location have an impact of the availability of work from home. For example in Pakistan, the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority became a first public sector organization to announce work from home policy for "female workers" on a trial basis. The current policy allows selected female workers to be able to work from home on just one day of the week. Based on the outcome of the latter, the decision to continue it or withdraw it will be taken. The characteristic mindset of the top-level management in Pakistani organizations holds that employees can only be managed and controlled once they are in sight (Timsal and Mustabsat, 2016). In western cultures there are people who advocate that work from home policies should

become the norm. The latter mentioned policies would be more results oriented than control oriented (Timsal and Mustabsat, 2016).

Teleworking in the EU

At the beginning of this century, the European Commission invited the European Social Partners to negotiations with a view to improving employment conditions and addressing the issue of telework. Following on from these negotiations the peak European social partners concluded and signed the European Framework Agreement on Telework on 16 July 2002. The framework agreement regulates issues such as employment and working conditions, health and safety training and the collective rights of teleworkers. A key aspect of the agreement was that it was not destined to be implemented through a European directive. Instead, it would be transposed through the autonomous route-that is in "accordance with the procedures and practices specific to management and labour in each Member State". The social partners agreed to implement measures in each EU Member State by July 2005. The implementation of this framework agreement has since been assessed through a joint report prepared by its signatory parties in 2006, along with a European Commission Report issued in 2008.

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_files/pubdocs/2009/961/en/1/EF09961EN.pdf

Teleworkers (EU27) increased from about 5% in 2000 to 7% in 2005. Countries vary in their adoption of telework. The highest proportion of telework is observed in the Czech Republic and Denmark, where one in seven employees is regularly involved in telework. Above average rates are also observed in the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), the Nordic states (including Norway) and a number of the new Member States. When comparing different forms of telework, the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) shows that telework performed only on a part-time basis is more common than full-time telework. This suggests that telework is used by a substantial proportion of employees to complement their normal working arrangements, at the employers' premises.

With the spread of ICT and broadband infrastructure in 2001 the Irish Government recognized telework as a "... component and facilitator towards introducing and supporting a new paradigm of work, organization and trade" (Callanan, 1999, p 5). The consideration of telework was impacted on by three main strands in Ireland: Sustainable Development, Transport and Employment and this scenario has led to confusion where it does not correspond to one department and consequently to a lack of practical policy in this area (Hynes, 2014). In Ireland there is no employment legislation dealing with telework or the status of teleworkers. There are various organizations which foster teleworking such as the National Advisory Council on Teleworking, the e-Work Action Forum, Enterprise Ireland and Eircom (now Eir). . While teleworking was under review especially around the millennium, there is now scant evidence of government policies or supports for companies and individuals to put teleworking schemes into practice (Hynes, 2014, p593). Telework remains underdeveloped in Ireland largely due to the absence of regulation that gives it legitimacy in the eyes of management and workers alike (Hynes, 2013). There seems to be a lack of commitment to investigate the "complex economic, social, environmental and personal issues involved when adopting this way of working or legislate for these concerns" (Hynes, 2014, p594). The responsibility for telework falls on management who lack expertise on this matter. There has been significant growth of telework in Scandinavian countries but slow progress in Ireland. According to Bates et al (2002) the uptake of e-working is slow and takes place predominantly in small knowledge based firms (Bates et al, 2002).

According to the 2000 Eurobarometer survey regular teleworking in Ireland was at 2.4 % of the adult workforce and occasional teleworking at 6.1%. In contrast European averages were 5% for regular teleworkers and 6.6% for occasional teleworkers. By 2003 in the Quarterly national Household Survey conducted by the Republic's Central Statistics Office 3.5 % of the workforce were teleworkers according to the wider definition of teleworking .i.e. homeworkers who use a computer with a telecommunications link for work in Ireland were teleworkers and 2.3 % of the workforce were teleworkers according to the narrow definition of teleworking i.e. homeworkers who need a computer with a telecommunications link for work. All figures apply to the non-

agricultural workforce due to the large number of agricultural workers who work from home. The survey asked if people worked from home the previous week and may have missed out on some teleworkers and it was also carried out during the holiday period (Flexibility.co.uk). In 2014 a survey conducted by UPC and Amarach Research it was found that 47% of Irish employees use the internet at home in relation to work, up from 45% in 2012

(https://www.virginmedia.ie/pdf/UPC_2014_report.pdf).

Teleworking in Great Britain

The Office of national Statistics found that more than half of British workers are satisfied with the balance of work and leisure time, while more than a quarter are dissatisfied. Some employers reported that 97% of employees find work/life balance challenging.

https://www.theguardian.com/money/2016/jan/02/work-life-balance-flexible-working-can-make-you-ill-experts-say

There are in Great Britain employment policies and practices and legislative endorsement for flexible working, longer leave periods and unpaid leave. Working mothers can and do take advantage of such policies to manage their work/family balance (Toyin et al, 2016, p. 429). The number of teleworkers doubled in the UK from 1997-2005 (Ruiz and Walling, 2005) and also the total number of teleworkers has increased from 2.3 million in 1997 to 3.2 million in 2007. To facilitate the practice of different types of teleworking the Institute of Employment Studies has "Guidelines for Good Practice".

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/telework-in-the-united-kingdom

According to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the numbers of employees working from home is increasing. Regarding a survey conducted by CBI in 2011 a total of 59% of employers who responded to the survey were offering teleworking, up by 13% in 2006.

http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21588760

The Office for National Statistics (2014) found that in the UK there were 4.2 million working from home in the first quarter of 2014, which is 13.9% of the total workforce. Of those working from home, approximately 1.5 million (or 5% of the workforce) work within the home or its grounds, while the balance of 2.7 million persons (8.9% of the workforce) utilized their home as a base, but worked in various locations.

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105210705/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/characteristics-of-home-workers/2014/sty-home-workers.html

Different perspectives on teleworking

Bloom (2014, p 28-29) claims that critics assert that employees who are not office-based are actually not working. The challenge is the traditional management mindset which is control focused, believing employees have to be in view for productivity reasons. An example of this was Yahoo, where CEO Marissa Mayer took the decision to move employees from working from home to different Yahoo facilities (Smith, 2013). The office setting offers opportunities for collaboration which is important for effectiveness. It is claimed that working from home reduces work output and quality of work. Google and Hewlett Packard also try to reduce work from home (Pathak et al, 2015, p12).

Otani (2015) argues for flexibility and cites Sheryl Sandberg, Facebooks Chief Operating Officer as making the point that it is more important to measure the results, rather than watching people "try". She makes the important decision between seeming productive and being productive.

 A study conducted by Lourenco and Lourenco (2016) demonstrated that women working in a cooperative exercised self-management in relation to flexible working hours. The women were allowed to organize their workday with full control over their working time, although they still followed the terms of their collective contract (Lourenco and Lourenco, 2016 p. 580).

Advantages and disadvantages of working from home

Timbal and Mustabsat (2016) in their abstract pose the question "why a perk or benefit is now being considered as an ethical issue". Many businesses do provide some form of flexibility for mothers and parents working outside the home. However, the debate regarding working from home is very current. Timbal and Mustabsat (2016) find that the decision to offer this amenity to employees is partly determined by geographic location. Staff recruitment, development and retention is regarded as a competitive advantage for any business. Establishments which support work from home claim that this latter opportunity results in greater productivity.

Some of the benefits for employees are:

- A flexible environment in which you get to decide your own working hours (in agreement with your employer)
- Fewer distractions and stress
- Proximity to home and family members
- Reduced travelling time
- Better health and better work/life balance and
- Greater productivity and creativity (Timbal and Mustabsat, 2016).

According to Nytimescion (2013) and Baytcom (2013) the following are disadvantages of working from home:

- The difficulty in separating work from home
- The difficulty in separating home from work
- Self-imposed pressure of working endlessly and
- The feeling of being alienated from a company's major decisions and sometimes promotions.

Home-based work may negatively affect family relations between partners and children, where conflict can results between work and home roles (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003, Sullivan, 2003,

Mirchandani, 2000). In addition to work infringing on the physical space of home, work also impacts on the emotional, psychological space of home (Baines and Felder, 2003). There are mixed results regarding the benefits of teleworking. According to Hartig et al, (2007) remote e-workers may experience overlap between work and home and consequently lessening the restorative benefits of home. In contrast, Kossek et al (2006) in a study of teleworking professionals found that greater autonomy through teleworking led to less frequent occurrence of depression in women. Kossek et al (2006) were of the view that teleworking may provide women with more flexibility to manage their work, resulting in greater levels of well-being as a consequence of being present in both work and family lives.

Teleworking helps to recruit and retain talented workers by providing people with ability to reduce commuting time and fit other activities around the work tasks, thus contributing to a diverse workforce (Beauregard et al, 2013). The benefits of teleworking in terms of quality and quantity of outcomes can result from allowing employee's time away from the office to work on tasks requiring higher levels of concentration without interruption. Organizations benefit by saving costs on office space and becoming more flexible. HR has an important role to play to ensure teleworking is a good experience for employees and staff need to be prepared to work in the home environment (Basile and Beauregard, 2016).

According to Grant et al (2013, p532) the positive aspects of remote working can be summarized as

- increased productivity
- the ability to work flexibly and from different locations, within the temporal restrictions of office-based hours and in some cases
- reduced stress levels and greater well-being.

Conversely the negative effects include

- work intensification with access to technology 24/7 leading to long hours, with little respite from work.
- Sitting behaviors many increase with the temptation to work for longer hours at the computer and cause physical problems.

Remote e-working facilitates the blurring of boundaries between work and home, with some individuals helping to integrate the two while others separating tasks.

Research shows that employers who have introduced flexible work have

- environmental benefits
- improvements in employee morale
- increased productivity
- lower employee turnover and
- lower absenteeism (Thomson, 2008, Lapierre et al, 2008, Poelmans et al., 2005).

Wheatley (2012) found that in the case of women remote working can result in saved time but this time is not always spent on leisure activities but on housework or paid work.

Requirements for working from home

Working from home requires personal control over working hours, the organization of the home space as well as negotiations among family members over the distribution of time and space (Felstead et al, 2005). There are findings which show that working at home is work that augments and continues work done at the office for the employer and not official telework (Natti et al, 2009, 2011, Song, 2009, Fenner and Renn, 2010). Ojala et al, (2014) highlight while home working can be portrayed as a great advantage for work/home balance, there is contradictory research about whether working from home strengthens or weakens work/family harmony. Grant et al (2013, p532) found that job effectiveness, well-being and work/life balance have been found to be key factors when exploring the impact of remote technology on individuals, supervisors and organizations. The three areas overlap and are interrelated to some extent, in that job effectiveness can be impacted on negatively and positively by both well-being and work/life conflict.

Tietze and Musson (2010) warn of values of industrial production invading one's personal life. In their study involving three case studies, all of the protagonists had to find practical solutions to working from home such as the setting up of routines and tasks for carrying out home tasks as well as work tasks. In the case of Tom (case study) his identities were challenged both as a father and

a manager. In Deirdre's case, her identity becomes more forged in the domestic environment, where she develops new routines and the professional practices which had been her main priority now have become less important. While Deirdre does not leave aside her identity from the world of work, she "discovers" new aspects of "who she is" or "who she might become". In her case we see changing identities where the domestic element of Deirdre's sense of self come to the fore (Tietze and Musson, 2010, p153). Carrying out paid work from home offers not just the possibility of work/home balance but there are questions of identity "which are central to understanding the mutually, constitutive relationship between domestic and professional spheres of life" (Tietze and Musson, 2010, p154). Clearly, there is a need for people to come to an understanding of this way of working from the perspective of their overall lives and especially in light of the home, which influences every aspect of our lives, particularly our health and well-being.

Teleworkers are physical, temporal, behavioral and communicative. Even though teleworkers can generally develop strategies that align boundaries to their preferences for segmentation or integration, employees with greater job autonomy and control are better able to do so. (Basile and Beauregard, 2016). The limitation to the study conducted by the aforementioned authors, is that it lacks generalizability to teleworkers in organizations with "always on " cultures who may experience greater pressure to allow work to permeate the home boundary (Basile and Beauregard, 2016). Hayman (2010) in a study of 336 employees found that flextime was more helpful in decreasing role overload and work/life balance issues than teleworking.

When work and home activities take place in the same physical space, physical, temporal and psychological boundaries between work and home can become blurred. There is some research which indicates that teleworkers work longer hours (Harker, Martin and MacDonnell, 2012). Employees vary in how they keep work and activities outside work separate or overlapping (Clark, 2000). Employees who favor integration of work and home activities are more likely to favor weaker boundaries.

Kreiner et al (2009) propose four divisions to manage boundaries between work and home namely: physical, behavioral, home-based and communicative tactics. Teleworking challenges boundary

management because the usual physical and time-based boundaries of the office space are absent. A study of a large public sector organization in the UK shows how their long- standing teleworking programme results in above average productivity for teleworkers compared to their office counterparts. Forty in- depth interviews with occasional teleworkers, partial teleworkers (20-50 per cent of teleworkers) and full teleworkers who work the majority of the time away from the office were carried out. The interviews yielded evidence that teleworkers employ physical, time-based, behavioral and communicative strategies for managing boundaries between work and home. In relation to physical activities, it was found some employees had an office space in their home while others create separate space for work activities and switch off. In relation to time-based activities, although most people worked beyond contracted time, many had strategies in place e.g. to walk the dogs at 5pm, children returning from school. Commitments to other people appears to produce stronger boundaries than being accountable only to oneself. The behavioral strategies employed relate mainly to information technology such as switching phone off when business time finishes, logging off computer systems, shutting down the laptop, thus removing the temptation to check messages. Communicative strategies included getting family members to knock before entering the work space. According to Kreiner (2006) boundary management is a question of individual preferences, but the ability to manage preference can result in reduced work/ life conflict and stress and higher job satisfaction. Research shows that the danger lies in work spilling over into home time.

Behavioral tactics are social practices that are used to decrease work/home conflicts (Kreiner et al, 2009). In a study conducted by Von Borell de Araujo et al (2015, pp. 570-576) applying the boundary tactics of Kreiner at al (2009)

Three types of behavioral tactics were found i.e. using other people who filter undesired demands from work and home, using technology such as use of two cell phones and setting priorities in advance e.g. involving others in which items to filter and which to allow pass the boundary.

- Temporal tactics involve managing work home time and some mothers were found to change routines and block off time to attend to work or family issues, finding respite such as taking a break and synchronizing tasks.

- Physical tactics include manipulating physical boundaries e.g. turning off cell phone, manipulating physical distance between domains e.g. some mothers chose to live close to work while others chose to live far away and managing physical objects e.g. choosing not to do anything related to work after 5pm.
- Communicative tactics involve setting expectations e.g. not working late, renegotiating expectations e.g. when an unexpected problem arises and confronting violations e.g. if the boss calls on Sunday (Von Borell de Araujo et al, 2015, pp 570-576).

Gorham (2006) calls for women to exercise management skills in the home such as delegation of responsibilities, efficient use of time and resources and coordination of activities. According to Mellner at al (2016, abstract) employees now have more work flexibility and are more adept at organizing their work in time and space i.e. boundaryless work. The authors highlight the need to manage effectively the boundaries between work and personal life, so as to renew one's energies and get adequate sleep. In a study carried out among Swedish professional workers (N=3,846) the results showed that working boundlessly in time i.e. spread out over the whole day and week, was directly linked to long weekly work hours and lack of psychological detachment. In contrast, working boundlessly in space i.e. at various locations was inversely associated with weekly work hours and had no association with psychological detachment.

In a study conducted by Tunyaplin et al (1998, p 183) the participants when asked if given the opportunity, how would they divide their time between a home office and a remote job site i.e. how many days per week would they work from home? Over 75% of respondents regardless of where they currently work, suggested they would spend only two or three days per week in the home office. They may suggest that employees, whether they work in the office or at home, need to interact on a personal level with their co-workers.

The role of human resources

Women are often being told that they must choose between the domains of work and family (Bailyn and Fletcher, 2003) and they can be under pressure to manage the demands of work and family without any help (Lourenco and Lourenco, 2016). Self-employment or business ownership

has been proposed as a way for women to balance family and work responsibilities (Daniel, 2004, Walker and Webster, 2006)

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    Strategies to be used by HR to regulate the interaction between work and home include: Building autonomy into teleworkers jobs, along with
- Greater control over their work schedules,
- Empower employees to create or maintain boundaries that fit the personal preferences for integration or segmentation of work and home activities.

A "good fit" will help organizations benefit from productivity increase and retention of staff (Harker Martin and MacDonnell, 2012).

HR needs to be aligned to the company's overall strategy. For companies seeking radical innovation requiring a lot of collaboration, it may be beneficial to be office-based. However, for most companies pursuing incremental innovation, working from home contributes to keeping real estate and operational costs low. Furthermore, offering employees flexibility increases motivation and reduces turnover, thus increasing profitability (Pathak et al, 2015, p12,). The aforementioned authors recommend that HR managers need to contribute at two levels:

1. At the level of setting a clear, coherent and logical work-from-home policy that is aligned with the company's strategy; and
2. In ensuring that operational decisions are without favoritism and prejudice and align to the best interests of the employees and the company (Pathak et al, 2015, p14)

Future research

In Europe there are variations in uptake of teleworking but there is lack of clarity as to why this is so. There is a need for substantial, in-depth empirical research in this particular area, to identify the key indicators and conditions that permit the practice to flourish or fail (Hynes, 2014, p596). A greater insight into the latter will assist policy makers going forward. Before embarking on telework practices it is necessary to "fully understand the environmental and social consequences

and impacts of working from home for individuals, organizations and the environment……It is only then that a true assessment and the practical benefits of the practice of working from home can be made and we can decide if indeed it is a goal worth pursuing" (Hynes, 2014, p596). Remote working and more flexible technology may have helped to improve job effectiveness, flexibility and to some extent well-being, however, the more negative issues also need to be explored in more detail (Grant et al., 2013, p.532).

Conclusion

As we move forward to effective recruitment and retention best employers tend to have flexible work arguments. The employers should be properly trained in how to do this effectively for businesses and employees, in order to make working from home successful. In terms of working from home, it is important to consider the nature of the work involved. Some activities call for more collaboration, where the office offers a beneficial environment for this, while many other tasks can be done from home. Home is needed to recover ones energies and to renew oneself, thus contributing to health and well-being. The modern home space is shaped by new technologies. Work can be carried out anytime and anywhere. The increasing participation of working mothers in the labor force has focused more attention on the woman at work. There is research which indicates that the relationship between home and work needs more attention. Managing one's home life effectively is linked to effectiveness and job satisfaction in one's work role. The home plays a very crucial role in society from the perspective of a healthy home life being essential for a healthy work-life and a healthy society.

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