

Are Employees More Productive at Home?

6 min read



Before the pandemic, many business and nonprofit leaders viewed working from home as a sort of forbidden fruit, assuming that remote work from home might improve employee morale and satisfaction but significantly reduce productivity.

Key Takeaways

- **The Numbers Are In! Remote Work Statistics:** A 9-month Stanford study that looked at 16,000 workers found that working from increased productivity by 13% and reduced turnover rates by a staggering 50%.
- **Work From Home Productivity Before the Pandemic:** This pre-pandemic aversion to offering remote work opportunities often occurred because business leaders feared the risk of productivity lags which could occur as a result of employee distraction, procrastination, or lack of communication.

- **Top 5 Benefits of Working From Home Over Working in the Office:** Yes, remote work reduces turnover and increases employee productivity, but those aren't the only benefits of letting your employees work from home...

Then 2020 and the novel coronavirus hit, and most workplaces were forced to reconfigure their operations, decentralizing their offices and allowing all of their employees classified as non-essential workers to work out of their homes.

As a result, we now have two years of experience with decentralized workplaces, remote productivity, and two years' worth of work from home statistics, and the results of this forced, worldwide, workplace experiment might surprise you – the statistics show that employee productivity can actually increase as a result of remote working.

Of course, every company is different, so keep your organization's best interest in mind. Big decisions begin with weighing your options, so let's start with looking at the data.

The Numbers Are In! Remote Work Statistics

A 9-month Stanford study that looked at 16,000 workers found that working from increased productivity by 13% and reduced turnover rates by a staggering 50% ^[1]. Such a significant reduction in turnover – one of the biggest hidden costs in business – alone could have an enormous impact on business success.

Another survey found that 77% of individuals who work remotely – even just part of the time – were more productive with 24% accomplishing more work in the same amount of time and 30% accomplishing more work in less time compared to working in the office ^[2].

Read More: [More Than You Think: the Cost of Employee Turnover](#)

Work From Home Productivity Before the Pandemic

Before the pandemic, remote work had not been widely adopted. A 2019 study from the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that on workdays 24% of employees did some or all of their work from home and 82% did some of all of their work at the office (with only an overlapping 6% that performed with a combination of remote and in-office work) ^[3].

This pre-pandemic aversion to offering remote work opportunities often occurred because business leaders feared the risk of productivity lags which could occur as a result of employee distraction, procrastination, lack of communication, or even general laziness as a result of not being held accountable while being unsupervised at home.

In fact, a study from 2019 even demonstrated that remote workers would become less productive with each hour they worked from home [4].

However, pre-pandemic, the vast majority of businesses, their leaders, and their employees were also unfamiliar with the plethora of technologies and tools that are available to help improve and facilitate remote work.

Post-Pandemic Remote Work: What Changed?

As with the implementation of any new policy or procedure in a company's operations, there is a period of learning and adjustment during which you shouldn't expect to see overwhelming success. The pandemic forced most workplaces to enter the remote workplace learning curve. As a result, new communication technologies and remote workplace operations have been adopted, implemented, learned from, honed, and finely tuned over the last couple of years which has resulted in streamlined remote work operations across several industries.

Read More: [Lower Turnover & Boost Profits By Honoring Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs](#)

In fact, studies are showing that remote work – when implemented properly – improves project turnaround and increases productivity [5]. One particularly compelling study of 800,000 employees compared the six-month stretch from March to August in both 2019 and 2020. This study found that remote work productivity either remained stable or increased during the pandemic [6].

Top 5 Benefits of Working From Home Over Working in the Office

But wait! There's more!

Yes, remote work reduces turnover and increases employee productivity, but those aren't the only benefits of letting your employees work from home.

1. No Commute

Working from home eliminates the dreaded rush-hour commutes to and from the office. Whether a work commute to and from the office takes 15 minutes or an hour and a half, the commute to and from your home office takes no time at all which means employees have more time for work.

A survey from Airtasker found that **working from home saved the average employee 8.5 hours each week**. Annually, that adds up to 408 hours or 17 days no longer spent stuck in traffic^[7].

2. More Free Time

Spending less time in transit not only means employees have more time and energy for working but that they also have more time and energy free for anything. As a result, employees can achieve an improved work-life balance because they have more time to spend with their families and friends, on self-improvement, on hobbies they enjoy, or simply to relax and unwind.

3. More Exercise

The same survey from Airtasker that studied commutes and remote work also looked at the time employees spend exercising. Those who work from home exercise an average of 30 minutes more per week than those who work at the office. This directly translates to healthier, happier (exercise-induced endorphins), and more productive employees.

4. Better Meetings

A 2021 report from Owl Labs found that **70% of individuals who worked from home during the pandemic found meetings to be less stressful**, and a majority (64%) still prefer the hybrid virtual meeting structure to mandatory in-person meetings [8].

Read More: [Two Steps To Having Highly Effective Virtual Meetings](#)

5. Less Water Cooler Talk

At the office, employees waste a lot of time talking to each other. Working from home, this time can be replaced with time spent on work-related tasks or time spent on personal endeavors.

While more time is an added benefit of remote work, the lost social interaction with coworkers can be detrimental to your company culture and your employees' overall happiness as a result of the social isolation, the lack of water cooler talk. According to the Airtasker survey, **70% of people place the same priority/value/importance on workplace relationships and productivity.**

So, it's important to find a good balance and provide employees with virtual opportunities that can replace the water cooler.

Reap the Benefits: Improve Work-Life Balance With a Hybrid Office Structure

Moving forward, as the health dangers of the pandemic subside, business leaders can leverage the best of both worlds with a hybrid workplace model to help [prevent employee burnout and maximize productivity](#).

A hybrid workplace model means having a centralized office while also offering opportunities for remote work. Creating a hybrid office structure allows employees to work from both the office and from home based on their individual needs and preferences, specific project demands, employee retention/satisfaction metrics, and your company's productivity metrics.

This flexible workplace structure allows your company to leverage the remote work lessons learned during the pandemic while honoring the tried-and-true central workplace models of the past. With a hybrid workplace, you can avoid the drawbacks of both a 100% centralized office and 100% remote workforce while reaping the benefits of both workplace models to maximize employee productivity, job satisfaction, employee retention, employee happiness, and future success of your business.

[1] <https://nbloom.people.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj4746/f/wfh.pdf>

[2]

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/technology/pages/teleworkers-more-productive-even-when-sick.aspx>

[3] <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf>

[4] <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ntwe.12153>

[5] <https://www.apollotechnical.com/statistics-on-remote-workers/>

[6]

<https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/remote-work-productivity-study-finds-surprising-reality-2-year-study#:~:text=Working%20from%20home%20is%20just,employees%20started%20working%20from%20home.>

[7] <https://www.airtasker.com/blog/the-benefits-of-working-from-home/>

[8]

https://resources.owl-labs.com/hubfs/SORW/SORW_2021/owl-labs_state-of-remote-work-2021_report-final.pdf?utm_campaign=State%20of%20Remote%20Work%202021&utm_medium=email&hsmi=180908804&hsenc=p2ANqtz-QqLI-7bQetjbjYOdCoskUzSr2pErrPvrTL353dUDu9e3aetTHyMlktMDf-N_opd0g0eg2lZzzzMM4MFaCkoOPa9Edt73hZO7QXJGYUaOVMIIdnk&utm_content=180908804&utm_source=hs_automation