

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

WHAT IS BEST FOR ME?

NINE LIVES CONSULTING 

Career Navigator



The Covid-19 response forced employers to rapidly install the requisite infrastructure and systems to enable working from home, and many have found this as been a positive experience.

Physical barriers have been permanently removed, the workplace culture resistance has been weakened and the genie is out of the bottle as far as working from home advocates are concerned.

Now employers and employees need to sort out and embed the future design of working from home flexibility. While there are many employees who have revelled in the working from home format, providing them extra time in their day from no travel, and greater flexibility to mesh and manage work and family demands, there are also many for whom the remote working process is isolating and restrictive.

The estimation is that post-COVID, working from home will increase by 18%*

A recent survey conducted by *Gartner has estimated that working from home will feature in the employment arrangements of 48% of employees, up from 30% pre Covid-19.

As the novelty factor wears off and is replaced with a practical assessment, how do employers and employees resolve this on an equitable basis?

- **Role:** The nature of your role: how is this role, or its key elements, best serviced?
- **The employee:** Their aspirations provide the reason or purpose of this role in their career. Is its purpose still served under different work place formats? EG if the purpose is to gain people management skills, will working from home provide that exposure? Is the individual best suited to remote working (eg parents of young children, people who are quite autonomous) or do they need and want frequent reassurance of social and work reinforcement (eg less experienced employees, people seeking social aspects of the workplace) and closer supervision?
- **Supervision:** The existing supervisor, installed to manage a centralised workforce, suitable for managing a disparate and varied combination of working from home and office attendance?

To thrive in our role, we need alignment with our employer of values, role and personality fit.

Three aspects that must be aligned to our needs for us to thrive.

- **Our values:** Our values must match those demonstrated by the dominant party.
- **The role:** Our track record indicates whether we can perform the role; Our career stage and aspirations dictate the personal purpose of the role; Our personality dictates the work style and key focus of the role.
- **Our fit** ...with the team; our personality and style cannot change significantly; we need to know what we need in our environment so that we can thrive.

When we are confident about who we are, what we have to offer and why we want the role, we are more authentic in meetings, interviews and negotiations.

What are your options?

For any newly restructured role, each employee needs to review the revised circumstances on:

Work Style

Does the new arrangement suit my personal work style?

- Do I need the discipline of being in the office or going to the office?
- Do I need the social contact from being in the office?
- Do I need the close proximity of colleagues to complete my tasks?
- Does WFH change my work focus?
- Do I need autonomy and freedom to decide how to get the job done?

Do the reporting and communication lines suit me?

- Are telephone and livestream meetings serving my needs?
- Do I need more personal, less contrived, contact with peers, supervisors, clients?
- Do I need to present more or less detailed reports in writing?
- Does working from home interfere with getting rapid decisions or responses from my peers and supervisors?

Career Purpose

Aspirations; given my aspirations provide my career goals and hence the purpose this current position plays in my career; does WFH still enable this role to meet my purpose for it?

To illustrate this issue, consider two opposite scenarios:

Steady State

You want a role that provides a consistent work place and income;

- Where you have a work life balance that accommodates and serves your non-work interests such as family, volunteering, leisure requirement
- Which provides satisfaction and self-esteem from being able to perform a useful role
- Where you are recognised for your performance standards and contribution.
- If you are autonomous in style, you do not need the discipline of being in the office
- You do not seek significant social outcomes from work.

....then a large portion of WFH will be a great opportunity to balance your life.

Ambitious

The current role is part of your plan to develop skills, achieve higher levels of responsibility executive level roles. To achieve this, you your bosses' expectations and be visible.

- In a consultant role, your most important is the person paying for your services. In a hierarchical non-consulting organisation, your most important client is your boss. If they are happy with you, then you thrive. What makes a boss happy depends on personality and competence.
- Ambitious people need to be visible and in corridor and informal chats, being in when issues arise and sharing in office (networking) are all components of accommodate these activities?
- People skills; what is your plan to display your people skills if you are working remotely
- Self-promotion; this can be called managing upwards of being visible but you need a plan on how people will realise your contribution to not only your own role but the organisation as a whole? How will you manage this under the new flexible arrangements?
- Influencing; rising stars and ambitious newcomers need to establish a position of influence in their peer group and with management. Working from home can both help and hinder this, so how will you ensure that your views are sought and valued?

The more remote team members, the higher the 'people skills' capability that will be required

In addition to your thinking, your employer has a fundamental and more difficult issue to resolve; the redefinition of managerial roles and the selection of suitable people to manage and lead a disparate group of employees requiring, in some cases, demanding, a wide and variable range of flexible working arrangements.

Paradoxically, the more remote the team members, the higher the “people skills” capability required of the Manager. Expect many mishaps as this evolves.

Your employer will be inclined to offer work from home arrangements that suits its purposes, your clarity on your needs will serve you well.

If you know who you are, others will know who you are. Opportunities to thrive will then appear. Don't hesitate to contact us to find out more about how we can assist you.

The information provided in this article is of a general nature only and not intended to be advice

