1. **Respecting boundaries when working remotely-***Dr.Rajinder Shriram Aurora*
2. **Introduction:**

Working remotely is a new alternative that is used globally. The trend started during the global Pandemic COVID, when physical and personal contacts were not advisable. Keeping in mind the threat posed by COVID. This changed the work environment forever. We are not sure whether this change was for good or otherwise. In tis chapter we will analyze this fact and make an attempt to arrive at a valid conclusion.

**1.1 What is working remotely?**

Working remotely is the practice adopted by the employees whereby they do their jobs from a different location other than a central office that is operated by his/ her employer. Such locations could include an employee's home, a co-working or other shared space, a private office, or any other place that is outside the traditional corporate office building or campus. An example of remote working includes working at home as the office is a distance from the employer's offices and the employer has given you permission to work remotely since the employee is an approved remote worker. In a remote working situation or arrangement, the worker is not required to commute or travel to an office building, warehouse, or he/ she is not required to travel to a central workplace. In other words remote working means working from anywhere other than the office, which can be the employees home, a cafe, just a co-working space or a place outside one’s country. It may also include: Libraries, Rented Offices, Pools, Parks and Green Spaces, Resorts, Decks and Patios and Public Courtyards.

**1.2 Why working remotely is permitted?**

Employers consider a number of reasons before they allow employees to work remotely that could be lack of a commute, employees have more time and fewer distractions that results in increased productivity, allows employees and companies to focus on performance, Working remotely gives the employees to think critically and perform better; it also thrills an employee on the prospect of working for a company one may admire without being limited by one’s geographical location .It also lowers the company’s overhead costs, improved employee morale .

All ones needs to remember here is that healthy boundaries are a reflection of one’s principles, rules, and guidelines that one sets for oneself. A break in those boundaries arises when your partner disrespects, ignores, or isn’t aware of those principles or personal needs. This is where the mission fails.

**1.3 The work life boundaries of a remote worker:**

1. They should adhere to the office hours. It's the same work, but in a different environment.

2. The worker should effectively plan and prioritize the activity

3. The worker should make all efforts to cut all the possible distractions, as thy impact their performance and accordingly results. For this one should avoid Clutter, intrusions and procrastination which is so common at home.

4. Working by oneself can make one feel lonely and disconnected from the team. To avoid this make a habit of having regular chats with your teammates through a virtual water cooler. Reach out to them on virtual breaks during the week in which you can share work related issues and life issues.

5. Set boundaries on technology. Technology is the key to remote working. The front should be very strong like good network connectivity, relevant equipment requirements, proper environment with no noise and distraction, Proper seating arrangements and other requirements. One has to resist the temptation of being plugged in to the outside world at all hours. Avoid taking mobile to bed as it can cause a lot of distraction and irritations and can shorten your rest time.. That means having a strategy to deal with unbounded technology is essential. Check devices manually at set times. Try hourly checks and wean down from there. Turn off visual notifications on your screens. Also avoid too much screen time as t can lead to screen fatigue.

6. Take occasional breaks and do exercise so that the mental strength is intact and supportive to performance. The remote worker should create his own schedule within the office hours, the schedule that allows one’s brain and body to get the daily recharging that is so essential for sustaining the planned performance.

7. Start following a hobby so that stress can be relieved at regular intervals and this can help the remote worker to develop another side of his/her identity. The worker should remember that the work is not all going to get done by the end of the day, but the remote worker can finish himself off by chronically going on too long. Long hours have been shown to dramatically increase strain and the stress that results from it and the reasonable time to stop for the worker. The aim of this process is to achieve consistent and regular closing hours. Set an alarm as a reminder for going home.

**1.4 Easy Tips for Setting Boundaries At Work:2**

It is very important to follow certain tips, and so that the worker has the confidence to set boundaries when working remotely and must ensure that he/ she actually sticks to them:

**1. Identify Your Boundaries**

During [the first virtual on boarding process](https://weworkremotely.com/6-best-practices-for-your-new-virtual-onboarding-process), it is impertative for the remote managers and employees to do a proper brainstorm and discuss at length what employees are comfortable doing. They should also clearly intimate the remote worker what is expected of them, so that they do not end doing any such task which is not relevant to their performance.

It is important to remember that No two employees or managers are the same, so they will each have different priorities, expectations, and boundaries.  This is very important for ensuring the work done matches the organizational needs.

For attaining success on this front, managers should prepare a list of guidelines regarding:

1. Typical work hours/workdays to be adhered too. Avoid frequent changes in this.
2. Clear specification on vacation days and time-off policies to be followed.
3. Having a very clear guidelines on the job responsibilities
4. Clarity on who will assign projects/work/deadlines to the employee to avoid confusions

 and misunderstandings related to their job responsibilities.

1. Clarity on communication standards to be adopted (i.e. relaxed for quick check-ins vs. Trello for project updates)

It is again very crucial to finalize:

1. How one would like to create his/her own work from home schedule.
2. Whether one is comfortable working weekends/holidays if required.
3. What one can realistically take on outside of your job duties if required and expected
4. One’s idea about a healthy work-life balance.

**2. Communicate Your Boundaries Clearly and ASAP:**

Once the worker and his manager have identified the limits, and the same have been communicated to the team to help them sync with the same to give everyone a head’s up and help avoid future miscommunication. There should be a clear understanding on whether one would prefer to only work during the week r otherwise, but have willingness to break this boundary for an emergency then one should clearly define what an emergency means. In addition one should even outline what an urgent matter looks like and how it should be notified and communicated in the hour of need. Finally one should have a specific Do-Not-Disturb window during the day and it should be communicated to everyone so that they know the timings when you will be in deep work zone between those hours. You should also give them a window during which they should reach out to him without any fear or hesitation.

Outlining these details to let the team your team clearly know where they stand; this will create an environment of greater efficiency and productivity while reducing the chances of lines getting crossed resulting in unwanted stress amongst employees and their teams.

3. **Stick to the boundaries that one creates and never apologize to anybody for small issues and matters:**

Take a situation where one says he will not to answer emails after 7 PM or during the weekends but then you do. It is not that you are telling people its okay to disrespect your boundaries but you desire clarity in what you do. But then be sure that you must always operate within the boundaries you have created. As you reinforce these, you’ll get others in the habit of following your requests. The issue here is even if you have a quick answer to the email or Slack message that came in after stipulated hours; it can wait until your designated work time. Keep in mind the next one that comes through may not be so simple, and others will expect a response then too and of course every time.

It may also encourage you co-workers or managers to routinely drop tasks or projects in your lap at the last minute. The question here is if completing these will compromise the other to-dos on your agenda, or force you to work more overtime than you’re comfortable with, then do not hesitate to say no rather than being submissive and unnecessarily nice. Never apologize for sticking to the boundaries you create. As long as one is giving everything during office hours one should not worry about anything else.

**4. Ascertain clearly what one can delegate to others:** This aspect relates to the team leaders and other remote project managers are the prime candidates for rake up overtime and over committing that happens in the heat of a moment. Instead of doing the work of five people, one should always consider the tasks that can be easily and conveniently delegate to your team.

In order to determine the tasks that can be delegated to others one should ask oneself:

1. Is this a project/task the one wanted to do and does it require any more skills than those I already possess?
2. Will this task help me advance in my position or career and will it affect my short- and long-term goals?
3. Which of my team members are best-suited for the task/project based on the skills, experience and schedule they display?
4. Which team member has been looking to step up and who would want to crush this project?

This analysis can help one to look forward and make small adjustments so that the task can be pursued. It can also let us know the strong, capable team member with fewer responsibilities do the job right than be overwhelmed on the limitation’s and ignore and overlook our own boundaries and limits. This requires trusting one’s own team and provides them space to impress you and make you feel more confident in their abilities and less tempted to take on everything on yourself.

**5. Always Use Your Time Off**:

Stats collected in this area clearly show that even when the companies offer unlimited vacation time nearly half of the remote workers opt for just two or three weeks of time off per year. The stats shows that 10% respondents settle for one week, and another 5% don’t take any vacation time at all. When the vacation piles up it shows that you have nothing better to do than focus on your work making you even more susceptible to taking on more tasks and projects.

**6. Prepare For Boundary-Crossers**

When people often forget your boundaries or blatantly cross them, it’s best to have a plan for how you’ll deal with them when it occurs. This can help one respond to the environment with a clear head rather than getting angry or feeling pressured to compromise your boundaries. One needs to show compassion and deal with the situation with firmness and courage. If we fail to do this there is a fear of violating one’s boundaries and continue to make mistakes that an otherwise be avoided. When people around you routinely disregard your boundaries, one may have a toxic workplace on your hands. If no one respects your desire to create a healthy work-life balance, it may be time to look for a new remote job with a team that encourages prioritizing your mental and physical health.

### 1.6 Other reasons:3

### 1. Streamline the communication process and ensure the flow is proper and is being regularly monitored:

### When one works in an office setting, the media used for communication are email, in-person meetings, phone calls, video chats or sometimes informal conversations making it challenging to keep track of all the conversations and decisions related to crucial projects or activities. When working remotely, employers have to choose from a variety of communication platforms .While the exiting platforms do change marginally but one can add Zoom and Google meet to it facilitating recordings of all the discussions it is presumed it can lead to better organization and improved collaboration among all the employees.

### 2. Results in Higher productivity:

Employees who work from home they encounter fewer social distractions from coworkers and it can lead to improved productivity. Employees also have the opportunity to take brief breaks as they need them, which can help them return to their work more energized and motivated. The only important aspect is no to get distracted by household distractions which can replace office distractions. The emote work setting gives the employee the space to fully focus on their work and follow their own work schedules, employers may see a marked improvement n productivity.

### 3. Improvement in the work-life balance that is missing in the office settings:

Working from home makes it easier for employees to create a better work-life balance. This is beneficial for employers because a good work-life balance can lead to less burnout and higher productivity. Since remote work environment is more flexible, helping employees to better manage their personal time. Getting to appointments and taking care of family matters is much more realistic when one works in a flexible work schedule and absolutely no time lost on commuting especially in metro cities.

### 4. Expanded and Larger talent pool:

Rather than being confined to candidates within their area, remote employers can hire candidates from all over the world. Since remote work can be done virtually anywhere, employers can choose from the very best people when making their hiring decisions. There is no need to have an employee relocate if they have a strong internet connection and computer setup.

### 5. Lower turnover rates

Employers may experience lower turnover rates when offering remote work. One reason this can happen is that employees have fewer reasons to look for a new role. For instance, with an in-person job, an employee may need to resign if they need to relocate for their spouse's job. With remote work, this same employee can keep their job since they can work from anywhere. Companies may also experience lower turnover rates due to having flexible schedules and high job satisfaction among employees.

### 6. Increased job satisfaction

Remote work often comes with more flexibility and freedom for employees. Those who can adjust to this [work environment](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/types-of-work-environments?from=careerguide-autohyperlink-en-US) may feel happier in their roles. Increased job satisfaction among employees can lead to all sorts of beneficial things for employers. Higher staff loyalty, more productivity, happier employees and a better reputation are just a few.

### 7. Reduced overhead costs

While remote employers may reimburse employees for their at-home work setup, there are significantly fewer costs associated with starting a remote company. With a non-remote company, employers need to pay for building rent, utilities, office supplies, kitchen snacks and coffee supplies. This can lead to a lot of savings for companies. Employees may also feel happy about the money they save not paying for gas money, frequent oil changes, parking fees, business attire and team lunches.

### 8. More time saved

Both employers and their employees can save quite a bit of time working from home. Getting ready for work each morning can take a couple of hours. Along with this, driving to and from work place takes up a good portion of one’s day. With all this extra time, companies can be more productive and meet important deadlines. Employees may feel happier about all the extra time they have for their personal lives too.

### 9. Better brand reputation

Companies that offer work-from-home options may improve their public relations. When people know that the employees at a company are happy, they may feel more inclined to support it. Likewise, those who are looking to apply for jobs may be more excited to apply for a company that offers more flexibility.

### 10. Global insights

Having employees who work all over the country—and possibly the world—can be quite beneficial for employers. That's because by hiring people from different areas, companies can gain unique perspectives and ways of thinking. Employers may also be able to learn more about different markets by having employees working in these locations.

### 11. Fewer sick days

When employees work from home, they may less likely to be exposed to germs that make them sick. That's because they aren't interacting with colleagues who feel like they need to come to work even if they are feeling ill. This can lead to fewer sick days among team members, which is a good thing for productivity. Employees may also be able to work through a slight cold without the risk of getting their coworkers sick.

### 12. Improved inclusivity

Traveling to work can be challenging for some employees. By giving people the option to work from home, employers can improve inclusivity. Along with accounting for those who have mobility barriers, remote work can open up more opportunities for those from various cultural, geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

### 13. More sustainability

Remote work can help employers lower their environmental impact quite a bit. By cutting back on energy usage and gas emissions, remote companies can be much more sustainable. Having people work from home ensures they are using less gas and oil that can majorly impact the environment. Likewise, employees may be more inclined to use their own dishes and cups rather than using disposable ones in the office.

### 14. Comfortable employees

Having an ergonomic setup is an important part of being healthy and happy at work. When employees can customize their own workspace, they may feel much more comfortable throughout the workday. This can help employers build a healthier workforce and may even save them money on health insurance. Likewise, employees who are more comfortable may take fewer sick days due to neck and back problems.

### 15. More freedom

Employers and employees can both have more freedom with a remote job. As long as you have a reliable internet connection, it's easy for you to travel for extended periods of time. This makes it easier for employers and employees to plan long getaways. One thing to be mindful of with this freedom is that it's important for both employers and employees to take time off for themselves and turn off their work. It can be very easy to check in on work even if you're on a tropical getaway.

### 16. Longer business days

Having employees in different time zones allows companies to extend their business days. Since employees are starting and ending their workdays at different times, this makes it easier for employers to ensure someone is working most hours of the day. This can be quite helpful for things like customer support and other 24/7 services.

## 1.7 Benefits of remote working for employees:

### ****1.**** Freedom and Flexibility

**The remote workers certainly appreciate their flexibility and freedom extended by this arrangement.** They can plan their day to suit both their work and home life, as long as they do the set hours at the right time. Having the flexibility to attend medical appointments, watch the kids’ basketball game, or take elderly parents shopping can lighten the load. The main point is one does not need to take special permission from their employers but can early and conveniently fit the same with other team members that takes the pressure off from everybody. One wonders what is the result of this it builds trust and [gives more job satisfaction](https://www.lumapps.com/employee-engagement/improve-employee-satisfaction/) to the employees and thus improves their motivation level too.

### **2.** Cost saving:

Going to work is an expensive proposition for every employee since he has to incur monetary and physical cost for the same. He has to incur expanses on travel costs, parking, lunch, coffee and snacks, colleague presents, clothes for work and this list and related expenses are endless. Some employers even give refreshment or clothing allowances as a benefit to their employees. With r**emote working these expenses can be saved.** One needs to keep in mind that these expenses can add up to a substantial amount. This implies that the employee has more disposable income available for other things when these expenses get saved. This represents a big cost saving and need to be kept in mind.

**3. Childcare costs can also be reduced with remote working:**  With remote working the employee as parents can spend more time at home and devote the same to their children. Though it does not imply that we are advising working with young children around which can be a cause of distraction and there by the employees productivity.

### ****3.**** Save time:

Remote working helps in saving a great deal of their time on commuting to their work place every day. Thus, having a remote job means **the employees can then manage their own schedules and convenience**. Some people work better in the mornings than during the afternoons while some employees come alive with great productive ideas in the evenings. It allows the employee the time choice to decide the work hours and ensure it does not affect his colleagues and one can meet the work deadlines as per their self decided work schedules as per their wish. Working remotely also saves time traveling to and being in meetings as modern technology allows teams to video calls and do their work conveniently.

### **4.** Location:

Another benefit of working remotely for employees is that they can work from anywhere.**People don’t have to be bound to a city that doesn't correspond to their standards or preference,** which also helps them avoiding unnecessary travelling. It also allows a spouse to be based or located at a particular location; it allows partners to keep their job, or get peace and ease of the transition period. While working remotely the geographical location of the place of work is not important. All they require is good **internet connectivity for one to work effectively and without any hassles.**

### **5.** Peace and quiet:

A traditional office is often a very noisy and distracting place. Phones and intercoms keep ringing, people are talking and moving around and there’s a general buzz in the work environment. Whilst this is very good from the social point of view it can be difficult to work in such an environment. **Some people need and prefer working in such a quiet and silent environment to be able to focus on their work. Such an environment allows** creative thinking and greater productivity. As they feel silence is golden and encouraging for their performance.

 **6. Health and happiness:**

Commuting every day and being in an office isn't the healthiest way to spend time. Remote workers have the advantage of not coming into contact with other people in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and catching unwanted coughs and colds during their social interaction. It also pumps in a lot of negativity that affects them mentally. In fact it is psychologically proved that one’s **mental health improves when they work remotely since one experiences** less stress, keeping the employees more happy increasing their are productive and motivational levels. leading to a better quality work.

### **8.** Good work/life balance encouraged:

The ability to work remotely certainly offers a better work/life balance. Working away from the office can make you feel that one is in control of one’s life giving them more time to plan both work related and home related tasks. This gives a sense of achievement and makes employees more productive. When working remotely:

* There is no rush to catch a train or sit in traffic
* There is no need to carry files or your laptop from the workplace tp your residence and back.
* One can take a break when one needs.
* There are no stressful office politics and unwanted competition which are so common in modern organization.
	1. **Benefits of Remote Working:**

**(B) For Employers:**

### ****1.**** Cost saving:

The biggest benefit of remote working is the cost savings that arise. One may have rented an office; still one hot desk is enough which saves on space. Depending on whether the organization is a completely virtual or physical, employers save a lot of resources from:

* Rent
* Utilities (water, electricity, Wi-Fi)
* Building maintenance
* House- keeping
* Provision of a coffee shop or restaurant or pantry
* Office Equipments
* Furniture

### **2.** Spreads Positivity:

A common question generally asked by a lot of people Is it a good idea for teams or otherwise. Many people believe it is a good idea as **it can increases communication and integration amongst individuals.** Team members remain in touch [through the modern company intranet](https://www.lumapps.com/platform/cloud-intranet/), as if they’re in the office anyway. Working together efficiently like this promotes positive feelings and motivation the workforce. This in turn allows the workforce to go the extra mile. It could be a situation the workforce is willing to work late or do an unexpected task with great ease. This proves that remote workers are happier than office workers, This makes them good brand ambassadors for the company.

**3. Pool of talent:**

Business entities get a wider choice while selecting remote workers. For this the prospects do not need to be locals, instead can be from any part of the globe. All one needs to verify is their time zones so that they find it convenient to do the work. One can get workers possessing the required skills. This saves training cost of the employees. The company can also avoid the relocation costs for the remote workers but simply install the most convenient technology that helps the worker to work from any location.

**4. Reduction in absenteeism:**

Since remote workers work from home no travelling is required even when they are feeling unwell. This means employees do no remain absent from the work situation reducing the absenteeism rate in the organization. Since the employee has the flexibility to organize his work schedule leaves are not needed.

### **5.** Time:

Another benefit of remote working for employers is that**employees will use their time more productively if they work from home.** Since the employees save a lot of their travelling time it reduces office gossip time, being late for office, and wasting time n the cafeteria.

### **6.** Office politics:

 It reduces office politics and dispute as people are the cause of all disputes. It can help avoid fifths, tears and anger which are so common in the work environment. Even the time of the managers are saved as they are not required to resolve the dispute and keep healthy environment in the organization, making every employee in the organization more productive and focused.

### **7.** Loyalty:

**It is said that flexible working helps builds loyalty**. This is another benefit of allowing employees to work from home. He loyalty thus built helps to build trust between employer and the employee. This finally creates a feeling of mutual respect. When an employee gets a feeling that their boss trusts them to do their job it builds a feeling of mutual respect for each other. The will ultimately reduce labour turnover in the organization and eliminate the recruitment and training cost of the entity.

### **8.** Productivity:

Productivity is essential for the growth of an organization. For productive employees generate greater efficiency leading to higher profits. Employees can be more productive when working from home since they their get the job done effectively without wasting their time. It lo reduces time spent o meetings that stretch beyond requirement. A meeting using technology is generally shorter and more productive.

### **9.** Technology

Given the technological advancement seen today employers can reap more benefit using the advanced technology by allowing the employers work from home. Examples of the technology in use include the following for work - **Collaboration suites**, [Microsoft 365](https://www.lumapps.com/fr/plateforme/integrations/google-workspace/) or [Google Workspace](https://www.lumapps.com/fr/plateforme/integrations/microsoft-365/) apps, task management tools, Zoom , Google meet, etc.

 **1.9 Drawbacks of remote working include:**

### (A) From a worker’s perspective: The drawbacks from a worker’s perspective include:

#### The risk of losing work-life balance:

Although it is presumed that remote work improves work-life balance, it can also have the opposite effect. For some employees, going to the office helps maintain a daily structure between their personal and professional lives. When they go to office on time, come home on time, quickly checking the work emails and the pending task. After coming back home they can relax, spend time with their family and forget all work related stress. If the switch over does not happen very easily it impacts the work-life balance of the employees.

#### A great communication strategy needs to be in place:

When all employees operate from different places, the communication strategy has to evolve and this take may some time. Poor communication can impact your employees’ work and thus the business results. While communication is smooth and straightforward in the office, leaving little scope for inefficiencies and misunderstood in the process. Poor and ineffective communication can leave the workers get frustrated, anxious, and annoyed. This, in turn, is going to negatively affect job satisfaction and productivity.

1. ‍ **Poor communication can quickly impact your employees’ work and your business:**

Workplace connection physical or remote can make the employer and employee feeling frustrated, and impacts the people, the job, and the company involved in the process. It also proves a sense of purpose and plays a part in employee satisfaction. It is harder for remote workers to maintain this relationship with the organization and their colleagues if they do not go on-site and meet their teammates often. Without an option to come to the office and work together in person, employees might start to question their job, feel unhappy, and look for change, increasing turnover in the entity.

#### The risk of isolation is higher:

Remote work practices can lead to terrible isolation of the remote worker. It is agreed without doubt that the workplace is more than just a professional environment, but it is also a place to meet people, make connections, learn and share experiences and socialize. In this way it can result in loneliness and isolation of the worker and its impact on him. It is a known fundamental fact that companies consider this risk when switching to a fully remote work model.

#### Energy bills at home increase:

If the remote workers operate mainly from home and not from a third workplace, then their energy bills are obviously going to increase. It is the price they pay for more freedom at work and they see it as “part of the deal”. For others, it can be an issue that you should not be underestimated.

### (B) Cons for employers having a remote team: The drawbacks for the employers include:

#### 1. Fostering the company’s culture is harder

The culture of the workplace is a fundamental aspect of every organization. It makes people feel that they belong to a community, and creates common values and purpose, and is the backbone of a business. When the collaboration is restricted to only online with your employees, maintaining a positive corporate culture becomes harder. It requires more effort to keep the company’s spirit and motivational levels up. Team leaders and HR managers need to come up with new and innovative solutions to promote a positive workplace culture in the organization.

#### 2. The risks of having disconnected employee’s increases:

It can be very hard to feel connected to the workplace when working from anywhere but the office. This is one of the few disadvantages of remote work and can lead to a decrease in engagement, a drop in productivity, and an increase in employee turnover, taking away the benefit of reduced cost.

#### 3. Managing a remote team needs specific skills:

The managers of remote teams face a different challenge. They are required to adjust their leadership style to this new way of working is very important. Remote workers do not have the same needs as office employers. Again the communicating and collaborating tools are different for every team member operating from different locations. To be able to manage a remote workforce successfully, the leaders are expected to be aware of these aspects. For example, providing flexible work management training is useful in this case.

**4. Company culture is often developed from coming into the office:**

The traditional work model and the remote worker have a different type of employee empowerment. Companies need to create a perfect hybrid work model where workers both work from home and the office have to contribute towards evolving employee empowerment. . To get the most out of flexible work and make it as simple as possible for your workforce, they need to be equipped with the right tools. This is a sure way of empowering the employees.

**1.10 Conclusion:**

Remote working may be a new way of functioning that has its own challenges, benefits and drawbacks. But there is no turning away from the point that this is an environment here to stay. Al we need to collective do is to evolve mechanisms and tools to make it more effective/

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