

TELECOMUTTING FROM AN IT PERSPECTIVE.

Telecommuting is whereby a company or an organization allows employees to complete work assignments from outside the organization's traditional workplace using telecommunication tools such as email, video conferencing, phone chats and messaging.

It utilizes Information technology and telecommunications to enable employees to complete tasks, meet, and collaborate with each other from remote or separate locations.

The phrase 'telecommuting' was first coined by NASA engineer Jack Nilles in 1972, who at the time was working remotely on a complex communication system. Nilles believed this innovative way of working would act as a solution to traffic, sprawl, and the shortage of non-renewable resources. Sourced from <https://www.lorman.com/blog/post/history-of-telecommuting-best-tools-for-remote-work>

The idea of working from home was appealing for workers in the 'ME DECADE'. In 1979 author Frank Schiff's piece in The Washington Post outlined how working from home would positively affect the nation's gasoline consumption, traffic congestion, air pollution, as well as mental and physical stress. He coined the term 'flexplace' and this post is often credited with beginning to popularize the idea of telecommuting and lead to the first conference about the subject, which took place in 1980.

In 1992, the Interagency Telecommuting Pilot Project was born. The Project's entire purpose was to popularize the use of external telecenters for government agencies in Washington D.C. Two years later, in 1994, September 20th was named 'Employee Telecommuting Day', and the concept began to gain steam.

In 1995, ESPN streamed a radio broadcast of a baseball game to thousands of subscribers using technology created by an innovative company called

Progressive Networks. While this move may have seemed unrelated, it laid the foundation for the HTTP-based streaming revolution that would help make telecommuting possible over the next several years.

Although formalized corporate telecommuting processes grew in popularity throughout the eighties, telecommuting was unavoidable when worldwide internet users reached 400 million users in 1999. Sourced from <https://www.coworkingresources.org/blog/the-negative-effects-of-working-from-home-on-company-culture>

Telecommuting has evolved a lot in recent times. This has been accelerated a lot by the pandemic that rendered the social interactions in the office place somewhat dangerous due to the virus. The office scene was almost being rendered useless and the concept of working from home became a norm.

This has created a lot of issues both positive and negative in the corporate world and from an IT perspective has created a whole new range of issues.

Some of the issues may include but not limited to; remote access, security, database access and more.

- **REMOTE ACCESS**

This can be viewed in two ways. The employee needs to access the work environment and be able to do some actual work for the company and the employer needs to monitor the employees and make sure that everybody is working.

The employee needs to access the platform created by the employer for them to work effectively, the employee needs to have a reliable internet connection at the same time the employee needs to be in an environment devoid of distractions. sometimes in our homes there's not always free spaces to effectively work especially when we have children so this creates a lot of

distractions in order to work effectively. When one e.g., is supposed to attend a meeting, you find there is a lot of distractions mainly because of the environments we live in.

On the other hand, you find employers have a hard time tracking all the employees especially if the number of telecommuting employees is high.

- SECURITY

This is mostly related to cyber security. There has been a lot of cyber security crimes, a lot of data breaches, company secrets being made public and many other kinds of cyber related crimes. These are concerns by a lot of companies in relation to telecommuting by employees. Employers are increasingly concerned by the ability of employees selling company data to rivals and in turn eating into the company's earnings.

- DATABASE ACCESS

This is also a concern by employers when telecommuting that employees are able to access a company's database remotely and therefore not able to fully regulate to what happens with the data that can be accessed by the employers. Their main concern is the fear that data can be accessed by non-employees and thus not safe. Other concerns also include data breaches and other cyber related crimes.

- OTHER IT RELATED FUNCTIONS

Other IT related functions such as computer repairs, programs updates, etc. become difficult due to sometimes logistical difficulties, internet related issues and sometimes laxity by some people in the office. When someone has computer related problem that they cannot solve by themselves it becomes difficult for them to get help as the people tasked with those kinds

of jobs are not with them as opposed to being in the office whereby its easy to handle IT related problems.

Telecommuting has its advantages to both the employer and employee and also it has its fair bit of challenges. Company's need to look at what model works best for their employees. There are companies that have hybridized both concepts and have worked for them. However, there are others that have to pick one and leave the other model maybe because of the nature of their jobs or the company's budget.

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