



THE IT INDUSTRY'S EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR VIRTUAL EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, several companies have established a remote working environment. This pandemic has caused a greater transition from a typical office setting to one that is entirely virtual. The goal of this article is to examine the impact of a virtual workplace on employee engagement. Adapting a new employee engagement approach that works in the post-pandemic period will be critical in light of this transformation. In order to discover different parameters from secondary data, thematic analysis of data acquired through the Delphi method was conducted. Trends were studied and a strategy was put into place to better understand the level of involvement and how to monitor performance.

Keywords: *Working From Home, Employee Engagement*

Introduction

Companies in the information technology industry are increasingly allowing their employees to work from home on COVID-19 days. Even so, the idea of working from home is not brand new at this point. Instead, it has changed in step with the advancement of technology itself.. During the 1970s oil crises, computers' availability led to the beginning of "telecommuting" for white-collar employment. However, as computer technology advanced in the 1980s, senior managers and executives began working more and more from home. The rapid development of fax machines and telephones as a means of speedy communication has contributed to the rise of work from home opportunities. Companies that allow physically challenged workers to work from home in the United States have been given tax breaks by the federal government. Since COVID-19, working from home has become more commonplace in the IT industry, and this trend appears to be continuing. Therefore, it is critical to devise methods for enhancing the level of commitment to the new work environment among employees.

The Viewpoint of the Experts

Employees' satisfaction: When an individual has a positive and upbeat attitude toward their work, the workplace, and the company's culture, they are said to be engaged at work. Employees are provided with a variety of engaging activities and a positive work environment as part of this strategy, which aims to improve productivity above and beyond that of the average employee. Work, environment, and company culture all play a role in determining how motivated employees are to perform their jobs. It is imperative to update existing policies in the IT sector following COVID-19 in order to strategically improve employee engagement.



Working in a virtual office: Rather of an actual workplace, this is a workbench with all the tools and materials needed for the job. An intranet or the internet is used to link the company's personnel, even when the company does not have an actual location. Its debut to the market had as its primary goal the facilitation of cross-cultural collaboration among personnel located in different parts of the world.

Definition of the Issue

It's here to stay, and it's not going anywhere anytime soon. The current pandemic situation may have accelerated the trend toward more flexible work arrangements, especially for millennials, who value the freedom to shift between work and personal life as they see fit, but the pandemic also accelerated the existing trends toward more flexible work arrangements. Work from home can save both the company and its employee's money and time by reducing the need for long journeys. In order to avoid any negative effects on employees or their work, an organisation must address specific concerns or obstacles that arose as a result of the unexpected shift in work culture.

To address the following difficulties (research questions):

- In the long run, how might employee involvement affect an organisation?
- How can a company foster a sense of camaraderie among its remote employees?
- If some employees work in the office and some work from home, how would the organisation ensure that all employees are engaged?
- It's also important to ask about the professional ethics of companies that are moving toward a more remote work environment.

Objective

The research's goal is to outline the process of establishing the virtual working environment and analyse the factors that can play a big role in keeping employees engaged. The topic of this paper is the importance of being actively involved in a specific sector of the economy. Virtual environments have been around for a long time, and employees were aware of their existence in some of the world's largest corporations. However, the CORONA pandemic, unexpected lockdowns, and curfews have prompted businesses across industries to set up a virtual work environment for their staff. Since every new implementation comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages, the workplace has no physical presence. In many companies, a virtual work environment has become the standard, and so do the employees. Even though performance metrics are the same, we strive to focus on them as well. In addition, we look at current industry practises and trends to see how they can affect productivity, employee well-being, and the company's future growth.

Review of the Literature on Factors Affecting IT Sector Employee Productivity When Working from Home

Self-Determination Theory will help you better comprehend the concept of employee engagement. An individual's natural or intrinsic tendency to behave in healthy and successful ways are being studied using the Self-Determination Theory, which was first introduced by Ryan and Deci (2000). Based on the various reasons or goals that motivate an action, Deci and Ryan make a distinction between several types of motivation in Self-Determination Theory (SDT; (Ryan & Deci, 2000)). Internal motivation refers to doing



something because you love it or find it interesting, while external motivation describes doing something because it results in a measurable effect that can be measured. An employee's work performance is negatively impacted when he or she begins to withhold information about themselves and their thoughts and feelings (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It's been proven over the last three decades that acting for internal versus external motives can have a significant impact on the quality of one's experience and performance.

Employee engagement and profitability are directly linked to a strong relationship between leaders and employees, according to (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). An organization's financial success hinges on its capacity to increase its workforce's sense of purpose and commitment. Dissatisfied workers will have a negative impact on productivity and customer service. An organization's success depends on a leader's ability to effectively implement employee engagement methods.

If you want to build a highly engaged workforce, you need to perform the following five things: DDI (2005, as quoted in Tripathi & Sharma, 2016)

Assist in coordinating activities with the strategy

Teamwork and collaboration should be promoted and encouraged.

When appropriate, offer assistance and appreciation to those in need.

When employees are not engaged, attrition rises and efficiency declines, which has a negative impact on customer loyalty as well as on stakeholder value (Lockwood N. R., 2007). Due to the negative impact on organisational success that low levels of employee engagement can have, human resources must endeavour to develop and implement policies and practises that promote employee well-being, health, and a healthy work-life balance.

As stated by (Bathini & Kandathil, 2015), the cost of employing a person is based on a number of different factors.

- Workplace tension will rise.
- A decline in one's state of health.
- Isolation in work and at home.
- The development of my career was hampered by unfavourable reviews.

While the employer incurs the cost of the technical setup, each employee receives their own.

- Personalized attention.
- HR policy changes.

An experiment conducted at CTrip, a NASDAQ-listed Chinese travel business, showed that employees who worked from home had an increase in productivity of 13%, according to the study (Bloom, Liang, Roberts, and Jenny, 2015). Additionally, there was a considerable decrease in absenteeism and turnover among the workforce.

(Airtasker, the year 2020) Working from home adds an extra 1.4 days to your month, which equates to 16.8 extra workdays every year.

According to (Zhao, 2020), the percentage of Americans who can work from home has climbed from 28% in 2011 to 54% in 2020. Additionally, the number of people who are happy with the perks of working from



home has risen to 4.3 out of 5. By (Bloom N., 2014), we found that employees working from home completed 13.5% more calls than their office colleagues. On average, it saved \$1.9k per employee over the course of the nine-month period.

It's a fact that As a result of Yahoo's recent ban on work from home, a media controversy erupted, prompting the company to take corrective steps. However, stating that working from home is a pricey endeavour.

Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer is on the record in support of the prohibition. People are more creative and collaborative when they work together in an office, she said.

Gaps in Literature

Research on work from home employees has focused mostly on the efficiency and affordability of an alternative to traditional workplaces.

The ease with which employees and organisations can carry out their duties when working from home is increasingly closely linked to the results of study conducted on this topic. However, in research, the focus will be on factors that affect the productivity of employees who work from home, and Delhi NCR will be chosen as the area. John Elton Mayo's "Hawthorne" experiment on industrial employees has inspired me.

Methodology

This section explains the methods used to collect the data and information needed to answer the study questions. Document analysis and the Delphi Technique are the methods used to collect data and information. Because this is a qualitative study, input from industry experts and document analysis are both essential. In order to gain knowledge about the industry that is relevant to the research, the experts' input is obtained through a structured interview.

Data and information are being analysed using a thematic approach to identify and compare the productivity and degree of involvement of IT sector workers who work from home.

A preliminary investigation into the factors influencing employee satisfaction in a virtual workplace is the focus of this study. In the new normal that the covid pandemic has produced, the study is adaptable, dynamic, and participatory, and it helps us grasp the underlying opinions and motivations. It also aids in the discovery of previously undiscovered potential parameters and the development of new ideas by exposing challenges in a more perceptive light. In order to better understand the level of participation, this qualitative research will use both primary and secondary data. The Delphi method helps us gain insight into an expert's thoughts on current research issues and potential future developments in this field of work.

Structured interview

Virtual workplaces and the new trends coming from them were discussed with industry experts by researchers. Specifically, the researchers asked them about their views on the virtual workplace, performance comparison (offline vs. online workplace), employee perception of the virtual workplace, problems encountered by employees in the virtual workplace, employee feedback on this new working environment, and how to make the virtual workplace more employee-friendly and engaged.

In order to make the virtual workplace more accommodating for employees, the questions posed sought to



gain a better understanding of the practises now in place. An attempt is made in this article, based on the responses, to develop a plan for increasing employee involvement.

A Study of the Industry's Perspectives

According to the appendix attached below, we interviewed experts from various organisations about their experiences working in virtual environments under various parameters and received a variety of viewpoints, but the general perception is that the new virtual work culture has an impact on the mental level. Appendix Because of the virtual workplace, their movement, interaction, expression, and development have been limited.

It is more effective to operate in a typical work atmosphere because of the face-to-face interaction and teamwork that is there. Getting used to working in a virtual office isn't always easy, especially when you're doing so mentally from your own home. Meddhans (OYO's Manager) claims that "The use of soft skills has decreased dramatically in the virtual workplace because meetings are now more goal-oriented. We rarely have a chance to speak up. Our personal growth is being hampered as a result of this." Traditional workplaces, on the other hand, allow employees to maintain and enhance their personal grooming. Grooming and personality development are required at traditional workplaces; in a virtual office, it is an elective activity that no one wants to put in the time. New employees, in particular, may find it difficult to form bonds with their coworkers if they don't have many opportunities to communicate outside of team meetings. However, there are a few advantages to working from home. According to employees, the absence of a 2-4-hour commute means that they now have an extra four hours in their day to explore other possibilities. Even if their stress levels haven't gone down, they say they're now able to handle it better, and they're more active at home because of a healthier diet. Employers can argue that it hasn't caused any issues in an IT basis. Employees are being forced to work longer hours because of the decrease in office expenses and the reduction in the number of time slots available, something that was not always the case in more traditional organisations.

When we spoke with the expert on the efficiency and effectiveness of virtual employees, we learned that the results varied by job. From a company's standpoint, performance and productivity have grown, if not maintained, in positions that are more programmatic and structured, like coding or in the IT sector.. Only the company culture is altered in the IT industry as a result of the epidemic. At first, employees were ecstatic about the prospect of working from home, but as time passed, they began to get restless. Doing their jobs or napping during their breaks was once an option for workers; now they are either working or sleeping during their breaks. Internal research at the company discovered that employees who are parents or established in their existing jobs had a higher liking for working from home than singles or people who want to grow and learn.

There have been productivity issues for occupations that require innovation and consulting from diverse verticals. Even while virtual calls are used for coordination, they have yet to find a traditional match for the presentation of ideas. They frequently switch off their microphone and camera because of house interruptions and avoid speaking or contributing unless it is absolutely necessary. Even the most innovative



tasks have become tedious as a result of this.

While working from home, the employee's relationships with his or her family have a significant impact on how engaged they are in their work. With an abrupt work change, unmarried people who live at home and work from home find their employment tedious and tough. Few, though, are content with working from home since it allows them to spend more time with their families. Employees, on the other hand, desire to see a shift in work culture, such as the hybrid model, which allows employees to work from home or in the office on a flexible schedule. Work-life balance is a big worry for many employees, according to research. Because the concept of working from home is relatively new for most employees, they are doing their best, but many are having problems balancing their work-life or profession with their personal lives. Because they don't know how to deal with or address the situation, it isn't that they don't know about it. Employees may become accustomed to working from home over time, but it is the role of the company to assist its employees in finding a work-life balance while also supporting their transition to working from home.

For the virtual workplace, IT businesses are taking huge steps to supply the employees with necessary tools and information online, but this is not very engaging or productive for the majority of companies. If not carried out correctly, this might have the opposite effect, slowing rather than accelerating the growth of the workforce and resulting in a complete waste of money and resources.

There were times when notices were physically displayed on the company's Notice Board, but those announcements have been replaced with e-mails that are sent to all of the company's employees on a daily basis. In order to find an essential email, even if an employee knows that he will receive one, he must first search for it in the mail, and if he/she is not aware of the notice's specifics, he may not be aware of it.

Since the outbreak of the disease, companies have had to rethink how they commemorate milestones. It is now impossible for firms to celebrate or hold an event for all of their employees, as they used to do before. There will be no team outings, picnics, get-togethers, lunches, or other social occasions that the employees have come to expect and look forward to. Only the attendees and the event planners have the ability to talk during a virtual company gathering. People who are in the same virtual room but do not know one another will not be able to engage in personal dialogue or engagement, which is how people used to communicate at events in the past.

Recommendation and Conclusion

An employee's participation in a virtual workplace is a challenging endeavour. Every non-work-related interaction that engaged employees prior to the introduction of a virtual platform has been banned. Individual growth possibilities have decreased as a result of a decrease in team engagement, team gatherings, and individual development opportunities. A loss of workplace belongingness is a common complaint among those who enjoy the new work environment. To be effective, work is more like a task that necessitates teamwork and the ability to express oneself creatively. With the help of numerous programmes, virtual workplaces are becoming more engaging. These programmes include interactive sessions and video call celebrations, among others. The fact remains, however, that they must do more to



nsure that employees' soft abilities are increasingly utilised at work.

If work-life balance can be maintained at both the individual and company levels, as well as sufficient support for the employees and employee engagement, most employees will be content with the virtual work environment.

Using a Hybrid model can help a company boost employee engagement (Phadnis, 2020). Virtual and traditional work environments are combined to create a unique and dynamic atmosphere at work. In addition, the business can create a hybrid model using any of these three pillars or a mix of them. The following are the three additional pillars upon which the Hybrid model is built:

Employees can choose which type of work environment they are most comfortable with and prefer to work in, for the firm with the highest performance level.

It is possible to rotate a certain percentage of employees between a traditional office setting and a virtual work environment on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis (for example, 40% of employees work in a traditional office setting and 60% in a virtual work environment).

According to a four-point scale based on the performance levels of employees during the previous six months, both when they worked traditional hours and during the most recent six months when they worked virtually: not satisfactory, satisfactory, good, and excellent. The organisation uses a comparison to help them decide whether or not to call its employees. It will be decided whether or not to return staff to the regular office setting beneficial or detrimental to the business.

Better communication between employees and their employers can lead to increased employee engagement as a result of familiarity. Increasing the employee's sense of belonging to the organisation can lead to an increase in internal motivation, which in turn encourages the person to work more, resulting in a higher level of performance.

A virtual meeting would not be possible due to the team's global dispersion, thus there will be neither team reunions nor celebrations of team achievements. People who work at different companies but live in the same city can organise informal get-togethers. Rather than handing out money, corporations might offer their employees special lunch tickets that they can use with their friends who have the same coupon, which was given to them by their firm for the same reason, to use together. An alliance of enterprises that likes this type of compensation coupon can be used to implement it. A hybrid compensation plan, for example, can be created by companies X and Y. (Lunch budget, Team Party Budget). These vouchers are available to employees of businesses X and Y who live in the same city.

Involving employees in extra work decisions would increase their sense of ownership, which in turn will reduce their stress levels. Employees are already overburdened with work after completing one assignment ahead of schedule. Employees must begin work on another activity on the fourth day in order to meet a deadline of five days and they have already met that deadline in three days. However, they are not asked if they would like to take a break and resume on the 5th day instead of the 4th, even if they are paid for it. In the long run, if people are made to labour uncompetitively because of financial incentives, they may not try to improve their performance. If things aren't managed properly, employees may begin to take their



work messages for granted or disregard them altogether.

Employees are increasingly required to work on the weekends and have less break times, which contributes to a work-life imbalance that does not take into account both the emotional and physical health of the employees. Employees are now required to request leave often even on weekends. In order to get all the work done ahead of schedule, ignoring the emotional and physical well-being of employees can have a short-term benefit for the organisation, but not in the long term. When employees are able to maintain a work-life balance by taking regular vacations, their level of engagement in the firm rises as a result, which is good for the bottom line.

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