



Future of Work

**Remote Work :
Lessons from the Lockdown**

DANNE INSTITUTE FOR
RESEARCH

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The Danne Institute for Research Ltd/GTE, a not-for-profit organization limited by guarantee, was set up in 2018 to carry out research that will positively impact the Nigerian and African environment. Through research we contribute to the public discourse and to improved decision making in the public and the private sectors.

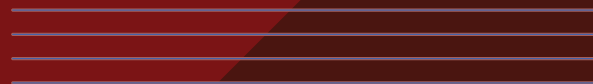
A very important aspect of our work is the dissemination of our research findings. Through Public-Private Sector Dialogues, Seminars, Workshops, etc. we champion conversations on our research results; conversations which will lead to positive change in the environment.

Our Mission

To lead positive change in Africa by undertaking relevant, rigorous research, building capacity among African scholars and effectively engaging stakeholders with our research findings

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We are curious about what makes cities and states develop – Connectivity & Productivity, Preparing the labor force for the 21st Century, Leadership & Governance; Sustaining Transformation in the Public sector and Strengthening Institutions.





FUTURE OF WORK

REMOTE WORK: LESSONS FROM THE LOCKDOWN

TOTAL RESPONDENTS

497



461 

RESPONDENTS RESULTS ANALYZED



85% 

OF RESPONDENTS ARE IN MANAGEMENT CADRE



95%

OF RESPONDENTS HAVE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE

60%



OF RESPONDENTS ARE MARRIED



FINANCE SECTOR HAS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

20%



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INTRODUCTION

The lockdown in Lagos due to the COVID 19 pandemic took many organizations by surprise. Employees had to work from home for an extended period of time.

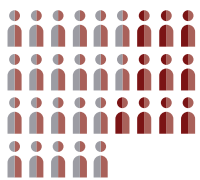
A Fortune magazine survey of CEOs of the 2020 Fortune 500 list showed that about 26% of them believe that 90% of their workforce will never return to their usual workplace. When they were asked the single most important thing the crisis taught them, their answers included: “the meaning of the word essential”, “a business cannot wait for the transformation it knows it needs,” “leadership and values matter always, but especially in a crisis” and finally, “working from home works!”.

In fact, many senior executives have hyped the productivity increases associated with working from home. The Global CEO of Diageo said in a CNN interview that working from home following the Covid 19 crisis led to huge productivity gains for the company. No doubt, they will not be going back to business as usual when life returns to normal.

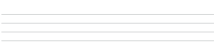
The lockdown in Lagos due to the COVID 19 pandemic took many organizations by surprise. Employees had to work from home for an extended period of time. For many of them it was the first time they were working from home or remotely. Today, a number of organizations are wondering if Working from Home (WFH) which they had no choice but to implement following the lockdown in Lagos, should be the new way of working.

What challenges did employees face working from home? Did organizations provide enough support for their employees so they are productive while working remotely? Are there advantages to working from home compared to working from the office? Post COVID 19, will employees happily go back to working from the office or do they expect a new normal given their experience? How do we manage remote workers if working from home becomes the new normal in Nigeria?

There is a paucity of research on the Nigerian environment in general. We are not aware of any studies carried out on Remote Work in Nigeria. Where research results are referred to by managers, it is usually to research done in western countries (especially the United States of America). The results of these studies may not be applicable to the Nigerian context. The C-Suite often finds itself making decisions without knowledge of local conditions and often without the necessary data.



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PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The lockdown forced all organizations (private and public) to introduce WFH practices all of a sudden. Lagosians now have some experience with working from home.

We carried out a survey of employees who worked from home during the Lockdown. Instead of relying on anecdotal evidence, this study provides rich data which the top team can use to make informed decisions based on the evidence.

The purpose of this study is threefold. While research has explicated the benefits of remote work in developed countries, not much has been done in developing countries such as Nigeria. In this study, we examine WFH during the lockdown in Lagos in order to tease out some learning points for organizations. We examine what helped employees WFH productively, the advantages of working from home, etc.

Secondly, we ascertain willingness or otherwise of employees to WFH post Covid 19. Their willingness to WFH will probably depend on the experience they had working from home during the lockdown. Finally, we would like to draw policy implications for organizations including government departments. The lockdown forced all organizations (private and public) to introduce WFH practices all of a sudden. Lagosians now have some experience with working from home. This study documents this experience and draws implications for organizations.

We hope that this study will provide evidence which will help the C-Suite make decisions about the future of work post Covid 19. The results of this study are also important for employee experience and engagement: these may be different if employees are working





METHODOLOGY

The survey instrument was designed and administered to employees who live and work in Lagos. The questionnaire included several open-ended questions which invited respondents to express their opinions in their own words.

Sample

We used a mixed method in this study. We recognize that some things can be measured and the result of such measurement can be a good reflection of the population. Actions can therefore be taken based on this knowledge. However, we also appreciate that contexts or circumstances do vary and a nuanced understanding of a phenomenon is important especially when trying to understand a concept in a context for the first time, i.e. when carrying out exploratory research.

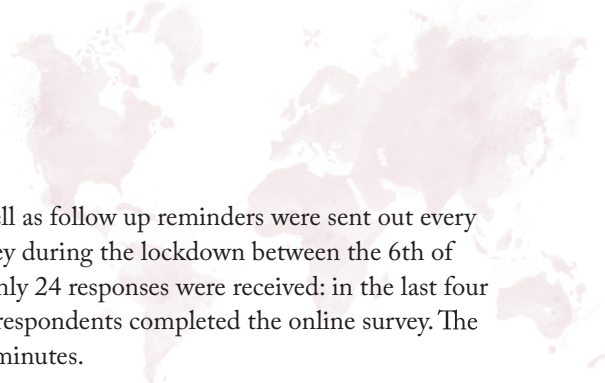
We used both qualitative and quantitative data for this study. The survey instrument was designed and administered to employees who live and work in Lagos. The questionnaire included several open-ended questions which invited respondents to express their opinions in their own words. Open-ended questions allowed us understand the individual's unique experience with WFH. We were able to obtain a nuanced understanding of the context of WFH in Lagos. To understand the challenges respondents faced with WFH, we asked them not only to tick one or more of the options we made available, but also to add other reasons. A good percentage of respondents did (20% of the sample gave reasons using their own words).

The Survey Instrument was designed and administered using Survey Monkey. Given the subject matter, an online survey was considered adequate as respondents had been working online from home during the lockdown. We reached them via email and WhatsApp messages. (The link to the survey was sent to them as part of an email or a WhatsApp message). It would have been impossible to reach respondents via mail or in person during the lockdown. We also wanted to reach respondents who were working from home; who were working online.

We invited recipients to complete the questionnaire and to forward the link to their contacts who meet the criteria for participation. Only those who live and work in Lagos and who worked from home during the lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic were invited to participate in this study. We encouraged respondents to complete the questionnaire and assured them of the anonymity of their responses.

In all,
497
respondents
completed the online
survey. The typical time
spent completing the
survey was 8 minutes.





New invitations to participate in the study as well as follow up reminders were sent out every 3 to 5 days. All respondents completed the survey during the lockdown between the 6th of April and 23rd of May 2020. In the last week, only 24 responses were received: in the last four days, only 2 responses were received. In all, 497 respondents completed the online survey. The typical time spent completing the survey was 8 minutes.

Of the 497 who completed the survey, we found that 36 of the respondents did not work from home during the lockdown. We deleted their responses and analyzed results for 461 respondents. These respondents live and work in Lagos, worked from home during the lockdown so they have some experience with working from the office and from home. They are therefore able to compare both experiences and provide useful information for this study.

We could not determine the number of people who received the invitation to participate in the study. However, given the general negative attitude towards completing questionnaires in the environment and the close follow up we did, we surmise that about 3 times the number of respondents were invited to participate in the study.

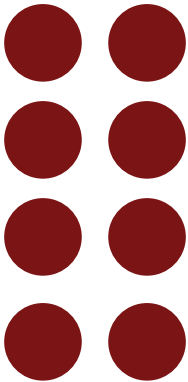
36 out of 497
respondents did not work from
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ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

8



We carried out content analysis of the 8 open-ended questions (question 2 was both open and closed-ended).

Twelve questions on the survey required respondents to simply click the option that best describes their answer. These questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics: we calculated the percentage of respondents who ticked a particular option. Graphs of responses are included in our analysis of the results.

We carried out content analysis of the 8 open-ended questions (question 2 was both open and closed-ended). We searched for key words and how often respondents used them. For example, we searched for traffic, commute time, transportation, travel to identify all respondents who mentioned savings in commute time as an advantage of WFH. The analysis of results was done using Survey Monkey.



FINDINGS

The survey instrument was designed and administered to employees who live and work in Lagos. The questionnaire included several open-ended questions which invited respondents to express their opinions in their own words.

In this section, we present the results of the analysis. First, we introduce the sample. We analyzed 461 responses. Respondents' age was widely distributed. While 7% of the sample were above 50 years, 5.45% of the sample were less than 23 years of age. 41% of the sample were aged between 24 and 36. 46% of the sample were between 37 years and 50 years. Our sample covers the spectrum of generations in the workplace today.

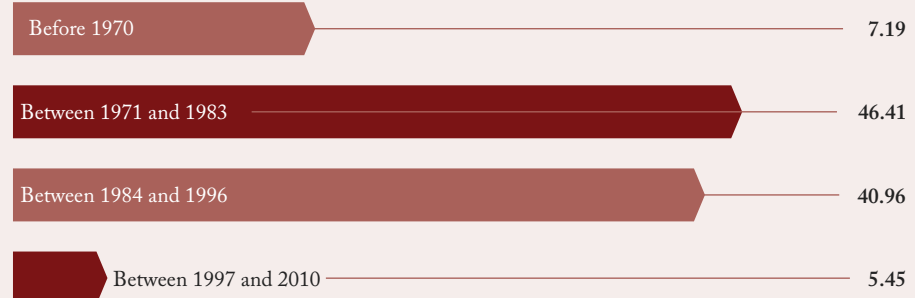
According to Ovadje (2015), there are three generations in organizations in Nigeria today: Generation X, M, and Generation Y.

These generations are defined by unique historical, political and socio-economic events and experiences in Nigeria that have shaped their values and attitudes. Generation X were born between 1955 and 1970; Generation M between 1971 and 1983. Finally, Generation Y were born between 1983 and 1996. We will analyze their perspectives regarding WFH to find out if age makes a difference to say willingness to WFH.



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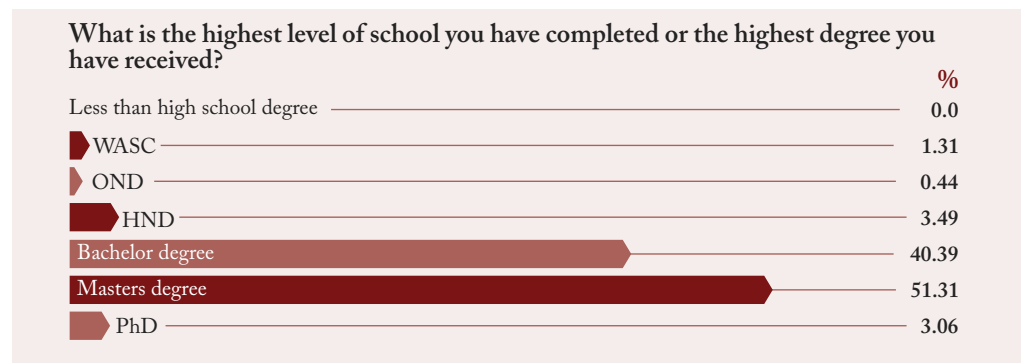
In what year where you born?





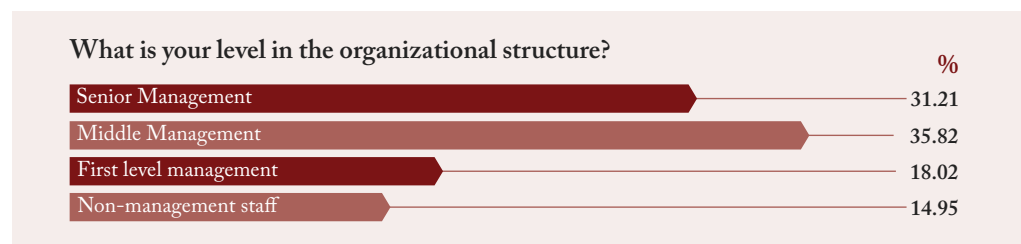
Level of Education

Respondents were highly educated. About 95% of them had a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree. Less than 2% of the sample had an Ordinary National Diploma or lower. This is not surprising as these are the employees most likely to be working from home. They are not likely to be blue collar workers: they do not work on the factory floors as mechanics, lathe operators, etc. Rather, they are most likely to be managers and management trainees.



Level in the Organizational Structure

We tried to reach a very diverse group. Our sample is made up of mostly managers: 85% of respondents are in the management cadre. 31% of them are in senior management. Only about 15% of our sample are in non-managerial positions. This is probably a reflection of the kind of employee who worked from home during the lockdown.





Marital Status

40% of the sample are single, and 60% are married.

Single
39.87%

Married
60.13%

Children of School Age

We included this variable because home schooling became the norm during the lockdown. Those who have children of school age are likely to have more distractions at home caring for children, supervising their school work during online school and assignments. It is possible that the house maids had been asked to go home due to fears of the Coronavirus. Parents with children of school age faced a huge challenge during the lockdown but post COVID 19, it may not be relevant for decisions on WFH.

Do you have children of school age?

The sample was almost evenly split between those who have children of school age and those who do not: 52% of the sample had children of school age, while 48% did not.

Yes
51.63%

No
48.37%

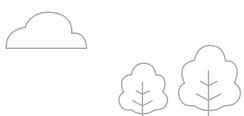
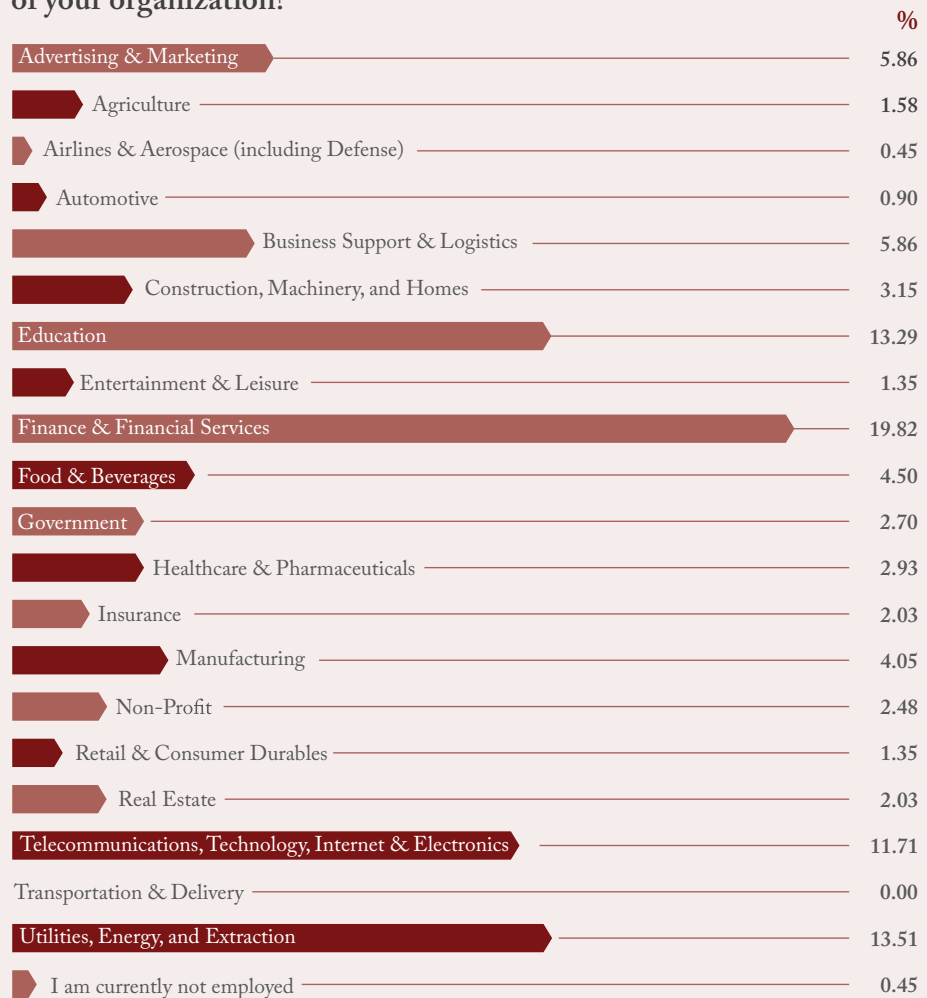




Industry

The sample was very diverse in terms of industry representation: 20% of the sample work in the Financial sector. 13% in the education sector, 12% in Telecommunication; Advertising & Marketing and Business Support & Logistics had 6% each. 3% worked in the public sector.

Which of the following best describes the principal industry of your organization?





CHALLENGES OF WFH

Access to stable Internet was the most important challenge that employees faced while WFH during the lockdown. Some organizations paid for a modem and provided employees with other resources such as a laptop and data to enable them work effectively from home. However, access to a stable internet service remained an issue beyond the control of both the employee and the organization.

Respondents were asked to indicate the five biggest challenges they had WFH. Their answers were instructive.

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Access to the Internet and to broadband in Lagos and Nigeria is limited. In April 2020, active Internet subscriptions was 138,733,733. However, the number of subscribers on broadband was only 75,558,163 with a penetration of 38.58%¹.

The next big challenge was keeping a regular schedule. This was reported by 53% of respondents. Keeping a regular schedule required discipline on the part of the employee. For some of them, it took about a week to get into a routine. Some

organizations designed training programmes on time management and WFH to help employees transition smoothly. Others had sign in and sign off times which was an added incentive to get employees to keep to a schedule.

About 42% of the sample said that there were too many distractions at home and this was a challenge to working effectively from home. It is pertinent to note that for many, this was the first time they are working from home. All members of the family were home (because of the lockdown). 60% of the sample were married and 52% had children of school age.

Children were attending classes online at the same time as parents were logging in and working from home. It is not surprising that they found many distractions and had to organize themselves if they were to be productive.

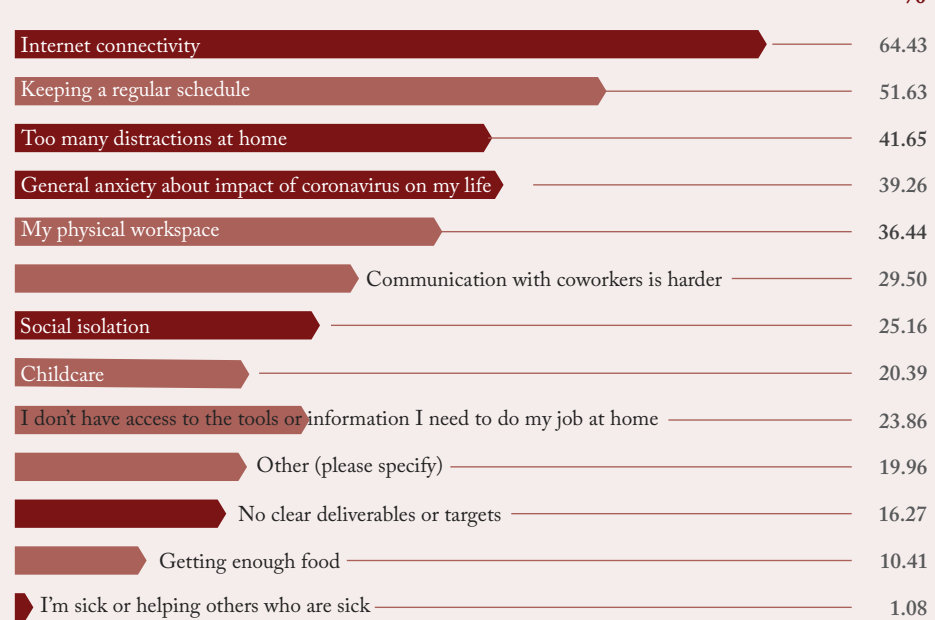
About
42%
of the sample said that there were too many distractions at home and this was a challenge to working effectively from home.

¹Source: ncc.gov.ng. Accessed June 21st 2020





What are the FIVE biggest challenges you are currently facing while working from home?



The impact of the Coronavirus on themselves and perhaps their families was a source of anxiety which about 40% of the sample indicated was a challenge. The impact of the virus goes beyond the fear of some member of the family or friends being infected to losing one's source of livelihood or not getting paid because of the economic downturn.

There was a lot to be concerned about during the lockdown. Very few respondents noted that their company brought in the services of psychiatrists to train them and gave their phone numbers to employees to call them if the need arose. Other companies paid part of employees' salaries upfront to enable them stock up food items before the lockdown.

About 36% of the respondents considered their physical workspace a challenge to WFH. There was no opportunity to set up an office at home if one did not already have one. While organizations pay attention to ergonomics and ensure employees have the right chairs and tables to work with in the office, this is not necessarily so at home. Since a large majority of employees did not expect to work from home, they were not adequately set up in terms of physical workspace and equipment. Besides, their spouses and children were also home and needed workspaces and devices for online schooling and work from home.

Communication with co-workers was the next challenge with about 30% of the sample reporting this. One wonders if respondents had access to instant messaging communication tools in addition to emails and video conferencing tools. Respondents missed the social

40%

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Communication with co-workers was the next challenge with about 30% of the sample reporting this. One wonders if respondents had access to instant messaging communication tools in addition to emails and video conferencing tools. Respondents missed the social interactions at work and the opportunity to walk across to a colleague's table or office to ask for help, clarify something, or just talk football at lunch time. If social interaction is important in all cultures, it is probably more so in a humane, collectivist culture like Nigeria's. Even though respondents appreciated the advantages of working from home, about 30% missed communication with colleagues. It seems that the online meetings, emails and messages to colleagues were not sufficient.

Respondents also mentioned in the survey: social isolation (25%), access to tools and information required to do my job at home (24%), no clear deliverables (16%), getting enough food, childcare, caring for others.

Other challenges

We invited respondents to indicate other challenges of WFH which were not mentioned in the list of challenges they were given. 20% of respondents specified other challenges they faced working from home. A little over one third of them mentioned unstable power supply and its cost as one major challenge. With the epileptic power supply in most parts of Lagos, it is not surprising that this challenge was mentioned. Respondents had to provide alternative power supply to WFH. This involved in many cases, buying diesel or fuel for their generators. A few organizations gave their employees some funds to cover this extra cost but most did not.

About 22% of respondents lamented the lack of respect for their time during the WFH. A few said they received work related calls during the weekend; there was no resumption and closing time: employees were expected to work 24/7. The lack of boundary between work and non-

30%

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work was a source of dissatisfaction. For some respondents, the workload seemed to have increased. Other respondents complained about unscheduled meetings which were prolonged unnecessarily.

Respondents also indicated that some tasks are not amenable to WFH: site visitation, property marketing, etc. could not be done during the lockdown. Other respondents complained they could not access their files during the lockdown. This limited the amount of work they could accomplish WFH.

Finally, taking care of the home, helping with home schooling of children were challenges that a few respondents mentioned.

In summary: respondents faced a number of challenges working from home. Access to the Internet, epileptic power supply, distractions, organizing themselves and adequate physical workspace were some of these challenges.

20%

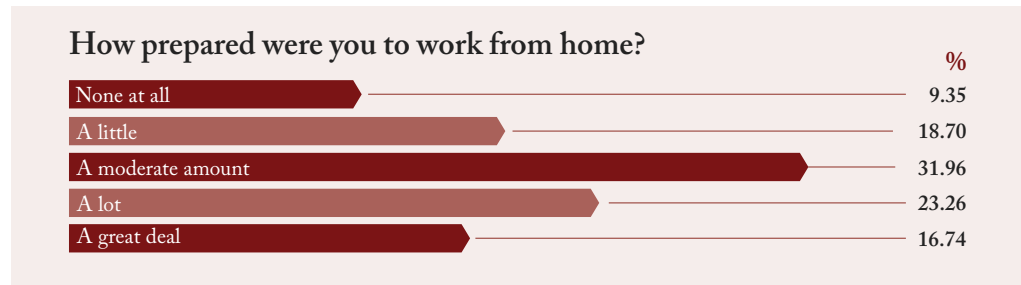
of respondents specified other challenges they faced working from home. A little over one third of them mentioned unstable power supply and its cost as one major challenge.





HOW PREPARED WERE YOU TO WFH

Respondents highlighted many challenges with WFH. However, when we asked them how prepared they were to work from home, less than 30% said they had little or no preparation. Very few worked in organizations with a WFH policy and worked from home a few days a week



Those who worked from home are probably those who could work from home. They had laptops, Access to the Internet and perhaps a generator. Even though they encountered several challenges, they could plug in and connect to the organization somewhat. It is important to recall that 85% of the sample are managers. It was probably easier for them to adapt to the sudden announcement of a lockdown.

They also had a team to manage; to help settle into the new normal. It is perhaps not surprising that they felt more prepared to WFH. The non-managerial staff were millennials and very few were Generation Z employees. They are more digitally savvy than their bosses. Working online was probably not much of a challenge for them if they had all they needed.

30%

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ADVANTAGES OF WFH

We asked respondents to tell us the advantages of WFH. Their responses ranged from savings in commute time, flexible schedule, increased productivity, to work-family balance.

Savings in Commute time

The most important advantage of WFH was savings in time, stress, cost of traffic jams. Almost 70% of respondents mentioned savings in travel time, commute time, traffic, and transportation. Some respondents said they spent 4 to 6 hours commuting each day to and from work. Traffic saps a lot of their energy. One respondent talked about the terror of traffic! Respondents felt more rested, slept better and were able to work in peace and tranquility at home. They reported less stress and one commented: “things have slowed down; it was overwhelmingly fast before.”

Another respondent wrote: “My daily commute time is almost 5 hours; it was amazing not to have to do that.” One respondent said that WFH “helped prove that some job functions can deliver without reporting to the physical office daily.”

Flexible Schedule

About 30% of the sample mentioned flexible work hours and schedule as an advantage of WFH. Respondents could work in their own time in scheduling their work targets. They could complete tasks at their convenience (one mentioned working at night to take advantage of better access to the Internet). Respondents could plan their time while ensuring they met agreed targets.

Flexibility enabled them work at their own pace and control their time. This meant of course that they had to manage time well, and take responsibility for their work.

Work Family Balance

Work family balance was another advantage of WFH mentioned by about 12% of respondents. The lockdown (and WFH) enabled them do other stuff at home with their families. This strengthened the bonds within the family. Respondents gave time and attention to their children many of whom were home schooling at the time. One respondent summed it

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70%

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thus:

“It was an opportunity to build a stronger relationship with family which led to improved family interactions.”

Increased Productivity

About 8% of the sample mentioned higher productivity as an advantage of WFH. Working from home enabled them focus on deliverables. They were able to work calmly; no stress from commute and no bosses hovering over them. Productivity also resulted from fewer distractions and savings in commute time. A few respondents mentioned not having to wake up at 4am to beat the traffic to work. For some others, the office environment and their managers were a source of pressure. WFH enabled them meet deadlines without the pressure. They felt rested, creative, could strategize better and got more done. According to one respondent, increased productivity resulted from:

“a clear state of mind as a result of ample night rest.”

Finally, another respondent noted:

“I had to meet timelines, no story, no excuse, no support. I realized there are many more ways to do the same thing.”

One would have expected the lockdown to produce considerable stress in the workforce and that this would lead to increased performance for some time and then performance would drop if stress levels were sustained. In Lagos, this did not happen. Savings in commute times left employees rested and more focused. One can only imagine the damage done to employees by long commute times daily.

One respondent told the researcher that the CEO of her company refused to allow a proposal to WFH which was put forward by the Human Resource Department long before the pandemic. The lockdown forced this company to work from home. They found that employees were more productive working from home during the lockdown; the CEO was pleasantly surprised. The respondent commented that there will be a new normal in the office post Covid 19 regarding WFH.

Other Factors

While respondents mentioned other advantages, it is important to note that a few respondents did not like WFH as they did not see any advantage in it. According to one respondent:

“it is really not working for me.” Another noted: “the only advantage is staying safe.”

Respondents faced several challenges with WFH. In spite of these challenges however, a large

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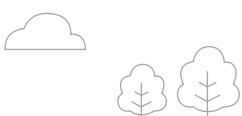




majority of them acknowledged that there are many advantages from WFH. In fact, when we asked them if they would like to work remotely or from home in the future, less than 2% said they would not.

In summary: one of the advantages of WFH according to respondents is increased productivity. In general, employees feel more rested and creative working from home than working from the office. The reasons are many but the most important seems to be the savings in commute time; the fact that they do not spend hours in traffic morning and evening.

One implication of this study is that to get employees to be innovative, creative and productive, WFH as well as a reduction in the amount of time employees spend commuting are important. Lagos is losing a lot of productivity to traffic jams. To improve productivity, employers need to consider WFH and working with the state government to improve the traffic situation in the megacity.

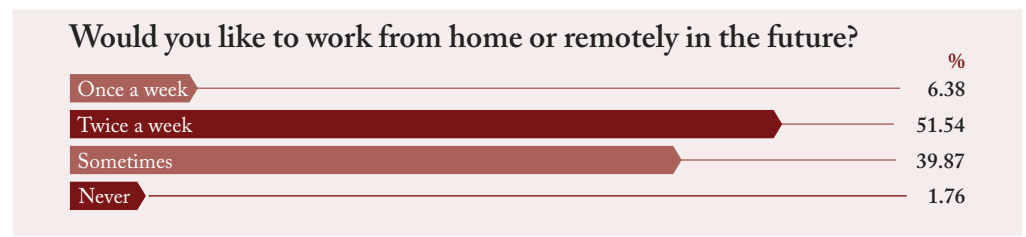




WOULD YOU LIKE TO WFH OR REMOTELY IN THE FUTURE

For a large majority of our respondents, this was the first time they were working from home. They had to work from home because of the lockdown following the Covid 19 pandemic. Their families were also at home during this period. One would expect that the distractions were many and the uncertainty high.

However, in spite of the above, an overwhelming majority of respondents would like to WFH in the future. In fact, 98% of the sample said they would like to WFH. While about 40% of respondents would like to work from home sometimes, about 52% would like to work from home as much as twice a week.



A large majority of respondents were enthusiastic about WFH. A few responses to the question why would you like to work from home illustrate this:

98%
An overwhelming majority of respondents would like to WFH in the future. In fact, 98% of respondents said they would like to WFH





“ Because I can without losing productivity. ”

“ I feel relaxed working from home and I think that makes my productivity level higher. I don't have to wake up too early and dash into the Lagos traffic. I save time and energy that can be put to better use! ”

“ I can get more done. Especially in a scenario of the kids in school. ”

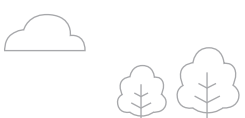
“ Traffic is a major challenge in Lagos. If I am able to achieve 80% of my work without physically being in the office then why not. ”

“ There's no need being in an office 5 times a week. An office is a space where all available resources for me to get my job done is available. Therefore, my office can be in my home. ”

“ Balance. The Lagos commute is grueling. For me it is about 40 minutes each way. A lot worse for others. Saving that time will make me more productive. Focus. You get more done at home. But you also need to collaborate. So, a mix of both is good. If you go to the office 3 to 4 times a week, you spend more time focusing. And can push the deep work component of your work till when you work from home 1 or 2 times each week. Everyone benefits and the organization gets more productivity from you. ”

In summary: commute time (traffic jams) came up as the main reason why respondents would like to work from home. They would like a mix of WFH and working from the office.

While the large majority would like to work from home, there are differences in how often they would like to WFH. Perhaps, some democratization of the decision to WFH is necessary to get full benefits from WFH.





ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR WFH

In this section, we discuss what organizations did to help employees get started to WFH, what employees think organizations should have done better and what else employees need to WFH effectively.

What Organizations did to help employees get started to WFH

A few organizations had a WFH policy as part of their business continuity plan. The lockdown was an opportunity to test the plan. For the large majority of respondents however, the lockdown came as a surprise and their organizations were not prepared for it.

From the survey, it seems there is a wide gap between organizations regarding the support they provided their employees. While some respondents said their organizations did all they could to get them started to WFH, other respondents said their organizations did nothing! In spite of the fact that the lockdown began in other countries weeks earlier, some organizations were not prepared.

We grouped responses to this question into a number of headings: Resources & Tools to enable WFH, Training & Support and Deliverables.

Resources & Tools

Regarding resources, several respondents commented that their organizations provided them laptops (or loans to purchase laptops), modems and subsidized Internet subscriptions. Very few organizations provided energy allowance to pay for fuel/diesel to run their employees' generators. Communication applications were provided by a few organizations. Such tools included: online collaboration software, meeting applications, and other remote working applications. A lot of focus was on the hardware and software to enable working remotely (including access to company documents). Some organizations were prepared.

As one respondent noted:

“My Organization already had a Business Continuity Model in place which included work from home scenarios, so we were technology wise ready for it when it happened. The tools needed for me to work were immediately deployed and we had a seamless plug-in.”





Training & Support

A few organizations put together training sessions for employees on time management, communication technologies such as video conferencing tools, etc. One organization simulated a real-life WFH scenario depicting the pros and cons of WFH. Another organization organized a mental health workshop for employees. Support provided by the organization was in various forms: paying salaries early to enable employees stock up food stuff and other essentials; online hangout every Friday, weekly online competition or games. One organization developed and circulated a WFH policy.

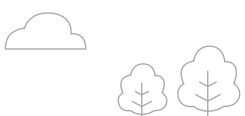
Deliverables

In very few organizations, targets were set and a workplan developed for all staff WFH. Check-in emails, calls and meetings were organized. One respondent summarized support received from the organization thus:

“VPN connections enabled secured connection to the office. We set up collaboration tools like Zoho, Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Google life sheets and emails to help operations. There were webinars to train people on work from home and the use of the work tools. Training courses were loaded on Learning Management Systems. Monthly KPI sessions were organized to ascertain performance against set KPIs. Business Continuity Plans were developed and continually modified.”

In summary, the lockdown caught many organizations by surprise: they were unprepared and so could not prepare their staff to WFH. Very few organizations had a policy of WFH and were able to plug and play and check that their business continuity plan was working. The support employees received was mostly in providing resources and tools to enable WFH. Some organizations subsidized data, others did more; providing laptops, and stipend for fuel/diesel to provide electricity. Some training was done online (when employees were already working from home). The increased costs to employees of providing these resources to enable them WFH (where organizations did not provide them) was significant.

However, one misses the support employees need during a pandemic when fear for the health of their loved ones is perhaps uppermost in their minds. The emotional, psychological support was mostly absent. From the organizational standpoint, it seemed to be “if you have a laptop and Internet access you should be able to work from home.”



WHAT HELPED EMPLOYEES WORK PRODUCTIVELY FROM HOME

We asked respondents what helped them work effectively from home. Their answers were varied. We grouped them into: Personal factors, Infrastructure & Resources, and Organizational Support. First, we look at the personal factors.

Personal Factors

The sheer number of responses who referred to personal factors reflects the importance of these factors to working effectively from home. Within these personal factors we can discern 3 sub categories: Personal Effectiveness & Mastery; Physical Work Space; and Support from Spouse & others at Home.

Personal Effectiveness & Mastery

We grouped these factors into four: Mindset, Organization, Self Mastery & Experience.

Mindset: Respondents indicated that a positive outlook in spite of the pandemic helped them work effectively at home during the lockdown. Some wanted to justify the salary they were receiving; another respondent was afraid he would lose his source of income if he did not show he could perform. The fact that they were not stressed (no traffic jams) helped a great deal. They felt rested and had more energy. One respondent said he/she had peace of mind because he/she was at home with the children).

Organization or personal effectiveness skills were perhaps the most cited reasons for working productively from home. Time management; having a planner or workplan, developing a work schedule or To Do List helped a great deal. Some respondents said they learned over time to be effective. Slowly they got into a routine and having a routine helped them work effectively. As two respondents put it:

"the first week was a challenge. But my productivity improved when I stuck to a routine/schedule." "A routine. I woke up early, got dressed, plugged in, worked, shutdown at 5 or 6pm and did it again the next day."

Another respondent developed task sheets for self-pacing. It is important to remember that they were stuck at home, with their families. Those with children of school age (about 50% of the sample) were home schooling online as well as working from home.

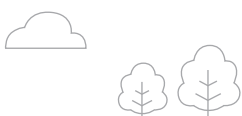
This, together with the fear of infection and possible consequences for the family, was the reality they had to deal with as they worked from home. One respondent commented that it was a course he/she took on Productivity and Time Management that helped him/her to be effective WFH.

Self Mastery. It was not enough to have a routine to be effective, will power and dedication are also necessary for effectiveness. Many organizations did not have a way of monitoring employees on a continuous basis apart from some emails and WhatsApp messages from time to time.

Respondents commented that it was their personal determination to achieve results and keep their jobs that helped them work well at home. One respondent said that "Keeping a deliverables diary and regular meetings with my team" was what helped him work effectively

50%

Those with children of school age (about 50% of the sample) were home schooling online as well as working from home.





from home. Keeping that diary daily required self-discipline. Two respondents commented:

"I made the decision to be productive at home."

"Personal drive to meet set targets and then had to personally spend a lot on data purchased from different service providers. Also ran my generator almost every time the power was gone...if not we for no make am o!"

Experience with WFH also played a role in effectiveness. In one organization for example, employees WFH two days a week:

"Even before the lockdown, my organization practiced a 3-day week so we have always worked from home 2 days in a week. We were all prepared."

These employees were used to this and could just plug and play.

Physical Space

Another personal factor was physical space. Those respondents who had a study room or could set up a workspace or office in their homes worked more productively. One respondent noted that it was important to demarcate the office from the sitting room. Respondents who had some experience with WFH had an office in their homes and it was easy to work.

However, while the lockdown required adults who had jobs to work from home, children were also attending classes online. Adequate workspaces were therefore scarce and not always available in the home. In this situation, everyone managed what they could find.

Support from Home

The last personal factor that accounted for effectiveness of WFH was support from the home front. It is important to note that 59% of our sample are married, and 50% have children of school age. A number of respondents said that support from wife or husband or other family member was one of the reasons why they could work effectively from home.

The fact that other members of the family were also working from home helped; even children were attending classes online some hours a day. The fact that there was no panic from the family (in spite of the pandemic) helped one respondent focus and work effectively from home.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

The need to equip employees to WFH cannot be overstated. Respondents said that a laptop, power supply and access to the Internet enabled them WFH. Although access to the Internet and power supply were unstable and often unreliable, without this access they would not have been able to WFH. One respondent commented that she/he did not work productively from home but tried his best.

The challenge of stable electricity was a major factor:

"Not really productively but I tried my best because electricity is another factor. ... Getting to provide fuel to generate power and all the rest can be stressful too."

Organizations also provided access to applications which enabled communication: meetings, messaging, etc.

59%

It is important to note that 59% of our sample are married, and 50% have children of school age.





ORGANIZATIONAL / MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Apart from personal factors, this was the most cited reason for working effectively from home. Respondents said that support from their organization enabled them work effectively from home. In most cases, the organization provided the infrastructure and resources that employees needed to work from home. We have grouped their comments into three: Setting Clear Objectives, Information/Communication, and Support from HR & Colleagues.

Setting Clear Objectives

Some respondents noted that having clear deliverables or targets as one reason they were effective. Clear targets enabled them focus. One respondent developed task sheets to track his performance and ensure deadlines were met. Clear expectations made follow up easier and enabled task achievement. However, not every organization set clear goals. One respondent said that because most departments were unable to develop smart goals, employees were told to go on leave!

Information/Communication

Another enabler of WFH was communication. Some managers set up weekly meetings to provide information and coordinate the team's activities. In some teams, there were "scheduled meetings with team members where everyone presented an update on their tasks." In one case, an accountability group was set up and team members reported daily achievement of goals to the group. Some managers checked in on team members via calls, emails and WhatsApp messages.

In some organizations, information was available on the cloud so members of staff could access the information they needed to do their jobs. Organizations that were not WFH-ready were not able to provide all the information employees needed to achieve their targets while working from home. In these organizations, information had not been digitized and employees found themselves unable to do their work effectively because they lacked access to their physical files in the office. A few of them had worked from home in the past but always had the opportunity to go to the office if they needed some files. The lockdown made it impossible to do so.

Support from Management and Colleagues

The support from management was in form of provision of infrastructure and resources as well as training on time management, use of communication applications, etc. A few of the respondents mentioned checking in by their managers to find out how they were coping. A few

Organizations that were not WFH-ready were not able to provide all the information employees needed to achieve their targets while working from home.





respondents also acknowledged receiving their salaries early at the beginning of the lockdown to enable them stock up.

While colleagues were seen by some respondents as a source of distraction and of delays some of the time, (delays in getting feedback from colleagues was mentioned as a challenge to WFH), other respondents saw communication with colleagues as critical to the achievement of objectives and thus to effectively WFH.

During the lockdown and WFH, respondents related with colleagues via chat, email and phone. One respondent acknowledged that *“Connecting with other colleagues at work makes work easily and faster.”* In the absence of a WFH policy that outlines response times to emails and other requests from colleagues, having *“All colleagues always online means everyone can be reached.”*

This helped in getting things done. For one respondent what helped him/her be effective WFH was *“the support of colleagues who were themselves eager to get things going online and remotely.”* Another said: *“the availability of colleagues online for real time response”* was important.

Some respondents missed this availability and response time:

“Accessibility of all staff and colleagues needed to contribute to the completion of the task”

“Faster response from colleagues is required.”

In summary: respondents highlighted personal factors, support from the organization and colleagues and resources and infrastructure as the factors that helped them work effectively from home. A large majority mentioned personal factors: mindset, personal effectiveness skills, self mastery and previous experience with WFH as facilitators of effectiveness. In the next section, we compare these results with the advantages of working from the office.

In the absence of a WFH policy that outlines response times to emails and other requests from colleagues, having “All colleagues always online means everyone can be reached”





ADVANTAGES OF WORKING FROM THE OFFICE

We asked respondents the advantages of working from the office. We wanted them to compare WFH with working from the office in terms of their relative advantages. We have grouped their responses into; Infrastructure & Physical Environment, Organizational Support, Social Aspect of Work, Work vs. Personal Life, Productivity and Cultural Issues.

Infrastructure & Physical Environment

For many years, the office has been the place where work is done. Only in the last decade or two, has WFH gained some traction. Organizations typically provide office space and infrastructure needed to work in the office and they bear the burden of doing so. Electricity, Internet Service, communication equipment and software, tools, documents, support, etc. are usually made available to members of staff. As one respondent put it:

“An office is a space where all available resources for me to get my job done is available.”

The challenges of constant electricity in Nigeria make the office a very attractive place to work. Many employees live in houses which are significantly less comfortable. After a very hot night with little sleep, employees look forward to going to the office to the air-conditioned environment and in a few cases, a good lunch provided by the office.

Organizations provide a physical space for their employees to work. On the first day at work, the new employee is shown his/her work station. Desktop screens, printers, ergonomically friendly chairs and tables are provided to enable employees work effectively. Even the temperature of the office is regulated. Some effort is made to ensure concentration level is high and there are few distractions. The physical environment is one of the advantages respondents mentioned regarding working from the office.

This is especially important in Lagos where electricity supply is still unstable and families (that can afford it) run generators most days. 70 respondents mentioned a stable Internet as an advantage of working from the office. 40 respondents mentioned power supply as an advantage of working from the office. The cost of diesel or fuel to run generators is an additional cost which companies bear.

One would expect employees to want to work in the office where electricity is always available. In some organizations, senior managers are provided generators in their homes and the company bears the cost of its purchase and maintenance. Thus, while middle level managers

The challenges of constant electricity in Nigeria make the office a very attractive place to work. Many employees live in houses which are significantly less comfortable.





and those in the lower rungs of the organizational hierarchy may look forward to going to the office to enjoy a cool environment, senior managers may not have the need to do so as their homes can be as comfortable as the office environment if not more so. Thus, the level in the organizational structure may affect an employee's preference for WFH or from the office.

Organizational Support

Some respondents commented that working from the office makes supervision easier and provides easy access to experts. There is a structure and as one respondent put it:

"Deadlines set are easily monitored and followed up".

According to one supervisor:

"my subordinates are more available, and accountable; I can provide better coaching and training for my subordinates."

Another supervisor commented that working from the office makes tracking of colleagues who owe deliverables easy. One respondent highlighted the ease of working across departments and coordination with the rest of the team in terms of work schedule. According to one team member:

"Being together with team members sparks a level of collaboration and creativity that is hard to achieve remotely. There appears to be less accountability for work when done remotely."

No doubt it is easier for managers to work from the office: it seems to be their natural habitat.

Easy access to colleagues was mentioned by several respondents as an advantage of working from the office. 17% of respondents mentioned easy access to colleagues, bonding with colleagues, interaction and collaboration as some of the advantages of working from the office. Several comments by respondents illustrate this:

"You can communicate directly with colleagues in the office. If a colleague refuses to pick up the phone there is hardly anything you can do [working from home]."

"You may get issues resolved faster by walking to the desk of a colleague"

"It is easy to bounce off ideas with colleagues, discuss issues and find solutions together on the go."

Social Aspect of the Work

Respondents reported that bonding with colleagues, social connections and human interactions are advantages of working from the office. There is a social aspect to work which is very important especially in a non-individualist culture like Nigeria's. One respondent said what he missed most working from home was:

17%

of respondents mentioned easy access to colleagues, bonding with colleagues, interaction and collaboration as some of the advantages of working from the office.





“Talking to people, to team members in real life.”

Employees appreciate and miss the networking opportunities, bonding and human interaction that working in the office provides. Several respondents commented on this aspect of working from the office:

“I have made many friends at work across various departments by bumping into them in meetings or at lunch. Hard to do that while at home. Your corporate social circle is restricted to people you knew before the lockdown.”

“Face time accelerates collaboration in diverse teams.”

“There are more opportunities to shadow seniors and learn from them and more opportunities to support and mentor juniors.”

“Via work collaboration tools, it is hard to feel people’s emotions etc. and this reduces empathy.”

Work vs. Personal Life

Respondents commented that it is easier to distinguish work from personal life working from the office. For many respondents, while they worked from home, work hours were extended. Bosses called their subordinates even during the weekend. The office encroached more and more into employees’ personal lives. As one respondent put it: WFH “it seems bosses expect you to be on call 24/7”. A few respondents said they logged in at a particular time and logged off at 5pm or 6pm. It is possible that the latter’s organization has policies on WFH.

Respondents like to separate work from family. Leaving home for the office and coming back made that separation possible for some. They would like clear boundaries between work and personal life. This may be even more important for Millennials and Generation Z. The findings of research on Millennials in Nigeria suggests that they want to have a personal life: time for hobbies and other interests (Ovadje, 2015). Whether they work from home or from the office, they are not ready to spend their lives at work as they parents do.

Productivity

Very few respondents mentioned higher productivity as one of the advantages of working from the office. 5 of them said targets are clearer when working from the office. One respondent mentioned that he/she was more relaxed working from the office and could deliver his/her work more easily. On the other hand, two respondents did not see any advantages from working from the office. One respondent summarized the advantages of working from the office:

“Complete and comfortable work space, uninterrupted air conditioning, ease of communication with co-workers, access to physical records that had to be left in the office,

The lockdown showed that work can be done from home and that it is ok to work from home.





ability to work with greater intensity and be more productive.”

Cultural Dimension

Before the lockdown, there was a cultural belief that work was done in the office. Those who occasionally worked from home had to explain themselves to family members (spouses included) who believe that one is giving bad example to the children by WFH. Many years ago, a large American multinational tried to implement WFH policies in its offices in Nigeria.

Many years ago, a large American multinational tried to implement WFH policies in its offices in Nigeria. They set up employees to work from home; they provided them not only desktops but also generators and modems. They encountered some resistance from the employees. One latter said they had problems explaining to their spouses why they were not going to work. One male employee said his wife told him it was bad example for their children to see their father at home on a work day!

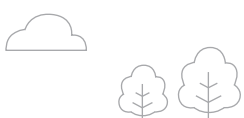
The lockdown showed that work can be done from home and that it is ok to work from home. It challenged the cultural belief that if you have a job, you go to the office to do that job. Two respondents put it succinctly:

“I see more of [a] cultural issue here. People believe that when you come to the office then the work is done.”

“There is just the sense of being employed.”

In summary: WFH presents many advantages especially savings in commute time. This has implications for stress reduction, work family balance, productivity, etc. We have also seen that working from the office presents a number of advantages including access to infrastructure, interaction with colleagues, separation of work and personal life, etc.

We have seen that a large majority of our sample would like to WFH sometimes. The new normal (post Covid 19) is likely to be a combination of working from home and the office.





CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS²

This study fills a gap in the literature on the Future of Work in Nigeria. The lockdown following the Covid 19 pandemic forced organizations to WFH. This investigation was carried out to assess employee experience with this relatively new phenomenon and their preferences regarding WFH going forward. We carried out an online survey during the lockdown in Lagos. We asked respondents closed and open-ended questions to better understand the challenges and advantages of WFH.

The study provides data for decision making by senior executives of organizations (private and public) drawing on the lessons from the lockdown. The need for data for decision making cannot be overemphasized. Yet organizations often fly blind or rely on the results of studies carried out in other contexts (usually western countries). These results may not be generalizable to the Nigerian environment.

We found that an overwhelming majority of Lagosians would like to WFH sometimes. As many as 52% of our sample expressed a desire to WFH twice a week. The main reason why WFH is so popular is the savings in commute time. Lagosians worked from home for about 6 weeks before the lockdown was eased. Even after the easing of the lockdown, many continue to work from home some days a week. We found in this study that in spite of the uncertainty around Covid 19, the distractions in their home at the time (everybody was home 24/7), and the lack of preparedness (the lockdown took many organizations by surprise), many respondents were able to WFH productively.

Savings of 4 to 6 hours commute time (traffic jam) daily improved respondents' health; they felt rested, more creative and productive. They were also able to take care of their families. They had more time each day. What helped them work productively from home was personal effectiveness and organizational support. The experience from the organization's perspective (though anecdotal) suggests that employees were productive working from home. It seems therefore, that post Covid 19, the new normal is likely to be a combination of working from home and from the office.

If WFH is going to be part of the new normal, what can organizations do to support managers

The challenges of constant electricity in Nigeria make the office a very attractive place to work. Many employees live in houses which are significantly less comfortable.

²We acknowledge the assistance of Stephen Ovadje in writing this section of the Report





and employees adequately so they can work productively from home? Can all employees WFH? What do employees need to be fully equipped to WFH? Does the organization have a policy for working remotely or from home? What should be included in this policy? What are the legal implications of WFH? How should remote workers be managed? What training do managers need to manage remote workers effectively? How do we structure remote work? How do we get employees engaged and manage employee experiences in this new normal? These are the key questions the C-Suite should find answers to as it prepares for a post Covid 19 world. First, organizations have to develop a WFH Policy or if they have such a policy, to review it in the light of the experience during the lockdown.

WFH Policy

The policy should define who qualifies to WFH. The lockdown can be considered an experiment on WFH. Those employees who were productive working from home during the lockdown are probably the most qualified. Employees who have demonstrated they can organize themselves, are responsive to communication and take ownership are more likely to work from home effectively. Such employees also use work tools effectively. Human Resource Directors could use this data to come up with requirements for working from home.

Not all jobs are amenable to WFH. It is important to identify the jobs which are not amenable to remote work. For example, it may be difficult to supervise call centre staff working from home. Frontline jobs are difficult to translate into a virtual environment and employees on the factory floor can hardly WFH. The policy should define which jobs qualify for WFH and which do not.

Another decision to be made is how often employees may WFH. Should it be as needed (e.g. if the employee has a doctor's appointment, then he or she can WFH)? How many days a week? Or will WFH be compulsory for employees doing jobs which can be done at home?

Answers to the following pertinent questions must be found: Which tools and infrastructure are needed to work effectively from home? Who should provide them – the organization or the employee? Or both? What are the work hours? Will there be strict check in and cut off times or will some flexibility be allowed?

A procedure for working from home should be developed. This could include guidelines regarding response time to emails, instant messages, etc. In a few organizations, it is 2hours maximum to respond to instant messages and 24hours to respond to emails. This communicates to all that for urgent messages, instant messaging is preferred and the software to enable this is provided. Employees who are WFH will endeavor to be logged in and respond to messages as required.

Finally, the WFH policy could be part of the business continuity plan of the organization. The experience during the lockdown and slow easing of the lockdown is invaluable for drawing up this policy.

The WFH Policy could be part of the business continuity plan of the organization. The experience during the lockdown is invaluable for drawing up this policy.





Setting up Employees to WFH

Perhaps because the lockdown took many organizations by surprise, employees were told to WFH without any preparation. This study points to the importance of ensuring employees are set up to work productively from home. This will involve providing the tools and resources they need, clarifying performance targets, training and establishing communication channels to ensure they are connected to their colleagues and clients.

Tools and Resources

One of the first things HR Directors think about when preparing employees to WFH is the tools and resources they need to work productively. This is not surprising, when a new employee reports to work on the first day, he or she is shown his or her office, the desk, work tools, is introduced to colleagues, etc. This should be the same for WFH especially if employees are expected to WFH for a significant period of time.

Organizations will need to invest in the tools required to WFH – buy or finance their purchase by employees. If employees work productively from home, the organization should be willing to share the economic gains or benefits with the employee. On the other hand, it could be argued that employees save on transportation costs by WFH so they should be willing to share this benefit with the organization. The bottom line is that the organization is not doing worse than when work was done in the office. Some agreement must be reached regarding who should pay for the furniture, desktop or laptop, Internet access, etc.

Where a large majority of employees WFH, the organization saves on office space and it should therefore be willing to bear the cost of setting up an office in each employee's home. Stable Internet access, and uninterrupted power supply are necessary tools which organizations cannot assume are available since they are not always available. They may be a need to buy a generator or an inverter, provide fuel/diesel allowance or simply encourage employees to work from a library or coffee shop with reliable and fast Internet access close to their homes.

Employees need a proper desk and chair to work from home especially if they are going to be working from home often. Dining chairs and arm chairs are inadequate to work for so many hours a day. Since employees are unlikely to spend their money on ergonomic furniture, the organization may want to consider equipping their offices at home fully. Even though this may appear to be an additional cost, it could reduce medical costs resulting from back aches (a result of not sitting properly for many hours). Alternatively, a minimum requirement to apply to WFH could be a fully equipped office at home.

Setting Performance Targets

An important aspect of setting up employees to WFH is clarifying performance goals or targets. Managing from the office is easier for managers compared with managing remote workers as managers monitor employees informally and follow up on assignments when they

“An important aspect of setting up employees to WFH is clarifying performance goals or targets.”





work from the office. The risk of employees getting caught up in what McChesney et al (2013) call the whirlwind is higher with WFH. Urgent tasks (the whirlwind) often obfuscate the overarching goals. If the whirlwind is a major challenge in organizations, when work is done remotely it is even more of a challenge. It is essential that an execution plan is put in place that enables the organization achieve its overarching goals in the midst of the whirlwind

According to McChesney et al (2013), this requires setting specific and measurable goals and measuring leading indicators of these goals and holding team members accountable for results. Clear goals and deliverables are even more important for WFH and managers need to get comfortable with managing team members WFH. Employees should have a well-equipped office at home to work from and clear targets to achieve within a time frame.

Communication & Coordination

In addition to an office at home and clear targets, a good communication system is indispensable for working productively from home. Team members need to work collaboratively on projects and tasks. Feedback sessions and meetings need to be organized. Without good communication, WFH cannot possibly work. Team members must be available to provide explanations, suggestions, etc. that other team members need to facilitate their work. Besides, employees working from home need access to information usually in office files to get the job done. To ensure employees have access to information it is important to digitize information and automate processes otherwise WFH cannot be productive.

Messaging, video conferencing tools, and other communication technologies make it possible for team members to collaborate across dispersed geographical areas. They are key to WFH. In choosing a communication system, it is important to ask if the system can handle all employees WFH or if it is scalable. During the lockdown some organizations found their system could not handle all employees and it was not scalable. It is also important to identify the messaging tool that works best for the organization.

Guidelines should be set on response time to emails, WhatsApp messages, Instant messaging, etc. The rationale behind this should be explained to all employees. Online chats should not be about work only. Some slack is needed for employees to talk about football games, and other current issues (like the water cooler or lunch time chats). They are not a waste of time; they constitute an important aspect of work as they fulfill a social need.

Training

Training is an important aspect of preparing employees to work productively from home. Just as the human resource department organizes induction programmes to prepare employees to work from the office, a programme should be put together to train employees in a number of areas which this study found to be important for working productively from home. First, is training on personal effectiveness skills and self mastery.

These skills are necessary for WFH. Employees must learn to manage their time, develop a





routine and work productively. This requires a certain level of maturity, accountability and commitment. Skills, tools and the mindset of the remote worker can be communicated in these training programmes.

Employees also need training on the use of communication tools, the guidelines for responding to messages and emails, etc. Nothing should be taken for granted: communication is essential for efficiency.

Finally, training in performance management is of vital importance. Employees who work from home need a result focus which does not require face time. How can they deliver on their commitments while working from home? Which feedback mechanisms exist? How do they manage their own performance working from home? It is their performance that will speak for them as they are not available in the office and are thus somewhat shielded from the office politics.

Managing remote workers

WFH is new in our environment and managers need some guidance and training on how to manage in this new world. Employees in this study complained of micromanagement during the lockdown. It seemed that managers did not trust employees to do the work and it was difficult for employees to get them off their backs. If targets are not smart it becomes difficult for managers to know what to reasonably expect employees to deliver.

Managers need training on how to manage remote employees. One reason the latter want to WFH is the flexibility in the schedule and to get away from the distractions in the office and from their micromanaging bosses! Managers are probably apprehensive about what performance management looks like in a virtual environment. They are used to face time, but the new world requires a focus on deliverables and not face time. Before, managers received instant feedback; they simply walked across the corridor to get feedback from a direct report. Managers have to develop new feedback mechanisms in the new world.

Performance Management training is important and more urgent than ever before. Managers need to develop skill at setting performance targets especially for employees working from home. They need to set deliverables and time lines and then let employees do what they have to do and not micro manage them. In the office environment, it was easier for a manager to follow through and avoid surprises. With WFH, follow up has to be more formalized. Projects may need to be split into sizeable chunks and timelines and check-ins agreed. If follow up is not formalized the manager may lose track and the final product may be poor.

“Employees who work from home need a result focus which does not require face time.”

Scheduled Follow up Meetings

Regular meetings are required to resolve issues, share experiences, collaborate and increase productivity. The timing and length of these meetings is important as employees need time for implementation. Some respondents complained of long meetings that were not productive and





ate into implementation time!

Follow up is important for accountability and for results. Accountability meetings should be regular and frequent. McChesney et al (2013) recommend weekly meetings of 20 to 30 minutes during which each team member gives an account of what he or she did in the last week to achieve the goals and what her contribution will be this week to move the lever.

Supporting Remote Employees

We found in this study that employees want to separate personal and work life. They want organizations to be respectful of their personal life and keep to the work hours when WFH. Longer and unpredictable work hours are not productive. Those employees (usually the best) with options will leave. The WFH Policy should set the boundaries: show up before a particular time and check-in again in the evening, or allow some flexibility.

Organizational support of employees should include mental, financial and technical support. Simply paying salaries on the due date was appreciated by employees during the lockdown. Daily check-ins can be instituted to ensure employees feel supported.

Social Interaction with colleagues should be encouraged. One organization organized a family party over Zoom. Employees logged in with their spouses and children. This was much appreciated as there was entertainment for the children, it was restful and employees could interact informally.

Cultural Dimension

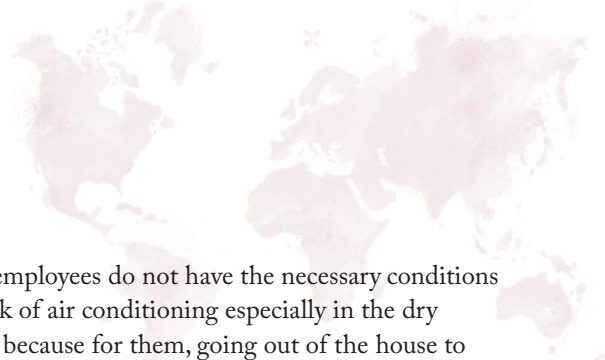
Finally, it is important to note that there is a cultural dimension to working from home. Before the lockdown, it was difficult to explain to family members and friends that one was working from home. Some mothers felt it gave bad example to children to see their Dad working from home. Many people felt work was done in the office and home was for other things (although sometimes additional work was done at home).

The lockdown challenged this as everyone worked or schooled from home. Perhaps it is easier now to explain that one is working from home. However, human resource department should check and make it easy for employees to work from home perhaps by helping set up the office at home.

Other Implications

It is important for organizations to consider the legal issues involved especially if WFH is going to be the new normal in the organization. Does the employment contract provide for WFH? How protected are employees and the organization in this new world? The legal and human resources departments should work together to ensure employees and the organization are adequately protected.





There may be a need for personalization. Some employees do not have the necessary conditions to work productively from home (workspace, lack of air conditioning especially in the dry season, etc.). Some others do not want to WFH because for them, going out of the house to work is very important. They want to separate work from personal life and the physical separation is important to them.

Individual preferences and needs on the one hand, and the organizations needs on the other hand must be understood and effort made to harmonize them. Forcing all employees to WFH after the lockdown may not be productive; even if only 2% of employees want to work from the office, senior managers should consider whether or not this is possible and where it is not, communicate with the employees who prefer to work from the office.

WFH is new in Nigeria, it is important to continue to track employee expectations and experience with remote work. This means organizations have to learn as they go. Policies and practices should be tested and modified over time. The experience is novel, it will take time to fully understand all its implications.

The results of this study suggest that WFH should be part of the operational model of the organization post Covid 19. The most significant advantage of WFH is savings in commute time. For this and other reasons, a majority of respondents would like to work from home twice a week. Post COVID 19, organizations cannot return to business as usual. At the end it is about productivity. Lagos is a poorly connected megacity.

Commute times are long; some respondents spent as much as 6 hours commuting to and from work daily. If many organizations implement WFH policies, there is likely to be a huge uptake among employees. If this happens, the demand for transportation and access to roads in Lagos will reduce. This will help decongest the roads such that those who have to commute will enjoy shorter commute times. WFH is one way to reduce commute times as it reduces demand for commute.

One question remains to be answered: are the results of this study generalizable across Nigeria? This study was carried out in Lagos: a megacity with poor connectivity. Commuting to and from work therefore, presents major challenges to workers. Commute times are extremely long and the demand for roads and means of transportation far exceeds the supply. The results of this study may not be generalizable to other cities with different characteristics.

“The results of this study suggest that WFH should be part of the operational model of the organization post Covid 19. WFH is one way to reduce commute times as it reduces the demand for commute.”

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