

Remote Office Management: A Study on Preparation and System Development for Developing Country

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Abstract: Most of the changes such as ammunition's development, border security, national security agencies, some emerging institutions (UN, World Bank, IMF, etc.) in the world were established after Second World War (WW2). Likewise, after the crisis of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) there will be some changes in the world such as office management, learning system, organizational operations, and so on. This research concentrates on preparation and the requisite technologies or access facilities to manage official works remotely in general or during any outbreak or natural disaster. Many organizations may conduct their operations remotely by ensuring technologies towards the office, employees, and customer premises during any outbreak over the developed country or region. The developing countries are always aback from the developed countries in all respects. During the COVID-19, developed countries faced a lot of issues to conduct the offices remotely where developing countries were incapable of control. Through some initiatives, the organizations can conduct their offices from remote to continue organizational operations in developing countries. To do so, the organizations must develop their office management system to execute a specific task along with the access facilities to contact the office from anywhere in the world in general or for any special reason.

Keywords: Outbreak, Office, Remotely, Technology, Access, System

1. Introduction

A decade earlier, an employee who would like to work from home was considered a bad one within the organization and it was very rare to find. But now it is "the new normal" [2]. Some network experts worked remotely to configure any network devices such as a router, switch, etc. through access facilities during the network expansion since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Later on, freelancing had made the first revolution and created variation in remote work. The lockdown for the outbreak of COVID-19 teaches us a new lesson and creates new demand for remote work.

Remote work is a working style that allows professionals to work outside of a traditional office environment. It is based on the concept that work does not need to be done in a specific place to be executed successfully [1]. That is, a professional will work from home or any other suitable place to achieve an organizational goal(s) designing a work

schedule per day and it may be part-time or full-time based on the organization's demand.

There are some technological requisites for making the organization congenial for remote work. First, a secured communication system between office, and employee and it may be a wired or wireless system. Second, available devices at both ends for interaction such as server and client with specific software for work. Third, ensure a possible way to real-time communication with the office and employees. Finally, a time management system will be established for the physical office and remote employees.

The technological infrastructures of the developed countries are more updated than the developing countries. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), more than 26 million Americans (about 16% of the total workforce) now work remotely at least part of the time. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of U.S. employees who telecommute increased by 115%. Those workers tend to be

older, more educated, full-time, and nonunion [4]. As a developing country, Bangladesh has been introduced to remote work recently during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. But a lot of remote workers or employees are working since the last decade for different countries all over the world, those who are called freelancers. According to the Oxford Internet Institute (OII), Bangladesh has already become the second-largest supplier of online labor or remote labor. To get a global market for digital outsourcing, the digitalization of a country's economy not only drives innovation in its service industry but also fuels domestic job opportunities and enables faster economic growth. In the quest to lower costs and risks, many large corporations in developed nations like the US, UK, and Australia are turning to IT outsourcing from developing countries including Bangladesh [7]. Bangladesh is providing its services to other countries but most of the local offices are not ready for remote work yet. Though no one was ready for remote work, yet during the novel coronavirus disease, 2019 outbreak many organizations including educational institutions tried to work remotely as per organizational or governmental demand.

Businesses that were late to the jump to e-commerce have found themselves facing obsolescence. Just look at the legendary Nokia corporation which once dominated the mobile phone and cellular industry in the 1990s for a lesson about seeing the opportunity and shutting the metaphorical door right in its face. Today, Nokia is a near non-factor in the global cellular and mobile phone industries. They refused to accept innovation when it came to user experience and what users wanted. They were change-averse and, as a result, lost everything. Remote working isn't just the future; it's already here. Millions of employees are already working from home on a part-time or full-time basis [6]. So the developing countries should change their office management system following the developed countries based on technological up-gradation.

2. Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are;

- 1) To analyze preparation and system development for remote office management.
- 2) To show some benefits of remote work for both employer and employee.
- 3) To illustrate the overall scenario of different organizations during the lockdown for the COVID-19 outbreak in Bangladesh as a developing country.

3. Related Literature

Some related literature has been illustrated in this part of the study those are given below;

Foster (2020) illustrated that many companies are successful as 100% remote teams and it's still not a common company structure. They have found three important ingredients to making remote work successful; (a) Team is

the most important ingredient and not everyone can work well in a remote environment and not everyone can manage a remote team. So, it's important to assemble a team that's capable of executing in a remote environment; (b) Tools or software is needed to synchronize the whole team (office and employees) to make the remote work environment. In a remote team, the right tools are badly needed to make sure everyone stays on the same track or page and can continue to execute without a physical person standing next to them; and (c) Process is the third ingredient for a powerful remote team that provides structure and direction for getting things done. It is more about providing a feedback loop so that you can measure progress for both the company and the people in the company [9].

Airtasker surveyed 1,004 full-time employees where 505 of them were remote employees throughout the U.S. about their work habits and productivity. The results indicate that remote workers are more productive than their office-based counterparts. The study found that (a) remote employees work an additional 1.4 more days per month than in-office employees, which is nearly 17 additional workdays a year. (b) remote employees take longer breaks on average than office employees (22 minutes versus 18 minutes, respectively), but they work an additional 10 minutes a day. (c) office workers are unproductive for an average of 37 minutes a day, not including lunch or breaks, whereas remote employees are unproductive for only 27 minutes. (d) 15% of remote workers said their boss distracted them from work, which is less than the 22% of office-based employees who said the same thing that reported Peek [3].

Liang (2020) reported in BBC news that millions of Chinese employees were working from home for the first time, as the nation tackles COVID-19. Though most of the Chinese people were not habituated to remote work, since 3 February 2020, when local governments and companies across the nation encouraged workers to stay at home, millions of Chinese had experienced the pros and cons of the home office for the first time. It was not clear exactly what proportion of the workforce was allowed to telecommute before COVID-19 emerged. There were varies based on the organization and variations make it difficult for remote work in some organizations. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Chinese workers use (or are allowed to use) home working considerably less than the US worker. Nevertheless, the organizations and the employees are trying to make it easier to control and work remotely [8].

Neeley (2020) states in the Harvard Business Review site that, there are more than 10,000 books in the English language on websites on virtuality and how to lead remotely or at a distance. Because this is very difficult to do, and managers have to actively work on it. Productivity does not have to go down at all. It can be maintained, even enhanced, because commutes and office distractions are gone. Of course, the employees might be at home with their partner or kids, and those issues will need to be worked out. Another problem might occur for employees to resolve problems quickly when they can't meet with colleagues or other

persons to discuss, in real-time. That might create delays. But other than that, it is not seen that productivity is going down. There's robust evidence showing that it shouldn't change [5].

Google and Facebook announced for their employees to work for the office from home or remotely. During COVID-19, Google chief executive Sundar Pichai said that employees who need to return to the office will start being able to do so from July with enhanced safety measures in place and the employees who can carry out their jobs from home will be able to do so until the end of the year 2020 that has extended up to July 2021 [21]. The social media platform was among the first tech firms to ask its employees to begin working remotely. The Facebook authority announced that anyone who can do their work remotely can choose to do so through the end of the year 2020. Facebook gave employees \$1,000 (£807) bonuses for their work-from-home and childcare costs that stated by BBC New Services [20].

Kennedy (2021) mentions in her report that people enjoy getting together in a preferable place for the meeting but the COVID-19 pandemic forced many companies to give virtual meetings a serious and sustained try. Gradually people are getting comfortable with the technology and have started realizing that with good planning and organizing, online meetings can be effective. Even they can build community virtually. Virtual meetings or communication can save money, time, and carbon pollution [22].

4. The Methodology of the Study

This research is based on only secondary data and required secondary data that have been collected from the internet, newspapers, magazines, articles, and so on. The data collection had been started since mid-March, 2020 based on the pandemic COVID-19 crisis, and as a developing country, Bangladesh has been considered for this research paper. American English has been used for this research and the collected secondary data are analyzed in a descriptive method.

Limitations: There were no field surveys or practical tests or implementation in any organization(s) for this research study. So the discussion part of the study has been illustrated based on others' information and the current scenario of the world.

5. Discussion of the Study

Many employers or organizations believe that the workforce will be easier for a person from home where there is no manager for his or her to report directly and they may hire the employees from around the world as their requirement. Remote work is a working environment that will not require a traditional place to work. An employee will be allowed to work for the organization from anywhere in the world at a specific time or 24/7 in any special circumstances. The assigned task may be on a contract or hourly basis or like a desk job (within a time frame) but from outside of the traditional office. According to APA, telework or remote

work can improve employee productivity, creativity, and morale with satisfaction when it will be implemented correctly [4].

Procedure to Work Remotely: There are various ways to work remotely that an employee can choose. For example, an employee may work from his or her home or any other flexible places and may come to the office once a week or twice a month for the physical meeting or any training session; or an employee may be hired for a specific project such as software development or architectural or fashion design, etc. who will work from remote and no need to come physically where both types of employee will get remuneration through any reliable e-payments. There will be a contract between employer and employee along with the code of conduct.

Benefits of Remote Work for Employees: Remote work doesn't mean that an employee will work only from home. It means an employee will contribute his or her ability or responsibility for single or multiple or branches of the offices from any flexible places like home, personal office, or cafeteria. Some benefits of remote work for the employees are mentioned below;

Cost savings – Employees will be able to save costs of fuel, food, car, or bike maintenance when they will work remotely. To maintain a physical office, employees who are availing cars or bikes have a minimum cost for maintenance along with fuel consumption. They also have an additional cost for food or snacks from outside. But a remote office management system may reduce all of these costs.

Time savings – Traffic jams or natural disasters may increase commute time for an employee. But remote working facilities may save it in many respects.

Flexibility in life – The most obvious reason why people want to work remotely is because it offers them a more flexible lifestyle [1]. Home maintenance and relations with family members may make a happy life. Sharing and caring within a family and children may build a better bonding and leadership for the next generation.

Mental and physical health – To reach an office at just the right time is a mental pressure for a worker and mental stress is a barrier for productivity or better output that also affects physical health to perform. Distraction supervision by the management may create mental pressure for an employee. But remote working management may reduce such types of mental or psychological stresses along with physical health.

Productivity – Productivity does not have to go down at all. It can be maintained, even enhanced, because commutes and office distractions are gone. Of course, you might be at home with your partner or kids, and those issues will need to be worked out [18]. That is the performance of the worker will be increased for remote working facilities.

Benefits of Remote Work for Employers: Employers may get a lot of benefits from applying remote office management systems for performing official tasks. The benefits of remote work for employers may include;

Cost savings – Many organizations bear full or partial costs of food, accommodation, transportation, and many more

facilities for their employees. Staffing costs are also increased with those employment facilities. These costs affect the total expenses and profit of the organizations where remote office management can reduce their cost mostly and the organization can gain more.

Time Savings –Remote office management not only saves the time of employees but also saves the time of the employers or entrepreneurs to solve any critical issues or attaining in a meeting. Throwing an email or message management can arrange a meeting within a short time connected by any suitable electronic media. Virtual presence in work stations saves the commute time of employers too.

Productivity– Since individual productivity is not affected for remote work rather enhanced. So, overall productivity of the organizations will be increased through the implementation of a systematic remote office management system.

Hiring employees from anywhere – Organizations may hire an employee from anywhere in the world. It may save money to hire the employee from the developing or under-developing country offering less salary. Applying multi tests the organizations may hire high-level employees from various corners of the world to ensure the best outputs.

Physical office space and decoration cost savings –Remote office management will reduce physical office space, decoration, and maintenance costs such as electricity, gas, water, and so on for the employer or entrepreneur of the organization. Either own or rental, physical office space and its decoration may cause the expense of a million-dollar which may be invested elsewhere. Office maintenance costs will also be decreased for the organization that will maximize the profit.

Environment Savings – Through the implementation of remote working facilities an organization can be contributed to saving the environment. That is, employees and employers will use their personal or official vehicles less and carbon emissions will also be less. Private transport is one of the world's biggest sources of greenhouse gases, with carbon emissions rising every year [19].

Preparation for remote work management: To manage the operation remotely, the organization has to ensure that all employees have got full secured access to operate their own task from anywhere. Some initiatives have to take to facilitate the organization for remote operation, like (a) get the right setup for office and remote employee, (b) make sure the device such as laptop or notebook for the employee to connect with the office, (c) confirm the software that will synchronize the devices of employees with office and the employee will be able to make a conference or contact properly; (d) provide training to the employee for introducing the software and regarding teamwork or responsibilities, (e) instructions guideline will be provided for the remote worker to manage the day by a disciplinary way and keep a scheduled time for work if needed, and (f) performance evaluation must be needed for every remote employee after a certain period.

System development procedure – Human is the most important element for a business and a manager will have to be supportive to control the team for conducting remote

work. Technology is the mainstream to synchronize the human and the devices achieving the organizational goal(s) through physical or remote work. The first requisite thing is high-speed secured internet that will connect the devices of the office as well as employees. To develop the office system, the organization must be ensured;

- a) *Mobile or Fixed Device:* The organization must provide a fixed device like desktop or mobile devices such as a laptop or smartphone with high-speed internet for remote work from home or any other suitable place. An employee or a worker will be able to work from home or cafeteria or on travel through using his or her internet enabled devices like laptops or smartphones according to organizational instructions.
- b) *Cyber Security:* To protect against cyber-attacks or malicious hacking cyber security is needed to develop the office management system for making a better work platform. Cyber security is the art of protecting networks, devices, and data from unauthorized access or criminal use and the practice of ensuring confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information [13]. These cyber-attacks are usually aimed at accessing, changing, or destroying sensitive information; extorting money from users; or interrupting normal business processes [14]. With the rise of remote working and the growing reliance on public internet connections for access to various cloud platforms and virtual environments, there has been a corresponding rise in the threat of cyber-attacks and malicious hacking. Office environments can be secured with a lock and key or hermetically sealed networks by using multi-factor authentication (MFA), virtual private network (VPN), real-time security monitoring, cyber security software, and so on [6]. Many firms provide real-time performance analytics monitoring to track their network's performance and keep it constantly updated on anything it should be aware of. On the infrastructure management side, it needs software to manage network layer firewalls, routers, switches, load balancers, and other network security devices [10].
- c) *Collaboration and Communication Tools:* Virtual collaboration and communication tools are the heart of remote work. The organization will maintain some software for internal collaboration and communication with the office to ensure real-time services from remote employees, team leaders, managers, or employers. This software will help a team or a group to accomplish a common organizational goal(s). There are some useful features like a calendar, the ability to upload documents, send notifications by e-mail and other updates and it removes the gap between employees due to far-away locations, and runs effective meetings online. These tools ensure that employees work together at the same time on the same platform helping to run projects faster and improve communication between employees [15].
- d) *Work Management Tools:* Work management software is a digital tool that allows you to plan, track, organize,

and review both projects and non-project tasks to improve your business results and team performance [16]. Right tools are badly needed to manage and coordinate the whole team for specific tasks remotely. Work management tools will be a breeze in between the physical office and remote employees that will create the working environment. It is newer than project management tools and has some differences.

- e) **Employee Engagement Tools:** The organization will have to use some tools to engage and track the employees for getting better output from the remote worker. In most time tracking systems, users log in to the software, select a project, select a task, and click Start [12]. This system will help to engage the employee and to make payroll for the remote employees based on their working hours. A lot of time tracking tools are available with updated features like mobile GPS tracking for a remote worker [11].
- f) **Performance Evaluation Tools:** It's true that every employee must perform for the organization and the performance level is not equal for all. The performance of the employees including remote workers should be evaluated through some tools that the human resources unit of the organization will make sure for the promotion or warning or training for the employees. The employee performance appraisal process is crucial for organizations to boost employee productivity and improve their outcomes [17]. Yet, a lot of software are available based on the organizational goals or objectives to evaluate the performance of the employees though they are working remotely. The organization will choose the tools as its requirement for measuring employee performance.

This preparation and system development of the office is not only for any outbreak it will be helpful for the organization round the year. Except for some organizations such as hospitals, financial institutions, courts, food processing sectors, etc., most organizations will be able to operate full or partial organizational functions through remote working facilities. The organization needs to provide training for the remote employees or workers to get better output of the specific production.

The general scenario of Bangladesh during COVID-19 outbreak: Most of all organizations were closed during the lockdown in Bangladesh for the novel coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak for more than two months continuously. Then gradually the organizations were opened with the concern of the government. Many organizations have had the opportunity to conduct their offices from remote but they were not able to do so due to inadequate technological infrastructure and skilled employees. Even many educational institutions also faced the same problem.

Primary and secondary school classes were conducted on government television channels during COVID-19 outbreak after June 2020 but higher secondary schools or twelve standard or colleges were suspended their classes for more than six months. English medium schools conducted their

classes through online along with some private universities. Later on the public and private universities started to conduct their classes remotely.

Many employees went to their organizations to get salaries during lockdown [23]. In developing and under-developing countries, organizations disburse salaries to their workers by hand mostly. For that reason, thousands of people gathered to get their unpaid salaries in front of the organization. Cashless transactions may reduce communicable diseases. A simple bank account or m-banking facility could solve the issue. If the organizations take initiative to open a bank or mobile bank account they will be able to overcome this problem and will not face the same issue in future crises.

Panic purchases made the shopping places crowded more after the announcement of any special issues or lockdown. Ethical transactions of online shopping platforms may reduce pressure on panic purchases. In developing or under-developing countries, structured and secured online buying and selling systems are most important to avoid the crowd in the shopping centers or hat and bazaar that will be helpful to avoid communicable diseases. Distribution channels of online markets should also spread out over the country including rural areas.

Limitations

There are some limitations to conduct office remotely. To conduct the office from city or urban areas is possible but from the rural areas, it's near about impossible due to lack of 3G or 4G network coverage. There are some organizations, such as hospitals, legal departments that will not be able to do their work remotely except for some administrative work.

Acronyms

Some acronyms have been used in this study those are given below;

- AI – Artificial Intelligence
- APA – American Psychological Association
- BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation
- BLS – Bureau of Labor Statistics
- COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease 2019
- IMF – International Monetary Fund
- IT – Information Technology
- MFA – Multi-Factor Authentication
- OII – Oxford Internet Institute
- UK – United Kingdom
- UN – United Nations
- US – United States
- VPN – Virtual Private Network
- WW2 – Second World War

6. Conclusion

The future works will be dominated by robots, AI programs, and other technological devices that will take humans' places in the organization. All the hubbubs have

been started in many industries along with industry 4.0 and the future workforce will be dominated by remote work that is increasing dynamically with time. To prepare and develop the office management system for remote work, the organization must ensure a security system. With modern technologies like access control, real-time performance analytics monitoring, and cloud-based systems, the office can be more secure than ever [10]. Developed countries have started remote work in many organizations and are trying to increase the numbers. Some developing countries are coping with those changes with the demand of time. But Bangladesh is surviving with the challenges of the changes and trying to overcome them. Researchers believe that preparation and system development for remote office management may reduce such situations in future and remote work facilities can make some benefits for both employers and employees over the country. Notable that, contact or assigned tasks need not be supervised always and are easy to control remotely. Before implementation of the remote work strategy over the developing countries some related research studies are required based on technological infrastructure and response of the workers or employees.

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