



TO BE, OR NOT TO BE, REMOTE?

EXAMINING ESSENTIAL FACTORS NEEDED FOR ONGOING REMOTE WORK SUCCESS

Research Presentation by:

Dr. Kate Cassidy

& Mackenzie Rockbrune

Dept. of Communication, Popular Culture & Film

Panelists:

Mishka Balsom, President & CEO of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce

Dolores Fabiano, Executive Director, South Niagara Chambers of Commerce

Laurie Ryan-Hill, Human Resources Director, Mainstream

Stacy Terry, Executive Director, Distress Centre of Niagara

Followed by a panel discussion with a Q & A session

The Challenge of a Remote Work Plan

- 1 in 3 Canadians were working from home at the start of the pandemic (3X those who worked remotely in 2016)
- over 70,000 Niagara workers were working remotely during the pandemic (author estimated)
- 80% per cent of new remote workers would like to perform at least 50% of their hours remotely once the pandemic is over
- 30% + Ontario businesses anticipate some remote work to continue
- 30-40% Canadian jobs can be regularly performed away from a specific location

(Statistics Canada, 2021)

The Inquiry

Relevance: Pivoting quickly during an emergency is one thing; building a remote work strategy for the long term is quite another.

Objectives: learn more about benefits and challenges, and how to organize conversations around building a long-term plan that maximizes benefits and minimizes drawbacks

Question: What is the meaning of remote work success ?

Focus:

- **Documents:** policy, research and best-practice literature
- **Individuals:** 14 executives, 13 interns, in-depth interviews, written responses
- **24 Organizations:** from multiple sectors and including non-profits (Business services, technology, arts & entertainment, retail, government & public administration, education, social services, & health care)

Framework & Methodology: group communication theory, hermeneutic phenomenology, interpretive

Benefits and Challenges



- As productive, ALSO saves time, more autonomy and flexibility, potential cost savings, less stress and greater job satisfaction
- productivity -> longer hours
- flexibility -> hard to disconnect
- autonomy -> lack of connection with co-workers, affect training & advancement

Findings: 7 Considerations

- Fit
- Tasks
- Communication
- Relations
- Organizational Culture
- Tools
- Support

Discussion & Conclusion

- Although there is a lot out there on the benefits of remote work, success depends on the right fit.
- Digital tools and managerial style should support, not drive, remote decisions.
- Remote work can have a tendency to be task-focused. Over the long-term work success is centered in human connection (so deliberate attention to relationships, communication, and organizational culture is needed).
- The 7 interdependent factors: Fit, Tasks, Communication, Relations, Organizational Culture, Tools, & Support provide an organizing framework to support dialogue and structure a work plan.
- Implementing remote work is not a one-time effort. Success requires deliberate plans, ongoing adjustment, and continuous conversation.

Questions?: Dr. Kate Cassidy kcassidy@brocku.ca & Mackenzie Rockbrune



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