



How Managers can motivate their teams during work from home

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Abstract

This research paper helps understand how Real Estate Managers are handling the effects of work from home within the sector and motivating their teams. As Real Estate sector grapples with Covid-19 crisis, employees are experiencing tremendous grief, loss, and anxiety. For managers this is both a challenge and an opportunity to rebuild motivation levels of their teams. During this tough time of a pandemic, the employees need more support from the leadership. Amongst juggling work, monitoring kids, worrying about job security & COVID-19 risk for their families, this is a unique opportunity for leader to step in & look for their team beyond the business.

Keywords: Employee Motivation, Real Estate, Work from Home, Covid-19.

Introduction

When Covid-19, first emerged, the entire world went into a state of frenzy. The sudden workplace shifts to online mode took a toll on employee productivity and wellbeing. The entire cycle of adaptation while continually affected by pandemic related news overwhelmed employees worldwide. In this research paper, different industry experts view is taken to understand how organizational leaders are connecting with their

employees. It is hard to keep the employees engaged during a crisis, let alone via virtual mediums. During these times, managers need to invest time in understanding what motivates their team and then look for opportunities to align that with the work that needs to be done. With the work from home model, managers have a great responsibility to shape their team culture and behavior.

Literature Review

As per (David Honigmann, 2020), with the pandemic, Managers are struggling to keep up the motivation levels of their teams while achieving the organizational goals. This crisis made the organization leaders strengthen their relations with the employees amongst a myriad of human emotions of grief & loss. However, this time is also an opportunity to overcome mental and emotional health which is often overlooked in workplace. For many employees, organization leaders are a source of stability and trust. However, the experiences will be varied for different organizations. Some will be struggling in business; some will need to remodel their business strategies while some are thriving due to new demand. This research will try to provide a comprehensive overview of how the communication should be during such frantic situations. According to (Saad, 2018) employees cannot fully get involved in their tasks unless they have a positive attitude towards it. This attitude not only adds to the economic value of the organization but also increases the personal skillset of the employees. For any enterprise or organization to be fully productive, the employees must be motivated. (Saad, 2018) points out that the democratic leadership style where employees get a chance to voice their views and opinions in the company decision making process are more preferred. Another important factor is competition amongst the team members which makes them strive for better work quality. As per Ms. Seema Rani B.N et al. (2020) effective time management is key during and after Covid-19 to increase employee productivity and motivation. Work from home is the business model many organizations are considering adopting even after the pandemic subsides. Employee productivity increases when employee well-being is taken care of. As per this research, almost 60% of the participants had a positive experience in working from home. However certain issues such as longer screen time, household chores were challenges. Also, the isolation, travel restrictions, news on ongoing crisis affected the mental health of the employees. Self-motivation, leadership by setting examples, knowledge sharing is considered chief contributing factors to increasing the productivity of employees. (Ms. Seema Rani B.N, 2020)

Employee motivation has been a challenge for all managers from all sectors, now more than ever. According to (Ganta, 2014), managers or leaders need to understand their employees well to be able to apply different tactics to motivate them based on their needs and desires. Different individuals react to different forms of motivation: some extrinsic such as incentives, salary hike, bonus and some intrinsic such as personal learning and growth. (Ganta, 2014) points out that managers not only need to be well versed in economics, finance and strategy but also understand the employee psychology and behavior to be able to motivate and maneuver them towards achieving organizational goals.

As per Christian Wiradendi Wolor et al. (2020) systematic work shifts, or phase wise working can also be allowed. This can be done while maintaining proper safety protocols with ample provision of masks, disinfectants, and personal safety equipment. (Christian Wiradendi Wolor, 2020). As per (Vaibhav Gujral, 2020) value of Real estate assets has fallen 25% in most sectors. Covid-19 impacted the way Real Estate managers communicate with their teams. With the employees not able to meet buyers and sellers in person, managers are having a tough time positioning themselves in real estate transactions.

Employees are having a tough time during this Covid-19 induced work from home phase. Just a motivational e-mail will not make the cut. WFH comes with its own set of issues: juggling professional and personal work, worrying about job security, keeping up with family's health.

Real Estate managers while keeping the business afloat during this economic crisis must also make employees feel motivated as their productivity impacts profits (Clark, 2020). As per (Kevin M. Fitzpatrick, 2020) nearly half of American adults reported anxiety and depression after pandemic. (Deloitte, 2021) reminds us of the importance of employee well-being and they will perform their best in organizations where this is adopted at the individual, team and organizational level. According to (Goleman, 1995) there are two versions of motivation, one is extrinsic and the other intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation (Roland Benabou, 2003) means external rewards for outcomes or to avoid punishment while Intrinsic motivation (Jobo, 2020) revolves around personal behavior that people find rewarding. This work from home model has pushed many employees to the external motivation mode while (Frankl, 2020) suggests reflecting on what really matters. (Brody, 2020) suggests Covid-19 motivation might mean breaking down big goals for teams into small goals which can be

achieved easily but not boring enough to easily abandon. Managers (Ganta, 2014) need to understand their team’s needs and motivate them based on that.

Research Methodology

A questionnaire survey of 9 questions were prepared on Google forms and floated to collect opinions on parameters that could affect the research findings. A total of 102 participants filled up the questionnaire.

This survey is taken of working professionals in the Real Estate sector. This survey represents opinions of the Real Estate professionals all over the country and understanding of their working during the pandemic. The survey consists of 9 questions & the aim was to understand the employee perspective during the pandemic induced work from home scenario.

The survey explains the psychological and emotional effects of work from home for employees.

Results

1. **Work from home satisfaction levels:** In terms of work satisfaction while working from home 45.1% were somewhat satisfied with 24.5% fully satisfied with their current work from home arrangement. This means most of the employees are happy & satisfied with the work from home policy.

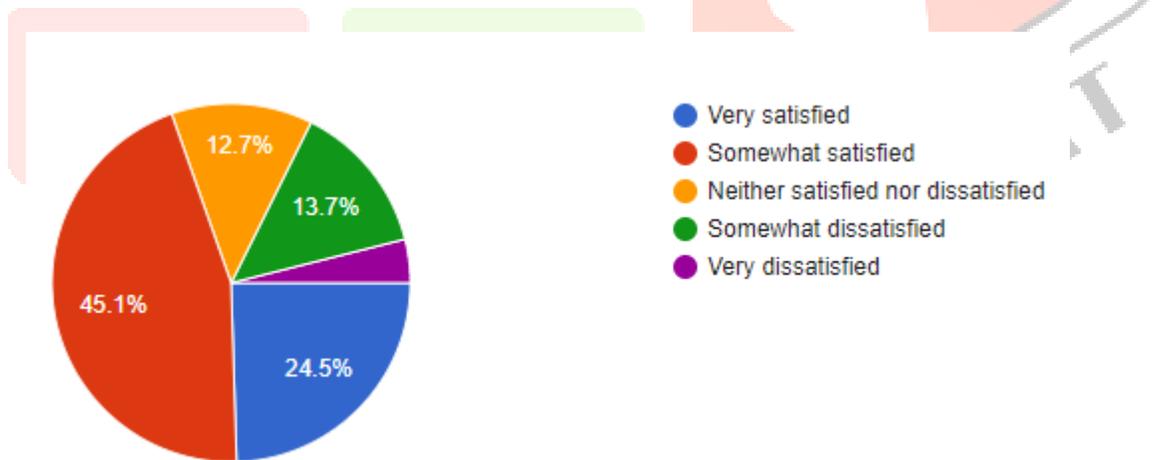


Figure 1 Home Arrangement Satisfaction Source: Primary Survey

2. **Biggest Challenges:** Despite the perks of remote working, there are several challenges that arise from working from home. The three major challenges while work from according to the respondents are: too many distractions (59%), hard to communicate with colleagues (49%) and their inability of a dedicated workplace (44.1%). Meanwhile keeping a dedicated routine, internet connectivity, general anxiety levels etc. are amongst the other challenges.

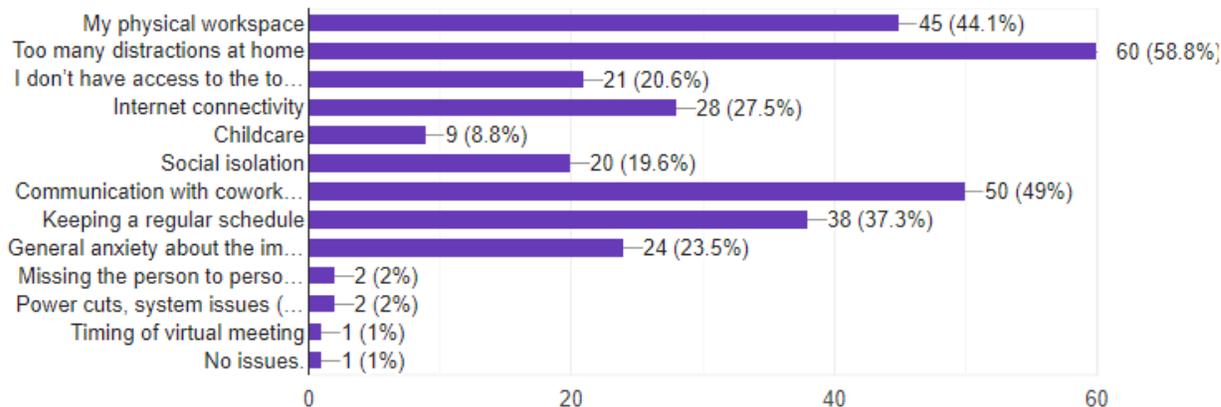


Figure 2 WFH Challenges Source: Primary Survey

- 3. **Support:** 37.3% of the respondents felt very supported by their managers whenever they needed them. 33.3% felt somewhat supported. A good support system is particularly important during crisis times.

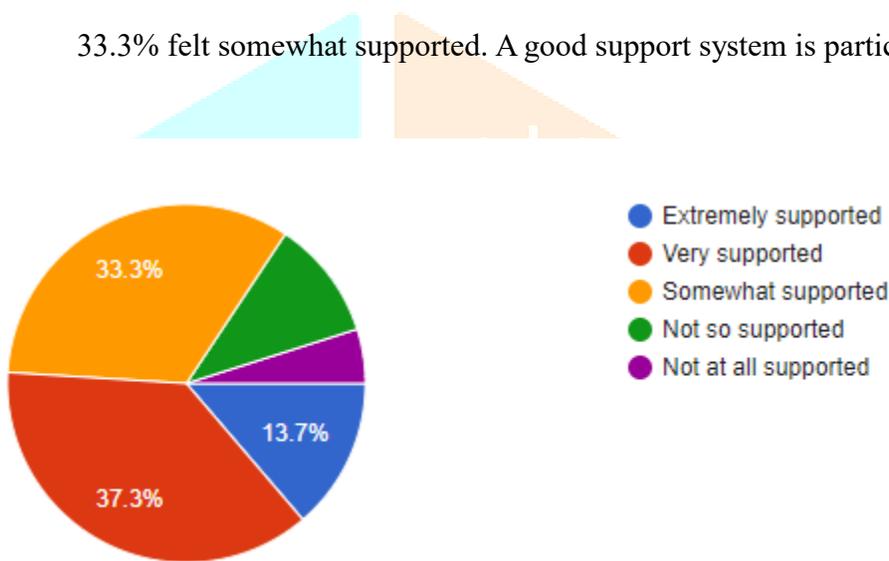
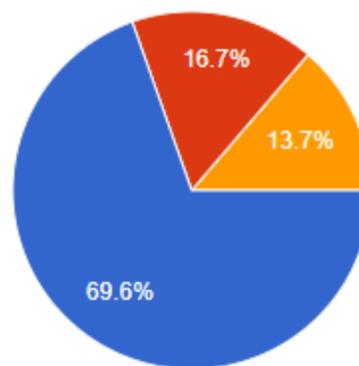


Figure 3 Manager Support Source: Primary Survey



- 4. **Communication:** A total of 69.6% of the respondents had adequate communication with their managers during this work from home scenario.

5. **Collaboration:** 45.1% had a neutral positioning on collaboration with their team members. 35.3% believed they were collaborating well.

Figure 4 Communication during WFH Source: Primary Survey

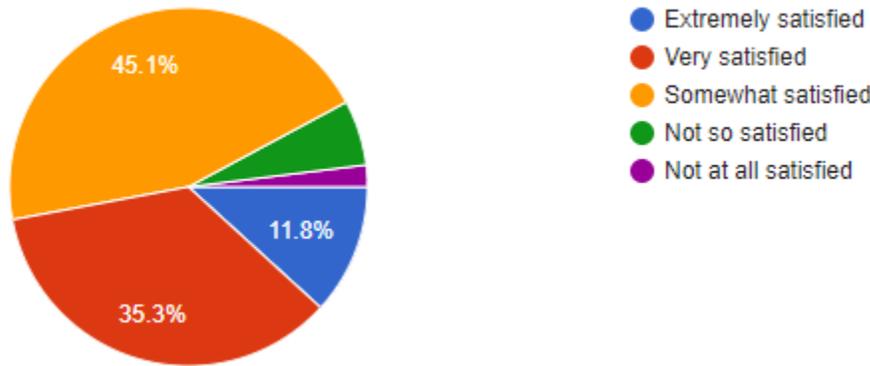


Figure 5 Collaboration Source: Primary Survey

6. **Motivation:** 44.1% of the participants felt well motivated by their managers while 33.3% felt somewhat motivated.

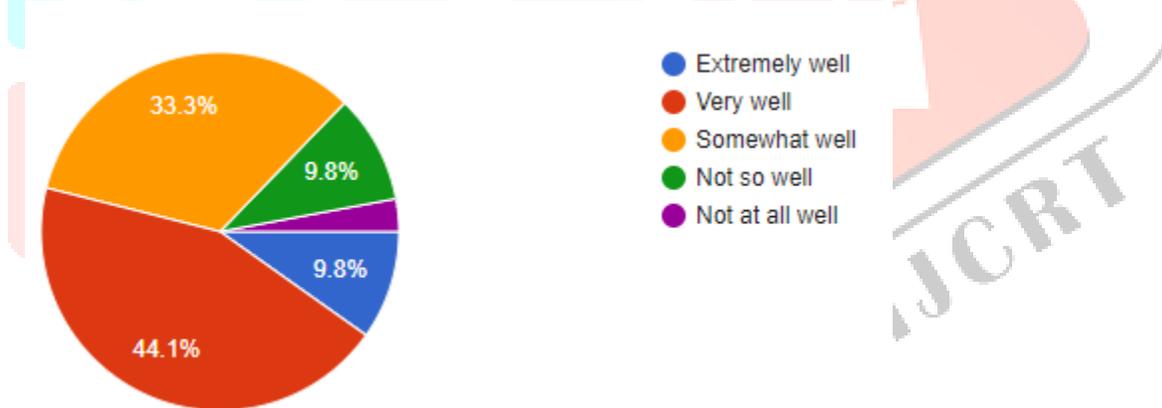


Figure 6 Motivation Source: Primary Survey

7. **Decision Making:** Moving from an office set-up to a home set-up is a tremendous disruption especially for decision making. However, 59.8% of the participants had a positive outlook towards appropriate amount of information for them to make correct decisions while working from home.

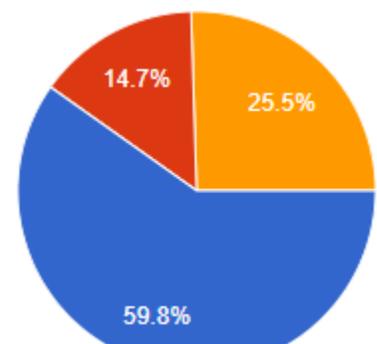


Figure 7 Amount of information while WFH Source: Primary Survey

8. **Mental Health:** 38.2% expressed they had good mental health during this time while 24.5% felt happier during this transition time due to be able to spend more time with families.

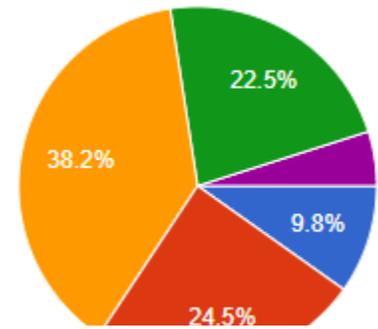


Figure 8 Mental health during WFH Source: Primary Survey

9. **Well-being:** Healthy & happy employees more motivated & productive. 43.1% gives credit to their managers for taking care of their well-being while 36.3% had a neutral standing on the same.

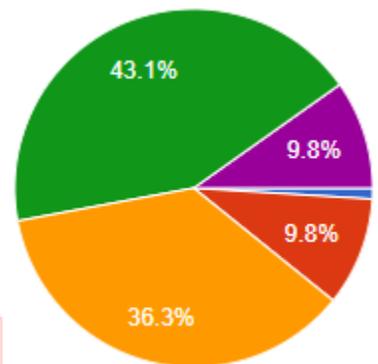
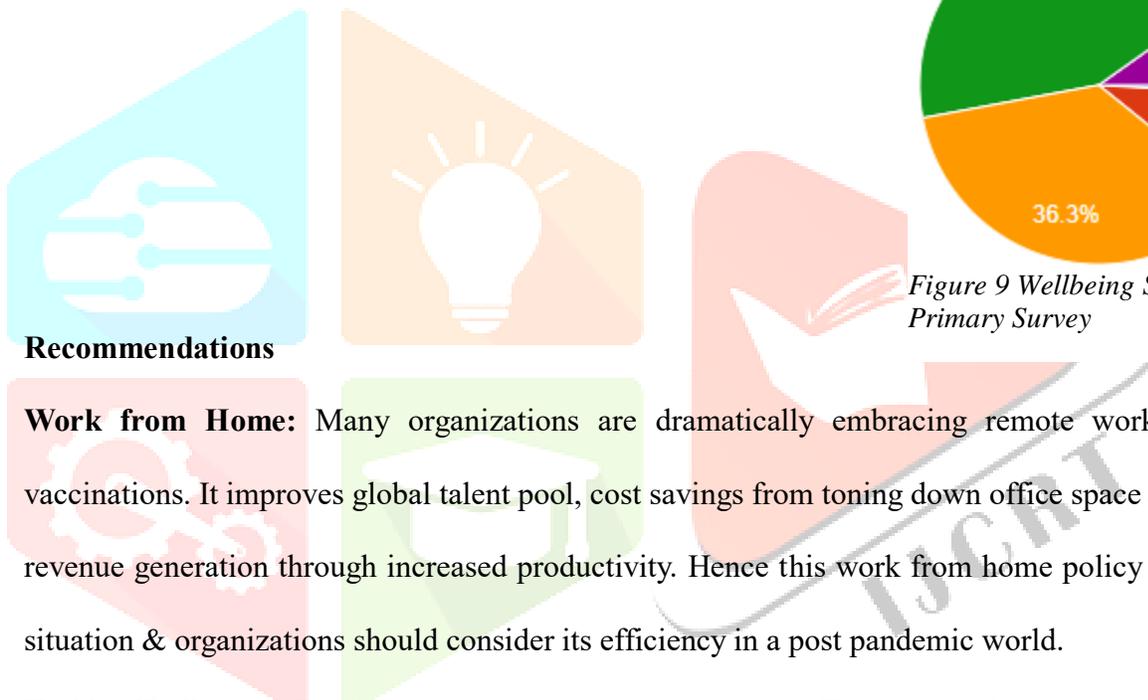


Figure 9 Wellbeing Source: Primary Survey



Recommendations

1. **Work from Home:** Many organizations are dramatically embracing remote work even after vaccinations. It improves global talent pool, cost savings from toning down office space & enhancing revenue generation through increased productivity. Hence this work from home policy is a win-win situation & organizations should consider its efficiency in a post pandemic world.
2. **Tackle Challenges:** Productivity is another major concern. This can be kept in check by setting smaller goals for each days & focusing on achieving the targets. Remote collaboration is amongst the major challenge & this can be handled by usage of various collaboration tools. Distractions are another productivity killer, & a dedicated workstation or corner, in the home where after the day’s target is achieved should be encouraged to leave the zone. This takes care of the real-world distractions during work time & also keeps the anxiety levels of employees on check.
3. **Support System:** People always remember how you make them feel. During & after this hard time of an ongoing pandemic, the employees will remember how their managers made them feel. Everyone is affected by Covid-19, & the business leader must step up and lead others through this transition.

Weekly check-in calls to build trust, maintaining consistent communication & being flexible with employee virtual check-in times will help in creating the right company culture.

4. **Communication:** Communicating virtually is tough especially with the absence of body language & facial cues, the best of intentions might be misinterpreted. However, majority of the survey results has directed towards adequate communication during the work from home tenure. Additionally, managers can communicate better by thinking before sending any work email, being positive, being available for any clarification & listening closely to avoid mixed messages.
5. **Collaboration:** Collaborating remotely has been a challenge for employees which is evident even in the survey results. Some of the ways to face this challenge are getting everyone on the same page with short- & long-term goals defined, setting expectations of who oversees what work & by when this needs to be delivered & maintaining tools to track this, being transparent so that any hidden information does not impede collaboration & finally holding team meetings frequently to catch up on professional & personal front.
6. **Motivation:** (Ackah, 2014) shows that mostly individuals feel unmotivated due to lack of appreciation or recognition. During this tough time of a pandemic, the employees need motivation from leaders perhaps more than ever. Managers need to genuinely demonstrate recognition & appreciation frequently, be visible & approachable, communicate transparently which would help employees to understand their roles & the current situation of the organization.
7. **Decision Making:** Remote teams can successfully use tools to keep track of the information which can be shared amongst them. More direct communication also helps with a feedback loop which aids in decision making all while making the team members feel included.
8. **Mental Health:** As per the survey, mostly expressed good mental health levels. However, at time long working periods start to affect our mental health levels. This can be combated by creating specific routines separating work & personal time, having a dedicated work area from where you entirely unplug after a day's work i.e., taking a digital detox after work hours & try getting exercise or going outside at least once a day.

9. Well-Being: Remote working can affect wellbeing in two ways, induce loneliness & isolation & burnout. But by taking simple steps, the managers can support the well-being of the employees. Some of which are establishing work time boundaries, communicating regularly, setting good examples themselves, creating small breaks in between & setting realistic goals.

Conclusion

The managers must understand that the world is not normal currently and they need to adjust accordingly. Even a positive micro-level action would have a positive impact on the employees. Managers especially in real estate needs attention to detail, constant communication and transparency to keep their teams focused and motivated. Leaders throughout the Real Estate industry have to do more than taking strategic decisions to keep the company afloat during this economic crisis. They need to create an environment in which the employees feel supported & motivated. Happy employees will yield positive impact on the company's bottom line.

Limitations

This research is only based on review of literature available to help provide recommendations for Real Estate companies. Future research requires broader techniques through quantitative methods to increase the knowledge.

Also, with the second wave of Covid-19 virus many companies are contemplating on a hybrid model of working post vaccination drive. In this case there needs to be further in-depth research required to understand how to keep motivating people in the longer run.

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