



The Truth Behind 3 Common Remote Work Misconceptions

Understanding the truth behind common remote work misconceptions equates to organizational success. To learn more about the myths, read our ebook today!



Introduction

In February 2013, Marissa Mayer, president, and CEO of Yahoo!, banned company-wide telecommuting because she believed it undermined collaboration and communication.

In a memo sent to employees, Yahoo's then-chief human resources officer, Jackie Reses, wrote: "To become the absolute best place to work, communication and collaboration will be important, so we need to be working side-by-side. Speed and quality are often sacrificed when we work from home. That is why it is critical that we are all present in our offices."

Fast forward almost a decade, when more than half of the American population (58.6 percent—to be specific) are working remotely in some capacity, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no question that this increase is dramatic, compared to 17 percent of U.S. employees who consistently worked from home before the pandemic.

The good news is that today's remote employees are proving both Mayer and Reses wrong—and debunking the commonly-held misbeliefs about remote work. In this ebook, we examine some of these myths and explain why they are neither accurate nor credible.

Myth #1: Remote Workers are Unproductive

For Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook founder and CEO, working from home during the pandemic has been a very positive experience.

In fact, Zuckerberg named the No. 3 richest American by Forbes, decided to offer all full-time employees the ability to work from home.

"We've learned that good work can get done anywhere, and I'm even more optimistic that remote work at scale is possible, particularly as remote video presence and



Working remotely has given me more space for long-term thinking and helped me spend more time with my family, which has made me happier and more productive at work.

Mark Zuckerberg

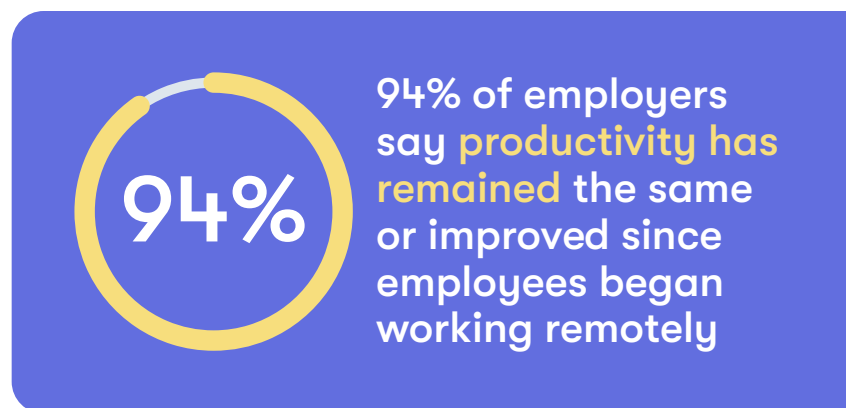
CEO of Facebook

virtual reality continue to improve,” Zuckerberg wrote in a memo to all employees.

And Zuckerberg is not alone. According to FlexJobs, a subscription service for job seekers, numerous companies with remote work programs have reported excellent productivity, with remote employees insisting they are more productive—or as productive—when working at home.

“What is most surprising is that productivity has remained strong amid the worst conditions for working remotely,” explains Brie Weiler Reynolds, FlexJobs career development manager, and coach. “Consider that remote worker during the pandemic have also had to deal with the intense stress of a worldwide global health crisis, and the compounded responsibilities of having children, partners, spouses, or roommates at home, and yet they’ve been able to remain productive—or actually increase their productivity.”

In fact, according to recent [research](#) by Mercer, an HR and workplace benefits consulting firm, 94 percent of today’s employers believe that productivity has remained the same—or improved—since employees began working remotely.



“Historically, there has been a perception in many organizations that if employees were not seen, they weren’t working—or at least not as effectively as they would in the office,” explains Mercer senior consultant Lauren Mason. “And in most cases, this forced experiment around remote working as a result of COVID-19 has shattered those perceptions to prove that most employees can actually be trusted to get their work done from home.”

So, how can working from home contribute to an increase in productivity? There are several possible explanations:

No commute time: When employees work from home, they don’t waste valuable time driving to and from work. While it may take some employees only a few minutes to walk, bike, or drive to the office, many others spend hours sitting in traffic or dealing with public transportation headaches.

When individuals don’t commute, they are able to start working earlier in the day and work later in the evening. In fact, according to an Airtasker [survey](#), on average, remote employees save 8.5 hours each week—or 408 hours a year—by not commuting

to work. And let's not forget that removing challenging commutes also equates to less stressed employees, who are more productive and engaged at work.

Increased exercise: Working from home—without a long commute, water cooler chats, coffee breaks, and daily lunches out on the town—leaves employees more time in the day to exercise. In addition to improving physical/mental health and well-being, regular exercise also helps to relieve stress, depression, and anxiety.

Reduced distractions: Some workers struggle to focus in an office setting, where numerous distractions can become a problem. According to an Ask.com [survey](#), 86 percent of respondents prefer to work alone in order to attain maximum productivity. In addition, 61 percent said that noisy coworkers were a big distraction at work, and 40 percent believed that impromptu meetings tend to create many unnecessary distractions.

Myth #2: Zoom Fatigue is Unavoidable

As COVID-19 spread across the globe in early 2020 and many countries began to lock down, video conferencing platforms (such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom) made remote work possible for millions of employees.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, weekly meeting time has more than doubled—and today's meetings are lasting about 10 minutes longer than they used to, according to Microsoft [research](#). In fact, [45 percent](#) of employees report attending more meetings during the pandemic, compared to when they worked in the office.

As we gradually begin to move into a post-pandemic world, it looks like video conferencing will continue to be a commonly-used communication method. Consequently, we need to understand that Zoom fatigue is avoidable. The key is learning how to best manage the exhaustion that can come from video conferencing technologies, so it doesn't add to the growing problems of workplace burnout.

According to Stanford professor Jeremy Bailenson, founding director of the Stanford Virtual Human Interaction Lab, "Video conferencing is a good thing for remote communication, but just think about the medium – just because you can use video, doesn't mean you have to."

Based on his extensive [research](#), Bailenson insists that this type of fatigue is avoidable. He provides several suggestions for employees and organizations on how to decrease video fatigue:

Understand the effects of intense eye contact: When people participate in in-

person meetings compared to virtual meetings, there is not as much concentrated eye contact because people look at the speaker, as well as at other participants in the room and down at their notes. However, Zoom meetings require a lot more eye contact, which tends to increase social anxiety and intensity—and make participants feel hyper-aroused.

To manage this problem, Bailenson recommends moving away from the full-screen option and reducing the window size. This will not only minimize face size but also reduce some of the intensity experienced by participants.

Understand the effects of constantly staring at yourself: In-person meetings do not involve seeing yourself in a mirror for several hours each day. The problem is that seeing a constant reflection of yourself causes all of us to become overly critical of our appearance. “It’s taxing on us. It’s stressful,” explains Bailenson. “And there’s lots of research showing that there are negative emotional consequences to seeing yourself in a mirror.”

To manage this issue, he recommends using the “hide self-view” button. To access it, right-click your photo once your face is framed in the video.

Understand the effects of being sedentary: Roaming around the room is common when participating in phone conversations and in-person meetings. In fact, [research](#) shows that movement helps boost cognitive performance. As a result, Bailenson recommends that individuals consider placing an external camera away from the computer screen, allowing them to move around the room. Additionally, he suggests periodically turning off the camera to give yourself a “brief nonverbal rest.”

The good news is that while video calls have been exhausting our minds and bodies, there are simple ways to mitigate these effects. Since using video chats as a common communication tool is clearly here to stay, it is imperative that we learn how to adapt in order to alleviate the fatigue that goes along with this form of communication.

Myth #3: It’s Impossible for Remote Workers to Stay Connected and Avoid Burnout

There is no question that it can be challenging to stay engaged as a remote employee. And the long-term impacts of working from your home can



severely affect employee morale and collaboration. But it doesn't need to. There are numerous creative solutions that organizations can implement to keep employees connected to each other and to the organization—in addition to easing the burden of working remotely. Let's take a look.

Consider implementing no-Zoom meeting days for all employees: Instituting company-wide work days without any Zoom meetings, or blocking a morning or afternoon on your calendar with no meetings, can help reduce Zoom fatigue for employees. Be sure to take advantage of this much-needed time away from video calls to complete work projects or to treat yourself to rest from the intensity of being on camera.

Think about developing company-wide stretching, yoga, or meditation classes: Remember the days of walking around your office, catching up with colleagues, and chatting about the hottest Netflix series or exciting sporting events? Many employees



just want to get out of their chairs and move around. Hosting stretching, yoga, or meditation classes is a very good way to not only help people move and stay physically/mentally healthy, but also connect employees to something other than work conversations via their computer monitors.

Develop a company-wide conference series: This series—similar to TED Talks and hosted by both external and internal speakers—should cover a variety of interesting topics for employees, such as health, well-being, and productivity.

Consider sending regular communication from members of the leadership team:

When working remotely, it is common to feel disconnected from the leadership team, since these connections do not happen very often. As a result, consider regular communication between the executive leadership team and employees in the form of emails, calls, or videos.

For example, some organizations hold leadership office hours each month, so employees can virtually meet with leadership and ask any questions they may have. Other organizations send out weekly emails from different members of the leadership team, so employees can hear various leadership perspectives and ideas. These emails can help strengthen numerous connections throughout the organization.

Conclusion

While some organizations are insisting that employees return to the office, researchers at [Ladders](#), a career site for high-paying jobs, believe that remote work is not going anywhere. According to their projections, 25 percent of all professional jobs in North America will be remote by the end of 2022, and remote opportunities will continue to increase. The move to remote work may have been fast and furious during the pandemic, but many organizations are realizing that working from home is actually the future of work.

“This change in working arrangements is impossible to overhype,”

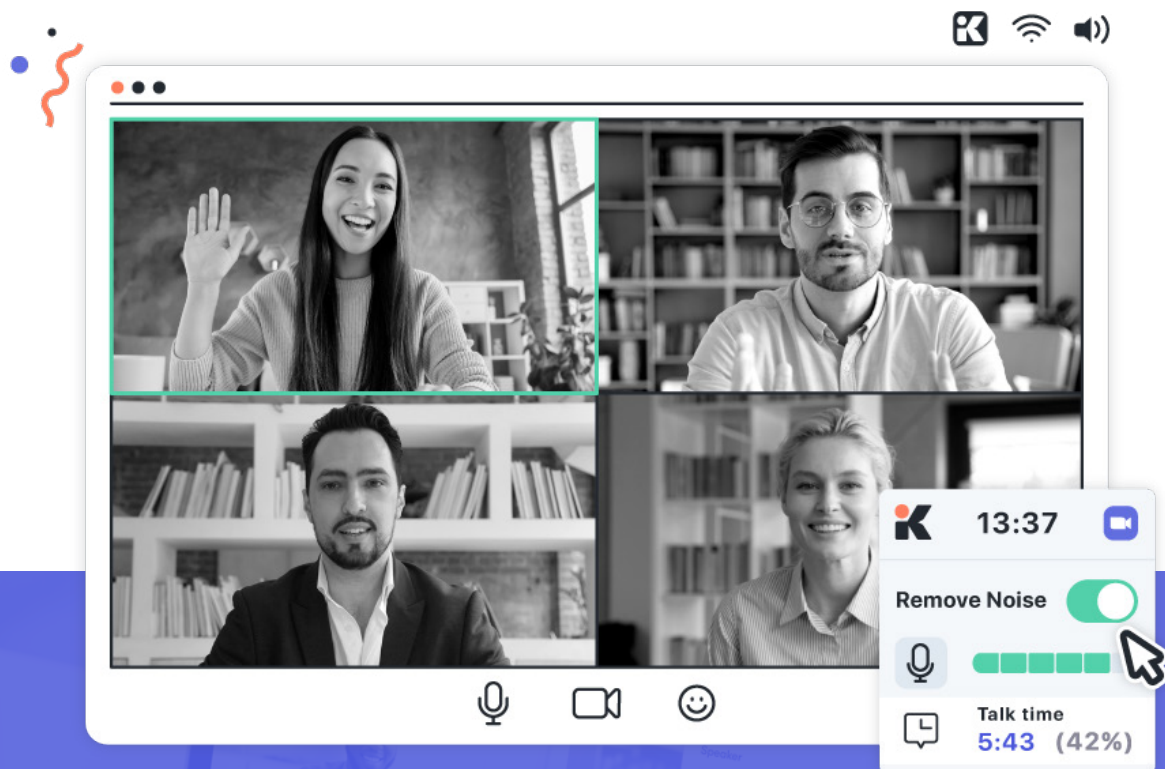
- Marc Cenedella, CEO of Ladders

Marc Cenedella, CEO of Ladders who maintains that what we are currently experiencing is the largest societal change in America since the end of World War II. “As big as it is, it’s even bigger than people think. Hiring practices typically move at a glacial pace, but the pandemic turned up the heat, so we are seeing a rapid flood of change in this space. It’s really rather amazing.”

It’s clear that the “9 to 5, Monday through Friday” working model is dying before our eyes. The reason is quite simple: Remote work benefits employees—as well as companies. After all, remote companies have access to a larger talent pool and are no longer limited to employees located in the immediate geographic area. In addition, there are numerous financial benefits for organizations looking to save money on commercial real estate and the operating costs of an office building. And

remote work benefits the environment because fewer vehicles on the road mean less air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and carbon footprint.

The bottom line is that returning to the pre-pandemic business model is clearly not a reality. Consequently, the only way for organizations to remain strong and resilient is to embrace this new reality. To do this, it is imperative that organizations consider how remote work affects employee productivity, morale, well-being, and the connection between employees and teams—and work to strengthen these aspects of the business. The first step is to debunk the myths that stand in the way of achieving success in our rapidly changing business world.



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