

Virtual Working Environment: How to Manage and What Is the Benefit & Challenges

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Abstract: A virtual work environment or a virtual workplace is a workplace which exists digitally. It does not have a physical presence. It is created and maintained with the help of the internet. A virtual workforce can lower your costs and even increase productivity by keeping your overhead expenses low and allows companies to offer their employees more flexibility and give them more control over their daily schedule. On the flip side of the coin some studies shows that managers are ill-prepared to manage virtual workers and struggle with coordinating remote employees. Recognizing this fact, this article will present some suggestions and state the benefits and challenges that need to be faced in managing and implementing virtual environment in the workplace.

Keywords: Virtual, Working Environment, Virtual Working Environment

1. Introduction

According to [6] advances in technology have led to unprecedented levels of geographically distributed work by linking workers, providing unrestricted access to expertise by location, providing greater flexibility, and reducing costs. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has forced the transition to a virtual workplace for all major companies around the world [13] The virtual working environment, also known as a virtual workplace, is a digitally existent workplace with no physical working area at all, and it was developed and maintained by the internet. According to [10] a virtual working environment is any job environment that does not depend on one physical location and in other words, the virtual working environment is a remote workplace that refers to an individual office that is linked to a business through the internet, such as a remote worker's home. The digital workplace's pace can lead to greater freedom and flexibility by encouraging workers to use digital technology while managing their tasks and communicating independently of time or location [1].

Moreover, companies find that virtual work structures are one alternative they can implement to provide improved flexibility in a rapidly changing current economy [14]. With the growth in technology simultaneously with the economy, most of the company, especially manufacturing companies, adopt the virtual working environment to minimize the operation cost. According to [25],

shortly, most industries start to visualize what the workplace would look like and align in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some business organizations were ready to migrate those forms of work to the virtual workplace to reduce workers' number inside their production facilities. Work from home was not an uncommon development. It has been adopted in this recent decade. The world had to confront the coronavirus that forces people to work from home to decrease the physical distancing among workers as it is the new norm nowadays. Most companies try to reduce their cost to rent a working space by adopting the work from the home method, especially during this pandemic.

2. Discussion

Current and Future trends of Virtual Working Environment

In this recent years, digital transformation has been one of the most debated issues for company administrators and management gurus. Many companies, while recognizing the importance of digital transformation and focusing on this emerging trend, have been reluctant to make changes in transforming the current system, creating possible disruption, and making ongoing transformations [19]. Moreover, virtual working environment already exists in the past few years but it become trending due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

The impact of the virus towards every industry sector contributes towards a new normal for employees from physical working environment towards a virtual working environment [15]. The uses of video confronting are the most chosen among the company to conduct a meeting as they are working virtually. According to [3] during this period, the option to work from home has become of great significance as it enables employees to continue working and thus earn salaries, employers to continue delivering services and profits, and reduces the overall spread of risk infection and the pandemic recessive impacts. Besides, according to [Annie] during early stage of implementing the virtual working among company, employees confronting a hard time to get use towards the new normal however after a few months company management start to realize that it was succeeded.

Moreover, [4] stated that according to a survey done by Enterprise Technology Research (ETR) the percentage of permanent employees working from home is estimated to increase twice in 2021. In the view of this statement, it can conclude that in future company management tend to use a virtual working environment as its worth companies as management able reduce company revenue such as office leases. [22] Thus, the future trends of the virtual working environment can be seen as the huge company such as Google and Facebook had been extending their employees to work form home until in the middle of 2021 [10]. Other than that, the development of Artificial Intelligent (AI) also encourage employees to working in virtual environment as all the task can be done at home. Besides, according to [4] most of the workforce and economic sectors are at the start of a major transformation stimulated by recent developments in machine learning.

3. How To Manage And What Is The Benefit & Challenges

2.1 How to manage the virtual working environment

Employee management is related to leading an employee. It includes directing everyone to work together for the benefit of the whole organization. To help the organization run smoothly, management needs to be planned strategically, the structure of the virtual working procedure, and ensure employees alert and follow the rules.

According to [22] there were five steps to manage the virtual working environment in leading an employee. The first step is to organize and explain the current environment. It was an employer's responsibility to conduct and guide an employer to the new working environment. Leaders must be ready for any probabilities for changes that may affect the organization's business plan, which may influence the working operation of the organization. The second is building a procedure that maintains and increases the team's commitment to the organization's new changes. Managers of remote workers need to establish and retain trust where there is a high risk that team members feel isolated. Having

lower confidence levels can harm their involvement in the community, the company's purpose, and the team's effectiveness.

Third, upgrade communication techniques. To satisfy the communication needs of virtual workers, leaders should be prepared to recognize that communication strategies that might have served well in face-to-face environments need to be changed or strengthened. It is suggested to start with a training plan to help participants understand how shared leadership works and what good team results look like to incorporate shared leadership within a community of virtual employees effectively. Fourth, sharing leadership. It is suggested to start with a training plan to help participants understand how shared leadership works and what good team results look like to incorporate shared leadership within a community of virtual employees effectively. Fifth, perform an audit. Conduct an audit to ensure that the workers are connected with the company's virtual working environment, cultural values, and objective.

2.2 Benefits of the virtual working environment

2.2.1 Flexibility

Time is important in everything that needs the individual energy to complete the task especially Employees can achieve greater flexibility from a virtual working environment, as they are less limited by when and where they were working [24]. People who work in virtual environments show higher satisfaction with greater flexibility and independence [18] Other than that, according to [8] by the virtual working environment or work from home, it becomes more flexible if there could be a situation in a physical workplace when an employee needed to operate from home, such as bad weather conditions, caring for sick family members and medical appointments. Virtual teams manage their schedules fully, making it more flexible to balance personal and working life. A better work-life balance encourages people to work well and less stress. Employees were having a hard time maintaining healthy boundaries between professional and personal lives instead of finding the drive to work from home and remain productive [15]

2.2.2 Improved productivity

Working in the physical workplace means working in a sharing space or team's distractions. While working in virtual environment allows employees to increase the ability to adjust their space, schedule, and working methods. [19]. According to Nick (2020), a survey was run over 50 people regarding where employees felt more productive in work. The result showed that 58.3% felt more productive working from home, while 41.7% are preferred working from the office. A virtual workplace aims to improve productivity, provide transparency, and provide the same persuasive boost that tends to result from working in an office together. Instead of wasting time talking to each other, everyone on the call is committed to dedicating their whole time to work [2]. Using IT or infrastructure for digital work, an employee can only achieve so many flexibilities and productivity benefits before drifting into digital overload or work stress [24].

2.3 Challenges of the virtual working environment

2.3.1 Communication

Communication is an important element in every organization for achieving their goals and keeping related to each other, but their situation intrudes on the communication analysis. During in-person conversations, the expression and body language was excluded during chat messages, texts, and email. It was difficult to interpret things and lead to the wrong interpretation. [8] Leader and team communication are considered an essential element of employee job satisfaction, and a major issue exists for leaders who are insufficient to meet the leadership role expected by a virtual workplace [17]

According to [21] the emergence of new challenges alters how teams communicate. The advancements in technical capabilities that have enabled distance-to-distance communication have encouraged organizations to use virtual teams more frequently. Digital teams, for their daily operations work, rely heavily on communication media. Professional communication styles, such as attempts to understand and respond to teammates, are correlated with good communication. The lack of non-direct and nonverbal communications associated with computer-mediated exchanges, such as body language or even facial expressions, significantly obstructs contact in geographically scattered teams [9]

2.3.2 Leadership

Align with the Covid-19 pandemic situation that encourages people to work in a virtual environment. The manager was the most important person to lead the teams in daily operation. Sometimes the manager could not conduct the teams as they were working in a digital environment. Digital worker job satisfaction may also be influenced by leadership styles, as some leadership styles may be better suited than others to the virtual world [17]. According to [10], without successful virtual teams, the lean concept cannot be passed to the workers. To create consumer satisfaction, teams must function together. Leadership worldwide has a challenge as to how to implement such a big change and with immediate impact [26].

2.3.3 Attitudes

Attitudes must be excellent as a working person is important in committing company. Meanwhile, their certain problem appeared because the workers increased flexibility to match their family responsibilities during working hours. Understanding a worker's attitude towards the place of work can be a significant factor in maintaining new virtual workers and retaining them. There are important personality factors that may affect individual perceptions and attitudes towards virtual workplaces, but other variables may play a role in shaping attitudes [18]. Employees are dedicated by expressing commitment to do whatever it takes to perform the duties of their jobs and create new ideas to make the business even better. Everyone in the organization gains profits when dedicated individuals work together as a team towards the business's objectives [12].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, align with technologies emergence virtual working environment was a new culture for the organization structured. Every company must ready for the changing working culture as it ensures the improvement and increasing the company profitability. As mentioned previously, this virtual workplace was given benefits towards company such as flexibility and improved productivity. These benefits help the company to produce more high-performance workers in their company. As the unstructured virtual work becomes common issues, the company must decide what the factors that required for an individual worker to be effective in a virtual work environment were. Other than that company also need to prepare and give training to individuals for virtual work. [7] Due to this Covid-19 pandemic, a most organization in Malaysia adopt this virtual working environment in order to follow the government orders to encourage people to work from home to reduce the social contact at physical workplace.

In my opinion, the virtual working environment has a positive and negative impact on an employee. For the positive impact, employee working time can be more flexible if they had more commitment at home, and it can reduce the cost of transportation. In opposing sides, the communication between employees and employer was limited. As they communicate using a digital platform, it led to miscommunication among them. To ensure the development of the virtual working environment manager must lead their workers to achieve the company objectives provide training if it was needed, guide their workers and always communicate with workers in order to gain accurate information. Same with employees keep committed towards the tasks or job given and perform an excellent attitude.

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