



SOCIAL DISTANCING UNVEILS HIDDEN BENEFITS OF REMOTE WORK



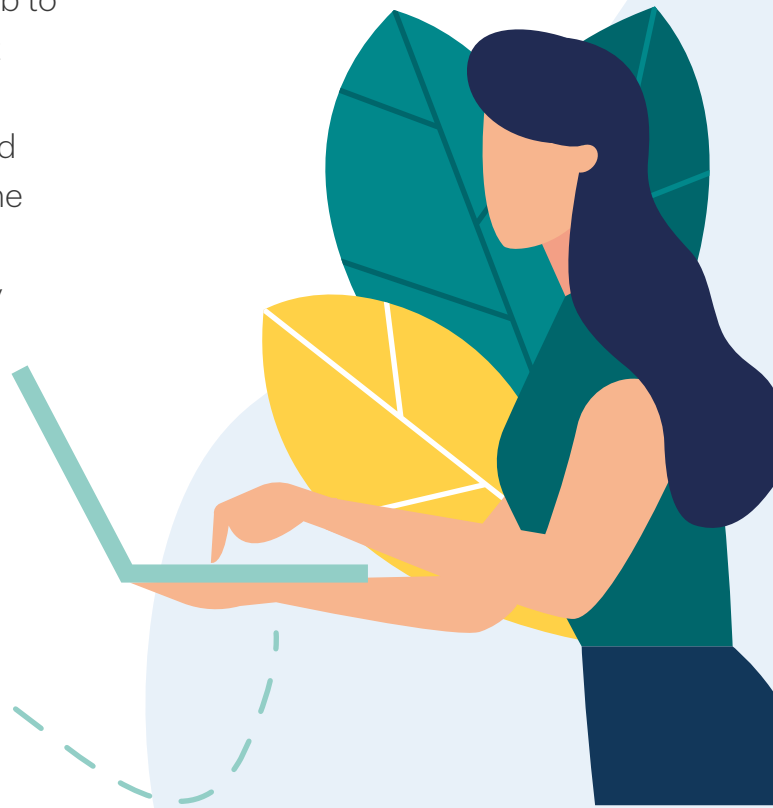
Working from home has for years been the life of millions of freelancers and the dream of millions more office employees. Many employers, however, are still reticent about the benefits of allowing significant portions of their workforce to work remotely. Now that COVID-19 has forced many companies to embrace working from home, there will inevitably be significant data anecdotes to support or detract from the work-from-home movement.

With the jury still out, Metasys will examine some of the positives and negatives that have emerged. We will address the not-so-great aspects of long-term remote work in a future article. Here, we discuss developments that support organizations' use of remote and contingent workers. In addition to scalability, access to scarce talent, and reduced need for office space, the massive increase in home-work arrangements has generated several benefits. Companies interested in expanding their work-from-home policies or increasing their use of consultants and contractors once the situation returns to normal may be able to look forward to these advantages:



1 WORKER FOCUS

While some home workers may succumb to the distractions of the television and cat videos, most companies find that their **remote workforces are more diligent** and productive than when they come into the office. This may be particularly true and important for workers engaged in highly technical or sensitive work. So long as companies can guarantee document security, work requiring extreme concentration or privacy may best be performed away from office hubbub.



2 CHEAP, ROBUST TECHNOLOGY

Videoconferencing, project management, communication, and other **business equipment** has evolved by leaps and bounds over the last decade. They are easier to set up, maintain, and use. They are cheap to implement. They are compatible with and accessible by desktop computer, laptop, tablet, and cellphone and can live in the cloud, on a server, or through a wireless network. And with fast and ubiquitous residential internet and cell service, no longer is a paneled conference room and video screen required for your team to collaborate. A small investment to equip workers' home offices with these tools could make your office more virtual and less costly to maintain.



3 BETTER COMPENSATION

Money saved on office rent, travel, and other expenses deemed unnecessary in the remote-work environment can be reallocated to salaries and fees for freelancers and consultants. Firms will be able to afford to pay contingent workers the going rate for their specialized skills since they hire them only when required and assign them to value-adding projects that ensure sufficient return on investment.



4 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Companies that have implemented paperless billing and other [green initiatives](#) earn substantial goodwill and attract likeminded customers. A remote-work revolution at your organization could generate similar revenue advantages. Eliminating commutes, live conference attendance, and business travel saves money and protects workers and customers while reducing your company's carbon footprint. According to [Airtasker](#), traditional employees spend more than 400 hours a year driving to and from work and engaged in other activities preparatory for going to the office. That's an additional 10 work weeks that could be spent with family, recharging their batteries, and working.



5 GREATER DIVERSITY

Allowing people to work from home also expands companies' talent pools. A Silicon Valley firm in need of a software developer no longer is limited to recruiting people willing and able to move to the Bay Area. Geographic limitations disappear, along with other talent-access concerns, [expanding worker pools](#) to include parents, students, expatriates, and retirees.



6 EXTENDED OPERATING HOURS

Hiring workers across time zones extends the functional hours of your organization. For instance, if you use helpdesk workers based in New York and Los Angeles, their combined 8-hour days can provide customer assistance from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time. Put more representatives in Hawaii, and the desk could stay open till midnight. Other businesses benefit as well. Imagine web developers tag-teaming a project, with a team in London handing it off to colleagues in Seattle, who in turn, send it on to the Melbourne office. Projects could be completed in one-third the time!



7 GROWING ACCEPTANCE

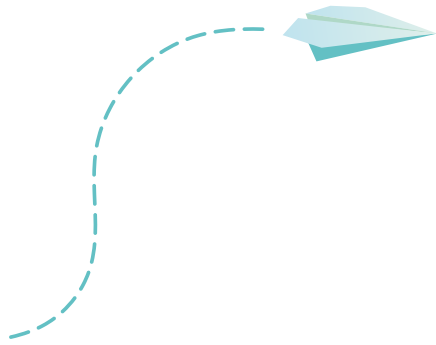
Working from home was a growing trend before COVID-19 struck, with full-time remote workers [increasing](#) from 3.9 million Americans in 2015 to 4.7 million today. Tens of millions more work from home at least some of the time. Workers demand, and employers are providing work-from-home opportunities more than ever. Customers are no longer put off by talking to a customer-service tech answering the phone from home.



8 ACCOUNTABILITY

Managers who have been slow to accept remote work often cite the loss of control and oversight of their activities. They fear workers will find ways to goldbrick while on the clock, but the [Airtasker survey](#) found just the opposite. Slightly more than one-third of remote workers attempted to avoid work. While this may sound high, the survey also found that more than half the people working in an office goofed off. Working from home makes employees more productive. For firms still leery of trusting home workers, you could easily track their activities through keyloggers. Resist that Big Brother inclination, however; instead, measure their results with Smartsheet or another collaborative project management platform.





Many businesses still have to work out some kinks if remote work and contingent [labor management](#) is to work on a large scale and extended time frame. But for organizations willing to invest a little time and technology, the results could transform the worldwide work environment.

