**Work Arrangements: A Roundtable Discussion about how to Incorporate this Evolving Topic into the Management Classroom**

**Abstract**

The concept of work arrangements, or the physical arrangements workers will experience (i.e., work-from-home, hybrid, etc.), is of great interest to both practitioners and academics alike. This is an evolving topic that has so far received little research attention but has immediate practical implications for organizations and managers. As such, it is an important and relevant topic to address with current management students. In this roundtable, we will first discuss the ways we have integrated the workplace arrangements topic into a variety of different courses (i.e., HR, OB, and Principles of Management courses) using class discussions, emerging literature, classroom activities, and assessments. We will utilize small group discussions to explore new ways to integrate work arrangements into additional courses and management topics, and will close the session with a large-group discussion on how instructors can use the best ideas in future semesters.

**Keywords**

Work arrangements, Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management, Strategic Management, Principles of Management

**Introduction**

A quick perusal of social and popular media sources reveals that employees and organizations alike are constantly musing about what work is going to look like going forward—Will employees be increasingly working from home, or will organizations go back to pre-pandemic conditions of near-total in-office work? No matter the industry, employees, managers, and organizations all must now grapple with what (and where) the future of work will be. Embedded within these decisions are many unresolved questions, such as whether working from home benefits all employees, whether they prefer flexibility or a hybrid environment, and how all this affects the organization. So far, it seems there will be some resolution in between the two extremes of working 100% from home versus in the office, but there is wide variation across organizations, with many often changing and questioning their policies.

In the wake of the pandemic, in conjunction with technological gains made over the past two decades, many employees are realizing that they have the power to choose jobs that offer the arrangements they prefer (i.e., the Great Resignation of 2021, Cook, 2021). Furthermore, a recent study showed that 54% of employees seek a job that allows working from home, but only 10% of jobs offer this option – up from only 3% of jobs pre-pandemic (Davidson, 2022). What do these trends mean for modern-day managers and organizations? Simply put, these shifts in employee work preferences create human capital implications that managers and organizations cannot ignore. The significance of current and future work arrangements for organizations is paramount, but there seems to be little guidance on how to approach this conundrum.

Given the dearth of evidence-based guidance, we do not have the “right” answers, but we propose that as management educators, we can incorporate meaningful discussions on this important topic into the classroom to get students thinking about the implications. In this roundtable, we seek to foster conversations about how to approach this topic in a variety of management courses, ranging from organizational behavior and human resource management to strategic management.

**Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications**

The impetus for this session began in Summer 2021 when vaccinations for Covid-19 were becoming more widespread and the world was starting to see a vast improvement in case numbers and other metrics. At that time, organizations were considering plans for employees to return to the office, and many personal conversations revolved around the question, “What is your company going to do going forward?” The popular press was picking up on this topic as well, with articles like, “*JPMorgan Requires Employees to Return to Their Offices By July Striking a Blow to the Remote-Work Trend*” (Kelly, 2021), “*Facebook Extends its Work-at-Home Policy to Most Employees”* (Rodriguez, 2021), and “*Google Relaxes Remote Work Plan, Will Let 20% of Employees Telecommute*” (Novet, 2021).  The situation related to Covid-19 has since changed (many times), yet the interest in these discussions persists. In fact, this topic is evolving at such a rapid pace that we expect there to be several new developments even between the time that this proposal is submitted and the session takes place!

There are strong connections between the evolving global conversation regarding work arrangements and various topics we cover in management. For example, in organizational behavior, work arrangements can be incorporated into seminal topics such as job satisfaction (Chen & Fulmer, 2018), turnover (Masuda et al., 2012), personality (Perry et al., 2018), and stress (Delanoeije et al., 2019). In HR courses, work arrangements tie into topics like applicant attraction (Thompson et al., 2015), employment law (Garen, 2006), and retention (Choi, 2020). In macro-level courses, there are ties between work arrangements and creating and sustaining a strategic performance advantage (Monteiro et al., 2019), organizational culture (Borgkvist et al., 2018), and international/cross-cultural differences (Peretz et al., 2018). Across the management discipline, we believe there are even more topics that could relate to work arrangements. This indicates the grave importance of addressing this current topic and having a roundtable discussion with educators to clarify existing ideas and create new ideas together.

**Session Description**

As a roundtable, this will be a 60-minute session. We will spend the first 5 minutes welcoming attendees and introducing the presenters. The next 10 minutes will be a brief informal presentation about how the presenters have integrated this topic into a variety of courses during the 2021-2022 academic year (e.g., in-class discussions & activities, writing assignments, and group projects). The bulk of the session (30 minutes) will be spent in small groups discussing relevance to different management topics and courses, as well as concrete ways to address work arrangements in the classroom. Each presenter will facilitate one small group. Finally, we will spend the remainder of the time (15 minutes) regrouping, sharing what was discussed in our groups, and concluding the session.

We plan to use the following specific timetable:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Duration** |
| Welcome & Introduction | 5 minutes |
| Brief presentation of what the presenters have done | 10 minutes |
| Small group discussion | 30 minutes |
| Regroup & Conclusion | 15 minutes |
| **TOTAL** | **60 MINUTES** |

**References**

Borgkvist, A., Moore, V., Eliott, J., & Crabb, S. (2018). ‘I might be a bit of a front runner’: An analysis of men's uptake of flexible work arrangements and masculine identity. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *25*(6), 703-717.

Chen, Y., & Fulmer, I. S. (2018). Fine‐tuning what we know about employees' experience with flexible work arrangements and their job attitudes. *Human Resource Management*, *57*(1), 381-395.

Choi, S. (2020). Flexible work arrangements and employee retention: A longitudinal analysis of the Federal Workforces. *Public Personnel Management*, *49*(3), 470-495.

Cook, I. (2021). Who is Driving the Great Resignation? *Harvard Business Review*.

Davidson, P. (2022, January 4). *Great resignation: The number of people quitting jobs hit an all-time high in November as openings stayed near record*. USA Today. Retrieved January 6, 2022, from https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2022/01/04/great-resignation-number-people-quitting-jobs-hit-record/9083256002/

Delanoeije, J., Verbruggen, M., & Germeys, L. (2019). Boundary role transitions: A day-to-day approach to explain the effects of home-based telework on work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict. *Human Relations, 72*(12), 1843-1868.

Garen, J. (2006). Use of employees and alternative work arrangements in the United States: a law, economics, and organizations perspective. *Labour Economics*, *13*(1), 107-141.

Kelly, J. (2021, April 28). *JPMorgan Requires Employees to Return to Their Offices By July Striking a Blow to the Remote-Work Trend*. Forbes. Retrieved January 17, 2022, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/04/28/jp-morgan-requires-employees-to-return-to-their-offices-by-july-striking-a-blow-to-the-remote-work-trend/?sh=7832ca0b4cdc

Masuda, A. D., Poelmans, S. A., Allen, T. D., Spector, P. E., Lapierre, L. M., Cooper, C. L., ... & Moreno‐Velazquez, I. (2012). Flexible work arrangements availability and their relationship with work‐to‐family conflict, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions: A comparison of three country clusters. *Applied Psychology*, *61*(1), 1-29.

Monteiro, N. P., Straume, O. R., & Valente, M. (2019). Does remote work improve or impair firm labour productivity? Longitudinal evidence from Portugal.

Novet, J. (2021, May 5). *Google Relaxes Remote Work Plan, Will Let 20% of Employees Telecommute*. CNBC. Retrieved January 17, 2022, from https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/05/google-relaxes-remote-work-plan-will-let-20percent-of-employees-telecommute.html.

Peretz, H., Fried, Y., & Levi, A. (2018). Flexible work arrangements, national culture, organisational characteristics, and organisational outcomes: A study across 21 countries. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *28*(1), 182-200.

Perry, S. J., Rubino, C., & Hunter, E. M. (2018). Stress in remote work: two studies testing the Demand-Control-Person model. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 27*(5), 577-593.

Rodriguez, S. (2021, June 9). *Facebook Extends its Work-at-Home Policy to Most Employees.* CNBC. Retrieved January 17, 2022, from https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/09/facebook-will-let-all-employees-who-can-work-remotely-to-request-full-time-remote-work.html.

Thompson, R. J., Payne, S. C., & Taylor, A. B. (2015). Applicant attraction to flexible work arrangements: Separating the influence of flextime and flexplace. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *88*(4), 726-749.