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"Unique Hybrid Work model- The future of remote work"

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the usual working norms of organizations worldwide. The entire world is trying to cope up in every possible way to overcome the unprecedented situation. The organizations worldwide are trying to adopt many new norms which were never dreamt of before. The entire world had never dreamt that remote work would be the new work norm. It is really hard to believe that one day such a situation would arise where everyone would be forced to work from home. Remote work has its share of challenges. Most of the organizations are still trying to cope up with this new norm. Challenges in the form of employee engagement, motivation, decrease communication, employee mental health and wellbeing, performance management, job security, stress and job satisfaction are wreaking havoc in the job market. organizations performance is greatly affected. Organizations worldwide are embracing a new concept in the form of Hybrid work model which will help in curbing the remote work challenges. This paper will help the readers to understand the concept of hybrid work model and also explain the benefits of this model. This paper will also give a glimpse regarding a unique Hybrid model if followed will help the organizations to overcome many challenges faced by Human resource managers due to remote work.

Introduction

Remote work which had started as a short time solution due to COVID-19 pandemic has now become more or less a full-time office norm. During the pandemic the organizations worldwide were skeptical about the success of remote work concept. The management as well as the employees were not able to accept the idea of remote working. It was beyond everyone's imagination that one day such a situation will come where organizations worldwide would be forced to work remotely and wont physically come to office and would able to deliver the same results like a physical office.

Initially people were not comfortable with the idea of remote work but without a choice the remote work became the new norm during the pandemic. The employees and the management who were hesitant and not comfortable initially have in fact started accepting and have become comfortable with the entire scenario. Now employees have become so comfortable with the remote work that now ad days post COVID-19 they still want to continue remote work.

Post COVID-19 when organizations are planning to reopen and normalize the work environment. Most of the employees are not willing to come physically to office they want to go for remote work. With the second pandemic hitting the world the organizations cannot force employees to be physically present in the office. The organizations cannot also argue that work is getting hampered due to remote work. It has already been proved that remote work is also giving good results and organizations are not suffering because of that.

Organizations are now trying to adopt a hybrid work model which gives the freedom to the employees either to remote work or come physically to office and work. Many organizations worldwide have decided not to keep the physical workplace norm every day. Organizations are planning to keep the office open physically as per the requirement. It is now not mandatory for employees to attend office for a fixed time every day but when there is requirement, they can attend office and on other times can remote work.

Many organizations think that physical office is important so they have decided to operate may be three days a week. Many organizations are giving the liberty to the employees to remote work like IT companies they have asked their employees to remote work completely. Many organizations are going for a combination of remote work and physical presence. Whatever be the case but the Hybrid work model is the new norm and is here to stay.

Meaning of Hybrid work model

As per the definition Hybrid work model means the combination of remote work and physical presence in the office. As per the combination there are 3 types of Hybrid work model:

1. ***Remote first model-*** Organizations like Quora and Dropbox are following the remote first model. In this model most of the employees plus the leadership team would be generally working remotely but if there is an urgent requirement for physical presence may be one or two days in a month that can be done by few employees. The office space would be physically present and if anyone wants to utilize it for official use can be done but not frequently but whenever there is a requirement.

Quora CEO Mr. Adam D'Angelo stated that their company would be following remote first model where employees are supposed to remote work. The office would be used by those who wants to use it occasionally. He himself would be coming to office once in a month and the leadership team would be remote working.

Dropbox has also announced that employees should be remote working and the office space would be only used for collaboration and not for solo working of employees.

In Remote first model it is not necessary that employees will not meet each other. The management sometimes can arrange for certain activity where employees staying close to each other's place can collaborate and work together.

2. **Office Occasional-** Many organizations still now have not accepted the remote work model. They still feel that employee's physical presence in the office twice or thrice in a week is necessary for the organization.

This concept would be possible for those employees who are localities as occasionally they have to be in office. In this model leadership as well as higher authority would be also working occasionally in office. Those employees who cannot come to office physically can work remotely.

This concept may have some problems as those employees who are working remotely may feel insecure and think themselves as second citizens. These employees may feel that since they are working remotely, they are sidelined and more importance would be given to those who are physically working in office. Management has to address this issue and take all possible steps to overcome this feeling from the employee's mind.

3. **Office first, remote allowed:** This model uses the combination of remote first and office occasional. In this model the organization mostly works offline and occasionally remote working. Most of the employees including the leadership team come to office regularly and those who have opted for remote work are kept in loop and important discussions are briefed to them. The employees working remotely find themselves out of place and also communication between employees become less. Management has to so design this model in such a way that irrespective of being in office in case of meetings or other activities make sure that everyone is joining virtually so that the remote employees don't feel neglected.

Pros of Hybrid Work model

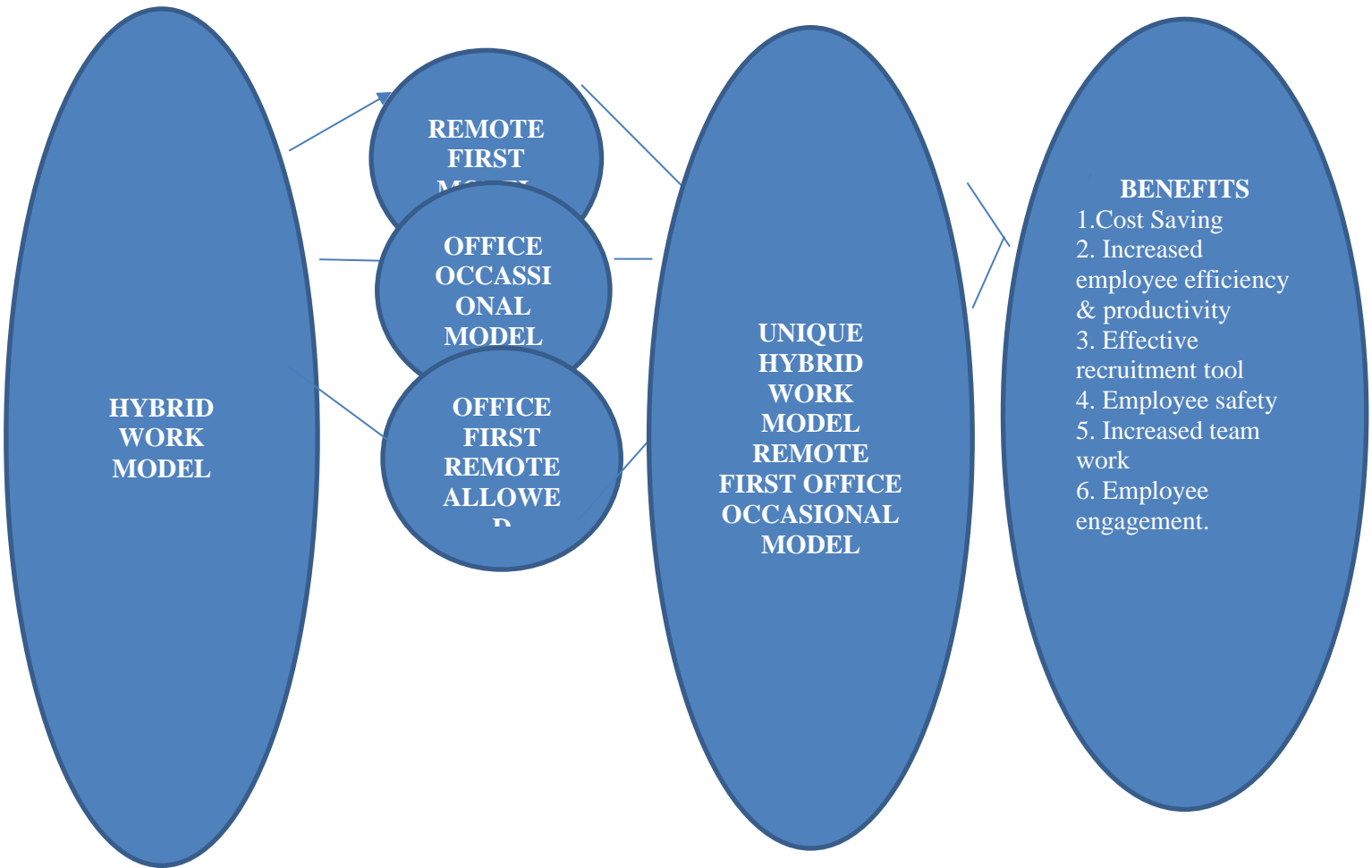
1. **Cost saving-** Hybrid work model contributes towards cost saving for both employer and employee. Employer saves money as they save on power consumption, cleanliness of workplace, printing, snacks, tea, water, parking and other miscellaneous cost. Employees saves on travel time and cost, food and other costs which is associated with daily office reporting.
2. **Increased employee efficiency and productivity-** Hybrid work model helps in increased employee efficiency and productivity. Employees are not forced to come to office from 9am to 5 pm so they are relaxed and they save time in commuting. The time saved as well as working in a comfortable environment of their choice helps in increased happiness and thinking ability. The employees are able to perform much better and their efficiency level is also increased. Most of the organizations worldwide are reporting that remote work has increased the efficiency and performance of the employees up to 30%.

3. ***Effective recruitment tool-*** Hybrid work model can work as an effective recruitment tool as remote work gives the liberty of involving and recruiting best employee's world over. Best talent can be hired as it is not restricted to one place. This helps in better performance and gaining competitive advantage.
4. ***Employee's safety-*** Hybrid work model increases employee's safety from COVID-19 infection. Since employees are remote working then they hardly come in contact with other employees. This helps in maintaining social distancing and also helps in stopping COVID-19 which is the need of the hour. Since employees are healthy, they can give their best and can help the organization to grow further.

Cons of Hybrid Work Model

1. ***Teamwork affected-*** In Hybrid work model teamwork is the greatest challenge. In remote work solo work is not a challenge but when it comes to group work where employees have to work in a team, it creates a challenge. In physical office setup coordination between various team members and communication becomes easy but in remote work communication and coordination becomes a problem. This arrangement can affect the work.
2. ***Reduced Employee engagement-*** In Hybrid work model employee engagement is affected badly. Employees don't see each other. In case of any problem faced by them it becomes very difficult to sort it out virtually. When physically present in office there is a sense of bonding and any problem is sorted out easily this increases employee engagement and a track record of what the employees are doing is also kept. Remote work become very boring at some stage, communication become very less and people starts getting frustrated and cannot concentrate and results in employee disengagement.
3. ***Tools not up to date-*** In Hybrid work model the greatest challenge is remote tools not UpToDate. Due to poor tools remote work becomes very difficult to handle. Most of the time employees face connectivity or internet issue because of which work gets hampered. This leads to pending work, poor communication and performance and efficiency being affected.
4. ***Reduced employee visibility-*** In Hybrid work model employee visibility becomes a problem. Due to remote work most of the employees and managers don't keep a track of what the other employee is actually doing. This creates a kind of problem as the management is not aware of the employee's progress. This situation creates an impact on employee performance appraisal, career development and promotion. From the above discussion it can be seen that irrespective of the fact that Hybrid work model has certain cons but given the pros it can be safely concluded that Hybrid work model is here to stay as long as COVID-19 is there and beyond as well. It is mandatory for Organizations to accept the Hybrid work model for a better and efficient workplace.

Unique Hybrid work model



Companies using Unique Hybrid work model

Case1. Microsoft

From October 2020, Microsoft has declared regarding following the Unique Hybrid work model which consists of more 50% remote work and less time in office where permission from management is not required. If few employees want to work 50% remote and 50% in office then permission from management is necessary.

Those employees who permanently wants to work remotely they have to take permission from the management. These employees won't have dedicated place to sit when they would come to office when there would be a requirement but some place would be definitely given to them.

Microsoft has also decided to take care of the financial aspect of employee's remote work expenditure.

Case 2. Ford Motor Company

Ford declared in March 2021 that it would be following the Unique Hybrid work model. It has already given instructions to hit 30000 employees to mainly work remotely and when there is an urgent need they can come to office. The employees can take permission from the management and can work remotely.

There are some manufacturing sectors in Ford where coming to office occasionally is required as in these case remote work wont yield results.

This decision by Ford has been taken by collecting feedback of employees in 2020 where 95% employees stressed that Unique hybrid work model should be followed. Ford has taken the initiative from the automobile sector others like General motors and Toyota are also planning for the same.

Case 3. Citigroup, Inc.

Citigroup has also declared acceptance of Unique Hybrid Work model from March 2021. The Citigroup CEO Jane Fraser conveyed that since employees are used to working remotely and also are able to deliver due to work flexibility so it will be better if they follow the Unique Hybrid work model. The employees have to make sure that they maintain a good coordination amongst themselves and the management so that there is no problem in the work front.

This Unique Hybrid work model is not available for bank branch or data centre employees at its Manhattan's headquarters. Zoom meetings on Friday has been banned and also it has been decided that in these centres few sections of people out of 2,10000 employees would be permanently working remotely.

Case 4. Google

Google has decided to adopt Unique Hybrid work model and has declared the same in March 2021. Google has decided that most of the employees will be working remotely and when there is a requirement employee can come to the office. In order to work seamlessly certain changes in the workspace has been made by google.

The changes are as follows:

- Cloud-based storage
- Collaboration tools
- Endpoint security
- Management controls
- Video conferencing

The acceptance of Unique Hybrid work model has been done by Google CEO Mr. Sundar Pichai by taking feedback from many of its clients and employees. In the feedback 95% of the clients and employees have suggested that Unique Hybrid Work model is the best approach to be followed.

Case 5. Infosys

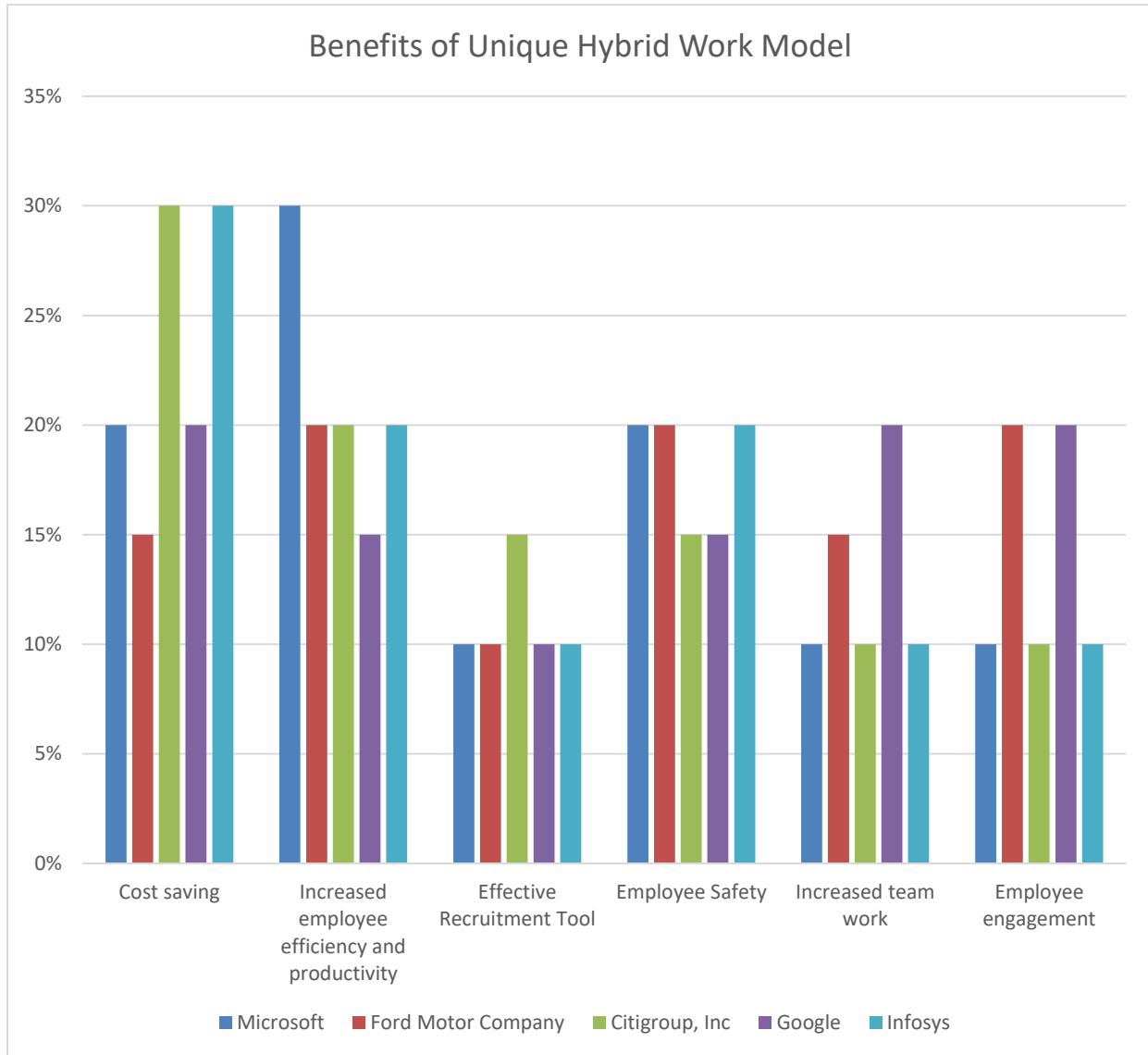
Infosys has also decided to accept the Unique Hybrid work model. Infosys CEO Mr Salil Parekh has announced in March 2021 regarding the acceptance of Unique Hybrid Work model. Mr Parekh have confirmed that from 2020 only 2% of several thousand employees are occasionally present in office and rest employees are remote working. This arrangement is there to stay.

Mr Salil Parekh is very happy with the model and also states that because of the work flexibility lot of women employees can give their contribution as they can take care of their family and job at the same time. Flexibility of work has also improved the productivity of the people as well.

From the above findings it is clear that many well-known organizations have started practicing and adopting the Unique Hybrid work model which is equally successful in every sector. Unique Hybrid work model should be adopted by other organizations as well so that it will be beneficial for everyone.

Findings

Figure 1. Benefits of Unique Hybrid Work Model



- Figure 1 shows “Benefits of Unique Hybrid work Model”.
- N= sample size 100 respondents, N=5 companies, N= 6 parameters
- Figure 1. Shows: 20% respondents confirm that there is Cost saving for Microsoft, 30% respondents confirm that there is increased employee efficiency and Productivity for Microsoft, 10% respondents confirm that there is effective recruitment tool for Microsoft, 20% respondents confirm that there is employee safety for Microsoft, 10% respondents confirm that there is increased team work for Microsoft and 10% respondents confirm that there is employee engagement for Microsoft.
- Figure 1. Shows: 15% respondents confirm that there is Cost saving for Ford Motor Company, 20% respondents confirm that there is increased employee efficiency and Productivity for Ford Motor Company, 10% respondents confirm that there is effective recruitment tool for Ford Motor Company, 20% respondents

confirm that there is employee safety for Ford Motor Company, 15% respondents confirm that there is increased team work for Ford Motor Company and 20% respondents confirm that there is employee engagement for Ford Motor Company.

- Figure 1. Shows: 30% respondents confirm that there is Cost saving for Citigroup, Inc, 20% respondents confirm that there is increased employee efficiency and Productivity for Citigroup, Inc, 15% respondents confirm that there is effective recruitment tool for Citigroup, Inc, 15% respondents confirm that there is employee safety for Citigroup, Inc, 10% respondents confirm that there is increased team work for Citigroup, Inc and 10% respondents confirm that there is employee engagement for Citigroup, Inc.

- Figure 1. Shows: 20% respondents confirm that there is Cost saving for Google, 15% respondents confirm that there is increased employee efficiency and Productivity for Google, 10% respondents confirm that there is effective recruitment tool for Google, 15% respondents confirm that there is employee safety for Google, 20% respondents confirm that there is increased team work for Google and 20% respondents confirm that there is employee engagement for Google.

- Figure 1. Shows: 30% respondents confirm that there is Cost saving for Infosys, 20% respondents confirm that there is increased employee efficiency and Productivity for Infosys, 10% respondents confirm that there is effective recruitment tool for Infosys, 20% respondents confirm that there is employee safety for Infosys, 10% respondents confirm that there is increased team work for Infosys and 10% respondents confirm that there is employee engagement for Infosys.

Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic has created havoc worldwide. It has shattered the very existence of human being in such a ruthless way that no human being is in the right frame of mind to think and take decisions. Every country worldwide is trying to come up with solutions and are trying their level best to normalise the situation.

Every sector, every Organization is badly affected by the pandemic. Organizations are in such a sorry state that most are not in a position to pay the employees leave aside your increment. There is no job security for the employees. Production is badly hit and business has almost come to a standstill. The economy worldwide was slowly recovering when the 2nd wave of COVID-19 has made an entry which is much worse than the previous wave.

This is such a dire situation worldwide that in order to sustain and to normalise the worldwide economy it is but obvious to think of a out of the box solution. Now the situation is such that the more the people work remotely and maintain safe distance the better. In this situation adopting such a work model like Unique Hybrid Work model would be the best solution as in this model maximum times employees will be working remotely and whenever there is a requirement they can come to office. This arrangement will not only curtail the spread of the virus but also will help in smooth work operation, increased performance, motivation, employee engagement and good team work can happen.

Many well-known organizations like Microsoft, Ford motor company, Citigroup,

Inc, Google and Infosys to name a few have acknowledged its benefits and also are using the Unique Hybrid work model and happy with its results. The findings regarding the same are discussed above.

From the above discussion it can be safely concluded that in this Pandemic and beyond every organization worldwide should adopt Unique Hybrid Work model for the betterment of the organization.

Recommendations

The pandemic is here to stay. This pandemic has taught us many new things and also new ways of running the organizations. Organizations worldwide cannot wait for the pandemic to get over and start the operation.

In order to sustain and also to proceed further the organizations should think about such a solution which will not only be ideal for the pandemic but also the organization can gain in the Pandemic as well.

Well known organizations are adapting Unique Hybrid Work model as the best solution for this situation. It is highly recommended that this model should be adapted by every Organization. This model helps the employees to work from the comfort of their home. The employees are saved from the infection and also they are in a position to contribute and be more productive for the organization.

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former Social Democratic Party-Green government (1998-2005), Germany is at the forefront in developing forms of precarious employment. [...] The IBM model globalises the so-called employment contract, increasingly replacing agency working as the preferred form of low-wage labour. Companies assign key tasks to subcontractors, paying only for each project.