

WFA

**Working from anywhere
and the digital nomad**

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VOLUME 9 IN THE UBSS PUBLICATIONS SERIES

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(WITH A FOREWORD BY ANGUS HOOKE)

Melbourne, Australia



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Foreword

Working from Home (WFH) is not a new phenomenon; it has been the dominant practice since humans ceased to be nomads and settled down as farmers about 12 millennia back. Those carrying out household chores, raising children, and looking after the elderly and infirm have an equally long history. In fact, it was only in the early 18th century, with the establishment of the first textile factories in England, that Working Away from Home (WAFH) became popular. However, as the industrial revolution spread, WAFH became the norm, and by the turn of the 21st century, about 95% of manufacturing and service workers in high-income countries had adopted it.

The COVID-19 pandemic rocked this system, with virtually all workers whose tasks allowed them to do so being required to work from home for varying periods of time. Most of the new home-based workers perceived their changed situation to be temporary and both hoped and expected to return to their offices fulltime when the pandemic was over. Had COVID come much earlier – say, in the 1980s -, these hopes and expectations would probably have been realised. However, conditions supportive of WFA had emerged toward the end of the industrial era and had spread rapidly during the first two decades of the digital era. They included social changes such as the move to two-income families and the associated sharing of domestic duties; technical advances in computers, mobiles, and software; and economic changes like the rise in commercial rents relative to other costs.

The early experiences with WFH were nevertheless daunting, as workers tried to cope with resources, practices, and skills that had been tailored to single-site locations. However, due to necessity, the

displaced workers added new resources better suited to off-site work and acquired new skills that allowed them to use these resources comfortably and efficiently. After several months, many now at-home workers began to feel comfortable with their changed working environment. They also developed a greater appreciation of the benefits of WFH, such as the savings in time and cost from reduced commuting, the higher productivity from more protected focus periods, and the longer time spent with close family members. As the lockdowns continued, it became clear that a significant and growing proportion of the workforce would not want to return fulltime to their company office when the pandemic was over.

Success with WFH led to experiences with working from the local coffee shop, the airport lounge, and even the car. Inevitably, the practice spread into Working from Anywhere (WFA), including other parts of the world with their alternating seasons and different time zones. WFA has emerged as a productive, attractive, and acceptable 24/7, global option. For a large part of the working population, it is now becoming the new norm.

This book, edited by Emeritus Professor Greg Whateley (Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Group Colleges Australia) and Professor Ian Bofinger (CEO of the Australian Academy of Music and Performing Arts), has been written by entrepreneurs, company owners, company directors, senior managers, junior managers, administrators, academics, and self-employed professionals who experienced and generally adapted successfully to the need to work away from their offices during the pandemic. It describes the initial difficulties they faced, the ways in which they overcome these difficulties, and what they have learned from their experiences.

WFA is essential reading for those who wish to prosper in the post-pandemic business environment. For employers, it provides numerous examples of changes that were or could be made to policies, equipment, and recruitment practices to future-proof their organisations in the new labour market environment. There are also warnings for those who employ nurses, police, baristas, and bus drivers - workers who

generally don't have the option of WFA and will need additional inducements if industry demands for their services are to be met. Finally, there are lessons for public policymakers who are now being challenged to update the legal and regulatory frameworks so they can better address the risks involved in working in a variety of locations and political jurisdictions and take advantages of the opportunities that this wider range of choice offers.

In addition, it is a great read!

Emeritus Professor Angus Hooke

Director, UBSS Centre for Scholarship and Research

Preface

This publication began with two stimulus papers – *WFA – Working from anywhere – and the digital nomad* (Whateley and Bofinger) and *Snakes on a plane – or just meetings on a plane* (Kanwar). The two papers (now Chapters 1 and 2 of this book) in turn were presented to selected authors both national and international for consideration and response.

Twenty one responses were received and are used as the additional chapters (now Chapters 3 – 23 of this book) and provide a valuable insight into the WFA issues across so many sectors and within a range of contexts. The chapters also represent projections on what the future of work looks like – and how the notion of digital nomads is growing and spreading – clearly COVID-19 had a significant impact.

Cyril Jankoff (Chapter 3) shares how his unplanned use of technology made it possible for him to work across different areas within the working from anywhere notion.

Daniel Bendel (Chapter 4) discusses the social and technical factors that have all aligned to fuel the ‘working from anywhere’ and ‘working from home’ trend. The pandemic may have accelerated this trend but there were three major factors already in play - social changes; advancement in IT; and rising property values.

Art Phillips (Chapter 5) shares the view that WFA (working from anywhere) and WFH (working from home) are both the new norm for our global workforce. Prior to the pandemic some companies had already allowed their staff to work from home, but since the effects from COVID-19 and lockdowns which began in March 2020, offsite working

has increased substantially - and much remains the same since lockdowns have eased.

Shawn Kok (Chapter 6) shares the trials and tribulations of working from his phone as a digital nomad internationally.

Anurag Kanwar (Chapter 7) highlights that fact that prior to COVID-19, work consisted of working in an office. In a brave new world that has followed COVID-19 much has been written about the benefits of remote work. A number of companies are even offering employees the opportunity to work from anywhere. But what is little understood are the risks of working from anywhere (remote work) particularly for employees.

Jim Mienczakowski (Chapter 8) explores that WFA is already happening and what are the wider societal implications of emerging WFA/WFH developments? Will WFA eventually change more than just our places of work?

Alan Finch (Chapter 9) examines how we need to adapt to the 'living with COVID' world and how this will apply to work irrespective of the sector or occupation.

Art Phillips (Chapter 10) considers the history of WFH, the psychology of WFH and the impact on self-employed workers.

Greg Whateley and Andrew West (Chapter 11) consider the impact of the shift to online learning where students become the WFA digital nomads.

James Manly and Greg Whateley (Chapter 12) explores an environment – gymnasiums – where the WFA actually did not work.

Nilima Paul (Chapter 13) reflects on the fact that WFA is not a new concept that has permeated both the work place and the learning place.

Greg Whateley (Chapter 14) notes the WFA concept suggests that it is both possible and feasible to literally work from anywhere – on a plane, a train, a ship (with some issues relating to WIFI access), in a hotel, an apartment – for that matter anywhere that has WIFI connection. The notion of a shared working space – available commercially – provides another excellent option that is well worth considering.

Jim Mienczakowski (Chapter 15) explores the notion of permanent alternatives – digital offices and classrooms – will they become the thing of the future?

Andrew West (Chapter 16) considers whether organisations – large and small – are ready to ‘let go’ in terms of WFA.

Tom O’Connor (Chapter 17) introduces us to the Edupreneur – and considers the application of the WFA concept to the emerging role.

Arash Najmaei and Zahra Sadeghinejad (Chapter 18) consider the fact that digital nomadism has become a global cultural trend transcending typical workers who seek remote to different walks of life including students who now can work and study digitally from anywhere.

Zahra Sadeghinejad and Arash Najmaei (Chapter 19) explore the rise of digital nomads, and the associated life style, is in fact transforming society and requires further consideration.

Jamie Rigg and Ian Bofinger (Chapter 20) investigate the notion that contemporary recording equipment makes it possible and feasible to record anywhere – the recording studio has gone portable.

Syed Uddin (Chapter 21) considers the longing for flexibility in terms of structuring, scheduling, and conducting jobs (along with where and how to complete them) has been the major focus of those people who spearheaded the agenda of work life balance from the very beginning.

Dimitri Kopanakis (Chapter 22) argues that connectivity is the never ending necessity in the world of the digital nomad.

James Manly and Greg Whateley (Chapter 23) reflect on how technology has changed the very face of gymnasiums.

The authors wish to thank sincerely the responders for their invaluable insights and the fact that all chapters were produced within a very short timeframe – in an effort to maintain currency. The speed has ensured the relevance and of the issues considered. We would also like to take the opportunity of thanking **Veronica Sorace**, **Angus Hooke** and **Ian Bosler** (and team) for their efforts and support in the production process.

Our view is WFA and the digital nomad is alive and well

Greg Whateley

Ian Bofinger

Anurag Kanwar

UBSS Centre for Scholarship and Research, November 2022

WFA - Working from Anywhere – and the Digital Nomad

Greg Whateley

Ian Bofinger

August 2022

There has been considerable chatter about the notion of working from home (WFH) over the last few years, courtesy of COVID-19. Essentially a health consideration from the outset, it has now become more of a lifestyle question, impacting on everything from negotiating a contract, changes in house prices (a shift in demographic), design of new houses (with home office space included) and whether to finally make a sea or tree change a reality. The burning question is whether the associated freedom can ever be reeled back in.

Some historical context

Small office home office (SoHo) was all the rage some twenty years ago. The authors remember even teaching postgraduate music subjects such as SoHs (small office home studio). Interestingly, the

statistics suggest that in the 20+ years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, the proportion of the population working from home remained steady at circa *five percent* - one percentage point of whom were 'farmers'. The concept then, though feasible, was not exactly embraced.

In recent times, the notion of small, flexible-use spaces has become not only critical but also more palatable. Beyond the original notion of SoHo, there are now SoFo (small office/flexible office) and SoVo (small office/virtual office). Peterson (2020) notes that whereas a SoHo usually has a dedicated space for the office, such as a converted spare bedroom or study, the SoFo utilizes more of the property's space by converting dining, bedroom and lounge spaces during office hours and returning them to standard residential domestic functions after office hours. SoVo spaces are generally small commercial stand-alone or shared places that are within the local district, such as suburban commercial hubs or shopping complexes. They often have greater access to high-speed, large bandwidth technologies but do not allow for overnight accommodation.

SoHo, SoFo, and SoVo are usually suitable for start-ups or independent companies that require only a small amount of infrastructure. For many workers, this is a convenience that allows them to work comfortably either at home or in a nearby location and is especially suitable for those who are engaged in design, IT, tertiary education (such as Business Studies), and other similar activities.

Working from Home

In 2016, the Australian Government's Productivity Commission reported that over 35 percent of jobs had aspects that allow staff to work remotely. Working from home (WFH) is particularly well-suited to office-based work, where the use of computers and telecommunications is dominant and the need for direct interaction with the public is minimal. In 2019, however, only 8 per cent of employers had a formal WFH arrangement and the median number of days worked at

home per week was only one (AGPC 2021). The concept was tolerated but not embraced.

According to Salt (2021), industry surveys have shown that, in the age of coronavirus, WFH arrangements have risen to *45-50 percent*. This is a quite remarkable increase and was certainly not expected. It is safe to say that COVID-19 coughed up a range of unexpected phenomena. Once WFH commenced in earnest, it was embraced by many, including employers (at least at the outset).

As a result, it is projected that more than one million cars are likely to disappear from Australian city motorways - forever - because both the number of people who work from home permanently is set to treble and there will be a sizeable shift to urban living. If this happens, levels of relief and comfort will immediately be raised. The challenges relate to the ability of the individuals and organizations to achieve a level of connection.

The shift to WFH is having other consequences as employers evaluate the need to keep paying for partially empty city real estate. In the tertiary sector, university timetables were previously created to maximise the use of campus infrastructure and students had to fit their lives around that requirement. The balance has now shifted in favour of student travel times for compulsory on-campus classes and hybrid models of study. There is a degree of tension in this space. National surveys indicate 77-94 percent student satisfaction with studying online. This is accompanied by remaining concerns regarding health and well-being associated with returning to campus.

The personal reflections of the authors (who work from home three days a week and in an office setting two days a week) is that the model encourages a 12 -15-hour day, starting with emails at 5am and finishing with writing articles at 8pm. For self-confessed workaholics, this is highly acceptable. But, for most people, it is not sustainable.

Salt (2021) believes once life returns to something like normal (whenever or whatever that is), the rate for WFH will drop back to *10-15 percent*. At 15 percent, 1.8 million Australians would/could be working from home.

Working from Anywhere

In 2004, the authors created the first ever Virtual Conservatorium (Bofinger & Whateley, 2004), in which the notion of providing tertiary students access to study *Anywhere, Anytime, Anyhow* was a cornerstone of the program. Although this concept did not gain much external traction at the time, almost twenty years later, nearly every tertiary provider is incorporating some, or all, of these elements into their course delivery.

Working from anywhere (WFA) may provide a valuable option moving forward. With WFA, workers get geographic and/or time-zone flexibility, eliminate lengthy commutes, and achieve a better work/life balance. This option is also ideal when the need for synchronous communication is not essential. It fills the middle ground between working in the office and working from home.

There has been a rise in the number of cafes with collaborative meeting spaces, power outlets, and semi-private booths. Prior to the pandemic, shared office and co-working spaces were gaining popularity, and it is anticipated that there will soon be a return to this workplace choice.

Choudhury (2020) reported that in order to return to a relatively “normal” existence, the notion of being able to work from any location (cognisant of time differences) using some relatively high-end technology would appear to be a worthwhile option. The key ingredients would be a strong WIFI access and the appropriate teleconferencing gear.

The other benefit of this WFA model is the implementation of “Time Zone Stacking”, which creates strategic flexibility by sequencing work hours across the world (Pupius, 2021). The desire for employees to maintain a work-life balance and good mental health is also an increasingly important consideration. It has been well-reported that burnout is a leading cause of attrition, and implementing time-zone stacking has the potential to reduce the load of “on-call” roles and excessive overtime expectations.

Businesses should be open to the pros and cons of these multi-time zone teams and recognise the benefits that time-zone stacking can offer. Most staff members report positive satisfaction in being able to maintain dedicated focus time while still being able to keep in touch with co-workers when their workdays overlap.

Take workers in Melbourne and London as an example. The time difference during the Australian autumn is nine (9) hours. For a Melbourne-based staff member commencing work at 9am and working through to 5pm, followed by a London-based colleague starting their day at 9am (6pm Melbourne time) through to 5pm (2am Melbourne time), the working day is effectively 17 hours. The benefit to online students of this level of staff access would be immeasurable. For example, a TEAMS meeting scheduled for 5.30pm Melbourne time and 8.30am London time would be very doable.

The advantage this creates for current Business Studies tertiary students is also significant. With many units now available 24/7 via online delivery platforms, the flexibility for students to work and study at hours that suit their personal lifestyle is paramount. With tutor access effectively extended by time-zone-sharing models, the delay in response time for student questions could be reduced from days to hours and minutes.

So where to now?

Salt, though expert in his estimates, may have missed the issue of mixed mode - where people work from home on certain days and return to the office on other days. It is likely that the WFA model will be taken up with considerable enthusiasm. Whatever happens, the authors will become digital nomads - wandering the earth - checking WIFI strength and time zones on a regular basis. And wondering why they had not thought of this some twenty years ago.

Postscript – living the life of a digital nomad

The challenge was laid down. A digital convict (that is someone who reluctantly joined the digital revolution) wanted to experience the notion of being a digital nomad working from anywhere (WFA) and decided to choose a remote location (London) as part of the experiment - it happened to be one of the authors.

The adventure began with the careful inclusion of the essential technologies for the experiment - a laptop (with the appropriate accesses) - in this case, a Lenovo Think Book 15 Gen 4; a Logitech wireless mouse and keyboard combination; a Logitech BCC950 Conference Cam; large Sasco event calendar (old school); an iPhone; a notebook (also old school); a tri-screen (Xebec); and a London underground mousepad (not essential, but provides great comfort when you are looking to find your way around the city).

In some ways so simple - despite having to jettison a few bits of clothing to ensure falling below the maximum baggage allowance - the preparation was very straight forward.

The pack down volume and weight of the peripheral technologies also become a critical consideration. As an example, the overall volume and weight of a standard 5m HDMI cable is almost three times that of a light-weight cable. The higher price initially paid for the thinner, faster cables is a quickly justifiable expense when travelling out of a briefcase.

On arrival, it was essential to quickly establish a space from which to work with good light and access. A quality WIFI setup is essential - and most rental apartments/hotels have this facility available. In fact, it was the number one pre-requisite with regard to the selection of accommodation.

For an emergency scenario, the closest 'WeWork' option was identified, just in case. These facilities are dotted throughout the CBD of London and provide a most useful fall back, in case the planned resources cause any trouble. A virtual office will set you back about AUD\$500 a month - not a bad option to be honest.

In many ways, this was the hardest issue of all. There is a 9-hour difference (behind) between London and Sydney/Melbourne, creating the need for an early start each morning (4am London time) and working through to mid-morning (9am London time). This provided a 1pm to 6pm window with colleagues on the other side of the world.

Real time interaction was important, and this was achieved through email, SMS, WhatsApp, Teams and Zoom. The immediacy of response was always impressive - and this made a major contribution in avoiding any sense of isolation.

This challenge was not particularly difficult - the constant reference to time calculation, on the other hand, was a minor challenge, but quite doable, nevertheless. The laptop was set for Sydney/Melbourne time and the mobile phone setting was London time. This assisted enormously.

In all, the establishment of a workspace was very straight forward. Natural lighting is important, though this can be augmented with artificial lighting (lamps and the like) to quite a good level for video conferencing.

Download and upload WIFI speed of greater than 10Mbps is essential - and was, in fact, not an issue. Adjusting to the different time zone was also straight forward. Ideally, landing in London on the weekend was a solid step. This gave time to adjust the body clock in order to be ready for operations on the Monday morning. This is highly recommended.

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Snakes on a plane - or just meetings on a plane

Anurag Kanwar

August 2022

Introduction

Prior to COVID-19, work consisted of working in an office. In a brave new world - that has followed COVID-19 - much has been written about the benefits of remote work. A number of companies are even offering employees the opportunity to work from anywhere all of the time. Spotify and Atlassian are two large operations demonstrating the point. PWC Australia now offer employees remote working for up to eight weeks, as noted recently in the Australian Financial Review.

Several articles, blogs and books have been published about the advantages for both the employer and employees. A Google search on 'benefits of remote work' reveals some 630,000,000 results in 0.45 seconds. Missing in the publications are actual tips and tricks to work effectively from anywhere - the 'anywhere' being a plane, airport, shared office or hotel lobby.

As we are now two years into COVID-19, disrupted workforce members, employees, stakeholders and customers are becoming less

forgiving with the Internet connection issues, noisy backgrounds and microphone mishaps. Working from anywhere - or remote work - requires some planning and equipment for it to be seamless.

This article is inspired by the author's experience on a recent flight - for transparency, the flight was Sydney to Melbourne, flying with *Virgin Airlines*. The conclusion is that working on a plane is possible but there needs to be some preparation prior to flying.

First and foremost, your equipment needs to be taken on board with you. For the purposes of this article, the author travelled with a laptop Lenovo Think Book 15 Gen 4, Logitech wireless mouse and an iPhone.

Time of flight

If you know you must work on a flight, look carefully at the time of your flight. Are you planning a red-eye flight? Then, working on the plane is not going to be popular with your fellow passengers. You will need to factor in a dimly lit cabin for the video calls.

Carry-on luggage

Before getting on a flight, look at your carry-on luggage. Does your bag allow you to fit your equipment neatly and in an orderly fashion? Take a quick inventory of chargers and cords. Do you have them and are they able to be accessed quickly? One suggestion is to carry small cosmetics purses and place your chargers in these. This allows you to remember where you put the chargers and, more importantly, they will not be tangled.

Noise-cancelling headphones

Planes are noisy, so noise-cancelling headphones are a must. While the traditional earphones are good, they may not be practical for a plane. Instead, wireless ear buds are invaluable. They do not weigh much and are small enough to carry in your pocket or handbag. As a tip, make sure that your headphones are connected to your device via

the Bluetooth **before** you board the plane. Bluetooth is often disabled during a flight. The author recommends Jabra Active 75T noise-cancelling earbuds. The battery life is 5.5 hours - in contrast, Air Pods Pro have a battery life of 3.5 hours (talk time). The volume on the earbuds will also need to be adjusted to take into account the noisier surroundings on a plane. A helpful suggestion is to test all the equipment, such as, laptop, microphone and ear buds **before** you get on the flight.

Masks

The wearing of masks, on all domestic flights in Australia, remains compulsory for the time being. What does this mean if you are on a call? How do you look? The mask will cover a large proportion of your face (if worn correctly). This means that your meeting participants will not be able to read your facial expressions during the meeting. All in all, this will require you as the participant to verbally articulate your thoughts during the meeting.

In addition, your video photo may look unusual. One suggestion would be to wear a funny mask. Again, it depends on the subject matter of the meeting. If the meeting were serious in nature, sticking to a dark coloured or neutral coloured mask would be the best option. It may be prudent to warn your meeting colleagues prior to the meeting that you are on a plane and cannot remove a mask.

Internet

Most domestic flights in Australia do offer free WIFI. This can be 'sketchy' at the best of times. To minimise disruption for the meeting and save bandwidth, if possible, turn the video off. In addition, Virgin Airlines (for example) does offer the 'high speed' (paid) option for the Internet. This may be the best option for anyone wishing to conduct a meeting without disruption.

Laptops and devices

The number one rule before you get on the plane is to make sure that your devices are charged - this means laptop, tablet, ear buds and mobile phone. Better still, charge them at the terminal before you board.

Mouse

Some people love them, some people hate them. For remote work, however, a charged wireless mouse is invaluable. A wireless mouse is compact and portable. Just remember to charge it before the flight and ensure that the USB connector is in your laptop.

Passengers

Working on a plane may not be ideal when you are sharing close quarters with seat mates. If you can try and get the window seat, the window seat offers the least amount of interference in the guise of drink trolleys going past and/ or passengers asking you to move during the flight. It may be wise to even tell your seat mates that you are working. Generally, if you wear your wireless headphones, most people will know it is a sign you are not in a talkative mood.

Software

If you use other software, such as, Otter Ai to take notes, there are a few things to remember. Such software relies on an audio recording to transcribe. If you are on mute wearing headphones, such software cannot be used. As a tip, if you find it difficult to take notes in a meeting, use TEAMS. TEAMS - when it records a meeting - serves as a transcript function. The downside is that a TEAMS recording will not highlight important parts of the meeting (unlike Otter Ai).

Natural lighting

Natural lighting is important for video calls. On a plane, this can be difficult (if not impossible). The use of artificial lighting with lamps also is not practical. For the optimum lighting effect, keep your blinds open if possible. Another suggestion is to use the torch facility on the iPhone - to avoid looking too dark. This author kept the torch on and mounted the iPhone on top of the laptop. It was a crude but effective measure. As a note, the author did tell her seat mates about the meeting and the use of a torch (as expected, seat mates were disinterested).

Conclusion

Remote working can be successful - and this includes from aeroplanes. What it does require is some planning prior to the flight and, mostly importantly, a sense of humour.

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About the author

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How I use technology as a WFA practitioner, teacher and academic administrator

Cyril Jankoff

August 2022

It was not planned this way, but I work in several different areas, and below I will discuss my WFA (Working from Anywhere) and related technology issues.

My different areas of work

I am the UBSS Programs Director of the Melbourne Campus and the Executive Delivery Mode MBA. This is a part-time position. I also work as a CPA accountant and a solicitor, using my accounting, finance and legal training, as well as the knowledge gained from my MBA, where I assist clients with their commercial and legal issues. I also teach, work as a corporate trainer and lecture undergraduate and graduate students. My education activities have an interesting origin. While in

graduate school in 1986, the Head of Department of Business and Law asked if I was interested in teaching in the evenings because the full-time staff did not want to work in the evenings. I gladly accepted the offer and have been teaching ever since. This is my 36th continuous year of university teaching which started with undergraduate students in 1986 and where I added MBA students in 1992. In addition, I have for nearly thirty years provided in-house training to corporate executives and now so on a regular basis locally, interstate and internationally.

Working from anywhere

As you see, I can, and indeed do, work from anywhere, whether it is from my home, my UBSS office, my private office, an airport lounge, in a taxi, on the plane, on the beach, in my car etc. To do this reasonably comfortably I need assistance. I am a computer novice. This is my story, and you may be more sophisticated, but this is what I am currently using. If you have any suggestions, please contact me.

My technology

To function efficiently when WFA, I try to keep my life simple, and my technology is basic and includes:

- *Computer*: office commuter with a wide extra screen, and two laptops, one in my UBSS office and one in my other office
- *Mouse*: cordless on all three computers for ease of use
- *Key software*:
 - On computer:
 - Microsoft suite: the usual, including Word, PowerPoint and Excel
 - Microsoft Snipping Tool: to copy parts of what is shown on screen
 - Microsoft Word dictation and Dragon dictation: makes writing quicker and more

- accurate than typing (I find this software a great time saver)
- Video communications: Zoom and TEAMS
- Headphone: to be used with the main computer
- *Scanner*: stand-alone scanner in my home office
- On Phone:
 - Microsoft Word dictation and Dragon dictation
 - Microsoft OneDrive: to access Microsoft Suite files when away from a computer
 - Apple Notes: to scan documents by phone
 - Facetime: to look at the party you are talking to over the phone
 - Video communications: Zoom and Teams (this can also be used over the phone)
- *Phone earpieces*: for hand free calls (with and without cable)
- *Bluetooth speaker*: to provide music when I am teaching students face-to-face
- *Mouse pad*: soft UBSS mousepad used with the laptops and placed onto the laptop's keyboard when closed
- *Mobile phone*: I chose an Apple iPhone 13, as for me it is easy to use, and information and assistance can easily be obtained (the last thing I want is to have technology that is hard to maintain and use)
- *Stand for each laptop*: so that it is easier to type, view the screen and to use Zoom and Teams
- *Scanner*: stand-alone scanner in my home office, but I can also use the Apple Notes software on my mobile phone.
- *Bag*: my computer that I use at UBSS travels with me most of the time and the bag I carry with it includes:
 - A charging cable (both laptops are HP, and thus, both use the same charging cable)

I seek that all electronic devices are reasonably charged (which I also do with the petrol in my car)

- Two spare cordless mouse batteries
- A phone charger with three alternative endpieces:
 - Apple charger and lightning cable
 - USB Type C Cable
 - Micro USB cable
- An HDMI cable when I travel in order to offer corporate training so that my computer can connect with the client's data projector / electronic screen
- A phone charger and spare phone earpieces in my car
- *Telstra Premium Tech Services*: \$15.00 per month to assist if support is required
- *Charging pack*: to charge my phone if it runs out of battery when I am interstate
- *External hard drive memory*: to supplement my cloud-based memory, I back up my computer memory monthly to an external hard drive
- *Computer bag*: not a cheap one, but one with a bit of style to it, to carry the equipment when I am WFA (it carries all my equipment for the day)
- *Phone access (also on all computers)*:
 - *Money*: bank account access in case I need money
 - *Newspaper*: to keep up with the news
 - *Email access*: for my different email accounts
 - *Others*: internet, camera, timer, Google and Wikipedia for research, COVID vaccination documents, all key documents such as passport, Medicare card, driver's licence, health insurance fund details
- *Portable table*: to be used in the car (it fits onto the steering wheel - have done much work while waiting in the car between appointments, for children etc)

My wallet

Making my life far easier, I fortunately no longer have a big bulging wallet. I now only have my phone with a cover which protects both the back and the front of the phone. Between the phone screen and the front cover I carry the following:

- Credit cards (one for business and one for private), Medicare card and health insurance cards (they are all on my phone if the card is lost / misplaced)
- Myki (public transport card)
- Several business cards

Working in practice

I have a wide scope of work. Having the above computers and technology makes my life so easy when I am WFA, locally, interstate or overseas. I found that a lot of the writing for my books and courses was not undertaken in the office, but outside, that is, while WFA. When one thinks about it, there is a lot of time wasted during the day and when one travels interstate and, in particular, overseas.

My IT man

My IT man is a critical professional person in my life, and I like to treat him well. When he leaves my office after attending to my technology, he leaves with a bottle of wine or box of chocolates. When he renders me a tax invoice, I pay him within five minutes of receiving his tax invoice. I never query his invoices, and there is a reason for this: I am *very* sure that I need him more than he needs me!

About the author

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Working from Anywhere - A concept whose time has come

Daniel Bendel

August 2022

In this article I will be discussing the social and technical factors that have all aligned to fuel the 'working from anywhere' and 'working from home' trend. The pandemic may have accelerated this trend but there were, in my opinion, three major factors already in play - social changes; advancement in IT; and rising property values.

Social changes

Many older readers of this contribution will likely agree that we have seen huge social changes over the last fifty years. Who would have thought fifty years ago that the United States would have a black American president? How about couples living together without marrying, gay marriage and the like?

One big social change is the rise of the two income families, but even more significant in the last thirty years is the interchanging

between husband and wife on lifestyle balance, that is, working versus looking after the kids, domestic duties, et cetera. This huge social change has been putting pressure on the income earner to be more at home. There has been a hidden desire just waiting for a catalyst like the COVID-19 pandemic for it to be set in motion.

Changes to working patterns have been occurring for some time, with the growth of part-time and casual work. Some part-time work was “tolerated” so that the worker - usually female - could do other things such as shopping or “the school pick-up”.

Where I worked, the CEO disliked part-timers. He wanted the employee to be available whenever he needed them. I remember him growling that “Mary” was on her day off. I wonder how today he would have coped with staff working from home. He expected staff to work long hours at the office and there was an unwritten expectation for senior staff to work on Saturdays. I used to joke that staff went in on a Saturday to get “appearance money”. That old generational attitude has the built-in implication that if you are not seen to be working then you are not working.

My CEO would have really struggled with the WFH/WFA changes caused by the pandemic. I am sure he would have adapted as all clever business people do. Many recent surveys indicate that staff now want to stay with these changes. A survey of nearly 1200 companies, conducted by the Australian HR Institute in July 2022, found just 4 per cent required employees to work in the office full-time. Of those surveyed, 7 per cent of organisations allowed employees to work from home continuously, while 34 per cent had no set number of days required in the office but did encourage it. The average proportion of employees working continuously from home has increased from 5 per cent before the pandemic to 18 per cent. Almost 30 per cent of companies are requiring a minimum of three days a week in the office and 16 per cent require two days.

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/work/at-work/australian-employers-defeated-in-battle-to-keep-staff-in-the-office/news-story/d2416db50ab3066b94f6956dda8e688d>

The changes go even further than this. Many of the younger generation workers are refusing to work in the old-style way. They are happy not to work at all unless it suits them. For employers to attract good staff they will need to work with whatever technology is available to entice them.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-15/generation-z-millennials-quitting-jobs-financial-struggles/101304758>

IT changes

We have had significant technology improvements, particularly in IT, with the dramatic increase in computer power over time. Then there is the biggest disruptor of them all - the Internet. Up until only a few years ago, we saw many people using the Internet (for business) by simply catching up on their work from home, checking emails, basic banking, and maybe preparing the odd document. And then the pandemic struck. Without the technological advances in recent years, including the various Microsoft applications - file sharing, Wi-Fi, online meetings - businesses would not have coped with the pandemic inducing the huge shift to working from home. I wonder, will this be temporary?

I know many of the contributors to this book will talk about how they use their IT applications wherever they are, and about the hardware and software applications that they can use to conduct their work. I am not up to date with much of the advanced hardware and software of my associates. I only have one computer at home which is a Windows 7 that I have upgraded to a Windows 10. Nevertheless, I am not a total IT ignoramus. I do use backups to the Cloud and an external hard drive. I do have a large screen and run all the Microsoft applications, my tax software (I am a CPA accountant who provides professional taxation advice and lodgement services) and Zoom on the computer.

Even without all that equipment, however, everyone has in their hand an extremely powerful tool - their mobile phone. The average

mobile phone is said to be one million times more powerful than the Apollo 11 guidance computer.

Recently, I joined my friends for a game of golf. While waiting to play, I checked my emails and responded to most of them. I made a few calls and sent some text messages and then attached a couple of photos of some products to an associate. No one with whom I connected would have known where I was. Twenty years ago, however, I would have needed to be in my office to do all of this. But now I can do so from the golf course - and nobody would even know!

Property values

Commercial property values have risen over the years as well. Shopping centre owners such as Westfield and AMP require property values to increase to provide strong returns for their shareholders. There has been a short-term reality check with the effects of the pandemic, but will this last?

The result of this is that retailers need to earn higher gross margin percentage to make a profit, and indeed, to survive. In my time as director and company secretary of a manufacturer with many retail shops in shopping centres, I have seen retail gross profit margin percentages rise from 30% to well over 50% to ensure survival. This has fuelled the increase in cheap imports.

Commercial office rentals have grown in a similar way, placing many businesses and professionals under significant rental pressure. So suddenly, because of WFH/WFA, they see an opportunity to reduce their rent - a major cost. A case in point - a senior Telstra manager advised that they have reduced office space and he now has to book in if he wants to come into the office. I asked him how the Telstra staff are accountable, and he said they have so many meetings and reporting requirements that this is not an issue. What is happening to this excess in office areas? Many are being converted to apartments to cater to the unaffordable residential housing market.

Conclusion

The network of change is thus catered for by a combination of underlying social drivers, economic drivers and, fundamentally, all facilitated by IT.

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Productivity and Workspace Design

Art Phillips

August 2022

'Work plays an influential role on our lives, and the quality of working environments can have considerable impact on our health and wellbeing'

(Paradise, Hynes, Proulx, de Sousa, Jicol, Esenkaya 2018).

WFA (working from anywhere) and WFH (working from home) are both the new norm for our global workforce. Prior to the pandemic, some companies had already allowed their staff to work from home, but since the effects from COVID-19 and lockdowns which began in March 2020, offsite working has increased substantially - and much remains the same since lockdowns have eased.

In an analysis of data issued by the US Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it is revealed that 4.7 million people, which make about 3.4% of the US workforce, were already working remotely

before the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) took the world by storm. This is an increase of 1%, or 0.8 million, from 2015 (Marinova 2022).

Marinova also says: Gartner, Inc. (research) found that 88% of business organizations all over the world mandated or encouraged all their employees to work from home as the virus started to spread at exponential rates.

The research also indicates some interesting facts given in USD, such as, on average a company can save \$11,000 annually for each employee who works remotely half-time, and that people who work remotely retain \$4,000 more per year generally (saving on travel, food, and the like). Surveys have indicated that 99% of remote workers want to continue telecommuting in the future, and that 90% of remote workers would recommend working remotely to a friend.

Setting up your workspace correctly

Careful thought and planning must be considered when working in any environment, whether it be an office space within the business's location, from your home office space or working remotely, for example, in a coffee shop, hotel room - anywhere for that matter. The aura of one's surroundings is critical to well-focused productivity, as the human perception of space, environment and the feel factor are critical to achieving the most productive outcomes.

In the last 20 years, the modern office has gone through numerous evolutions. The early 2000s saw the death of cubicle farms and the rise of open floorplans, and 2015 brought waves of ping pong and foosball tables to some offices. While office trends come and go, one thing that does not change is the impact that the office environment has on employee health and wellbeing (Kohll 2019).

Kohll further states: a quality workspace design leads to a less stressful and more productive atmosphere. It's essential that employers take the physical work environment of their employees into consideration. Employees need to feel comfortable and calm in their physical work settings to produce their best work.

I argue that we should not just leave this up to the worker themselves – in the design of the space for the work environment, I strongly suggest that business organizations take this onboard and create a *‘working offsite handbook’*, a guide to aid in how to set up the most effective workplace design for your available space and for the organization to provide stipends to help create the most ideal environment possible for their workers offsite.

To my knowledge, most businesses leave it up to each individual when it comes to the importance of office space design. Whilst it is acknowledged that most companies do supply the communication means for their employees, such as laptop computers, applications for remote use, mobile phones, and various accessories, not many companies offer assistance nor stipends to design an effective office environment for their employees offsite.

If you want your employees to improve their productivity, it could come down to the structure and setting of their office. It is not only a matter of the location, either, but the layout of office furniture and equipment, the flow between employee workspace (and home disruptive spaces), and the overall vibe and atmosphere of their office (Post 2022).

I again argue that a comfortable and compelling workplace design is a necessary aspect to ensure employee productivity, so why not write a company **‘WFH / WFA Handbook’**?

As BOS, Inspiring Workspace Furnishings (2022) states: spatial shapes and layouts have an emotional and behavioral effect on employees within the workspace. These emotions are deeply psychological and rarely have any conscious effect. The goal of any office, in-house or offsite, is for the entire staff to work in harmony. It might be helpful to think of the designing of these layouts as tuning piano strings.

Like colors, shapes have deep psychological effects on workers in the workspace. Using these tools together can create significant change in the workplace and in their personal moods and emotions.

The shape of circles

Circles have freedom of movement. They are associated with comfort, safety, and warmth. Due to the movement and completeness of a circular shape, power, electricity, harmony, and infinity are all associated emotionally. With all elements of the shape considered, like the movement, structure, and how it is represented culturally, it is often associated with protection, integrity, infinity, perfection, and harmony. Due to its geometry, it provides emphasis on improving concentration.

Circles are a very collaborative space. They create a rounded area where everyone has an equal place at the table. It removes the workers away from their other workstations and puts them in a neutral room to focus on the meeting at hand. Because of the warmth circles bring, the staff working in a circular room actually began to care more about their work.

I have performed as a touring musician (guitarist, musical director, and orchestrator) with many acts such as Barry Manilow, The Lettermen, and Demis Roussos, working ‘in the round’, a revolving **circular** stage, with the audience spread all around us. I can share firsthand that the feel of these performances of working in a circle connected like no other front of house staged performance. The effects of working on the revolving ‘theatre-in-the-round’ stage was much more intimate than any other performing method as the audience felt an integral part of the artists’ performance, where together we connected and communicated like nothing I have ever experienced before. Other artists have said the same, and as Stephen Joseph says: *‘theatre-in-the-round’ demands fast action, movement, and sincere performances from the actors (performers). It is exciting and real. It is theatre in 3D.*

BOS promotes ‘Inspiring Workspace Furnishings’ (2022) from their online website publication, pointing to the important categories to consider:

Honesty and stability

Those are only two words used to describe hard edged shapes like squares, rectangles, and pyramids. These shapes are rigid, and therefore, represent order, rational, discipline, solidarity, equality, and security. Remember, these straight-edged shapes do not have to be on the same latitude as the office.

Experimenting with the angles of these shapes can help fight off some of the boredom that we are used to seeing in office spaces. But since they stand for discipline, but also peacefulness, it might be a perfect fit for a new-take on an old-fashioned cubicle.

Growth and dynamism

Triangles are built from the base up, so they have a strong foundation. This means stability and growth. Like circles, they have energy and power because of the way their shape indicates the movement from the ground up and strength because of the direction in which they are pointing. Because of their sharp points, each represents an idea like progression, direction, and purpose. Triangles are best suited for high-efficiency areas in need of dynamic solutions, accurate results, and dominant energies.

Creativity in spirals

There is no greater shape for creativity than a spiral. In nature, many growth patterns are indicated in a spiral shape. It takes on the warmth and energy of a circle, while it spirals upwards. Because it does have an end to it, it also represents the cycle of birth and death, as well as evolution, fertility, transformation, and expansion.

A spiral becomes transformative in the journey, allowing flexibility and release of energy through the life cycle. Spirals are not only helpful for creative spaces, but in any field, help to unlock another part of the brain.

Transition and balance

Vertical, horizontal, cross, and curved shapes represent not only transition and balance, but faith, unity, and hope, as well as relationships. They have a need for connecting to each other. Vertical lines and shapes are associated with strength, whereas horizontal are seen as peaceful.

Curved shapes are musical. They represent rhythm and movement, happiness, pleasure, and generosity. Sharp shapes are very youthful and energetic.

Femininity and masculinity

Rarely considered in the workplace design is the differences that masculinity and femininity associations have in a workspace area. It goes beyond the color blue or the color pink. It is said that the triangle's strength makes them masculine, so it is not uncommon to see them in large tech startup companies or sales divisions, in many cases. Like triangles, sharp shapes are also associated with masculinity, whereas curved shapes represent femininity.

Tips and tricks

A poorly designed workspace can cause mental and physical anxiety which wrecks concentration and performance. Therefore, I suggest these important items to consider:

Identify the most suitable work location within your home, away from disruption and interferences;

Shape of your workspace;

Size of room environment;

Placement of your desk within the space;

Working desk design;

Chair comfort;

Acoustics;

Room color scheme;

Air quality;

Use of natural light;

Keeping your space clean;

Living plants;

Keep hydrated;

Self-movement awareness and exercises;

Conscious use of breaks to achieve the most from your work time;

Knowing when to walk away for the moment;

The efficient use of time, and use of the trash bin.

Do not be afraid of the rubbish (trash) bin, as in when an idea is not working, do not continue to try and reshape it, as if it is not flowing well, it probably will never work naturally.

Keeping it fresh, clean and tidy

I feel that when a worker continues to spend time on an idea without clear, conscious breaks of time, the task loses its energy and creative magic. Keeping the focus and creative momentum can only exist when the worker is refreshed, clear headed and is aware of positive flowing energy within.

As Jamie Fertsch, director and co-founder of [Xdesk](#), a U.S.-based company that creates customized, ergonomic desks out of environmentally friendly materials, says: the best way to stay focused during a long day of work is to acknowledge when you have hit a productivity wall and to take lots of short, quick breaks to gain a new perspective on what you are working on (Post 2022). She also said that productivity is not directly correlated with time spent on a task. It is important to make sure that you are recalibrating and refueling your mind and body every so often (Post 2022).

If you are sitting in a messy work area, you have created a burden both consciously and sub-consciously for yourself, and you are probably not going to get much work completed.

Take time every few hours to keep your workspace tidy - this includes your computer desktop and electronic filing systems in addition to your physical space environment.

Air quality

There is also a lack of knowledge and awareness about co2 levels and healthy air quality - the purity of air within an office can have a significant impact on your employees' health and, in turn, productivity. Research carried out by the World Green Building Council recorded an 11% increase in productivity as a result of increased fresh air to the workstation and a reduction in pollutants (Kohll 2019).

I consistently keep an eye on the air quality around me by carrying an **Aranet4 Radical Monitor**, made by AviateRX Pty Ltd (2022), an effective co2 handheld portable monitor device sensor that reads carbon dioxide levels to ensure the room and space that I work in is well-ventilated and has healthy oxygen levels.

The level of co2 in outside air is usually between 420 and 500ppm (parts per million). Even though atmospheric co2 levels have increased upward in recent times due to our numerous air pollutants, inside room levels should still ideally be below 600ppm. Anything under 600 indicates a well-ventilated room. Levels above 1000ppm should be strongly avoided.

Aranet's product guide states: less than 600ppm is best, 600ppm ~ 800ppm is acceptable, 800ppm ~ 1000ppm avoid if possible, and greater than 1000ppm avoid at all costs. Visit www.aranet.com for more information.

Richard Corsi, an indoor air quality expert at Portland State University, who has been taking carbon dioxide measurements for years with many different instruments, says that when the indoor concentration of carbon dioxide, co2, reaches 800 parts per million and above, then each time you breathe in, one percent of the air you inhale has come from the exhalations of others. During a pandemic that's an alarming thought (Mooney 2021).

Mooney also says, in the new pandemic trend, people are turning to carbon dioxide monitoring devices to help assess ventilation quality.

Article about the Aranet4 cO2 reader:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/health/2021-09-11/covid-transmission-co2-carbon-dioxide-monitor-ventilation-school/100444884>

Video about the Aranet4 cO2 reader:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q45TIsyOuv8>

Feng shui

Feng shui should become a part of the office design plan as it can improve the dynamic of your workspace, increasing positive productivity.

The practice of feng shui originated in China more than 3,000 years ago and has been embraced in Asian-Pacific places such as Japan, Vietnam, Korea, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia. In recent years, the feng shui philosophy has become increasingly popular in Western countries as well.

So, how can we bring feng shui to our workplace? With feng shui, objects in a room are arranged according to the flow of natural energy. The concept also involves using colors, natural materials, and the layout of a space to create a pleasantly favorable ambience.

From incorporating specific colors to placing your furniture in the proper spot, there are many ways to bring feng shui to your office.

Here are some tips from Julie Marks (2019), medically reviewed by [Debra Rose Wilson, Ph.D., MSN, R.N., IBCLC, AHN-BC, CHT.](#)

Place yourself in a power position within the room

According to feng shui, you should place your desk so that you are sitting in the power position. This is the furthest spot from the entrance of the room. Arrange your desk so that you can see the door when seated.

Create a strong backing

You can produce strong feng shui backing by positioning your chair so that your back is against a solid wall. If this is not possible, try placing a row of lush plants behind your seating area.

Choose the right chair

A comfortable chair with a high back is ideal for feng shui. It is believed that a high back creates support and protection.

Introduce water and plant elements

Experts believe incorporating water features and plants into your workspace can create positive energy. Try placing a fountain with moving water in your office. A live plant can also help improve indoor air quality.

Hang artwork

Surround your office with images and objects that are inspiring, such as pictures with mottos or images that symbolize what you want to accomplish.

Choose the right colors

Feng shui office colors should create balance without being overwhelming. Some popular choices for consideration are: soft yellow, sandstone, pale gold, pale orange, pale green, blue green, and white.

Natural lighting

When possible, use natural light from windows. Yellow-tinted and fluorescent lighting can bring about fatigue. If you must use artificial light, opt for incandescent, full-spectrum light bulbs.

Conclusion

Ensure that you have a calm, clean, quiet, well-lit, and natural-feel workspace. And importantly, keep your homelife space and workplace space completely separate if this is possible. Do not overdo yourself and burn out. Take needed breaks.

The vibrations of a well-constructed office space will benefit your inner self and productivity.

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Art is an accomplished music composer and musician with a multitude of international credits. (Refer to <https://101.audio/bio-art-phillips/>)

Work from Phone: A Snapshot of Non-Tertiary Music Education in China

Shawn Kok

August 2022

My first online music lesson in 2008 was, for the lack of a better word, disastrous. Technology was trailing behind the exploding demands of Web 2.0, and professional equipment had not yet been commodified. Preparation for the lesson was technical and laborious, connection (with my students in Australia) was choppy, and the overall experience for both parties was lacklustre. A decade later, in 2018, I was in South China for a series of face-to-face percussion masterclasses. My students were non-tertiary music teachers from across the country. After each masterclass, I would have a few days to rest and travel to the next city for my next masterclass. It was during these days that I would give private lessons to those who were unable to attend my masterclasses in person. I video-called them from my hotel, sent them the materials and recordings from the masterclasses,

provided guidance in text, voice messages, images, and videos - all through WeChat, a messenger application on my mobile phone.

I was not just working from anywhere. I was working from my phone.

From Cloud Computing to Work from Phone

The ramifications of ubiquitous connectivity through computing power - known today as the Internet - first piqued the interest of academics at the close of the previous millennia, at the advent of the thumb drive, in a world of floppy disks and 256K dial-up connections or, what some would call, the steam age of digital technology. In 2004, Hiroaki Ogata postulated the profound concept that would go on to be somewhat of a poster child for ubiquitous learning (Ogata, 2004), ushering in speculations on the possibility of telework and taking work home (Felstead, et al., 2005) and a plurality of scholastic views on online learning (Cope, 2009; El-Bishouty, Ogata, Rahman, Yano, 2010; Yahya, Ahmad, Jalil, 2010; Gwo, Chin, 2011; Ogata & Ousaki, 2012) and online music learning (Brooke, 2013; Hebert, 2008).

Owing largely to geographical, geopolitical, and sociocultural reasons, China diligently woos online connectivity. According to HSBC, China surpassed 100 million Internet users in 2005, and today has “more Internet users than combined populations of the United States, Indonesia and Brazil, three of the world’s most populous countries” (2018). The nation also has over 1.96 billion mobile phone subscriptions in 2022 (Statistica, 2022) and accounts for over 10 percent of total mobile phone users globally (Slotta, 2022). As early as 2015, China possessed a vibrant domestic e-commerce environment and online ecosystem (Wang, Wang, Wu. 2015). At the top of 2019, when most parts of the world were showing off their newly-minted 4G status, China was already initialising 5G as a nationwide norm.

My observation tells me it was apparent that when Covid-19 intruded lives globally, most scrambled for independence from (their) conventional modi operandi while China segued -not without grumble

- “into” their mobile phones and mobile devices. For the non-tertiary music teacher, this meant that the world was now the office, as long as he or she had a mobile phone or device. In a broad sense, China skipped the “work from home” phase that other parts of the world were coerced into embracing.

How non-tertiary music teaching and learning skipped work from home

China’s high number of Internet and mobile phone users may be the linchpin of their Work From Home (WFH) phenomenon, there are, however, other aspects that are instrumental to this spectacle - the prevalent instructional methods to which the Chinese from China are exposed, their music-learning culture, and the learning tools they employ.

Teaching and learning strategies

Despite being vast topics, we can distil from the tenets of pedagogy, andragogy, heutagogy, and gerontology some common factors of how people learn: motivation (to learn), learning styles, and learning experience. In a highly-connected multimedia age, teachers and students alike can draw inspiration and purpose from a wide variety of online resources, ranging from high-quality videos or music concerts to copious amounts of information such as Blogs (web logs) and Vlogs (video logs) of artistes, influencers, and political figures past and present. Perhaps, children are instructed by their parents or guardians to learn, adult learners are self-motivated, and senior learners learn to stay connected.

Culture of learning music

At the risk of sounding casual, my teaching experience in China evidenced that the Chinese learn music how they learn anything else - relying heavily on written instruction such as a manuscript, and relentless practice. They regard the attainment of knowledge to be an

individual pursuit, and would spend hours on end observing and mimicking their teachers, reflecting upon their teachings and deciphering their instructions - as part of a self-imposed, necessary intellectual journey they have to make so to become well-learned in the subject. The Chinese character, 悟 (Wu4), often used to measure the success of knowledge transfer and which means to “know”, is made up of left and right components, “heart” and “five-mouths”, respectively. While the right component carries a few meanings, such as the five basic elements (gold, wood, water, fire, earth), and the five musical notes in the pentatonic scale, they collectively infer the concept of an ecosystem which, when combined with the left component, means “to know *wholistically*, in the *heart*” (Baidu, 2016).

Learning tools and learning experience

Online learning platforms or learning management systems have been around, and today we have plenty, including Coursera, edX, FutureLearn, Udacity, just to name a few. Nevertheless, the UX (user experience) and UI (user interface) of these said virtual learning environments gravitate toward the desktop computer or laptop, and cater for the Western part of the world. Another important element of a good learning experience is its sociality, which is also where the above mentioned learning systems suffer, as their classes, assignments, and assessments are undertaken individually and remotely. A third, intricate yet often neglected aspect of learning experience, is what I call “system fluidity in digital learning”, where the number of “moves” such as shuffling between applications or multiple log-ins a learner has to make during a learning phase or lesson disrupts the flow of learning, impairs the acquisition of knowledge, and degrades the learning experience.

The music classroom within the phone

Choose between synchronous and asynchronous learning with a classroom housed in your mobile phone. In a typical music course that

I conduct for my China students, class sizes range from eight to over one hundred people. For small class sizes, my classes are delivered through WeChat's video-call function (refer to appendix 1a), and through “Wei1 Shi1” (微师), WeChat's “Zoom” for big classes (appendix 1b). Both formats are housed within WeChat, the former liken to the FaceTime function in Facebook, the latter a virtual platform that dynamically conforms to the size and resolution of the mobile phone or device the student is using. Lessons are brief, usually 15-45 minutes weekly. In exchange for shorter contact time with my students, there is more provision of written instruction, music notation (appendix 1c), audio backing/practice tracks (appendix 1d), and video demonstrations (appendix 1e) pertaining to the learning point(s) of the lesson, in order to scaffold learning.

Assessment, feedback, and the sociality of learning in the phone

I have a group-chat for every course. The function of these chat groups is two-fold - first, as a “reception counter” for my students where I provide succinct replies to simpler questions, also acting as a catalyst for peer-learning, and second, as a safe, conducive environment for constructive discussions that often identifies gaps in learning and serves as feedback for me. Assignments are bitesize, each requiring 15-30 minutes, spread across the number of days between lessons. They are completed in a widget built for WeChat, called “Xiao3 Da2 Ka3” (小打卡). I also provide my feedback and conduct assessments within the widget (refer to image 2a).

Conclusion

With mobile computing technology inexorably becoming more powerful, the mobile phone will soon be, if not already, the “most accessible piece of technology to workers worldwide” (Mendes, 2020). Patterns of work have already changed and are still changing (Mullan, Wajcman, 2017). But while my music classes are suited to WFP, it is

hasty to say that the mobile phone will replace the computer as the main interface for work - or the home for the office - until the WFH phenomenon has penetrated even more types of work, especially the ones that function on human connection.

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Work from anywhere and the associated risks

Anurag Kanwar

August 2022

Introduction

Prior to COVID-19, work consisted of working in an office. In a brave new world that has followed COVID-19 much has been written about the benefits of remote work. A number of companies are even offering employees the opportunity to work from anywhere. But what is little understood is the risks of working from anywhere (remote work), particularly for employees. What are the implications for the broader organisational risk management framework?

Remote working has become common practice in business, both internationally and nationally. There is much literature on the benefits of remote working, from flexibility, higher productivity, cost savings to time saved on commutes, to name a but a few. According to the *Australian Financial Review*, the change from office work to remote working has made Australians happier and wealthier. The average Australian saved an average of \$10,000 a year as a result of remote work.

On the face of it, remote working seems like it is working for all stakeholders. In fact, some organisations highlight that they are 'remote' in their recruitment advertisements. See for example, Apple, Spotify, Twitter and Microsoft.

Yet, what about the risks to the organisation. Most, if not all, organisations consider risk as part of standard business operations. The five most common business risks faced by all organisations are:

- Security and fraud risk

- Compliance risk

- Operational risk

- Financial risk

- Reputational risk

In Australia, organisations are required by law to manage some types of risks, for example:

- Accidents and injury under Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) laws

- Customer complaints by treating customers fairly under Australian Consumer Law

- Injury or harm to employees by having workers' compensation insurance

- Potential environmental damage by meeting environmental laws

For the purposes of this article, I will focus on WHS laws in the State of New South Wales.

So what does this actually mean?

In NSW, directors and managers have personal liability (or responsibility) under WHS laws. The obligation is on the employer to ensure the safety of the work environment. This means that directors and managers are held legally responsible for any breaches that may occur under WHS laws.

There has been substantial case law in this area to state that directors and managers have a positive duty to be proactive to ensure that WHS laws are being met. See, for example, *James v Paul (No 2)* [2011]

NSWIRComm 117. The definition of ‘*officer*’ under the WHS Act is the same as ‘*officer*’ in the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

Officers are required to exercise ‘*due diligence*’ to ensure that the company is meeting its obligations under the WHS Act. This *positive duty* requires officers to:

1. Acquire and keep up-to-date knowledge of work health and safety matters
2. Gain an understanding of the nature of the operations of the business and the hazards and risks associated with those operations
3. Ensure that the person conducting the business uses appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business
4. Ensure that the person conducting the business has appropriate processes for receiving and considering information regarding incidents, hazards and risks and responding in a timely way to that information

Officers who breach their duties under the WHS Act may attract penalties that include fines of up to \$600,000.00 and five (5) years’ imprisonment. *WHS is clearly a serious matter.*

But what about working from home or anywhere?

At the date of writing there is little case law in this area. But as an acceptable rule of practice, WHS risks present in the workplace can be present in an employee’s remote place of work. (See, for example, the information provided by Safe Work Australia available here at <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/managing-health-and-safety/working-home>.)

The WHS risks or hazards typically present in a workplace can also be present in an employee’s home. These risks may be physical or psychological. Physical risks include:

- Slipping, tripping or falling

- Risks posed by working with electrical items
- Risks posed by manual handling
- Risks posed by incorrect or inadequate equipment (not ergonomic)

Unsafe or unhealthy working conditions can also lead to psychological risks, including:

- Being tasked with an excessive workload
- Contending with organisational change
- Managing conflicting demands
- Experiencing a lack of role clarity
- Feeling uninvolved in decision-making processes
- Contending with inadequate communication practices
- Experiencing loneliness and/or isolation

Is it just the working area itself that needs to meet WHS standards?

It is not just the working area that needs to be safe when an employee works from home. Facilities that the employee uses in the course of their working day are also subject to WHS standards - the kitchen and bathroom are two examples.

What are the employer's WHS obligations if an employee is injured while working from home?

If an employee sustains an injury while working at home, it would need to be determined whether the injury arose out of, or in the course of, the employee's employment. In recent years, there have been several cases where an employee has been injured at home and has been entitled to receive workers' compensation.

A case that considers this issue is that of a Telstra employee who slipped down the stairs while working from home. See *Hargreaves and Telstra Corporation Limited* [2011] AATA 417 (17 June 2011). The worker fell twice in two months, while wearing socks to get cough mixture from the fridge. Telstra argued that they should not be liable as

the worker was not at her designated workstation when she fell. Still, the tribunal found that both falls arose out of her employment with Telstra, and they were required to offer compensation.

In another case in NSW, a teacher brought student workbooks home after school to finish marking them. The books were in a cane basket, and the teacher slipped and fell on the stairs at her home while carrying them inside. She fractured her ankle and it was determined that her injuries arose out of her employment and compensation was awarded. See *Catherine Mary Hopkins v Department of Education and Communities* [2014] NSWCC25.

A sad case that also considers this issue is one brought to the Supreme Court of NSW with respect to workers' compensation. See the case of *Workers' Compensation Nominal Insurer v Hill* [2020] NSW CA 54. The court found that a woman killed by her partner (also her supervisor) at home was at her normal place of work. Therefore, her children were entitled to workers' compensation. While this case rested on some unique facts, employers need to be aware of domestic violence.

What about visitors?

Visitors - including children - who visit during working hours may be exposed to risks in the work environment the same as the employee. And, employers may find themselves exposed to liabilities. A good risk management plan will be able to assist employers to reduce WHS risks outside the office. SafeWork NSW has published a number of risk templates to assist employers. See <https://www.safe-work.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/easywhs/managing-risks/template>.

What about mental health?

Employers, under current WHS laws, must also manage mental health risks at work. The things that can harm mental health are known as 'psychological hazards'. These can include, for example, bullying,

harassment, poor support, low job control, job demands and isolation. Psychological risks can be managed using a risk management process.

Good communication with employees is important to determine realistic deadlines, clear instructions and monitoring of tasks.

Steps you may take to manage risks to an employee's mental health - where reasonably practicable - may include:

- Maintaining regular communication with employees
- Eliminating or minimising physical risks
- Providing employees with a point of contact to discuss their concerns
- Providing information about mental health and other support services available to employees - for example, *Beyondblue has set up a freely available mental health support website or you may have an existing employee assistance program*
- Staying informed with information from official sources and sharing relevant information with your workers
- Informing employees of their entitlements if they become unfit for work - or have caring responsibilities

How can employers make sure an employee's home is a safe working environment?

The best way for employers to make sure an employee's home is a safe working environment is to conduct a safe work risk assessment. This risk assessment considers physical risk but also psychological risks. An issue that arises is who completes this risk assessment. Some employers ask employees to do self-assessments. The question arises as to whether an employee can be objective. In addition, employees may not have full understanding of WHS requirements. Some employees may consider it invasive for a third party to visit their home. The issue remains that it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that the 'at home' or 'remote environment' is safe.

Conclusion

While working from anywhere has become common practice globally, and while it may improve flexibility, there are some risks that need to be considered for both employees and employers. These need to be examined when looking at remote work.

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Working from anywhere – The devil’s advocate or a paradigm shift?

Jim Mienczakowski

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WFA is already happening. This paper is not about how to do it but about what it all might mean. What are the wider societal implications of emerging WFA/WFH developments? Will WHA eventually change more than just our places of work?

The Earth on Fire

It was just a little while before Melbourne’s full lockdown restrictions finally ended that, on my way to a board meeting, I found myself alone in the CBD. Eerily, it was midmorning and midweek. Once upon a time, at that time of day, the streets would have been heaving and jostling with office workers - but no. Just me - until I crossed into Swanston Street, where a few other masked figures were scurrying by.

People could have been busy in their offices, I suppose - but it transpired that most had chosen not to make the journey into Melbourne's centre on that day. Or on most days of any week.

I felt a bit like Peter Stenning (the journalist in the 1961 British movie, 'The Day the Earth Caught Fire'). In it, the world is in the grip of a global drought caused by too many atomic bomb tests. London is baked dry, and the river Thames has dried up. During the opening sequence, Stenning walks through London's empty streets just moments after a further nuclear detonation has taken place - this time to try and correct the Earth's wobbling orbit, etc, etc, etc. The question for Stenning on his solitary CBD stroll is, '*Will the Earth survive and human life return to normal?*' My question was much smaller, '*Is going to the office a thing of the past?*'

Well, perhaps it is not such a small question. At the time of writing, still only 38% of Melbourne's city workers have returned to their offices and many of this travelling 38% may only be visiting their city bases sporadically. In fact, nearly all of my friends and acquaintances are now WFH/WFA aficionados. One admitted that his productivity had actually improved - as his normal city 'office day' usually revolved around frequent coffee shop chats with his various groups of colleagues and reports. And although his social life had clearly deteriorated, he was still easily able to achieve his work targets and report reviewing - whilst going nowhere near his city office or (sometimes) even his home.

Will Melbourne's CBD recover?

Ultimately, the extensive and continuous lockdown culture of recent years has delivered a potentially lethal blow to the 'going to the office' routine. Unless state and federal governments produce legislation demanding the return of knowledge and office workers to their original shared workplaces, things are unlikely to change much at all. And as state and federal governments comprise politicians who are

keen to remain popular, re-elected and employed, workplace legislation of the kind required isn't at all likely.

So where does all of this leave us?

Like the climate change questions raised (and left unanswered) in the 1961 film here mentioned, sometimes we just never seem to know how or if society will be impacted by any given sociological trend or technological development. Terrorism, for example, in the 1970s transformed the experience of aviation forever. It had significant, and has continuing, impacts on how we travel and how we protect our air services, but (depending on where in the world you live) it did not really change most people's everyday routines significantly. Conversely, the smart phone has had immense consequences for human communications and social interactions. (Just think about dating apps and swiping left or right! Unheard of in our parents' day.) Smart phones are now an ever-present factor influencing people's existences. And they continue to change and effect the way human beings behave and engage with the world. And they slipped into our lives with a whisper and not a bang...

WFH/WFA – Represents Major Societal Change and Business Opportunities

WHA/WFH seems a small change - but it is not. When it comes to WFA possibilities, the obvious implications are numerous. Some 62% fewer people are, at this point in time, making journeys into the Melbourne CBD and metropolitan regions for work purposes - that is a 62% reduction in people movements. There is a significant decrease in employers' workspace, heating and lighting needs, a major decline in CBD footfall for cafes and restaurants formerly serving the CBD workforce, reduced parking, tram, bus and train requirements. This list goes on and on - and if the WFA movement continues, what will change in our cities? Inevitably, it will change many things, including the employment of some and the property/investment portfolios of others. But

what, ultimately, will it also mean for you and your future employability?

Sometimes simple observations and ideas lead to major shifts in how we think and behave as a society. In 1971, the Austrian philosopher, Ivan Illich, proposed revolutionary alternative sites for learning to take place - places other than schools. His basic premise was that much of 'schooling' and 'learning' was, in his view, concerned with institutionalisation - learning your place in established social and cultural hierarchies, and in students being controlled by the power structures of school establishments, particularly in religious schooling settings. At that time, irrespective to where your politics located you in response to Illich's notion of **deschooling society**, there were, in actuality, very few viable alternatives available with respect to providing adequate replacement learning engagement opportunities for children. A great number of other sociologists and philosophers have also contributed to this critique of schooling in what amounted to a popular *thought-wave* of change.

None-the-less, the idea and philosophy of 'deschooling' potentially influenced some significant educational developments:

- Home schooling approaches became much more popular in the 1970s and that movement still continues to grow.
- Community schooling also became an alternative to standard comprehensive schooling.
- Some quite unconventional private schools sprouted up (particularly for early years child development), offering radically different student centred (flexible) engagement (*children studied what they wanted to at their own pace, etc.*).
- Much educational pedagogic experimentation took place, and some *ideologically driven*, and theoretical modes of analysis (such as deconstructivism) became embedded in various teaching methodologies.

Fast forward some fifty years to today. Covid school closures (particularly in Victoria) demonstrated that now, more than ever before, schools are considered as essential for *mindin* children whilst their

parents (ostensibly) go to work - as well as important places of student learning and education. Nevertheless, Covid also demonstrated that most students did manage to successfully study online *at home* whilst their parents were with them throughout lockdown. (*It was not always popular though*).

Many, Many More Parents Working & Child Minding from Home?

So, with 62% more urban adults now WFA or WFH, could schooling, like the office work experience, actually change even further through utilising educational WFA technologies? Could Covid prompted WFA approaches radically alter the current experience of schooling - as it is doing with university and higher education in general? Could WFA be the ultimate mechanism for *even more home-schooling*? And might a more technologically supported home-schooling or partial home-schooling environment also be part of a solution for the struggling state school system and its teacher shortages?

I, of course, do not know what will happen with WFA, but I am confident that such a major shift in travel, work behaviours and freedom from static workplaces does in itself imply a massive cultural transformation, with business opportunities burgeoning for those who can invent ways of capitalising on the trend. Shifting some schooling to a mixed mode (at school face-to-face and also some offered through location-free WFA) relationship might be a start. I have a few ideas on how schools and classes could be beneficially reduced in size and cost (*de-structured*) through WFA/WFH approaches - without losing the desirable elements of student socialisation we often associate with children learning from other children. But the real societal changes yet to be made in this area (as with Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Tesla) will most probably be driven by business entrepreneurs - not educators or philosophers. So now is the ideal time for the business savvy to see where they can take a WFA driven future.

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Adapting to the ‘living with COVID’ world

Alan Finch

August 2022

The following is based on the messages contained in an address to graduating students from the Universal Business School Sydney (UBSS) in August. Graduation addresses are, of necessity, succinct and I have taken the opportunity to expand on the brief points which were made in the speech about managing and leading the people who work with you.

Successful degree completion is the product of persistent hard work, self-motivation and occasional sleep deprivation. These same elements are requirements for a successful career, irrespective of whether you are working on site, working from home - or for that matter, *working from anywhere*.

Wherever you work and whatever your occupation, an understanding of the basic principles of maintaining good human relationships in a workplace context is an essential part of a successful career. To

suggest that these skills will no longer be so important in an age of automation and ongoing digitisation of the workplace - is simply wrong!

We are in a vastly different space in the changed 'living with COVID' world. Adaptability and a mixture of online and interactive contact in an office are likely to be the future of our working world. Whether you work in services or sales, whether you are in marketing, IT, finance or management, the way you deal with people will still be important. I share the following suggestions about what I regard as practical advice for leading and managing people, drawn from my own experience.

Hiring

Appoint the brightest people you can, but define the specific skills and experience which are necessary to perform the role and ensure that those selected for interview conform to those requirements. Also be aware of the potential "fit" of an individual within the organisation. Use a selection process which relies on the assessments of a small group whose judgement you trust and never be concerned about whether a bright or overqualified applicant might show you up or displace you. If they excel it reflects well upon you.

If you make a bad appointment, and it happens despite best intentions, fix it as soon as possible to minimise the negative impact on your team. Delaying action until contract expiry might avoid the unpleasantness of terminating someone, but the consequences of prevarication can be quite dysfunctional. Always include an appropriate probation period in your employment contracts, say 6 months, set KPIs or objectives to be achieved during that period and review the situation fully, clinically and objectively at that time. Always remember that you have to act in the interests of your organisation.

Managing and leading

There is often confusion about what constitutes leadership and what differentiates it from management. My own definition is that

management is primarily supervision, that is, doing your best to ensure that staff are performing their prescribed duties properly, functioning as they should, and working together. Leadership is developing staff to achieve their potential and ensuring that they are guided and supported to do so to the benefit of the organisation and in line with the strategic direction of the organisation. Management is about ensuring that work gets done; leadership is about motivating people. A good manager should be able to do both.

Retention and promotion expectations

Remember that bright people usually are ambitious. I have always taken the view that if opportunities for advancement do not exist in my organisation, I should be realistic about retention expectations. Three to five years of excellent service and contribution are preferable to a decade of solid but moderate performance. Support good people seeking advancement and let them know that they can depend upon your support if they wish to move on. They will be useful contacts for you as their careers advance.

Be careful to promote on the basis of demonstrated competence, performance and potential. Don't fall into the trap of the Peter Principle (promoting people beyond their level of competence).

Build trust and respect

Acknowledge achievement. If one of your people does something good, tell them so, preferably in front of their peers, and also acknowledge their contribution to your senior colleagues. Do not take credit for someone else's hard work or good idea, but acknowledge the source. Be a mentor to your people. Encourage and support them and facilitate opportunities for them to grow their experience and knowledge. Look for opportunities for them to learn from networking which will provide such opportunities.

Don't try to shift blame. We all make mistakes, be prepared to own yours. To do otherwise will cost you the respect of your staff.

Pick your battles, but do try to defend your staff against unfair criticism.

Do not micromanage people. Empower them by letting them do what they have been hired to do. Interfering and taking away responsibility can be demoralising, and some senior managers cannot help themselves. Understand that you are unlikely to have the same understanding of a function as the staff member who has that function as a prime responsibility, and that you are likely to diminish the respect that they have for you if you do not respect their knowledge of their role.

Above all else, remember that you are dealing with other human beings. They have feelings, they need regular feedback and guidance, they need encouragement and they should be treated with respect.

Fostering initiative

Encourage initiative, innovation and creativity. The best ideas often come from those at the coal face because they fully understand processes and usually know how they could be improved. Encourage staff to think about their roles and to share their thoughts about how to improve processes and make them more efficient. And don't be afraid to implement suggestions which make sense.

Communication - The importance of listening

Learn to know when you should speak and when you should let others do so - that is essential in creating effective communication. You need to show that you are willing to listen to inputs and prepared to encourage them. Listen, be civil, be patient and try to be fair and consistent in your responses.

Create opportunities for your managers to meet with you individually to facilitate their (and your) understanding of how they are progressing, and collectively, so that different functional areas can collaborate and work together more effectively. This will also

encourage better communication between them in their day to day work environment and also develop respectful and productive relationships.

Always leave space in your diary to accommodate a meeting with a staff member who wants to see you.

Dispute resolution

Things don't always go smoothly, and when dealing with disagreements between your staff, always make sure that you obtain a balanced understanding of what the issues are before you make any decision or take any action. I have always found that by sitting down with the complainant and then with any other parties involved and patiently and calmly encouraging all parties to provide their perspective on a problem, it usually ends up providing a clearer view of what you are dealing with and how to best resolve it - much better than jumping to the wrong conclusion.

Lead by example

Continue to value the merit of working hard, stay focused on your objectives and lead by example. Show that you are prepared to put in extra time and effort when needed and that you are prepared to step in and help when that is needed.

Be at work no later than your staff and do not leave before them.

If you decide to go missing, or indulge in frequent long coffee breaks or lunches, then you cannot expect your staff to go the extra yards when required.

Stay calm

Above all else, persevere and remain calm in times of adversity - irritation and anger are not good perspectives for dealing with problems. Suppress instinctive reactions and take a moment to consider problems objectively and then work on solutions with your team. If they think that you are going to explode every time that they make a

mistake or bring a problem to you for your help, they will cease to do so.

You don't know everything

The motto on the coat of arms of the university where I spent most of my professional life is: "Forever Learning". Don't stop learning, and if you don't know or understand something, ask someone who might. No-one will think less of you for seeking information, but they will come to regard you as less than intelligent if you don't seek advice when you need to.

In conclusion, none of this advice is complex or difficult to practise - it is the way you can develop teamwork by demonstrating empathy and an appropriate level of care for, and interest in, your staff. Ultimately, this will result in a more cohesive and productive environment.

About the Author

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WFH and the Self-employed

Art Phillips

September 2022

‘Before the days of Skype and Zoom calls, a NASA engineer by the name of Jack Nilles laid the foundation for modern remote working when he coined the term ‘telecommuting’ in 1973. Long before modern remote working came into play at the turn of the millennium, a limited numbers of workers at IBM were working from home to test the effectiveness of telecommuting’ (Butler 2022).

History of WFH

What began as a handful of offsite workers at IBM in 1973 had increased to 2,000 ten years later. IBM’s ‘call center’ staff conducted work via landline telephones, and their employees were offered the option of doing this work from home.

From a long-view perspective, working from home has always been a thing, not just in the last several decades with the advent of telecommuting, but for thousands of years. Combining workspace and living space is a natural way for families and communities to efficiently pool

resources, make the most of the space at hand, and work cooperatively together for the good of all (Reynolds 2022).

Reynold states, 'Fast-forward to work from home during medieval times, when the working classes often set up craft and trade-focused shops in their homes. They offered goods and services to support their families in living spaces that were architecturally designed to accommodate working from home. In fact, during medieval times, most working-class English people lived in work-homes. The single-storey, one-room houses were a combination of kitchen and spinning, weaving, dressmaking workshop, bedroom and dairy, dining room, butchery, tannery, and byre.'

The psychology of WFH

One needs to be quite dedicated and completely focused to be able to work from home effectively to avoid the normal day-to-day home-life distractions which can cause unwanted interruptions to workflow. In addition, one needs to be careful that work time does not interfere with home life, as this can take a toll on family and personal relationships.

Working from home (WFH) causes changes to both work and life environments which can impact on family relationships. Family relationships have critical impacts on wellbeing and mental health. Strong family relationships provide crucial social support that could mitigate psychological problems including anxiety and loneliness. As a rapidly growing future work arrangement, WFH may have a widespread impact on family relationships and affect the wellbeing and mental health of many individuals (Wu, Song, Proctor, Chen 2022).

As Heather Ikin (2020) notes, 'Working from home has been associated with a range of detrimental outcomes, including decreased social interaction, difficulties psychologically detaching from work, tendency to overwork, stress, depression, and anxiety.' Working from home can also hinder team effectiveness and creativity, and result in fewer career opportunities (Sander, 2019). Song and Gao (2018) found

that working at home is associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing work-related stress and negative impacts.

In a recent article, *Productivity and Workspace Design (August 2022)*, I suggested that there are many considerations to take on-board if one wishes to achieve the most productive outcomes of working from home, from deciding on the most effective workspace location within the home property, through to the design and fit-out of the workspace itself.

The self-employed

In this article I focus on the self-employed regime of business entrepreneurs, where decisions need to be made as to whether to save on costs and convert a home-office space or to work from a rented / leased office location outside the home - or alternatively, to purchase a commercial property as an investment, where a business can create a more ideal set-up to accomplish a complete separation between home-life and work-life.

In my main business - within the music industry - the majority of musicians, composers, music producers, and TV /film soundtrack orchestrators historically work from home for the most part of their working life. But it is not just music composers and musicians who opt to work from home, as there are many other industries that do the same - and this has little to do with COVID-19 pandemic hitting the planet - indeed, it has been happening for centuries.

WFH has positive and negative implications as I see it. It is very practical and saves in terms of expenditure, but can we keep home-life and work-life 'in-check' and not have them infringe upon each other? We also need to be aware of the 'tax trap' if using the home-office space as proportional business deductions against income.

The tax trap

If you rent your home or apartment, you can utilize allowable expenses as business deductions, proportionally, to the physical space

that your work area represents. For example, if your home office workspace utilizes, say 15%, of your floor space, you can use 15% of your rental (lease) payments - 15% of electricity, 15% of water and gas, 15% of telephone, and the like - but if you own your own home or apartment, there is a TRAP when utilizing home workspace expenses as business deductions, as you will be subject to capital gains tax (CGT) when you go to sell the property.

There are two types of expenses you can consider using as a business tax deduction for your home-based business: running expenses and occupancy expenses, but you must have a designated area set-up specifically as a place of business inside your dwelling for this to be allowed. One must be very careful if you are attempting to do this when you own your residence, as you will be subject to capital gains tax when you sell that property.

As the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) publishes in '*small business, home-based business expenses*':

https://www.ato.gov.au/uploadedFiles/Content/MEI/Downloads/TaxTimeToolkit_SB_home-business.pdf

If you operate some or all of your business from your home, you may be able to claim tax deductions for home-based business expenses in the following categories -

- Occupancy expenses (such as mortgage interest or rent, council rates, land taxes, house insurance premiums)
- Running expenses (such as electricity, telephone, decline in value of plant and equipment, furniture and furnishing repairs, cleaning)

You would calculate occupancy expenses based on the proportion of the floor space of your home that is a place of business and the proportion of the year it was used for business.

You can only claim deductions for the portion of your expenses that relate to running your business, and you must keep records for at least 5 years to show that your business incurred the expenses and how you calculated your claim.

If you sell your home, there will be capital gains tax (CGT) implications from the portion of your home used as a business deduction from the income generated in the business.

One can also utilize expenses of motor vehicle trips between your home and other locations, if the travel is for business purposes, but you will need to keep a logbook documenting your business trips for a consecutive period of 12 weeks, using odometer readings and locations of travel. You then calculate the percentage of business-related use compared to private use, where motor vehicle costs such as insurance, registration, petrol, and repairs are tax deductible proportioned to the business use 'percentage'. You must also update your vehicle logbook every 5 years (Synectic 2021).

If you are an employee of a business and the business pays for or reimburses you for some of the costs of running your business from home, you cannot claim a deduction for the expenses in your individual income tax return. Your business may also be subject to fringe benefit tax (FBT) if it pays or reimburses you for these expenses.

It might seem appropriate to work from home and use the office space proportion dimensions as a business deduction but there are tax implications of using the home-office expenses against income if you own your home (ATO 2022).

My advice is to always consult a qualified tax accountant about your tax situation.

Working away from home (WAFH) for the self-employed

After more than 20 years of working from a home office and home-based recording studio,

I decided to move to a '**work away from home**' commercial property environment. '**WAFH**' - a newly coined term for the 'self-employed' who decide to move out of their home-office space and conduct their business in a commercial set-up away from home.

After leaving the home-workplace environment, I rented an office space for 2 years, where I modified the leased property to use as a

recording facility, acoustically soundproofed as best possible for the budget available, with an office set on the same premises to work the admin and back-office tasks. This effort cost somewhere around AUD\$ 60,000 to modify the space - but then lo and behold, when the owner decided to sell the property, I was left in the lurch as it then became 'dead cash'. It was dead cash as these modification works were mostly structural, with the creation and soundproofing of new walls, a raised floor and ceiling isolation due to recording studio requirements, where all these items were unable to be removed and relocated to use in another facility.

The dead cash syndrome

I had learnt my lesson and decided it would now be best to purchase a commercial property, where I would be able to build a state-of-the-art recording studio and office set-up, being completely soundproofed. If I owned the property, I could build an isolated and floating recording studio shell sitting inside a pod, consisting of two sets of walls, outer walls and inner walls, each constructed of plywood on each side of the wall frames, built-up with 32 mm of gyprock over the plywood on each side of the walls, where the internal wall frames would be stuffed with a special wool insulation (not the normal insulation used in homes), and where the outer wall frame would be filled with sand. Between these walls would be 32mm of dead air space for additional isolation, with a floor built over rubber padding blocks sitting on a solid concrete base. The ceiling would be sprung hung, where it would detach from the above floor via springs the more you pump the room with sound vibrations/volume.

Inside the studio it would be acoustically treated with various wood panels on the wall and ceiling filled with the most unusual contents (rags, insulation, foam, silk and woolen textiles and the like), with the panels covered in chosen design fabric and set in unorthodox placements to achieve the perfect balance of frequencies inside the room when writing and mixing. When positioned correctly, using special

acoustic analysis devices when choosing the placements of the panels, this allows a perfect balance of acoustic sound frequencies with zero reflections nor any false impressions of hi, mid or low frequencies.

A well-designed bass trap (low frequency fixer) would also be constructed in the back of the room to allow an 'even balance' of low sub frequencies from front to back, from side to side and in any place in the room. Every sub-frequency would then be evenly heard with no lumps, bumps nor frequency cancellations, no matter where one is sitting.

I would also build a separate office facility in the property, with a boardroom for 10 and a foyer where this workspace would last a lifetime.

But where and how would I find the cash to buy a commercial property and to create such an environment?

I am very fortunate to have a great tax advisor/accountant and was therefore able to accomplish this task some 22 years ago using the strategy outlined below.

I was able to pull enough funds together initially to purchase the property in a 'trust' that I created, where over time my self-managed superannuation fund (SMSF) would own all the units in that trust, allowing me to use this business structure to benefit smartly, and well into the future.

The Unit Trust and a Self-Managed Superannuation Fund (SMSF)

The strategy - a self-managed superannuation fund acquires commercial property indirectly via a related non-geared 'unit trust' and operates at 'arm's length'.

A unit trust is set up and the SMSF invests cash into the unit trust in return for a percentage of ownership of the units in the trust. Other units can be purchased by you, the individual, as long as you operate at 'arm's length'. For example, you want to purchase an \$800,000 commercial property, a unit trust is set up and your SMSF buys 50% of the

units (\$400K) (for example) and you personally purchase the other 50% (\$400K). The property is owned by the 'unit trust'. Both you and the SMSF indirectly hold the property via your percentages of ownership of the units in the trust.

Your business will pay rent (the lease) to the 'unit trust' and the unit trust will distribute the net rent (post expenses) proportionally as per the ownership percentage to you and your SMSF.

It is important to note that in this structure the property cannot be geared. Additionally, rent must be at market rate and all expenses need to be paid by the unit trust. Market lease valuations must be sought - and in writing - every couple of years. You must also have a valid commercial lease in place between the trust (who is the property owner, via trustees of the trust) and the lessor.

Over time, the superfund can purchase additional units in the trust, when in time the superfund would own all the units in the trust which then in turn owns the commercial property at 100% - a perfect superfund income stream.

Superannuation income is taxed at 15% while you are still working and at a rate as low as 0% when you have satisfied special conditions in your retirement age. The concessional tax rates apply to both the rental income as well as any capital gains resulting from the sale of the property.

In his article, 'How a SMSF can Purchase a Property with a Related Party', Liam Shorte says, 'One way you can purchase a property with your SMSF and a related party as co-owners is to establish a unit trust to purchase the property. For this to work you must ensure that the strategy complies with the SIS Act 1993, and in particular Regulation 13.22C of the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Regulations 1994 at all times.'

Shorte continues, and here is a simple practical example of how this strategy works.

Nancy & Colin have an SMSF that has \$250,000 that they would like to invest in a commercial property. In their personal names, they also

have the ability to borrow \$350,000 against their home that they would like to invest in property.

A unit trust is established and their SMSF purchases \$200,000 of units, leaving \$50,000 liquidity in the fund, and they purchase \$350,000 of the units personally which funds the unit trust with \$550,000 in cash, with the SMSF owning 36% and Nancy & Colin owning 64%.

The unit trust then uses this money to purchase an industrial unit/commercial property, pay for any purchase costs, such as transfer duty and legal fees and maintains some extra funds in a bank account for some liquidity.

The unit trust enters into the lease with Widgets Pty Ltd as tenants, receives the rent and pays the expenses, such as rates, insurance and repairs. The net income is then distributed to the unit holders based on their ownership.

In the scenario above, the superfund would receive 36% of the net rent and Nancy & Colin would receive 64%. Each owner would include their share of the income in their tax returns.

This is called a 13.22C Ungearing Trust and works well for simple scenarios where you wish to buy a property and your SMSF can contribute towards the cost -

- The SMSF can in later years acquire more units from the related party which allows it to increase its ownership of the property. The idea would be to have the property eventually owned 100% by the superfund and the money paid to Nancy & Colin for the units it used to pay down their personal loan. This is not possible when a Self-Managed Super Fund and related party co-own a property as tenants in common, unless it is business real-property.
- The related party and/or the SMSF can subscribe to new units in disproportionate amounts if more capital is needed for improvements or renovations.
- The related party (Nancy & Colin in the above example) can borrow to acquire their units in the unit trust (generally by

offering another asset such as their home as security) and then claim the interest on the loan as a personal tax deduction because the trust is income-producing. This effectively allows them to gear their share of the ownership, much like they would if they owned it as a tenant in common with the SMSF.

Disadvantages

- The unit trust must comply with the provisions of 13.22c at all times. Any breach of any of the provisions will mean that the trust is subject to the in-house asset rules which limit the value of this investment in the fund to 5% of its assets. This almost always means that the SMSF must dispose of its investment in the trust even if the breach is rectified.
- There are additional costs to establish this structure due to the set-up of a unit trust (and corporate trustee if desired).
- There are additional costs to run this structure because the unit trust is a separate entity and must lodge a tax return.

SUMMARY OF 13.22c RULES:

To meet the requirements of SIS regulation 13.22C, the trust must

- Be a 'unit trust'
- Have no debt and not allow any security to be taken over its assets
- Have no lease arrangement with a related party other than one relating to business real property
- Not acquire an asset (other than business real property) from a related party
- Not lend money to any entity other than an authorized deposit taking institution (e.g., a bank)
- Not conduct a business, therefore, depending on the size and scale of the development, the trustee should consider engaging a third party to develop the land for a fee

- Not own an interest in another entity - this means it cannot own shares or invest in another trust

Broadly, this means the trust can only own residential or business real property and cash on deposit.

Other consequences you may have to consider -

- Some of the transactions outlined above could have capital gains tax (CGT) implications
- May be subject to duty as the trust may be or in the future become a 'land rich entity' under the various state Duty Acts

With careful planning, however, these outcomes can be managed in some circumstances. For example -

- If the Units are disposed of by the SMSF during pension phase they would generally be CGT-free
- Some of the different states' Duty Acts offer concessions in some form or another where there are transactions between an SMSF and its members
- The related party may be able to utilize the small business CGT concessions when disposing of units in the trust

As George Karavias writes, 'If you're currently renting your business premises by using your superannuation to purchase, it means you are paying off your own assets as opposed to paying off someone else's investment.'

Holding your business premises within an SMSF can provide asset protection against any future claims or liabilities that could result from operating your business. That means if your business goes belly up, your property is safe.

As the property is held in your SMSF, you can guarantee and secure your business' tenancy for the longer term.

Once again, and as stated earlier, it is advised to consult and get advice from a qualified tax advisor at all times.

Conclusion

A thorough assessment of your business and personal situation must be undertaken, in order to make the most appropriate decisions when setting up a workplace environment, especially when one is self-employed. Importantly, one must be vigilant about tax-driven strategies to ensure the structure you are undertaking is the most effective for your situation, and that it follows the ATO tax guidelines (tax and superannuation rules) to ensure what you are doing is completely legal.

I had undertaken this strategy (as Nancy & Colin did in the above example) some 22 years ago. The benefits have been enormous over time as my company business pays lease payments to the 'unit trust' monthly at market rates under a commercial lease, then the unit trust distributes the rent to the unit holders, proportionally.

At this stage in my life, the superfund owns all the units in the trust, where my company pays lease payments to the trust, the trust then distributes the returns to the superfund (which now owns all the units in the trust) - a good way to accumulate wealth. The company business claims a tax deduction on the lease payments for the business and there is an income stream going into the superfund from the investment. As I am also now in my retirement phase, I am able to distribute a pension back to myself from the superfund.

What goes into the lease as a deduction for business comes back out to myself, as an individual, by way of a pension.

It takes careful planning by a qualified tax advisor and considerable time in order to achieve these lifelong benefits. In the beginning it is tough, as you need to find the cash to invest in the purchase of the commercial property and to make on-site modifications to suit requirements (more cash, more loans), set up the SMSF which is expensive, quite complicated and has ongoing yearly costs associated to run correctly. Your company business (the lessee) must be able to pay the ever-changing market value lease payment rates for the rental of the property and never default. If any of this goes haywire, you will be up

for fines and heavy penalties, as you are running your own SMSF in this strategy.

Please be sure to get advice from a qualified and experienced tax advisor / accountant if you are contemplating any of these strategies.

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Studying from anywhere (SFA) – does the student to staff ratio issue mean anything in this context?

Greg Whateley

Andrew West

September 2022

The impact of COVID-19 created a shift from face-to-face (F2F) teaching to online teaching - and it happened rather quickly. Our own organisation moved rapidly to the online mode, given our in-house expertise and preparedness to invest in the accompanying resources. One of the key concerns at the time was the impact that the shift would have on *learner engagement and the student experience*. We had been working for a number of years with F2F delivery for international students, so the concern was of some significance and relevance.

The key issue was whether or not our high levels of student satisfaction (leading up to the pandemic) could be sustained in a WFA (or studying from anywhere, SFA) environment when it came to teaching international tertiary students who were accustomed to the F2F mode – and, in fact, it had been mandated by the Australian Government that they could not do more than 30% of their onshore study in an online option.

Over a six-year period (17 trimesters) our institution has systematically gathered feedback (both internally and externally), monitoring student levels of satisfaction and performance. One of the measures we have used, over a number of years, is the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) Student Experience Survey - [https://www.qilt.edu.au/surveys/student-experience-survey-\(ses\)](https://www.qilt.edu.au/surveys/student-experience-survey-(ses))

A number of institutions (particularly public universities) performed rather poorly throughout the COVID-19 period, given their reluctance to focus on learning and teaching and an obsession with cost saving initiatives. One remedy commonly touted as a means of improving student satisfaction is reducing class sizes - that is reducing the staff to student ratio (SSR). For some, this was seen as a panacea for all student dissatisfaction.

Little more than a distraction

We have argued for a number of years now that there is little *if any* relationship between quality teaching and learning and Staff to Student Ratio (SSR). Attempts to reduce the ratio is little more than a distraction. This applies to both F2F mode teaching and online mode teaching.

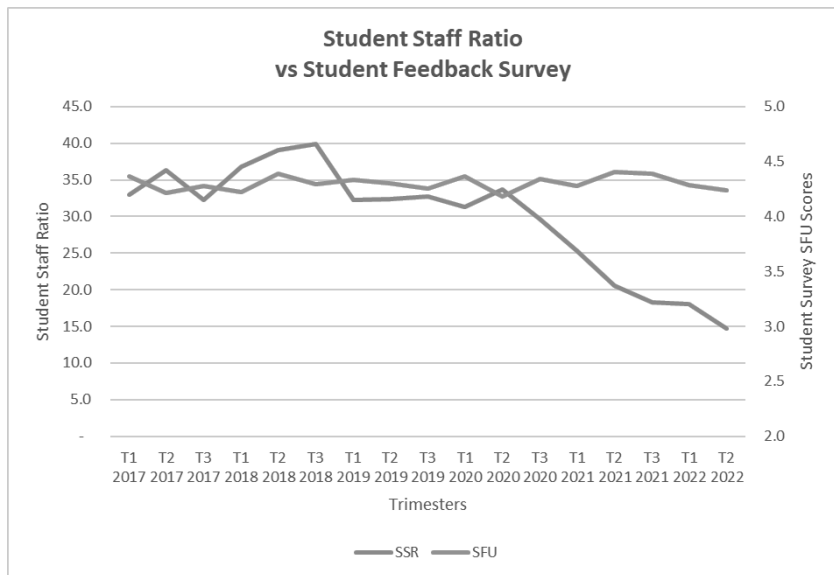
Student to staff ratio is calculated as the sum of student EFTSL (excluding work experience in industry) divided by sum of staff full-time equivalence (FTE) in teaching and teaching/research functions, including actual casual staff – www.heimshelp.dese.gov.au

Using our own institution as an example (over a six-year period - or 17 trimesters), we have matched the **Student Feedback on Units**

(SFUs) aggregates (internal), the **QILT annual outcomes** (external), and the **grade distributions** (internal) - and overlaid them on the changing SSR during the same period.

SFUs and SSR

The following graphs are a comparison of the *Student to Staff Ratio* (SSR) and the *Student Feedback on Units* (SFU) surveys for the period Trimester 1, 2017 to the most recent Trimester 2, 2022 (that is, 6 years and 17 trimesters).



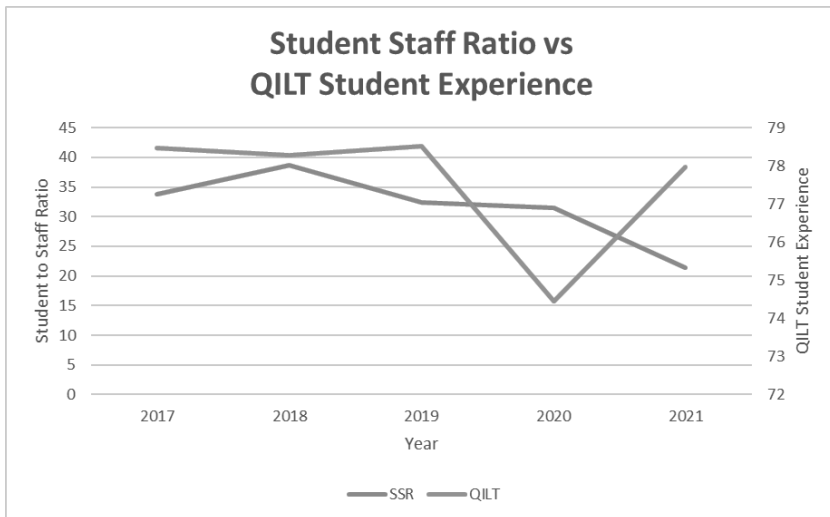
This graph shows the consistency of the SSR between 32 and 39 up until T2 2020, when COVID-19 impacted student numbers. Since then, the SSR has been in steady decline to a level of 14.7 in Trimester 2, 2022. The SFUs remained constant throughout the whole period between a tight range of 4.2 to 4.4 out of a possible 5.

The correlation between these two variables is -0.17. This indicates a negative, weak correlation. There is no impact of lower SSRs.

QILT and SSR

The Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys are an annual request for feedback from all students at universities and independent higher education institutions who choose to join. Since 2016, our school has been involved in the QILT Student Experience Survey. “The SES is the only comprehensive survey of current higher education students in Australia. It focuses on aspects of the student experience that are measurable, linked with learning and development outcomes, and potentially able to be influenced by higher education institutions. Information collected in the SES helps higher education institutions and the government improve teaching and learning outcomes for students.” www.qilt.edu.au/surveys/student-experience-survey

The following graphs are a comparison of the *Student to Staff Ratio (SSR)* and the *QILT Student Experience Survey* for each year from 2017 to 2021 - and include the latest results available for QILT.

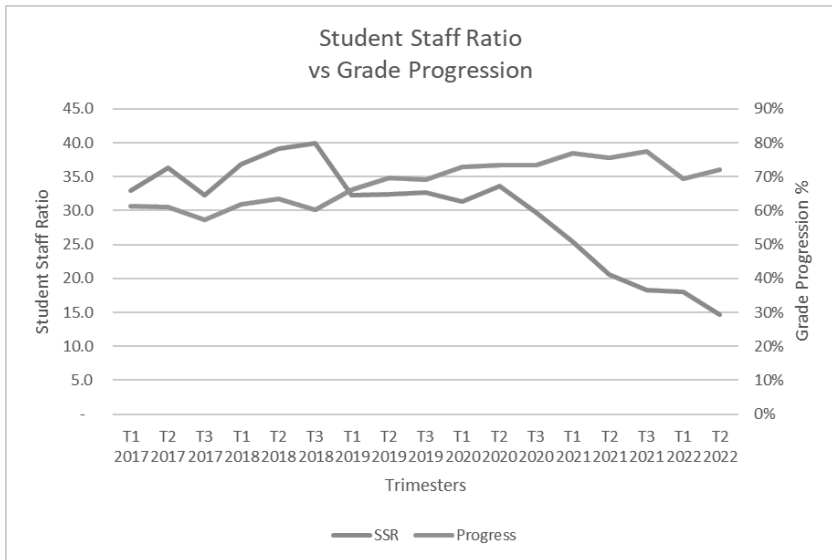


The line graph for SSR shows the same steady level of SSR from 2017 - 2020, in an annual range between 31.6 and 38.6. There is a

steep decline in the SSR in 2021 to 21.4. The QILT SES score is consistently high between 78.3 and 78.5. There was a drop in the 2020 survey to 74.4, due to the negative impact of COVID across the sector. In 2021, the QILT SES rebounded to 78. There is no correlation between SSR and QILT, with an $r = 0.09$. It can be seen that the impact on QILT is due to a range of other factors (mostly COVID) and nothing to do with the SSR.

Grade Distribution and SSR

The following graphs are a comparison of the *Student to Staff Ratio (SSR)* and *Grade Distribution (progression)* for the period Trimester 1, 2017 to the most recent Trimester 2, 2022 (6 years/17 trimesters).



This graph shows the consistency of the SSR between 32 and 39 up until T2 2020, when COVID impacted student numbers. Since then, the SSR has been in steady decline to a level of 14.7 in Trimester 2, 2022. The grade progression was a band of between 57% - 63% up to the end of 2018. The grade progression, then, steadily improved to a high of 77% by Trimester 3, 2021. During the time from mid-2020, the SSR steadily decreased.

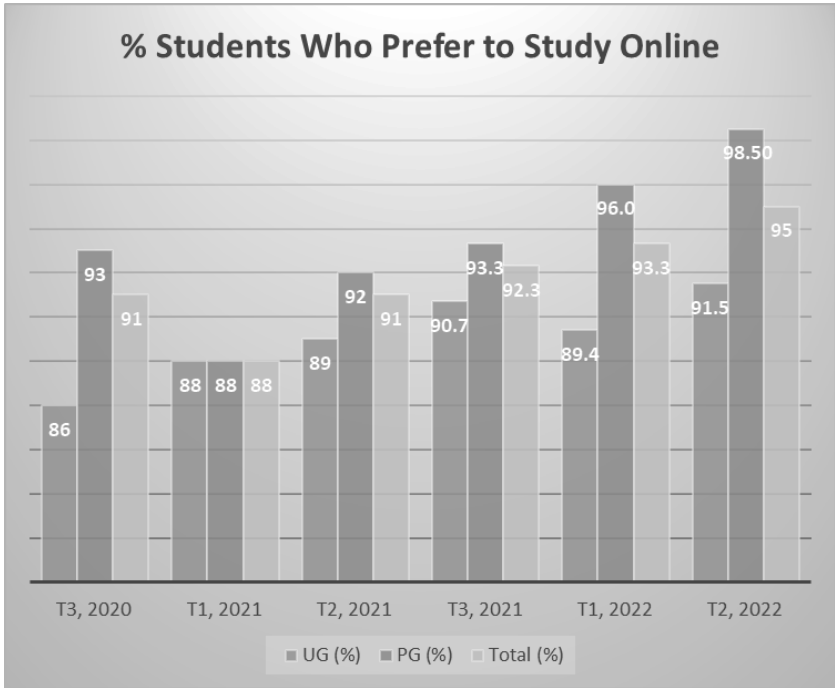
For 2022, as the SSR dropped to its lowest level of 14.7, the grade progression dropped back to 70%, reversing the previous trend. The correlation between these two variables is - 0.66. This indicates a negative, moderate correlation.

No impact on quality teaching and learning

What we can clearly see is that the SSR is essentially irrelevant and bears no impact on student feedback and performance. Amidst a flurry of suggestions on how to improve student satisfaction has been the suggestion to reduce the SSR - a waste of effort! The focus needs to be on quality teaching and learning that is well done by our private providers - but poorly done by our research-focused institutions. If you want to engage students, put the time and effort into that very thing.

Measuring eagerness to return back to F2F

In addition to measuring levels of student satisfaction and performance (especially during the SFA phase), we have also been eager to monitor the level of enthusiasm from our students to return to F2F teaching - that is, a return to campus. Each trimester, over a 3-year period (since being online), we have requested feedback from students, accordingly. The data has remained relatively constant over the period, as reflected in recent surveys (T3, 2020 to T2, 2022).



Clearly, our students wish to remain online (95% overall), and at the same time, the feedback suggests that they are quite happy with the online (SFA) experience.

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Gymnasiums – where WFA did not work out

James Manly

Greg Whateley

September 2022

WFA became the catch cry of numerous businesses and industries throughout the pandemic - and in this transition period out of it. Law courts operated online, medicos conducted online consultations, teachers managed classes online, virtual retail outlets flourished, and virtual streaming and performances proliferated. Managing gymnasiums during COVID-19, on the other hand, became a complex task and attempts to virtualise activities and classes did not do well. It had a lot to do with the fact that gymnasiums have always provided a physical outlet for stress and tension and the resources required are many - online (virtual) options did not do the trick.

With the return of patrons in more recent times, there are a number of key areas that demand attention. As the return to site commenced, there were in place a number of highly restrictive practices that made the average 'workout' less than satisfying. Slowly, though,

things have returned to a relatively normal state - with some additional demands on owners and staffers that were not there pre-COVID. These demands are explored in some detail.

Hygiene

Health and safety have always been important in gym facilities and for those staffing and using the facilities. Staff would always make sure the gym equipment was wiped down once or twice during a 4-5 hour shift - prior to COVID-19. Since COVID-19, gym equipment is now generally wiped between 4-5 times each shift, suggesting wiping of equipment has *doubled* since the pandemic. Each night the gym equipment is deep cleaned by professional cleaners. This heightened awareness and activity is well supported - and has become a vital aspect of gym management and operation.

Prior to COVID-19, gym management would encourage the use of a full bench towel. Since COVID-19, this is now mandatory - and enforced - so that, if patrons do not have a towel, they are strictly unable to train. Again, a heightened requirement, but quite a reasonable one upon consideration.

Continuing to ensure members have access to wipes - so they can wipe down the equipment after they use it - has increased at a significant cost to the gym but deemed essential in order to ensure they maintain a hygienic and safe environment for staff and members.

There is little objection to any of this. In truth - given the significant lockdowns of gyms throughout the high COVID-19 period - patrons appear more than happy to abide with the new regulations and embellishments, if it means getting back into action again. <https://covid19.swa.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/gyms-and-fitness-centres/hygiene>

Masks

Masks were not mandatory prior to COVID-19. During transition pandemic times, gyms were allowed to re-open on the condition that

a mask mandate was in place. It was recommended that members wear masks whilst training and was mandatory for gym staff members to wear masks throughout the entire shift of between 4 and 5 hours. This element was less embraced by patrons for a number of reasons. <https://healthcare.utah.edu/healthfeed/postings/2020/11/masking-at-gym.php>

It became apparent that wearing masks whilst training restricted the members' ability to breathe properly, suggesting it actually became unsafe for them to train with masks. The simple task of walking and using public transport with a mask was onerous - it would come as little surprise that exercise and energetic activities became very difficult indeed. This condition was slowly removed. But, they were required to wear the mask when entering the gym and talking to the gym staff.

Gym staff - trainers and front desk personnel - had to wear a mask during their shift. A number of additional issues arose with the mask wearing, including being unable to understand what the members were saying; members not being able to understand the staff (augmented by the fact that sometimes English was not the member's first language); and staff being unable to breathe properly whilst wearing the mask. Unlike the hygiene issue, this one was particularly cumbersome and troublesome.

Staffing

Industry - both essential and otherwise - experienced significant staff losses and this has hampered preferred recovery rates. The media is filled with stories of staffing shortages. Airports throughout the country are calling for staff across all positions. https://www.mmaglobal.com/files/577_covid-19_gyms_impact_report.pdf

Prior to COVID-19, there were no issues in having all shifts covered or staffed within the gymnasium industry. After COVID-19 - and as gyms were allowed to reopen even with numerous restrictions in place - the staff who worked at the gym prior to COVID-19 were more than

happy to return to being able to work after such long lockdowns (in NSW the first one was two months and the second one was over three months). Staff were keen to return to their positions - this was very much the case with community type gyms.

This is quite a different story to what we are collectively experiencing with shortages of teachers, nurses, medicos, transport workers and café and restaurant hospitality staff. In many respects, the gym industry is fortunate.

F2F – Face to Face

Prior to COVID-19, gyms were opening for members to come to either the actual gym itself or attend classes with an allocated trainer. Gymnasiums flourished and the last five years (prior to COVID) saw memberships flourish.

During the lockdowns (across the country), numerous gyms attempted to conduct virtual classes/sessions via ZOOM. For the first week or two, it was reasonably popular as it was really the only way to get a workout done. Enthusiasm for the mode decreased rapidly as it was not the same as face-to-face classes, and eventually, most gyms decided to stop the ZOOM sessions. The view was that gym goers needed the physical connection and routine that was not readily available in the virtual environment. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/05/22/1099120054/pandemic-virtual-workouts>

Before gyms formally reopened to the public, they were allowed to have face-to-face sessions outside - in a park, for example - but with restricted numbers and other conditions in place. These sessions became quite popular and quite quickly with members, given the restoration of the social aspect not available on screen. There is something about working with others in this environment, even though it still requires careful distancing.

Once the gyms were able to open, the members flocked back to the facilities and the group sessions that were so popular prior to COVID.

Class sizes

Prior to COVID-19, the only restriction on class size was determined by the size of the actual room available for the activity. Depending on the nature of the workshop, it was not uncommon to have packed sessions with high levels of enthusiasm and interaction.

After COVID-19 (or best called transition from COVID-19), gyms were allowed to reopen but with numerous restrictions in place, including each member in the class having to be 1.5m apart from each other, so depending on the actual size of the room, it would limit the number of members a class could manage within the given space available. Some classes might have to be capped at 16 people, for example, in some sessions.

Post COVID-19 restrictions, some classes have returned to 25-30 members. This, in many cases, is a significant dip in group numbers. Again, reasonably well received by members, as in, better than no classes at all. The gymnasium industry relies heavily on the face-to-face element. The COVID-19 pandemic had profound impacts on the industry - one that is slowly recovering as various restrictions are lifted.

The gymnasium industry is essentially a face-to-face experience environment. There have been a number of valuable technology-based initiatives that have improved the management of processes within the industry - but the fact remains, enthusiasts were keen to return to the physical environment and this is simply the state of play. The virtual did not work out (so to speak).

About the authors

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Work from Where?

Nilima Paul

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Introduction

Work from Home (WFH) or Work from Anywhere (WFA) - although this has become more common or almost inevitable in the case of office workers during the COVID-19 surge, this is not a new concept. 'Work' - when defined as undertaking an activity such as a job, where a person uses physical or mental effort and usually for money (or equivalent) - has been undertaken for a long time. Along with this, when 'home' is defined as the house or apartment, where we live, sometimes with our family, then many factors are to be considered when we call it Work from Home (WFH). For this article, I will also consider formal learning, especially at tertiary institutions, as work. So, prior to COVID-19, approximately 5% of workers utilised WFH - now it is more than 50% (MI, 2022).

WHS aspect of WFH

By law, all workplaces have their own regulations, policies, principles and guidelines for Work Health and Safety (WH&S) compliance.

This is due to the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) regulations that are applicable to every workplace. Therefore, if I WFH then the home or the remote workplace, or the alternative workplace in this instance, will have to be fit for purpose and must be WHS compliant. Not only will it have to be fit for purpose, but it must also be sound, safe for the worker and safe for the data/information. It must be a place where data, information and all these are secured and sound. If not, when somebody succumbs to an injury due to working from home, how will that be considered? Would the person/s be eligible for a compensatory, or other, replacements? When these issues and aspects are taken into consideration, then it may be almost impossible that the high percentage of people can actually work from home.

Nevertheless, to make it workable even at this rate, it may be possible if the policies and guidelines, or even the related legislation, is reset. If I may share here my husband's situation. He is a public servant in New South Wales. Prior to COVID-19, he was asked to review a draft WFH guideline. Whilst it was a detailed guideline, there was not a definition of 'home'. Incidentally, that guideline has not come back to him for review and the impacts of COVID-19 have come in to play. The sector is revisiting the entire WHS aspect of WFH. Mind though, there is another variant of WFH. If I am a contractor, then I can WFA and deliver the content. As a client, I would not likely be bothered by where exactly the work is undertaken nor the situation regarding the working conditions, or that of liability, as far as WHS is concerned.

Will this sustain?

With COVID-19 a feature of our day-to-day, the question is - how many people will continue to work from home? Or, from a place other than their primary workplace, what percentage of employees will be allowed to WFH? To answer this question, one has to look at various aspects of the benefits and liabilities of this type of working arrangement. Another aspect of WFH is the social capital issue. People working at a traditional workplace, where one meets colleagues, they

physically meet and greet each other. Along with regular formal meetings, they also have many micro meetings or exchanges of views and ideas. These often take place in the corridor, kitchen, hallway or other spaces within the formal workplace. In these micro-environments a lot of decisions, or fine tuning of the decisions or clarifications on an earlier decision do take place.

WFH or from a remote place has these elements missing. Not only that, by working with peers or others, one has a lot to learn apart from what they work on or deliver. What I am trying to say here is, the productivity of a place is not just about the formal work, it has a lot to do with informal communication - much of which works better when physical meetings are possible.

Another aspect is the building up of wisdom from the ambient. For that to be achieved, a co-worker in a physical environment is most effective. Think of a migrant professional. S/he must be good at her/his subject, but since the person joins the new workforce in a new ambient and work culture, WFH can be disastrous. For a new worker to be able to deliver effectively, s/he needs to be exposed to that work atmosphere or the ambience so that they understand the new dynamics of the workplace. A team consisting of people of different chemistries of the workforce means people are physically mixing with each other to be a part of, and to fit into, the new workplace. WFH has little opportunity for this to happen.

Interpersonal resolutions

Another thing about WFH is the lack of the interpersonal relationship between two colleagues - whether at the vertical hierarchy or the horizontal level. Since every workplace has its unique interpersonal issues and arrangements, much can be resolved only through physical meetings. This can, otherwise, become a serious problem if one does not happen to meet and greet the person frequently, if not daily. So, WFH means the person interacts either online or via computer or through telephones or other social media. Being physically in touch

may mean that some micro issues are managed swiftly and may not trigger a bigger workplace issue. This is particularly important for teacher-student relationships. Teaching is not only imparting knowledge - robot-like. The very life or the liveliness aspect of the teacher-student relationship is, for the most part, hidden in the face-to-face communication. A student learns or takes a lot from a teacher by noticing, watching, walking-the-walk and talking-the-talk. WFH does not offer that.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there will always be a place for WFH in the workplace, but it is unlikely that the present rate will be sustainable. Hence, a hybrid model is necessary, and the sooner this can be worked out, the better. For this to be achieved, the government, institutions and individuals will all have to work cooperatively and in a complementary manner.

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Shared workspaces – a great WFA opportunity

Greg Whateley

September 2022

The WFA concept suggests that it is both possible and feasible to literally work from anywhere - on a plane, a train, a ship (with some issues relating to WIFI access), in a hotel, an apartment - for that matter, anywhere that has WIFI connection. The notion of a shared working space - available commercially - provides another excellent option that is well worth considering.

The working from anywhere (WFA) phenomenon - or at least the growth of the idea in more recent times - has also highlighted other options such as shared workspaces that can be scaled up or down depending on daily, weekly, monthly (or even longer) requirements. One such option is **wework**.

Working from home provides a simple and straight forward option for a single person or even a working couple. An interesting development is with regard to new homes being built that now include one and often two office spaces for this very purpose. Bedroom

conversions have also been a feature driven by working from home opportunities. In many cases the option is ideal, but productivity can be restricted with interruptions and diversions.

Working collaboratively, though, provides more of a challenge, especially if that collaboration is changing on a day-to-day basis. For some digital nomads, having a retreat or quiet space away from the pressures of the home also presents challenges. When travelling around the globe, hotel and apartment scenarios are often less than ideal. There are solutions available, though, that provide both flexibility and stability at the same time.

Strategic Locations

Wework (established in New York in 2008 with facilities around the world) have four set-ups in Melbourne and five in Sydney. There are no Adelaide options at the moment (this will change no doubt). All nine of the Melbourne/Sydney facilities are located in the CBD with easy access to public transport or bicycle paths (also a growing phenomenon).

All four of the Melbourne-based centres have easy access and a range of support facilities. For the purpose of the discussion, I have selected the *Exhibition Street premises in Melbourne* as my sample for consideration.

Ideally located in the heart of the Melbourne CBD -



The building is a short walk (3 minutes) from Parliament Station (city loop stop) with easy access. Located to the east of the CBD, it has excellent café and dining options - ideal for breaks and meetings.



Working space options

In my view, the most impressive element is the variety of space options available - with flexible (changeable) opportunities and costs as needs vary and change. There are five options within this particular facility.

Private Office for up to 2 people that is move in ready and lockable. The space includes furniture, mail and package handling, credit towards booking meeting rooms and a printing allowance. The setting is functional and comfortable.



Private Office for up to 3 people with the same add-ons.



There is even a window view option available -



The cost variation is minimal, and a lot depends on specific needs and comfort levels. There are equipment hiring options, but mostly users bring their own devices.

There is a hot desk option -



Shared space facility -



Meeting room availability -



The space options are extensive and can be adapted and/or changed as circumstances change (working independently, working with others, working with a group). This represents, to my mind, the

most important issue - flexibility. As noted, the costs vary according to choices, but the plans are reasonable and competitive.

Other support facilities

Essential to all current work is the need for speed, that is, high speed **WIFI**. From the perspective of a digital nomad, WIFI is the most essential element for effective work. Having worked in various apartments and hotels throughout the world - the speed has varied - this can be debilitating, especially when it comes to internet-based meetings - Zoom, TEAMS. Access to high speed WIFI, then, is imperative.

The access to **meetings rooms** - when needed - is an added bonus. Whether weekly or monthly, meetings with colleagues provide a valuable source of focus and interaction. For the lone wolf, the opportunity to meet with clients is a genuine option. I have, on occasion, rented conference/meetings rooms in hotels and these have often been quite expensive and often not ideal for purpose.

Onsite support staff - particularly with matters relating to IT - are a bonus gift. So much time can be wasted trying to troubleshoot problems alone. I suspect we have all experienced the time-consuming problem solving involved with computer glitches, difficulties in accessing the Internet, and general data projector problems. Having someone on site to call and problem solve is a genuinely positive thing.

Cleaning services - particularly in this COVID transition period - are vitally important. There is a certain degree of relief around knowing that the facility you are using (especially when sharing) is regularly cleaned and refreshed. Attention to detail in this space is essential - and having professional cleaners on site is another bonus.

Printing services are also very useful, if and when needed. In truth, I have essentially walked away from hard copying, but on the odd occasion where it is essential, it is good to have a facility available. I think the shift away from printed copies has been a positive thing in my line of work and has certainly changed (for the better) the way I present and support.

Common spaces encourage interaction and also provide a degree of socialisation - if and when sought after. Using a shared workspace can often be isolating, especially in the single desk scenarios. The opportunity to wander to the café style common spaces and interact (even briefly) with other nomads is a positive thing - and is available as needed. Meetings can also be held in the common spaces and often this can mean being more productive than in isolated meetings rooms - a lot depends on the nature and number of participants.

Parking, outdoor space options, bike storage, showers, mothers' rooms and wellness rooms are also available as required. These additional spaces are extremely useful. The growth phenomenon in Melbourne is the number of cyclists now commuting. Having a safe and secure place for your bicycle is a very handy aspect. Privacy and fresh air are also premium needs for many - and these are catered for accordingly.

A genuine working option for the digital nomad

In circumstances where apartment and hotel options are not workable, the notion of these hired facilities is a splendid alternative. On closer examination of **wework** premises in London, Melbourne and Sydney, the opportunities are both cost effective, comfortable and viable.





Some of the spaces viewed are quirky and others inviting. The facilities are very well maintained and managed. The big issues - for me at least - are the range of options available, the affordability and the flexibility in place. The **wework** premises (and there are a number of

other like options) are well worth exploring and provide the perfect haven for a day, a week, a month or even long term for the digital nomad.

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Permanent Alternatives: Digital Offices and Classrooms?

Jim Mienczakowski

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The First World War was, amongst many terrible things, an accelerant for the development and wider availability and uptake of advanced technologies - such as motorised vehicles. Nevertheless, an estimated 8 million horses, mules and donkeys died during that conflict and there were calls for mechanised technologies to be developed to replace the use of animals in zones of war. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s technologies to replace horses entirely in the workplace were majorly improved but, as observed by Oliver Marks (2008), some 20 years later during World War II over 80% of the German war machine was still being pulled along by an equine workforce. Part of the reason for this related to cost; some to the need for a large supply of skilled, trained drivers and mechanics to operate trucks but also to the fact that the German forces were moving into countries which still sustained horse-driven infrastructures. Similarly, today, the march of the

electric car draws to a halt where there are no charging stations and the digital nomad stumbles without good internet access.

Is the future here yet?

Some practices and ways of working, historically, have proven more enduring than others. Digital nomadism actually represents a huge step away from the long-established experiences and traditions of human learning which have customarily relied upon F2F (face- to-face) human interactions. COVID may have been an accelerant for the uptake of electronically mediated engagement, but will it be an enduring shift into working from anywhere (for students and academics) or will such a transition take much longer - like the move away from horse driven transportation?

We are, arguably, on a COVID accelerated plateau of changes in how we engage with study and work - some of which will be permanent because the changes proposed are logical, practical, sustainable and more affordable. And new insights abound. If, as it indeed appears to be the case, as is argued by Whateley & West, 2022 in this volume, *there is little relationship between student and staff ratios and excellent student outcomes* (a phenomenon which has been long suspected), then the argument for further extending student learning experiences through online engagement is strengthened. The key, logically, revolves around the quality of the learning engagements being provided rather than solely upon the volume of F2F (in the flesh) teaching contact. And there are many quality points of engagement available in non-F2F approaches that are sometimes not properly recognised. One such example is the quality and learning impact of the supporting online media and high-grade downloadable podcast, illustrative and written resources made available to students. UBSS' online non-F2F student outcomes data (as discussed elsewhere in this volume) demonstrates that quality learning engagements are key, irrespective of whether those learning encounters take place F2F or over the internet.

So, a major question arises, if, technically, we are on the cusp of sufficient infrastructure for digital nomadism and a working from home culture to become standard fare, do we have the right teaching approaches to sustain and operate effectively in such an environment? Or will F2F, classroom-based (horse-driven?) teaching traditions and practices overwhelm these new approaches? *(There is also a subsidiary question worth considering. To date, universities worldwide have been geolocation-driven. They are places, buildings, subsets of business dependencies: Oxford, Harvard, Sydney, Bordeaux, et cetera - places you go to and live in carrying high educational real estate values. The rise of digital nomadism may be seen as a threat to this class of business investment.)*

Definitions of Teaching

One of the stumbling blocks of educational change relevant to DN (digital nomadism) relates to our own experiences and understandings of ‘teaching’. Whilst the annual teaching survey QILT goes some way towards determining the causes of student failure and non-performance, it could go further. One of the un-tackled issues lies in the very definitions and perceptions we all have around the generalised terms ‘teaching’ and ‘teachers’. ‘Teaching’, often simply defined as a mode of instruction, doesn’t always imply ‘learning’.

Primary and secondary school teachers have hugely different demands placed upon them compared to university teachers, yet they are all labelled ‘teachers’.

Since the late 1800s, most state-provided school education around the world has become compulsory. Increasingly, in western societies, mandatory schooling has also become a site of contestation and resistance (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) for some sectors of young people attending school, particularly in socially deprived areas or in demographics in which the level of unemployment is high, and predominantly, where racial difference is considered a factor (Carby,

1982). Teaching is not a level playing field for either teachers or students.

Some school teachers have to also overcome student difference and resistance to learning. University students, of course, are there by choice. Teaching with a clear intent to bring about student success, however, is, perforce, something other than (something more than) passive instruction or lecturing.

University teachers are on an entirely different pedagogic spectrum to school teachers. In 'lecturing' or 'instructing' there resides a strong element of passivity and simple presentation of knowledge and learning transmission as opposed to directly engaging with learners.

In between eras

Certain teaching environments are always going to be more demanding of teachers/lecturers than others. Understandably, the teaching approaches required for digital transmission are a skill set and acculturation which many school and university teachers are yet to comfortably master. It is a new mode of student engagement. We are moving between eras in the conception of what teachers must actually do. We need to develop some more nuanced definitions to embrace the new digital arena we find ourselves inhabiting - ones that are different to the current understandings developed under QILT.

Essential student demographic knowledge

Nevertheless, the QILT reviews over the COVID period have placed UBSS and Bond University (another private provider) high in the league table of student-focussed, student- applauded tertiary delivery. This is because UBSS is evidentially driven to achieve positive outcomes for its students. This is not just the utilisation of sound pedagogic approaches but a prioritisation of ensuring every possible measure is taken to help UBSS students achieve. It is, I believe, the 'extra difference of pursuing positive student outcomes' which matters.

There is clearly no cultural or political contention or resistance amongst UBSS's student cohorts - far from it! But there is difference. Students at UBSS are often studying in English which is a second language for them. They are often studying a long way away from home, family and friends and they frequently need to maintain some form of paid employment as well as study. So, when 96% of UBSS students say that online engagement fits best with them studying and also meeting all of their other life requirements, then UBSS does its utmost to support their requirements. Entirely logical and understandable. This is especially the case when the data demonstrates that the quality of non-F2F provision given to UBSS students has led to **no drop** in student outcomes and in fact a **continuation of excellence** in student results.

Knowing your students' demographics and how best to support them is fundamental to teaching success.

The teaching difference lies in the determined, overt intent to bring about learning as an outcome of faculty interactions with students - whether the delivery is F2F or over supported electronic interfaces.

Such an intent requires dedication and passion.

More of the same

Noticeably, it appears that a few larger tertiary institutions have been languishing in a COVID malaise (long COVID?) as their ways of teaching are entrenched and invested in industrialised work practices, comfortable routines and traditions. Changing staffing levels and modes of student engagement become expensive and difficult industrial activities. Big universities also enshrine their work practices in an unwieldy barrage of impenetrable policy bureaucracy - as much ensuring work for administrators as in protecting the values of the institution. Of course, a level of bureaucracy is essential, but overly bureaucratic practices are divisive and toxic when it comes to change and, often, stall progress. Consequently, DN exponents are likely to prosper in fields other than higher education for the time being.

There is also a lock-step approach across Australia's public institutions which, in reality, inhibits real change. The recent Universities Australia Conference (2022) was an opportunity for Australian university leaders to seek new directions but, predictably, its keynote address set the tone by congratulating the sector on its achievements and turning to government to fund even more of the same. Change, of course, is unwelcomed by those who prosper under the current circumstances. Ultimately, DN represents a massive disruption in how work has been conceived in those areas of the economy in which DN is a viable practice.

Emulative same thinking

Counterintuitively, Finnish educator, Pasi Sahlberg, actually touches upon the risky urge to be of a collective mind in education by noting that "If we all think the same way, none of us probably thinks very much." Certainly, in higher education we are very prone to 'keeping in line' with the rest of the sector and emulating whatever it is that we see others doing. Career paths, in large universities, are often more secure if the boat is never even 'gently rocked'. Sadly, Sahlberg's main thrust is yet more of 'thinking the same', as in order to achieve his conception of better educational outcomes we need to learn (emulate) the conditions and social culture which have given Finland high standing in PISA results. It is an unworldly and unachievable aspiration, of course. It brings us full circle back to emulation rather than innovation and the adoption of innovative pedagogic technologies.

Where are we now? Latent transition...

A further element relates to the pace of technological change and its uptake in educational settings. I mentioned earlier that delivering effective learning outcomes requires dedication, intention and passion. For DN to be a lasting influence in higher education its exponents need to be appropriately skilled as well as passionate and its technological underpinning needs to be affordable and sustainable.

I suspect that we are currently in an unenviable place of *latent transition*. Populist pressure is mounting for a WFH and DN future as it is similarly for a 4-day working week. There is an apparent will for permanent change amongst the younger workforce but, perhaps, not the means by which it can be sustainably achieved. Sustainability is a major consideration before technological development and progressive change can be implemented securely. Here, lessons from the past show that there are always risks in choosing new technological platforms and ways of doing things. Yes, we are already adopting electric vehicles and they are a great step ahead in technology - but we've been there before. In the late 1950s the milk float daily delivering 2 pints of full cream pasteurised to my front door was electric. It was one of the numerous fleets of electric milk floats used across the entire UK. Then electric vehicles were suddenly forgotten until the current surge in EV development rekindled interest, but that development isn't yet sufficient for 'convenience'.

There are, as yet, no EV capabilities for hauling trailers, horse floats or caravans or heavy loads over distance.

Electric long-distance trucks? Not so many, it seems.

And instant recharging? No sign of that coming at all.

Back in the 1920s and 30s steam powered lorries were the big go. Fleets of them pulled heavy loads around Europe for various industries. But you had to fire up the boiler and keep the water levels topped up and it took two people to run one effectively. They ran on coal, wood and water - which were readily available. But they were replaced by faster diesel trucks as soon as sustainable diesel supplies arrived - and there was virtually no second-hand market for used steam technologies.

Turn the page forward to today's classrooms. Electronic 'smart' whiteboards have come and gone. Well, not so much gone as dumped in huge numbers. Not all emerging technologies marketed globally prove to be sustainable or enduring. For example, I once owned an Amstrad computer - now very much a thing of the past - something

that was outdated almost the minute I unpacked it and plugged it in. Things change.

Will the attractiveness of DN and WFA approaches in higher education and study also change? Colleagues in France and the UK tell me that, if President Putin cuts off the gas to Europe this winter, they'll be working from their university offices as the universities will be paying the heating bills to keep workers warm! A DN existence would see them also working from shopping malls or wherever heating was not at their own expense! This would be WFA by necessity rather than choice. Conversely, universities might actually encourage DN approaches in order to save on their own heating costs! It is, as yet a great unknown.

One colleague in Australia has questioned whether or not her home insurance and tax situation would be altered by using her home office more frequently to conduct a DN style of work delivery? Pause for thought on that one. Will government legislation and insurance caveats impact the desirability of mobile workplace technologies in the way that public holiday rates are causing hospitality businesses to rethink their operating hours?

Ultimately, will DN and WFH approaches surge ahead or will the power broking of the traditional real estate universities act as a huge anchor stalling the pace of change?

Newer, smaller universities - focusing on narrower fields of offer without also investing majorly in research infrastructure (research-active but not intensively research-focussed) - might have a key role to play in promulgating and developing DN and WFH teaching approaches. This is especially the case where students demand such flexibilities and continue to achieve high academic results whilst studying off campus.

UBSS is one such institution with the capability and necessary drive to test the boundaries in this area. Emphatically, change will happen as the entire value premise of physically attending university is very much being brought into question by young people seeking a secure place in the current and future world economies.

Welcome to the cutting edge.

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WFA – Are companies ready to let go?

Andrew West

September 2022

Before COVID struck us all in early 2020, if I asked you to describe the typical office workspace, you would immediately be able to conjure up a mental picture - lines of hot desks, maybe with partitions, offices in each corner for management, meeting rooms with large rectangular tables and chairs, coffee rooms as de facto meeting spaces. The list goes on.

The other image would be of people - some working diligently on their computers, others on phones, very few with headsets on involved in online meetings, and many walking around communicating in person mainly about relevant work, but also about the weekend and upcoming holidays, current news and life in general. The office was the central point of most in-person interactions and relationships. We spent more time with our co-workers than our families.

For the thirty odd years of my working life, this has been my experience. If I think back to my first job at Shell Oil Company in Phillip

Street, Sydney, the office layout was exactly the same as I described above. Sure, the technology was different, with mainframe Vax computers on most desks, orange monochrome text on our small but impossibly heavy cathode ray tube monitors, no graphics or images possible.

If I wanted something typed, I would take my handwritten page to the secretary in the typing pool. As I was a junior, I always smiled and tried to use my charms, emphasising the importance of the memo requested by my boss. She would smile and then put my page at the bottom of the pile in her inbox, thinking I didn't catch a glimpse as I walked away.

Over the last thirty years the technology has changed. Now we type our own correspondence, communicating via email and other message platforms across the globe at rapid speed. There are still computers on every desk, we still congregate in the central place of the office, to work together for hopefully a common goal. The synergies and random communication of the office, bringing otherwise strangers together creates inter-personal bonds and a purpose.

But now that has changed. During COVID-19 lockdowns, offices mostly became the hollowed-out vessels of their former selves.

As we exit COVID-19 lockdowns in 2022, the new promise is the ability to work from anywhere (WFA). During COVID-19 lockdowns, this was work from home (WFH). Now, theoretically, it can be anywhere on the planet, anywhere on the grid of electricity and reliable internet.

This is particularly the case for knowledge workers. The term knowledge worker was created by management thought leader, Peter Drucker, in his book, 'The Landmarks of Tomorrow' (Drucker, 1959). His definition states knowledge workers as "high level workers who apply theoretical and analytical knowledge, acquired through formal training, to develop products and services."

More and more work is now completely knowledge work, or comprises elements of knowledge work. This is no longer the realm of high-level workers. Also, the theoretical and analytical knowledge is

acquired more through the work experience than formal training. This is particularly the case for fast moving technology-based companies.

There is fierce competition for top talent for the global tech companies. One of the ways to lure this talent is by offering WFA. Many global tech companies have touted their flexible working policies.

In May 2022, in the Forbes article, 'If the office didn't exist, would we invent it?' (Prater, 2022), Air BnB CEO, Brian Chesky, outlines how his company has changed its remote work policy, stating this is now permanent after COVID. After the broad announcement of the change to WFA, the Air BnB careers page had nearly one million hits from all over the world.

In the article, Chesky makes the observation of the change in client bookings to Air BnB. Where these used to be for one-week holidays to the major global cities of London, Paris, Rome and New York, now there is a rise in booking for one or two months. This is due to workers moving to new locations to WFA and experience a whole range of work environments and cultures. He calls this the growth of **workations**.

One of the first movers to a WFA policy was Spotify in March 2021 (Westerdahl, 2022). As part of a one-year review, findings reveal that this change had three main benefits.

First, the accessing of new talent is 50% of the new hires during this period come from outside the regions where they had hired before. This is the case for me. Since the beginning of 2022, I have been working as an analytics consultant for a tech company based in France. They have software developers across the globe. Morning meetings in Europe fit with evening meetings in Australia. I still retain my connection with the Australian higher education industry, with various consulting, academic board and lecturing positions, but these also primarily allow working from anywhere.

At Spotify, the second finding is with regard to retaining staff. During the time of the 'great resignation' this did not occur at Spotify. Staff were able - permitted - to make a change by moving to a new city or state but stayed. Nevertheless, staff remained often within the same country and often within the same state.

Finally, the decision to remain allowed Spotify to be more efficient. Interestingly, even with this choice, about 60% of workers chose to go to the office as their main place of work.

The Australian \$100bn tech company, Atlassian, has a similar WFA policy named 'Team Anywhere'. This policy 'allows staff to work anywhere it has a legal right to employ on a reasonable time zone' (Bonyhady, 2022).

Atlassian is hedging its bets and still believes in the office space. In August 2022 they announced a \$1 billion plus 40-storey development in the Sydney Tech Central hub on the current site of Central Railway Square YHA. With the expected opening in 2027, Atlassian staff can work from anywhere, but may still be enticed to come into the Atlassian HQ (Bonyhady, 2022).

Not all global tech companies have embraced the WFA policy. Since May 2022, Apple employees are expected to be in the office three days a week (Reichert, 2022). Google required their employees to come into the office three days a week from April 2022. Twitter followed a similar work arrangement. It seems most tech companies have pursued a hybrid model.

The standout is Elon Musk and Tesla. In June 2022 he wrote his famous email to 'Everyone', titled, "To be super clear" (Nicolas and Hull, 2022). In the email he stated, "Everyone at Tesla is required to spend a minimum of 40 hours in the office per week. If you don't show up, we will assume you have resigned." To a Twitter post questioning his "antiquated management style", Musk replied, "They should pretend to work somewhere else." (Nicolas and Hull, 2022).

WFA is an ongoing experiment in human relations management and organisational productivity. It must be remembered that work from anywhere may easily translate to 'employed from anywhere'. For knowledge-based companies such as tech companies, there is a broad range of management approaches. How employees respond will be worth watching and which is the more successful model in the long term will be determined.

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Work From Anywhere: Diary of an Edupreneur

Tom O'Connor

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In managing the delivery of VCE offshore, I was required to undertake a fairly constant routine of travel and therefore develop a 'Work From Anywhere' mentality. To those of you who are in the same position, you will understand that while we think time changes and cultural differences are the major issues to be confronted, and they certainly are challenging, the major enemy of those who work on the road is the Chief Financial Officer of the organization for whom you work. He or she will be constantly trying to cut costs by removing the elements essential to travel such as business class tickets and squeezing as much 'work' into the travelling time as possible. This masks his or her belief that anyone 'working' overseas is actually spending their time sight-seeing and eating and drinking in exotic locations.

The CFO decided that it would be a more productive use of my time if we combined two activities which involved overseas travel, albeit in two different countries a couple of thousand miles apart. Managing

the Victorian Certificate of Education offshore involved assisting the Department of Education officials in auditing the exams conducted overseas. Normally, I arrived a day or two early to make sure that everything was well prepared, and that the Chinese invigilators knew exactly what to do. The DET officials had decided to audit the English exam which was on a Wednesday at one school and the Maths exam on the following Monday at a different school in a different part of China. This also happened to be the day before the Melbourne Cup holiday and, unfortunately, it meant the officials would have to spend four days in China followed by a day off for them as public servants. They later reminded me - often - that this was a great 'sacrifice' on their part.

At the same time, my school was applying to the Department of Education for a partnership with a new school in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The application to partner with an offshore school runs to about 350 pages and must be submitted 7 days prior to the meeting with a panel of Department international panel bureaucrats present. This gives those members of the panel time to read the application so they can ask irrelevant questions during the meeting. Despite this, it must be delivered on time, or the application will not proceed. The meeting is due to take place on the Wednesday of the week after I return, so the documents are due for submission on the Wednesday after the Melbourne Cup. While much of the application can be prepared in advance, due diligence means I have to visit the school and attest to the fact that they have the facilities and personnel to run the VCE. This has to be documented and photographs supplied. So, the CFO has decided that in between the first and second exam audits, I can fly to Sri Lanka, complete the due diligence, get the agreement with the new school signed and submit the documents to the panel secretary before the due date - then return to China and attend the second audit. "You will have plenty of time," the CFO says with a grin and just the vaguest hint of sarcasm. "You've done this stuff before."

China Southern Lounge, 10.00 pm Melbourne, Monday. Having threatened the CFO a work cover claim for potential blood clots and

other assorted ailments, he has allowed me to fly business class as long as I work the day of leaving and travel overnight (saving a hotel room). But on the shorter five-hour flight from China to Sri Lanka it's economy, as I "wouldn't have enough time to get a good sleep anyway." His logic is irrefutable.

China Southern Lounge Guangzhou Airport, 5.00am Tuesday. This is like a second home. As the major hub for China Southern, I have been through here numerous times. Well rested, I go to the business class lounge for breakfast and fire up my laptop. Usual run of pointless messages - confirmations from VCAA officials that we will meet later in the evening prior to exam in the morning.

Suzhou International Foreign Language School, 2.00pm Tuesday. Arrived Suzhou on time. Got to school for lunch with principal. Presented him with a gift of Penfolds wine which he put in his bag, and he then proceeded to order several bottles of the local Chateau Great Wall red, which the staff at lunch downed with gay abandon.

Now with the exam invigilators, slightly worse for wear. They are missing a few documents which I download and print off. After a few adjustments we are good to go - everything is set up correctly.

Fairmont Suzhou Hotel. Lounge, 7.00pm Tuesday. Meet VCAA officials. They inform me, with a certain smugness, that there is a new form I must fill out and I access it through a link to a Google shared drive they have set up. When I inform them that the Chinese government has banned all things Google, they hastily open their laptops and find they can't access it themselves. They look at each other. I buy them a drink.

Suzhou International Foreign Language School, 4.30am Wednesday, English exam. It is VCAA policy that exams done offshore must take place at the same time as those in Victoria. The three-hour time difference means the English exam is to start at 6.00am in China, which means a 5.00am arrival at the school, which means a 4.00am start for those involved. The audit officials are bleary-eyed, cold and hungry. The five-star hotel they are staying at doesn't serve breakfast until

6.30am and they will not get back in time to have any. I give them a pork bun each.

Suzhou International Foreign Language School, 9.30am Wednesday, English exam complete. Preparations paid off, and I can tick off that box. Audit officials look pale. Between the two of them, they are discussing how to get overtime for the early start. I tell them I am leaving for Sri Lanka to visit another school and that I will see them on Monday. They look somewhat startled and tell me they had hoped I would help them visit pandas. I explain that the pandas are in another province, Sichuan, which is several hours away by train.

“Do you have any contacts in Sichuan?”

“Well, we do have a school in Chongqing that has just started the VCE program.”

“That’s great. Tell them we are coming to visit them.”

“They are not expecting you. They will get nervous.”

“Purely meet and greet, no pressure. And could you ask them to organize a panda tour?”

“OK.”

After a lengthy phone call soothing the nerves of the VCE coordinator at Chongqing, we agree to a brief school visit and that they will organize a visit to the two panda parks near Chongqing.

China Southern Lounge Guangzhou Airport, 5.00pm Wednesday. Email school to let them know all went well and inform them of the VCAA’s interest in Chinese wildlife. I receive an email from the secretary of the international panel reminding me that all the documentation needs to be sent by the following Wednesday. The following Tuesday is Melbourne Cup Day, so no VCE exams. It gives me a buffer of one day to finalize the application.

Metropole Hotel Colombo, 11.00pm Wednesday. Arrived in Sri Lanka and am met by our local agent. All going well. The hotel he has booked for me is eerily identical to one where I have stayed in Dubai, the Al Bustan. The layout is identical, the ‘services’ equally disappointing and the designation four-star highly optimistic. The one difference is the air conditioning, which is not working, so I sit at my computer

wearing as little as possible and check my documents for the next day. After a few hours' fitful sleep, I wake and think I am in Dubai.

Metropole Hotel Colombo, 6.30am Wednesday. I pride myself on being able to eat the food of most cultures. The one thing I cannot eat is chili. Sri Lankan cuisine seems to be based entirely around chilies and I thank God for British colonialism which allows me to have jam and toast with a cup of tea for breakfast.

Principal's office, St. Daniel's School, Colombo, 10.00am Wednesday. The principal indicates that he will not sign the agreement I have brought with me. I have just spent the last hour photographing classrooms and interviewing staff to complete the application. It is clear that he simply wants to rent out his classrooms and staff during the afternoons when his own students have gone home. This is not the type of school-to-school partnership that the international panel will approve. Many hours of work I now deem useless.

Unnamed café, Colombo, 11.30 am Wednesday. After telling me that the encounter with the principal was a 'spot of bad luck', the agent and I make a shared phone call to my manager back at the Melbourne school explaining the situation. The agent says he knows some other schools that might be interested and that we should visit them. My manager, fearful of confronting the CFO, agrees and urges me to do everything possible to get a school on board, reminding me that she has spent two years getting approval for this project.

Principal's office, St. Anne's Anglican Girls' College, 4.00pm Wednesday. This is the third school we have visited. We have been fobbed off by the secretary of one school, listened to but ignored by another. This principal, however, listens intently and is interested. She would like to proceed but needs me to do the presentation to her board. She phones the members, but they cannot meet until Friday. Things are looking good.

Metropole Hotel Colombo, 6.00pm Wednesday. The air conditioning is now working, and the room temperature is 13C. Fortunately, I have winter clothing from China, so I sit at my computer wearing as much as possible, however, while the AC is back, the Wi-Fi is gone. I

ask concierge if there is a McDonald's nearby. Yes, there is. My heart leaps as I get into the local 'taxi'.

McDonald's Colombo, Four Square Mall, 6.30pm Wednesday. Great Wi-fi, good temperature and a big TV. They are offering a special McNormal Burger which, for a limited time, means you can get a burger without chili. I seriously contemplate staying here overnight. I access my drive in Melbourne and download material for the presentation. I also have to work on a new agreement, send it back for signatures and get it returned. It will be tight but if the board is 'on board', it is doable. I get a text message from our local agent asking me if I would like to go to a whiskey bar. I decline and tell him I need to spend some time at the school collecting the information for the 'revised' application.

Metropole Hotel Colombo, 11.30pm Wednesday. Wearing a hoodie and track pants, I send the revised agreement back to Melbourne and climb into bed.

Metropole Hotel Colombo, 6.00am Thursday. Tea and toast.

St. Anne's Anglican Girls' College, 8.00am Thursday. Tradition is very important in Sri Lanka. St. Anne's was used as a hospital in World War II and they have kept all the furniture including the school desks from that time, which the girls sit on to this day. They have also kept the large jars full of the fetuses of many animals and one or two humans. The photos I take strategically omit these details.

St. Anne's Anglican Girls' College, 4.00pm Thursday. I have collected all the material and information I need to revise the Application.

Metropole Hotel Colombo, 5.00pm Thursday. Air conditioning out.

McDonald's Colombo, Four Square Mall, 5.30pm Thursday. I receive the new 'Agreement' to be signed and settled in order to complete the presentation for the next day. One McNormal meal, please. Things are still on track.

St. Anne's Anglican Girls' College, 8.00am Friday. Tradition is very important in Sri Lanka. The school has one of what must be one of the earliest production photocopiers. She presses several buttons, and the machine starts to shake and produce a screeching like a 747 heading

down the runway. As she prints, the machine produces, this time, strange guttural screeches preceding each page. After a page is produced there is a deep hissing sigh. At this point, I understand how the machine feels.

St. Anne's Anglican Girls' College, 10.00am Friday. The principal and four Anglican ministers in religious attire face me in a room. Since there is no projection equipment, they are crowded around my laptop. As the presentation proceeds, there is no discernible reaction until I get to the budget. As I explain that they will be free to charge what they like, silent glances shoot between them. After I finish, there are some questions but none that seem negative. One of the ministers thanks me and says they need to pray on the matter.

St. Anne's Anglican Girls' College, principal's office, 11.00am Friday. With the agent, I explain to the principal, the timeline I have. The particular issue is that the agreement between schools is a critical part of the application to run VCE offshore. She is very understanding and says she believes it will go ahead. I suggest leaving the signature page - which already has the required signatures from my school - with her, and when the board says yes, she can sign the page and send a copy to me. She agrees and will meet them after church on Sunday.

Metropole Hotel Colombo, 12.00 noon Friday. Having successfully fended off the agent's desire to treat me to a traditional Sri Lankan meal, I find the hotel room temperature is quite pleasant. It is in these quiet times, the edupreneur might be tempted in some reflection. This should be avoided at all costs. Questions like, "How did I get here?", "What am I doing?", "Am I in some bizarre nightmare?" serve no purpose and can only lead to madness. Instead, for the twentieth time, I calculate the timeline for getting the work done. It's getting tight, but still doable.

Metropole Hotel Colombo, 3.00pm Friday. I wake up shivering as the AC has gone into overdrive. Email school to let them know the situation. It is 8.00pm Friday night in Melbourne so I don't expect an immediate answer.

The Boomerang Bar, Downtown Colombo, 9.00pm Friday.

“Look, mate. I don’t want to buy a piece of beachfront property, I don’t want a genuine Rolex watch and, while I am sure she’s as beautiful as you say, I don’t want to meet your sister.”

Colombo Airport, Starbucks, 7.00pm Saturday. Preparing the application is a time-consuming process. I have been making changes across the whole 350 pages, replacing all references and information about St. Daniel’s with those relating to St. Anne’s. I am getting there. No word from my school yet. Email to Nanjing School arranging to meet them Sunday afternoon to prepare for exam.

China Southern Lounge Guangzhou Airport, 5.00am Sunday. I feel like I have come back home. Suddenly it is announced that all airspace has been closed for five hours for military exercises. No problem. I will still get to Nanjing today and, in the meantime, I can keep working in a comfortable place. Email from my supervisor has a slightly frantic tone. I reply we can only wait.

Nanjing Sheraton, 9.00pm Sunday. After a day of repeated delays, I finally get to Nanjing. Have had to cancel meeting with exam supervisors but I am assured they are all OK. I have left messages with VCAA officials reminding them of the time and location. Done everything I can. No word from Sri Lanka.

Nanjing Jia Din International High School. Monday, 7.30am

“Hi, Mark, what happened to you?”

“We had an accident at the panda park.”

“Where’s Margaret?”

“She’s flown back to Melbourne.”

“What! Is she OK? Are you OK? That bandage on your head looks serious. What happened?”

“Well, the Chongqing people took us to two panda parks. At the first one we couldn’t see anything. They were asleep or something. So, at the second park, Margaret was determined to see them and get some photos. Honestly, they have no idea about health and safety here! So, she was leaning over the fence to get a good shot and the fence gave way. She fell into a water ditch and I slid down a concrete wall. The ditch smelt of panda poo and she got worried about getting

an infection. The Chongqing people were great, they got the school nurse to come and help us and she bandaged me up. They wanted to take Margaret to a local hospital, but she refused to go and got the next flight out. I think she was pretty traumatized.”

“Yeah, well Margaret is a bit bigger than your average Chinese, so I guess the fence wasn’t designed for someone of her... dimensions. What about this exam then? It starts in an hour and a half.”

“How do I look?”

“Oh, not too bad. The grazes on your face are hardly noticeable at all.”

“I’m here now. I’m representing the Victorian government and we will get the job done.”

Nanjing Jia Din International High School. Monday, 8.00am. Wounded VCAA official and I are taken to the exam venue, the school library. The chief exam supervisor is there. She is dressed like a cross between the lead singer of KISS and Captain Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. There is little time to speak to her before the students start to file in. Also, the school officials have decided that the library will stay open while the exam is underway, instructing all other library visitors to remain quiet. I tell the VCE coordinator that this is not acceptable, the library must be shut. She leaves to try and get the necessary permissions.

Meanwhile, the Chief Supervisor, who has chosen to go by the English name of “Candy”, starts reading the instruction script from the handbook. She decides, however, to add her own messages, poetry and quotes from Confucius. A look of disbelief and horror appears, under the bandages, on Mark’s face. He stands at the doorway - enough to scare away students. The exam starts, but as Candy walks around, the chains clink against the studs on her clothes and the early morning sun coming in through the window bounces off the many pieces of glass and chrome she is wearing, sending patterns dancing across the exam papers the students are reading.

With the library secured, Mark retreats to a chair at the back of the room. Fortunately, this exam is only 90 minutes. After the students

have left and the papers are packed for shipping to Australia, we have a “review”. Candy - who seems quite happy with her supervisory performance - Mark and I sit together.

“Tom, I can’t sign off on this. Candy, did you do any training?”

“When?”

“At anytime.”

“Now?”

“Let me answer. We supervised Candy and all the staff doing the online courses that the VCAA provides.”

“Candy, you did the online course from VCAA?”

“When?”

“At anytime.”

“Candy did the course in August.”

“I find that difficult to digest, given what I have seen here today. Candy, the library was open while the exam was on.”

“Yes.”

“It must be closed.”

“When?”

After several minutes of this discussion, it is clear the ‘training’ did not specifically mention having a room that is closed to all other students, nor does it cover the type of clothing a supervisor should wear. The chief supervisor displays an air of self-satisfaction. To my horror, Mark says he has to stay and watch the next exam on Wednesday morning and that tomorrow, Tuesday, Melbourne Cup Day - my buffer - we will give the supervisors some proper training.

Golden Dragon Restaurant, Nanjing. Monday, 6.30pm. It would be extremely impolite to refuse a dinner invitation from the principal. I tell Mark he needs to attend because he represents the Victorian government, and so, we find ourselves around the table with various staff, including the chief supervisor, who is dressed in what is best described as a ‘tiger theme’. Because of his antibiotics, Mark cannot drink, I refrain because I have work to do, but the rest of the table enjoy the hospitality to its fullest.

Nanjing Jia Din International High School. Tuesday, 11.00am. Mark remains faithful to the values of the public service which is to make even the simplest procedure complex and mind-numbingly boring. The supervisors sit through it dutifully, the chief supervisor dressed in a bright red tracksuit with gold shoulder braids and belt. I ask the VCE coordinator to have a chat to her about dress code for exams.

Nanjing Jia Din International High School. Tuesday, 2.00pm. Stay behind to explain the procedure to the supervisors in a way they can understand and set up the room for the examination.

Nanjing Sheraton, 5.00pm Tuesday. The window for delivery of Sri Lankan documents is closing. I call the agent. He informs me that the bishop, a board member, has gone to visit his sister in the country and cannot be contacted. His office has said he will be back later that day. I remind him of time differences and that we must have everything in by 5.00pm Wednesday, Melbourne time.

Nanjing Sheraton, 5.00am Wednesday. Email from my supervisor saying it was an exciting Melbourne Cup, that she enjoyed a barbecue and won the sweep. An important matter - if we don't land the Sri Lanka project, it does not bode well for us, meaning, in reality, for me. Nothing from Sri Lanka.

Nanjing Jia Din International High School. Wednesday, 8.00am. The chief supervisor arrives looking like a member of the cast of the Matrix - black leather coat, black clothes and hair tied back. Mark is satisfied and the exam runs smoothly. He signs off and I say goodbye and dash to the airport.

Nanjing Airport Lounge, Wednesday, 12.00 noon. On my phone I receive a photograph of signed signature page of the agreement. I have to email the photo to myself and then, using my highly developed Photoshop skills, make it look like the rest of the document. My plane leaves at 2.10pm, 10 minutes after close of business Melbourne time. I have difficulty completing this, due to sweaty palms and faltering mental capacity. Nevertheless, at 1.15, I insert the page into the agreement and the agreement into the application. I attach it to an email and press send. "Attachment exceeds acceptable limit" jumps onto the

screen. Holding back my nausea, I break attachment into three sections and send each separately, explaining why. They go through. I run to catch the flight.

China Southern, CZ 321. Somewhere over the South China Sea.

“Sir, would you like something to drink?”

“Yes, a glass of shiraz, thanks.”

My desk at work, Thursday 9.00am.

CFO - “Tom, how did you get on?”

Me - “All done, no problem.”

I receive an email from the international panel thanking me for the documents and informing me that the meeting has been postponed for a week and that I have five days to submit any additional material.

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Digital Nomadism and Nomadic Students: Insights from Theories of Learning

Arash Najmaei
Zahra Sadeghinejad

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Digital nomadism has become a global cultural trend transcending typical workers who seek remote working to different walks of life, including students who now can work and study digitally from anywhere. This has given rise to a growing population of nomadic students. Nomadic students bring about both opportunities and challenges to universities and these deserve systematic and methodical investigations. In this short essay, we look at this phenomenon from the learning perspective. We review several theories of learning and discuss how they apply to nomadic-style students. We draw relevant insights for educational institutions (universities and colleges).

Defining digital nomadism and digitally nomadic students

When Makimoto and Manners (1997) wrote their manifesto, “Digital Nomad”, very few would have thought that their speculations about the potential of the Internet to liberate workers from the shackles of their office would one day come true, but if Covid-19 has taught us anything, it is the human adaptability and the transformative role of digital technologies and the Internet as its driving engine. Accordingly, a digital nomad is someone who benefits from the freedom granted by digital technologies in the new economy. They are in search of freedom, community, and meaningful work by adopting a mobile lifestyle (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021). As such, nomads are different from travellers, migrants, and tourists in that they do not move to a new location permanently, nor do they seek pure leisure. Their lifestyle is a mix of leisure and work, the so-called serious leisure (Makimoto & Manners, 1997; Schlagwein, 2018). Adding studying online to the mix, we will arrive at the burgeoning phenomenon of nomadic students - those who adopt a digitally nomadic style to study while travelling in search for more freedom, new job opportunities and taking advantage of benefits offered by cost-efficient destinations like Bali, Thailand, Barbados, and Bahamas. As digital nomadism rests in the nexus of remote working and travel mobility, student digital nomadism lies in the intersection of digital nomadism and online learning.

Learning theories and digitally nomadic students

The question is how educational institutions adapt or evolve in a competitive manner to serve students who are digitally nomadic. Not only should curriculums change but also educators’ approaches to teaching must be modified because, as Eaton (2018) envisioned, digital technologies and, specifically, social media can function as a medium for students to be “nomadic” (p. 60) throughout their lives, moving outside of the space in the classroom into a digital space where digital content is entertaining and educational. Students, therefore, use

digital spaces to form a new identity and find community support, while learning things in a new way (Ibarra & Kalich, 2022). As a result, the way digitally nomadic students interact with the world and learn from and about it is fundamentally different from traditional students' modes of learning. A review of learning theories offers important insights into this phenomenon.

Theories of adult learning

For the purpose of this discussion, we used Mukhalalati and Taylor (2019)'s list of main Adult Learning Theories (ALTs). According to Mukhalalati and Taylor, ALTs can be grouped into seven theoretical domains: (1) instrumental (2) humanistic (3) transformative, (4) social (5) motivational (6) reflective and (7) constructivist. Furthermore, instrumental theories can be behavioural, cognitive, or experiential.

Behavioural learning focuses on how, when, and why stimulus in the environment leads to an individual's change of behaviour. Cognitive theory, on the other hand emphasizes learner's internal environment and cognitive structures which include mental and psychological elements such as learning style, thinking, and processing styles, and preferences rather than the context or external environment. Experiential learning, however, suggests that learning is often facilitated through interaction with the authentic environment in the form of accumulated experience.

Humanistic view suggests that learning is student-centered and student-directed because adults can plan, manage, and assess their own learning to accomplish self-actualization, self-fulfilment, and self-motivation. Educators are essentially facilitators of personalized learning. Transformative learning, on the other hand, emphasizes transformation of meaning when the learner confronts a confusing issue or problem and engages in a critical evaluation of the situation based on self-reflection, which often results in a transformation of existing knowledge into new meanings. Related to this, is social learning theory which highlights the centrality of social interactions where, the person,

context, community, and the desired behaviour become the facilitators of learning. Social interactions, in this regard, can play transformative and modelling roles in one's learning journey.

Motivational theory of learning departs from social view by placing more emphasis on the role of intrinsic factors such as expectancy of success, self-determination, self-evaluation, and attitudes towards education in one's learning. Reflective theory is also an inward view which focuses on reflection-on-action of learning and reflection-in-action of learning. While reflection-on-action allows learners to evaluate the level of relevance or rigor of the processes after they happen, reflection-in-action allows learners to reflect while the activity is happening. This leads the learners to test their own knowledge, through investigation and development of richer more critical meanings about the world.

Lastly, the constructivist theory of learning suggests that individuals actively construct new knowledge through the interactions between their previous skills and knowledge, the skills and knowledge gained from social interactions with peers and teachers, and social activities.

A learning-based view of digitally nomadic students

As outlined above, learning occurs in different ways. Digitally nomadic lifestyle of students offers an interesting lens through which a number of learning theories can be viewed. First, from the perspective of humanistic theory, it can be argued that nomadic students are perhaps the main subject of student-centred and student-directed approaches to learning. The digitally nomadic lifestyle is the offspring of technology-enabled human centrism. Digitally nomadic students use technology to travel while learning and technology has given them a degree of flexibility and student-centrism that is unprecedented. New advances on online education and the myriad of tools available to facilitate that point to the significance of the humanistic view of learning

and its rising traction among different student cohorts such as nomadic ones.

Other theories of learning also seem relevant. For instance, motivational learning suggests that since a digitally nomadic lifestyle is in essence a serious leisure and imposes less control over agents (students here), students who adopt this lifestyle need to be more self-disciplined, self-determined, and capable of constantly evaluating their learning and actively reflecting on and during their learning journey as their lifestyle is more dynamic. Educators can provide motivational guidelines to help students reflect on their experiences to achieve their learning goals. Analogously, from the viewpoint of social learning theory, digitally nomadic learning happens at the intersection of the student's intention to learn, the educational context of their temporary location and the community where they are based. Educators' facilitative role in helping students blend in and have an authentic experience is the key factor here. Moving on to the behavioural view, the learning style of students and their cognitive capabilities to acquire, process and apply knowledge in a nomadic style is an interesting, yet, less empirically explored domain. Previous research on VARK (Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, Kinesthetics) learning styles (Prithishkumar & Michael, 2014) offers a solid ground upon which further explanations on how digitally nomadic students learn compared to their counterparts can be established.

Last, the constructivist theory of learning offers two implications when applied to the learning style of digitally nomadic students. First, students actively construct new knowledge through their interactions with others, which is different in nomadic students compared to other students, due to the unique nature of nomadic lifestyle. Therefore, their constructed knowledge is profoundly different from their peers. Second, their peers, including their virtual communities of which they are members, and their online student cohorts play a central in their knowledge construction mechanisms. Educators' key role here is to ensure that a student's knowledge construction path is aligned with their learning goals.

Concluding remarks for educational practitioners

In this short essay we shed some light on the growing phenomenon of digitally nomadic students. We offer a simple discussion about their learning journey from the perspective of main learning theories. This stream of research is in its nascency and is more empirical as well, as theoretical research is required to explore how, why, and under what conditions a nomadic lifestyle can yield desired learning outcomes. We encourage researchers interested in this stream to use our discussion as a starting point in a long yet very rewarding journey to a fertile land for research and practice.

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A Socio-Materialistic View of Digital Nomadism

Zahra Sadeghinejad

Arash Najmaei

September 2022

Digital nomadism has become one of the most significant social phenomena in the last few years. Preponderance of scholarly and anecdotal evidence about the rise of digitally nomadic life style and its role of transforming societies, markets, and industries suggests that the phenomena deserve more systematic explanation. To this end, we borrow the socio-materiality theory from the field of organization science to propose a socio-materialistic view of digital nomadism. Our conceptualization suggests that digital nomadism is best understood as a form of continuous emergent of social life of a nomad and through his or her use of digital material. The socio-materiality of digital nomadism, hence, offers a new view of the phenomenon as an inseparable entity that is social and material.

Defining digital nomadism

Nomads are people who move often to different locations. Traditionally, they were motivated by the need to obtain food, find pasture for livestock, or otherwise make a living. While a grey zone exists in defining nomads and migrants, nomads move more often or move continuously as a lifestyle choice (Schlagwein, 2018). Among traditional nomads, we can distinguish hunter-gatherers (moving in their search for food), pastoral nomads (moving with their livestock, such as the Bedouin) and peripatetic nomads (moving to sell their craft, such as the Sinti) (Schlagwein, 2018).

Digital nomadism departs from these traditional forms by emphasizing the central role of digital technologies and the need to seek digital freedom which is enabled by the Internet. In 1997, Makimoto and Manners recognised the power of the Internet in transforming lives in their manifesto called “digital nomad” in which they described the future of work as:

“At the moment, we do not have the ability to communicate by video link between any two points on the planet. But we will have it, and it will be generally affordable, within ten years. We will be able to see people, documents, and pictures wherever they happen to be, from anywhere we happen to be” (p. 5f).

Fast forward 25 years, the prophecy of Makimoto and Manners has turned into a global reality. Digital nomadism is the offspring of the freedom that global digital technology and its rapid advancement and widespread adoption brings about. As described by Reichenberger (2017), freedom in the information era appears “in a variety of contexts, including freedom within paid employment, freedom relating to location independence and freedom to pursue self-development” (p. 9). Digital nomads are, then, those mobile laborers who seek a new mode of work-life reconciliation (Müller, 2016) by adopting a nomadic lifestyle while working remotely by leveraging digital technologies. As

such, digital nomads are also called “neo-nomads”, “global nomads”, “modern nomads”, or “new nomads” (Müller, 2016).

The lifestyle of the digital nomad unifies different aspects of multi-directional technology-enabled mobility and location-independent work on a new social level that may lead to a new global culture or a universal social system (Bozzi, 2020; Ibarra & Kalich, 2022; Müller, 2016; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021). As such, a deeper understanding of the genesis of digital nomadism is warranted. To this end, we can distinguish two forces that play a pivotal role in the formation of digital nomadism: 1) digital technology 2) socio-cultural style of a nomadic life. The question is, then, how do these forces come together to explain the genesis of digital nomadism?

Socio-materiality theory

The socio-materiality theory is a theory of the interaction between technology (material) and organization of societies in which different technologies are used. This theory aims to explain the state that is simultaneously social and material in the world (Kim & Yang, 2020).

Traditionally, the distinct and direct use of technology in societies was either absent or only implicitly discussed. The separation of technology and organisation of societies was paradoxical and problematic due to the rising importance of technologies in transforming existing, and shaping new, social norms and structures (Jain & Srinivasan, 2022; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008; Stanko, Dahm, Lahnehan, & Richter, 2022). Therefore, the socio-materiality theory gained momentum as a theoretical view that replaces the separation of technologies from societies with a fusion of them (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). In this way, the socio-materiality perspective rests on the premise that social and technological aspects of various social systems and phenomena are interlinked and inseparable in a given context. This inseparability creates constitutive entanglement and recursive intertwining which creates unique forces for the system to adapt and evolve (Jain & Srinivasan, 2022). Therefore, a socio-materialistic view of a given social or organizational

phenomenon suggests that all materiality is created, interpreted, and used based on social practice, and all social practice is affected by materiality (Leonardi, 2013). We now use this view to propose a socio-materialistic view of digital nomadism.

A socio-materialistic view of digital nomadism and why it matters

In a socio-materialistic view, materiality refers to the qualities of material agencies including all technological tools, methods, techniques and essentially all non-human elements performing specific functions. Considering this, the digital and physical aspects of a digital nomadic lifestyle form the inseparable materialistic fabric of it. Furthermore, materiality is not limited to only technical aspects of digital nomadism. The workplace and the physical environment where a digital nomad is situated and works also constitutes as components of its material identity. The social practice is, however, broader and covers all human-enabled or performed agencies or routines that make a system function. In the context of digital nomadism, the human-centric of a nomadic life and the way a nomad organises his or her life while balancing it with work constitute social practice. This includes routines, norms, policies, communications and personal, as well as professional, activities that are crucial to perform jobs and sustain the nomadic lifestyle. Taken together, a socio-materialistic view of digital nomadism suggests that digital and non-digital tools and technologies as well as human-centered agency and different policies and behaviours work in tandem to create a reconciliation of work-specific requirements with the necessary conditions of a nomadic lifestyle.

This view is important in two ways. First, it portrays digital nomadism as a complex system of social and material factors which work together in order to create a unique lifestyle. This view is, therefore, a theoretically robust approach to study different aspects of digital nomadism. Second, it offers three intertwined directions to study the formation, functionality, and consequences of adopting digitally nomadic

lifestyle. These three include: the materiality side, the social practice, and the fusion of these two in the form of a unified socio-materialistic phenomenon.

Conclusion

Digital nomadism has become one of the most talked-about buzz terms recently. Despite its rising popularity, little research has been done on the theoretical foundation of this phenomenon. In this short essay, we used the theoretical lens of socio-materiality and proposed a socio-materialistic view of digital nomadism. We argued that the technological and social sides of digital nomadism cannot be separated. We also outlined why this view matters. We hope other researchers interested in this phenomenon see benefits in this approach and build on our conceptualization to advance research on this interesting phenomenon.

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Recording from Anywhere – A Story from a Digital Nomad with a Recording Studio in a Briefcase

*Jamie Rigg
Ian Bofinger*

September 2022

Just a few decades ago, if you wanted to record an album or a song, there were only a few options available. You could rent time in an expensive professional studio or invest in creating a personal recording studio, either building new structures or converting existing rooms into studio and control spaces. Building a studio is also expensive, and the space had to be large enough to hold all the equipment needed to produce high-quality recordings.

Today, high-speed computer processing power and advanced software and peripheral hardware technologies make creating a portable recording studio more accessible and affordable. Unlike the large

recording studios of the past, you can take these on the road with you. The recording studio has gone portable.

A professional recording studio might cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to construct, fit out and bring online. As Vincent (2018) states, a portable studio costs a fraction of that as it tends to assign multiple production tasks to a single device so that only a few pieces of equipment handle the same duties as a large studio full of ‘offboard’ gear.

The most important piece of equipment in any portable studio is the digital audio workstation (DAW). Depending on the type of software and the computer, a DAW could act as a recording device, mixer and sequencer. By handling so many tasks, a good DAW reduces the need for additional equipment.

Handling audio files requires a lot of computational power, particularly if you are mixing multiple channels of audio and midi. For that reason, it is important to utilise a computer with a fast microprocessor. Walker (2022) notes that as long as “the computer you pick has a powerful CPU and a large, fast hard drive, it will suffice, but most engineers opt for the Mac platform.”

A second vital piece of the portable studio setup is the audio interface. While many computers have input and output ports for simple stereo sound, they are not always capable of recording or playing back multiple tracks of professional-quality sound. The interface also acts as analogue-to-digital converter (ADC).

In addition to these elements, the portable studio also consists of microphones, headphones and a MIDI keyboard. To keep the overall size and weight to a minimum, so as to fit the whole studio in a briefcase, in our setup we have chosen thinner XLR and HDMI cables than the standard gauge. The HDMI also allows us to use TV monitors in hotels or other rooms as external monitors. A rollout piano keyboard acts as a portable MIDI keyboard controller.

The ‘Studio in a Briefcase’ that we are using contains:

- **DAW:** Macbook Pro M1 Max 16”
- **Hard Drive:** 2TB external Solid State Drive (SSD)

- **Software:** Logic Pro X (10.7.4)
- **Audio interface:** Scarlet Focusrite 2i2
- **Other hardware:** Microphones - a pair of Rode M5-matched small-diaphragm condenser microphones and an AT4050 large diaphragm vocal microphone as per White (2012), ATH-M50X headphones, as Clark (2022) lists, a silicon roll-out 88 keys with USB as a suitable 'on road' midi piano keyboard, USB cables and various audio and peripheral adapters.

A collaborative music project - conceived and delivered during COVID lockdown

Around twelve months ago, in September 2021, during yet another COVID lockdown, I was approached by my good friend, Rohan Cannon, a social worker and fine musician, from Sydney's Wayside Chapel to ask if I could come up with a song that could align with the philosophy and spirit of Wayside.

The Wayside Chapel is a charity and parish mission of the Uniting Church in Australia in the Potts Point area of Sydney that provides unconditional love, care, support and essential services for people experiencing homelessness and social isolation in Sydney (Dunn 2008).

The idea was to gather some heavy weights of the Australian Music Industry and record a song and film clip that could be used as a promotional and fundraising piece. I immediately considered enlisting the help of my dear friend and long-time musical amigo, Brian Cadd. Brian is of course a legendary stalwart of the Australian music scene and an award-winning songwriter and producer.

The brief for the song was that it should have an anthemic feel, ideally be sung by several artists and include a memorable chorus sung by a choir. This struck a memory response from me, as Brian and I had previously done some writing together in 2005 and, had at that time, developed a verse and chorus of a potential song with the working title, "I Can Still Believe". As luck would have it, after rifling through

various boxes of old tapes and CDs, I found the very rough demo-recording we had put together at that time.

Brian and I presented this to Rohan at Wayside and his response was literally, “Shit, that’s got potential!” We then set about embellishing the idea into a full track with new verses, a bridge section and an enhanced chorus, as per the brief. I would point out that during this part of development, I was in Sydney and Brian was touring in various parts of the country, so all the collaboration was occurring remotely.

Once we had a new computer-generated backing track, using the studio at AMPA, Sydney, we added guide vocals parts using a brilliant Sydney session singer, Katie Carr, singing all the individual parts on the track. We now had a product we could use to enlist the support of our wish list of high-profile Australian artists.

And what a list it turned out to be - a who’s who of great Aussie voices.

- **Glenn Shorrock:** Legendary Australian performer, founding member of rock bands: The Twilights, Axiom, Little River Band and an inductee of the ARIA Hall of Fame.
- **Russell Morris:** Singer-songwriter and guitarist who had five Australian Top 10 singles during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Also, an inductee of the ARIA Hall of Fame.
- **Angry Anderson:** Australian rock singer-songwriter, television presenter-reporter and actor. He has been the lead vocalist with the hard rock band, Rose Tattoo, since 1976.
- **Melinda Schneider:** Australian country music performer and recording artist.

All were anchored by Brian Cadd’s incredibly distinctive and emotional vocals leading the way.

Now, to record, produce, and mix the final track in an extremely challenging setting due to the fact that most of the country was in lockdown, we had to somehow assemble these performers at various times and places to add their contributions to the project.

At this time, I was in Sydney and Brian Cadd was on the Gold Coast in Queensland. It was decided that he would use a recording studio

there to record live musicians, drums, guitars and pedal steel guitar on the original computer track. I was able to join them live via Zoom during this session.

Thankfully, shortly after this, the Queensland border opened to NSW, so I was able to travel there for the recording of Brian's lead vocals in December, 2021.

Things were now starting to gain momentum. We found a window for Glen Shorrocks to record his parts, however, he was in Sydney and both Brian and I were in Queensland. So, thanks to Zoom, we were able to set him up in a studio in Darlinghurst, Sydney, while Brian and I directed him from Brisbane.

While this was not the ideal way to record and produce an artist, it was actually progressing quite well. Next it was Russell Morris recording his vocals in his study at his home on the Gold Coast onto a laptop computer, and then over the next few months, Melinda and Angry added their parts in similar scenarios.

During all the audio recording sessions, we were of course filming the process on various devices, that is, the iPhone, domestic cameras and using professional film crews. Once all the lead voices were recorded, it was time to add the choir and finishing touches to the track.

A choir made up of music students and folks from the Wayside community was assembled at AMPA in Surry Hills, Sydney, where all the vocal parts were added, and the choir filmed by a crew singing along to playback of the song.

At the time of writing (September 2022), it has evolved into a 12-month project and is in the final stages of video editing. While the process was unorthodox and highly challenging, the end result is an example of how we were able to re-think the strategy and deliver an exciting and worthwhile project.

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Work life balance when working from anywhere

Syed Uddin

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Prelude

‘Flexibility’ has been the buzz word which has attracted a great deal of attention amongst all other parameters of the phenomenon of work life balance (WLB). The longing for flexibility in terms of structuring, scheduling, and conducting jobs (along with where and how to complete them) has been the major focus of those people who spear-headed the agenda of work life balance from the very beginning. The desire to have flexibility is most prevalent with some sections of the population - namely, Gen-Y, Gen-Z, and the Millennials - across the globe. In developed countries, flexibility reverberation has reached a new height as people in general are more health and wellbeing conscious now compared to any other time in the past. People at large are convinced that they ‘do not live to work’, rather, they work to make a living. To these people, work is just the ‘means, but not the end’. Hence, the logical expectation is that work must not interfere with lives outside work hours. Arguably, employees manage work-related

stress better if they are provided with flexibility. Furthermore, the notion that flexibility has the potential to improve the productivity of an organisation ties into the other notion that greater flexibility allows employees to fulfil their obligations away from work (including fulfilling the needs of families and friends and discharging other commitments) relatively better.

Ground reality

During the last two and a half years the world has been ravaged by COVID-19, and, incredibly significant is a powerful new trend that was already in the making. The workplaces in Australia, USA, Europe and in some parts of Asia witnessed an unprecedented disruption when employers had to shut their doors and ask employees to leave the premises. No one knew what to expect and how things would unfold. Jobs which could not be completed online (nursing, aged care, delivery, supermarket, cleaning, policing, etc.) were, however, treated differently. Many millions had to adjust to a life that literally changed overnight. This triggered an attitudinal change in employees' minds all over the world when they, inadvertently, started valuing certain aspects of life which were once on the back burners or taken for granted. But for those who had an appetite for WLB, this came as a windfall. Overall, nearly everyone - the supporters as well as the opponents - could understand firsthand deep inside the value of home, social life, and the quality of life. Employees who were suddenly pushed online started to realise and value the importance of mental/ emotional wellbeing, as well as the quality time they were spending with their family and friends. The value of social life - which for all practical purposes was in the deep recesses of people's minds prior to the onslaught of COVID-19 - had now started to be well understood and appreciated. In brief, there has been a paradigm shift in the way employees perceive their work. This trend is unlikely to die down anytime soon.

Net gain

Among all the changes that COVID-19 has brought, flexibility has been a welcome serendipity. This works beautifully as the gig work and gig economy naturally fits smoothly with the idea of flexibility. COVID-driven disruptions at the beginning of 2020 forced nearly everyone to be off-site. The opportunity to be 'online' has been the saviour for many organisations. Government initiative, in terms of 'job keeper' and 'job seeker' allowances, has helped businesses to remain afloat during this tough time. The net benefit of all these new normal phenomena has been manifold. The forced off-site and online situation helped save travel time and costs to and from the workplace, avoid the risks of being on the road physically, and reduce the risk of catching the virus during work-related travel or from the workplaces. Naturally, one would hope to have some of these features remain in place while they aspire to enjoy a good work life balance.

Realisation

COVID-19 has forced many millions of employees to revisit and re-evaluate the value of work in their lives. The sheer number of fatalities [6,514,397 as of 26 September 2022 (WHO, 2022)] has shaken the resolve of the world from the most developed to the least, and from the technologically well-advanced all the way to the techno-devoid nations. The powerful message is that work is only one part and that there is a lot more in life. This wholesome view of life is what makes us human. If an individual's mindset shifts from being a 'flame out track' to valuing relationships, health, leisure, and wellbeing, then the crazy race of obsessive materialism and workaholism is bound to be slowed for sure. Nevertheless, the longing for a well-paid job, a higher position, higher status, more power, and commensurate prestige is unlikely to disappear overnight. But the ground has visibly started to shift. Only time will tell if the shift is for the better or for the worse.

The risks

The world seems to have embraced the fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0). The omnipresent interconnectivity, the availability of smart and intelligent technology and automation (artificial intelligence, robots, etc.) have been some of the main drivers paving the way for this phenomenon to take a firm hold. The Industry 4.0 journey, among others, shall require the ready-availability of a skilful e-aware workforce (with digital literacy available nearly 24/7) capable of surviving the peril of 'presenteeism' which costs the economy a lot more compared to the cost of 'absenteeism'. This trend (presenteeism) is bound to have a big impact on the quality of life. Automation, robots, and artificial intelligence shall force employees to learn new sets of skills to remain relevant in the changing world of work. Many may end up losing their livelihood due to their inability to learn new skills or due to the shrinkage of opportunities in traditional fields. Some of these people may endeavour to acquire new skills out of sheer fear. Nonetheless, this state of change could have an adverse effect on the WLB. Business leaders and managers, therefore, need to look at the possible downsides of the increased use of technologies in workplaces. A workforce that is increasingly connected and contactable can also mean that 'work' will become nearly 24/7 with a real potential to affect worker's health and well-being. The probable invasion of people's private space is also - and ironically - a real threat here.

Concluding remarks

Though the momentum gained is gratifying, there is no scope for being complacent about the progress to date on this front. The anticipation is that the WLB, that is, the quality-of-life movement will continue to occupy space, generate waves, and capture ground, with even better traction in the days to come. Perhaps an added challenge is discovering ways to protect our private lives, so that work does not invade our private time and space.

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Ubiquitous Connectivity, Never-ending Necessity (Planes, Trains ... and Tokyo Taxis)

Dimitri Kopanakis

September 2022

Picture it - central Rome, 2005. As the sunset settles on the Roman landscape, I make my way through the streets from one tourist site to another, all the while mindful that it is the start of another business day back in Australia.

Given the year, mobile data charges and technology of the day were not an option to enable connectivity for work, my Wi-Fi internet subscription entity had only limited locations throughout the city, and as far as I could identify, I was some distance from any accessible Wi-Fi hub. Important emails needed to be sent for the start of the business day, and I knew I needed to source a location in the next short while.

As I turn a corner, I see nothing but the stereotypical ruins and charm of the ancient city, but in the distance notice a glow, with a number of people gathering around it. I approach, I see there are about a dozen individuals seated and milling around piles of ancient ruins, all huddled around their laptops, chatting away in Italian. Curious, I ask, in my broken Italian, “What is here...?”. “Wi-Fi Internet!” was the enthusiastic response from one in the forum, to which I quickly withdrew my laptop and could not think of a more fitting example of “When in Rome...” Other than some broken ancient columns, marble ornaments, and a few retailers, there was nothing notable in the area - but I had my Wi-Fi. I was online and worked away and have the photo evidence to prove this random moment in time did happen!

Fast-forward 17 years, as I sit on my Qantas flight between Brisbane and Sydney, Australia, ubiquitous connectivity could not be more evident, or prevalent for our professional or personal needs.

Technology has evolved, and continues to do so, and our connectivity and needs to work without impediment only become more relevant.

Ultimately, in over 20 years of travelling the globe for work in many capacities, seamless and ubiquitous connectivity - supported by access to the appropriate technology - has been critical in order to respond to, and maintain, intercontinental business.

In 2022, we have become accustomed to broad and wide-ranging digital services and products on offer, supported by high-speed Internet accessibility. Further, our tablets, phones and portable computers have provided the means to assimilate and create content, regardless of their platform. Augmenting this, online and accessible platforms for transfer of data is equally critical, enabling the exchange of necessary business resources.

Like many a digital global nomad, my inter-connected, global ‘office’ (consisting of a laptop, tablet and phone) has ranged in location from cafés and restaurants around the world, to airline lounges, planes, hotels, airport-express train services, even taxis in Tokyo (each with their own Wi-Fi hotspot connectivity - critical in early mobile

phone days, when cellular devices did not work in Japan unless you had a device that communicated on their technology).

As we also now accept, the physicality of a resource no longer creates an impediment, and no clearer an example of this is on a business trip to Thailand a number of years ago, prior to the readily-available resources we have today.

In the mid 2000s, as part of a MICE event (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions), my organisation had the opportunity to exhibit our products at an international, sector-wide, industry trade show in Pattaya, Thailand.

Supported by our team of staff, my business partner, colleagues and I prepared all we needed to set up our booth and present at the trade show, including, a signature drawcard, our 5-minute promo-video, which we would loop on the trade stand to attract delegates and passers-by to our booth, and showcase our products.

We all flew the 10 hours to Bangkok, then undertook the 2-hour car transfer to the beachside town of Pattaya, and diligently went straight to the trade show to ensure we were set up for the following day's flurry of visitors. As we unpacked the collateral and our representative merchandise, we eventually came to the realisation we had forgotten the video (on DVD) back in Sydney. This was not ideal to say the least. Whilst in 2022 this would not present an issue, there was no video-sharing social media platform in place at the time, international mail couriers would not deliver the physical disk to us in time, and we were facing a dilemma of having our signature attractant not supporting this critical event on which we had spent significant funds.

Fortunately, large-capacity file-sharing platforms had just commenced operation, and courtesy of some late-night uploading from the team back in Australia, our video was downloaded by us in Pattaya, in time for the exhibition opening the following day. Without this technology, we would not have seen the trade show as successful as it was, with much uptake of our services in Thailand for many years to come.

Whilst in my home, a security assessment of my Internet-connected devices informs me that I total over 30 devices registering an

IP address (only a handful of these are for work-purposes), on the road, my three, key devices armed with a plethora of apps and platforms for processes including communication, project management, file-sharing, audio/photo/video editing, text/data generation/editing, and visual presentations, cover all that is necessary for my teams and I to work seamlessly, and to keep connected whilst working across borders and time zones.

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How technology has changed the way gyms operate

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There are some industries that require F2F support - one of those is the gym industry. WFA does not strictly apply - although there were some efforts in place during COVID-19 to support members and enthusiasts, but essentially it is a F2F enterprise.

There is little doubt that the technologies in gyms have changed in recent times and there is an argument - we think to be correct - that COVID-19 acted as an accelerant to several developments and improvements. What we have seen within the sector is a significant move towards technology-based support around the all-important F2F activities. In this paper we share a number of the key technology driven changes and reflect on how these changes are for the better in terms of convenience and efficiency.

Class lists/taking attendance

Pre-COVID, class attendance was taken by way of a printed (paper-based) method and then checked after the class was completed. So, step one at the front desk was to print the class list and place it in the studio - this was often both time consuming and frequently led to error (often caused by last-minute attendees). The trainer would ask the clients to physically put a tick next to their name, and after class, the trainer would give the list back to the front desk staff and they would manually check off the names. Again, another time consuming and often error-prone exercise.

Post COVID, staff and trainers download the “Gym Master” App, where the above steps are removed and essentially automated. The trainer uses their smart phone and automatically marks off all who attended. This technology makes tracking attendance for class so much easier and considerably more accurate. The App also places a considerable amount of the responsibility with the member - and that is a good thing going forward.

COVID-check

Pre-COVID, when the gyms opened up but had restrictions around attendees, most places firstly used paper-based systems where people would write down their details as part of the sign-in process. This was repeated each time a member attended a session, despite the repetition, in the name of good practice.

This was slowly overcome as members were provided with electronic-based passes to enter the gym, enabling them to swipe in and the record of the swipe would be recorded - another positive technology spin off. Changes enforced by the NSW government (and other governments in other states) insisted on check-in via a QR Code (only recently dismissed) with evidence of a valid COVID Vaccination Certificate. Again, a technology-driven issue with much of the responsibility lying with the member means both pieces of information can now be stored on a mobile phone - and more recently on a smart watch.

Members could email/use their COVID Vaccination Certificate, where it would be uploaded to their account, so they did not have to show the documentation each time they entered. The member would basically check in via the NSW Services App (or relevant App in other states) and swipe in using their access pass - this is technology-driven improvement and streamlining.

Placing memberships on hold

Pre COVID, if a member wished to place their account 'on hold' for a particular reason, they generally had to come to the front desk and fill out the form (paper-based), where the staff would add the hold through the Gym Master system for them.

During COVID, all members' accounts were automatically placed 'on hold' and the member was not required to advise as such. This was processed without question, due to the two lockdowns in NSW (and elsewhere) - a good example of technology improving systems for the benefit of the member.

Post COVID, members wishing to place their accounts 'on hold' can now do this through the App and it will, in turn, send the gym an email stating that the member has placed their membership 'on hold' and it automatically updates in their account.

This has had a dramatic, positive impact on the whole process of gym membership change and management.

Event applications and hiring rooms in the gym

Pre COVID, for members wishing to book one of the rooms for a particular reason, the process was cumbersome. Once again, the member would have to come to the front desk and check with the staff, fill in a form and return, making the payment via the front desk EFTPOS terminal. Once this process was complete, the staff member would put the entry into the system and, incidentally, if there was alcohol at the event, it was necessary to copy the RSA and attach to the application as proof.

Post COVID, the members now can send an enquiry message via the website, check availability, and if they wish to proceed, the events staff will email them the electronic form and payment details for the member to pay via direct deposit and, in a follow-up email, provide proof of payment. A couple of days prior to the booking, the member receives an emailed copy of the policy, detailing what they can and cannot do - indeed, everything is processed online from start to finish. We now have a much more efficient approach, thanks to developed technology.

Purchasing items

Purchasing items traditionally involved using an EFTPOS card (or cash), but now can be achieved through the member's account, automatically, as well as via the Tap and Go option (on smart phones or watches). This is proving successful. Gyms sell a range of items such as food, drinks, towels or resources for the classes.

Pre COVID, if the member wished to purchase something, cash or an EFTPOS card (credit/debit) would be required.

Post COVID, Cash/EFTPOS is still a valid way to purchase an item at the gym, but now members can make payments automatically from their nominated card or their bank account. Tap and Go is an easy option - they simply use their smart device (watch or phone), with no need to get their card out or pay in cash. This is proving to be a very popular option, especially with the smart watch (or equivalent) which a member wears for both convenience and relevant health and fitness checks. In reality, the modern gym user only needs a smart watch on the wrist to function perfectly well - they can function without carrying other items that could get lost or mislaid.

In all, technology has certainly changed how gyms operate on a daily basis - in a good way, essentially making it easier for the members and staff. Accepting COVID-19 as an accelerant during a difficult time explains why significant change has been achieved in a relatively short time frame. The changes, brought about by the use of technology,

have improved the systems remarkably - and made the varied processes for gym members much simpler and expedient.

About the authors

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