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Lagos Workforce Productivity Report Vol. 2

A Report on the Experiences of Employees Working
from Home

Executive Summary

In a fast-evolving world filled with uncertainties as experienced with the current infectious disease of COVID-19, businesses have experienced unprecedented losses. Because of this pandemic, employees across the globe are working from home to stop the spread of the virus. This has spurred the global economies and businesses to re-think operating models to ensure continued business operations, performance and, importantly employee morale and wellbeing.

Business continuity has always been key to the survival of any business and the ongoing pandemic as indeed necessitated a review of most business continuity strategy. Therefore, relentless efforts are being made to stay in business. In normal operation activities and in reaction to common events (e.g. breakdowns), business continuity management sets a strategic and operational framework to actively increase corporate resilience.

As businesses are getting used to the new normal, they are without doubt looking at cost reduction mechanisms while aggressively monitoring the effectiveness of the work from home policy. This is equally in tandem to decisions on the preferred workspace policy to adopt in the post COVID-19 economy that will ensure talent retention and increased employee productivity.

In lieu of this backdrop, MusterPoint, a workspace solution company conducted a survey to assess benefits and challenges of working from home in Nigeria. Below is our finding from the survey and a case by case analysis of some of the questions and responses

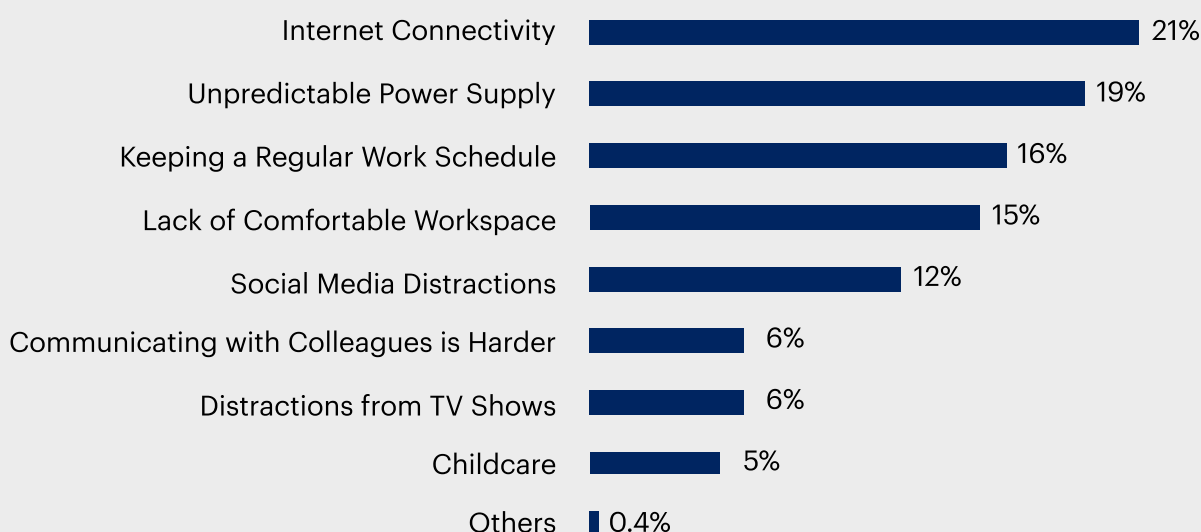


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Work from Home Challenges

Poor internet connectivity was recorded as the most prevailing challenge experienced by employees working from home with 21 percent of the respondents indicating that internet connectivity was a challenge for them. This has negatively impacted on the productivity of employees working from home as without a reliable and fast internet connection working from home is unproductive.



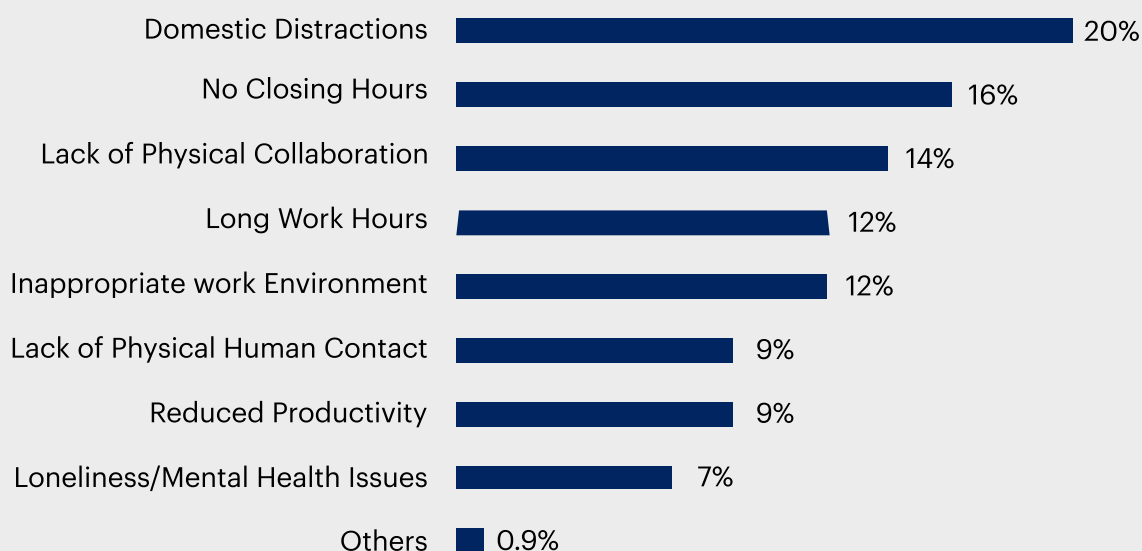
Closely followed by poor connectivity is the unpredictable power supply. Nigeria has grappled with inadequate power generation and distribution for years and many businesses have had to invest in alternative power supply. With the pandemic forcing employees to work from home, the lack of reliable source of power impacted negatively on the ability of employees to be productive working from home with, 19 percent of the respondents stating unstable power supply as a challenge to working from home.

The respondents indicated other challenges working from home, some of which include; Keeping a regular work schedule (16 percent), lack of comfortable workspaces (15 percent), social media distractions (12 percent), communication with colleagues (6 percent), TV show distractions (6 percent), childcare (5 percent) and several other reasons (0.40 percent).

Downside of Working from Home

Working from home does not necessarily mean you are doing less work; the opposite might be the case, particularly for diligent employees. Domestic distractions (20 percent) was the major downside of people working from home with interference from family members taking the lead. Since many residential accommodation in Lagos did not make provision for home office, the lines between home office space and living space has been blurred giving room for distractions.

Working from home makes one end up working round the clock with no end in sight thus, burning out from lack of adequate rest. 16 percent of the responses gathered from the survey says the lack of distinction of work hours has been a major downside for them working from home. Employees complained of lack of physical collaboration (14 percent) and lack of physical human contact (9 percent) as the downside of working from home.



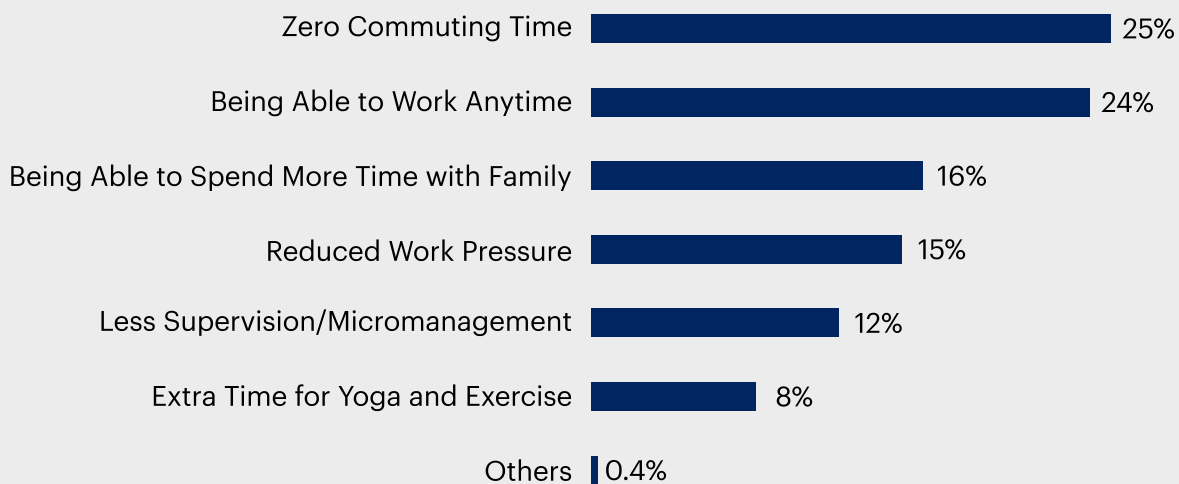
Other downside as indicated by the respondents include; long work hours (12 percent), inappropriate work environment (12 percent), reduced productivity (9 percent) and loneliness/mental health issues (7 percent) as the downside of working from home.

Benefits of Working from Home

21 percent of the respondent identified Zero commute time the highest benefit of working from home. Without doubt, the amount of time wasted on the road while going and returning from work has been eliminated giving employees more time to be productive while also reducing the stress associated with long commute time.

Interestingly, 16 percent of the respondent, identified the opportunity to “spend quality time with family” as the second highest benefit of WFH. This was emphasized in a further analysis, where 66 percent of the married respondents identified with this benefit. This has led to having more exercise sessions, with 45 percent of the married household actively involved in yoga and exercises, which can be said to easily encourage family bonding.

Furthermore, not every employee performs optimally under strict supervision or micro-management and about 15 percent of employees are excited about the opportunity that WFH has provided for them to work independent. Some employees cherish this opportunity and are able to deliver their task on time without a supervisor breathing down their neck. This equally speaks to the fact that collaborating remotely has made job easier, with the accessibility of documents, data and resources to get the job done being readily available via a share-point.



Employee Productivity Working from Home

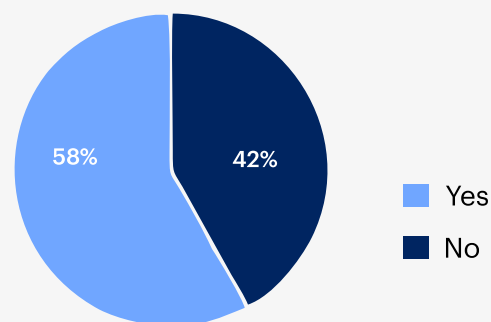
Employees have become very creative in these trying times, creating work spaces around their beds and on their dining tables. 58 percent of the respondents answered in affirmation of having a dedicated workspace with the other 42 percent resorting to any available space to carry out their assigned responsibilities. The effect of an uncomfortable workspace cannot be overemphasized as it will most certainly have a negative ripple effect on the productivity of the respondents.

Despite the favorable figures on having dedicated work spaces, most respondents (58 percent) are convinced of not being as productive as possible working from home. It probably goes without saying that employees will certainly be more productive when they have access to more comfortable work spaces rather than just a “dedicated workspace”.

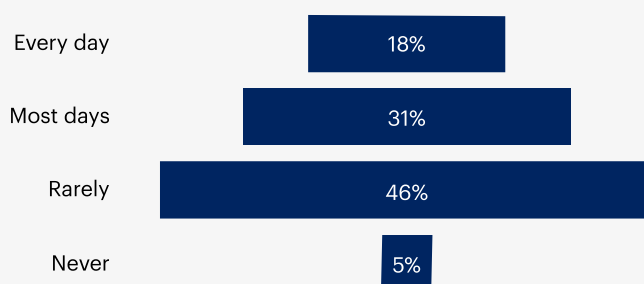
As identified in the survey, irregular work schedule hinders employee productivity. With claims around elongated work hours and the absence of closing time, most employees have found it difficult, or rather, impossible to stick to a regular work schedule. Only an inconsequential proportion of the respondents (18 percent) were able to categorically affirm to keeping a regular daily work schedule.

On the other hand, with 75 percent of the respondents having no work schedule, it is no surprise that a significant proportion of the respondents rarely (46 percent) have a regular work schedule. It is also noteworthy that 31 percent of the respondents identified keeping to their work schedules on “most days” despite the several challenges working from home.

Do you Think you are More Productive Working from Home?



How Often do you Keep to a Regular Work Schedule?



Research Methodology & Mix of respondents

Musterpoint conducted an online survey with a target audience of Lagos employees. Respondents were from a mix of 401 employees spread across the different walks of life. This survey was carried out to understand the challenges employees faced working from home. Employees were from different sectors of the economy with Business and Finance (24 percent) and Information Technology (17 percent) as the most represented sectors in the survey.



24%
work in the
financial
industry



17%
are employed
in the technology
industry

Interestingly, 62 percent of the respondents are between the ages of 25 and 34 years which represented one of the most active workforce and an important age groups as they the most important talent pool that will lead many organisations in the future. Their responses is a clear reflection of the labour force. Furthermore, about 96 percent of the respondents currently have a minimum of a University education or its equivalent as its highest level of education indicating the level of educational exposure of the respondents.



67%
are currently
in marriage
with their respective
partners.



28%
have at least one
child as one of
their dependents

A further analysis of the responses equally revealed that 67 percent of the respondents are single and 28 percent have one child at least. This indicates the extent of personal commitments as well as domestic distractions that can influence the work bandwidth of the respondents of the survey.

Conclusion

As governments around the world and particularly in Lagos are easing the lockdown on commercial activities, the main question business leaders need answered is what workplace model they will be adopting to ensure a more productive and agile workforce.

Our research indicates that there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to which work place model is suitable to businesses post pandemic. From the survey, it is clear that employees are facing challenges working from home, from caring for children to adjusting to virtual collaboration with coworkers. It is obvious that working from home is affecting employees differently. Some are more productive working from home while others are less productive.

For company leaders to make a decision on whether to return to working from the office, working from home or adopting a hybrid model that is a combination of work from home and work from the office, there is a need to consider the implication of each workplace model on the basis of the following:

- **Economic implications:** cost saving, capital efficiency, improved productivity
- **Social-psychological implications:** Social distancing and loneliness, stress and burnout
- **Changes in work practices:** Virtual teams and virtual leadership and management.

These would help them better understand the issues and be better informed to adopt a suitable workplace model.

The nature of work to be done is also a major defining factor when deciding on which work model is most suitable for employees. Some jobs cannot be done from home while some others also require extensive physical interaction with colleagues.

The conversation on what will finally be the generally acceptable model for the workplace is an ongoing conversation. Sir Winston Churchill once said, "The longer you can look back, the further you can look forward." I believe we can draw some parallels between the current crisis and previous pandemics and learn from how these crises have shaped the workplace. We at MusterPoint can help you navigate this uncertain time with a workplace solution that is agile, employee-centered, capital efficient and which improves productivity and profitability.

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