

Remote Workers vs. Office Workers

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Brian de Haaff

CEO, Aha! -- #1 product roadmap software

“I could never work remotely.” A friend of a friend said this to me the other day. We had just met and I was explaining how we run Aha! as a fully distributed team. Despite that declarative statement about “never working remotely,” this person seemed plenty interested in the concept of remote work once I described how we do it at Aha!

He then launched into a rapid-fire series of questions:

- *How do you collaborate with the team?*
- *What tools do you use to stay connected?*
- *When will you really need an office?*

Frankly, this is not the first time I have been roped into a debate pitting office workers against remote workers. (I am sure it will not be the last either.) And I can understand why. People often reject the unfamiliar.

If you have never been a part of an all-remote team, it might seem hard to imagine that any company with 50 or more people could work this way.

But if you are motivated, a skilled communicator, and can handle a mix of autonomy and teamwork, then remote work may be perfect for you. I think you will find more benefits working remotely than you ever could in an office.

To me, there is no debate for bright people who want more control over how and where they work. Remote workers win every time. And the statistics prove it.

Productivity

Remote workers: People get more done when they have autonomy. According to a nationwide productivity survey, 65 percent said that remote work would boost their productivity. And 86 percent said that working alone allows them to “hit maximum productivity.” Their managers agree, with two-thirds saying that employees who work remotely increase overall productivity.

Office workers: Research confirms what you could have already assumed — the office is filled with distractions. This is especially true for those who are in an open-office space, where they are 15 percent less productive, have more trouble concentrating, and are not too pleased with their sound privacy.

Camaraderie

Remote workers: People are often surprised to learn that remote workers are actually *more* engaged than in-office counterparts. One reason is that people have to make a greater effort to connect since there is no chance of running into a co-worker in the hallway. So interactions are more purposeful. And yes, video chats are an excellent way to foster these relationships — with 92 percent of workers saying that it improves teamwork.

Office workers: Things are not looking so friendly in the office. According to *Harvard Business Review*, all that proximity leads to complacency — with people not bothering to go out of their way to connect with people who work just a few feet away. But complacency is

not the biggest problem. A recent study found that one in five Americans believe their workplace has a hostile or threatening social environment. (Yikes.)

Health

Remote workers: No commute and more time for family and friends. Is it any wonder remote workers have more peace of mind? One study found that remote workers are also getting more sleep and exercise, and they are eating healthier. They even have a more positive attitude overall and experience less stress.

Office workers: The office is no place for a germaphobe. Research shows that people who work in open-plan offices are 62 percent more likely to take a sick day than those with a separate office. Office workers end up taking an average of 3.1 sick days in a year, compared to the 1.8 sick days for those who work from home. And then there is the “sick building syndrome” — a general feeling of poor health in corporate complexes that can lead to greater absenteeism in the office.

Happiness

Remote workers: Perhaps the greatest benefit of remote work is that it makes the way for sustainable happiness — giving people the chance to pursue their passions both in work and in life. Fifty-one percent of remote workers report that they are able to spend more time with their significant others, which has helped them experience greater job satisfaction.

Office workers: Lack of control over work spaces is making people miserable. Research has long proven that cubicles are a dreadful place — with workers longing for sunlight and more natural environments.

And even more telling is the fact that office workers are more likely to quit their jobs than their remote counterparts.

The numbers do not lie. Remote work offers more tangible benefits than you could ever find in an office.

Admittedly, I am biased. But for good reason. I have experienced first-hand what remote work can do — boosting my productivity while giving me more time to spend with my family and pursue other adventures. And I have seen how it has enriched the lives of our team as well.

But the next time someone tells me they could “never” work remotely, I will not get into a debate. I will simply smile and point them to this article.