Chapter 11
Teleworking Research

ABSTRACT

A March 2021 survey is used to consider three hypotheses relating to working adults. Hypothesis 1 is that teleworking perceptions of leaders and employees are related in terms of promoting increased trust and improved performance. Hypothesis 2 is that a structured plan with associated resources to sustain long-term telework situations will be positively associated with program effectiveness. Hypothesis 3 is that a structured plan with associated resources to sustain long-term telework situations will be positively associated with improved performance. Presidents/CEOs (67%), upper managers (80%), and mid-level managers (75%) believe there is daily telework accountability, but the level of belief is different for those who are subordinate to them. Just 55% and 29% of supervisors and employees, respectively, share that belief. These differing viewpoints can make it difficult to manage the kind of work environment and work relationship issues that are crucial in addressing a pandemic or other crisis. In the search for shared understanding, one path to success is rules-based trust.

BACKGROUND

A survey conducted by professors at Florida Institute of Technology in March 2021 focused on working adults by considering three hypotheses as listed below. The survey was designed by starting with brainstorming to think about potential telework questions. The researchers looked at several relevant issues, such as how online applications revised their approach to provide

online meeting capabilities. These capabilities were focused on providing more technology than was available before. For instance, one major company created a semi-secure application that was employed by the military. That initiative led the Navy to start working on its own application so that it could maintain security when dealing with non-military affiliated customers.

That meant the conversation also included how to maintain and improve cybersecurity. Whenever you discuss cybersecurity, you must discuss trustworthiness, so that was naturally a part of the conversations as the researchers weighed the appropriateness of including each question. The researchers next discussed real-world, current situations that could provide insight as the survey was finalized. Several informal interviews were conducted to measure individual perceptions related to telework, trustworthiness, and performance. An overview of some of the information from those informal interviews is below. This kind of discovery was central to how the survey was completed.

> *Several interviewees mentioned a perceived organizational lack of trust in employees who are working remotely. The employee must do the time-consuming task of document all work done from home when the workload is already excessive. This is part of a problem of organizational culture that requires an understanding of how best to manage remote workers. While people may agree that work outcome is important and should be measured, some said leadership should invest time into getting real information about how people are being managed in the remote work environment.*

Hypothesis 1: Teleworking perceptions of leaders and employees are related in terms of promoting increased trust and improved performance.

Presidents/CEOs (67%), upper managers (80%), and mid-level managers (75%) believe there is daily telework accountability, but the level of belief is different for those who are subordinate to them. Just 55% and 29% of supervisors and employees, respectively, share that belief. This presents challenges to the organization in terms of shared understanding.

The need for shared understanding is clear. One way to achieve it is to focus on rules-based trust, where leaders and members accept and adhere to a system of rules that establish the standards of appropriate behavior (Kramer, 1999, pp. 575-579; Lewicki & Bunker, 1995, p. 142; McAllister, Lewicki, & Chaturvedi, 2006). This type of trust helps everyone commit to the same standards and appropriate behavior throughout the organization.

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