December 2001

Toward a Deeper Understanding of Alternative Work Arrangements: The Impact of Core Self-Evaluations on Remote Work

Richard Johnson

University of Central Florida

Follow this and additional works at: http://aisel.aisnet.org/amcis2001

Recommended Citation

http://aisel.aisnet.org/amcis2001/364

This material is brought to you by the Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in AMCIS 2001 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.
TOWARD A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS: THE IMPACT OF CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS ON REMOTE WORK SUCCESS

Natalia G. Falaleeva
University of Central Florida
nfalaleeva@bus.ucf.edu

Richard D. Johnson
University of Central Florida

Abstract

Advances in information and communications technologies have enabled organizations and employees to utilize alternative work arrangements, such as remote work, that were previously unavailable to them. The distributed nature of this work can place unique strains on the employee that can affect the successful implementation of any remote work program. While research has shown the importance of the availability and use of information and communication technologies, limited research has investigated the influence of individual characteristics on remote work success. Building on current remote work research, this research proposal suggests the importance of including an individual’s core traits, or core self-evaluations, in any model focusing on remote work success.

Keywords: Remote work, core self-evaluations, remote work success

Background

Skillfully implemented remote work programs can be potent solutions for employers, employees, society and the environment. The effectiveness of remote work programs depends on a variety of factors that need to be considered during the design of these programs. Remote work occurs when an individual completes at least some of their work outside of the traditional office. Increased productivity is often considered to be a popular organizational objective when establishing telecommuting. It is believed that remote work “can lead to more creativity with undisrupted concentration periods, increased employee morale, efficient use of noncommute time, work scheduled at peak efficiency periods, and fewer medical absences” (Belanger & Collins, 1998). Other proposed benefits of remote work for the organization include increased employee loyalty and retention, access to human resources otherwise not available, and cost savings on office space. For the employee proposed benefits are increased flexibility, better balance between work and personal concerns (Belanger & Collins, 1998). While millions of employees currently are involved in some type of remote work and 2 of 3 Fortune 500 companies employ remote workers (Cascio, 2000), the success of these arrangements has been decidedly mixed, with few organizations able to realize the full potential of remote work (Belanger & Collins, 1998). To better understand remote work, Belanger and Collins (1998) developed a framework (Figure 1) that suggests that “organizational, individual, work, and technology characteristics all impact outcomes of distributed work arrangements” (p. 139), including productivity, performance, and satisfaction.

Investigating the literature focusing on remote work, and using the above framework as a lens revealed that the vast majority of research on remote work has concentrated on technology related issues. For example, Belanger, Collins, and Cheney (2001) found that the level of available IS and communication technologies positively impacted productivity, performance, and satisfaction. A large number of studies have also found that both the availability and application of effective communication tools are important to the successful implementation of a remote work program (cf. Jarvenpaa & Liedner, 1999; DeSanctis & Monge, 1999).

While much less research has focused on the remote worker himself or herself, Belanger and Collins (1998) have suggested the importance of not only basic knowledge skills but also self-sufficiency, reliability, communication skills, good planning capabilities, ability to concentrate in a non-work setting, and good time management skills. What types of individuals then would be “ideal” candidates for telecommuting? Initial work by Staples, Hulland, and Higgins (1999) provide evidence that remote work
self-efficacy plays an important role. We believe that there are other, deeper held traits that can also provide insight into remote work success. Collectively these traits are thought of as an individual’s core self-evaluations (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998).

A Core-Self Evaluations Approach

Core self-evaluations are “fundamental, subconscious conclusions individuals reach about themselves” (Judge, Locke, Durham, and Kluger, 1998, p. 18) and are considered to be among the most basic or fundamental psychological traits of the person. Core self-evaluations consist of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control, and are thought to affect situational specific appraisals and to lie at the base of all other appraisals. Recent research has suggested that core self-evaluations influence perceptions of work characteristics and ultimate satisfaction with the working environment (Judge, et al 1998). Research has also shown that computer self-efficacy is essential to the effective use of technology (cf. Marakas, Yi & Johnson, 1998; Johnson & Marakas, 2000). Thus this research seeks to add to the current remote work literature by evaluating the additional influence that core self-evaluations have on remote work success, above and beyond the influence of technology characteristics. This research raises several hypotheses in regards to the influence of both technology characteristics and core self-evaluations on remote work success. Each of these will be addressed in turn.

As previously discussed, Belanger, et al. (2001) found that the availability of advanced communication technologies had significant impacts on perceived productivity, performance, and satisfaction and availability of information system technologies had significant effects on performance. Thus, to replicate previous findings, we suggest that:

H1: Higher levels of information systems technology will increase perceived performance as reported by remote workers.

H2: Higher levels of information systems technology will increase perceived satisfaction with the work environment as reported by remote workers.

H3: Higher levels of information systems technology will increase perceived productivity as reported by remote workers.

H4: Higher levels of communication technology will increase perceived productivity as reported by remote workers.

Solving technology issues alone will not be enough for the successful implementation of a remote work program. Above and beyond any situational specific technology requirements, core self-evaluations will influence remote work success. Individuals with higher core self-evaluations tend to choose occupations consistent with their abilities, personalities, and self-perceived traits and are more likely to persist in the face of obstacles. They also tend to be more satisfied and productive (Judge, et al, 1998). Specifically the following hypotheses are raised.

H5: Employees possessing higher core self-evaluations will have higher perceived performance.

H6: Employees possessing higher core self-evaluations will have greater perceived satisfaction with their job.

H7: Employees possessing higher core self-evaluations will have greater perceived productivity.

Study Methodology

To test the above hypotheses, data will be collected from remote work employees at a large telecommunications company. Each of the variables will be measured using existing measures. Information systems and communication technology availability,
productivity, performance, and satisfaction will be measured using the instrument developed by Belanger et al (2001). Core self-evaluations will be assessed as follows: self-esteem will be measured using Rosenberg’s (1965) ten-item instrument, computer self-efficacy using Johnson & Marakas’ (2000) seven-item instrument, neuroticism using Eysenk’s (1965) twelve-item instrument, and locus of control using a subset of Levenson’s (1973) instrument.

Implications

The availability of remote work can be a strategic asset for organizations attempting to recruit and retain workers. Previous research has suggested that to fundamentally understand how to successfully manage remote work, we must understand four major aspects, the work itself, the organization, the technological support, and the individuals involved in this work. This work represents an attempt toward understanding the influence that individual dispositions give us in understanding how to manage remote work. Pilot programs have been proposed as an important tool in the implementation of remote work programs (Davenport & Pearlson, 1998). A better understanding of the influence of core self-evaluations provides us with an opportunity to a-priori select workers who would allow the pilot program to be most successful instead of waiting to evaluate behaviors during such a program when it may be too late to change course. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of the individual traits that promote increased opportunities to realize remote work success will be of a benefit not only to interested researchers, but ultimately to those organizations who depend upon remote work for the successful operation of their businesses.

References