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Report Prompt:

Many businesses think that telecommuting is an efficient option for employees. Describe the causes and effects of telecommuting.

Text 1: Telecommuting is on the Rise

Today, more and more employees are **telecommuting** (working from home). In 2015, nearly 40% of U.S. workers telecommuted, up from 9% in 1995; this is indicated in the table below. In the UK between 2007 and 2012, the number of employees working from home increased by 13%. Telecommuting is clearly becoming more and more popular.

One of the biggest factors causing companies to employ more at-home workers has been financial. If a typical business allowed employees to telecommute just half the time, they would save about \$11,000 per year per person. The costs that can be reduced or avoided include real estate, utilities, cleaning services, office supplies, coffee and water expenses, office equipment, furniture, and transportation costs. Companies can also save money on salaries because many workers accept a smaller salary so that they can work from home.

For the telecommuter, the positive effects of working from home are many, such as creating a better work-life balance. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average commute time to work in the United States is approximately 30 minutes each way; this adds up to about 5 hours over a 5-day work week. Without this commute, people have more free time for activities such as exercising or taking their children to school. Workers can also save money on professional clothing, commuting costs, and restaurant lunches. Cutting these expenses can save a telecommuter a lot of money over time.

The benefits of telecommuting are clear, and many people are interested in the possibility of working from home. This, unfortunately, has created opportunities for scammers who try to take advantage of people looking for jobs. Scammers have several purposes, such as collecting confidential information to use for identity theft or getting people to send money. People searching for at-home work need to do their research to make sure that any job that they are interested in is legal and legitimate.

Source: He, S. Y., & Hu, L. (2015). Telecommuting, income, and out-of-home activities. *Travel Behaviour and Society*, 2(3), 131-147.

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Text 2: The Problems of Working from Home

While there are many benefits of telecommuting, there are also some limitations. One of the negative effects of this type of work is that there may be a lack of creativity. For example, many at-home workers miss out on interpersonal connections over lunch, coffee breaks, or while working with colleagues on a project. Research has found that certain moments of creativity are actually created by unexpected conversations at the office. Because of issues like these, the IT company Yahoo, who originally supported telecommuting, has started having their former commuters report to the office so employees can “feel the energy and buzz” of the workplace.

Distractions at home can also create problems for telecommuters. Unless a person is very disciplined, it could be difficult to remain focused with children and pets around. Also, while new technology ensures strong security, not all companies are set up for at-home workers. This makes them more likely to have problematic and costly situations such as losing or being unable to protect confidential data for clients’ personal or medical data.

Another downside to telecommuting is the fact that office-bound coworkers might think that telecommuters are doing less work because they are based at home. Unfortunately, there are few ways to make sure that employees are working the hours that they are required to, which is a risk for companies. A lack of supervision can also lead to a drop in work quality and resentment amongst other employees who are not allowed to telecommute.

Communication difficulties for at-home workers can also present problems. Even with modern technology such as phones, video programs and instant messaging software, messages between managers and telecommuters can easily get lost. Difficulty making contact with someone can also lead to errors or additional pressure. Also, if a telecommuter has technological issues and is unable to connect into a crucial meeting or submit a key document, there is not any back-up.

Source: Glass, J. L. (2013). It’s about the work, not the office. *The New York Times*.

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Text 3: Why Do Companies Hire Telecommuters?

The benefits of telecommuting have caused many companies to hire more and more at-home workers. First of all, because location is not important, telecommuting allows companies to hire the workers that they need no matter where they live. Companies can use a talent acquisition strategy to hire workers who may live hundreds of thousands of kilometers away. There may be people who have rare skills like translating a difficult language or doing special computer programming that can be hired no matter where they live. Similarly, a key employee with many years of experience in the company may have to move away due to personal reasons, but with telecommuting the company can continue to keep that valuable employee. Offering telecommuting options can help employers give more flexible working conditions and stay competitive in the modern workforce.

The idea of cutting costs also causes companies to hire telecommuters. A 2013 report by Global Workplace Analytics found that employers of telecommuters in the United States save around \$11,000 per employee per year on furnishings, maintenance, parking, phones, and having to purchase more real estate for office space.

Aetna, an American insurance company, has stated that they now save between 15% to 25% on their real estate costs as a result of hiring telecommuters. Because telecommuters do not need to drive into the office, Aetna also prevents employees from driving 205 million kilometers each year, saving over 20 million liters of gas and reducing CO₂ emissions by 46,700 metric tons. Helping to save the environment from harmful emissions is another reason for companies to encourage at-home work.

Studies have shown that employees working from home are less likely to take sick days, which cost American employers an average of \$1,800 per employee per year. This is important to businesses looking to cut down on unnecessary costs. Companies also report that telecommuters appear to be more engaged and happy with their work. This helps employers retain valuable employees while continuing to attract new talent.

Telecommuters are, on average, more productive. However, this is not true in all cases. Research shows that the type of work an at-home worker does has an impact on productivity levels. For employees who typically perform repetitive tasks like entering lists of data every day, productivity is 6-10% less than that of on-site employees.

Companies can measure telecommuters' productivity in many ways, which helps them make informed decisions about how and when to allow the option for at-home work. They can do this by setting short-term goals (daily or weekly), checking if tasks are completed in time, holding regular team meetings, and getting feedback from clients. Using a few of these methods help companies check on productivity.

Source: Rauchut, J. M. (2016). *Exploring the impact of manager behaviors on remote workers' affiliation needs* (Doctoral dissertation, Colorado Technical University).

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Text 4: Telecommuting: An Overview

Telecommuting began in the 1980's, when the first personal computers were being used. Working from home was uncommon during this time period, but continued to grow as people began to realize the possibilities that this type of work offered. In the 1990's, telecommuting grew as industries involving advanced technology rose to importance. In current times, there are many staff members in a variety of industries who telecommute. New technologies make telecommuting a valuable tool for small businesses and big corporations alike.

There are many companies that hire employees to work from their homes. Some of these jobs include customer service, recruiting, sales, marketing, and telemarketing positions. A home based agent, for example, works from a home office gathering, entering and confirming customer information. They also answer customer questions, resolve issues, provide customer care, and respond to email.

According to the most recent statistics from Global Workplace Analytics, telecommuters said they see a clear financial motive in working remotely. Thirty percent reported saving \$5,240 per year in expenses such as day care, transportation, lunch and dry cleaning. The study also found that half of the remote workers surveyed said that being able to work from home makes them much more likely to stay with the company.

Other benefits include personal satisfaction and more of a work/life balance, the study concluded. Forty-five percent of remote workers get more sleep, 35% exercise more, and 42% eat healthier. Nearly half report a more positive attitude and feel less stressed. Fifty-one percent spend more time with loved ones and report greater job satisfaction.

Being able to successfully telecommute requires some discipline, however. For workers who are easily distracted, telecommuting can negatively affect work performance. If an employee has young children at home, for example, they may not be able to focus on their work for long stretches of time, making them less productive. In addition to this, making a frequent transition between the role of a parent and the role of a professional at home can often be confusing for children who may not understand why you are not continuously available to them.

Some telecommuters also feel left out of social activities. Experts agree that socializing among colleagues is very important to build positive trust and support in the workplace. Those who work from home may miss important opportunities that occur during social activities and networking events.

Source: Ozcelik, Y. (2010). The rise of teleworking in the USA: key issues for managers in the information age. *International Journal of Business Information Systems*, 5(3), 211-229.