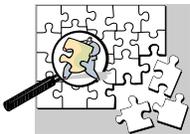# The Remote Work Challenge:

How to Effectively Manage a Distributed Work Environment

David Aronoff
(416) 930-3803
pareto.consulting@sympatico.ca

Teri Nghiem
416) 450-1337
teri.nghiem@tnconsulting.ca

Glen Fulton
(416) 574-1024
glen.fulton@manageflow.com

The Issue

Over the past few months, mostly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Remote / Distributed Work has become a reality for many organizations, becoming the primary mode of work for many employees. This has brought a whole new set of challenges to managing the work environment. Much of the focus initially has been on getting the technology basics in place, such as laptops and video conferencing.

However, the realization is setting in that Remote Work may become part of a new standard and that many of these changes could be part of the ongoing work setting.

Done right, Remote Work can provide an opportunity to re-imagine your work environment and make positive change; generate productivity improvements, accommodation and even personnel redistributions. It can result in more flexibility and better work-life balance for employees to design their workdays in ways that make the most sense for them. It can reduce travel and commute times. Done right, Remote Work can provide an opportunity to re-imagine your work environment and make positive change; generate productivity improvements, accommodation and even personnel redistributions. It can result in more flexibility and better work-life balance for employees to design their workdays in ways that make the most sense for them. It can reduce travel and commute times.

It even has the potential to foster a more diverse and inclusive work environment, by reducing barriers to those with physical disabilities, by providing an office culture that is less influenced by racial and gender bias, and by providing more flexible work arrangement to support stay-at-home parents.

However, effectively transitioning an organization from a traditional office environment to include remote (or distributed models) involves much more than starting up a video conference.

Beyond the initial first steps of technical and equipment requirements, there are many business, legal, HR and management issues and decisions that need to be considered to create a sustainable approach.

A thorough identification of the organizational impacts should be undertaken including productivity, employee satisfaction, costs, savings, and ROI. Criteria-based decisions can be utilized regarding the level/ratio of remote to onsite work. Other considerations include:

- What support will staff require to properly setup their home office environments
- Does your organization have the right technology/tools?
- Do your current business processes support a remote work environment?
- Can you continue to support your clients in an effective manner?
- What changes are needed to HR policies, collective agreements, job descriptions, employee contracts, etc.?
- What changes are needed to how employees are assigned work, evaluated on performance, and managed?
- Does the current organization structure still make senses in a Remote Work environment?

Remote work may require fundamental changes in how an organization is structured and managed. This needs to be done in a strategic and planful way.
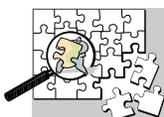
Our Approach

We believe the move to include Distributed Work has the potential to positively impact the work environment – if it is done right.   We have developed a comprehensive approach to assisting organization in adapting to the new Remote Work reality.

Capability Assessment

- We begin by developing objective criteria to determine which jobs can be considered first for remote work (and even those activities that may not lend themselves to this approach).
- The next step would be to conduct an initial Capability Assessment to determine how far along the path of transition the organization is.
- We survey management and staff on attitudes towards remote work and to better understand current culture and change readiness.
- We assess the organization on readiness across several key areas including technology, business process, HR policies, structure, management style, and corporate culture.

Strategy Roadmap

- Based on the Capability Assessment, we develop a roadmap for the organization.
- With senior management, we review how far along the continuum the organization is now and how what pace of change is optimal, including phased and hybrid approaches.
- Based on these discussions we can develop a comprehensive Implementation Plan

Implementation Support

- As needed, we can also help your organization through the suite of implementation services
    - Selection and implementation of new technology and tools
    - Re-design of business processes to support remote work
    - Change Management plan to develop new DW culture at all levels
    - Review of HR policies, procedures and practices and management of labour relations
    - Redesign or organizational structure, job descriptions and hiring processes

Each of the above services can be tailored to the specific requirements of your organization.

About Us

We have assembled an experienced team of Senior Consultants with a broad range of experience in Organization Review, Human Resources Management and Labour Relations, Business Process Design, and Technology Implementation in the broader public sector environment. We also have access to a broad range of consulting partners to supplement the team as required.

David Aronoff, Pareto Consulting
David has over 30 years of diverse experience in both the public and private sectors. Pareto works with public organizations and crown agencies to address fundamental organization issues including transformation and culture change, effective performance measurement, program evaluation, business process redesign, governance and accountability.   Pareto's operations are based on a remote working environment, and several organizational reviews specifically incorporated distributed work options. The primary focus for all projects is to develop balanced alternatives and implementation plans with high regard for mitigating potential risks and negative impacts.

David has also held various executive positions within the Ontario Government, heading ministry organizations responsible for corporate services, policy and program development, revenue, finance, treasury functions and gaming.

Teri Nghiem, Think Now Consulting Inc.
Teri has 20 years of experience working with organizations in the public and broader public sector to drive organizational and cultural change and the alignment of processes, structure and people to business goals and mandates and new strategic directions. Teri has extensive expertise in human resource management and organizational design, change management and organization transformation, employee transition and labour relations. Teri has recently been engaged in a number of projects during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide HR expertise and support to senior executives and has completed a number of organization review projects in the past that included looking at centralize/distributed service delivery models and impacts to organizational design, roles and responsibilities and work location.

Glen Fulton, ManageFlow Consulting Inc.
Glen has over 25 years experience in helping public sector organizations implement business and technology solutions, by providing high quality project management, business analysis and information technology services. In addition to working in a primarily remote work environment for the past 20 years, Glen has implemented a variety of business solutions to support remote and distributed work environments. ManageFlow Consulting Inc. is on the Management Consulting Services, I&IT Solution Consulting Services, and I&IT Task-Based Vendor of Record arrangements for the Province of Ontario.

Think Now Consulting Inc.

ManageFlow