



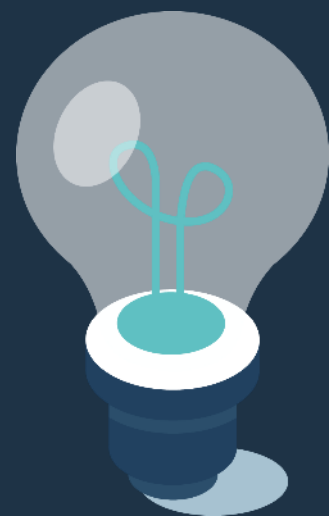
Remote Success

The role of assessment in making good decisions around people, productivity and risk with a home-based workforce.

Questionmark

The enterprise-grade assessment platform

April 2020



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1. Introduction: one month in, how well is working from home working?

Long before the world knew the name COVID-19, 2020 was predicted to be the year of working from home.

In 2016, futurologists forecast that technological developments would lead to 50% of the workforce working remotely by the end of this year.¹ Faster broadband, easy access to cloud systems and the availability of 'collaboration apps' would make it possible to perform a greater range of tasks without the need for the daily commute.

But no one could have predicted the urgency and scale with which new working solutions would have to be tested. Governments around the world have ramped up social distancing measures. Working from home has been identified as a major pillar of business continuity.

There is no doubt that remote working has enabled businesses and organizations from a range of sectors to continue operating. While different governments have introduced different measures at different times, it is approximately a month since a switch to working from home gathered rapid pace. Has the transition been as seamless and straightforward as many had predicted?

Are workers as tech-savvy as employers had assumed? Do people have the same expectations around what working from home looks like? Do employees know how to keep important data safe and secure when away from the office? Have we trained our workers with the skills they need to be productive from home?

Senior leaders play a crucial role in making decisions which build engagement and increase productivity. In this new environment, new decisions need to be made. Too often, organizations simply do not have the information they need to make them.

¹ <https://www.hso.co.uk/leased-lines/technology-news/homeworking-news/50-of-uk-workforce-to-work-remotely-by-2020>

This report:

1. Explores the stresses and struggles that all organizations are experiencing as they move to remote working
2. Identifies the emerging types of home worker: their characteristics, and how to help them deliver to their potential
3. Demonstrates that by investing in remote assessment of staff, leaders can acquire the information they need to ensure success in a radically new environment.



2. Competency: do staff have the technical and soft skills they need to be productive at home?

In recent weeks working from home is increasingly becoming standard practice for all jobs where remote working is possible. Each organization has experienced their own unique challenges with this shift. However, social media, press reports and comment from business leaders suggest that many of the struggles to adjust to are common across sectors and industries.

Despite the increased prevalence of technology in the workplace, many are struggling to adjust to new tools. Zoom, the video meeting software company, has seen its share price nearly double over the past month. Microsoft Teams, which lets workers video chat, message, and share documents, has seen a 500 percent uptake in some countries.² These increases in usage suggest that workers are having to adapt to new technologies without the time for training.

Technological struggles clearly inhibit the execution of essential tasks. But they also have a knock-on effect to wellbeing and team dynamics. HR leaders have written about the emotional stress caused by technology failures and the tensions this creates in teams.³

The pace of recent changes has left employees little time to think through creating a professional environment at home. This has understandably been particularly challenging for those that have to combine remote working with looking after children as schools around the world close their doors.

According to a light-hearted Instagram survey, 50% of at-home workers have unexpectedly found a child or a pet burst onto their screen during an important video conference.⁴ Colleagues are likely to be sympathetic to teething problems in the

² <https://time.com/5801882/coronavirus-spatial-remote-work/>

³ <https://www.hcamag.com/us/specialization/change-management/remote-work-are-employees-struggling-to-adapt/218455>

⁴ <https://www.prima.co.uk/leisure/celebrity/a31910535/steph-mcgovern-working-from-home-mishaps/>

current crisis. But this is indicative of the inherent struggles with creating a professional working environment from the comfort of home.

Organizations are also noticing barriers to remote working that go beyond the technical. It's clear from a glance at social media that 'working from home' means different things to different people. For some, it is interpreted as carrying out a normal day's work. To others, it's been taken as a simple requirement to listen out for the phone whilst gardening, relaxing or home schooling.

Part of the issue is that some employees may not have the skills to make working from home productive. It's tempting to think that once workers understand the technology, working from home will come naturally.

However, a study has revealed that certain 'soft skills' are more important to working from home than technical know-how. These include communication, self-discipline, trustworthiness and adaptability.⁵ Depending on the role of the employee, these skills may not have been adequately developed back when they were in the office.



⁵<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b045109c258b4052b14cd0d/t/5c8d6f0ee4966b4eaedbf0df/1552772880182/Academic+Paper.docx.pdf>

2. Competency: do staff have the technical and soft skills they need to be productive at home?

3. Compliance: increased risk during the crisis

The move to remote working creates risks. These are not limited to dips in productivity. With many workers using file sharing technology, collaboration apps and video conferencing facilities for the first time, there is an increased danger of compliance failures or, more simply, through work getting lost or misplaced.

The average data breach costs an organization \$3.92m⁶. Many are caused by human error. Some 32% of all data breaches involve phishing, while 29% involve stolen credentials.⁷

Security experts have predicted that while working from home people will innocently fail to observe the strict data protocols they usually abide by. This will include using unsecure personal laptops to access sensitive information and downloading files to unauthorized USB sticks.⁸

Another common risk is opening an email attachment which contains a computer virus.⁹ As well as being an issue of compliance, this could cause vital work to be lost. Depending on the nature of the virus it could corrupt files and important documents.

While these risks are always present with at-home working, the current crisis creates two specific vulnerabilities.

The first is that people are understandably distracted. Among the newfound pressures of home-schooling and caring for vulnerable relatives, issues of data security may seem less pressing.

The second is more sinister. Experts predict that hackers and phishers will take advantage of the current crisis to increase scams and attempt to breach security.¹⁰ At a time when people are adjusting to new technologies and distracted by a global crisis, the need for caution has never been greater.

⁶ According to IT consultancy IBM: <https://bit.ly/2ykEj8F>

⁷ According to telecoms company Verizon: <https://vz.to/3dECow5>

⁸ <https://www.govtech.com/blogs/lohrmann-on-cybersecurity/how-is-covid-19-creating-data-breaches.html>

⁹ <https://www.comodo.com/business-security/email-security/email-virus.php>

¹⁰ <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/working-remotely-and-cyber-security-during-covid-19-outbreak>

4. Identifying the types of need across the workforce

To protect the organization's security and maintain productivity, senior leaders need to take action. However, given the variety of issues that employees are struggling with, one solution is unlikely to suffice, and so they may need to do several things.

To understand the right decisions to take, organizations need to understand the areas that their employees are struggling with. What are their people struggling with? Where do gaps in skills lie? What is being done well and what's not being done at all? What problems exist in different teams and business functions?

By examining how different people are adjusting to remote working it is possible to identify five typologies. Understanding the work force in this context will help managers assess what decisions should be made to be able to get the best performance out of each individual.

<p>question mark</p> <h3>Managing the 5 types of home workers</h3>	<h4>Seasoned Survivors</h4> <p>Before the current crisis, millions were experienced remote workers. Working from home is nothing new. They are familiar with the range of technology at their disposal and well versed in the culture and etiquette that accompanies remote working.</p>  <p>Support Needed</p> <p>None. They can be encouraged to work as unofficial mentors for colleagues who are struggling.</p>	<h4>Paddlers</h4> <p>This group have some experience of working from home. But are they as remote ready as employers might assume? Perhaps in the past, they have been home based every now and then to let a repair man in. But have they exaggerated the effectiveness of their at-home set up?</p>  <p>Support Needed</p> <p>This group will require some support to maintain productivity: some formal training and unofficial mentoring.</p>
<h4>Newbs</h4> <p>The people entering a brave new world, technologically and culturally. Having never worked from home before, this group are experiencing a host of challenges. From the cat jumping on the keyboard to struggling to find the mute button on a video conference, creating a professional environment is taking its time.</p>  <p>Support Needed</p> <p>Support with an unofficial mentor who can determine if they need formal training or just a bit of hand holding. Younger workers likely to adjust more quickly.</p>	<h4>The anxious</h4> <p>Crafting an email from your kitchen table may be a strikingly similar process to doing so from the office. But for the anxious, new ways of working have triggered a sense of crisis. Convinced that their job role is simply impossible to execute from home, productivity from this group is in sharp decline.</p>  <p>Support Needed</p> <p>Need a combination of support and greater accountability to ensure delivery.</p>	<h4>Task-takers</h4> <p>Studies have shown that working from home requires 'high self-efficacy.' But this group are used to taking orders. Without a manager or supervisor sat next to them, deciding what to do next seems like an insurmountable challenge. For some this is symptomatic of job roles performed to date. In others, it is engrained into personality.</p>  <p>Support Needed</p> <p>New management approaches and structures and more regular formal input.</p>

5. Getting the information for good decisions through assessment

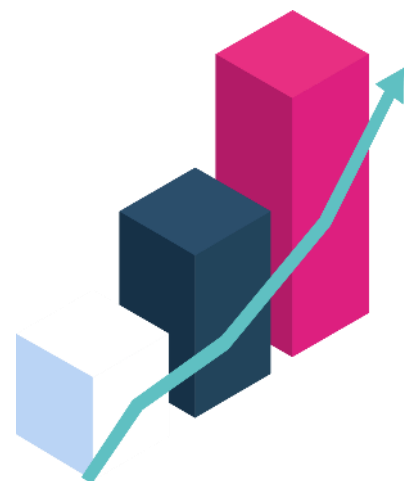
In some countries, organizations had to move to remote working in the space of a few days. In many cases there was simply no time to conduct a 'remote ready' analysis. It was all done on the go.

However, to make the decisions about maintaining productivity, information is vital. To ensure that the risk of compliance breaches is reduced, leaders need to know where areas of vulnerability lie.

Identifying training needs. Remote assessment of staff can give senior leaders the reliable, fair and defensible information they need to make good people-related decisions. Through testing employee's knowledge, technical gaps can be identified. Remote training can be arranged, and mentors assigned to struggling employees.

Clarifying expectations of home workers. Assessment can reveal differing expectations across teams about the patterns and structure of the working day. It creates the chance for leaders to clarify expectations and for managers to hold teams accountable to them.

Cybersecurity risk assessment. By testing staff knowledge on data security, areas of risk can be identified. Emergency training can be tailored. Organizations can demonstrate their compliance to regulators. Assessments can prove the integrity of the business to customers.



6. Maintaining remote productivity with Questionmark

Questionmark helps organizations improve their performance by unlocking the potential of their people.

We provide online assessment tools, professional services and ready-made content to help organizations and their people improve their performance and safely meet their compliance requirements.

Supporting organizations through the crisis

We aim to help organizations maintain crucial business functions, so we have introduced promotional bundles for new customers to help them carry on in the current crisis.

This will enable organizations to maintain the integrity and security of remote assessments according to their needs.

Cybersecurity for home-based workers

Questionmark has also developed the cybersecurity for home-based workers assessment to help organizations identify whether employees have the required cybersecurity knowledge to do their jobs. The assessment enables organizations to meet their compliance requirements and avoid cyber breaches when their people are working from home.

To help get their people up and running quickly and securely, we are offering all organizations their first 1,000 assessments for free.

The offer is open to current and new customers and runs to the end of April 2020.

For more information visit: <https://www.questionmark.com/platform-services/cybersecurity-for-home-based-workers/>

Questionmark core bundle

The core promotional bundle, which is available to new customers until the end of June 2020, consists of:

- **The Questionmark platform:** can assess an unlimited number of test-sitters, from anywhere in the world. The platform provides a range of assessment formats including 'drag and drop', 'multiple choice' and many more. Organizations can conduct a range of assessments across different courses and ability ranges. Tests are automatically marked. Results are instantly compiled. Trends and patterns are easy and quick to spot.
- **Forensic Analysis:** will give confidence in the integrity of their assessment results by making it possible to identify types of cheating that are usually hard to spot. Questionmark's Forensic Analysis looks for patterns such as similarities in answers and the time taken to answer each question.
- **Professional Services:** with access to Questionmark content experts, test-setters can ensure that the assessment is robust and appropriate. The experts will support organizations in setting up and deploying the platform and migrating from existing systems. As such, organizations new to the platform will receive a high level of support as they begin operating in a new environment.

For more information on discounted product visit:

<https://www.questionmark.com/platform-services/promotional-bundles/>

About Questionmark

Questionmark provides a secure enterprise-grade assessment platform and professional services to leading organizations around the world, delivered with care and unequalled expertise.

Our full-service online assessment tool and professional services help customers to improve their performance and meet their compliance requirements. Questionmark enables organizations to unlock their potential by delivering assessments which are valid, reliable, fair and defensible.

Questionmark offers secure powerful integration with other Learning Management System, Learning Record Service and proctoring services making it easy to bring everything together in one place.

Our cloud-based assessment management platform offers rapid deployment, scalability for high-volume test delivery, 24/7 support, and the peace-of-mind of secure, audited U.S., Australian and European-based data centers.

Working with Questionmark

To further explore how Questionmark could work for your organization, or to book a demo, please see:

<https://www.questionmark.com/request-demo/>

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