

WFH is great... even if things go wrong!

by Vincent Ho, Co-owner & Director, aAdvantage Consulting Group P/L



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Flexible work arrangement has always been huge in our company. In fact, many of our team members value it as one of the primary employee propositions working here at aAdvantage. So, it's of no surprise that when Covid-19 hit us in the form of mandatory work-from-home (WFH) ruling, all of us were 'ready' for the transition - to move from the familiar physical world and navigate into the unknown 'virtual' world.

Of course, there were a couple of challenges:

Technical issues - Murphy's law: whatever can go wrong, will go wrong. This can range from home broadband to hardware and software issues. Even the hardy 'original' battery charger will break down when you need it most; thankfully most of these got resolved over time, though some of us experienced greater pain than others

Face-time - even though we could work from home in the past, most meetings tend to be conducted in the office as team members felt that it's more conducive and perhaps, more productive and effective this way. Seeing and talking to one another face-to-face on-line especially in a group setting seem weird. Can't help but think, "What are they doing when they are not talking?"

Physical space - having to work with multiple family members around you can be a boon or bane. There can be 'distractions' of different nature, ranging from tender loving care from a loved one who's constantly checking in if you want a drink or perhaps more (I emphasise) food; to kids (if you have them), who are perhaps not so happy that you are around because you have taken over their desk (and room) to do your private video conference call.

The list goes on and at the end of the day, it requires passion, discipline and established norms to make things work and work well.

It has been two weeks since the official WFH started and I realise that as a rm, we have achieved so much. So, here's my stock take on what's been done (the list goes on but here are a few). Whilst similar activities were conducted in the past, these items in the list got accomplished for the very rst time in the virtual environment!

1. Birthday song for our April "Baby" colleague, Joan
2. First company-wide townhall involving all our colleagues
3. Experiential learning journey from our Learning Lab committee – an initiative to explore new areas and share
4. Joint development of bite-size online product offerings (from ideation to development)
5. Joint development of marketing collaterals for omni-channel outreach
6. One-to-one debrief / leadership conversations on Executive Leadership Assessments with clients (each lasting close to two hours, complete with screen sharing and document exchange)
7. Planned on-line games, Zumba, Yoga and High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) sessions from our Work-life Committee
8. Official communications, chats and weekly Friday check-ins using multiple online platforms (whichever works best!)

All these may happen as a result of necessity (or some would say 'no choice'). Some organisations will embrace WFH faster and more effectively than others. In my experience, this has less to do with access to technology but more with organisation culture.

At the core of this is Organisation Trust. Is there trust within the organisation that everyone will "do the right things and do things right" for the organisation? Do we know what the promoters and inhibitors to trust building are in the organisation?

At aAdvantage, our current culture of people taking ownership, seeking clarity, respecting differences, learning and applying new knowledge and caring for one another helps us navigate through this difficult period and propels us to be ready for the future. No one is 100% clear, but we are learning and adapting together, as one.

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