WORKING FROM HOME:

Overcoming Challenges & Developing Steps to Success
INTRODUCTION

In the first white paper, we discussed the concept of working from home - how it has evolved over the years especially in the Western world and how this is now a growing trend in Malaysia and other Asian countries such as Singapore. Our second white paper discussed the new reality of remote working and highlighted processes and structures to consider when making a shift into remote working.

In this new edition, we identify the challenges of working from home or remote working - especially for countries that are unprepared for these new ways of working. What are the challenges and how can we develop effective practices to address these?
To understand better how the individual workforce perceives working from home, Leaderonomics conducted the following surveys:

**Employees’ Perspective on WFH**

**Business Owners’ & C-Suites’ Perspective on WFH**

Based on the surveys’ analyses and other research evidence, a series of topics is being produced with the aim of providing individual employees and organisations with better understanding of the relatively new concept, identifying best practices for effective working from home, and other related challenges. In addition to insights from these two surveys, we will also be referring to responses that we had collected from survey questions produced from a variety of webinars we conducted over the last few months.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The surveys were conducted in the form of questionnaires and were disseminated via Google Forms. The employees’ survey produced 173 responses, while the business owners’ survey produced 77 responses. The majority of responses were collected from Malaysia and India, with a number of responses from the following countries:

SINGAPORE  U.S.
INDONESIA  U.K.
RUSSIA  SPAIN
CYPRUS  AUSTRALIA

In this paper, we identify the challenges that respondents had experienced during the period of enforced working from home. Furthermore, we discuss some effective practices for efficient working from home or remote working, and how companies and employees can develop these moving forward.

In the next section, we make reference to a number of questions from the two WFH surveys, as well as four other questions posed during webinars we conducted:

“What is the biggest dilemma that you are facing at work today?”

“Is digital transformation an opportunity or threat to your company?”

“How would you define your relationship with being online?”

“What is your attitude towards new technologies?”
85% of respondents indicated that their employers utilised various tools to ease communication when working from home. This demonstrates the importance of communication and the need for employers to utilise tools that best fit the company’s structure and employees’ working styles. Next in line of importance is the arrangement of organisation-wide meetings done on a virtual space (60%); in which company leaders may check in with their employees to update on changes or to have realignment of company goals. This is one example of how employers may maintain and promote rapport in the future of remote working or working from home. A combined percentage of 74% shows individuals checking in with their direct supervisor (35%) and team members (39%). Depending on work responsibilities and colleague relationship, the frequency of checking in with each other may vary from either daily to weekly check-ins. At 29%, virtual “de-stressing” sessions include examples such as workouts, mentoring sessions, virtual lunchtime, and catch-up sessions. These are effective examples to keep working from home interesting and may also be a way of destressing.
What are the struggles of WFH for you?

Respondents identified distractions at home (89%) as one of the biggest struggles of working from home. The distractions could be in the form of family members, housemates, poor internet connection, noisy neighbours, house chores, accessibility to entertainment, and so on. 67% reported struggling to stay motivated while working from home and this could be due to various factors - experiencing distractions at home or the boundary-less working (64%) in which some respondents expressed having to work day and night on an almost daily occurrence. Poor communication (61%) and poor trust (22%) may be attributed to organisational silos especially when individuals are dealing with colleagues from other departments. At 25% respondents reported feeling lonely when working from home - this is true especially for those individuals who are living alone, away from family members or friends.
Share with us any thoughts that you have regarding WFH and the current situation.

Qualitative analysis was done in which responses were analysed, coded, and categorised into themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allows for flexibility</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindset change</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of time management</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distractions at home</td>
<td>2%</td>
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It was indicated that WFH was a good way to help achieve flexibility (3%) in terms of time management - being able to attend to personal life while working from home. Some say that this arrangement allowed them to achieve a work-life balance. Respondents also indicated a mindset change (10%) - having positive outlook towards remote working and identified the need to look into organisational transformation for new ways of working.

Although respondents indicated that flexibility was achieved, some others also highlighted the importance of time management (3%) especially in terms of the struggles that they have with distractions at home (2%).

One of the identified struggles of working from home is the presence of distractions in the form of family members, house chores, or even internet problems. With such distractions, some had indicated they needed more discipline or at times felt demotivated to work.
Share with us any thoughts that you have regarding WFH and the current situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of personal interaction</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty carrying out office tasks at home</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle for WFH parents</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feelings of burned out / overworked</td>
<td>6%</td>
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Our respondents shared that there was a lack of personal interaction (5%) with team members. Some felt it challenging to discuss ideas with colleagues when working remotely, while others missed face-to-face interactions.

There was also the struggle to carry out office tasks when working from home (6%). For example, recruitment/onboarding of new joiners had to be put on hold. Other struggles include lack of proper working space setup, poor internet connection, and poor trust.

Respondents who are parents expressed struggle to work from home while taking care of young children (2%). Some felt guilt as there was lack of quality time spent with their children due to heavy workload, on top of house chores.

In line with boundary-less working as one of the struggles of remote working, respondents expressed experiencing almost unending working on a daily basis. This has resulted with such respondents feeling overworked or burned out (6%).
How does your company help employees WFH effectively?

Likewise in the business owners and c-suites’ survey, we asked the same question on how companies help their employees work from home effectively. Once again, ease of communication has the highest percentage at 88%. Besides virtual all employees meeting (61%), 51% of our respondents indicated having provided work from home guidelines for their employees. Such guidelines are an aspect of communication and a way of maintaining company culture even while employees are working from home. These guidelines need to be detailed - providing clarity of employers’ expectations and enabling structure that safeguards employees’ personal time. A combined percentage of 63% indicate respondents having daily check-ins with either team members (32%) or direct supervisor (31%). Similarly as in the employee survey, 29% reported having virtual “de-stressing” sessions - corresponding to the same criteria in the employee survey.
What are the struggles of WFH for your company?

Struggles of WFH

- Unable to track productivity / engagement: 49%
- Weak IT system: 32%
- Employees are not as tech savvy: 26%
- Retrenchment of employees: 8%
- Loss of business opportunities: 56%
- No struggles / Not apparent yet: 5%

56% expressed having experienced loss of business opportunities. This is expected due to the unexpected situation that has occurred - namely the coronavirus pandemic. 49% reported having a lack of system or structure in place to track employees’ productivity or engagement. Strong leadership and relevant expertise would be required for companies to implement IT infrastructures and solutions. 26% of respondents indicated that their employees were not up to par with the required technological skills. In line with this, there may be growing demands for learning and development specialists to step in with their expertise in upskilling employees with technological skill sets. A small percentage of respondents reported having to retrench their employees (8%) in this critical period of time. It is also surprising to note that 5% indicated not experiencing any struggle or that which is not apparent yet.
What is your company doing to overcome the challenges of WFH?

Steps to overcoming challenges of WFH

- Implementing new IT systems: 49%
- Ensuring employees wellbeing: 58%
- Developing digital products: 35%
- Transforming products: 31%
- Outsourcing services: 8%
- Improving employees engagement: 65%

In line with the previous question, we also asked respondents what their company was doing to overcome the challenges experienced during the period of working from home. Improving employee engagement (65%) and wellbeing (58%) are top on the list. This is identified as necessary as company leaders need to ensure that employees are at optimum state - be it physically, mentally, or socially - before being able to perform well at work. 49% reported looking into implementing new IT systems as this may improve business functions, productivity, communication and even enabling accessibility for employees working from home. 35% ventured into developing digital products, while 31% reported transforming some of their current products to maintain or increase source of revenue. Below 10% of our respondents indicated outsourcing services.
1) How do you foresee the current experience will change the way your people and company work, in the long run?

2) What are some measures that you and your company need to take short to mid-term to ensure you are well prepared for WFH?

Qualitative analysis was done in which responses were analysed, coded, and categorised into themes. Similar themes from these two questions are combined together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving to digital tools, upgrading working systems, &amp; IT infrastructure</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of communication &amp; ways of measuring productivity</td>
<td>12%</td>
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Respondents indicated the need to digitalise certain ways of working (29%), such as: moving to digital learning, increasing usage of digital communication tools, upgrading IT infrastructure, working systems, and so on.

Communication was more important than ever due to the lack of face-to-face interaction when working from home. As such, it is also important to identify ways of measuring productivity and keeping track with employees’ task progress.
1) How do you foresee the current experience will change the way your people and company work, in the long run?

2) What are some measures that you and your company need to take short to mid-term to ensure you are well prepared for WFH?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upskilling employees in IT &amp; improving employee engagement</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindset change</td>
<td>29%</td>
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The importance of upskilling employees in utilising various digital tools (16%) in order that they work from home efficiently was also highlighted. Some respondents also shared the need to utilise specific online communication tools in order to improve employee engagement.

It was identified that this period of working from home had caused a time of reflection to identify areas of the company which need to undergo certain organisational changes. For example, some expressed a need for new marketing strategies, need to implement remote working in the future, or even to ensure that employees are in the right mindset.
This period of working from home has benefitted some companies in decreasing company costs and increasing efficiency in some ways (6%). For example, respondents indicated that cost was saved on real estate fee and electricity charges, while efficiency was increased when employees cut down travelling time.

A number of respondents indicated that working from home will drive change in increasing flexibility within the company and also forcing certain companies to become agile in adopting new ways of working.

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1) How do you foresee the current experience will change the way your people and company work, in the long run?

2) What are some measures that you and your company need to take short to mid-term to ensure you are well prepared for WFH?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost saving &amp; increasing efficiency</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility &amp; agility</td>
<td>4%</td>
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What is the biggest dilemma that you are facing at work today?

In one of our webinars, participants were asked what dilemmas they faced at work. The top three dilemmas that respondents highlighted are interrelated - suggesting an overarching issue. Firstly, respondents expressed not knowing how or struggling to leverage technology (44%). This is in part related to insufficient learning (28%) whereby employees may not be properly equipped to perform their various tasks, be it technology-related skills or soft skills. Furthermore, 22% found that their company was unable to adapt to the digitalisation trend - further emphasising the struggle to leverage technology. 18% reported having a lack of autonomy over their tasks, while 16% indicated misalignment between personal goals and company goals. Especially in a time of crisis or with a lack of physical interaction, it is important that employees are inspired to take initiative of task responsibilities and are able to align personal goals with company goals. This ensures that employee spirit are kept high and motivated for work productivity and efficiency. Lastly, 4% of respondents expressed struggle to find a new job.
Is digital transformation an opportunity or threat to your company?

Following on from the previous question, we also asked our participants whether they found digital transformation an opportunity or a threat to their company. 97% indicated digital transformation as an opportunity while a small percentage still perceive it as a threat to their company. A plausible reason digital transformation is perceived as a threat is due to employees’ fear of having their jobs taken away and being replaced by technological advancements. For effective transition into the digital movement, employers need to consider employees’ mindset and how these may need to be realigned to the company’s new structure and system. Besides developing a right mindset, company leaders may also need to consider providing a structured learning and guidance that could help employees effectively adapt and incorporate the new digital changes into their habitual working style.
How would you define your relationship towards being online?

- 67.4%: I’m in control and can freely disconnect when I want to.
- 12.3%: I’m addicted and can’t imagine going a day without it.
- 20.3%: I feel anxious when I’ve not logged on after some time.

In a different webinar on the topic of “Self Development: Building Resilience”, we asked participants to define their relationship being online. About 67% of respondents reported themselves to be in control and free to disconnect when they want to. 20% indicated feelings of anxiety when they have not logged on after some time. 12% of respondents indicate being addicted and cannot imagine going a day without being online. This is an interesting question because it allows us to gauge our respondents’ state of mind and how this relates to factors such as screen fatigue or digital overload.
In another group of webinars we ran, we asked participants on their attitude towards technologies. The majority saw technologies as something beneficial that can help people and organisations improve in many aspects of their work. If not that, it is something that has to be embraced as there is no way to work without it.

As technology becomes critical while we move towards remote learning, we can at least see that people are on the right track towards embracing it - either understanding and being excited by its benefits, or at least accepting it as something necessary (17%).
Working from home is not an easy feat. Through the interpretation of analyses we identify the struggles faced by employees as well as employers and their companies. Some challenges may be specific to the individual or environment of the individual while others may be challenges shared within a group of people - team members or colleagues from work, and still other challenges that arise from job functions or company structures. As such, in order to develop effective ways or best practices of working from home it is crucial to understand and acknowledge the different levels of challenges experienced by the individual and how these may interact and influence challenges faced at the group level or organisational level.

In the following pages, we identify challenges faced by the individual employee and employer or organisation as a whole, and what these challenges pertain to - whether the struggles involve the environment the individual works in, or it involves job functions and processes that are office-bound.
WFH: Challenges Faced by Individuals

- Distractions at home
- Struggle for work from home parents
- Lack of motivation
- Loneliness
- Boundaryless working
- Difficulty carrying out office tasks at home
- Lack of / poor communication
- Lack of personal interaction
- Insufficient learning
WFH Challenges from a Psychological Perspective

Based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, we examine and seek to understand the challenges of working from home at different levels. Maslow’s theory explains that there are five needs to be met before an individual could feel a sense of fulfilment or reach self-actualisation. The meeting of needs unconsciously drive behaviours and may also be a source of motivation.

At the lowest level are physiological needs such as the need for food, water and air. The second level is safety in which individuals seek shelter and need a place to live in. Love and belonging indicate the need for social interaction or the need to be accepted. At the fourth level, self-esteem demonstrates the need to feel accomplished and respected by others for various achievements - whether at home or at work. At self-actualisation, individuals seek to reach their full potential - utilising their capabilities and talents in the most effective way possible.
Using Maslow’s theory, we evaluate the issues concerning the home. Nowadays, individuals’ basic needs are more complex than ever and have evolved due to technological advancement and improvement in society’s standard of living. An example of how our extremely basic needs have evolved from food, water and air is our adaptation to technological changes and how we have developed the basic need for internet connection.

During remote working, we identify the need for a conducive environment. This would be a designated place to work at home - away from possible distractions. A proper working space is important because it ensures concentration, reduces distractions, eliminates the possibility of having to move around if distractions were to occur, and also helps to maintain or promote good working posture. Another important aspect of a conducive environment is the necessity of having good internet connection.

During the period of enforced working from home, one of our respondents highlighted that increased bandwidth usage in apartments had resulted in a decline of download speed - causing disruption in internet connectivity. This is true as the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) reported a 32.1% increase in internet traffic during the first two weeks of movement control order. As such, internet connection is an uncontrollable factor, even as it is an important necessity at this present time.

Understanding Issues Concerning the Home

Issues concerning the home

● Distractions at home
● Struggle for work from home parents
A Way Forward: Issues Concerning Home

Developing Effective Ways

SHARE - a psychologically informed approach

- **Safe home-working:** Create a workspace at home that is equipped with: proper table, chair, good lighting and ventilation, and access to plug points. The space should also ensure privacy for yourself and work meetings.

- **Help yourself & others:** Communication is key. Ensure that your family members and colleagues know your working routine and when you are taking breaks. You may negotiate time for productivity and time for chores.

- **Adapt to change:** Some people adapt easily to change while others take a longer time. Create working styles that best suit you - whether it is following a strict routine or a more relaxed one.

- **Relieve the pressure:** Remember to take breaks from work. Sitting down too long can cause pressure on your body, so take short walks to clear the mind; stay active through physical activities, keeping to meal times, and getting enough rest.

- **Evaluate:** Consistently review your work routine and approach. Are your needs being met? Do you need to change things up? Check-in regularly with your manager and team members to ensure good team understanding and collaboration.

For Employers’ Consideration

- **Redefining workload - set realistic expectation:** Making tasks more manageable for remote workers. It is important to take into consideration other responsibilities that employees may have at home.

- **Tools and action plan for measuring productivity:** Cloud-based tools or apps are a good way of keeping track of employee productivity. Daily or weekly check-ins with team members and managers are also recommended to ensure that key people are kept updated on work progress.

- **Creating and maintaining a safe and honest culture:** It is important that managers and key leaders create a safe and honest culture for employees to voice out their concerns or struggles. Such a culture helps create and maintain good working relationship and ensures that employees are motivated to meet leaders’ expectations. On the other hand, it is important that leaders ensure their employees are performing at optimum state without being overworked.
The third level of needs to be met - love and belonging - may be used to evaluate issues of lack of motivation and loneliness. During working from home or remote working, the need for interaction is more important than ever. The office environment compared to the environment at home is very different. At the office, the atmosphere is made up of people working on their computers, ongoing meetings, colleagues having conversations with one another, etc. Work is almost continuous except for the random toilet breaks, lunch time, coffee break or catch-up session. Although distractions may occur at the office, there is a driving force that motivates individuals to continue working simply because they are surrounded by their colleagues who are working.

Besides experiencing a lack of motivation, individuals also suffer from loneliness - as reported by 25% of our respondents in the employee survey. This is also in line with a different survey conducted by Buffer, whereby it was reported that 19% of their respondents experienced loneliness when working remotely. Even though meetings may still occur on a weekly basis if not daily basis, individuals still find loneliness a serious issue especially for those living alone. As such, a question to ask is, how can we mimic the office environment for individuals who are working from home?
A Way Forward: Issues Concerning Personal Self

Developing Effective Ways

- **Celebrate your wins:** Exercise self-acknowledgment instead of self-criticism - recognise your efforts however small they are because every step taken that adds to the progress of a task is an effort. This applies for work-related tasks and house chores.

- **Make extra effort to reach out to colleagues:** Allocate time to catch-up with your colleagues. This could be in the form of short calls during periods of rest or before the start or end of team meetings.

- **Working outside of home:** Now that the movement control order has relaxed and people are starting to go out more, this is an opportunity to explore working outside. Co-working spaces and some cafes are examples of places with a more conducive and appropriate environment for working, and are possible solutions to address the feeling of loneliness.

- **Being courageous & seeking help:** Mental health issue is a stigmatised topic and not many people have the courage to speak up about how they feel. However, there are many online resources available in the form of podcasts, webinars, apps, and even communities which hold such discussions to help individuals develop a better understanding of what mental health issues are and how these may be addressed appropriately. *(Click for more information on page 38)*

For Employers’ Consideration

- **Virtual coffee breaks:** Have HR set up virtual coffee breaks on all employees calendar during working hours. Gitlab encourages this approach to foster collaboration and to alleviate feelings of isolation.

- **Tools for maintaining engagement:** With remote working, most engagement usually occurs during conference calls or virtual catch-up sessions. However, these are not the only way to keep employees engaged. Digital tools and softwares are also available to keep employees engaged through knowledge transfer and intentional conversations.

- **Empathising & reaching out:** Leaders need to ensure that employees are healthy in all aspects: physically, mentally and emotionally. Virtual talks or community engagements could be organised on self-development or mental health topics to equip employees with tips and strategies for dealing with and overcoming such struggles. *(Click for more information on page 38)*
Understanding Issues Concerning Work

Issues concerning work are many and complex due to the involvement of factors such as rigid task processes, team members and/or colleagues’ expectations, company culture, and so on. Due to the complexity of these issues, we identify the following: lack of personal interaction, poor communication and insufficient learning - to be evaluated based on meeting self-esteem needs.

In the workplace, part of the development of self-esteem is an individual’s knowledge that he/she is contributing positively to the team or company’s goals and that these contributions are being acknowledged. This is an important need to be met because it helps individuals keep track of their work goals and plan for future goals. When individuals feel accomplished in their task responsibilities, it is more likely that they will be motivated to achieve more - in turn promoting work productivity.

One part of self-esteem is when individuals seek to understand team members’ and/or supervisor’s expectations, and how these could be met during task collaboration. Having a good understanding of these may add to one’s self-esteem because it helps with the building and maintaining of good working relationships - of which individuals as social beings will generally find satisfying. Therefore, communication and clarification are crucial at all times.

Workplace learning is another important aspect as the learning of new skills is one other factor that adds on to an individual’s self-esteem development. The process of learning and adding positively to one’s life is perceived as rewarding because these are seen as successes that one could be proud of.
A Way Forward: Issues Concerning Work

Developing Effective Ways

- **Replace your commute time with intentional rest time:** Calculate the amount of time you would take to commute to work, and convert it into time to rest. Actively detach yourself from work to do activities that you find enjoyable and relaxing.

- **Digital detox:** Virtual meetings have increased in numbers for employees working from home. With online meetings, time spent in front of the computer screen has also increased, leading to screen fatigue or digital overload. As such, employees may need to actively refrain from digital screens and to engage in more offline activities.

- **Learn constantly:** Learning new skills whether as part of a hobby or as a way to upskill at work is a good mindset to have. The process of learning is beneficial in many ways - adding value to you as a person or enabling meaningful application at work.

- **Identify and agree on best way to communicate:** Different people have different communication styles - some prefer long emails, others prefer video calls, and still others prefer using messaging apps. It is important to identify which form of communication works best for yourself and your team members. There is no one right form and different situations may call for different communication form at various times.

For Employers’ Consideration

- **Clearly defined WFH guideline:** A clear guideline highlights leaders’ expectations and how these can be met. Respect for personal time should be emphasised across the whole organisation as well.

- **Revolutionising office-bound processes:** Employers may need to look into work processes that could be reformed to enable continuity of such processes even during remote working.

- **Tools to improve communication and personal interaction:** Besides tools for measuring productivity and improving engagement, there are also tools for maintaining communication and personal interaction even when remote working. These tools may be apps that are easily accessible on mobile phones - making communication and interaction fun and convenient.

- **Learning software and platforms:** The use of online learning software and platforms will enable employees to learn and grow at their own convenience and in any location.
WFH: Challenges Faced by Organisations

- Unable to track employee productivity / engagement
- Employees are not tech savvy
- Need for upskilling employees

- Weak IT system
- Struggle to leverage technology and adapt to digital transformation movement

- Loss of business opportunities
Using our Leaderonomics’ **Science of Transforming Organisations (SOTO)** framework, we will be evaluating the issues faced by employers and their company. In our framework, we highlight four critical areas: structure systems, alignment, business model and culture - in which company leaders and their organisations need to consider and address in order to help individuals operate in an effective environment.

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**WFH Challenges from SOTO perspective**

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**Structure
Systems**
- Structure drives behaviour
- Process/structure does not support business model
- Misalignment of processes versus culture

**Alignment**
- Clarity across the organisation
- Is there clarity of meaning and expectations
- Are leaders aligned on vision, mission and key goals of the organisation?

**Culture**
- Beliefs in organisations
- Experiences reinforce wrong beliefs
- Beliefs changed by rituals
- Intentionally designed culture vs default country culture

**Business Model**
- Wrong business model
- Bad strategy and execution
- Inferior or obsolete products/services
- Lack of future pipeline
- Lack of technology & innovation

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**Note:** The SOTO model is based on the work of Roshan Thiran who spent more than 20 years studying various successful and failed organisations. The model is copyrighted to him and has been used in transformation and scaling projects.
The issues concerning employees are complex and involve factors such as team or company alignment, company structure and systems, and company culture. According to our SOTO framework, alignment and clarity are extremely important and should flow down from company leaders and across the organisation.

At every level of leadership, the alignment and clarity of organisational goals should remain consistent. This is especially crucial during critical and uncertain times. Leaders and managers need to constantly reevaluate and realign team goals to help employees develop clear goals for themselves - ensuring that productivity is maintained. In turn, this could also help managers and leaders develop better ways to track productivity or engagement even when employees are working from home.

The process of upskilling employees involve equipping them with the right and specific skill sets for task responsibilities and also ensuring that they are able to perform tasks via technology in the most efficient way possible. This process has to do with company structure, systems and culture. Some questions to consider are:

“Does your company culture promote a growth mindset or a fixed mindset?”

“Do your employees embrace a progressive attitude towards change?”

“Is your company’s structure and systems enabling and driving employees to learn?”

### Issues concerning employees
- Unable to track employee productivity / engagement
- Employees are not tech savvy
- Need for upskilling employees
A Way Forward: Issues Concerning Employees

For Employers’ Consideration

- **Apply a ROWE mindset:** ROWE stands for results-only work environment, and having this mindset could address concerns that employers have about tracking employee productivity. So it does not matter how many hours are put into work or how work is done; instead the emphasis is on the results produced and the quality of it.

- **Creating and maintaining a learning environment:** Even during remote working, learning and upskilling can still occur on virtual learning platforms. Online learning compared to the traditional classroom is perceived to be more flexible in which learners can learn at their own pace and in any environment. Furthermore, online learning encompasses different learning styles - catering for the different ways that individuals learn best.

- **Deploying a tech expert:** In every organisation, there would be an IT department that deals with technological related matters. Besides managing the computer network systems, IT experts could be tech heroes who would help employees with technology-related issues. Furthermore, upskilling can be in the form of short training sessions in which employees are required to attend, or even as step-by-step guideline videos that are accessible to all at any point of time.
Understanding Issues Concerning Company Infrastructure

Referring to structure systems, we evaluate the issues of weak IT systems and the struggle to leverage technology and to adapt to the digital transformation movement. As discussed in our earlier white paper, organisational silos and lack of strong leadership are some factors obstructing organisations from transiting smoothly into digital transformation initiatives.

In face of these obstructions, there may be a need for organisations to reassess their business model and strategy. In line with this, company leaders need to be courageous in identifying possible structure and systems that could redefine task processes and company strategies.

The reformation should start to take place especially in times of crisis or when the organisation is looking to shift into new ways of working. When the organisation is able to provide a strong IT system and adapt well to digital initiatives, employees will also be motivated to drive the necessary change and achieve high performance.
A Way Forward: Issues Concerning Company Infrastructure

For Employers’ Consideration

- **Identify your business strategy:** Before making investments into technology or taking steps to adapt to the digital initiative, company leaders need to first identify their business strategy. When there is a clear picture of this, decision making becomes much more efficient when leaders know what kind of technology is needed for their business strategy.

- **Identifying which structure and processes to reform:** As the digital initiative starts to take more shape and even as organisations consider shifting into new ways of working, it is important for company leaders to identify structure and processes within the company that need reformation. This could be an example of eradicating organisational silos and a step to improving the IT system.

- **Reassuring employees:** From our interpretation of analyses, 3% of respondents indicated perceiving digital transformation as a threat. A plausible reason for this is due to employees’ fear of having their jobs taken away and being replaced by technological advancements. As such, it is very important that company leaders reassure employees of their value and position in the company. When employees are reassured and given the right guidance, digital transformation and adaptation will be well accepted.
Loss of business opportunities was the top struggle during the period of enforced working from home, as indicated by our respondents. Many companies were unprepared for the crisis situation and had to make do with last minute preparation. However, how often do companies get this opportunity to reassess their business model and strategy to continue scaling their businesses? Having had a taste of enforced working from home and some benefits of it, a number of companies are looking into remote working as the new norm.

As organisations make this shift, some important questions to consider include:

“What kind of products and services does the market demand at this point of time and in the near future?”

“Are your company’s products and services market driven?”

“Is your company positioned primarily to survive, sustain or shine?”
Identify market driven products & services: At different period of times and trends, there will be changes in what the market demands for and which products and services that are deemed as essential. As such, company leaders need to be able to analyse their market well and identify the trends and how best to produce company products and services that are market driven.

Recognise potential points of failure: What are the weak points in your organisation that would be vulnerable in times of crisis? In identifying potential points of failures, company leaders are required to look ahead, assess and develop possible ways to mitigate business failure.
Unlocking Organisational Learning

Enabling every individual & organisation in Asia to benefit from a personalised digital ecosystem that actually works and enables limitless learning, growth and development.

**Necole**
The first AI knowledge cloud for unified and personalised leadership content discovery. Our revolutionary mobile-first online learning platform pulls content from multiple sources to fulfill your learning needs.

**MentorCloud**
A platform that facilitates the establishment and continuation of meaningful mentoring relationship, providing a ground for mentees to initiate intentional conversations with mentors of same values and interests before deciding to move forward with mentoring relationship.

**Happily**
A mobile solution for HR to measure and understand employee engagement while helping managers transform negative states into positive states.

**Leaderonomics academy**
A Learning Management System that does so much more. Deliver diversified learning experiences that are skills mapped and tracked. Monitor, measure, manage and deliver online and offline learning activities within an organisation to achieve higher productivity.
Virtual Solutions for Your Organisation

Our solutions work in conjunction with each other to create a stand alone yet co-dependent ecosystem of intelligence, learning and engagement for organisations as well as communities.

**Virtual Intelligence Services** involves:
- SBA (Scenario Based Assessments)
- CBI (Competency Based Interview)
- 360 Assessments
- Motivation Hierarchy
- Psychometrics

**Virtual Learning Interventions** involves:
- Coaching
- Instructor Led Training
- NaaS (Necole as a Service)
- Speaker Series
- BAL (Be A Leader)

**Virtual Engagement Services** involves:
- Youth Campaign
- Team Building
Conclusion:

A Way Forward

In this white paper, we identified some of the struggles or challenges of working from home. We examined these challenges at different levels - first at the individual level and then at the organisational level. For challenges faced by employees, we made certain connections of how some challenges are related to underlying needs that need to be met, according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

For challenges faced at the organisational level by company leaders, we used our Science of Transforming Organisations (SOTO) framework to explain how certain struggles originate from critical areas to tackle in the organisation. These critical areas provide a framework for company leaders and their organisation to consider and address, in order to help employees operate in an effective environment.

With the identified struggles and challenges, it is important to note that these were the outcomes of an unprepared and unforeseen period of time due to the pandemic. As such, the future of remote working may not necessarily hold issues or challenges to that extreme. In fact, the outlook on the future of remote working seem to be quite positive and well accepted as Deloitte reports that 74% of CFOs expect flexible work arrangements to continue in some form. Moreover, we provided recommendations for developing effective ways to work from home or remotely. Some recommendations are specifically for individuals who would work from home or remotely, while others are recommendations for employers and company leaders to consider when making the shift into new ways of working.

Lastly, we make mention our digital products and services that are developed to grow individuals into effective leaders. Leaderonomics is an organisation that is driven by the purpose of transforming the nation through building leaders. Through many years of working closely with a wide age group - from children to university students, to all levels of employees, management and even senior leaders, we have thoughtfully created and developed some of our very own digital and virtual products and services. Some of these are specific to improving workplace engagement - even when working remotely - while other products are intended for learning, through intentional transfer of knowledge and purposeful conversations.
Resources on Mental Health

Below are links to various resources on mental health as according to the recommendations that were offered for issues concerning personal self. Leaderonomics is not affiliated with any of the organisations highlighted below, and it is suggested that readers exercise personal discretion regarding the use of these resources.

WFH: Self-Development resources
https://www.a-p-a.net/learn/apas-resources-self-development/

Mental Illness Awareness and Support Association
https://miasa.org.my/

SOLS Health
https://www.sols247.org/solshealth/

Befrienders
https://www.befrienders.org.my/

RELATE
https://relate.com.my/
References


References


Growing People into Leaders, Building Communities of Love, Transforming the Nation

Leaderonomics is an organisation driven by the purpose of transforming the nation through building leaders. We believe that everyone with the right mindset and support can become a leader that can profoundly affect the social and economic health of their community, be it their organisation, community, or nation. With our guiding frameworks and intelligence gathered over the years, we work with children, university students, employees of all levels, management, and senior leaders to help them discover, develop and hone their leadership abilities.

Want to unleash your inner leader? We’d love to help.
Reach out to us at: info@leaderonomics.com

www.leaderonomics.org