A Preliminary Study on Managing Remote Working in an Emerging Country, Vietnam

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Abstract: The present paper aims to propose a study on managing remote working in an emerging country that is Vietnam. Semi-structured interviewing is utilized to gather necessary data from managers who have been leading remote employees in Ho Chi Minh City. On the basis of the collected data, case study is then used to analyze and examine the level of effectiveness of managing remote employees in Ho Chi Minh city. Recommendations to manage remote employees right to ensure consistency and productivity are also made based on the research findings.
Keywords: Remote Working, Remote Employees, Remote Worker, Emerging Country, Vietnam

I. Introduction

Remote working has been becoming an increasing trend worldwide. Especially, the coronavirus pandemic may push the work-from-home movement more quickly than expected. In fact, "clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced people and businesses to adapt to remote working—whether they were ready for it or not", stated by Ben Rogers, president of platform and technology clients at the National Research Group (NRG).

Having been working under organizations locating in Vietnam, an emerging country, that follows remote working trend, the researchers captivated to this business issue from the beginning. Since starting the jobs, the researchers have always been drawn to the managers' techniques in leading teleworkers, which is the main reason why the researchers decided to carry out the study on the effectiveness of managing remote workforce.

First of all, an overview of some aspects of remote working such as the definition of remote working, some advantages and challenges of remote working is presented. The general roles of managers in leading remote employees are then outlined to easily compare with the case of managers in Vietnam, particularly in Ho Chi Minh city. In addition, the research methodology, significance, scope and limitation of the research are mentioned.

II. Literature Review

1.1 Remote Working
1.1.1 Definition of Remote Working

"Remote work is a growing trend around the globe" (Eddleston and Mulki, 2017). According to Tuoitrenews (2017), some Vietnamese organization admitted that they started to allow teleworking as a policy. Remote working is defined as some paid work is taken on at home, or in virtual reality (Hardill and Green, 2003); or work is being separated from usual fixed environment of work, such as office (Felstead and Henseke, 2017). In the book *Remote Working: Linking people and organizations (2011),* D. Nicksonand S. Siddons, from the view of employees, had clarified: "We saw remote working mainly in terms of the freedoms, convenience, independence and opportunities it had given us".

1.1.2 Benefits and Drawbacks of Remote Working

Firstly, employees can still be active when they are ill, which is called "attending work while ill" (Johns, 2009). In addition, teleworkers significantly reduce transportation costs (Tremblay and Genin, 2007). Other than that, teleworking remarkably impacts gender issues. More women are interested in remote working than men (Belanger and Jordan, 2000) as it raised autonomy when working remotely since it allows them to plan their work and family time (Lim and Teo, 2000). Finally, employees are enabled to take care of family members while working at the same time. Flexibility of work hours is much appreciated as it contributes positively to work-familybalancing (Tremblay, 2003). Thus, this brings satisfaction to teleworkers and improve work quality.

Besides the benefits, remote working has its own drawbacks, one of which is the lack of communication and feedbacks between colleagues as opposed to working at the office, "people who work full-

time at home are especially sensitiveto this issue" (Tremblay and Genin, 2007). It is further illustrated that ages come with the feeling of isolation (Tremblay and Thomsin, 2012). According to Hertel, Geister and Konradt (2005), teleworking "increased chances of misunderstandings and conflict escalation, and increased opportunities of role ambiguity and goal conflicts due to commitments to different work-units". Moreover, "not all people are equally suited to remote working as some perform better amidthe buzz of a team" (Hunter, 2019). If every worker is allowed to do remote work without considering, it may impact on the productivity. Certainly, there are many distractions at home and not all of them can manage well enough to keep on track with work. Therefore, as a leader, it is quite challenging to keep remote employees engaged to the organization and manage them more effectively and productively.

1.2 Manager's Role in Leading Remote Employees

The importance of managing virtual work has been emphasized in many researches (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002). Indeed, the role of a manager of remote employees is not much different from traditional managers' role, which includes providing expectations and goals, evaluating employee performance, and giving coaching for development (Bell, 2012). However, it is riskier for remote managers to lead teleworkers as the managers cannot see them frequently and it also limits the "chemistry for success" (Maggie Walsh, 2011).

According to Gerke (2006) and M. Walsh (2011), successful remote managers often apply some main key points. Firstly, it is essential to build and maintain good relationship with teleworkers to make them more commit to their jobs. Secondly, appropriate communication and collaboration technologies are truly highlighted, managers have to find out the best method to contact remote employees when in need. Finally, team development has to be established to arrive at the final goal quickly and then make a plan on how to achieve it, hence, they can get the tasks done efficiently and on time.

After viewing target remote managers' methods of managing employees, the researchers will find out whether the remote managers in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, actually follow any of the above steps. As a result, the researchers will assess if the target managers' ways of leading virtual teams are effective or not. On the basis of the findings of the research, recommendations to managing remote workforce right will be made to improve the engagement, creativity and productivity of remote employees.

III. Methodology

3.1 Research paradigm

The present research aims to analyze the performance of managers who have been managing remote employees in Vietnam, especially in Ho Chi Minh city to analyze if it is effective or not, based on the standard methods of successful remote managers. Thus, qualitative research is more suitable to collect the necessary information. Qualitative research is used when it comes to collect other people's experiences and perceptions (Patton, 2005).

Semi-structured interviewing will be utilized in the research to gather and analyze the data on how target respondents manage remote employees. It is expected to collect necessary data from successful and experienced managers. Then, the gathered data will be examined and deeply analyzed to come up with the level of effectiveness of managing remote working in an emerging country, Vietnam.

3.2 Significance of the Study

The present study has made several original contributions to the literature. The study is the first comprehensive investigation of the level of effectiveness of managing remote employees in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam.

A few researchers have studied the effectiveness level of managing remote employees, but no researcher has studied the level of effectiveness of managing remote employees in emerging countries such as Vietnam. Therefore, the current study represents an important and significant contribution to the remote working literature in Vietnam in particular and in the field in general.

The outcomes as well as the limitations of the present research can serve as a basis for further studies. Therefore, future researchers can find out the research gaps for further studies on remote working to enrich the knowledge of the field.

3.3 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The present research will concentrate on investigating the managers' effectiveness in managing remote teleworkers in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam.

The data is only gathered in a dynamic business area of Vietnam that is Ho Chi Minh city. Data on managing remote working in other parts of Vietnam is not included in the current research. Besides, it may be difficult and complicated to be able to interview the target managers.

IV. CONCLUSION

Remote working has been increasingly captured the interests of people in the business world. The current paper presents a preliminary study on managing remote employees in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, an emerging country. Target respondents are experienced managers who have been leading remote employees in Ho Chi Minh City. Necessary data is primarily obtained by semi-structured interviewing. The collected data is then analysed to explore the level of effectiveness of managing remote employees in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. Based on the results of the research, recommendations to managing remote employees right and thus having a loyal, productive, creative and satisfied team of employees to help businesses succeed are also proposed.

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