**The Effect of COVID-19 on Australian workforce that can Work from Home**

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**Abstract**

This paper will investigate what ways COVID-19 has affected the Australian workforce who were able to work from home from both the employee and an employer’s perspective. This report reviews literature and statistics in relation to causes and effects. In late 2019, COVID-19 was discovered, and the globe was immediately impacted by a pandemic. As a result of this, countries entered lockdown protocols which meant some business ceased work whilst others had to drastically change the way they operated. Also, through this, individuals have had time to self-reflect and assess what they feel they should expect from an employer, and this has prompted retention challenges as employers have not remained fully aligned to the employee evolving needs. The significance of this event has meant that employees have decreased intent to stay therefore adjusting tenure statistics.

**Introduction**

The global pandemic was declared by the World Health Organisation in March 2020 impacted the workforce in many ways, namely that a large number of employees would work from home on a semi-permanent basis as lockdown protocols were observed and others who couldn’t work all. With restrictions on what individuals could do such as leave their property, employees were found to be working longer hours (Oakman, J., et all. 2022). This resulted in employee “burnout” and contemplation of what really matters to them (Oakman, J. et all 2022). There are many factors that need to be applied when targeting retention and without applying or considering possible consequences, businesses could suffer from potential loss of profit, efficiency and employee drive.

**Literature Review:**

Throughout the start of the pandemic in 2020, individuals were placed under unprecedented stress with restrictions being placed on them in all aspects of their lives both personally and professionally. Some industries could facilitate a work from a home environment and therefore continue with day to day operations albeit at a less productive pace. With the lines blurred between start and finish time, individuals who worked from home tended to work abnormal hours and occasionally they were working more than the standard 38-hour week per Australian National Employment Standards required of them (National Employment Standards). This also shared other implications such as altered dress code. A paper by Lipton, B., & Basu, S. (2022) suggested that employees were wearing casual clothes whilst working from home. This however challenges concepts of productivity (Smith, A. 2020) which means managers are having to adjust their management style to ensure they are present in an online environment and monitoring employee outcomes in line with work deliverables.

With the workforce being remote from the worksite during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an instant lack of immediate oversight of employees from managers and an increase of expectation of managers to more present and in touch with their teams. Managers were required to have a higher level of trust in their employees and as such attitudes changed from working a standard eight-hour day to focusing on outputs (Marzban, S. et all. 2021). Another implication managers were required to be cognisant of was Work Health and safety considerations. There were physical safety requirements that had to be adhered to through out the lockdown periods whilst employees worked remotely. These requirements were often addressed through introduced policies and updated practices such as compliance checklists. (Marzban, S. et all. 2021) Another factor that strongly presented itself throughout the lockdown periods was a greater need for attention on employee’s mental health (Westrupp, E. M., et all 2021). Increased stress due to isolation other new challenges such as home schooling started to impact the stress of individuals and impacting their work environment and in some cases work output (Westrupp, E. M, et all, 2021). With these additional challenges, employees started to assess their personal and family needs and questioned whether their current employer could continue to meet their needs this has escalated to retention concerns.

Turnover of employees can be a natural and healthy part of the business life cycle however over the span of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in resignations (Allman, K. 2021) and subsequently, a loss of trained staff and intellectual property. Employers have found themselves in this position as they have attempted to operate and not address reasons for their staff leaving. Often retention strategies can prove effective in retaining employees. Since the start of the pandemic, individuals wants and needs have changed in the sense that they are looking for more flexibility in ways that have not previously been offered (Williamson, S., & Pearce, A. 2022). According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, “1.3 million people (or 9.5% of employed people) changed jobs, the highest annual job mobility rate since 2012” (National Employment Standards). Employers on some fronts, have attempted to remain current and aware however there is still a relatively high turnover rate in comparison to past years. In order to address the resignation, increase that has happened as a result the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to address the changed needs of the employees.

**Method:**

**Data Analysis:**

**Resource, budget and project timeline plan**

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**Conclusion**:
COVID-19 has had drastic effects on the workforce in Australia with renewed expectations such as the way in which individuals and companies work, and retention difficulties. Businesses are being driven to act with agility and innovation when deciding the way in which they might practically work. It appears that most corporate workforces have leaned toward a work from home or hybrid approach, whilst hospitality and retail remain entirely on site. With new, evolving and differing needs of employee, workplaces are forced to consider how they will retain their staff. Implementing strategies to address either address retention or continual turnover is beneficial to the workforce planning process. This study was aimed primarily at the Australian workforces, thus not considering the differing results that may come from specific industry and other countries.

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