

# **GRENOBLE ECOLE DE MANAGEMENT**

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### **EPREUVE ORALE D'ANGLAIS**

#### **Script n°02**

#### **The Benefits of Working from Home**

By Jena McGregor

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Employees who have tried to negotiate a remote work arrangement often ask to spend one day working from home. But new data from a big workplace study suggests they might be better off asking for three or four.

As part of its massive "State of the American Workplace" report released Wednesday, Gallup asked more than 7,000 U.S. workers during 2016 about how many days a week they worked from home, as well as questions about how "engaged" they are at work -- how much they feel enthusiastic and committed to their jobs.

The survey found that those happiest with their jobs were not people who spent the majority of the week in the office collaborating with their colleagues and one day a week skipping the commute. Nor were they the people who spent the entire week working from home.

Instead, the report showed that the most engaged workers were those who spent 60 to 80 percent of their week, or three to four days, working from home, and a minority of their time in the office. Those who spent more or less time working remotely were less enthusiastic about their work, with the lowest numbers occurring among those who spent either all of their time either in the office or at home.

In other words, after untold dollars spent by companies to get workers more committed to their jobs, and study after study suggesting a link between employee engagement and the bottom line, working from home three to four days a week doesn't just make things better for employees. It could also make things better for their boss.

Unsurprisingly, people feel most plugged in to their jobs when they have some balance -- a little bit of face time and camaraderie at work, and plenty of time to hunker down and get work done from home while avoiding the headaches of going in to the office. What may bewilder many managers, however -- particularly those at companies like Yahoo or Bank of America that scaled back on telecommuting programs in recent years -- is the extent to which that balance is tipped toward working remotely.

Just four years ago, after all, Gallup found that the "optimal engagement boost" happened for those who worked remotely less than 20 percent of time, a third of where it is now. The 2012

data showed that those who spent more than half their time away from the office were only about as engaged as those who never worked remotely.

Four years on, something has changed dramatically.

Improvements in technology -- better mobile phones, faster home Internet service, better videoconferencing -- may play some role, though these technologies were also well in place in 2012. Greater numbers of people working from home -- and therefore, more acceptance that could lead employees to feel more comfortable with doing it more -- could also help explain the boost, but the jump is not profound. Gallup found that in 2016, 43 percent of employees worked remote at least some of the time, compared with 39 percent in 2012.

Rather, says Jim Harter, chief scientist for workplace management at Gallup, the primary explanation may be that companies are doing more to help remote workers get it right. From handing out technology kits to get people up and running at home to training managers to be clear about job descriptions to building in systems that improve collaboration between those outside the office, he says, companies have been responding to the shift toward remote work with ways to help the work-from-home crowd work. "I think organizations are more intentional about putting resources around it," he said.

While Harter was surprised to see the ideal range for remote working shift so much in four years, he was not shocked to see a strong link between employee enthusiasm and working from home. The best predictor for employee engagement, he says, is when workers say they have a "significant amount of time where they get absorbed in their work and time passes quickly," he said. "And when you work remotely, you certainly have more of a chance to get absorbed in your work."