

# Preface

Anywhere working, or working remotely, is not new but it is only recently that this concept has become an attractive and viable choice for workers and their managers. Other terms used in the literature include ‘teleworking,’ ‘telecommuting’ or ‘flexible work’ (amongst others). Anywhere working refers to flexible work arrangements where employees work in locations that are remote from a central office but who can collaborate and communicate using a variety of information and communication technologies (ICT). Recent developments in ICT such as ubiquitous broadband Internet, mobile devices, social media, cloud computing, and networking tools as well as media attention and management awareness underpin anywhere work. Anywhere working or telecommuting was initially conceptualized as a distributed workplace, work located close to the worker’s home. As ICT became more accessible and affordable, anywhere work commonly referred to work from home. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century collaboration and communication technologies support collaboration and communication from home, an airport, a co-working hub or anywhere at all. The proliferation of mobile handheld devices enables workers to work ‘on the go’, in which case the term ‘mobile work’ is often used to refer to the ability to work from anywhere using mobile devices.

In the era of big data and ubiquitous technology, for many organizations customers can be served from anywhere. As the digital infrastructure improves, there will be more opportunities for working anywhere that have implications for governments as they grapple with traffic congestion, urban sprawl, and an aging workforce. The appropriate technology infrastructure and support is necessary to support government policies as well as workers. Managers require the right skills to manage workers across a diverse range of settings - from workers in an office to freelancers (and everything in between). The final component is the ability to provide the right level of service to the customer. How can we adopt anywhere working so that the benefits are realized and the limitations mitigated?

The ability to work from anywhere using modern collaboration and communication technologies is gaining in popularity across many parts of the world. Government bodies, as well as private and public sector organizations, are recognizing the

environmental, social, economic and organizational benefits of anywhere working. Environmental benefits include reductions in traffic congestion and carbon emissions due to work-related travel. For employers, there may be benefits through savings on dedicated office space, parking and equipment costs. Anywhere working can increase job satisfaction and as such may reduce employee absenteeism and turnover. There may also be other benefits for employees such as an increased sense of well-being, due to having more control over work/life balance, increased autonomy and responsibility, a feeling of accomplishing more with fewer expenses and resources, and a potential reduction in emotional and monetary costs of commuting to and from work. From a social perspective, anywhere working may increase workforce participation of women, the disabled and indigenous people. By breaking down geographical boundaries, people in rural and remote communities can take up new opportunities afforded by the potential of anywhere working. Anywhere working can also offer substantial benefits to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are critical to fostering business growth and regional development. Anywhere working can enable SMEs to grow as e-businesses and to take advantage of different times zones and to grow their businesses in overseas markets. Supported by sophisticated technology, the modern ‘office worker’ can be fully ‘virtual’ while conducting work-related activities from anywhere. Telework activities may extend, foster and grow social networking activities, which may, in turn, provide a basis for individuals to learn from each other and extend their technological skills and experiences, thereby fostering innovation and mitigating the ‘tyranny of distance.’

The changing nature of work demands teamwork that extends beyond the normal institutional, geographical and time boundaries, in which case flexible/teleworkers need to collaborate across time and space. Whereas seamless networking in the virtual domain has previously posed a challenge, modern collaborative and networking technologies, combined with broadband-enabled networking infrastructures, enable new forms of work and opens up business opportunities for both individuals and organizations.

The objective of this book is to bring together the seemingly disparate areas of research relating to anywhere working so that government policy makers, managers, and workers can make informed choices about adopting anywhere working to achieve competitive advantage. The objectives are to understand the most current research that informs anywhere working (telework/telecommuting) and to develop a research agenda that builds on the latest empirical research in this area. It is anticipated that the target audience of this book will be composed of government, professionals, and researchers working in the field of anywhere working (telework/telecommuting) in various disciplines. The book will inform academics, researchers, managers and other professionals on issues relating to anywhere working from government policy, technology, management and service quality perspectives.

## SECTION 1: MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Section 1 focuses on management and leadership issues relating to anywhere working. As organizations continue to grow their technical capability and leverage innovative technology, anywhere working has the power to transform working relationships significantly – for better, or for worse. ICT is an important enabler of productive anywhere working; medium to high-level IT support, particularly communication and collaborative IT tools are required to increase individual productivity. Provided they have appropriate IT tools allowing them to continue their work seamlessly from their virtual offices; workers can be more productive when anywhere working. However, while technology is a huge enabler of anywhere working, many managers and leaders lack experience, skills and capabilities relating to anywhere working. Despite the promise of virtual and mobile work, there is a wide discrepancy in the level of acceptance of anywhere working by managers and that this is a key barrier faced by employees who wish to engage in telework.

Anywhere work requires a different managerial approach and style, and managers need to set clear tasks and articulate outcomes to be achieved by individual workers as well as teams. The changing nature of work demands teamwork that extends beyond the normal institutional, geographical and time boundaries, in which case anywhere workers need to collaborate across time and space. Trust between managers and employees is important to foster a productive working environment, as is regular and effective communication. Managers and leaders of anywhere workers should not be concerned about where work is done, as long as employees are productive and clearly demonstrate that tasks are completed successfully and on time. Managers need to carefully select employees for anywhere working, as the most productive anywhere workers tend to be driven, self-motivated and independent workers who are well-organized and can deliver results as expected. Not all roles and tasks are conducive to telework. For instance, some roles requiring a high level of customer contact may not be suitable for telework.

Chapter 1, *Management Skills and Capabilities in an Era of Technology Disruption*, examines the literature relating to ICT and management skills and capabilities relating to anywhere working. This chapter argues that although ICT is an enabler of anywhere working, sustainable anywhere working requires specific management skills and capabilities. Rapid changes such as the globalization of work require organizations to manage workers ranging from full-time employees through to freelancers working in different locations including a central office, co-working center, from home and other flexible options. The chapter concludes by proposing a research agenda and conceptual framework to identify the management skills and capabilities required to manage anywhere workers successfully. The proposed

conceptual framework will inform researchers and managers on best practice for adopting sustainable anywhere working to achieve strategic business objectives.

In Chapter 2, *The Social Relations of Anywhere Working: Major Themes and Meanings*, the idea of anywhere working provides opportunities to utilize non-traditional workspaces and new employment relationships. However, the new employment relationships ensuing from anywhere working have implications for both employees and employers. While thinking about the nature of anywhere working tends to focus on macro-level issues and micro-level practices, the social relations of anywhere working is a peripheral concern. This chapter reviews some of the images and meanings attached to work through the ages. Subsequently, the dominant ideas in the anywhere working literature emerge as employee centric, employer-centric and technology centric themes. The notion of a sociological paradigm frames the discussion and analysis of anywhere working in its broadest context. Given its rapid spread, anywhere working may be represented as a watershed in employment relations and work practices. In this light, new ways of thinking about the social relations and the nature of work itself are required.

Chapter 3, *Leading Anywhere Workers: A Scientific and Practical Framework*, discusses the challenges associated with management and leadership in a virtual context. As organizations continue to adopt anywhere working, it remains critical to address the leadership and management challenges of leading anywhere workers. Through interviews with experienced anywhere leaders from several different organizations, this chapter clarifies how leaders meet and overcome those challenges. Building on existing behaviorally-based models of leadership, the authors propose a hierarchical taxonomy of effective anywhere working leadership behaviors. The taxonomy is composed of four meta-categories (Relationships, Flexibility, Productivity, Culture) and fourteen subcategories, which detail the behavioral capabilities necessary for anywhere leadership. In doing so, this chapter provides a common framework for understanding ‘anywhere leadership’ and lays the foundation for the assessment and development of leadership in the context of anywhere working.

## **SECTION 2: TENSIONS AND CHALLENGES**

Section 2 discusses a range of issues and challenges arising from anywhere working. In addition to some of the management and leadership issues raised above, there are a number of occupational health and safety considerations that should be taken into account when implementing anywhere work. Safety of the employee while undertaking anywhere work is important. There should be seamless working conditions between the office and the flexible work environment, and the level of technology available in the office environment should also be available while

teleworking, whether from the home office or another location (such as smart hubs or hot desks). This level of support is not always the case for anywhere workers. Working from anywhere can result in social isolation, as well as professional isolation. Anywhere workers need strong support from their organization to feel less isolated, as reduced organizational visibility may mean that they are overlooked for promotion and other career opportunities. Security of data, information, and knowledge in an organization can also be compromised if proper measures are not put in place to protect such resources.

Chapter 4, *Working Anywhere and Working Anyhow? A Tension-based View on ICT and the Coordination of Work* examines the ways in which working from anywhere relies heavily on ICT. Scholars are increasingly utilizing a tension-based research lens to investigate organizational paradoxes which are rooted in opposite tendencies that might negate one another. Thus, computer-mediated communication can be both demanding and resourceful. The aim of this chapter is to present an analytical framework integrating three distinct but interrelated perspectives (task, medium and individual) to account for individuals' perceptions of job demands and job resources associated with the usage of ICT when working from anywhere. This chapter draws on insights from theories of media choice and communication performance, the self-determination theory, and the job demands-resources model to better understand the impact of communication in the remote setting.

Chapter 5, *New Ways of Working: Flexibility in the Accounting Profession in Australia*, provides evidence of the practical implementation of a 'new way of working' (NWW) in the Australian accounting profession. It reports and analyses the results of interviews with twenty accounting professionals conducted in 2014. NWW refers to the interrelationship between temporal and spatial flexibility (flexible work arrangements – FWA) facilitated by technology. In this chapter, evidence is provided of the public rhetoric regarding NWW by accounting firms, particularly the Big Four firms. This is contrasted with anecdotal testimony from the interviews to reveal the success with which these goals have been adopted and implemented across the accounting profession. The findings reveal inconsistencies and prejudices still in place in Australian accounting firms and suggest that, although there has been some success in this area, some conservative views still need to be challenged.

### **SECTION 3: DISABILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS**

Section 3 investigates various aspects of the potential of anywhere working to provide greater employment opportunities for the disabled. As various disabilities may affect a significant percentage of the population, disability should be treated as part of the larger debate on diversity. There is a need for management to take responsibility

for increasing workforce participation by people with disabilities. This involves changes at both the level of employee and employer – including the cultivation of greater levels of tolerance and acceptance arising from equity policies that support recruitment practices focused on diversity balance. Moreover, job and task structures need to be revisited or redesigned as part of a larger reasonable adjustment strategy to match specific and unique worker skills with tasks. Anywhere work can bring about advantages for people with disabilities and may reduce social stigma associated with a disability because people are judged more by the work they do, rather than by their disability. Sadly, most managers do not yet fully understand the potential that people with disabilities can contribute to the workplace and workers, especially through working from anywhere.

Chapter 6, *Telework and People with Disabilities: Perspectives of Managers and Employees from Australia*, outlines the ways in which people with disabilities face unique challenges to access work and participate in a work culture and environment. The increasing uptake of anywhere working is promising from a digital inclusion perspective for people with disabilities. This qualitative study explored barriers and problems of including people with disabilities through telework in Australia. The study focused on management and worker perspectives, and findings indicate that both parties face unique challenges to accommodate and include people with disabilities in telework arrangements. Worker barriers to access telework relate to management attitudes, physical and infrastructure problems, social isolation misconceptions, lack of management trust, insufficient telework opportunities and inadequate management knowledge of IT support and reasonable adjustment for people with disabilities. Management issues involve cultural intolerance towards diversity and disability in general, as well as a lack of policies and processes that create a supportive environment for people with disabilities who wish to telework.

Chapter 7, *Telework: Exploring the Link Between Disability, Work/Family Balance, and Flexibility*, provides insights on issues relating to disability, flexibility and the impact on work/life balance from a U.S. perspective. While anywhere working has been a subject of interest to researchers for decades, the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has seen a renewed interest from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. This chapter explores the relationship between disability, work/family balance, and flexibility by examining the impact anywhere working has on disabled online instructors. This research identified “flexibility” as the main theme that was important to the disabled teleworker and was identified as the most positive outcome of anywhere working. By taking advantage of flexibility and benefits of telework, all participants indicated that they were better able to balance work and family obligations. The chapter concludes with a discussion on possible research opportunities to further study how anywhere working affects people with disabilities.

## SECTION 4: TELEHEALTH

Section 4 is concerned with anywhere working in the areas of ICT-enabled telehealth services and aged care services. Given this societal trend of aging populations and people living longer, in general, health care costs are rapidly increasing. The promise of technology and anywhere working to support telehealth services is huge: delivering cost savings, time savings, allowing for increased frequency of service to clients, greater flexibility of delivery, streamlining of administration processes and enhanced client/worker relationships. While ICT enabled delivery of health care services shows great potential, its success is heavily dependent not only on technology but also on users of that technology. For as many problems as anywhere working through ICT enabled technology adoption may be able to address in health care delivery, new challenges related to the use of that technology arise constantly. Many of these issues do not involve the technology itself, but rather the anywhere workers using that technology.

Chapter 8, *Aged Care, ICT and Working Anywhere: An Australian Case Study*, examines how information and communication technology (ICT) and working anywhere was adopted in a not-for-profit aged care organization in Australia. The aged-care and services sector has grown over the last decade leading to shortages of skilled and experienced workers. At the same time, the sector is dealing with significant changes relating on how services are funded, an increase in competition from both not-for-profits and for-profit providers, a rise in demand for services, changes in technology as well as variations in government regulations. Using ICT to streamline operations, communicate and collaborate has become critical for delivering efficient and effective services in both residential aged care and community care sections of the aged care and services sector. The not-for-profit case study in this chapter shows how a first mover in ICT adoption and utilizing working anywhere can support cost savings, provide the ability to respond to the changing regulatory environment as well as attract, recruit and retain skilled and experienced workers.

Chapter 9, *Working Anywhere for Telehealth*, discusses issues and challenges related to the provisions of telehealth services in Australia. Clinicians (general practitioners, specialists, and allied health professionals) are experts in medicine, not technology. The delivery of health care using technology includes changes to the way the clinician works; in effect, they work from anywhere. This study examined telehealth adoption from the perspective of clinicians. Data was collected from 44 in-depth interviews undertaken with a variety of Australian clinicians. The findings show that telehealth is a complex endeavor involving multiple stakeholders. While the potential of telehealth service provision is significant, the realities of delivering telehealth services involve many challenges for clinicians. These include technology-related issues; lack of funding and financial incentives for telehealth;

the changing skills and capabilities required by clinicians who engage in telehealth consultations; as well as changes to business processes resulting from the introduction in a complex environment. A conceptual model for the adoption of sustainable telehealth is proposed for a better understanding of these complexities.

Anywhere working shows great potential to address various economic, social and managerial issues in the contemporary organizational context. For instance, there are many new ways that ICT is connecting workers and their customers. Current examples include Uber, Deliveroo, Airtasker, Freelancer, Upwork, and Expert360. What will be the implications of these new business models for employers and workers? As ICT continues to become more sophisticated, the proliferation of anywhere working continues. While anywhere working offers many advantages, there are also challenges, and future research should address a number of issues relating to anywhere work using a multi-disciplinary approach. For example, how can the skills and capabilities of managers be effectively developed so that that workers, regardless of their location of work, feel engaged and included? How can we counteract the culture of ‘presenteeism’ or low visibility if the worker is working off-site? How can organizations embrace Inclusiveness and sensitivity to cultural, family and health (physical and mental) requirements of each worker? On the one hand, anywhere working can broaden the labor pool and assist with the inclusion of workers with disabilities. On the other hand, anywhere working has the potential to increase social and professional isolation. Finally, how do we integrate government policies including a long-term vision and funding to ensure anywhere working is sustainable and able to contribute to a reduction in traffic congestion, pollution and reducing carbon emissions? Addressing these issues will go a long way towards realizing the immense potential of anywhere working in the future.

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