

# Work from Home vs. Virtual Flex: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



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# Work From Home vs. Virtual Flex: What's the difference, and which model is better for your business?

Words like “work” and “home” don’t mean what they used to. Today, millions of people do their jobs in the same places they live their lives. They can measure the distance to their offices, not in miles, but steps. They can meet, coordinate projects, provide goods and services, and win business from the comfort of their own desks, sofas, or dining tables.

However, as much as the world has changed, many aspects of working life have remained the same. Most people are still expected to be available to complete their tasks roughly between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm. Employers and their employees are located in the same metropolitan areas. Meetings and deadlines still fill up our workdays.

Some companies realize that the decline of the brick-and-mortar office offers new opportunities to redefine work, life, and the balance between the two. These organizations are embracing a model beyond just “working from home.” They’re operating under a new, more dynamic, and flexible model: virtual flex.



## WORKING FROM HOME, VIRTUAL WORK, REMOTE WORK, TELECOMMUTING: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Many misconceptions stem from the conflation of terms such as “remote work,” “virtual flex,” “telecommuting,” and “working from home.”

Within this document, we’ll refer to remote work as the umbrella term and divide things into two general categories: working from home (which encompasses telecommuting) and virtual flex.

## WHAT DOES WORKING FROM HOME MEAN?

Working from home means doing an office job at home. Many businesses operated in a physical location before the COVID-19 pandemic, then equipped their teams with the materials needed to work remotely. This is considered “working from home.”

When people work from home, they're expected to do their jobs a certain way, show up and be available at certain times, and use the technology and tools their employers provide. They're still employees working for the same companies. The main difference is *where* they're working—not how, when, or how much they're working.

This is why working from home is often called telecommuting. Rather than using a car to get to work, you're using the internet.



## WHAT DOES VIRTUAL FLEX MEAN?

Virtual flex is a fundamentally different labor model. There's no commute, tele- or otherwise. "Working from home" is an important component of virtual flex, as the workforce is not based in a brick-and-mortar office. However, this model also features flexible schedules and talented professionals within the virtual workforce.

In many ways, virtual workers are the ones who call the shots in their workdays. How, when, and how long they work depends on how much opportunity there is and how much time they're willing to give. They can work as much or as little as they want, in the way they want to.

That level of freedom comes with distinct responsibilities. Virtual workers may have to provide their own tools and technology. Mindset matters as well. People who work virtually need to be self-motivated and self-disciplined, able to deliver quality work at a consistent pace with little manager or supervisor oversight.

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Some people also refer to this as a "flexible work arrangement" (or simply "flex work"), or with some combination of the terms "virtual," "flex," and "on-demand." Uber's staffing model is often cited as an example of flex work. However, not all flexible jobs are virtual jobs. For instance, an Uber driver needs to be working within a particular physical location. Truly virtual jobs are both flexible and remote.

*TLDR: Working from home and virtual flex both happen remotely, but that's where the similarities end. Virtual flex work is freer, more flexible, and more entrepreneurial than work-from-home arrangements.*

## WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF VIRTUAL FLEX?

Virtual flex offers numerous benefits for people and organizations.

### BUSINESSES THAT LEVERAGE VIRTUAL FLEX...

- » access talent when they need it
- » reduce labor costs
- » can staff up quickly for unanticipated surges
- » source high-quality, motivated workers from anywhere
- » reduce workforce turnover and burnout

### PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE VIRTUAL FLEX WORK...

- » act as their own bosses
- » set their own hours and schedules
- » control the direction of their careers
- » can find meaningful work wherever they live
- » have the freedom to follow opportunities as they arise



Virtual work isn't for everyone and every employer. To succeed as a virtual flex worker, a person needs to be intrinsically motivated rather than driven by short-term extrinsic rewards. In other words, building one's own business and living life on one's own terms needs to be more important than a pizza party at the end of the month.

For this reason, successful virtual flex workers tend to be more experienced than entry-level employees. They frequently have established lives, routines, and goals outside of their jobs. In fact, many choose virtual work because it gives them the flexibility to take care of their families or follow their creative pursuits.

Most businesses can benefit from embracing a virtual model in some form but may find it difficult to implement it immediately by themselves. Transitioning to virtual work involves myriad security, learning, and management considerations.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic as many businesses rushed to send their teams home, many challenges began to surface. Companies realized that integrating remote work meant new tools were required, new processes needed to be developed, and not all brick-and-mortar employees will thrive in a remote environment.

Many enterprises have found that a virtual flex model can supplement their brick-and-mortar or work-from-home teams to maintain business continuity during these unprecedented times. To learn more about the scalability of the virtual flex model and how it helps enterprises access better talent, when they need it, visit [liveops.com](https://liveops.com).

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