

Get mobile, get promoted

Without that five minutes chat by the watercooler, the open-ended lunch break, or a boss's beckoning door, homeworkers can often feel isolated from colleagues and the opportunities for informal networking and mentoring that are wrought by the almost mythical 9-to-5. Without the ties that bind, those working from home offices can be overlooked for perks and promotions. So, what's a busy homebody to do? Get connected, that's what!

Research to be published soon in the *International Journal of Mobile Communications*, looked at how a small sample of homeworkers working in a telecommunications organization were affected in terms of job satisfaction and promotions.

Homeworking involves individuals carrying out traditional office tasks, full-time or part-time, usually using a computer, an internet connection, and a telephone. The standard view is of someone isolated behind a desk in their home office.

Now, Banita Lal from the Nottingham Business School at Nottingham Trent University and Yogesh Kumar Dwivedi of the Centre for e-Business Research, at Swansea University, UK, carried out in-depth, semi-structured interviews with homeworkers and their results challenge some of the received wisdom in the published sociological research literature on homeworkers.

"It emerged that four respondents expressed an interest for career progression and subsequently remained connected to their mobile phone outside of working hours to avoid feelings of professional isolation," explains Lal, "The other twenty-one interviewees did not communicate a similar desire for promotion but remained connected nevertheless."

Although face-to-face interactions with peers, mentors, and one's boss is important, the advent of email, broadband, and widespread cellular networks means that homeworkers no longer perceive themselves as islands in a vast ocean. Indeed, with globalized corporations becoming the norm, it is more and more likely that a homeworker will not even be working in the same country as their peers or boss.

We now have "Martini communication" - any time, any place, anywhere. This means that with flexible working becoming commonplace within many companies, there is a reduced chance of bumping into your employer-mentor at the water cooler and fewer opportunities for getting a rise with that carefully honed elevator pitch. It could be that the hoped-for beckoning door of your boss is closed, not because they are not approachable, but because they are a homeworker too.

Source: Inderscience Publishers

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