Relations industrielles
Industrial Relations

Dialing it in: A Missed Opportunity Regarding the Strategic Use of Telework?

« *Dialing It In* » : une occasion ratée de recours à l'utilisation stratégique du télétravail.

« *Dialing It In* »: una ocasión perdida de recurrir a la utilización estratégica del teletrabajo

Gordon B. Cooke, James Chowhan and Tom Cooper

Volume 69, Number 3, Summer 2014

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1026758ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1026758ar

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (print)
1703-8138 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Cooke, G. B., Chowhan, J. & Cooper, T. (2014). Dialing it in: A Missed Opportunity Regarding the Strategic Use of Telework? *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, *69*(3), 550–574. https://doi.org/10.7202/1026758ar

Article abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the degree of alignment of organizational strategies with two types of telework using Statistics Canada's 2005 Workplace and *Employee Survey* data. In this paper, we intentionally use the most inclusive definition of telework, because we are interested in all cases where an employee works from home at least some of the time. We consider telework to be 'employee-oriented' when an employee works at home to address his and her family-related or personal wants or needs, and 'employer-oriented' when an employee works at home due to the employer's strategic or operational objectives. The three organizational strategies that we considered were innovation, involvement, and cost-containment. We found that employers focusing on innovation were significantly more likely than other employers to use both types of telework, with greater emphasis on employee-oriented telework, whereas employers using an involvement strategy were less likely to use either type of telework, albeit at only a weak level of significance. Moreover, we did not find a statistical relationship between the cost containment strategy and either type of telework. We hypothesized that employee-oriented telework would be more common among workers in workplaces focusing on innovation or involvement, but less common among workers in workplaces focusing on cost containment. We hypothesized the reverse situation for the incidence of employer-oriented telework. On the whole, the results suggested that employers are not universally aligning the implementation of the two types of telework with their organizational strategies. Rather, either telework is not commonly used as a strategic tool or, alternatively, the strategic implementation of these two types of telework is more contingent upon other organizational or employee factors in specific circumstances.

 © DÉPARTEMENT DES RELATIONS INDUSTRIELLES, UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL - ISSN 0034-379X – RI/IR, 69-3, 2014, 550-574

Dialing it in: A Missed Opportunity Regarding the Strategic Use of Telework?

Gordon B. Cooke, James Chowhan and Tom Cooper

We assessed the degree of alignment of organizational strategies with telework using Statistics Canada's 2005 *Workplace and Employee Survey* data. We consider telework to be 'employee-oriented' when an employee works at home to address his and her family-related or personal wants or needs, and 'employer-oriented' otherwise. We found that employers focusing on innovation were significantly more likely to use both types of telework, with greater emphasis on employee-oriented telework, whereas employers favouring an involvement strategy were somewhat less likely to use either type of telework. We did not find a statistical relationship between a cost containment strategy and telework. Overall, the results suggested that employers are not universally aligning the implementation of the two types of telework with their organizational strategies.

KEYWORDS: telework, home-based work, innovation, cost-containment, work-family balance.

Introduction

In today's global business environment, employers have strategic options regarding which human resource practices to implement. In fact, a whole area of study (i.e. strategic human resource management) has emerged in the last two decades to analyze these very issues. While the effect sizes can be small, there is a body of evidence that certain organizational strategies may be statistically related to the existence of particular human resource practices (e.g. Gerhart *et al.*, 2000;

Dr. Gordon B. Cooke, Associate Professor, Faculty of Business Administration, Memorial University of Newfoundland (gcooke@mun.ca).

James Chowhan, Adjunct Assistant Professor, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University (chowhan@mcmaster.ca).

Tom Cooper, Associate Professor, Faculty of Business Administration, Memorial University of Newfoundland (tcooper@mun.ca).

Acknowledgment: This study was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (#410-2006-1380) held by Dr. Isik Zeytinoglu, a research colleague of ours. Access to data was received through a Statistics Canada Research Data Centre, although the opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the views of Statistics Canada. The authors would also like to acknowledge the constructive suggestions provided by three anonymous reviewers who provided comments on an earlier version of this paper, as well as the helpful insights provided by Isik Zeytinoglu.

Wright and McMahan, 1992) and to improved organizational outcomes (e.g. Delery and Doty, 1996; Jiang *et al.*, 2012). We believe that the use of telework is one of the human resource practices that could be implemented in a way that is consistent with some organizational strategies. For example, the implementation of telework could differ if an employer is trying to reduce overhead and labour costs as opposed to trying to motivate and retain valued workers by improving their work-life balance. Yet, telework research tends to focus on the prevalence of telework, its effects on employees, or its theoretical benefits for employers. Too often, the research does not address when and which types of telework are being used, making it impossible to infer why telework is implemented (or allowed) by employers, and therefore sends mixed messages.

Our quantitative analysis was based on Statistics Canada's 2005 *Workplace and Employee Survey (WES)*[1], which contains a wide range of worker and workplace variables including employer strategy variables. The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between three organizational strategies and two types of telework. The three strategies are innovation, involvement, and cost-containment, while the two types of telework are employee-oriented and employer-oriented telework. These strategies and types are defined below. While telework is generally associated with undertaking work duties at home through the use of technology (i.e. internet, cell phones, video-conferencing, etc), sometimes much broader definitions are used. The reality is that a standard definition has not emerged in the literature, nor has a standard terminology, with 'homework' and 'telecommuting' also being used. In this paper, we intentionally use an inclusive definition of telework, since we are interested in all cases where an employee works from home at least some of the time. To minimize confusion, we will solely use the term 'telework' for the rest of this paper, although readers should remember that alternative terms and definitions exist (see Sullivan and Lewis, 2001; Wilks and Billsberry, 2007). We agree with Schweitzer and Duxbury's (2006) view that, whether called telework or something else, the key characteristic is that an employee spends part of his or her work hours away from the employer's traditional location, and that technological changes have made it possible to do so for individuals in many fields and occupations.

Three employer strategies are used depending on the importance given to several tactical strategic priorities. 'Innovation' captures the importance that employers place on improving and expanding new products, services, and markets. 'Involvement' captures the importance that employers place on improving services, products, and processes, including increasing employee skills and participation, and labour-management cooperation. Finally, 'cost-containment' captures the degree to which employers prioritize reducing labour and operating costs. Further details are provided in the methodology section. We consider telework to

be 'employee-oriented' when an employee primarily works at home to address his and her family-related or personal wants or needs, and 'employer-oriented' when an employee primarily works at home for operational reasons or based on a choice made by the employer. We are not suggesting that employee-oriented telework is necessarily unfavourable to employers. If telework is valued by workers who, in turn, are motivated to perform well, then presumably the use of this work arrangement also benefits employers. Conversely, while employer-oriented telework is not inherently harmful to employees, based on our definition, it does not contain a direct benefit for employees. While the terminology might appear to be provocative, our intention is merely to label the prima facie impact of these two distinct types of telework.

This study contributes to existing academic knowledge by clarifying the degree to which the use of telework, a high profile human resource practice that has received public and media attention, is aligned with employers' organizational strategies. This study also has practical implications because if employers wish to achieve a strategic objective, then using the appropriate type of telework is one of the available options to consider.

Literature Review

Although telework can be defined in many ways (e.g. Haddon and Brynin, 2005; Verbeke *et al.*, 2008), we are interested in all situations where an employee works from home at least some of the time. Because of the range of definitions used, the estimates of the prevalence of telework vary widely. The proportion of teleworkers in Canada has been estimated to be in the range of 4%-10% among all workers (see Akyeampong, 2007; KPMG Canada, 1997; Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2006). While this percentage translates into hundreds of thousands of Canadian workers, it is perhaps lower than one would have guessed given its touted benefits. However, these estimates are typically based on cases where employees regularly or always telework, and could exclude cases where employees telework on an occasional or irregular basis. Cooke *et al.* (2008) have estimated the proportion of teleworkers in Canada to exceed 15%, based on Statistics Canada's 2003 *WES* data, using a similarly inclusive definition of telework. Tremblay *et al.* (2006) and Tremblay and Najem (2010) also examined the prevalence of telework in Canada using the *Workplace and Employee Survey (WES)* (in their case, based on the 1999, 2002 and 2005 data). They estimated that the proportion of the Canadian labour force using telework was approximately 25%, which, not surprisingly, is in line with our estimates based on 2005 data. Whatever definition is used, the anecdotal and empirical evidence is that telework has become increasingly prevalent throughout the industrialized world, and this trend is expected to continue due to its possible benefits (e.g. Golden, 2012).

As mentioned above, in our view, telework research tends mostly to focus on only three themes: i – the prevalence of this practice in workplaces, ii – the individual characteristics of teleworkers, and/or iii – the positive and/or negative effects of telework on the work-life balance of teleworkers. While these themes are certainly important, it seems to us that the degree to which employers strategically use different forms of telework is also worthy of attention. For employers, implementing telework potentially generates cost savings by adapting available labour levels to fluctuations in demand for their services, and by reducing or restraining the need for real estate, office space, supplies (Peters *et al.*, 2010; Templer *et al.*, 1999; Verbeke *et al.*, 2008) and other overheads (Morgan, 2004). Canadian research has shown that, on average, teleworkers have reported increased productivity and improved customer service along with decreased absenteeism and turnover (Devine, Taylor and Haryett, 1997; Templer *et al.*, 1999). This arrangement might also favourably impact organizational productivity and efficiency, in turn leading to higher organizational profits and also more satisfied workers (Mayo *et al.* 2009). Based on their analysis of eighty studies, Bailey and Kurland (2002) concluded that the majority of teleworkers participate in this work arrangement by choice on an occasional or irregular basis, for example to avoid interruptions. This implies that employers allow (valued) workers to decide whether or not to participate in this arrangement based on their personal preferences and work-family circumstances. Needless to say, some reported employer benefits are less desirable from a worker perspective, but would appear to be consistent with a cost-containment strategy.

On the other hand, if an employer adopts an innovation or involvement strategy, then implementing employee-oriented telework might help retain and engage valuable employees, since teleworking can provide individuals with more flexibility to schedule working time, thereby allowing them to have more time to organize and focus on their work and improve their work-life balance (Tietze, 2002; Nunes, 2005). In addition, commuting time and associated costs can be reduced or eliminated (Verbeke *et al.*, 2008). While telework potentially helps those dealing with work-family conflict, Tremblay *et al.* (2006) found that teleworkers are more likely to use this practice for operational reasons (such as to complete job requirements) than for personal reasons. As a result, Tremblay *et al.* presume that telework is primarily employer-driven (see also Tremblay and Najem, 2010).

We now turn to industrial relations and strategic human resource management research to see how and why broader employer strategies are so relevant. From an industrial relations perspective, since the seminal work by Kochan *et al.* (1986), employers' strategic choices have been thought to be the dominant force shaping conditions of work. More recently, Zeytinoglu, Cooke, and Mann (2009) also found that working conditions in Canada continued to be primarily employer-driven rather than employee-driven. If employers are the primary drivers, what are their

major options? Broadly speaking, employers have the power to provide favourable working conditions to their more valued employees and/or to impose operationally favourable conditions on other employees (e.g. Boulin *et al.*, 2006; Vallée, 2005).

In their seminal work, Wright and McMahan (1992) establish a theoretical framework for strategic human resource management (SHRM). They define SHRM as 'the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals' (Wright and McMahan, 1992, p. 298). That is, SHRM takes the macro view that human resource policies and practices can be designed to play an important role in achieving broader organizational goals. In other words, the focus of SHRM is on the degree to which human resource policies and practices are, or could be, designed in a strategic (i.e. intentional) way by employers. Several researchers have found a small but robust empirical relationship between the use of specific work practices and firm level outcomes such as profitability and productivity (e.g. Delery and Doty, 1996; Gerhart *et al.*, 2000; Huselid, 1995; Jiang *et al.*, 2012; Wright and McMahan, 1992). One reason why strategically chosen organizational practices can lead to improved firm performance is that the human capital of a workforce can be unleashed and fully utilized (see Wright and McMahan, 2011). Moreover, flexibility over one's schedule, which telework can provide, has value to employees (see Hausknecht *et al.*, 2009; Hilbrecht *et al.*, 2013).

If well-matched organizational strategies and human resource practices are, or can be, related to firm performance, it appears worthwhile to assess whether the two types of telework are used in different situations as employers try to achieve their specific organizational strategies. The question thus arises whether employee-oriented telework is more heavily used in organizations having an innovation or involvement strategy because of the need to retain and motivate valued workers, and whether employer-oriented telework is more prevalent in organizations having an organizational strategy of cost containment. From a universalistic perspective, it is assumed that there is an optimal set of practices (and strategies) for organizations to achieve optimal performance, whereas a contingency perspective naturally assumes that optimal firm performance would depend on finding a particular set of human resource practices that fit best given other firm characteristics and strategies. For our study, if the universalistic perspective applies to the use of telework, there should be a relationship between organizational strategies and the incidence of employee-oriented and employer-oriented telework. In contrast, if the contingency theory applies, one would expect weak relationships between stated organizational strategies and the two types of telework, because employers' use of telework would be contingent upon specific organizational or individual characteristics that fit with its use in particular situations, rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach (see Mayo

et al., 2009). As mentioned earlier, an employer could decide to only provide certain perquisites to the most valuable members of its workforce and not to others (e.g. Hausknecht *et al.*, 2009), and presumably this could include being allowed to choose to telework for personal or family reasons.

Interestingly, Mayo *et al.* (2009) found that the implementation of telework appears to differ from family-friendly practices such as part-time hours or flexible work schedules insofar as the former are more closely correlated with certain organizational characteristics whereas the latter are not. Presumably, this suggests that telework is more likely to be implemented for operationally (i.e. employer) driven reasons whereas family friendly practices are implemented more for worker driven reasons. Conversely, in their study involving 156 Spanish firms, Martinez-Sanchez *et al.* (2008) found that firm performance is positively associated with the intensity of the use of telework and other managerial flexibility initiatives. This suggests the use of employer-oriented telework and circumstantial evidence for the universalistic perspective. Of course, some innovative employers might simply be more willing than others to try telework or any other variations in work design (e.g. Mayo *et al.*, 2009; Peters *et al.*, 2010). Hilbrecht *et al.* (2013) explain that some teleworkers involuntarily participate in this arrangement as a result of employers who chose not to provide office space for the entire workforce (presumably as a cost savings initiative). Similarly, Tomaskovic-Devey and Risman (1993) outline how employers could design their teleworking policies as a cost savings tool (referred to as a clerical design) versus as a way to boost productivity (referred to as a professional design). Tomaskovic-Devey and Risman's study has particular appeal because it is an early analysis of telework describing how this practice is not one-dimensional. As we argue here, the use of telework can be designed in substantially different ways, depending on its strategic purpose within an organization and its intended purpose. We draw direct parallels to our conceptualization of employer-oriented telework (which we argue means satisfying operational objectives) and employee-oriented telework (used for personal or family reasons). Somewhat similarly, Golden (2012: 257) differentiates between 'traditional' telework usually carried out during typical work hours and 'nontraditional' telework conducted outside of typical work hours, with the latter being deemed to be undesirable for employees since it could represent incremental, and unpaid, work. While we directionally agree with this logic, in our view, the more compelling characteristic is the self-reported reason a person teleworks, because the notion of 'typical' work hours does not necessarily apply to telework, nor is it possible to easily differentiate between paid or unpaid telework (see also Hilbrecht *et al.*, 2013). Certainly, Verbeke *et al.* (2008) outlined in great detail the potential positive effects of telework on employees, employers, and even

communities, and the reasons why strategically motivated employers (and, for that matter, governments) might encourage its use.

To summarize, the mixed messages in the reviewed literature suggests that the supposed benefits of telework, in terms of efficiency and productivity gains for employers and as a means of saving commuting costs and time and facilitating better work-life balance for employees, do not consistently materialize in practice. Also, there is not a clear pattern about when and why employers use telework (i.e. whether to achieve innovation, involvement, cost-containment, or other strategies). In our opinion, it is not merely a peripheral issue whether a person teleworks because his and her job requires it versus choosing to telework based on one's family situation, hobbies, and lifestyle preferences. Until telework is separated into its two prima facie types (i.e. the employee-oriented and employer-oriented varieties), we would expect results to be mixed. We would argue that ignoring the different possible types of telework accounts for some of the inconsistencies in terms of whether telework reduces work-life balance (see Golden, 2012; Hilbrecht *et al.*, 2013) or the extent to which telework increases job satisfaction levels (see Golden and Veiga, 2005). If employers are, on average, implementing telework in a strategically consistent (i.e. universalistic) manner, one would expect the employee-oriented variety to be more prevalent in workplaces with a strategic focus on innovation and involvement (where motivating and addressing the wants and needs of employees is presumably the goal as a means of improving processes and outputs) , and to be less prevalent in workplaces with a focus on cost containment (where labour is presumably viewed as an input cost to be minimized), whereas we would expect the opposite relationships for the use of employer-oriented telework. While several SHRM studies have examined the link between human resource practices and organizational strategies, our contribution is to assess the strength of the relationship between organizational strategies and our two distinct types of telework.

Thus, we put forward three hypotheses:

HYPOTHESIS 1: The greater the importance of an innovation strategy in a workplace, the higher the incidence of employee-oriented telework among its employees, and the lower the incidence of employer-oriented telework.

HYPOTHESIS 2: The greater the importance of an involvement strategy in a workplace, the higher the incidence of employee-oriented telework among its employees, and the lower the incidence of employer-oriented telework.

HYPOTHESIS 3: The greater the importance of a cost-containment strategy in a workplace, the lower the incidence of employee-oriented telework among its employees, and the higher the incidence of employer-oriented telework.

Methodology

Dependent Variables

Two types of telework were used as the dependent variables. They were based on the *WES* dataset question «Do you ever carry out the duties of this job at home?» The first dependent variable, 'employee-oriented telework,' identified those carrying out work duties at home for a family or personal reason (with 1=yes, 0=no). Reasons coded as worker-related were: care for children or other family members, other personal or family responsibilities, better conditions of work, or to save time/money. Conversely, our second dependent variable, 'employer-oriented telework,' identified those carrying out work duties at home for an operational or employer-created (i.e. something other than a family or personal) reason (with 1=yes, 0=no). Reasons coded as operational or employer-created were: requirements of the job/finish projects, usual place of work, or other. We included 'other' as part of employer-oriented telework because the worker in question did not specifically indicate that he/she participated in this arrangement for personal or family reasons.

Independent and Control Variables

Our three independent strategy variables, namely, innovation, involvement, and cost-containment, emerged via exploratory factor analysis from the set of 15 business strategy questions asked of employers within the *WES* dataset. The alphas for the innovation, involvement, and cost containment variables were .81, .89, and .71, respectively. To be more precise, each item included the following scale: Crucial (6), Very important (5), Important (4), Slightly important (3), Not important (2), and Not applicable (1). The innovation strategy scale measured the extent to which one's employer rated the relative importance of the following factors in terms of their workplace's general business strategy: (Undertaking research and development) + (Developing new products/services) + (Developing new production/operating techniques) + (Expanding into new geographic markets), and ranged from 4 to 24. The involvement strategy scale measured the importance of the following factors in terms of their workplace's general business strategy: (Total quality management) + (Improving product/service quality) + (Reorganizing the work process) + (Enhancing labour-management cooperation) + (Increasing employee skills) + (Increasing employee involvement/participation) + (Improving co-ordination with customers and suppliers) + (Improving measures of performance), and ranged from 8 to 48. We chose the word 'involvement' to represent this strategy because the intent seems to be to optimize business processes by engaging, involving, and 'unleashing' its workforce. Possible alternative labels include 'optimization' or 'quality' or 'high performance,' among others. For those unfamiliar with factor analysis, it is important to note that the resulting three organizational strategies were generated

from the more tactical-level 15 strategic components (e.g. improving measures of performance), and each of these components fit with at most one of the three 'latent factors' (i.e. our three strategy variables). Although some of the strategic components of our 'involvement' strategy appear to be related to cost-containment or innovation, they 'loaded on' (i.e. fit with) the involvement factor, and not on either of the other two factors. Similarly, we assigned the label 'innovation' to the first strategy because it captures an emphasis on improving or expanding products and markets, as opposed to an emphasis on involvement or cost cutting. Finally, the cost containment strategy scale measured the extent to which one's employer rated the relative importance of the following factors in terms of their workplace's general business strategy: (Reducing labour costs) + (Using more part-time, temporary or contract workers) + (Reducing other operating costs), and ranged from 3 to 18. These scales were standardized using a z-score transformation for use in the model analysis (the unstandardized scores are presented in the descriptive analysis). Further information on the factor analyses is available from the authors on request. A similar analysis was used in Cooke *et al.* (2008).

The control variables we included were: occupation, education level, gender, worker age, marital status, presence of dependent children, whether or not a low-wage worker, whether or not a unionized worker, whether in the non-profit sector, workplace size, and industry sector. The inclusion of these variables was based on the precedent set in published studies, briefly presented below, which tend to include a number of worker and workplace variables conceptually or empirically related to telework. The characteristics that are consistently identified with telework are occupation and gender. Research from North America shows that professionals and clericals predominate among teleworkers relative to blue-collar workers, whereas it appears that approximately the same proportion of males and females telework (Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2006; Tremblay, 2002; Tremblay and Najem, 2010). Similarly, Haddon and Brynin (2005) show that managers and professionals predominate among European teleworkers. It is thought that professionals, managers, and/or knowledge workers tend to have autonomy and control over their work and work environment, and thus are relatively likely to opt to telework (Clear and Dickson, 2005; Taskin and Edwards 2007; Tremblay and Najem, 2010). By extension, we presume that more educated workers would tend to have positive telework experiences, while lower-wage workers would tend to have the opposite experience. Not surprisingly, it is common for researchers (e.g. Bailey and Kurland, 2002; Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2006; Tremblay and Najem, 2010; Verbeke *et al.* 2008) to include several worker characteristics, such as marital status, worker age and presence of dependent children, which are all logically connected to work-life balance, and hence, are relevant to an analysis of telework.

Although most of the research is conducted in private sector organizations, research shows that the sector is not a factor in the creation, acceptance and suc-

cess of telework and that this practice exists both in the public and private sectors (Taskin and Edwards, 2007; Templer *et al.*, 1999). Finally, according to Clear and Dickson (2005), teleworking exists in firms of any size or industry sector, although Mayo *et al.* (2009) found that teleworking was more prevalent in smaller organizations. We expect that telework will be more prevalent in the service sector, since many studies (e.g. Zeytinoglu, 1999) suggest that jobs in this industry tend to have less traditional working conditions. Similarly, because telework necessarily requires some customization to suit individuals' needs, it could be expected that the incidence of telework is lower in unionized organizations (where standardization tends to be the norm), although Schweitzer and Duxbury (2006) did not find that unionization played a tangible role in their results.

We now turn to the operationalization of the control variables in our study. For occupation, workers were categorized as being a manager, professional, lower white collar (i.e. marketing/sales, clerical/administrative) worker, or blue collar (i.e. technical/trades, production) worker. We categorized workers according to their highest level of education: those with at most a high school education, those holding an undergraduate university degree or higher, and those in the middle who had some post-secondary education, but not a university degree. As for gender, workers were sorted into male and female categories. We used three age groupings: those under 30, 30-50, and over 50 were sorted as being younger, middle-aged, or older, respectively. In terms of marital status, two categories were used: those who were legally married and not separated or currently living with a common-law partner, or those with other marital status (i.e. single, never married, divorced, widowed, and not in a common-law relationship). Presence of dependent children was a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not an employee had one or more dependent children. We categorized the bottom quartile of hourly earners as being low-wage workers in this study. Unionized workers were identified as those who were members of a union and/or were covered by a collective bargaining agreement. We also used a dichotomous variable to separate those individuals working for a non-profit employer versus all others (i.e. those employed by a for-profit employer). Workplace size was a continuous variable based on the number of employees in a workplace. A logarithmic transformation was also undertaken to normalize the distribution. Finally, two industry sectors were used: those in the service sector versus those in any other sector (i.e. primary, manufacturing, or related).

Data and Analyses

Our quantitative analysis was based on Statistics Canada's 2005 *Workplace and Employee Survey (WES)* dataset. This sample consists of 6,693 workplaces and their 24,197 employees. After dropping observations for missing values in our dependent variables, 5,630 workplaces and 23,639 employees remained in

our analyses, representing 11.8 million workers on a weighted basis (see *WES* Compendium, 2008). With some minor exceptions (for instance, those in public administration were excluded), the *WES* dataset represents most of the Canadian labour market. In addition to the exploratory factor analysis used to generate the scale-independent variables, the remaining analyses, generated using Statistics Canada's Research Data Centre (RDC) files, consisted of descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and multivariate regressions. In the regression models, the odds ratio, coefficient, and significance level of each variable are provided. All presented analyses used sample survey weights and bootstrap weights as recommended by Statistics Canada (Chowhan and Buckley, 2005). The unit of analysis was at the worker level. Thus, we analyzed workers using their answers plus the linked answers provided by a representative of their workplace (i.e. organization).

Sample Characteristics

Due to space considerations, sample characteristics, which are shown in Table 1, are reviewed very briefly. Somewhat surprisingly, the incidence of employee-oriented telework was just under 6%, compared to the incidence of the employer-oriented variety at 18%. These high incidences reflect our inclusive definition (i.e. working at home any of the time), which led to incidences of teleworking that are higher than most but not all other Canadian estimates.[2] However, the prevalence of employer-oriented telework was not expected to be so much higher, given the focus in the literature on telework's theoretical benefits for employees.

The three unstandardized strategy variables were continuous. Their mean values could be interpreted more easily after adjusting for the number of items comprising the variable. The involvement scale had the highest adjusted score (31.3/8 = 3.91) followed by cost containment (10.1/3 = 3.37) and innovation (11.6/4 = 2.90). These scores imply that employers, on average, ranked the order of strategic importance as being involvement, cost containment, and then innovation. As for the control variables, roughly one quarter of the workers held either a managerial or professional occupation, almost one quarter were lower white collar workers, and almost half were blue collar workers. Approximately one quarter of Canadian workers had at most a high school education, slightly fewer had at least a university degree, and half had some post-secondary education (but not a degree). Slightly over half of the workers were female. While over half of the workers were grouped into our 'middle-aged' category, the remainder were fairly evenly split between the younger and older categories. Approximately two thirds of workers were married or in common-law relationships, with the other third having other marital status (i.e. single, separated, divorced, widowed and not in a common-law relationship). Approximately 43% of workers had at least one dependent child. As for the remaining control variables, one quarter of the workers were unionized. By design, we categorized the

bottom-quarter of hourly earners as being low-wage workers, and these workers roughly earned under $13.00 per hour. One in five workers was employed by a non-profit employer, and one third were in the primary/manufacturing sector, while two thirds were in the service sector. We also showed workplace size in terms of number of employees, but a logarithmic form was used to normalize the distribution.

TABLE 1
Sample Characteristics

			Mean/ Proportion	Std. Dev.
Key Variables	Employee-oriented telework		5.8	
	Employer-oriented telework		18.1	
	Organizational Strategy	Innovation*	11.6	5.4
		Involvement*	31.3	8.8
		Cost-containment*	10.1	3.3
Other/Control Variables	Occupation	Manager	12.7	
		Professional	17.1	
		Lower white collar	22.9	
		Blue collar	47.3	
	Education	At most high school education	26.8	
		Some post-secondary education	49.4	
		Has university degree	23.7	
	Gender	Female	52.7	
		Male	47.3	
	Worker Age	Younger	20.8	
		Middle-aged	55.8	
		Older	23.4	
	Marital Status	Married/Common-law	68.1	
		Other marital status	31.9	
	Dependent children		43.1	
	Low waged		25.0	
	Unionized		26.2	
	Non-profit employer		20.5	
	Workplace Size (log form)		4.2	1.9
	Industry sector	Primary & Manufacturing	32.7	
		Service	67.3	
		Weighted sample size	11,753,385	
		Unweighted sample size	23,639	

*In the multivariate analyses, z-score transformed versions of these variables are used.

TABLE 2
Bivariate Correlations

	Variable	1		2		3		4	
1	Employee-oriented telework								
2	Employer-oriented telework	- 0.12	***						
3	Innovation strategy	0.03	***	0.06	***				
4	Involvement strategy	- 0.02	***	-0.01		0.53	***		
5	Cost-containment strategy	- 0.03	***	-0.03	***	0.40	***	0.65	***

Significance levels: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10

Results

Bivariate Correlations

A correlation matrix is provided in Table 2 for the dependent and independent variables, showing that all pairs of employer strategies were significantly correlated. However, multicollinearity was not a concern as the correlations among the independent variables were moderate to strong (r = 0.40 to r = 0.65), although none were over the rule of thumb of r = 0.70. However, we were surprised at the strength of these relationships, because it means that some employers prioritized two or more of the three strategies concurrently. The two types of telework were negatively correlated, which was expected given the operationalized definitions used in this study. The bivariate correlations indicated that employee-oriented telework was positively correlated to working for an employer with an innovation strategy, but negatively correlated to working for an employer with an involvement or cost containment strategy. While two of these results were expected, we anticipated the opposite results for the involvement strategy. Moreover, correlation results were similar between the incidence of employer-oriented telework and employer strategies. This was contrary to our expectations, since the reviewed literature implied that these two types of telework are implemented, or could be implemented, for vastly different strategic reasons. The most important finding, however, was that the magnitudes of the correlations between both types of telework and any of the three strategy variables were, bluntly, very low, albeit statistically significant. The statistical significance likely reflects the large sample size, and should not be assumed to be an indication of a substantive relationship between the pairs of variables.

Employer Strategies and Telework

In Table 3, logistic regression results are presented showing the statistical association between organizational strategies and employee-oriented telework. Estimates from the logistic regression analysis can either be presented as

coefficients (i.e. log odds ratios) or odds ratios. For ease of interpretation, odds ratios are reported and discussed below. Odds ratios compare the probability of events for two groups, with an odds ratio greater (less) than one implying the event is more (less) likely in the comparator group than the referent group.

TABLE 3

Incidence of Employee-oriented Telework – Regression Results

		Odds Ratio	Reg. Coeff.	Bootstrap Std. Error	Sig.
Independent Variables					
Organizational Strategy	Innovation	1.200	0.182	0.081	**
	Involvement	0.873	- 0.135	0.073	*
	Cost-containment	0.997	- 0.003	0.079	
Control Variables					
Occupation	Manager	3.295	1.192	0.228	***
	Professional	3.222	1.170	0.231	***
	Lower white collar (ref.)				
	Blue collar	1.313	0.272	0.229	
Education	At most high school education (ref.)				
	Some post-secondary education	1.414	0.346	0.165	**
	Has university degree	2.100	0.742	0.219	***
Gender	Female	0.850	- 0.163	0.144	
	Male (ref.)				
Worker Age	Younger	0.706	- 0.348	0.230	
	Middle-aged (ref.)				
	Older	0.754	- 0.282	0.134	**
Marital Status	Married/Common-law	1.029	0.029	0.158	
	Other marital status (ref.)				
Dependent children		1.097	0.093	0.134	
Low waged		0.585	- 0.536	0.266	**
Unionized		0.601	- 0.510	0.226	**
Non-profit employer		1.508	0.411	0.238	*
Workplace Size (log form)		0.971	- 0.030	0.036	
Industry sector	Primary & Manufacturing (ref.)				
	Service	1.557	0.443	0.160	***
	Constant		- 3.774	0.368	***
	Weighted sample size			11,753,385	
	Unweighted Sample Size			23,639	
	Pseudo R-Square			0.0902	

Significance levels: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10

The results indicate that, when controlling for other factors, those working for an employer valuing an innovation strategy were significantly more likely to participate in employee-oriented telework compared to those working for an employer that placed a lower strategic importance on innovation. In other words, workers at organizations that placed a relatively high strategic importance on innovation were 1.2 times more likely to use employee-oriented telework than workers at organizations placing an average level of importance on innovation. There was, however, a weak indication that those working for an employer valuing involvement were less likely to participate in employee-oriented telework. Cost containment was not related to employee-oriented telework according to this model, with the odds ratio being very close to 1.0. If employers were using telework strategically and in the way we hypothesized, we would have expected innovation and involvement to be positive and significant factors here, with the cost containment strategy having a negative association.

As for the control variables, several were statistically significant. The model indicates that managers and professionals were more than three times as likely to participate in employee-oriented telework compared to lower white collar workers. Also, more highly educated employees were more likely to participate relative to those with at most a high school education. Older workers were slightly but significantly less likely to participate in employee-oriented telework relative to the middle-aged reference group of workers. Low-wage and/or unionized workers were also markedly less likely to participate in this type of telework, compared to higher-wage or non-union workers, respectively. We also found a weak indication that employees working for a non-profit employer were more likely to participate in this type of telework, relative to those employed by for-profit organizations, perhaps because the former could not compete on wages, but could possibly offer this type of employee-oriented 'perk.' Finally, service sector workers were 56% more likely to participate in employee-oriented telework compared to those in the primary/manufacturing sector, presumably because the latter were involved with on-site equipment or processes which were less conducive to work being done at home.

In Table 4, we repeated the logistic regression model using employer-oriented telework as the dependent variable. If employers used telework strategically and in the universalistic manner we hypothesized, we should have found markedly different results in Table 4 compared to Table 3, However, the results were very similar. Those working for an employer with a high innovation focus were significantly more likely to participate in employer-oriented telework. Again, there was a weak indication that those working for an employer with an involvement strategy were less likely to participate in employer-oriented telework, while cost containment again had an insignificant effect. Thus, the same strategy was significantly associated with the existence of both types of telework, and the

same two strategies were either insignificantly or weakly related to the two types of telework.

In summary, there was support for *Hypothesis 1*, that is, the greater the importance of an innovation strategy in a workplace, the higher the incidence

TABLE 4

Incidence of Employer-oriented Telework – Regression Results

		Odds Ratio	Reg. Coeff.	Bootstrap Std. Error	Sig.
Independent Variables					
Organizational Strategy	Innovation	1.151	0.141	0.050	**
	Involvement	0.920	- 0.083	0.060	*
	Cost-containment	1.012	0.012	0.062	
Control Variables					
Occupation	Manager	4.143	1.421	0.163	***
	Professional	2.321	0.842	0.149	***
	Lower white collar (ref.)				
	Blue collar	1.143	0.134	0.136	
Education	At most high school education (ref.)				
	Some post-secondary education	1.545	0.435	0.115	**
	Has university degree	2.515	0.922	0.145	***
Gender	Female	0.916	- 0.088	0.090	
	Male (ref.)				
Worker Age	Younger	0.877	- 0.131	0.124	
	Middle-aged (ref.)				
	Older	1.080	0.077	0.112	**
Marital Status	Married/Common-law	1.238	0.213	0.116	
	Other marital status (ref.)				
Dependent children		1.307	0.268	0.091	
Low waged		0.435	- 0.832	0.154	**
Unionized		0.564	- 0.573	0.108	**
Non-profit employer		.606	0.474	0.133	*
Workplace Size (log form)		1.006	0.006	0.029	
Industry sector	Primary & Manufacturing (ref.)				
	Service	1.028	0.028	0.120	***
	Constant		- 2.608	0.193	***
	Weighted sample size			11,753,385	
	Unweighted Sample Size			23,639	
	Pseudo R-Square			0.1359	

Significance levels: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10

of employee-oriented telework among its employees, and the lower the incidence of employer-oriented telework, as seen in the higher odds ratio of 1.2 in Table 3 compared to the odds ratio of 1.15 in Table 4. Furthermore, given the reversal in direction for the involvement organizational strategy for both the employee-oriented and employer-oriented regressions, there was no support for *Hypothesis 2* (i.e. the greater the importance of an involvement strategy in a workplace, the higher the incidence of employee-oriented telework among its employees, and the lower the incidence of employer-oriented telework). Finally, there was no support for *Hypothesis 3* postulating that the greater the importance of a cost-containment strategy in a workplace, the lower the incidence of employee-oriented telework among its employees, and the higher the incidence of employer-oriented telework, given that neither of the odds ratios in Tables 3 or 4 were significant for the cost-containment strategy.

As for the other variables, managers and professionals were again at least twice as likely as workers in other occupations to participate in employer-oriented telework. Similarly, more highly educated workers were more likely to participate in this type of telework versus those with at most a high school education. As for age, older workers were slightly but significantly more likely to participate in employer-oriented telework than those in the middle-aged category. As with employee-oriented telework, low-wage and/or unionized workers were unlikely to participate in employer-oriented telework. Finally, as before, those employed by a non-profit employer and/or in the service sector were more likely to participate in employer-oriented telework.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between three organizational strategies and the incidence of employee-oriented and employer-oriented telework. We categorized telework as being employee-oriented or employer-oriented based on answers provided by the workers themselves, using Statistics Canada's 2005 *Workplace and Employee Survey (WES)* data. We hypothesized that employers favouring an innovation or involvement strategy would be more likely to use employee-oriented telework and less likely to use the employer-oriented variety, while the reverse would be the case for employers with a cost containment strategy. In other words, our (universalistic) thinking was that if employers are strategically using telework, the incidences of the two types of telework should be associated with different strategies.

We found that employers focusing on innovation were significantly more likely than other employers to use both types of telework, and were more likely to use employee-oriented telework compared to employer-oriented telework. On

the other hand, employers favouring an involvement strategy were less likely to use either type of telework, albeit at only a weak level of significance. Moreover, we did not find a statistical relationship between the cost containment strategy and either type of telework. Thus, the data only supported the first of our three hypotheses. As such, we are tempted to conclude that employers are generally not using telework in a strategic way, or at least not in a way that those with a universalistic perspective might expect.

Upon reflection, however, alternative explanations also seem plausible. The results show that those working for more innovative employers participate more in both types of telework than those working for less innovative employers. Perhaps more innovative employers are simply more willing to implement (or allow) telework, due to a willingness to try new forms of work (see Peters *et al.*, 2010). The negative, albeit weak, association between an involvement strategy and both types of telework might reflect employers' awareness of teleworkers' concerns of isolation noted in the reviewed literature (e.g. Tremblay, 2002; Whittle and Mueller, 2009). These authors noted that some employers perceive that communication and commitment—key components of an involvement strategy—can be hindered if individuals are allowed to telework. We would argue that any sense of isolation is likely to be mitigated if workers are choosing to participate in employee-oriented telework (i.e. for personal or family reasons), or if employers take the pre-emptive steps outlined by Duxbury and Neufeld (1999) to avoid communication problems. Finally, if employers with a cost containment strategy seek consistency and standardization, they might perceive the inherently idiosyncratic nature of telework to be a poor strategic fit. It could also be that in today's work environment, many employees simply have to take work home to complete their work duties, and completing them after hours at home is better than doing so at their employer's premises. Although we offer these possible alternative explanations, we conclude that, rather than using the type of telework that is consistent with their organizational strategies, the evidence indicates that employers are not using the two distinctly different types of telework as strategically as they could, or that there are contingent strategic elements eluding us that account for when and why employers choose to implement telework. For example, perhaps some strategic employers allow some privileged workers to telework if they so choose, while not giving this choice to, or even imposing the employer-oriented type of telework, on less valued workers.

While the apparent lack of correlation between telework and organizational strategies is interesting from an academic perspective, this study provides potential evidence of a missed opportunity for practitioners. We believe that telework is a promising 'tool' available to employers, and that its different types can be implemented to align with organizational strategies to achieve synergies that

lead to better outcomes for both organizations and employees. If telework can potentially generate mutual benefits for employers and employees simultaneously, why wouldn't an organization implement it in an employee-oriented manner? From an individual viewpoint, telework offers the chance to better manage one's schedule in order to balance work, family, leisure and other responsibilities, although Hilbrecht *et al.* (2013) remind us that finding such a balance is not necessarily easy to achieve in practice (see also Golden, 2012).

Some questions that arise from our research and that are left to future investigations are: Why are employers not using telework in a way that matches their organizational strategies? For example, if an employer has adopted a cost-containment strategy, why wouldn't this employer implement the type of telework that helps achieve this goal? Similarly, if an employer hopes to attract and retain involved and engaged workers, why wouldn't this employer allow or encourage employees to use telework on an as-needed basis to minimize work-family conflict or other distractions? Is there some reluctance on the part of employers to embrace the possible benefits of telework, or is it that employers' experiences with the use of telework do not correspond to the theoretical impacts or that the benefits of telework are contingent upon other factors? Are there potential moderators that decompose the relationship between strategy and the practice of telework that would aid in the identification of a more appropriate alignment?

Finally, one earlier point bears repeating. Our intent is to contribute to the understanding of the nature of telework that is being used and in which circumstances. While we do not want to see telework implemented in a manner that is 'unfriendly' to employees, we think that more applied research is required to understand why the relationship between employers' organizational strategies and the incidence of two distinct types of telework was found to be so small. We hold that it is unlikely that employees are the ones typically choosing to work at home for something other than personal or family reasons. We also propose that too much attention has been paid to the 'how' of telework (i.e. by studying the technological and communication logistics), and the 'who' of telework (i.e. the characteristics of teleworkers) while too little attention has been paid to the 'why' of telework (focusing on details such as the types of telework implemented by employers, for which workers and under what circumstances).

Notes

1 While the *WES* dataset ended in 2006, 2005 is the final year of this dataset containing full employee-level details.

2 Our estimate is consistent with Tremblay and Najem's (2010) calculations which are also based on 2005 *WES* data.

References

Akyeampong, Ernest B. 2007. "Working at Home: an Update". *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, 8 (6), 16-8. Statistics Canada, 75-001-XIE.

Bailey, Diane E. and Nancy B. Kurland. 2002. "A Review of Telework Research: Findings, New Directions, and Lessons for the Study of Modern Work", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 383-400.

Boulin, Jean-Yves, Michel Lallement and François Michon. 2006. "Decent Working Time in Industrialized Countries: Issues, Scopes, and Paradoxes", in J.Y. Boulin, M. Lallement, J. Messenger, & F. Michon (eds.), *Decent Working Time, New Trends New Issues*, Geneva, SWI: ILO, 13-40.

Chowhan, James and Neil J. Buckley. 2005. "Using Mean Bootstrap Weights in Stata: A BSWREG revision", *The Research Data Centres Information and Technical Bulletin*, 2 (1), 23-37. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 12-002-XIE.

Clear, Fintan and Keith Dickson. 2005. "Teleworking Practice in Small and Medium-sized Firms: Management Style and Worker Autonomy", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 20 (3), 218-233.

Cooke, Gordon B., Zeytinoglu, Isik U., Agarwal, N. & Rose, J.B. 2008. "Employee-friendly and Employer-friendly Non-standard Work Schedules and Locations." *International Journal of Employment Studies, 16 (2)*, 31-66.

Delery, John E. and D. Harold Doty. 1996. "Modes of Theorizing in Strategic Human Resource Management: Tests of Universalistic, Contingency, and Configurational Performance Predictions", *Academy of Management Journal*, 39 (4), 802-835.

Devine, Kay S., Laurel Taylor and Kathy Haryett. 1997. "The Impact of Teleworking on Canadian Employment", in Duffy, D., Glenday, D. and Pupo, N. (eds.) *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs, No Jobs: The Transformation of Work in the 21st Century*, Toronto, CAN: Harcourt Brace, 238-287.

Duxbury, Linda and Derrick Neufeld. 1999. "An Empirical Evaluation of the Impacts of Telecommuting on Intra-organizational Communication", *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, 16 (1), 1-28.

Gerhart, Barry, Patrick M. Wright, and Gary C. McMahan. 2000. "Measurement Error in Research on the Human Resources and Firm Performance Relationship: Further Evidence and Analysis", *Personnel Psychology*, 53 (4), 855-872.

Golden, Timothy D. 2012. "Altering the Effects of Work and Family Conflict on Exhaustion: Telework during Traditional and Nontraditional Work Hours", *Journal of Business & Psychology*, 27 (3), 255-269.

Golden, Timothy D. and John F. Veiga. 2005. "The Impact of Extent of Telecommuting on Job Satisfaction: Resolving Inconsistent Findings", *Journal of Management*, 31 (2), 301-318.

Haddon, Leslie and Malcolm Brynin. 2005. "The Character of Telework and the Characteristics of Teleworkers", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 20 (1), 34-46.

Hausknecht, John P., Julianne Rodda, and Michael J. Howard. 2009. "Targeted Employee Retention, Performance-based and Job-related Differences in Reported Reasons for Staying", *Human Resource Management*, 48 (2), 269-288.

Hilbrecht, Margo, Susan M. Shaw, Laura C. Johnson, and Jean Andrey. 2013. "Remixing Work, Family and Leisure: Teleworkers' Experiences of Everyday Life", New *Technology, Work and Employment*, 28 (2), 130-144.

Huselid, Mark. 1995. "The Impact of Human Resource Management Practices on Turnover, Productivity, and Corporate Financial Performance", *Academy of Management Journal*, 38 (3), 635-672.

Jiang, Kaifeng, David P. Lepak, Jia Hu, and Judith C. Baer. 2012. "How Does Human Resource Management Influence Organizational Outcomes? A Meta-analytic Investigation of Mediating Mechanisms", *Academy of Management Journal*, 55 (6), 1264-1294.

Kochan, Thomas A., Harry C. Katz, and Robert B. McKersie, R.B. [KKM]. 1986. *The Transformation of American Industrial Relations*. NY, US: Basic Books.

KPMG Canada. 1997. *1997 Telework Survey*, http:///ww.kpmg.ca/hr/telcmut.html.

Martinez-Sanchez, Angel, Manuela Perez-Perez, Marie J. Vela-Jimenez and Pilar de-Luis-Carnicer. 2008. "Telework Adoption, Change Management, and Firm Performance", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 21 (1), 7-31.

Mayo, Margarita, Juan-Carlos Pastor, Luis Gomez-Mejia and Christina Cruz. 2009. "Why some Firms Adopt Telecommuting while others do not: a Contingency Perspective", *Human Resource Management*, 48 (6), 917– 939.

Morgan, Robert E. 2004. "Teleworking: an Assessment of the Benefits and Challenges", *European Business Review*, 16 (4), 344-357.

Nunes, Flavio. 2005. "Most Relevant Enablers and Constraints Influencing the Spread of Telework in Portugal", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 20, 2, 133-149.

Peters, Pascale, Laura de Dulk and Judith de Ruijter. 2010. "May I work from Home? Views of the Employment Relationship reflected in Line Managers' Telework Attitudes in six Financial-sector Organizations", *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 29 (5), 517-531.

Schweitzer, Linda and Linda Duxbury. 2006. "Benchmarking the Use of Telework Arrangements in Canada", *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 23 (2), 105-117.

Sullivan, Cath and Suzan Lewis. 2001. "Home-based Telework, Gender, and the Synchronization of Work and Family: Perspectives of Teleworkers and their Co-residents", *Gender, Work and Organization*, 8 (2), 123-145.

Taskin, Laurent and Paul Edwards. 2007. "The Possibilities and Limits of Telework in a Bureaucratic Environment: Lessons from the Public Sector", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 22 (3), 195-207.

Tietze, Suzanne. 2002. "When Work comes Home: Coping Strategies of Teleworkers and their Families", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 41 (4), 385-396.

Templer, Andrew, Marjorie Armstrong-Stassen, Kay Devine and Norm Solomon. 1999. "Telework and Teleworkers", in I.U. Zeytinoglu (ed.), *Changing Work Relationships in Industrialized Economies*, Philadelphia, US: John Benjamins Publ., 77-95.

Tomaskovic-Devey, Donald and Barbara Risman. 1993. "Telecommuting Innovation and Organization: A Contingency Theory of Labor Process Change", *Social Science Quarterly*, 72 (2), 367-385.

Tremblay, Diane-Gabrielle. 2002. "Balancing Work and Family with Telework? Organizational Issues and Challenges for Women and Managers", *Women in Management Review*, 17 (3/4), 157-170.

Tremblay, Diane-Gabrielle and Elmustapha Najem. 2010. « Le travail à domicile au Canada: qui le pratique et pourquoi? », *Gestion*, 35 (1), 108-117.

Tremblay, Diane-Gabrielle, Renaud Paquet, and Elmustapha Najem. 2006. "Telework: A Way to Balance Work and Family or an Increase in Work-family Conflict?", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31 (3), 715-731.

Vallée, Guylaine. 2005. *Towards Enhancing the Employment Conditions of Vulnerable Workers: A Public Policy Perspective*. Vulnerable Workers Series. No. 2. March. Canadian Policy Research Networks. 57 p.http://www.cprn.ca/documents/35588_en.pdf (accessed July 10, 2009).

Verbeke, Alain, Robert Schulz, Nathan Greidanus and Laura Hambley. 2008. *Growing the Virtual Workplace: The Integrative Value Proposition for Telework*, Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, US: Edward Elgar.

Wilks, Linda and Jon Billsberry. 2007. "Should we do Away with Teleworking? An Examination of whether Teleworking can be defined in the New World of Work", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 22 (2), 168-177.

Workplace and Employee Survey [*WES*]. 2008. *2005 Compendium*, Statistics Canada catalogue: 71-585-X, accessed on 12 May 2010 at http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-585-x/71-585-x2008001-eng.htm.

Wright, Patrick M. and Gary C. McMahan. 1992. "Theoretical Perspectives for Strategic Human Resource Management", *Journal of Management*, 18 (2), 295-320.

Wright, Patrick M. and Gary C. McMahan. 2011. "Exploring Human Capital: putting Human back into Strategic Human Resource Management", *Human Resource Management Journal*, 21 (2), 93-104.

Zeytinoglu, Isik U. 1999. "Introduction and Overview", in I.U. Zeytinoglu (ed.), *Changing Work Relationships in Industrialized Economies*, Philadelphia, US: John Benjamins Publ., ix-xx.

Zeytinoglu, Isik U., Cooke Gordon B., & Mann, S.L. 2009. "Flexibility: whose Choice is it anyway?" *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 64 (4), 555-574.

SUMMARY

Dialing it in: A Missed Opportunity Regarding the Strategic Use of Telework?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the degree of alignment of organizational strategies with two types of telework using Statistics Canada's 2005 Workplace and *Employee Survey* data. In this paper, we intentionally use the most inclusive definition of telework, because we are interested in all cases where an employee works from home at least some of the time. We consider telework to be 'employee-

oriented' when an employee works at home to address his and her family-related or personal wants or needs, and 'employer-oriented' when an employee works at home due to the employer's strategic or operational objectives. The three organizational strategies that we considered were innovation, involvement, and cost-containment. We found that employers focusing on innovation were significantly more likely than other employers to use both types of telework, with greater emphasis on employee-oriented telework, whereas employers using an involvement strategy were less likely to use either type of telework, albeit at only a weak level of significance. Moreover, we did not find a statistical relationship between the cost containment strategy and either type of telework. We hypothesized that employee-oriented telework would be more common among workers in workplaces focusing on innovation or involvement, but less common among workers in workplaces focusing on cost containment. We hypothesized the reverse situation for the incidence of employer-oriented telework. On the whole, the results suggested that employers are not universally aligning the implementation of the two types of telework with their organizational strategies. Rather, either telework is not commonly used as a strategic tool or, alternatively, the strategic implementation of these two types of telework is more contingent upon other organizational or employee factors in specific circumstances.

KEYWORDS: telework, home-based work, innovation, cost-containment, work-family balance.

RÉSUMÉ

« *Dialing It In* » : une occasion ratée de recours à l'utilisation stratégique du télétravail.

Dans cet article nous proposons d'examiner le degré d'alignement des stratégies organisationnelles selon deux types de télétravail, et ce, à partir des données de l'*Enquête sur le milieu de travail et les employés de 2005* de Statistiques Canada. Nous adoptons intentionnellement la définition la plus inclusive du télétravail qui soit parce que nous nous intéressons à toutes les situations où un employé travaille à partir de son domicile et ce, pour au moins une partie de son temps de travail. Nous considérons que le télétravail est « orienté vers l'employé » lorsqu'un employé travaille à domicile pour répondre à ses souhaits ou à ses besoins pour des raisons familiales ou personnelles, et est « orienté vers l'employeur », lorsqu'un employé travaille à domicile pour répondre à un objectif stratégique et opérationnel de son employeur. Les trois stratégies organisationnelles que nous avons retenues sont l'innovation, l'implication et le contrôle des coûts.

Nos résultats suggèrent que les employeurs qui mettent l'accent sur la stratégie de l'innovation sont significativement plus susceptibles de recourir à l'un ou l'autre des deux types de télétravail (« orienté vers l'employé » et « orienté vers l'employeur ») tout en favorisant un télétravail « orienté vers l'employé », tandis que les employeurs qui ont recours à une stratégie d'implication étaient moins susceptibles de faire appel à l'un ou l'autre type de télétravail, quoiqu'à un plus faible degré

de signification. De plus, nous n'avons pas observé de relation statistique entre le recours à la stratégie de contrôle des coûts et une forme ou l'autre de télétravail.

Nous avions formulé l'hypothèse que le télétravail orienté vers l'employé serait plus répandu chez les employeurs mettant l'accent sur l'innovation ou sur l'implication et moins répandu chez ceux mettant l'accent sur le contrôle des coûts. Et nous avions fait l'hypothèse inverse en ce qui attrait au télétravail orienté vers l'employeur. Globalement, nos résultats laissent à penser que les employeurs n'alignent pas systématiquement la mise en œuvre des deux types de télétravail avec leurs stratégies organisationnelles. Plutôt, soit le télétravail n'est pas généralement utilisé comme un outil stratégique, soit la mise en œuvre de ces deux types de télétravail dépend davantage de facteurs organisationnels ou liés aux personnes employées selon des circonstances spécifiques.

MOTS-CLÉS : télétravail, travail à domicile, innovation, réduction des coûts, conciliation travail-famille.

RESUMEN

« *Dialing It In* »: una ocasión perdida de recurrir a la utilización estratégica del teletrabajo

En este artículo, se propone examinar el grado de alineamiento de estrategias organizacionales según dos tipos de teletrabajo, utilizando para esto los datos de la Encuesta sobre los lugares de trabajo y los empleados de 2005 efectuada por Estadísticas Canadá. Se adopta intencionalmente la definición más amplia del teletrabajo, pues el estudio aborda todas las situaciones en que un empleado trabaja a partir de su domicilio, al menos por una parte de su tiempo de trabajo. Consideramos que el teletrabajo está "orientado hacia el empleado" cuando un empleado trabaja a domicilio para responder a sus deseos o a sus necesidades por razones familiares o personales. Al contrario, el teletrabajo será "orientado hacia el empleador" cuando un empleado trabaja a domicilio para responder a un objetivo estratégico y operacional de su empleador. Las tres estrategias operacionales que hemos retenido son la innovación, la implicación y el control de costos.

Nuestros resultados sugieren que los empleadores que ponen el acento en la estrategia de innovación son significativamente más susceptibles de recurrir a uno de los dos tipos de teletrabajo ("orientado hacia el empleado" y "orientado hacia el empleador"), favoreciendo al mismo tiempo teletrabajo "orientado hacia el empleado", mientras que los empleadores que recurren a una estrategia de implicación son menos susceptibles de utilizar uno u otro tipo de teletrabajo, aunque a un menor grado de significación. Es más, no hemos observado ninguna relación estadística entre el recurso a la estrategia de control de costos y una forma u otra de teletrabajo.

Hemos formulado la hipótesis que el teletrabajo orientado hacia el empleado sería más extendido por los empleadores que ponen el acento en la innovación o en

la implicación, y sería menos presente cuando el empleador pone el acento en el control de costos. Y formulamos la hipótesis inversa en lo que concierne el teletrabajo orientado hacia el empleador. Globalmente nuestros resultados sugieren que los empleadores no alinean sistemáticamente la implantación de dos formas de teletrabajo con sus respectivas estrategias organizacionales. Dos situaciones alternativas son observadas, sea el teletrabajo no es utilizado como instrumento estratégico o, en alternativa, la implantación de estos dos tipos de teletrabajo dependen más bien de factores organizacionales o son vinculados a las personas empleadas según circunstancias específicas.

PALABRAS CLAVES: teletrabajo, trabajo a domicilio, régimen de trabajo flexible, innovación, conciliación trabajo-familia.