WORK FROM HOME – IS IT REALLY WORKING?: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The world has been going through a pandemic phase for the past couple of years. In person interactions have been stalled and big organizations with large number of employees have switched gears to address the work commitments while keeping the employees safe. One such evolution is making remote work possible wherever it is feasible. Technology organizations across the world have created platforms for collaboration and execution that made work from home possible for millions of employees. Though the idea of working from home sounds promising for safety of the employees, it opened new avenues for employment fraud. The current case deals one such situation that rose in IT department of a leading Metro rail division in east coast of the Unites States.

Purpose: *The present case deals with the employee's loyalty towards organisation and their work commitment. The purpose of this case is about employee fraud relating to commitment and personal benefit and consequences thereafter.*

Scope: *Similar situations may be prevailing in different sectors and different jobs engaged from home. This case discussion may be relevant to such situations and find a way to identify and tackle such situations. Such discussions will help in enlightening the employer – employee and to other domains like educational institutions where the online mode is prevailing and may continue with development in education technology.*

Conclusion: *The global data reveals that reveals that almost all sectors are opting the work from home mode. In this backdrop, the employer and employee need to be loyal to each other and continue their loyalty and commitment mutually to go forward in difficult situation like pandemic.*

Keywords: *Work from Home, Employee Fraud, Employee Loyalty, Team Work.*

Introduction

Employees are a critical asset of any well-managed organization. It is through the skills, talents and abilities of its employees that an organization thrives. Certain instances, however, are increasingly common in which employees seek to further their own interests at the expense of their employer (Mitigating employee fraud - Deepak Bhawnani is the CEO at Alea Consulting).

Loyalty, as a general term, signifies a person's devotion or sentiment of attachment to a particular object, which may be another person or group of persons, an ideal, a duty, or a cause. It expresses itself in both thought and action and strives for the identification of the interests of the loyal person with those of the object (Britannica, 1998).

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The Back Ground

The world has been going through a pandemic phase for the past couple of years. In person interactions have been stalled and big organizations with large number of employees have switched gears to address the work commitments while keeping the employees safe.

One such evolution is making remote work possible wherever it is feasible. Technology organizations across the world have created platforms for collaboration and execution that made work from home possible for millions of employees. Though the idea of working from home sounds promising for safety of the employees, it opened new avenues for employment fraud.

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This case study is an eye opener to checks and balances needed in a workplace setting while ensuring the safety and flexibility of employees stays intact.

Case Content

New Year began with cold weather and new contracts and exciting team additions in Washington metro division. Julian Richards, the program manager for the blue line venture is all set to lead a team meeting with his new team to summarize the project deliverables and timelines.

Julian Richards is Senior Executive of Information Technology and has over 25 years of experience in project and program management. He is very flexible that empowers his team to pitch in and grow in their skill sets. Years 2020 through 2022 have been extremely tough for his teams that are used to collaborate in person on day-to-day basis.

However, Julian worked together with the human resources department of his organization and enables several team collaboration platforms for the company. Microsoft teams were one such platform his team on boarded on and have been successfully able to perform using the platform.

Late august 2021, the department was awarded with a new contract for extension of blue line. The project was on a tight timeline and was extremely valuable for the company. Julian acted as quickly as he can and hired a new team of 20 employees to meet the project deliverables. In the new team he put together, he has a Senior Developer names Adam Edwards. Adam is a senior programmer with excellent skill set. Julian interviewed Adam over virtual platform and hired him.

The team started executing the project. Things moved fast and smooth. 6 weeks into the project timeline, deliverables started slowing down. Julian sent reminders to his team mates to keep tasks on track. Through 1:1 conversation with multiple employees, he realized that the bottleneck in last couple weeks has been the peer review for the code and tasks were piled up with Adam.

Julian tried setting up one to one with Adam which he denied a couple of times stating health and personal reasons. Julian was able to get in touch with Adam after a week. During his conversation he felt something was different with the way Adam was talking. He asked if he was doing okay, and Adam replied saying it's just his throat recovering from previous sickness. Julian sensed something fishy. He called for an all team meeting that afternoon and requested everyone on the team to be available on video conference.

Team meeting started. Adam joined the meeting but had his video turned off. Julian reminded all his staff politely that turning on the cameras was mandatory for this meeting. Adam mentioned that there was an issue with the web cam on his computer and he is unable to turn it on. Julian politely requested if he can do so using his phone and Adam came up with an excuse of being out of charge on his mobile. Meeting was held successfully and lasted for about an hour.

Right after the meeting Julian called the human resources of the company and reported an employment fraud against Adam. He suspected that Adam wasn't representing himself at work and reported the same concern with the HR. HR team conducted thorough investigation and identified that Adam was currently pursuing three full time job opportunities at leading companies with overlapping work hour commitments to make good amount of money. HR moved ahead and terminated his employment as well as reported employment fraud to the relevant parties in the other organizations as well.

Julian reviewed this incident with his team members and relayed the importance of work ethics and commitment to the company.

Discussion

- What is the main issue in this case?
- What is wrong about what Adam did?
- How can organizations learn from this case to enable right checks for remote work opportunities?

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Demographic Data on Employees Working Remotely

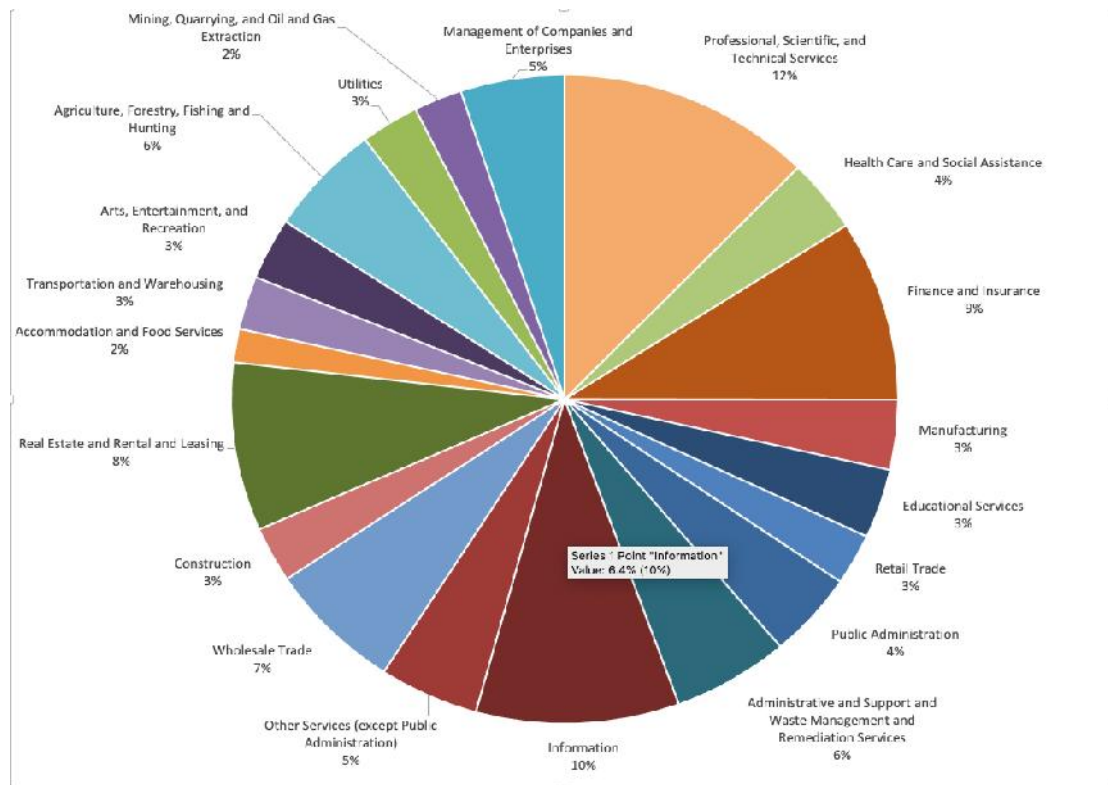**Fraud reports about business and job-related opportunities**

By subcategory, quarterly since 2015
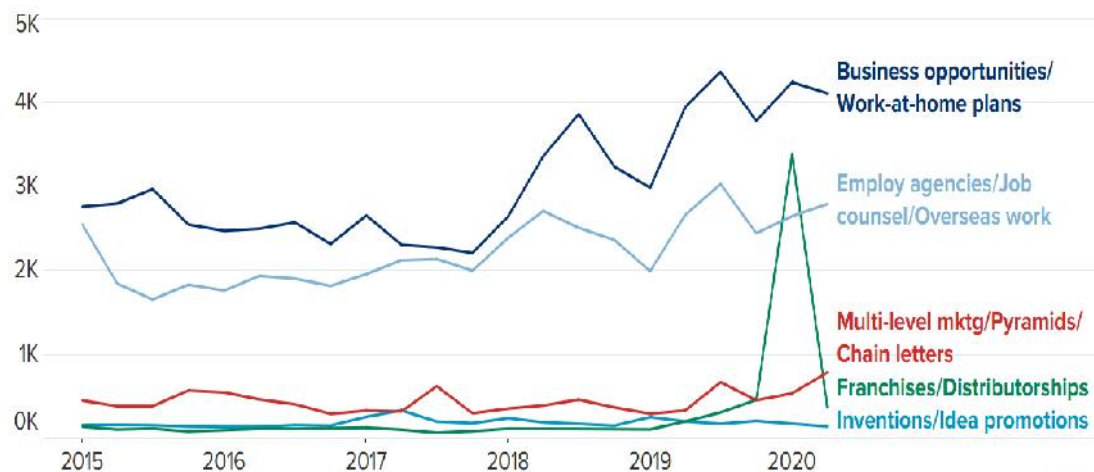
SOURCE: Federal Trade Commission

CNBC

Source: https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/-

Teaching Notes

- This case situation is related to loyalty and moral values of employees towards their organization and commitment to work. The work goal of each individual is connected to the work goal of everyone in the organization and finally contributes to the attainment of organization's goals. Earning money matters but in what way is important. The organizations believe its employees and expect loyalty to the organization from them. It's not just 'skill set' matters. Employee ethics is important to grow self and help grow organization.

- Adam is a senior programmer with excellent skill set. He being leading the team, need to encourage other team members to get the work done in time. But he is attracted to money and engaged working with other organizations which is unethical practice. As a senior programmer, he is supposed to take lead and encourage the team members to complete the task. Taking advantage of the situation and doing fraud is bad on the part of Adam.

- The organizations train and built ethical values in the employees is important. The level of motivation given by the organization and commitment towards the employees boost the morale of the employees. It is not working in or out of the work place but it is – whether the employees have the morale, loyalty and commitment within them is important. Organizations should look into this morale aspect to improve the employee commitment to the work and loyal to the organization.

- Globally, 3.7 million employees (2.8 percent of the workforce) now work from home at least half of the time. Employer should consider the needs of the employees and create an environment where they satisfy their needs and employees also should exhibit such loyalty and commitment to the assigned work. Both are important to each other and mutual trust and benefit is the factor that determines the success of both.

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