

BAM MCN Coffee Chat 1st March 2023

Topic: How has working from home affected consultants' ability to create change in organisations?

Emerging themes:

1. Informal communications and observation are very important in consulting. Both are not available for consultants working remotely.
2. Organisations are social entities, and social and cultural norms vary from one country to another. Remote working would be particularly difficult in some cultures, e.g. Middle Eastern countries.
3. For a consultant working remotely, informal conversations have to be replaced by, for example, phone calls, which require a conscious effort.
4. Many client organisations have made the shift to remote working. Research is needed into how people operate effectively in this new environment.
5. Building trust is an important aspect of establishing a consulting relationship. How consultants build trust online was the topic of a paper by Luca Collina that won a CMCE Research Award last year.
6. These days most projects have official channels but participants also use social media, both within projects and across organisations. Social media, e.g. WhatsApp, have become the channel for informal communications.
7. The functioning of the 'token economy', e.g. the exchange of favours, is affected by remote work. It is now facilitated by social media or phone calls at convenient times, e.g. when both parties are commuting.
8. There is less scope for substantial transactions when working remotely.
9. Scamming and hacking is on the rise. How does one hold trusted conversations online in the face of this threat?
10. Remote devices are much less secure now than 15-20 years ago. Quantum computing will threaten the security of today's encryption techniques.
11. Tasks where there is friction take longer to carry out remotely. There is a hierarchy of media for carrying out such tasks: email is the worst as it cannot convey emotional tone.
12. For effective working on a project, it is important to meet face to face at the start and then every 3 – 4 months to renew personal contacts.