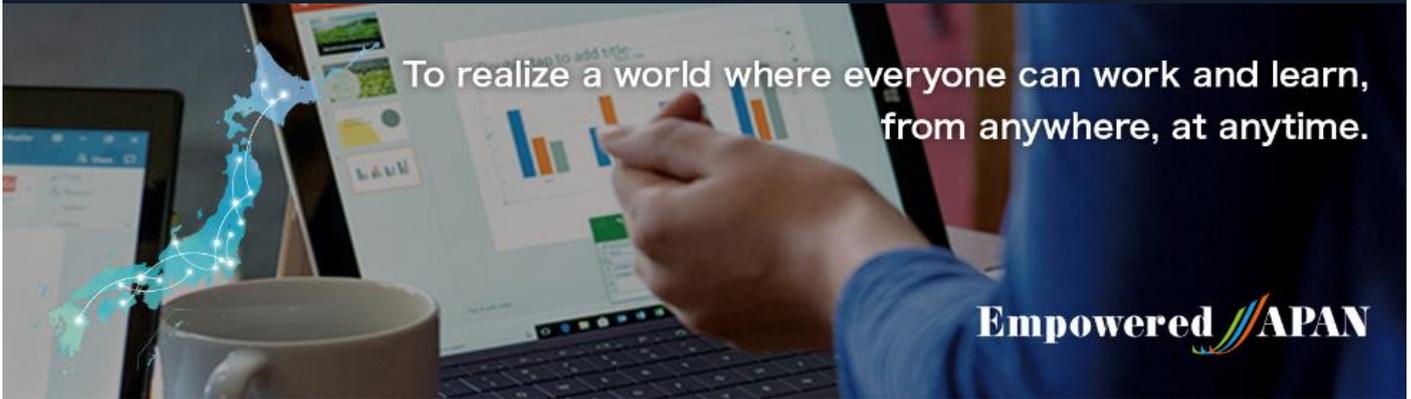


Empowered JAPAN Webinar Report



Empowered JAPAN Executive Steering Committee was established in 2018, "To realize a world where everyone can work and learn, from anywhere, at anytime." To promote the true value of workstyle innovation including telework, the committee has been coordinating symposiums in both Tokyo and regional cities. And in collaboration with various local governments, Microsoft, and partners, the committee has been serving as an advisor to provide telework training for both corporate and individuals. In response to the spread of infection of corona virus (COVID-19) and the government announcement on February 25, 2020, which included the request to citizens to telework, the steering committee made the decision to launch a series of free webinars starting from March 17, 2020, to provide practical information for individuals and organizations across the nation, to telework and/or practice online education.

Category : Mindset and Communication

Date : March, 23, 2020

Speaker : Naomi Tomiyoshi

Chief Researcher
Japan Telework Association



Born in Kagoshima Prefecture. After working at Fuji Xerox in Hiroshima, Fukuoka, and Tokyo as a system engineer and a solutions planner, started a new job at the Japan Telework Association from FY2016. Responsible for planning and operation of experience-based events operated by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, as well as for committees dealing with issues such as model employment rules. Also in charge of municipal programs such as teleworking for people with disabilities. After working completely from home in Fukuoka in FY2017, began splitting time between Tokyo and Fukuoka from 2018. Fully utilizes IT to implement self-management for making effective use of gap time and improving hourly productivity. Holds many lectures on teleworking with themes such as lectures for corporate employees, lectures for self-employed individuals, and experience-based lectures.

Teleworking to Achieve BCP: Minimum Necessary Rules and Important Points for Implementation

As a part of the BCP (business continuity plan) for preventing the spread of COVID-19, the movement towards teleworking is accelerating.

For business executives who are considering adopting teleworking, but concerned about the preparation of large-scale systems, Ms. Naomi Tomiyoshi, the Chief Researcher at Japan Telework Association explained the minimum rules they should know as an emergency response.

Ms. Tomiyoshi joined the association in 2016 after building her career as a system engineer at Fuji Xerox Co., Ltd. She was involved in the development of a telework model trial event, and the formulation of model rules for work regulations by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Since 2018, she is based in two locations, Tokyo and Fukuoka, and practicing productivity improvement by maximizing the use of IT.

Telework refers to a flexible workstyle that is not limited to location or time, and enabled by ICT (information communication technologies). "Tele" in telework means distance. "If you work from a place outside of the office, even by one step away, it means you are teleworking," said Ms. Tomiyoshi. Employment types are usually categorized into employed and self-employed, and an increasing number of companies with the first type are adopting teleworking. We will explain about teleworking from home within the category.

What kind of preparations does a company need to do before adopting home style teleworking? According to Ms. Tomiyoshi, there are four items required for teleworking during ordinary times: labor management, work environment, information communication systems, and business. However, in an emergency situation, if a company has labor management and an information communication system, they should be able to manage.

First, for labor management, managing working hours become difficult if you work from home. When adopting teleworking, using a specialized management tool is one of the ways, however, in an emergency situation, we must devise alternative time management methods. "For example, report the start and end of work hours by email. This at least helps to understand the daily working hours of each employee." (Ms. Tomiyoshi)

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On the other hand, it is difficult to draw a line between work and private life, and teleworkers tend to extend their working hours. Ms. Tomiyoshi who has experience in working full-time from home advised that "in principle, commit to zero overtime, and be conscious of the work rhythm including the private rhythm which has no variation." She also emphasized that working from home helps improving one's self-management skills.

When working from home, communication and utility expenses are incurred, and companies are responsible for them. If employees are responsible for them, it must be defined by the employment regulations. However, Ms. Tomiyoshi said, "in an emergency situation, employees can be responsible for them under their agreement." (Ms. Tomiyoshi) Even for a workplace, its options can be expanded if the company clearly specifies the regulations.

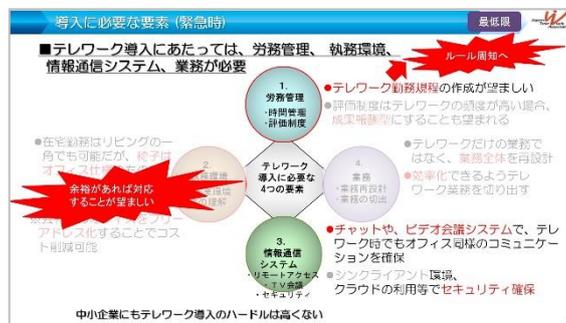
"In summary, there are three points you should remember: time management, expenses, and work location. I also recommend following the guidelines for the work regulation models and telework provided by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, when you readjust the company's telework systems later on." (Ms. Tomiyoshi)

Second, for information communication systems, companies must have a communication tool (Teams, Zoom, Chatwork, etc.) and an information sharing tool (Microsoft 365, Google drive, Dropbox, etc.). The difficulty of communication compared to non-face-to-face is a typical issue when working from home. Ms. Tomiyoshi recommended that "conducting daily morning and evening meetings using a video conference tool helps easing the feeling of loneliness."

Referring to BCP cases of other companies that are advanced with teleworking is also helpful:

SUNA Co. Ltd. in Fukuyama city, Hiroshima prefecture was able to continue undertaking business even when western Japan faced disasters from heavy rainfall as a result of adopting teleworking 5 years ago. Iwai Cosmo Securities Co., Ltd. in Osaka city distributed tablets to sales staff and established a telework-style of direct attendance and direct return with their slogan "shorter labor hours and higher income!" Hokurikujinzainet Co., Ltd. in Kanazawa city, Ishikawa prefecture, as a measure to prevent employees from leaving the company, promoted "a workstyle that is not limited to location and time" such as the full-flex system, and enabled continuous employment of someone who moved overseas.

Ms. Tomiyoshi pointed out four keys that we could learn from these advancing companies. (1) Be accustomed to teleworking through daily use, (2) Development of infrastructure, chat, video conferencing tools, etc., (3) Flexibility in labor hours, for example, allowing employees to take time off as short as an hour, (4) Establishment of rules for emergency response, for example, who is in charge of making decisions in an emergency situation. As you can see from these examples, that gradually preparing your company for teleworking contributes to strengthening of the organization when facing risks of disaster or losing a job.



"Telework is a positive reform for society, workers, and companies. I would like many companies to take this opportunity to work from home as an urgent measure for COVID-19, reconsider the common concept of how we should work, and reform to an organization that can overcome various obstructions. Let us work together and change the concept of teleworking to 'offense' for solving business issues from 'defense' for continuing business." (Ms. Tomiyoshi)

The government is advancing with support programs and has announced a subsidy program to support the adoption of telework as an emergency measure against COVID-19. Please check the latest information from "Telework General Portal Site" by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, and if you have any questions, contact Telework Support Center. The latest information is also available through the newsletter distributed by the Japan Telework Association.

