TRACUMENT SOLUTIONS INC.

NAVIGATING THE NEW NORM

A GUIDE TO **BETTER** REMOTE WORK DYNAMICS

THE CON TENT

INTRODUCTION

THRIVING BEYOND BORDERS

The dynamics of remote work have reshaped how we operate, collaborate, and function professionally. While many firms have allowed remote work to continue, there is a growing trend of recalling staff back to the office.

Why is this happening?

We will address the tensions between traditional law firms and remote work, as well as the challenges associated with it, including the impact on mental health and the importance of self-care. Additionally, we will discuss the challenges of mentorship in the legal field and how law firms can foster a sense of connection and collaboration in a virtual setting. The goal is to examine each component that defines work from home success and sustainability, as the legal landscape evolves.

Join us, as we explore the multifaceted elements that shape remote work.

REMOTE WORK &
ATTITUDES

The debate around remote work has intensified in the post-pandemic era, particularly with the increasing presence of <u>Millennials and Gen Z in the workforce</u>. This has sparked a crucial debate on their preference for remote work in law firms. While the younger generation advocates for increased remote work options, senior partners and executives push for a return to traditional 40-hour work weeks.

Millennial's and Gen Z prefer remote work due to their technical proficiency, prioritization of work-life balance, and belief in increased cost-effectiveness and productivity. They value the flexibility remote work provides, challenging traditional workplace norms thus showing a societal shift towards a more holistic approach to work.

90%

Around 90 percent of Canadians feel as productive or more productive working from home.

CANADIAN STATISTICS: MADE IN CA

- *Technological Proficiency*

Millennials and Gen Z are unique in that they've matured in the digital era, being the very first generation raised entirely in the age of technology. This has created an innate familiarity with both digital tools and platforms which make them early adopters of innovative solutions that can enhance efficiency and productivity in the workplace.

- *Work-Life balance*

Young associates are keenly interested in achieving balance between their careers and personal lives. As such, they are challenging conventional workplace norms and encouraging a more empathetic and flexible approach to legal work.

- *Cost and Productivity*

Millennials and Gen Z desire remote work for improved well-being, productivity, and lifestyle. It saves time, reduces stress and expenses, and allows for a personalized work environment. Remote work appeals to their desire for control over their work lives and a good work-life balance.

Despite the strong preference, ongoing debates persist regarding its overall effectiveness in specific areas such as:

- *Client Relationships*

The nuances of conversation can be difficult to read over messages, emails, or video calls. With a work-from-home or hybrid work model, it can be challenging to establish or maintain these relationships.

- *Work Ethic*

Critics fear that a lack of direct supervision may lead to decreased productivity and accountability. During the pandemic, managers used software to monitor remote work, raising concerns about privacy breaches.

- *Training and Mentorship*

Remote work models have prompted a reevaluation of traditional mentorship and training programs in the legal industry. Innovative solutions that combine technology with institutional knowledge are being sought to ensure younger lawyers continue to learn and preserve the cultural values within law firms. This transformation reflects the broader evolution occurring in the professional landscape.

The legal industry needs to adapt to the changing legal landscape by finding common ground between the preferences of emerging legal professionals who prioritise flexibility, and the operations that have historically taken place in-office. The industry must leverage the potential of the Millennial and Gen Z work force while also preserving professionalism and client relationships. Remote work will continue to be a significant part of the legal profession, and the industry's ability to meet its workforce's evolving expectations will determine its future.

These ongoing discussions highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of remote work's impact on crucial aspects of professional life.

REMOTE WORK &
PREDICTABILITY

Humans find comfort, stability, and control in predictable routines. The same goes for the workplace.

Predictability is important in remote work to achieve a harmonious work-life balance and regain a sense of order in an era where work and personal life can easily blur. The sudden shift back to in-office work disrupts this balance, and resistance to revert to the office is about preserving the predictability that has been integrated into daily lives.

The pandemic has led to a rise in remote work in Canada, which has become a vital component of employees' lives. Remote work offers employees autonomy and freedom, allowing them to create a productive work environment, save on costs, and structure their schedules to suit personal and professional obligations. Since this shift, employees have made strategic investments in technology to empower productivity from home. Remote work also makes it easier to predict and manage money, which helps improve overall financial planning. However, if remote work is suddenly stopped, it can impact a variety of responsibilities employees have taken on, upsetting their balance between work and personal life and their sense of satisfaction.

Autonomy

Choose where and how you work. Those who have returned to the office spend twice as much on expenses.

Technology Investment

Employees who have invested in technological set-ups may be hesitant to revert back to older technologies used in the office.

Scheduling Flexibility

Remote work provides employees with flexibility to structure their schedules according to personal and professional obligations.

Though firms may have various reasons for wanting employees to return, such as reviving company culture or implementing traditional mentorship programs, a sudden mandate can introduce challenges that may outweigh the benefits. To ease the return to the office, employers should understand the human need for predictability and control. Balancing structured office work with the flexibility of remote work is important in maintaining employees' sense of predictability while meeting employers' needs.

REMOTE WORK &
MENTORSHIP

Remote work poses a significant challenge for mentorship in the legal industry. With the lack of quality mentors coupled with limited access to valuable guidance, junior lawyers face difficulty navigating the cultural and political landscapes of their company, or industry, without the help of experienced mentors.

Mentorship is crucial for professional development in law firms. It facilitates the transfer of knowledge and skills from experienced to junior lawyers. Additionally, having multiple mentors can result in higher job satisfaction, better career success, and a sense of social value to their work. Traditional mentorship happens organically in physical office settings, but remote work has brought unique challenges to this.

According to our 2022 legal survey, legal professionals believe that an increase in training and mentorship is crucial to a firm's success. Junior lawyers and law students also noted they prioritise mentorship when considering future employment opportunities. Despite the rise of remote work, having a quality mentor remains essential for growth and success. However, as we embrace the evolving work-from-home dynamic, there are distinct hurdles to overcome.

They include:

1. Limited Face-to-Face Interaction
2. Communication Barriers
3. On-boarding Challenges

Navigating remote mentorship presents unique challenges, demanding innovative strategies for effective guidance and professional development. In response to these challenges, here are **four key strategies for success in remote mentorship:**

01 Structured Mentorship Programs

Formal mentorship programs with clear expectations, goals, and responsibilities for both mentors and mentees are crucial to fostering a thriving work environment. This ensures that the exchange of expertise and guidance is meaningful and impactful.

02 Regular Virtual Check-Ins

In face-to-face mentorship, meetings are held every one to two months to allow mentees time to practice and learn. Virtual mentorship offers flexibility but requires a reliable schedule and both parties' investment. To recreate the personal interaction of in-person meetings, minimize distractions during virtual meetings for more meaningful discussions.

03 Encourage Digital Collaboration

Create a culture of digital collaboration by using project management and collaboration tools, such as Google Docs and Zoom. This enables mentees to observe their mentors' work and receive real-time feedback, enhancing their learning experience.

04 Virtual Networking and Social Events

Modern mentorship includes virtual options like "Together," which connects mentors and mentees and supports aspiring legal professionals. Traditional and virtual mentorship programs offer low-stress environments, cater to individual needs, and showcase organizational commitment to growth and well-being.

While remote work presents opportunities for legal professionals, in-person mentorship remains crucial at many firms. Strategies and encouragement can help mentors and mentees overcome remote challenges. Adapting to these realities is vital to ensure the next generation of lawyers receive the necessary support to excel in their careers.

REMOTE WORK &
MENTAL HEALTH

The <u>work-from-home model provides flexibility and balance, but it can also ignite mental health challenges</u>. Reduced social interactions and potential distractions can negatively affect well-being. This section discusses the intersection of hybrid work and mental health and offers strategies to stay connected and maintain mental well-being.

Remote work presents challenges that individuals and organisations must navigate. It can lead to a sense of **isolation** and **loneliness**, altering workplace culture and reducing familiarity with colleagues. Striking a balance between personal and professional life can be difficult, as remote work blurs the boundary between the two. Communication can also be challenging, leading to information overload and misinterpretation due to the lack of non-verbal cues in written communication.

In the fast-paced and digitally driven world we inhabit, maintaining a sense of connection and overall well-being is paramount.

Seven tips for promoting mental well-being in a hybrid work environment include:

- Foster Open Communication
- Regular Check-Ins
- Virtual Social Events
- Setting Boundaries

- Mental Health Resources
- Mental Health Days
- Evaluate and Adapt

Employers should encourage a supportive team environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their concerns and respecting each other's boundaries. It's also important to prioritise mental health, recognising its importance and allowing for necessary rest. Additionally, regular assessment and adaptation of policies can help cater to individual needs and promote mental well-being.

REMOTE WORK &
TECHNOLOGY

To enable employees to work from home, employers must ensure they have <u>access to office technologies</u> and can replicate tasks remotely.

Law firms may provide employees with a computer to work on to minimise security risks and maximise productivity. This ensures that the computer is set up for work purposes, is not used by other household members, and is protected against viruses. Additionally, firms could provide employees with professional-grade cameras and ergonomic work-spaces to enhance productivity and comfort. Although the package may cost one to two thousand dollars, the increased productivity easily justifies the cost.

Why not go paperless in the process?

Bring in software to replace communication tools. You can also upgrade existing software to easily automate tasks and increase efficiency. This process goes hand in hand with crafting a well-defined remote work policy, which is essential for both employers and employees. It not only ensures the seamless functioning of remote teams but also prioritises the well-being and productivity of individuals in this decentralised work environment. A robust remote work policy becomes an indispensable tool in fostering a positive and efficient virtual work culture.

Merely allowing employees to work from home one day a week is not enough. A successful work-from-home arrangement must be deliberate, supportive of the employee's job tasks, and ensure they remain connected to the office and their team.

A <u>good WFH policy,</u> in concert with regular reviews, should do the following:

- Set Primary Evaluation Standards
- Set Guidelines
- Set Technology Requirements
- Set Review Methods

As the landscape of work continues to evolve, the need for offices to evolve and adapt to support employees working from home has become increasingly evident.

USING TRACUMENT

Tracument Solutions Inc. specializes in helping law firms automate the process of sending and receiving documents.

By automating tasks, such as manual document handling, law firms can allocate their valuable resources to more strategic and client-centric endeavors, such as legal research, case analysis, and client consultations.
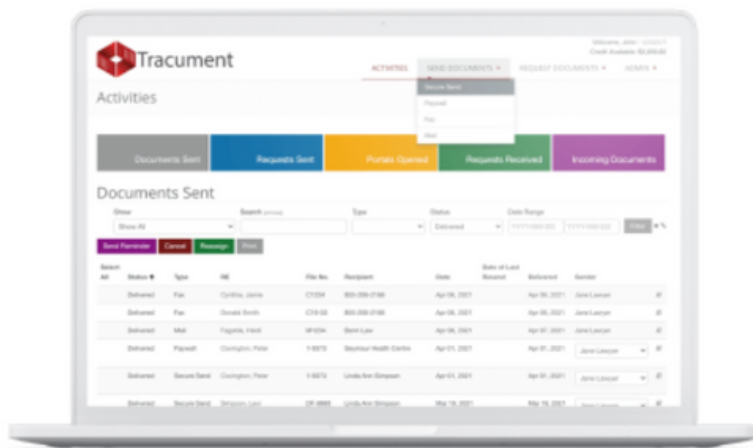
BOOK NOW

50-75%
of staff time saved

Law firms that choose to leverage Tracument's expertise also enhances client relations through timely and accurate communication. With a tailored approach and a commitment to data security, Tracument distinguishes itself as a valuable partner for law firms seeking to stay ahead in an increasingly competitive legal landscape.

Book a call with one of our product specialists to see exactly how it all works.

HOW WELL-STRUCTURED IS YOUR SCHEDULE?

Welcome to the **Predictability Quiz** – a tool designed to help you assess how well-structured and predictable your daily work schedule is! The quiz consists of questions that cover daily tasks and long-term planning, with a rating scale. The total points at the end of the quiz highlight your predictability.

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers – this quiz is a tool for self-reflection and a starting point for potential improvements. Let's get started!

Rate each question on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Question 1: Do you have a set start and end time for your workday?
1: Never
2: Rarely
3: Occasionally
4: Often
5: Always

Question 2: Are your daily tasks and priorities clearly defined each morning?
1: Rarely have a clear plan
2: Occasionally
3: Sometimes
4: Often
5: Always have a clear plan

Question 3: How frequently are there unexpected interruptions in your workday?
1: Constantly
2: Frequently
3: Occasionally
4: Rarely
5: Almost never

Question 4: Is your weekly schedule consistent, with similar activities on certain days?
1: Not at all consistent
2: Slightly
3: Moderately
4: Quite
5: Extremely consistent

Question 5: How well do you stick to your planned break times?

1: Rarely stick to break times

2: Occasionally
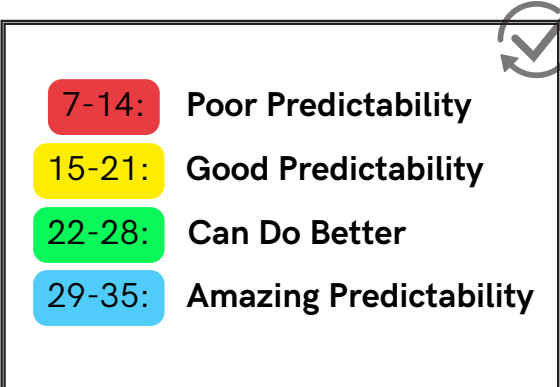
3: Sometimes

4: Often

5: Always stick to break times

Question 6: Do you have a monthly review or planning session for your goals and tasks?

1: Never review or plan

2: Rarely

3: Occasionally

4: Often

5: Always have a monthly review

Question 7: How well do you communicate schedule changes to your team or colleagues?

1: Never communicate changes

2: Rarely

3: Occasionally

4: Often

5: Always communicate changes promptly

After answering all seven questions, sum up the points assigned to your responses. You will find the point values on the left side of each answer option. Your total points will fall within a specific range. Match your total points to the corresponding category below. Remember, this quiz serves as a self-assessment tool to foster awareness of your work routine's predictability.

7-14:	**Poor Predictability**
15-21:	**Good Predictability**
22-28:	**Can Do Better**
29-35:	**Amazing Predictability**

Consider what your category indicates about the predictability and structure of your workday. Use the insights gained to assess potential areas for improvement or reinforcement!