

How Hybrid Work Has Given Family Caregivers a Lifeline



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Hybrid and remote models are not just influencing how we do our jobs but significantly transforming the approach towards elder care. These new work formats have empowered the way we care for our elderly loved ones while diminishing the previously unchallenged role of senior housing facilities.

Unfortunately, newspapers like *The Wall Street Journal* are decrying this change with headlines like “Is Work From Home to Blame for Senior Housing’s Muted Recovery?” Such pieces smack of an anti-consumer, anti-family and pro-special interest attitude. Instead, we should celebrate consumers not having to shell out money unnecessarily for services they don’t need on senior living, while also maintaining multi-generational family units that strengthen family bonds.

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The benefits of hybrid work for the “sandwich generation”

The advent of hybrid work schedules has proven to be a game-changer for a particular group of people known as the “sandwich generation,” middle-aged adults – often between their 40s and 50s – caught between the responsibilities of raising their children and caring for aging parents. Before the rise of hybrid work models, these individuals often felt like they were in a tug-of-war, being pulled in multiple directions at once.

But now, the paradigm has shifted dramatically. The flexibility of hybrid work has transformed this seemingly endless juggling act into a more manageable, even gratifying endeavor. It’s as if they’ve been given a magic wand, turning a high-stakes balancing act into a well-choreographed ballet.

Picture this: An employee, let’s call her Lisa, is in the middle of her workday. In the traditional work model, she would be in her office, miles away from her elderly mother and children. Now, working remotely, she can attend a virtual meeting, then immediately switch gears to help her child with homework and later accompany her mother to a routine doctor’s appointment, all without leaving her home.

This seamless integration of professional and personal life has become a reality thanks to hybrid work. The days of Lisa rushing through traffic, anxiously glancing at the clock as she races from the office to a nursing home, are a thing of the past. Now, Lisa can fulfill her role as a loving daughter and mother, all while continuing to excel in her career.

Moreover, this shift isn’t just benefiting Lisa. It’s

positively impacting her entire family. Her elderly mother gets to spend more time with her family, her children are receiving more attention and guidance, and Lisa herself is less stressed and more fulfilled. This new work model has not only given her the flexibility to manage her time better but also the satisfaction of knowing she is there for her loved ones.

In this way, the rise of remote and hybrid work models is not just a trend, but a societal shift that is empowering the “sandwich generation” and transforming the dynamics of family care. It’s a radical change that is having profound impacts on families, businesses and communities across the country.

Remote work schedules have come as a much-needed boon for those juggling the dual responsibilities of raising children and caring for older parents, often referred to as the “sandwich generation”. The flexibility of hybrid work is turning what once was a stress-inducing juggling act into a more manageable endeavor.

Now, with flexible work hours, employees can attend to elder care responsibilities without the fear of compromising their careers. The days of rushing from the office to a nursing home are being replaced with a seamless transition from professional tasks to personal responsibilities, all within the comforts of home.

Reframing the senior housing narrative

The era of hybrid work has led to a shift in focus from senior housing facilities to home-based care, causing a noticeable decrease in demand for the former. Some media outlets, such as The Wall Street Journal, have negatively framed this trend, attributing the muted recovery of the senior housing market to the rise of remote work. However, this perspective only

captures a part of the broader narrative.

Rather than viewing this as a setback for senior housing providers, it is essential to see it as an opportunity for innovation and adaptation. After all, progress and innovation are born out of change. Just as a chameleon changes its colors to adapt to its environment, senior housing providers need to adapt to the evolving needs and expectations of their customers.

In the past, the senior housing sector may have been the go-to solution for families juggling work and elder care responsibilities. But now, as hybrid work becomes the norm, families have the flexibility to care for their loved ones at home. This shift doesn't necessarily signal a death knell for the senior housing industry. Instead, it offers an opportunity for these facilities to reinvent their services and find new ways to support families.

For instance, senior housing providers could offer more flexible, part-time care services for families who need support but not full-time care. They could also develop programs that help the elderly stay engaged and connected with their communities while living at home. In essence, this is a time for the industry to creatively respond to the changing landscape of elder care.

From a financial standpoint, this shift towards home-based care presents families with potential significant savings. Rather than seeing this as a threat to the senior housing market, we should see it as an opportunity for families to better allocate their resources. The money saved from reducing reliance on full-time senior care facilities can be redirected towards enhancing the quality of life for the elderly or investing in other areas like education for the younger generation.

In reframing the narrative, we should celebrate this change as

a positive evolution in the way we care for our elders. This shift is not about choosing one form of care over another, but about providing families with more options to choose what works best for them. The rise of hybrid work has catalyzed this change, and it's up to all of us to embrace it and adapt accordingly.

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The shift towards hybrid and remote work is indeed a win-win scenario. It allows employees to strike a better work-life balance, and businesses to retain valuable staff who previously struggled with care responsibilities. It's about time we celebrate this change instead of resisting it, as I tell companies that ask me to help them figure out their hybrid work models.

The transformation of our work culture has far-reaching effects, extending beyond the confines of our workspaces and into our family lives. The shift to hybrid work is driving change in elder care, demonstrating the profound impact of workplace flexibility on various aspects of life.

Rather than lamenting the challenges, let's embrace the opportunities this change brings. The hybrid work model has already shown its potential to benefit our careers and care duties. It's fostering stronger family bonds by maintaining multi-generational family units and reducing unnecessary expenditure on senior living services. That's a future worth celebrating!

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