Outline

• Some comments on the ‘Google’ and ‘Yahoo’ stories
• Knowledge work in the 21st century
• Our study
• Conclusions and the way forward
The Google work environment

Google shared images: http://www.cbsnews.com/
Google and Yahoo

• Both highly innovative organisations
• The Google work environment
  – Google one of the 5 top USA employers
  – Invest in the design of physical space to boost creativity, collaboration and information flows
  – Motivate employees to come to work - a fun place
  – Nature of the work is : Agile development
Google and Yahoo

• CEO Marissa Mayer – 13 years at Google
• 2012 she started her career at Yahoo
  – Used to the Google culture
  – Yahoo’s work is similar to that of Google
  – Recall: more f-2-f, speed & quality of outputs, stop workers exploiting the policy
  – Not sure: roles who teleworked, how flexible workers were managed, communication structures & mechanisms
  – Question leadership and expectations
Knowledge work ...

Peter F. Drucker in 1999:

“The most important contribution management needs to make in the 21st century is to increase the productivity of knowledge work and knowledge workers”.

Characteristics of work:
job design evolved, job crafting, psychological state of workers, demand for more freedom, different forms of collaboration, work becoming more fluid, pervasive and mobile
Our study

• Part of the 2012 National Telework week
• No prior studies/literature on flexible work, and productivity
• Prior productivity studies in Software Development

**OUTPUT** = amount of work (hours) X intensity of work X efficiency X adjustments
Research Questions

“How does flexible work impact on an individual’s productivity and wellbeing”

- what are key differences associated with individual productivity and wellbeing as a result of flexible work?
- what are positive and negative impacts of flexible work on an individual’s productivity and wellbeing?
Research method

- Predominantly qualitative with a quantitative flavour
- Interested in both management & worker perspectives
- 2 Phases:
  - *Qualitative* - interviews: attitudes, perceptions of productivity and wellbeing
  - *Quantitative* - day experience data logging method: aim to get teams of participants to log data prior to starting a workday and at the end of each workday (2 telework and 2 non-telework days)
Day experience data log Website
Day experience data log Website

Day Work Experience

Day Experience 1 (out of 4 days of work)

Before you start your work:
- Start time of commuting to work: <<6am-10pm>>
- Start time of actual work: <<6am-10pm>>

Type of day: Non-Teleworking
- Arrival time at work: <<6am-10pm>>

How many tasks do you plan to do today? 1

Briefly describe Task-1 here

SUBMIT

STEP 2

Finish time (of actual work): <<6am-10pm>>
- Start time (of commuting to home): <<6am-10pm>>
- Arrival time at home: <<6am-10pm>>

How many tasks did you successfully complete today? 1

Indicate completed tasks with approximate time (in hours) taken to complete each task:
- Task 1 complete: 3
- Task 1 duration: 3

On a scale of 1 to 7 rate how productive you were today (e.g., 1 = extremely low, 4 = medium, and 7 = extremely high)
Day experience data log Website

War’s Vitamin Model
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case organisation</th>
<th>Type of Industry</th>
<th>No participants &amp; teams</th>
<th>Roles interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. NetworkCo</td>
<td>Network and Collaborative solutions</td>
<td>5 managers and 5 workers (1 team of 4 workers participated)</td>
<td>Regional Sales Manager, PM’s, Consulting Engineer, Collaboration team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. InfrastructCo</td>
<td>Network infrastructure solutions</td>
<td>2 managers and 1 senior role *1 non-teleworker</td>
<td>Strategic Solutions Director, National Sol’s architect, Sol’s architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. TestCo</td>
<td>Banking: investment &amp; superannuation services</td>
<td>1 manager and 6 workers (full team participated) *1 non-teleworker</td>
<td>Application Testing manager and 6 Testers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. EducoIT</td>
<td>Tertiary: TAFE</td>
<td>1 manager and 2 workers (full team participated) *1 non-teleworker</td>
<td>Infrastruct and IT manager, Snr Systems administrator and Network administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. GovernCo</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>3 managers and 1 worker</td>
<td>Project Managers and Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. EduCo</td>
<td>Tertiary: re-search institute</td>
<td>1 manager</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 participants / hybrid teleworkers  (8 women = 29%)
Findings

• Two perspectives on productivity
  – Management perspective
  – Worker/employee perspective

• Key findings:
  – Trust, trust and again trust
  – Measuring productivity is difficult
  – Focus is on individual task completion
  – IT key enabler for productivity - supportive IT tools for seamless work
  – Level of IT support = high, medium or low
Findings

• *Management perspective*
  – A different approach and style required
  – **Trust** is imperative, needs to be fostered
  – Frequent meetings and follow-ups required
  – Careful employee selection for telework
  – Develop a new communication style
  – Productivity is an individual aspect,
  – Flexible work culture and high level of IT support → no productivity concerns
Findings

Employee perspective
- More interruptions when at work: between 0.5 to 3 hours in length
- Value manager’s trust
- Longer working hours (2-3 hours longer workdays)
- Better coordination for collaboration and teamwork
- Adequate training to use IT was required
- Prefer hybrid telework
- Don’t want to be micro managed
Findings

Typical flexible worker profile

– Driven, high achievers and performers
– Independent, talented workers
– Self and well-organised
– Love their work, their passion
– Committed to deliver their best
– View flexible work as a privilege
Findings

Flexible work and wellbeing

– Unanimous agreement on wellbeing
– Rating of between 5 and 7 (med high – very high) on telework days
– ‘Head-space’ more productive, less stressed and anxious, break of the routine
– More positive towards work and colleagues
– Allowed for breaks during the day to re-energize
– Ability to balance work, family and home
Conclusion – future work

• Preliminary/pilot study
• Deeper understanding
• Strong link between productivity and wellbeing
• To what extent IT enables productivity
rachelle.bosua@unimelb.edu.au
and
marianne.gloet@unimelb.edu.au