



**University of  
Leicester**

**How does homeworking affect a line  
manager's ability to exercise control?**

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## **Abstract**

Changes in the nature of work e.g. Location Independent Working and the growth of homeworking, mean that managers and their staff may not work in close proximity and so rarely meet in person. The consequent loss of visibility and physical presence creates specific challenges and constraints in relation to the managers' role in the employment relationship.

As previous research has compartmentalised the perspectives of homeworkers and their managers, analysis has always been restrictive, lacking in an all-encompassing view of the employment relationship. Seeking to address this disparity, this research assesses the views of both sides of the employment relationship, thereby exploring the experiences of managers and homeworkers. Using contrasting organisations, this research explores how the practice of management control differs in a homeworking environment. The case study organisations suggest that job role, skill level and organisational size can influence a line manager's ability to exercise control.

Direct control is possible for organisations employing low skilled workers undertaking repetitive tasks. Close electronic monitoring of performance stimulates a cyclical process of resistance and increased management surveillance. For an organisation employing highly skilled autonomous workers, direct control is problematic. Managers become increasingly reliant on external proxies of performance. The objectivity of these external measures is questionable, which consequently reduces the manager's ability to control performance.

As a limited amount of research has investigated the practicalities of managing homeworkers, this research is unique as it has explored the influence of homeworking on a manager's ability to exercise control. Consequently, these findings will offer new insights into the practice of management control in a homeworking environment. As these findings have uncovered some of the specific challenges of homeworking from a managers and homeworkers perspective, the practicalities of managing homeworkers and the potential advantages and drawbacks of working at home may now be more readily understood.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Research Aim**

The aim of this research is to assess how the practice of management differs in a homeworking environment.

The erosion of physical presence and visibility challenges conventional management strategies and consequently this research seeks to evaluate the impact of this 'distance' on a manager's ability to manage.

As the practice of management covers a wide variety of processes and skills, this research will focus on one distinct activity – CONTROL.

The decision to concentrate on managerial control is largely based on the limited amount of research which has been conducted in this area. Managerial challenges have been considered by researchers such as Harris (2003) and Helms and Raiszadeh (2002) but few have sought to build on the study conducted by Felstead *et al.* (2003) which specifically looked at the consequence of a homeworking environment on a manager's ability to exercise control.

Avoiding the temptation to follow the preceding trend to treat homeworkers as a 'one size fits all' homogenous group, this research will use case study organisations to explore if variables such as organisational size, job role and skill level are contributory factors in the managerial control process.

#### Research setting: the rise of homeworking

'Homeworking is not a new phenomenon', (Baruch, 2000:34). During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the evolution of the cottage based industries encompassed the idea that basic production could be performed at home by various members of the family. Bythell's study (1978) of homeworking during this early period of industrialisation concluded that such workers were insecure, exploited, undefended and often unnoticed. As the decades evolved, such negative connotations associated with working at home (Heck *et al.*, 1995) were still pronounced during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century due to the publicity given to outworking in the garment trade where numbers of vulnerable women worked long hours for subsistence wages, (Patrickson, 2002). Unfortunately such exploitation continues today as many unscrupulous employers are still taking advantage of this potentially vulnerable sector of the labour market (National Group of Homeworking, 2008), by failing to offer any form of employment status, rights and protection, (Hansard, 2008).

However, in addition to this historical image of the homeworker being subjected to erratic and demeaning patterns of work, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has also seen the growth in a different category of homeworker. Moving away from the perception that homeworking is a role largely occupied by highly oppressed female workers undertaking manual tasks (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995), today's homeworkers are more likely to be males undertaking managerial, professional, technical or skilled trades occupations, (Office for National Statistics, 2005).

Advances in technology and organisational development have supported a change in gender, occupational type and pay level of homeworkers, (Pieperl and Baruch, 1997). Acknowledging that work within the home is not a new occurrence, Harpez (2002:74) argues that the real change centres on the fact that these individuals work at home but within the structure of the organisational framework. Advances in communication technology have increased the availability and feasibility of homeworking for a larger proportion of the labour market who can now surpass the boundaries of the office. Broadband connections and smartphones for example, are tools which now enable employees to undertake their normal duties within the confines of their own home. The growth in this category of homeworker can also be attributed to significant structural changes within the UK economy. The decline in traditional industries such as coal and steel and the subsequent rise in the service sector have changed the characteristics of the 'a typical' homeworker as more job roles can now be performed within the home.

Undertaking work which is dependent on electronic processing, (Huws, 1995), work at home is now viewed by homeworkers as a flexible way of working (Sullivan, 2001) which may be particularly appealing for employees with caring responsibilities for ageing relatives (Hakim, 2004) and workers with children under the age of 16. As the Government has recently accepted proposals to extend the current right to request flexible working arrangements (Employment Act 2002) for employees with children under the age of 6 to 16, the potential likelihood in having to consider the availability of homeworking is undoubtedly going to be influenced by these legislative changes (Gribben, 2008). It is therefore not surprising that family and work-life balance are commonly occurring themes in discussions concerning homeworking (Sullivan, 2007).

Whilst the freedom and autonomy afforded by the return to the cottage based industry was predicted by futurist Toffler (1980) and the subsequent claim made by Bill Gates of Microsoft that by the year 2050, 50 percent of the working population will operate from the home workspace, (Morgan, 2004:345) the current indications of the actual numbers of homeworkers in the UK makes it hard to support such a prediction.

Reports on the actual numbers of homeworkers are hard to justify due to the difficulty in establishing an agreed definition. Differing terms such as teleworker, remote worker and homebased worker are used interchangeably which therefore contributes to the confusion. According to Felstead *et al.* (2000) over a quarter of the UK workforce now perform some work at home.



The Spring Labour Force Survey (2006) narrows this figure down to 268,964 employees who mainly work from home and a further 423,924 who work from home at least one day a week. The differing definitions used to make such calculations may explain the variation in figures. Although Haynes and Lupton (2000:323) would argue that 'even allowing for some flexibility in definition, most teleworking surveys do not usually vary much more than 1 per cent.' They suggest that the figure is more likely to be recorded as 4 per cent of the UK workforce who are working at home.

### Academic Perspective

Whether homeworking is a commonplace phenomenon or a vastly over estimated working practice is subject to debate. However, the study of the teleworking phenomenon is fairly new, (Baruch, 2000:36). Although interest in this field is steadily increasing, it is still an under researched area. Sullivan *et al.* (2007) support the view that research into the efficacy of homeworking in facilitating the combination of paid work, family and other aspects of people's lives is still relatively scarce.

Research conducted by Felstead and Jewson (2000) thrust the concept of homeworking into the academic arena and engendered the beginning of new lines of research.

Adopting a very broad focus, their research sought to bring together the differing facets of homeworking (e.g. Health and Safety and Terms and Conditions etc.) which had previously been considered in isolation (Huws, 1984 and Hakim, 1985). Subsequent research has concentrated on addressing the distinct areas that Felstead and Jewson (2000) intimated were worthy of further investigation.

Such successive pieces of research have focused on the psychological and social aspects of homeworking from the perspective of the employee (Ward and Shabha, 2001), together with the consequences of homeworking on work and family boundaries (Sullivan, 2000 and Tietze and Musson, 2003). Sullivan and Lewis (2001) and Marsh and Musson (2008) have analysed the specific issues of gender roles and identity in a homeworking environment and identified how homeworking can perpetuate traditional family and work roles. Whilst the managerial challenges and dilemmas associated with homeworking and virtual teams have been considered by Harris (2003) and Helms and Raiszadeh (2002), relatively few studies have explored the phenomenon of homeworking in relation to the experiences of both managers and home-based workers. Felstead *et al.* (2003) study sought to redress this imbalance by assessing both the techniques and strategies deployed by managers when supervising homeworkers and exploring the perspectives of the employees in terms of how they are managed.

As previous research has compartmentalised the perspectives of homeworkers and their managers, the resulting provision of advice has been restrictive, lacking an all-encompassing view of the employment relationship. This research will therefore seek to build on the existing study conducted by Felstead *et al.* (2003) by exploring the effects of this working practice on manager's ability to exercise control. Previous research has largely treated homeworkers as a homogenous group, thereby neglecting to explore the differences in the nature of homeworking and the influence of job role, skill level and organisational size on a manager's ability to exercise control. By providing such distinctions, this research will address this gap and consequently add value to the academic arena.

The findings of this research will also be of value to employers of homeworkers and to those employees who work at home.

### Research Question and Objectives

The primary purpose of this thesis is to explore the question:

**‘How does homeworking affect a manager’s ability to exercise control?’**

In order to assess the influence of job role, skill level and organisational size on this particular working practice, the specific research objectives are as follows

1. To critically explore the practicalities of managing homeworkers, in order to assess the impact of this working arrangement on a manager’s ability to exercise control.
2. To critically evaluate the experiences of homeworkers in respect of how they are managed and the specific challenges and benefits of working at home.
3. Compare and contrast the views of managers and homeworkers in order to identify any similarities and differences in the employment relationship.
4. To specifically examine the influence of a homeworker’s job role, skill level and organisational size on a manager’s ability to exercise control.

### Personal motivation for the research

My personal interest in the topic area of homeworking began in 1999. Undertaking research for a Masters Degree in Human Resource Management, I was fortunate to gain access to a small IT organisation who employed homeworkers. They had no office facilities and their team of 9 consultants, 4 Directors and 1 Manager, all worked from home in various locations throughout the UK. In order to establish the 'Hometruths' of homeworking from the perspectives of the individual homeworkers, my research explored the positive and negative aspects of this working practice and the methods the organisation employed to overcome the drawbacks they had already experienced. Upon the cessation of my research, the Managing Director predicted that the company would employ a further 30 homeworkers over the next 3 years. When beginning my doctoral research, I had intended to revisit this organisation to continue my research. However, this was unfortunately not possible as they had recently been acquired by a much larger organisation who, when approached, denied me access.

In addition to the primary research conducted in 1999/2000, homeworking is also an area of interest to me due to the nature of my job role. I am a Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management at Coventry University and as a consequence of my subject discipline I have been involved in a JISC funded research project entitled 'Adjust the Balance.' This project explored the experiences of managers and employees who were either working remotely or intending to become remote workers in the near future.

As a consequence of this research, I supported the research team in developing training materials and guidance for managers of remote workers and also advice for individuals new to remote working.

Coventry University is also piloting Location Independent Working for Academics and Support Staff. I have recently agreed to become a Location Independent Worker as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot group and will therefore be giving up my office from 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008. This means I will be able to work from home for an average of two days a week and when I am in the University I will only have access to very limited 'Hot Desk' facilities. Putting the theory into practice will be an interesting experience. I am sure I will emphasise with some of the comments shared by the participants in this and previous research, as I learn for myself what it is like to work from home.

### Plan of research

This thesis is organised in the following way:

### Chapter 2 – Management Control and Homeworking: a review of the literature

In order to develop a thorough understanding of the insights into previous research relating to the research question – 'How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?' – a critical review of existing literature is required in order to set the research in context. This chapter will therefore appraise the key themes and ideas which have emerged from current research.

By firstly highlighting the purpose of management control, the issues which have prompted the introduction of homeworking and estimates regarding the actual numbers of homeworkers, this Chapter is then split into two main sections. The exploration of issues associated with the management of homeworkers will initially be appraised before considering the individual reactions to and ability to cope with homeworking. This chapter concludes with a summary of the existing literature, thus identifying the viability of continued research.

### Chapter 3 – Methodology

Having undertaken a review of the literature pertinent to this research, this chapter will describe the methodological approach and provide a justification for the methods employed.

Split into five sections, the chapter will begin by discussing the overall research design and chosen approach. Ethical considerations and the specific data collection methods employed will then be identified. The penultimate section will highlight the methods of analysis before finally addressing the limitations of the research.

### Chapters 4 and 5 – Findings and Analysis

Chapters 4 and 5 will present the data collected and analyse the information gathered.

Chapter 4 will address research objective 1 and therefore explore the issues relevant to the management of employees who work at home.

Chapter 5 will consider the findings which are applicable to the homeworkers themselves (research objective 2).

During the course of the discussions, both chapters compare and contrast the views of managers and homeworkers (research objective 3) and also examine the influence of job role, skill level and organisational size on a manager's ability to exercise control (research objective 4).

### Chapter 6 - Conclusions

This chapter will demonstrate the fulfilment of each of the four objectives of this research and address the overall research question. Possible future research interests will also be identified.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Management Control and Homeworking: a review of the Literature**

#### **Introduction**

In order to develop a thorough understanding of and insights into previous research relating to the research question - 'How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?' – a critical review of existing literature is required in order to set the research in context. This chapter will therefore appraise the key themes and ideas which have emerged from current research in the area of homeworking and management control.

By initially highlighting the purpose of management control and the varying control mechanisms employed by organisations, this chapter will then consider the issues which prompted the introduction and utilisation of homeworking as a viable method of working. The challenge of estimating the current number of homeworkers will subsequently be addressed in order to establish the definition of a homeworker which will be used in this research. The penultimate sections of this chapter will explore practical issues involved in managing homeworkers, together with individual reactions to and ability to cope with homeworking. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the existing research, thus identifying the viability of continued research in this area.



*Management and the pursuit of control*

At its most basic level, management is about making things happen. With the overall responsibility for achieving the given objectives of the organisation, managerial activity, according to Fayol (1949), involves 5 main elements: 1) Planning, 2) Organising, 3) Commanding, 4) Co-ordinating and 5) Controlling. Identified as the final function in the process of management, the overall purpose of control 'involves setting desired standards and measuring actual performance against them; from this, analyses of differences between the two will be made and remedial action will be taken where necessary,' (Pettinger, 2007:605). With a generic purpose, mechanisms of control can and do vary between organisations and according to Stewart (1991), control should be exercised in a variety of ways. Acknowledging that there are a number of different schools of thought on the use of control in organisations, the use of control mechanisms will be determined by 3 contrasting perspectives (Rollinson, 2008). Firstly, the underlying assumption of classical management theory is that managers have a right to manage and therefore control is a legitimate management activity. Secondly, control is an inevitable mediatory process which may lead to specific advantages in terms of efficiency but it can also have adverse implications for employees. And thirdly, based on Marxist principles (1894), labour process theory focuses on social control and the subordination of labour. In this environment, 'exploited' employees will attempt to resist such strict control regimes. In order to contextualise these differing perspectives, it is essential to undertake a brief historical review of the factors which have influenced management practice.

Evidently, the number of influential factors are vast and diverse, but for simplicity, this review will seek to address the most significant changes which demonstrate the use of control and changes in the employment relationship.

The distinguishing feature of the late capitalist era, was the emergence of managerial hierarchies for the coordination and control of economic activities, (Tsouskas, 1994:289). Adopting Taylor's (1947) concept of scientific management, traditional manufacturing environments amplified the hierarchical status of managers whose primary function was to control the behaviour of workers. Embedded in classical management and labour process theory, these highly prescribed working environments largely achieved control through direct surveillance. Managers took complete responsibility for the allocation and execution of work, thereby removing the opportunity for employees to have any say in how they worked. Managers had legitimate power as workers recognised and accepted their authority. The fundamental nature of the manager's role was to exert power, maintain discipline and ensure the objectives of the organisation were met. Managers used rewards (physical, material or symbolic) and punishment (deprivation) to secure compliance with these organisational goals, (Sisaye, 2005:53). Viewed as component parts of the production line, workers were treated like machines to control production and in essence managing people became like a science. The successive emergence of managerial hierarchies, such as those akin to mass production and large bureaucratic organisations, (Tsouskas, 1994) created a particular type of working environment that consequently influenced management thinking and practice.

Resisting management power and freedom of action, the 1960s and 1970s saw a significant growth in trade union membership. In their pursuit for democracy, workers attempted to claw back control through a collective voice. Trade union membership therefore reached its peak in the late 1970s when 13 million people (49% of the workforce), were members of a trade union, (Metcalf, 2003:170). However, collectivism in the workplace waned throughout the 1980s; partly as a response to political pressure from a right wing government in the UK which sought to regulate and ultimately curtail union activities, and also because of the vagaries of economic recession. At this time there also emerged a growing body of what became known as 'excellence' literature (Peters and Waterman, 1982, Kanter, 1983) which promulgated the notion that employees are an organisation's greatest asset. This approach was underpinned by much of the TQM and HRM literature appearing throughout the 1990s. It has been argued that the emergence of management practices such as TQM and HRM, along with demands for increased workforce flexibility amounted to a 'paradigm shift' (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995:618) whereby enhanced individualism changed the way managers controlled the workforce. Contemporary management practice achieved workforce compliance via mechanism such as Employee Involvement (Marchington, 1992) or cultural control (Ray, 1986). Thompson and McHugh (2002:114) argue that the locus of control shifted from external to internal regulation. Internalised control is achieved through employee commitment based on values rather than rules and empowerment techniques enable management to delegate control to self managing teams.

In post bureaucratic organisations, the utilisation of more socially acceptable means of control become paramount as workers are more aware of their rights (supported by a plethora of legal instruments now regulating the employment relationship) and seek to fulfil their own needs from the employment relationship. Giving employees more control over how they achieve their targets and individual work activity, the aim of empowerment is to increase job satisfaction and loyalty, whilst at the same time improve the profitability and performance of the organisation. A typical increase in company performance of 7% (Wood, 2007) is often associated with the introduction of empowerment, but the direct correlation between this practice and improved job satisfaction and loyalty is much harder to measure. It is quite apparent that employees do become empowered to decide on their own methods but consequently they then become more accountable for their behaviour and decisions. For this very reason, employees may decide to resist empowerment due to the realisation of increased accountability and possible exploitation (Johnson, 1994). It is therefore quite 'plausible that management and employees will offer quite distinct perspectives as to the meaning and success of empowerment and thus offer a different dimension to the understanding of empowerment,' (Greasley *et al.*, 2005:359). Nevertheless, continuing managerial interest in such areas as HCM (High Commitment Management) and Partnership, indicates that many still believe this mechanism of cultural control and compliance is an effective means of gaining commitment to corporate goals and thereby minimises dissent.

Collins (1996:30) concurs with this view that empowerment is actually a practice that enhances managerial control by reclothing it in the rhetoric and concerns of democracy. Pursuance of these cultural control strategies enabled managers to marginalise unwanted behaviour in the workplace, thus workers are required to identify with the corporate ethos and such compliance renders any behaviour deemed to be outside the desired corporate parameters as deviant (Willmott, 1993). Individual employees become agents of control and consequently police the rules themselves to ensure adherence from other members. Kunda's research (1992) demonstrates how the pressure to conform can become far greater and ultimately lead to employee burnout, which is somewhat self-defeating for management. The third order level or ideational control (Sturdy *et al.* 1992) described above is therefore less dependent on direct unobtrusive forms of control and favours control of ideas, beliefs and attitudes.

However, the shift from an industrial to a service based economy has witnessed a rapid influx of information technology which in turn has boosted new forms of control. Used as a tool to enforce control, advances in computer based technology now enables management to constantly monitor staff through the use of CCTV, telephone call and keystrokes surveillance. Such surveillance can be either covert or overt in nature. For example, key card access to individual rooms and corridors may be introduced on the pretence of concerns for security, although this information may also have a dual function as it can provide management with details of specific employee movements during the course of the working day (Sturdy *et al.* 1992).

In respect of more overt and visible control techniques, quantitative and qualitative control methods are imposed on employees as managers are now able to continuously monitor the precise outputs of each employee. 'Work in call centres represents the latest phase in Taylorist developments, which attempts to elevate management control to new historical levels by target setting and monitoring, in real time, both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of employee performance,' (Bain *et al.*, 2002:173). The strict regimes operated by many call centres has received much media attention and has resulted in 'modern day call centres earning the sobriquet 'sweatshop.' (Seddon, 2004:21). Working in such intense environments, operatives are controlled in a very autocratic manner with managers performing both covert and explicit inspections. Electronic surveillance becomes the dominant mechanism of control which has rendered perfect the supervisor's power, thus eliminating the possibility of worker resistance, (Ferne and Metcalf, 1998). Interestingly, Bain and Taylor (2000) challenge the panoptican metaphor proposed by Ferne and Metcalf as a simplistic assumption that the monitoring of call centre workers thereby abolishes workers resistance.

Bain and Taylor (2000) report how call centre agents can intuitively anticipate when they are being observed and exploit supervisory inconsistency. Disputing the electronic panoptican, their research demonstrates how workers attempt to claw back control in highly prescribed working environments that are based on low trust relations and low task discretion. However, Bain and Taylor (2000:8) acknowledge that the case study organisation used in their research is not typical of the call centre sector although it does share many of the characteristics of centres at the highly routinised extreme of the 'quality-quantity' spectrum.

Many call centre operatives have little control over the office ergonomics. The organisation of desk space and direction, lighting and temperature, visual and acoustic privacy facilitates the control process as workers become subjected to the regimented work space and surroundings (Baldry *et al.* 1998). New ways of working, such as homeworking or remote working has the potential to eliminate the regularity of work space as employees can control the temperature in which they work, organise their work space to suit their own needs and eliminate or inject noise as appropriate. For example, some workers may prefer to work with a radio on in the background, but permission was not given when they were in the office. Whilst homeworkers are able to avoid the work building as a structure of control, advances in information technology and particularly electronic surveillance means managers are able to use video cameras to monitor self-discipline compliance and obedience amongst those without face-to-face interaction, (Sewell, 1998:415).

Working at home has the potential to extend monitoring and control from the workplace into the home, (Sturdy *et al.*, 1992:230), but from an employee's perspective, the opportunity to implement strategies to resist these control mechanisms (as described by Bain and Taylor, 2000) may be limited due to the lack of visibility and physical proximity of their manager or supervisor. Bain and Taylor (2000) highlight how call centre operatives learned, by observing their supervisors behaviour patterns, when they were about to be monitored. The Supervisor would plug in their headset and look around the room in the direction of where they were about to listen in on telephone calls. Call agents would also make use of the 'down-time' when their Supervisors and Managers were in a meeting.

Whilst homeworkers may be able to avoid the carceral gaze (Foucault, 1977) and find spaces to escape (Knights and McCabe, 1998), they can be at a disadvantage as they are unable to directly observe the behaviour patterns of their Supervisors and be informed when the management team are in meetings.

Unfortunately, the control ramifications of working at home are unclear (Olson, 1985) as limited research has been conducted in this area. Felstead *et al.* (2003) did engender new lines of research in the area of homeworking and management control, however subsequent research on homeworking has failed to supplement these findings. Further research will enhance this limited understanding and hopefully provide new insights and recommendations for the management of homeworkers. A detailed review of the existing literature on homeworking will be presented in the following sections.

### *All change?*

Over the past two decades, a proliferation of new ways of working such as freelancing, subcontracting, homeworking and outsourcing have arisen within the UK labour market. Consequently, the changes in organisational structures, demographic transformations and social values together with new information technologies, have according to Johnson (2004:722) begun to alter the role of managers with the need for a chameleonic manager being ever more present. Traditional control systems associated with hierarchies and chains of command are, in some organisations being substituted or replaced by organic-based processes and structures.



Management control still exists in the employment relationship, but through the utilisation of work practices such as empowerment and teamworking for example, the methods become less intrusive and obvious. Surveillance exists but in the form of self-surveillance, rather than direct managerial surveillance.

Conversely, in the service sector in particular, advances in computer based technology has propelled the use of electronic surveillance as a dominant mechanism of control. Essentially, the post-bureaucratic organisational forms, such as those operated by call centre employers, are no different from the theories emerging during the late capitalist era. 'It is unrealistic to suggest that there is something new occurring to work organisations at the basic organising principle,' (Watson, 2006:271). Smith and Thompson (1998:555) argue that the 'shadow of scientific management continues to fall over contemporary work organisations, reinforcing the view that greater managerial control is currently being exercised in the labour process.'

### *Influences on the rise of homeworking*

It is evident from the above discussions that significant structural changes and trends in management practice have occurred in the UK labour market as decentralisation has moved the UK from a manufacturing to a service sector economy. An increasingly competitive market, brought about by the dynamics of globalisation and advances in technology has seen an increasing use of non-standard or peripheral work arrangements (Kallenberg, 2001).

The impact of a global economy on the need for organisations to be available to customers during different time zones has prompted organisations to review their strategic direction and structures. In response, homeworking has become particularly appealing for employers who wish to increase their availability to current and potential customers. One of the reasons why this is feasible is due to the ability of communication technology to surpass the boundaries of the office. PDAs, Smartphones and Broadband connections allow employees to undertake their role within the confines of their own home or any other remote location. The decline in traditional industries (such as coal and steel) and the growth of the service sector has therefore resulted in a larger proportion of roles now being performed at home. Originally viewed as a role largely occupied by highly oppressed female workers undertaking manual tasks (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995), homeworking is now an option for a larger proportion of the labour market. A variety of social and economic changes have supported the growth of a different category of homeworker as high paid and highly skilled professionals can now work from home due to advances in technology and organisational development (Pieperl and Baruch, 1997).

In addition to the economic and technological changes, demographic trends are likely to continue to influence the appeal of more flexible working arrangements, such as homeworking. For example, working at home may allow an employee to juggle their caring commitments with their need to work. With the projected increase in the age of the population, this may be of particular interest to workers whom have caring responsibility for ageing relatives (Hakim, 2004).

Hodder and Stroughton (1999) support this view and identify homeworking as a method to retain trained staff who need flexible working arrangements to care for dependents.

The potential likelihood for employers, in having to consider the availability of homeworking, will undoubtedly also be influenced by legislative changes. In accordance with the Employment Act 2002, all employees with children under the age of 6 have a right to request flexible working arrangements from their employer. The Government has recently agreed to proposals that this should be extended to parents with children under the age of 16. When this is enforced, this could have huge implications on the increasing availability of homeworking, (Gribben, 2008).

Homeworking has also received much political attention due to the associated social and environmental issues as homeworkers report benefits of increased autonomy in balancing work and life as well as cutting out annoying and environmentally damaging commuting journeys (Tietze and Musson, 2003).

#### *Who works at home?- Definition and numbers*

Having considered the varying issues which have or may influence the rise in the numbers of people working from home, reports on the actual number of current homeworkers are hard to justify due to the difficulty in establishing an agreed definition. Differing terms such as teleworker, home-anchored worker (Wilks and Billsbery, 2007) remote worker and homebased worker are used interchangeably which therefore contributes to the confusion regarding the number of individuals who work at home.

Organisations also categorise homeworkers in different ways and with no single agreed definition, figures could be compiled on the basis of Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995) broad categories of what constitutes a homeworker or Felstead and Jewson (2000) restriction of the definition to include only industrial workers undertaking routine clerical tasks.

Justification of an increase in homeworking is problematic as 'robust statistical evidence is scarce,' (Felstead *et al.*, 2005:416). Whilst acknowledging that there is no single data source available which can truly estimate the number of homeworkers in the UK, Felstead *et al.* (2005:417) believe that the annual Labour Force Survey is a more accurate source of statistical data as participants have, since 1992, been asked to indicate their location of work. According to the Labour Force Survey, 2006, there are currently 268,964 employees who mainly work from home and a further 423,924 employees who work from home at least one day a week. The Office for National Statistics (2005) compiled these figures based on their belief that teleworking is intimately linked to the concept of homeworking and there define a teleworkers as someone 'who works in a location that is separate from a central workplace using telecommunication technologies to enable this.'

However, the CIPD (2007) indicate that for the purposes of the Labour Force Survey, the Office for National Statistics defines teleworkers as 'people who work mainly in their home or mainly in different places using home as a base, who use both a telephone and a computer to carry out their work at home.' Utilising this definition, the Spring Labour Survey (2005) undertaken by the Office for National Statistics, indicated that there were around 3.1 million people in the UK who worked mainly in their own home,

or in different places using home as a base. They suggest that the number of homeworkers in the UK has risen from 2.3 million in Spring 1997. The Spring Labour Force Survey also reports that 90% of teleworkers work in managerial, professional, associate professional and technical and skilled trade occupations.

However, these official figures may grossly underestimate the true extent of homeworking in the UK, as they fail to measure the contribution made by the 'hidden economy.' For example, Mitter (1986) argues that a decline in the officially recorded employees in the clothing industry was accompanied by a rise in the 'invisible' workforce whom mainly worked from home. The actual scope of homeworking may therefore significantly differ from these published counts. It is unfortunate that this category of homeworker is still struggling to obtain any form of employment status and are vulnerable to exploitation from unscrupulous employers (National Group of Homeworking, 2008). Discussing the content of the House of Commons Select Committee Report on Homeworking in 1908, Mr Fabian Hamilton MP, reignited the debate in Westminster Hall on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2008 to discuss the range of issues still affecting homeworkers some 100 years since the initial recommendations were published. The Government acknowledged that there is still a need to address the problems faced by vulnerable workers and have established the vulnerable worker pilots and vulnerable worker enforcement forum (Hansard, 2008).

Such exploitation is not new. Bythells' study (1978) of homeworking in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries concluded that the homeworker was insecure, exploited, undefended and often unnoticed. Involved in early industrialisation, basic production was performed at home by various members of one family. With erratic and demeaning patterns of work, these homeworkers were low skilled and prepared to work at subsistence wages.

Whilst such homeworkers are still in existence, (a view supported by the recent parliamentary debate), this study seeks to focus on the views of a differing category of homeworker, ones who do have protective employment rights. In this instance, all of the workers were employees of one specific organisation which has issued them with a contract of employment. In return for the fulfilment of this contract, these salaried homeworkers will undertake specified duties and have a clear reporting structure in terms of being assigned a Line Manager.

Supporting Baruch and Nicholson's (1997:16) definition of a homeworker as 'an employee who performs all or the greater part of their work from a domiciliary base, physically separate from the location of their employer,' the homeworkers involved in this study will be either:

1. An employee who works permanently at home.
2. An employee who works from home for the majority of their time with the occasional need to undertake work within client premises.

The distinguishing feature applicable to each of the 2 categories of homeworkers is that they are all working in a location which is separate from a central workplace, in addition they are physically independent of both their Line Manager and other work colleagues. They will use a personal computer in the course of their work and various telecommunication links to communicate with their line manager/supervisor and colleagues.

Accepting the definition and category of homeworker outlined above, the objectives of this research will therefore be:

1. To critically explore the practicalities of managing homeworkers, in order to assess the impact of this working arrangement on a manager's ability to exercise control.
2. To critically evaluate the experiences of homeworkers in respect of how they are managed and the specific challenges and benefits of working at home.
3. Compare and contrast the views of managers and homeworkers in order to identify any similarities and differences in the employment relationship.
4. To specifically examine the influence of a homeworker's job role, skill level and organisational type/size on a manager's ability to exercise control.

In partial fulfilment of objectives 1 and 2, the following sections will explore practical issues involved in managing homeworkers, together with individual reactions to and ability to cope with homeworking.

### **Managing employees who work at home**

Fostering the current mood to provide workers with autonomy, homeworkers may naturally become empowered due to the physical location of work within the home. This change in work location challenges the traditional nature of the employment relationship, as workers are, to some extent, free from the rigidity of traditional control mechanisms. Homeworkers are not under the direct gaze of their manager and consequently can have more control over their working patterns. The erosion of physical presence and visibility of homeworkers does put conventional management strategies under threat. The loss of workers' visibility is identified as one of the most serious consequences of managing home-based workers (Felstead *et al.*, 2003).

Split into two sections, the exploration of issues associated with the management of homeworkers will firstly consider the impact of the loss of visibility on a manager's ability to exercise control before assessing the affect of physical separation on the manager/homeworker relationship. Although discussed in isolated sections, the concepts are inherently linked and therefore some aspects will inevitably overlap.



## Visibility

### *Impact on a manager's identity*

The lack of visibility manifests itself on both sides of the employment relationship affecting both the manager and the employees. From a manager's perspective, the physical separation means that symbolic trappings of management are no longer visible to their staff. Visual cues such as a larger office with expensive furniture, a reserved space on the company car park, attendance at Board meetings and a dedicated Personal Assistant reinforce a Manager's status and power within an office environment. 'The way work space is ordered reproduces and reinforces hierarchical authority relationships within the organisations as, for example, the further up the hierarchy you are, the more space you have allocated, the more lavishly it will be decorated and furnished and, essentially, the more control you will have over its operation,' (Thompson and Warhurst, 1998:164).

Working at home, employees do not see these 'benefits' associated with hierarchical position and this may therefore affect the perception of seniority from their homeworking subordinates. Consequently less emphasis is placed on positional power. It may therefore be harder for managers to represent authority. The appearance of a manager plays a role in control in the workplace as formal dress communicates a role of command and authority, (Valsecchi, 2006:133). As homeworkers work in a completely different context this social image of managers becomes irrelevant. Does this therefore mean that the manager has to work harder to reinforce their status and gain respect?

Whether managers ultimately seek status is a much larger debate, but it is worth acknowledging how a manager of homeworkers may feel a diminished sense of prestige and a threat to their professional identity due to the physical separation from their members of staff.

### *Observation of performance and contribution*

- *Management Style*

Many managers may be uncomfortable at not being able to observe subordinates at work, as traditionally, presence in the office would signify that their employees were working. Ahshed (2004) believes that managers of remote workers need to relax and move from a mindset of physical presence to one of outcomes and clearly defined measures and objectives. Unfortunately, many managers of home workers fall into the trap of developing control mechanisms to check on what their employees are doing at home, rather than checking on the work being done. Research commissioned by both the City and Guilds and the Institute of Leadership and Management (2007) concluded that managers need to focus on measuring results rather than relying on checking that staff are present.

Of the 200 managers surveyed, 35% of Managers said that they needed to know when and where their employees are working. Paradoxically, 90% also said that they trust their employee's to manage themselves, although when further questioned, 29% of managers indicated that they need to monitor their employees' progress closely.

This indicates that they do not trust them to manage themselves. Unfortunately, the study has limitations due to the ambiguity regarding the sample selection. The City and Guilds only identify that 200 managers responded to their survey but little is known about the nature of their work, the size of the organisation and sector. Consequently the advice provided may not be applicable to the variety of organisations and job roles that are now working remotely. However, the inherent value of this research lies in the concurring proposition that trust should be a natural component of the employment relationship. The City and Guilds research concludes that managers of remote workers should be developed as leaders and consequently delegate responsibility to their team once initial direction has been provided. Favours McGregor's Theory (Y) assumption of human behaviour and the human relations approach whereby managers favour controls of a more indirect kind, Lucas (2000:12) argues that 'command and control are out. Consultation and communication are in ... The idea of a leader as an autocratic; domineering, opinionated character are fast becoming out-moded in industry. It doesn't fit with the new knowledge-driven economy where people expect to be consulted not commanded, nursed not nannied.' Inevitably some form of control will be required in order to ensure that the objectives of the organisation are being met, but the devolution of power to workers, due to the lack of visibility and presence, signifies the need for a change in management style.

Adopting a leadership perspective, managers of remote workers are recommended to focus their attention on people and abscond from mere monitoring of task completion. Hertel (2005) supports the need for managers of virtual teams to focus on leadership concepts and let go of traditional controlling practices to ones which coach and motivate

their workers. Nevertheless, the virtual nature of such an employment relationship will create a number of fundamental obstacles to the fulfilment of a leadership role.

At its most basic form, leadership concentrates on the need to both inspire people and get to know them and assumes that individuals are motivated by the need for affiliation. Inspiration and a degree of team spirit will be harder to engender as the leaders are unable to provide influence through their physical presence. Commenting on the differences between virtual and conventional working and leadership, Symons (2003) suggests that whilst the role of the virtual leader is more subtle and less authoritarian, it is essential for the leader to invest time in building the team and developing mutual trust.

Time dedicated to the formation and maintenance of relationships, is a luxury not often afforded to managers of remote working teams. Ideally, face to face contact would provide teams with the richness of communication, the availability of contextual cues and immediacy of feedback (Warkentin *et al.*, 1997:982) to support the creation of relationship links, but the geographical dispersion of team members means that managers are reliant on forms of electronic communication channels. It is not always feasible, due to time, location and costs, to regularly meet with the whole team on a face to face basis. The utilisation of email and internet based chat rooms may therefore be the only option. Whilst the use of such methods may, in time, lead to collaboration among the team, they lack the deeper kind of rapport that can be developed during face to face communication. Pauleen and Young (2001:196) argue that email communication is suitable for pure information exchange but is an ineffective method for facilitating social interaction and building relationships.

Where possible, face-to-face meetings should be encouraged to secure better working relationships and understanding. This is a view supported by Pricewaterhouse Coopers whose Head of HR Services stated that 'you can't underplay the social impact of being in the office and the power of having people working in teams face to face. That creativity is not easy to replicate over the internet', (Bland, 2007:44).

- *Individual input and trust*

The limited opportunity for remote teams to establish bonds through physical face-to-face contact will inevitably lead to relationships that take longer to mature.

Consequently trust will become fundamentally important. 'Trust develops through frequent and meaningful interaction, where individuals learn to feel comfortable and open in sharing their individual insights and concerns....' (Holton, 2001:36). The limited frequency of meaningful interaction places remote workers in a vulnerable position. The lack of personal familiarity means that both the manager and each team member will have to trust that each party will meet their specific obligations. Due to the lack of direct control, Holton (2001:37) argues that remote managers will need to substitute conventional control mechanisms with a higher level of trust in the relationship.

The development of clear goals and expectations are fundamental methods to building and maintaining trust. Acknowledged as a key concern for managers, trust and accountability are linked as having established specific expectations managers must ensure that such targets are met on time, in budget and at standard, (Robison, 2006:3). Vague goals and a lack of awareness of individual activities will erode trust and therefore the transparency of performance is essential. Managers must ensure that they and other team members are confident in the competence of the team. In order to do this, managers must make sure that there is a clear understanding of the contribution made by each party and the specific expertise they bring to the team. An office environment provides workers with the opportunity to see their colleagues in 'action' and develop a greater understanding of the activities they are undertaking. This is not feasible for remote workers and therefore it is important to replicate this with access to diary commitments, online success stories and general announcements concerning promotions, transfers and awards etc. However, if organised and maintained correctly, the use of IT as a tool to disseminate information, can enable managers to strictly control what information is exchanged and the particular timing of its release. Consequently the manager can ensure that the communication briefs are accurate, with the same consistent message being delivered to all members of the team, thereby avoiding the dangers of 'Chinese Whispers.'

- *Out of sight = Out of mind*

The need to keep abreast of changes, gossip and any shifts in priorities was considered by homeworking managers in a recent Microsoft research survey of more than 1000 workers (Gribben, 2008). The homeworking managers suggested that they felt more vulnerable at home and were therefore attempting to move back to the office to protect themselves against sudden job cuts. Whilst this survey reflects the attitudes of workers during a worrying period of potential economic downturn, the research reinforces the fear many homeworkers have in respect of being 'out of sight and out of mind.' The City and Guilds (2007) support this view as their research reported this as being a particularly pertinent issue. Managers fear that their remote workers may miss out on promotional opportunities due to their 'invisibility', (City and Guilds, 2007).

Being by passed by the grapevine and not being in the 'right place at the right time' will be frustrating for employees whose career aspirations include the need to climb the hierarchical ladder or develop new skills in more demanding roles. If career prospects begin to suffer as a result of being less visible in the workplace (Huws *et al.*, 1990), the lack of promotional opportunities may force their decision to leave the organisation. However, from an organisational perspective, homeworking is advantageous as it can assist organisations to retain trained staff, partly due to the lack of geographical constraints (IDS, Homeworking, 2005). In a conventional office environment, those fortunate enough to secure a promotion have to physically go where the new role dictates and subsequently relocate, not only themselves, but also their whole family.

Office workers who decide to accept a new role, have no control over the location of their work. In contrast, homeworkers have more control as there is no need to move where the organisation demands. The homeworker can undertake their new duties at their existing location, their home.

*Technology as a source of control: Homeworkers are never out of sight*

Supporting the view of Allen and Wolkovitz (1987) it would certainly be a mistake to suppose that working at home leads to fewer restrictions, increased autonomy and the end of supervision. Sophisticated communication technology now presents management with the opportunity to measure precise outputs and monitor the activities of homeworkers. The exact start times, logging off periods and even keyboard strokes per minute made by each employee can be accessed and analysed by managers. This is particularly pertinent for managers of home located call centre operatives. Quantitative control measures are imposed as managers are still able to monitor the number of calls taken and the total time the homeworker takes to complete a phone conversation with a customer. These autocratic management techniques can still be enforced upon home located call centre operatives. However, qualitative control measures are much harder to achieve. In-house operatives are instructed to follow a formally prescribed vocabulary and managers can monitor adherence with rewards given to those who comply and do not deviate from the 'script'. In a home located call centre environment, limited technology may prevent the manager from listening in on the call taken by individual operatives. In this situation, home located operatives can take control and ultimately decide for themselves if they wish to repeat the required sentences and follow the script entirely.



The manager has no way of knowing if the home located operative is adhering to the 'qualitative' rules (Valsecchi, 2006). Researching the experiences of managers of home located call centre operatives in Italy, Valsecchi (2006) observed the willingness of managers to overlook any violations of the 'quantitative' rules due to the fact that home located operatives were far more productive than their in house counterparts. The home located operatives became extremely self disciplined and consequently worked harder due to the 'threat' from management that any lapses in their performance would result in their return to the in-house call centre. Valsecchi's research supports the findings of Felstead *et al.* (2003) who concluded that very few homeworkers complained about the intrusiveness of such electronic surveillance techniques and consequently accepted these control methods.

#### *Feedback on performance*

The lack of visibility invariably means that a manager of homeworkers has to work harder to appreciate the individual strengths and weaknesses of the team and understand what 'makes them tick.' How can a manager provide staff with the opportunity to develop new skills, if they do not fully understand their current skill base and any career aspirations they may have? It is therefore imperative that the assessment of an individual's performance is not restricted to the views of only the manager. The adoption of performance reviews that use 360 degree feedback can help managers to better understand how members are performing. The views of other stakeholders can help to get a more accurate view of the workers performance, potential and development needs.

These stakeholders can act as the 'eyes and the ears' of the manager, thereby extending managerial control, (McCready *et al.*, 2001:14). Without these additional 'eyes and ears', for a manager it may appear that on the surface the employee is achieving all their targets and therefore has no specific areas of concerns. Observations in an office environment may be ever more telling, as although the same targets were achieved, the manager may have seen how the employee had to call on the goodwill of other colleagues and/or take work home with them in order to complete the work and meet the set deadline.

Managers of homeworkers can therefore only make a judgement of what they 'see' in terms of the actual output of that employee and any additional information received from other stakeholders such as team members and customers. The reciprocal nature of the psychological contract means that the manager of a 'non-visible' worker is ever more reliant on the employee's honesty in giving an accurate account of their performance and developmental needs. In receipt of such information, the manager will then be better placed to raise the profile of the employee when appropriate promotional vacancies occur or specific skills are being sought to undertake major projects.

Responsibility for the allocation and distribution of work enables a manager to gain control and in a homeworking environment a situation may present itself where preferential work is unfairly distributed to those workers who 'shout' loudest.

Homeworkers therefore need to take preventative measures to avoid such imbalance by pushing themselves forward and raising their own profile. However, to avoid conflict and ensure that homeworkers do not over or underestimate their contribution, it is essential that managers provide regular praise, where deserved, and acknowledge specific contributions.

Some homeworkers can feel anxious and ill-at-ease without the reassurance of feedback from locally present management and therefore any acknowledgement from their manager can be of great comfort (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997). The recognition and praise of individual or collective contribution or effort are existing methods used by organisations to sustain the psychological contract, but due to the physical separation they become ever more present. Concerned with the terms of exchange, the psychological contract, although unwritten, needs careful management due to its influential nature on the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1995). Continuous communication, the opportunity for employees to develop new skills and feel a sense of accomplishment, the involvement of staff in decision making and ensuring that employees feel valued are critical strategies employed by organisations to positively manage the psychological contract (Beardwell *et al.*, 2004). The analysis of communication tools such as bulletin boards and 'chat room' facilities will give managers a feel for the issues and problems facing the team (Joinson, 2002). Their participation in these 'virtual airing of concerns' can help to provide the team with encouragement and feedback and subtly instil a degree of control. Pettinger (2007:606) agrees that 'there is a control function inherent in the communication process which provides workers with feedback on their performance.' Evidently, this can be achieved through informal methods or through the formal performance appraisal scheme.

## Physical Separation

### *Communication and Control*

- *Replicating informal control methods*

Physical separation does present the manager with a challenge in terms of building a relationship with staff members with which they have little face to face contact. Gerke (2006:103) argues that managers of homeworkers need to be more deliberate in their attempts to build relationships and suggests that whilst the basics of managing remote workers are generally the same as those required to manage office based staff, there are some areas that require special attention and effort. For example, in an office environment building relationships happens subconsciously as managers chat with staff at the photocopier or ask questions about their family when observing photographs on their desks. In remote environments, such casual encounters do not occur and therefore managers will have to be deliberate about building relationships. Ward and Shabha (2001:63) also agree that communication methods, which replicate such corridor discussions, have to be consciously considered and planned by managers of remote workers. The office presents managers with greater opportunities to get to know their staff and therefore managers of homeworkers need to ensure that they dedicate time to speak to their staff about issues other than those directly concerning the business. Ward and Shabha (2001:63) go on to advise managers to telephone their staff just to ask how things are going, rather than wait until they have something specific to say. Furnham (2000:252) describes teleworkers as forgotten telecolonial people and suggests that the alienation of such workers inhibits people's natural need for social interaction.

Jahoda (1982:154) argues that work provides individuals with important social and psychological benefits, rather than pure economic gain and subsequently reduced interpersonal contact will have negative consequences. Impromptu telephone calls by managers, which replicate 'walking the shop floor' can help to meet these social needs whilst also instilling a subtle form of management control.

- *Receiving the 'total' message*

'While technology can replace some office functions, it cannot supersede them all,' (Furnham, 2002:242). Focusing on the views of teleworkers within one large organisation, Harris' (2003) research highlighted the impact of reduced face to face contact on problem solving ability. One teleworker reported how time could be wasted as 'we may be reinventing the wheel when in the past a five minute chat at the beginning of the day would have suggested a solution just by sharing our experiences,' (Harris, 2003: 431). Virtual communication was therefore less effective than direct contact in solving problems and understanding the challenges facing all members of the team. Online monthly communication briefs can help to fill a communication vacuum but Hertel (2005:73) argues that the use of such electronic media reduces the richness of information exchange compared to face to face communication. Helms and Raiszadeh (2002:245) agree that face to face communication remains a far richer media than email as in person conversations go beyond words to include attitudes and concerns that are expressed via body language, facial expressions and tone of voice.

As 80% of communication is deemed to be non-verbal (Wright, 2007), reduced face to face contact will make it harder for homeworking managers to pick up on the non-verbal signals his/her workers are displaying. They may therefore be missing some very key messages which are being projected to them.

Consequently, the manager may perceive the employee to be coping, when in fact they are experiencing difficulties. Physical distance and lack of visibility enables a homeworker to gain greater control over their 'side of the story.' The manager can only make a decision based on the words supplied in an email or the tone of voice during a telephone conversation. The use of these communication methods therefore provides the homeworker with an increased opportunity to project a certain impression and hide behind a 'veil.' In an office environment, this poker face may be easier to crack due to the manager being in receipt of a variety of non-verbal cues. To prevent such distortion managers must try to schedule regular one to one, face to face meetings which each member of their team, a crucial aspects of the homeworking manager's role. By doing so, the manager will be able gain a truer account of the employee's feelings as they are able to receive the total message, rather than the isolated 'virtual' elements.

Due to geographical dispersion, regular face to face meetings may not always be feasible and subsequently managers will have to implement a range of communication methods in order to 'converse' with their staff. Conference calls, video conferencing and email are important, but one must not underestimate the value of simply listening to staff during the course of a telephone call.

Managers may experience emotional outbursts when on the phone to an employee, or alternatively, the employee may not be particularly forthcoming and reserved. The Manager does not have the opportunity to put down the phone and go and speak to that employee in person, so they have to develop a different set of interpersonal skills in order to deal with the situation. Whilst the manager may have already received specific training in relation to counselling skills, the physical separation from their staff will require the manager to respond in a different way. It is therefore not surprising that 39% of the 200 remote workers surveyed by the City and Guilds and the Institute of Leadership and Management (2007) indicated that they need to develop better communication skills, particularly relating to their need to be a good listener and listen to what is said and also what it not said.

The inability of managers to enhance their communications via casual corridor encounters poses a tremendous challenge for those working remotely. Sophisticated communication technology improves the delivery speed of an email message and widens the availability of information via attachments etc, but care needs to be taken as the 'written word can be so much more harsh than the spoken word and consequently even a critique needs to be phrased positively,' (Joinson, 2002:45). Both Managers and employees need to get back to basics in terms of considering the content, tone and style of the email messages they send due to the many misinterpretations that can be made. Joinson (2002:46) goes on to point out that the first few messages sent set the tone for all other communications and therefore it is essential that ground rules are agreed at the outset of the employment relationship.

Overcoming the gaps left by the lack of face to face contact, an agreed etiquette can facilitate better relations between team members and between individuals and the line manager. Research undertaken by the Work Foundation for the IT giant Microsoft found that remote workers were desperate for an agreed etiquette and clarity of expectations from their managers as this would assist them in determining where work ended and their home life began (Tyler, 2007).

These comments highlight how agreed rules regarding when an employee can be contacted, a timeframe for responding to emails and the appropriate time for use of different communications mediums, can help all parties to balance their work and home life commitments. The employee is seeking to gain control of their work in order to prevent an 'overspill' into the private sphere of their life. If there is an expectation that the homeworker can be contactable all the time, especially outside of 'normal' office hours, then this can put increased strain on family harmony and may prevent the employee from disengaging themselves from work. An agreed timeframe for responding to emails is a useful ground rule for the manager to enforce, as facilitators of such teams often feel a loss of control when using email communication and describe being at the 'mercy' of the recipient (Pauleen and Yoong, 2001:196). If an agreement is made, then both parties are obliged to respond to the email within the agreed timeframe.

An email containing swear words, or one that slips into 'text speak' may be acceptable to some but to others the content could be totally unprofessional. The Manager needs to consider how the recipient will feel if sent an email containing a message typed in capital letters as this may be perceived to be aggressive or a virtual form of shouting.



Clearly, office workers will themselves receive emails which have left them thinking 'what an earth do they mean by that? Are they being sarcastic? I don't know why they are being like that' but they have the opportunity to seek clarification on a face to face basis. Managers of homeworkers therefore need to ensure that such communication is clear, concise and also timely. Gerke (2006:103) advocates the use of ground rules and advises managers to agree with each of their employees 1) the best way to contact them (email or phone), 2) preferred number for receiving telephone calls (mobile or land line) and 3) how best to contact the employee if there is an urgent issue. Each employee will have their own preferences and therefore discussions should take place which take into consideration individual circumstances. However, the preferences put forward by homeworkers, should be reasonable and realistic to avoid the manager from assuming a subservient role.

#### *Home visits: entering the employee's territory*

According to guidance produced on teleworking by The Department of Trade and Industry, 'staff who are using their homes for working have a right to privacy out-of-hours, and to be able to separate their working and home lives. Times when they can and cannot be contacted on work issues should be agreed' (2003:14). Consequently, the DTI also advise managers to only undertake home visits at times that are both agreed and acceptable to the homeworker.

Home visits can themselves invoke a whole range of potential problems as identified by Felstead *et al.* (2003). Although some manager's in their survey 'routinely noted how such home visits facilitated a closer inspection of the demeanour, attitude and circumstances of the worker' (2003:249), a number of the managers encountered specific dilemmas when entering the homes of their employees. The dilemmas ranged from feeling uncomfortable in asking to use the toilet, having to enter the employee's bedroom as this is where they worked and arriving when other members of the family were trying to eat. Felstead *et al.* (2003) consider how the 'intrusion' into an employee's home can cite feelings of uncertainty regarding power, authority and status in the interactions of managers and staff. The dynamics of the relationship shift as the manager becomes a visitor into the employee's territory and subsequently many of the manager's involved in the survey conducted by Felstead *et al.* (2003:250) 'frowned on home visits as potentially leading to embarrassing misunderstanding or as constituting an invasion of privacy.' This is particularly pertinent for managers visiting employees of the opposite sex as such misunderstandings could lead to all types of allegations relating to Sex Discrimination and harassment etc. To protect both parties, meetings on neutral territory, in public view or meetings in the usual head office environment are recommended.

Although an initial home visit may be required to undertake a risk assessment of the employee's working environment within the home (Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992) the purpose of any subsequent visits need to be carefully considered by the manager.

The adoption of other forms of surveillance techniques may negate the need for the manager to visit the employee at home, particularly if such visits are primarily used to check on work progress as opposed to concern regarding the welfare of the employee.

### *Cultural Control*

According to Helms and Raiszadeh (2002:243) 'the office is not only a place to work but also a place to socialise and to be socialised into the culture of the company.' The induction process is a method utilised by organisations to shape the identities of their employees through the identification and reinforcement of acceptable standards of behaviour. Any social interaction during the induction stages of employment not only familiarises the employee with the many formal aspects of the new organisation but importantly, also shapes the boundaries of what is acceptable or unacceptable norms of behaviour in terms of employee actions and demeanour. This statement is particularly relevant when considering the need for a new recruit to quickly learn, through the observation of others, the cultural and behavioural norms of the organisation. Informal methods of evaluating and accepting the culture of an organisation are dramatically reduced in a homeworking environment. The 'unofficial stories' often whispered during coffee breaks, are more telling of an organisations culture than the official versions passed on by Management.

The inability of homeworkers to have a 'chat' at the photocopier and/or water cooler prevents these employees from catching up on the comings and goings of the organisation and this can therefore restrict the new employee's sense of belonging and ability to identify with that organisation. Referring to Deal and Kennedy's model of Corporate Culture (1982), the 'Heroes' element of symbolising the company to the outside world, cannot be learnt through informal channels, it is therefore reliant on the formal messages provided by Senior Management.

Citing Stewart's (1991) 3 main forms of control (control by orders, control through standardisation & control through influencing how people think), managers of homeworkers do become more reliant upon formal methods of control which influence the way people think. Peer pressure, as a form of control, is limited due to the physical dispersion of colleagues and therefore formal methods such as the induction process, the inclusion of a 'Buddy' Scheme and any subsequent training courses are used by management to reinforce acceptable standards of behaviour etc. In a conventional office environment, such official messages provided by management are often supplemented by the collective interpretations of fellow workers. The emergence of informal groups, who naturally band together for support and to seek clarification, can often become a threat to management's ability to control, as workers unite together and work against the interests of management by resisting change initiatives (Martin, 2005:219). However, as managers can physically see these cliques forming, it can be easier to establish who holds the power within the informal group. Approaching the 'leader', the manager can then try to get them on side to facilitate the acceptance of change by the rest of the group.

In contrast, a manager of homeworkers cannot directly observe the formation of such cliques. Membership will be less than apparent and subsequently, managers will have to make a conscious effort to ascertain who the key players are within their groups of subordinates. Reliant on their own fact finding, as opposed to direct observations, homeworking managers will need to subtly monitor the significance of their existence to ensure the 'power' of the informal groups does not begin to work against the interests of the organisation. Nevertheless, in a homeworking environment, informal groups may have limited significance as homeworkers can struggle to develop personal relationships due to the limited opportunity for these employees to meet and get to know each other. Whilst the restricted rise of informal groups may at first appear to be beneficial, from a management control perspective, employers may still decide to promote informal groups due to their positive function.

The exchange of knowledge and experience within these informal groups can be beneficial to both employees and employers and therefore management may try to encourage the formation of virtual Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Through involvement in the 'Community' workers will automatically ingress in the collective knowledge and equally acquire the tacit knowledge of practices that need to be engaged in to legitimate individual identity with that particular group. According to Bruner (1996:44), members learn to be, rather than just learning about. This involvement can aid commitment and also improve the performance of the group as workers share ideas and practices with each other. Unfortunately, motivating individual members to participate in virtual Communities of Practice can be difficult.

Citing the research of Williams (1999), Newell *et al.* (2002:126) identified that 60% of the online Communities sampled by Williams (1999) reported 'achieving member participation was a significant challenge, and difficult-to-use technology created hurdles for about 40%.' Quite clearly, homeworkers participation in a Community of Practice will be restricted if technology does not enable them to informally share ideas and knowledge. Access to online instant messaging services such as MSN can make it easier for homeworkers to stay in touch with each other and acknowledge the issues facing the 'Community,' but as previously stated, individuals cannot be forced to contribute.

Having appraised the myriad of issues which restrict, alter and also support a manager's ability to exercise control in a homeworking employment relationship, the following section will review the impact of this working practice on the individual homeworker.

## **Working at home**

### *Suitability and Preparation*

'Teleworking only really makes sense with the right job, the right person, the right reason and the right boss,' (Holland and Hogan, 1999:83). However, the decision regarding the availability of homeworking rarely takes into account all of the four factors identified by Holland and Hogan (1999). Furnham (2000:248) suggests that the very people who should be undertaking teleworking are often reluctant to do so due to their fear of being 'invisible' and postulates the suitability of teleworking for ambitious, self disciplined and conscientious individuals as opposed to what he calls the 'quality of life brigade' or those employees whom are near to retirement. Whether homeworking is imposed on or sought by the employee, it is imperative that time is taken to prepare such individuals for the change in work location. An assessment of the job, the person, the home working location and the required management aspects can help to alleviate teething problems, long term concerns and costly misunderstandings. For those new to the organisation, the DTI (2003:22) suggests that such preparation should include an initial period working within the office environment before working remotely. The DTI argue that a face to face induction period will enable the worker to firstly familiarise themselves with the organisation and secondly become acquainted with their many work colleagues. The positive aspects of adopting this recommendation, from a management control perspective, have been considered in the previous section. However, the apparent employee benefits will also become evident as the drawbacks of homeworking are considered in more detail.

For workers who are already employed by the organisation but are new to homeworking, the perception of being abandoned by management (Harris, 2003) is greatly enhanced if employees are just issued with an 'information pack and then packed off home to get on with it,' (Harris, 2003:425). Time needs to be invested in explaining the pros and cons of homeworking to enable the employee to mentally prepare themselves for the change and to allow them time to consider how this working practice may effect them and/or their family. Consequently, when they first encounter one of the identified drawbacks, such as the possibility of feeling isolated, it will come as less of a shock and the employee will also know how to react to that experience. Cary Cooper, cited in Garrett (2002) strongly recommends employers to provide training on how to work from home, on issues like managing work versus home life, and setting up rules for their families. In receipt of this additional information, the employee can then make an informed decision regarding their suitability to home working.

An IDS HR Study of Homeworking (2005:2) urges organisations to make careful selection decisions as 'not all jobs or employees are suited to homeworking (those who cannot work independently or who are naturally gregarious may find working in isolation at home difficult).' As this study suggests, personality can play a significant part in the ability of employees to adapt to homeworking. Extroverts, who relish social interaction may become deprived 'from the absence of a collegial community,' (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997:23). The research conducted by Baruch and Nicholson (1997) is significant as it identifies the personal qualities homeworkers need to be effective in that environment. The top three qualities were self motivation, ability to work alone and tenacity. When asked what would hinder the success of homeworking, respondents



mentioned the need for a social life and the need for supervision as uncondusive qualities.

### *The location of workspace within the home*

In conjunction with an evaluation of the personal attributes required for homeworking, Unison (2002) highlight the need to also assess the physical location within the home that the employee wishes to use to undertake their work. Complying with relevant Health and Safety Legislation, a risk assessment should be conducted together with an ergonomic review as per the Display Screen Equipment Regulations (1992) - (if the employee is required to use a computer to undertake a significant part of their duties). The purpose of such assessments are to ascertain if the employee's home is conducive to homeworking. The organisation of work space within the home can significantly influence the success of homeworking, both from an organisational perspective in terms of performance and also from the employee's view with regards to family harmony and other work-life balance issues. Having the opportunity to physically detach yourself from other areas of the home is a luxury not afforded to all due to lack of actual space. Although, working in a separate room may help employees to 'recreate the spatial categories of work and home under one residential roof' (Felstead *et al.*, 2005:111), some homeworkers may have to adopt a 'Juxtaposition' (Felstead *et al.*, 2005) whereby their work is performed in a corner of a bedroom or 'marooned in the middle of a domestic world,' (Felstead *et al.*, 2005:113).

*Impact on family members and co-residents*

Unfortunately, this type of working environment can negatively affect the homeworkers ability to reconcile the competing demands of work and home and ultimately prevent them from disengaging from work activities (Doskoch, 1997). The feasibility of a separate work area becomes ever more apparent for homeworkers who share their home with others, be that family members or tenants etc. In these circumstances, the homeworker will need to take into account the spatial needs of other household members (Sullivan, 2000). The house is still their home and the implications of working at home, within the confines of a shared territory, needs to be carefully considered. Some family members and also homeworkers themselves report feeling as though they have lost part of their home (Felstead *et al.* 2005 and Sullivan, 2000), the home is no longer a place to escape to as the two worlds of home and work become entwined. The spare room is no longer a place for visitors to stay or the dining room cannot be used to entertain guests, as these rooms are now occupied by the homeworker. Negotiations will need to take place with co-residents if the work area is to be shared. Rules can be agreed which dictate the times when the work station is not available to co-residents, but lack of space and/or other computer equipment will result in shared access at other times of the day.

Not only does Homeworking place restrictions on space, but it can also restrict behaviour. Capturing the views of co-residents of homeworkers, Sullivan (2000) identifies how homeworking 'impinges on the freedom of other family members to make noise or act in a spontaneous and uninhibited manner,' (Sullivan, 2000:187).

Co-residents may think twice when wanting to play loud music or undertaking household chores, when they know that this may disturb the person working at home. Keen to maintain their professionalism, some homeworkers become frustrated when background noise, such as children screaming, effects their concentration and may also give a negative impression to the customer or work colleague on the other end of the phone. This issue is particularly pertinent as such instances may 'add fuel to the fire' as office workers often have the perception that homeworkers are 'slackers' who are less productive (Felstead *et al.*, 2003). However, organisations such as the AA would argue against this as they have found their home based workers to be 1 and a half times more productive than their equivalent office based staff (Personnel Today, 2004). BT also report that their homeworkers are between 15 and 31% more productive and can handle up to 20% more calls a day than their office based colleagues (IDS, Homeworking, 2005:4).

#### *Increased access to work and to the homeworker*

The reason for this boost in performance may be due to the increased accessibility of work. Limited access to an office building due to specific opening hours, can inhibit the hours a conventional office worker can work. A homeworker has the opportunity to work at times more suitable to themselves as they are not asked to physically stop work by the security guard who is keen to lock up the office block. A person who is naturally more alert in the mornings or evenings, can find a working pattern that is more appropriate to their individual circumstances and preferences.

The homeworker can gain control by establishing their own routine and making work fit around their other non-work commitments. For example an employee may decide to spend time with their children when they come home from school and therefore work extra hours in the evening to compensate.

Arguably this flexibility is appealing, but homeworkers need to be mindful that their working day does not become too flexible in terms of never actually getting started or extended to cover a significant proportion of the day. Homeworkers can regularly work longer hours and forget to take a break 'due to the lack of the customary routines and signals from others which mark the rhythm of the working day at the office,' (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997:22). In an office environment stimulus to have a break is provided by work colleagues and also by direct instruction from management. At home, there is no one to tell you to stop working or to have a break, so the homeworker needs to be incredibly self-disciplined. Unison (2002) reminds employers of their obligation to ensure that training is provided to homeworkers to ensure that they know the necessity to take regular breaks and also to stretch and change position when working at a desk or computer. The requirements of the Working Time Regulations (1998) will require managers to monitor the working hours of employees and therefore homeworkers should not be forgotten. The homeworker will need to provide an accurate account of the hours worked each week, although individual organisations may have different methods of recording and collating this data.

The presence of an office in a home can be a temptation to work all the time and to be accessible at all times. Concerned with the lack of visibility homeworkers may seek to re-establish their visibility by 'engaging in some form of display behaviour,' (Felstead *et al.*, 2003:246). Sending emails early in the morning or late at night is a signal to others that work is being undertaken. Felstead *et al.* (2003) also found how homeworkers would be inclined to carry their phone with them at all times, including when going to the toilet, just in case it rang. Ward and Shabha (2001) denote the need for homeworkers to retain a sense of balance in order to preserve their self-esteem and productivity. They suggest that, where possible, homeworkers should replicate the patterns of the office environment and not feel guilty in taking time to go and have a cup of coffee and a chat with a neighbour. Unfortunately, this sense of balance can be harder to achieve as often, when someone starts to work from home, friends and family 'see them as available and make demands upon their time with frequent interruptions,' (Bricknell, 1995:28). If the homeworker fails to be assertive with such visitors and demands on their time, the working day can soon extend by several more hours than originally intended.

Practical steps therefore need to be employed by the homeworker to establish a routine and signal to others (and themselves) that they are working. Enlisting particular symbolic and material referents (Tietze, 2005) such as wearing particular clothes associated with the formality of work (for example a suit or tie) and adopting morning routines (shower then breakfast), the homeworker can persuade themselves that they are at work.

Tietze (2005) identified how such acts can be useful indicators to other household members that work is being undertaken and therefore the person is not available. Such acts include the use of a traffic light system to highlight when the homeworker can definitely not be disturbed or the symbolic opening and shutting of a door.

### *Identity*

Gaining acceptance and an understanding of these rules can be much more difficult for Homeworkers with young children. As the worker is physically at home, their identity is associated with that of a father or mother. Toying with the convergence of two identities, homeworkers can often find it harder to establish which identity should take precedence over the other. Should they be a father/mother or an employee first and foremost? (Tietze, 2005). Demarcation between the two identities becomes harder and adopting Parkinson's (1996) analogy of a 'fuzzy border' between work and home activities, the presence of work within the home can actually reveal the other side of an individual's identity. Partners of homeworkers may have never seen their loved one in 'work mode' before and this can be very shocking as they start to see a different side to their personality (Sullivan, 2000). Altering their behaviour and tone of voice, the homeworker may automatically continue to adopt their business demeanour when speaking to their partners after a particularly 'challenging' telephone conversation with their boss/customer.

Assessing the impact of homeworking on co-residents, Sullivan (2000) established that the integration of work and family can be a major source of conflict. Her research provides particularly telling examples of the negative impact business calls can have on family members who become annoyed when subjected to abrupt and rude tones from the homeworker's work colleagues or customers and being continually asked to assist the homeworker with their work (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001:137).

*Under the watchful eye*

Free from the direct gaze of their line manager, homeworkers become increasingly visible to family members who can (consciously or unconsciously) observe the working patterns of their partner/father/mother. Whilst this might divulge specific behaviour patterns of the homeworker, it also allows the 'comings and goings' of the household to be observed by the homeworker. Unable to conceal the truth, family members may resent the fact that they cannot hide. Family members therefore become exposed under a new kind of surveillance (Felstead *et al.*, 2003). The surveillance may be in relation to the undertaking (or not) of domestic tasks which itself can be a bone of contention in homeworking households. Although the distribution of domestic work within the family invariably stays the same, irrespective of whether the man or woman works at home (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001), due to the fact that the home environment is often associated with femininity, the undertaking of work within the home can threaten the traditional identity of men (Huws *et al.*, 1996).

Marsh and Musson (2008:35) echo this sentiment that 'by bringing work into the home, teleworking fathers are not only inhabiting a gendered space, but also an emotional context which has previously been held to be largely for women only.' As such, they may feel pressurised to undertake specific domestic duties as they are at home during the day. Some men may feel uncomfortable with this as they believe such tasks to be particularly 'feminizing.'

In contrast, many women find that homeworking reinforces their traditional identity in respect of the allocation of domestic work as they attempt to combine work and domestic life. Arguably this may be the very reason why women decided to work from home (Olson and Primps, 1984) as it has been established that women are more likely than men to swap rapidly between domestic and work tasks (Haddon and Silverstone, 1993 cited in Sullivan and Lewis, 2001:138). Homeworking provides workers (particularly females) with the opportunity to utilise the flexibility of their location to balance their work and family commitments but for some, feelings of guilt and frustration are often experienced, which results in more elastic temporal boundaries, (Tietze and Musson, 2003). With limited restrictions imposed, the autonomy associated with homeworking can be arduous. 'A certain amount of flexibility can be useful, but for some, too much flexibility can lead to a loss of the ability to control overzealous work tendencies, (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001:127). Choice brings decisions, and for some homeworkers, the wrong decisions can negatively affect their performance, their health or the family life.



The reality of homeworking maybe far from their original expectations as the mingling of work and domestic tasks becomes chaotic with stability only being maintained by those who 'revert back to clock based temporal order,' (Tietze and Musson, 2003:446). In a conventional office environment there is a distinction between the employer's time and the employee's time (Thompson, 1967). The 'clock' becomes the mechanism of control and therefore homeworkers may decide to adopt such bureaucratic rules and use the clock based approaches of time to regulate access – both from work and family. Tietze and Musson (2003:449) identified how home-based teleworkers replace external default signals with their own internalised time disciplines and in essence have to become their own watchers and keepers.

Unfortunately, whilst trusted workers were allowed to watch themselves, not all homeworkers could be trusted (Felstead *et al.* 2003) as their home working environment can be too relaxing (Ward and Shabha, 2001). Continually slipping into 'home mode' and without the terrors associated with conventional office-based work, such as internal competition and the need to impress people, work and behaviour patterns may be more difficult for the homeworker themselves to control. In an office environment, opposite activities are employed in order for a balance to be maintained. Visits to the vending machine at 11am or going to the pub on a Friday, are all attempts to restore a sense of balance and fulfil individual social needs. Working at home, these social aspects of office life are taken away and homeworkers may seek to replace this with telephone calls to their friends or extended lunch breaks in order to meet with other family members.

Replacing the internal support networks, the friends and family members of homeworkers may themselves become a source of support regarding work activities. Unable to bounce ideas with work colleagues on a face to face basis (Ward and Shabha, 2001), friends and family are used as substitutes to generate opinions and possible solutions. Keen to share successes and churn over failures, this spillover of work issues into the domestic sphere, may negatively effect family relations and increase family related stress (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997) if family members feel obliged to offer their support. No longer able to use the average commute of between 30 to 60 minutes (24/7 Work Life Balance Survey, 2007) as an ideal time to wind down and review the events of the day, family members receive the full examination of the issues which are agitating the homeworker as the commute becomes a simple step from one room to another.

Without the need to commute to work, BT estimates that their homeworkers save £9.7 million per year on travel costs which has also helped the organisation to reduce the levels of sickness absence in the organisation by an average of 5 to 6 days (IDS, Homeworking, 2005:15). BT report that the perpetual sharing of germs within an office environment and the tiring journey to and from work, can leave many office workers susceptible to illness. Working within the confines of their home, homeworkers are more inclined to undertake work tasks even when they may be feeling a bit under the weather. By not having to report in sick, the homeworker's pay is not affected and due to the flexibility of their role, they can gain control of their working patterns by maybe working later in the day when feeling better.

Who's in control in a homeworking environment?

The lack of physical presence and the loss of workers' visibility presents the manager's of homeworkers with specific challenges and constraints. With limited or no opportunity to represent their authority on a face to face basis, the professional identity of the manager is threatened as the symbolic trappings of management are no longer visible to their staff (Sankowsky, 1995; Valsecchi, 2006). Free from the direct gaze of their manager, homeworkers are, to some extent, free from the rigidity of traditional control mechanisms and consequently have more control over their working patterns. In response, specific strategies can be employed by those managers who wish to maintain the balance of power and/or are unwilling to relinquish their control. Using the selection and induction process to reinforce acceptable standards of behaviour, the agreement of specific ground rules regarding acceptable response and contact times and the utilisation of enhanced communication skills (Ward and Shabha, 2001), managers of homeworkers can attempt to replicate existing in-house control methods. Physical separation may warrant the evolvement of trust in the employment relationship but advances in technology also present management with the opportunity to continue the surveillance of their subordinates in a virtual manner. Termed the 'technological whip of the electronic age' (Fodness and Kinsella, 1990) electronic surveillance techniques can be more controlling and autocratic than those associated with conventional office environments. Due to the perceived advantages and benefits of working at home, workers may accept the use of such electronic surveillance techniques and therefore not object to the 'Big Brother' philosophy adopted by their organisation.

Accepting and predicting the ability of management to control (to a large or lesser extent) their working patterns, homeworkers can also be presented with unforeseen sources of control due to the location of work within their home. The organisation of work space within the home can significantly influence the worker's ability to maintain the boundary between work and non-work activities. The lack of physical space, the need for shared access, interruptions from and the behaviour of family or co-residents can prevent the worker from gaining control of their working hours and patterns.

Unable to disengage from work activities due to increased accessibility of work and the lack of stimulus to have a break, homeworkers can find it harder to achieve a sense of balance as work begins to take control of 'their time.' Whilst avoiding the direct gaze of their line manager, homeworkers do become increasingly visible to family members which itself can be a major source of conflict for both parties. Whilst the employee may have envisaged the positive influence of homeworking on family harmony and their ability to balance work and life commitments, the reality of homeworking can come as a surprise if specific strategies are not employed to overcome such obstacles.

### Summary of existing research

What is apparent from the above discussions regarding the organisational and social demands of homeworking, the impact of this working practice on a manager's and/or employee's ability to exercise control, and the perceived benefits and drawbacks of working from home, is the viability and value of homeworking as a research area.

Research undertaken by Felstead and Jewson (2000) thrust the concept of homeworking into the academic arena and engendered the beginning of new lines of research.

Adopting a broad focus, their research sought to bring together the differing facets of homeworking which had previously been considered in isolation (Huws, 1984 and Hakim, 1985). Subsequent research has concentrated on addressing the distinct areas that Felstead and Jewson (2000) intimated were worthy of further investigation.

Such successive pieces of research have focused on the psychological and social aspects of homeworking from the perspective of the employee (Ward and Shabha, 2001), together with the consequences of homeworking on work and family boundaries (Sullivan, 2000 and Tietze and Musson, 2003). Sullivan and Lewis (2001) and Marsh and Musson (2008) have analysed the specific issues of gender roles and identity in a homeworking environment and identified how homeworking can perpetuate traditional family and work roles. Whilst the managerial challenges and dilemmas associated with homeworking and virtual teams have been considered by Harris (2003) and Helms and Raiszadeh (2002), relatively few studies have explored the phenomenon of homeworking in relation to the experiences of both managers and home-based workers. Felstead *et al.* (2003) study sought to redress this imbalance by assessing both the techniques and strategies deployed by managers when supervising homeworkers and exploring the perspectives of the employees in terms of how they are managed. Clearly, their findings are significant as they disclose the varying surveillance techniques used by managers to compensate for the lack of visibility of their workers and conversely the views of these home located workers regarding these control mechanisms.

Although Felstead *et al.* (2003) concluded that these techniques had limited effectiveness, further research is required to ascertain if their findings are unique to their specific case studies and the time period of the research.

Whilst homeworking was evidently not in its infancy in 2003, five years on, further research will help to determine if the practicalities of managing homeworkers and advantages and potential drawbacks of working at home are now more widely understood by both Managers and homeworkers. This research will therefore seek to build on the existing study conducted by Felstead *et al.* (2003) by exploring the effects of this working practice on manager's ability to exercise control. Previous research has largely treated homeworkers as a homogenous group, thereby neglecting to explore the differences in the nature of homeworking and the influence of job role, skill level and organisational size on a manager's ability to exercise control. By providing such distinctions, this research will address this gap and consequently add value to the academic arena. The findings of this research will also be of value to employers of homeworkers and to those employees who work at home.

Mindful of the above, the objectives of this research are therefore:

1. To critically explore the practicalities of managing homeworkers, in order to assess the impact of this working arrangement on a manager's ability to exercise control.
2. To critically evaluate the experiences of homeworkers in respect of how they are managed and the specific challenges and benefits of working at home.
3. Compare and contrast the views of managers and homeworkers in order to identify any similarities and differences in the employment relationship.
4. To specifically examine the influence of a homeworker's job role, skill level and organisational type/size on a manager's ability to exercise control.

The following chapter will describe the methodological approach used to address the above objectives and overall research question: 'How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?'

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

Having undertaken a review of the literature pertinent to this research, this chapter will describe the methodological approach and provide a justification for the methods employed.

Split into five sections, the chapter will begin by discussing the overall research design and chosen approach. Ethical considerations and the specific data collection methods employed will then be identified. The penultimate section will highlight the methods of analysis with specific limitations being addressed in the final part of this chapter.

#### **Research Approach and Design**

When considering the various methods used to collect and analyse data and the techniques available, the researcher needs to consider the purpose of the research, the timescales available, their own philosophical viewpoint and the possible outcomes.

The philosophical underpinning to this research concurs with a phenomenological perspective. As such, the researcher acknowledges the complexities of human behaviour and the social world. As humans are heterogeneous in nature, attempts to explain a phenomena through statistical data, often ignores the 'meaning' associated to it by the participants who experienced it.



Consequently, the researcher seeks to understand why people behave in a particular way and how people make sense of their world. Aligned with the exploration of prominent propositions, the researcher wishes to observe and inspect any emerging patterns and apply these findings to the relevant theoretical concepts.

Using the researcher's philosophical persuasion as a foundation to this research, time was then taken to carefully consider the data sample, how access could be negotiated, the differing methods of data collection, approaches to the analysis of such data and of course time restrictions.

Mindful of the definition of a homeworker (as identified on page 37), investigations were made to locate homeworkers matching this definition. Many individual homeworkers (who worked for a variety of different organisations), were known to the researcher and consideration was given to their use as a possible random sample.

Whilst a large number of homeworkers were quite happy to be involved in this study, gaining the consent of their individual line managers may have proved to be quite difficult. In order to answer the overall research question and the specific objectives, it was imperative to obtain the views of both managers and homeworkers. A purely one-sided approach, which only captured the views of managers OR homeworkers, would limit the value of the research as the views of one party would be neglected. Obtaining the opinions of the two sides of the employment relationship would allow the researcher to acquire a truer evaluation of the impact of homeworking on a manager's ability to exercise control.

To address research objectives 1, 2 and 3, any case study organisations agreeing to participate in this research would therefore have to a) manage homeworkers, b) employ homeworkers and c) grant the researcher access to both parties.

In order to assess the influence of a homeworker's job role, skill level and organisational size on a manager's ability to exercise control (research objective 4), attempts were also made to locate organisations who matched these explicit requirements. A search criterion was therefore established in order to find organisations who matched all of the prerequisites. The organisations agreeing to participate in this study would therefore need to differ in size. The search criterion included specific requirements related to the size of the organisation, i.e. number of homeworkers. Efforts were made to locate two employers of homeworkers. One which employed relatively few homeworkers, i.e. less than a 100, and another who employed a large proportion of homeworkers, i.e. more than a 1000 workers. In addition, the search criterion included the need to locate organisations who not only differed in size, but also in terms of the job roles undertaken by their homeworkers and the subsequent skill level required by these homeworkers to fulfil the requirements of their role. The search focused on locating organisations whom a) employed low skilled homeworkers (categorised as individuals undertaking routine repetitive work tasks which required no previous experience and specific qualifications) and b) high skilled homeworkers (categorised as professionally qualified individuals undertaking complex and challenging work tasks).

The decision to use a comparative research design was, at first, a very frustrating experience as gaining access to two different sized organisations proved to be quite a challenge. Initially, two very similar small organisations agreed to take part in this study. Whilst the researcher was delighted to find two organisations willing to participate in this research, this sample would not be appropriate as comparisons could not be made between the two organisations. The search therefore continued to locate a larger organisation employing homeworkers with differing skill levels and job roles. Securing the agreement of larger organisations was much harder with many quickly declining the request to be involved. It took many months of exploration before an agreement was reached with a larger organisation.

In the end, contacts and acquaintances of family friends proved to be invaluable, as they kindly made initial enquiries to establish the feasibility of such research being undertaken within an organisation known to them. Having 'tested the water' and ultimately putting in a 'good word', a very large organisation agreed to participate in this research. Whilst, to a certain degree, the final choice of organisations involved in this study was down to luck in gaining their consent to take part in this study, the research design was focused on obtaining a purposive sample (Bryman, 2004:334) of respondents which would enable the researcher to seek the views of participants relative to the overall research question and individual research objectives. As a consequence, this study does not claim to address the views and experiences of the whole population of homeworkers, only those relating to the focused sample as identified in the specific objectives.

Whilst the adoption of a case study approach may limit the generalisation of the research findings to the defined population of 'homeworkers', its value as an approach lies in the robustness of the knowledge produced. The findings will offer some concrete reality to the specific situation, which managers and homeworkers can hopefully utilise to inform their decisions and choices in a homeworking employment relationship.

### Case study organisations involved in the research

Access was eventually negotiated with two organisations.

#### **Company Red** – Small employer of homeworkers performing low skill tasks

Company Red employs 14 data input clerks who permanently work from home. All 14 homeworkers previously undertook their role within the conventional head office environment before volunteering to work from home. Working for different departments, 3 managers and 4 supervisors are responsible for these homeworkers. The managers and supervisors are all office based. All homeworkers live within 20 miles of the company's head office and are required to attend a bi-monthly team meeting with their manager and fellow homeworkers.

In respect of their duties, the work is repetitive. The clerks are required to input data onto the company's computer system via their broadband connection. The connection is password protected. The clerks work a set number of hours each day, depending on their contract and have hourly input targets to achieve. This target is slightly less per hour than the equivalent office based data input clerk.

Following the pilot scheme, it was noticed that the internet connection was slower off site, thereby preventing the clerks from achieving the same target as they would have if working within the office. The logging on and off times for each homeworker is regularly monitored and the manager has the facility to monitor the actual screens the homeworkers are working on and the actual input times, i.e. how long they are taking to input each individual record. In addition, quality checks are completed on random samples of the homeworkers work. Office based clerks are also subjected to the same process.

**Company Yellow** – A large employer of homeworkers who undertake specialist and highly skilled work roles.

Company Yellow employs over 3000 homeworkers. As ICT professionals, these employees work from home for the majority of their time but occasionally undertake work within their client's premises. These highly skilled individuals undertake a variety of assignments and are used to autonomous working patterns. With a vast geographical dispersion, face-to-face meetings between homeworkers and their line manager can be as little as two or three times a year. The majority of line managers work from home. Although homeworking is not a mandatory requirement, managers encourage their staff to work from home as a proportion of their budget has to be allocated to those employees who decide to occupy dedicated office space. If employees decide to work at home, then a larger proportion of the manager's budget can be used for other purposes. Consequently, Company Yellow has seen a 50% increase in homeworking since 2004.

A manager, with two deputies, responsible for 28 homeworkers, agreed to participate in this research. The 3 managers and the whole team of homeworkers are vastly geographically dispersed. Of the 3 managers, one is now based in South Africa for 12 months, another is fairly local in Warwickshire, England and the final manager is based in Yorkshire. Of the 28 homeworkers, the dispersion ranges from Scotland, into Wales, a few in the North of England and a number in the South of England and only one in Northern Ireland.

Whilst these homeworkers are geographically dispersed, the nature of their work requires them to work in teams to provide their clients with the technical service and support they require. These virtual teams change on a fairly frequent basis as the homeworkers move on to other projects working with different colleagues. These colleagues can be based here in the UK and also abroad. For each project they are involved in, their work is overseen by a manager responsible for that particular task. This manager will change as the projects change. In addition, the homeworkers report into a line manager who is responsible for conducting a review of their performance, general welfare and career prospects etc. The homeworkers are required to submit a weekly timesheet to their line manager. This timesheet is submitted online and outlines the number of hours/days spent on a project that week. Homeworkers are also obliged to continually update their Curriculum Vitae which can be viewed by all employees of Company Yellow via the company intranet. This information is used to ascertain which homeworker is best suited to the particular projects that come on board. The electronic recording of hours worked, the requirement to update their CV and also to submit any expenses in a timely manner are all mandatory tasks.

If these tasks are not performed it will negatively influence their annual pay increase.

The company's performance management system is linked to pay.

Whilst the employees at Company Red and Company Yellow may undertake dissimilar roles and work for a different size of employer, the common feature lies in the fact that all homeworkers of both Company Red and Company Yellow work in a location separate from their organisation's central or local office place. None of them have allocated desk space within the office environment and in terms of their contract of employment, are classified as homeworkers. In addition to the physical separation from their work colleagues and also their line managers, face-to-face contact is very limited.

Having identified the two case study organisations who were willing to provide the necessary access and opportunity to collect data, time was then taken to further explore the differing methods of data collection.

Mindful of the purpose and nature of the research, i.e. to explore individual perceptions and experiences of the impact of homeworking on a manager's ability to exercise control, the researcher was ultimately drawn to the use of qualitative methods. With an emphasis on 'meaning, experiences (often verbally described), descriptions and so on' (Coolican, 1990:36) a qualitative approach will help to inform 'how' people feel and 'why' they feel the way they do, as opposed to obtaining quantifiable data which will identify 'how many' and 'what' has taken place. For example, a researcher seeking to identify how many homeworkers feel more in control of their work, would utilise quantitative methods.

However, if the researcher wants to fully understand why the homeworkers feel they are more in control of their work and how this working effects their relationship with their line manager, then they cannot view statistical methods as the all-encapsulating tool and they therefore need to acknowledge how people make sense of their world.

To a certain extent, the methods employed were restricted by the access granted by the two organisations. Methods had to be employed which made the best use of the researcher's time and also limit the amount of inconvenience caused to the host organisations. During the early discussions with both organisations, their initial response centred on the assumption that the researcher would concentrate solely on the distribution of a questionnaire. It appears that both organisations are used to this method of fact finding and it is a regularly adopted method of communication and feedback. As the homeworkers are geographically dispersed, the distribution of a questionnaire seemed a logical approach. Its use would also reflect the existing culture and work practices of the organisations and reduce the amount of time respondents would have to allocate to be involved in the research. For this reason, the organisations were keen for this method to be utilised in the research.

However, in light of the fact that this research seeks to understand the respondents world and explore people's experiences, the researcher felt that the statistical 'counts' produced by a questionnaire would provide a very limited reflection of the reality of homeworking. Whilst it is acknowledged that statistical data enables some form of structure to be established, it only provides the skeleton framework.

In order to obtain a complete picture it is essential that more 'meat is added to the bones.'



Statistical data is not a complete reflection of organisational life but the 'blurred vision' they provide allows for a clearer picture to emerge. To get a complete account of the event, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods can enhance the validity of the research and also ensure that 'the data is telling you what you think it is telling you.' (Saunders *et al.*, 2000:99). The incorporation of methods can help a researcher to investigate different levels and aspects of reality in order to obtain a richer picture about the event or situation. Creating a jigsaw, the researcher can put all the pieces together to hopefully deepen the understanding of the research area.

In light of the above, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used to maximise the amount of data collected and to improve the reliability of a single method. Qualitative data will therefore be used to support the statistical data by adding some rationale understanding as to why homeworkers feel the way they do about their working environment and patterns. By using both methods, the researcher can enhance the findings of the study and hopefully extract a fuller summary of the key themes associated with homeworking.

### Research Ethics

Having verbally negotiated access with the two organisations, it was imperative that the boundaries of the research were agreed in terms of the levels of access to information, appropriate timescales, sampling techniques and the need for anonymity etc. Following a verbal agreement, a written proposal (see Appendix F) was sent to the organisations to avoid any misunderstandings. By doing so, both parties are aware of their specific obligations and whilst this is not a legally binding document, it is a useful reference source that is essential when undertaking any primary research.

From the perspective of the case study organisations, the issue of confidentiality and anonymity was an area of concern. Therefore, to protect their identity, it was agreed that they would be referred to as only Company Red and Company Yellow.

Strong emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of the host organisation's contribution to this research. All participants, and the organisations itself, had the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any given point. A Participant Information Sheet (see following section) was distributed to all parties which reiterated the fact that their involvement was purely voluntary. The Participant Information Sheet was also used to ensure that there was a consistent message regarding the purpose of the study, why they had been chosen, what they will be asked to do, specific benefits and potential risks and issues of confidentiality.

When undertaking the research interviews, agreement was obtained from each participant for their comments to be recorded (please see following section for more details). The interview tapes were forwarded to a third party transcription service. To comply with the Data Protection Act 1988, no names were provided on these tapes as each participant was given an individual number. The tapes were returned to the researcher and destroyed after the transcription was completed. The hard copies of the transcripts, completed questionnaires and a research diary, were all stored in a lockable filing cabinet. These documents were not labelled in any way that connected them to an individual. The electronic versions of the transcripts, the data collected from the questionnaires and focus group and the typed notes from the observations were all password protected.

The specific ethical considerations for each method of data collection, will be considered in the following section.

### Data Collection

Five methods of data collection were used during this research.

1. Distribution of a questionnaire.
2. Observation of a team meeting.
3. A Focus Group.
4. Face-to-Face Interviews.
5. Telephone Interviews

The choice of methods differed between the two organisations due to the geographical dispersion of managers and homeworkers and also the restrictions imposed by the organisations.

The differences will be identified below, followed by a summary of the collective approach between the two organisations.

**Company Red** – Small employer of homeworkers performing low skill tasks

As Company Red has a head office within the same county as the researcher, face-to-face interviews with the relevant line managers was possible as the researcher was given permission to meet with the managers during the course of their working day. As such, the interviews were less disruptive for the participants as they were not asked to travel to another location and the interviews were undertaken in an environment which was familiar to them. The HR Manager also gave permission for the researcher to observe a bi-monthly team meeting of their homeworkers and also conduct a focus group with these homeworkers straight after that meeting. In total, 10 homeworkers attended the bi-monthly meeting and subsequent focus group on the day arranged. As the researcher is relying on the goodwill of the participants, it was agreed with the HR Manager that the interviews with the 3 managers and 4 supervisors were all undertaken on the same day. The HR Manager also agreed to be interviewed on the same day. By doing so, the researcher makes best use of their time and also becomes less of a hindrance to the host organisation. The researcher finally spent a total of two days within the head office of Company A: 1 to observe the bi-monthly meeting and conduct a focus group and another day to interview the relevant line managers.

These days were not consecutive and happened within a month of each other. Company Red also agreed to distribute a questionnaire to their homeworkers. This was done via email, asking the potential respondents to access the questionnaire via URL address. Unfortunately only 4 out of the 14 homeworkers took the time to complete the questionnaire. Whilst this equates to 28% of the overall sample, the responses are considered to be representative of this homogenous group of homeworkers. As all homeworkers undertake the same role, adopt very similar reporting procedures and are required to comply with the same company rules and procedures, the ability for this low response to significantly skew the data is minimal. Used in conjunction with the focus group comments and observation of the team meeting, the response rate was deemed to be sufficient and therefore the continual pursuit of further responses was rejected.

**Company Yellow** – A large employer of homeworkers who undertake specialist and highly skilled work roles.

The replication of face-to-face interviews with managers at Company Yellow was not possible. Based all over the UK, the researcher did not have the time to travel to meet with these managers on a face-to-face basis. Although not pursued, the researcher also did not deem it appropriate to conduct interviews within the manager's homes and would have therefore preferred to see these managers within an office environment. Unfortunately, the managers within Company Yellow rarely go into their head office (based in the South of England) and for the majority of their time, work from home. Interviews, on a face-to-face basis were therefore impractical.

As a part-time researcher, time was also a restriction as the research had to fit around full-time employment and the convenience of the host organisation. As such, telephone interviews were undertaken with the relevant line managers. In total, 3 managers were interviewed via telephone. Whilst Company Yellow employs 1000s of homeworkers, access was given to only a small sample of homeworkers. A manager, with two deputies, responsible for 28 homeworkers, agreed to participate in this research. The 3 managers and the whole team of homeworkers are vastly geographically dispersed. For example, of the 3 managers, one is now based in South Africa for 12 months, another is fairly local in Warwickshire, England and the final manager is based in Yorkshire. Of the 28 homeworkers, the dispersion ranges from Scotland, into Wales, a few in the North of England and a number in the South of England and only one in Northern Ireland.

Again, due to this geographical split, an opportunity did not present itself to meet with all of the homeworkers in one central location. Convening a focus group, to mirror the research conducted in Company Red was unfortunately not possible. To substitute the face-to-face contact, the homeworkers were invited to participate in a telephone interview. This invitation was sent via an email from their line manager, which also contained a link to and request to complete the online questionnaire.

All 28 homeworkers completed the questionnaire. 10 homeworkers agreed to a telephone interview.

## Summary

In summary, the researcher conducted:

- **11 interviews** (either face-to-face or telephone) with **managers** of homeworkers in Company Red and Company Yellow.
- 10 **telephone interviews with homeworkers** from Company Yellow.
- **A focus group with 10 homeworkers** from Company Red.
- **32** out of a possible 42 **homeworkers completed the online questionnaire.**

All 28 homeworkers from Company Yellow completed the questionnaire and 4 out of 14 homeworkers from Company Red.

The specific strengths, potential limitations, relevant design issues and ethical considerations for each data collection method will now be considered below. In chronological order, the distribution of the questionnaire to homeworkers in Company Red and Yellow will firstly be discussed. The observation of a bi-monthly team meeting, focus group discussion and the interviews with management arranged at Company Red will then be considered before finally outlining the telephone interviews undertaken with managers and homeworkers at Company Yellow.

*Questionnaire – Company Red and Yellow*

The questionnaire was designed using web survey software available at [www.surveymshare.com](http://www.surveymshare.com). The decision to use this online survey tool centred on an awareness of the characteristics of the targeted participants. It was important to use a method which would reflect the existing culture and work practices of the organisation. These homeworkers are used to receiving instructions via email. The distribution of a postal questionnaire was definitely not appropriate for these host organisations. The managers at Company Red and Yellow were kind enough to send an email to their respective homeworkers asking them to participate in the research. This introductory message also included the contact details of the researcher and an explanation of the purpose of the study and why they had been chosen. A copy of this email message can be found in Appendix A. All recipients of this email were advised that their participation was totally voluntary and they were assured that their responses would remain completely anonymous. To protect their anonymity, the researcher did not receive any of the email addresses for the potential participants and therefore relied on the goodwill of the line managers to forward the email message to their homeworkers. Whilst primarily, this action enabled the host organisation to gain a degree of control and also protect the identities of their homeworkers, it also assisted the researcher to ensure the legitimacy of the survey. An email sent directly from the researcher may have been viewed as junk mail by the recipients (Evans and Mathur, 2005:198) and therefore immediately deleted or ignored. An email sent directly from the Line Manager would hopefully avoid this perception and improve the likely response rate. Limited access to the individual email addresses of homeworkers was important for



both the researcher, in terms of their credibility and professionalism and also for the host organisation in terms of data protection and welfare issues of their staff. Embedded in the email message was a URL address which, when clicked on, directed the potential participant straight to the relevant webpage in order for them to immediately see and complete (if they so wished) the questionnaire. 'A URL embedded questionnaire seems to be less intrusive in that the potential respondent has the option of whether or not to visit the webpage and complete the questionnaire,' (Michaelidou and Dib, 2006:292). In receipt of the URL address, participants could avoid the intrusive nature of telephone based surveys and therefore complete the survey at a time convenient to them, (Evans and Mathur, 2005:197). For the researcher, this method was effective as the distribution was immediate, the participants were directed straight to the link and they were not required to forward their questionnaire back to the researcher once they had completed it. In all, this method required less effort on the part of the participant which would hopefully result in an increased response rate. The questionnaire was also designed so that the researcher had no way of knowing who had completed the questionnaire. The only distinction drawn was the ability of the researcher to ascertain which organisation the respondent belonged to. Although completing exactly the same questionnaire, two different URL addresses were created. One for respondents from Company Red and one for Company Yellow. As the researcher intends to conduct a comparative analysis of the findings from the two organisations, the opportunity to distinguish between the two groups of respondents was evidently crucial.

In order to improve the likely response rate, the questionnaire was carefully designed to ensure that it did not take too long to complete, the layout was simple and straight forward, the instructions were clear and none of the questions were deemed to be ambiguous (Bell, 1999). The questionnaire was piloted using 10 of the researcher's existing work colleagues. Their feedback was useful as they all work from home at least one day a week. A few amendments were made following the pilot, due to spelling mistakes and the identification of two potentially vague questions.

Mindful of the guidance of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2000), it was important to ensure that the questionnaire did not take longer than 15 minutes to complete. Although the final questionnaire contained 85 questions, the researcher did not feel that this would deter potential respondents from completing the survey. According to Brown (2003:18), 'it is not the number of questions that affect the response rate, but the amount of time and effort needed to complete the survey.' The questionnaire was therefore designed to ensure ease of completion and reduced time commitment. A copy of the final questionnaire can be found in Appendix B. When designing the questionnaire, 3 natural sub-headings emerged when attempting to group together the relevant questions/statements. The statements were composed from the key themes and issues highlighted when undertaking a review of the relevant literature on homeworking. Following the 'personal details' section, these 3 sub-headings were used to guide the respondent and provide the reader with a brief idea as to what might be covered in the following section.

The three sub-headings were 1) How I cope with homeworking, 2) My performance as a homeworker and 3) My relationship with my line manager. Employing the likert scale, statements were made under each sub-heading and respondents were asked to indicate their strength of agreement or disagreement to the statement posed.

The researcher was mindful that a 5 point likert scale can encourage a respondent to avoid making an opinion and thereby opting to 'neither agree or disagree.' Coolican (1990:98) agrees that the 'undecided score is ambiguous. Does it imply a neutral position (no opinion) or an on-the-fence position with the respondent torn between feelings in both directions?' A 5 point scale can provide an escape route for a respondent who wants to avoid a question. However, the researcher did not want to compel the respondents to express a view that they didn't really hold, thereby the option to choose 'neither agree nor disagree' was provided for each statement. The statements were also varied to include a mixture of both positive and negative viewpoints. This variation helps to 'identify respondents who exhibit response sets' (Bryman, 2004:68) and also ensure that the respondent reads each statement carefully and thinks about which box they are going to tick, Saunders *et al.* (2000:295).

Following the email distribution, respondents were given three weeks to complete the questionnaire. The deadline date was indicated in the introductory email and all respondents were sent a reminder email 1 week before the deadline date. As per the initial distribution, the researcher had to trust that the line managers had forwarded both the initial email containing the link to the questionnaire and also the reminder email. The researcher had no direct access to the potential respondents and as completion was anonymous, the researcher could not chase individuals for a response.

*Observation of a bi-monthly team meeting – Company Red*

A bi-monthly meeting is convened with 10 of the 14 homeworkers of Company Red. The other 4 homeworkers report into two different line managers who meet with them on a one to one basis. The researcher was given permission to observe one of these meetings. The meeting was held in departmental meeting room within the head office of Company Red.

When the meeting commenced, the line manager introduced the researcher to the homeworkers and advised the team that relevant line managers were also being interviewed. The researcher was then given time to explain the purpose of the study, their role and to ascertain if any member objected to the researcher being present. No objections were raised. The researcher's role in the meeting was purely non-participative. 'The purpose of non-participant observation is to observe and record what people do in terms of their actions and behaviour without the researcher being involved,' (Hussey and Hussey, 1997:159) and therefore members were encouraged to undertake 'business as usual.' To reduce the possibility of observing distorted behaviour, the meeting was not tape recorded with the researcher taking notes throughout. After the meeting had finished, the researcher immediately typed up the notes from the meeting to ensure that the comments were fresh in the researcher's mind. Whilst the notes were useful, they were evidently not verbatim, as the researcher also needs to pay attention to what was being said and by whom. Acknowledging the need to objectively interpret what has been observed, the researcher deemed the typed notes to be an accurate account of both the structure and content of the meeting as well as the

individual comments made by relevant team members. Access to a laptop immediately after the meeting was essential to maintain the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

The meeting lasted for 40 minutes. The meeting was primarily chaired by the overall line manager with the 3 supervisors taking the lead when focusing on certain areas of the agenda. In general, the meeting was relaxed and did not appear to be staged.

Homeworkers and managers talked freely and openly in front of the researcher.

#### *Focus group – Company Red*

Following the bi-monthly team meeting, the homeworkers were asked to take a 30 minute break and then return to participate in a focus group with the researcher.

Hartman (2005:405) suggests that approximately 6 to 10 discussants are recommended for focus groups and thankfully, all 10 homeworkers returned to contribute to discussion. When leaving the room, to go for their break, the homeworkers were all issued with a participant information sheet – please see Appendix C. This reiterated the purpose of the study and why they had been chosen etc. and also provided contact details for the researcher. Whilst this had been expressed verbally at the bi-monthly team meeting, it was also important to distribute this in written form to avoid misinterpretation, maintain the credibility and professionalism of the researcher and to comply with ethical guidelines when undertaking such research. All homeworkers then had a document to refer to during their break and therefore had a further chance to decide if they wished to contribute to the discussion or not. Although none of the relevant managers asked for a list of participants, the researcher was aware that the

attendees were easily identifiable. Care was therefore taken to protect the identity of individuals when reporting the findings to the host organisation. Whilst the managers did not ask to see a copy of the typed notes from the focus group discussion, time was taken to remove any information which could be easily associated with the participants, i.e. specific names mentioned the focus group participants were deleted. Each participant was only referred to as a number in the typed transcript.

Whilst the host organisation determined the access to these homeworkers, a focus group was a useful method of data collection as it enabled the participants to feel less inhibited, thereby possibly revealing more than would have been achieved if only individual interviews had been arranged. Morgan (1988) cited in Hartman (2004:402) supports the use of focus groups as 'it encourages a discussion among group members and this interaction tends to stimulate ideas that would not have been available otherwise.' As all the homeworkers knew each other, they appeared to be relaxed and more forthcoming with their comments. However, care had to be taken that the team was not prone to 'group syndrome' with dominant members taking a lead in the discussion. Bryman (2004:360) warns of the dangers of what he terms as those who 'hog the stage' or alternatively, those who are reticent to speak.

When observing the team meeting, the researcher noticed that 2 female homeworkers made the most comments and voiced their opinions when asked. These same 2 homeworkers took centre stage during the course of the focus group. It seemed that the other homeworkers relied on these 2 group members to express the opinions of the group. With quite domineering personalities, care had to be taken to ensure that the opinions of the whole group were encapsulated. This was achieved through increased

eye contact with the rest of the group when asking questions and listening to responses. Unfortunately, some individuals chose not to comment and were therefore happy for others to express opinions on behalf of the whole team. It has to be acknowledged that the responses provided may not be independent of one another and might be influenced by such dominant group members. However, in an attempt to counter balance such interjections, the researcher directed questions and comments among the other focus group participants regarding what the other participants had said to promote a greater depth of discussion and response, (Hartman, 2004:404). The value of such focus groups discussions therefore lies on its ability to provide data which is in-depth and expressed in the respondents' own words and the opportunity it provides for participants to both query each other and explain themselves to each other, (Morgan, 1996:139).

Despite repeated attempts to involve an individual in the discussion, throughout the whole focus group discussion, one homeworker did not make any comment at all. They also took the same stance throughout the whole team meeting conducted earlier on in the day. It is not known if that is a usual occurrence or as a consequence of the given situation, i.e. their involvement in the research. Whilst participants may be quite happy to be physically present, they cannot be forced to express their individual opinion.

Restricted by the time constraints imposed by the organisation, the focus group lasted for just under 30 minutes. The researcher decided not to tape record the comments made during the focus group to try to encourage honest responses and general participation. Although no managers were in the room when the focus group was being held, the homeworkers may have feared that their individual comments may be reported straight back to their line manager. A tape recording provides incontestable 'evidence'

as individuals can be easily singled out. As such, the homeworkers may fear the retaliation of their line managers and subsequently decide to offer no opinion. As per the bi-monthly team meeting, the researcher had to take notes throughout the focus group and then type them up as soon as the meeting had finished. However, whilst this was a fairly straight forward activity when observing the team meeting, the researcher found it harder in the focus group as they were not only leading the discussion but also trying to recall individual comments. As such, natural pauses emerged as the researcher made notes and the participants thought about a response. Thankfully, these pauses did not restrict the flow of discussion. The managers of the homeworkers did not ask, although entitled, to receive a copy of the typed notes from the focus group.

To a certain extent this was fortunate due to a particular comment made by one of the participants. During the discussions, she advised the researcher that she had trained her daughter to undertake the specific elements of her role, thereby allowing her time to go out shopping and enjoy more free time. It is not known, although highly unlikely, if management are aware of this practice and therefore the researcher would have felt particularly uncomfortable if asked, by management, to divulge the comments expressed during the focus group. In this situation, a researcher is faced with an ethical dilemma in respect of assessing their obligation to advise management of such activities or their loyalty to that particular focus group.

On this occasion, the comment was not passed on to management and the identity of the individual has been protected as each respondent is only referred to by a number. As a large proportion of the group have children, it should also be acknowledged that the ability to trace this particular comment back to the individual is extremely limited.



*Face-to-face interviews with line managers/supervisors – Company Red*

In total 6 interview slots were arranged with 3 managers, 4 supervisors and the HR Manager. 2 Managers, 1 supervisor and the HR Manager were all interviewed on an individual basis. 1 Manager was joined by their supervisor for the interview and 2 supervisors were interviewed together. This arrangement was dictated by the organisation. The interviews all took place in the specific offices of the 3 different managers (+ the HR Manager). Upon arrival, all interviewees were issued with a Participant Information Sheet – please see Appendix C.

Giving them chance to read and digest the comments, the managers and supervisors were then asked if they still wished to take part in the interview and also if they had any questions. At this point, all 8 individuals were advised that the interview would be recorded and the reasons for doing so were explained. No one objected. The tape recorder left the researcher free to converse more naturally with the participants and encouraged a greater flow of information (Coolican, 1990). The tape recorder was not hidden and was tested before the commencement of each interview.

The confidentiality of the discussion was assured to each participant and they were all advised that they were entitled to receive a copy of the transcript of their interview. The interviewees were all asked to sign a consent form agreeing to take part in the research.

Attempting to explore the experiences of these managers and supervisors in respect of managing homeworkers, un-structured/in-depth interviews were used to enable the interviewee to talk more freely, feel less like an interrogation and hopefully be more relaxed. The researcher only had in front of them a list of key themes which they wished to pursue during the course of the interview (please see Appendix D). This was used only as a prompt sheet for the researcher. This was clearly visible to the interviewee, although most did not pay any attention to it. One of the dangers associated with the use of unstructured interviews is the lack of actual data generated during the course of the interview as the interview can end up being 'just a social encounter whose content has little or no bearing on the intellectual puzzle which the research is designed to address,' (Mason, 2002:67). The researcher therefore needs to think on their feet and maintain the smooth progress of the interview in terms of both content and structure. Paradoxically, structured interviews can promote standardisation in respect of all interviewees being asked the same questions, but this method can also lead to a robotic disposition of the researcher as they become detached from the interviewees and pay little attention to what is actually being said.

In contrast, a researcher using in-depth interviews 'must be very attuned and responsive to what the interviewee is saying and doing', (Bryman, 2004:327) and therefore the researcher becomes more actively involved as they have to pay attention to the comments made by the respondent and therefore note what is worthy of further exploration. This also provides the researcher with an opportunity to observe any changes in body language and notice signs of discomfort for example.

The researcher did not observe any signs of discomfort and all interviewees appeared to be very keen to discuss their views on the research area. As it is a subject close to their hearts, all interviewees had an opinion to express. It is vital that the opinions of the interviewees are expressed, as opposed to the interviewee simply providing an answer that they think the interviewer wants to hear. Interviewer bias is a problem often associated with this method of data collection as the interviewer may push for certain responses. The interviewee needs to explore the issues in their own words and therefore not have 'words put into their mouths' by the interviewer who may feel inclined to finish the sentences of the interviewee or fill any silences with their own opinion.

There were no uncomfortable silences during the course of the interview as participants were quite happy to share their thoughts with the researcher. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 1 hour. All interviews came to a natural cessation. It can be the case that the interviewee may have their own agenda and try to divert the conversation to discuss issues that they think are particularly relevant. However, the researcher managed to keep the interview on track and no unreasonable diversions from the theme of the interview were experienced.

As the interviews were held during the course of the working day and at the head office of Company Red, the researcher found that the interviewees were quite keen to return to their work after the interview had finished. This may be largely due to their position in the organisation, i.e. the responsibility associated with their management or supervisory role. The researcher may have been subjected to delaying tactics if individual interviews had been conducted with the subordinates of these managers who could have been less enthusiastic about returning to undertake their duties. Faced with this

problem, the researcher would have politely thanked the interviewee for their time and brought the discussion to a close.

The 8 individuals who participated in the interviews were all very open about their feelings, professional in their approach to the interview process and enthusiastic about the research in general. The positive demeanour of the participants was certainly encouraging for the researcher and also helped them to gain a great deal from this aspect of the data collection.

The researcher strongly believes that the research undertaken at Company Red added significant value to the rest of the research process as the 'findings' from Company Red helped to inform both the content of the questionnaire distribution to the homeworkers of Company Yellow and also identify further exploratory themes to be used during the course of the interviews with managers.

#### *Telephone interviews with line managers and homeworkers – Company Yellow*

In total, 3 managers of homeworkers in Company Yellow agreed to be interviewed. As discussed, face-to-face interviews were not feasible due to geographical and time constraints. The managers were therefore all interviewed via telephone.

Company Yellow were kind enough to forward the email addresses of their managers to the researcher. In receipt of these email addresses, contact was made with each individual manager to agree a mutually convenient time and date to conduct the

telephone interview. This email also introduced the research to the potential participants with an attached 'Participant Information Sheet' – Please see Appendix C.

For the majority of managers, arranging a time and date for the interviews was straight forward. However for one, this proved to be more difficult as he had to cancel, at short notice, due to emergency business issues requiring his attention. The researcher was mindful of the fact that the manager's day to day operational issues would take precedence over the research and therefore accepted the need for some of the pre-arranged times to be subject to change. When finally carrying out the interviews, the researcher referred the participant to the 'participant information sheet' and identified the key issues. The participants were all asked again if they were still happy to take part in the research and also if they had any objections to the interview being recorded. No objections were raised and the participants were reminded of their right to receive a copy of the transcript from the interview. All of the managers were re-assured that the interview would last no longer than 1 hour.

As per the interviews conducted with the managers at Company Red, the researcher wanted to fully explore the experiences of these managers in terms of the impact of homeworking on the employment relationship and their ability to exercise control. Therefore, an in-depth interview was appropriate in order to tease out the pertinent issues and attitudes of these managers. An 'aide-memoire' was referred to by the researcher to remind them of the key topics and areas of interest. This was the same list of issues used when undertaking the research at Company Red – please see Appendix D.

Although, the use of telephone interviews has been criticised as the 'interviewees can be less engaged with the interview process,' (Bryman, 2004:116), the researcher found all the participants to be quite relaxed in their response and keen to share their thoughts and experiences. Employing a different set of interpersonal skills, than those employed when undertaking face-to-face interviews, the researcher had to really focus on what the interviewee was saying, rather than rely on other stimuli such as body language to support or contradict the statements made. Non-verbal cues can assist the researcher to establish if the interviewee is bored, angry, upset or embarrassed (Mason, 2002:75), but reliant on only the verbal cues, i.e. their tone of voice, telephone interviews can be more demanding for the researcher. For example, it is harder to tell if someone is just about to speak and the natural flow of the conversation can be interrupted or subject to uncomfortable silences.

The ability to build a sense of rapport can help the interviewee to open up and reveal their true feelings, but this can be inhibited if the researcher does not actually listen to the interviewee and engage themselves in the conversation. If the interviewee perceives the interviewer to be 'just going through the motions', their contribution will be minimal and ultimately the 'data' provided will be meaningless. Aware of this potential, the researcher did their utmost to prevent such occurrences through detailed preparation involving a number of pilot/practice interviews with work colleagues. This proved to be a valuable training activity for the 'live' event.

10 homeworkers agreed to be interviewed following a request for participants. When issuing the introductory email and questionnaire, all homeworkers were asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. Those who were, were asked to email the researcher to arrange a mutually convenient time. As per the interviews with the line managers, the participants were all emailed a Participant Information Sheet – See Appendix C. The telephone interviews were recorded with the agreement of the interviewee and a transcript available if required. The interviews lasted from between 30 minutes to 1 and a half hours.

The researcher conducted 3 of the 10 interviews on a Friday afternoon. Interestingly this was at the request of the participant and ultimately the researcher found these interviewees to be far more relaxed and willing to talk than those conducted at different stages of the week. In addition, the researcher also found themselves having to adopt more of a counselling role, as opposed to a researcher, when speaking to some of these homeworkers. They appeared to relish the opportunity to discuss their feelings, rather than a usual discussion centred on purely business issues.

As with the manager interviews, the researcher referred to an 'aide-memoire' (Please see Appendix D) to ensure that all essential themes/topic area were covered. However, the experience of conducting interviews within Company Red, enabled the researcher to feel more confident in their role as interviewer. For example, rather than just accepting what the interviewee had said, the researcher began to probe further in order to fully appreciate the meaning behind specific statements. For example, when advised by an interviewee that 'it was fine until maybe about a year ago and then I really started to feel isolated,' the researcher learnt to explore why they felt that way and what was it

that triggered this feeling etc. As the number of interviews increased, the researcher began to recall specific questions which had been used in previous questions. Whilst initially referring to the 'aide memoire' the researcher found that some of the interviews became more semi-structured in nature as specific themes were recalled from previous conversations with homeworkers in Company Yellow. However, the researcher does not feel that this was detrimental to the research process in any way.

Immediately before undertaking these interviews, the researcher had been a homeworker for just under a three month period. As a consequence, particular biases may have been explored during the course of the conversations as the researcher could empathise with the feelings and behaviours of these employees. Expressing their own experiences, the researcher found the interviewees to be more forthcoming with one even stating that they were 'glad that it is not just me that feels this way, I am normal then.'

The interviewees opened up as they felt that were talking to someone who had, to a limited extent, been through the same process and experienced a similar kind of working environment. During some of the conversations, the researcher is aware that they may have been a little too leading in their questioning but ultimately the richness of the data outweighs this possibility, as the interviewees were far more inclined to express their real opinions and views to someone who had also been a homeworker.



## Data Analysis

The data collection methods used during the course of this research, gathered four differing kinds of data: 1) the statistical data produced by the completion of an online questionnaire, 2) notes describing the content and general observation of a team meeting, 3) notes outlining the discussion of a focus group and 4) the responses from the interviews with managers and homeworkers.

### *The statistical data from the questionnaire – Company Red and Yellow*

Producing primarily quantitative data, the results from the questionnaire provided counts for the frequency of response (per question) for each category of the likert scale. A full presentation of the responses for each question can be found in Appendix E. As the questionnaire was designed using web survey software, the results were automatically produced for each question and the researcher had a choice of presentation methods, i.e. pie or bar chart etc. However, in order to conduct an analysis of the questionnaire results between the two organisations, the data was incorporated into an Excel Spreadsheet from which the relevant bars charts were created.

The questionnaire responses were used during the analysis to support the verbal statements made by the respondents and also to identify any contradictions between the interview and questionnaire responses. Specifically, these responses were also used to highlight particular differences and similarities between the two organisations, i.e. the views of homeworkers at Company Red and those of Company Yellow. Consideration was given to presenting the data in two distinct chapters to mirror the chronological order of collection, i.e. by firstly presenting the results from the questionnaire

responses, followed by the findings from the interviews and focus group discussion. However, the value of merging the two data sets seemed a more obvious approach in order to provide the reader with a composite picture of the results, as opposed to a segregated presentation, focusing on the isolated segments.

*The notes taken when observing the team meeting and following the focus group – Company Red*

The typed notes, made by the researcher, immediately after the bi-monthly team meeting and convened focus group of homeworkers, were analysed with reference to the thematic categories emerging from the interview transcripts – please see section below. These notes were again used to support or contradict specific statements made by the homeworkers or managers and add to the comparative analysis between the two organisations.

*Interview responses from managers and homeworkers – Company Red and Yellow*

The interviews with line managers at Company Red and Company Yellow and the homeworkers of Company Yellow were recorded and then transcribed in their entirety. The content of each transcript was analysed in order to identify specific categories and concepts within the text. By desegregating the text into a series of fragments, thematic headings naturally emerged from the data. Each fragment was then regrouped under the emerging thematic headings, (Goulding, 2005: 295). Rather than rely on pre-set categories (such as those associated with content analysis), the thematic analysis ensured that the data was not restricted and could 'speak for itself' thereby allowing the

researcher to completely immerse themselves in the data. The concepts that emerged from the data were finally grouped under 6 thematic categories. These thematic categories were based on a thematic analysis of the literature pertinent to this research and considered in Chapter 2. The goal of this analysis was to determine the major themes that emerged from the narratives in order to develop a composite picture of the effect of homeworking on a manager's ability to exercise control.

### Limitations

Each of the five methods of data collection used for this research had specific limitations. The particular drawbacks for each method will be considered below.

#### *Focus group and Team Meeting*

Permission was not sought from the host organisation to record the comments and opinions raised during the bi-monthly team meeting and the discussion arising during the course of the focus group.

As the researcher's role was purely in an observational capacity, the researcher was keen to see the team meeting run as normal and therefore felt the use of a tape recorder may inhibit the discussions and individual contributions made. To try and encourage honest responses and overall participation, the focus group discussion was also not recorded. This evidently restricted the researcher's ability to produce an accurate, word for word account of the whole discussion.

Unknowingly, the researcher may therefore have missed valuable interjections made during the discussion and interpreted the data in a biased manner having focused on some and not all of the comments raised. However, as the notes were made within minutes of the meetings finishing, the researcher believes that the account is as accurate and as detailed as could possibly have been achieved.

The researcher is also mindful of the fact that the comments raised during the team meeting and focus group was representative of only 10 of the 14 homeworkers at Company Red. The opinions of the other 4 homeworkers were not sought. This was due to the restrictions imposed by the organisation. The other 4 homeworkers report into different managers and they therefore do not attend the bi-monthly team meeting organised by one of the overall line managers. Nevertheless, the views of the majority were expressed as 10, represents 71% of the actual available sample.

A further limitation was the restricted time the researcher had to undertake the focus group discussion. Whilst access to these homeworkers was very much appreciated, the researcher would have welcomed more time with the homeworkers to enable them to further explore the attitudes and opinions of the group. Additional time may have encouraged all of the group members to participate in the discussion and divulge their true feelings.

Although restrictions were imposed by the case study organisations, it would have been more beneficial to meet with the homeworkers of Company Red on individual, one to one basis. Whilst the focus group was an ideal opportunity to meet with all the homeworkers, the researcher is mindful that such meetings can encourage 'group think.'

Therefore the responses provided may not have been independent from one another with opinions being expressed on behalf of the whole team.

### *Telephone interviews*

The use of telephone interviews, as a method of data collection, prohibits the researcher from engaging in any form of observation which may itself be a source of information. During the course of a face-to-face interview, the researcher is bombarded with non-verbal signals which can indicate the current mood and demeanour of the interviewee. In receipt of such stimuli, the researcher is better placed to assess their line of approach and course of questioning and therefore ascertain if the interviewee is fully engaged in the conversation. Whilst this drawback is acknowledged, the geographical dispersion of both homeworkers and managers, meant that face-to-face interviews were not feasible and therefore telephone interviews were employed.

### Interviews

Noise disturbance and overall failure, proved to be source of frustration when tape recording the face-to-face interviews at Company Red. Whilst tests had been made prior to each interview, an open window added significant wind and background noise which ultimately made some parts of the interview impossible to transcribe. Gaps were therefore left in the transcripts. The sound quality of some of the interviews was far superior to others. No issues of this nature were experienced when undertaking the telephone interviews at Company Yellow.

### *Questionnaire*

The design of the questionnaire may be criticised for the decision to include a 5 point likert scale. The adoption of such a scale can encourage a respondent to avoid making an opinion, thereby opting to neither agree or disagree. However, the researcher did not want to force the respondents to express a view that they didn't really hold and therefore the neutral option was included. When analysing the data collected from the questionnaires the value of the 5 point likert became more apparent as, unfortunately, the 'neither agree or disagree' category was used by respondents in 81% of the questions. There were only 12 questions which did not attract this response. Interpreting individual feelings and responses to the statements can therefore be problematic as it is difficult to ascertain if respondents were able to distinguish between the information given (Lee & Lings, 2008:282). Did a respondent who ticked the 'neither agree or disagree' category actually hold no opinion on the matter or did it mean that they were unable to 'fit in' with the prescribed categories? When analysing the questionnaire responses, the researcher chose to interpret a 'neither agree or disagree' response as a 'no opinion' response. In future research, a 6 point scale may therefore be a more appropriate method to obtain a more accurate assessment of the opinions of the participants.

As the interviews with participants appeared to provide a truer account of individual feelings and perceptions, the merits of distributing a questionnaire will be more readily considered when undertaking future research. The data analysis highlighted specific contradictions between the questionnaire results and the comments and opinions expressed during the course of the telephone interviews and focus group discussions.

These differences may be explained by a) the use of the 5 point likert scale, b) the limited time the homeworkers may have had to complete the questionnaire and c) a lack of understanding and/or misinterpretation of the questionnaire statements. Face to face or telephone interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to explain the focus of their questioning and also to 'probe' for clarification when the comments made may not be understood. However, it should be noted that the sample who agreed to be interviewed is significantly less than the number of questionnaire respondents. If all questionnaire respondents had also been interviewed, such contradictions may not have occurred.

Having established the methodological procedure followed to collect data for this study, the following chapters of this thesis will present the data collected and analyse the information gathered.

Chapter 4 will address the issues relevant to the management of employees who work at home. Chapter 5 will address the findings which are applicable to the homeworkers themselves.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Introduction to the findings and analysis chapters**

The following 2 chapters of this thesis will present the data collected and analyse the information gathered.

The presentation of findings and analysis will draw on both sets of data collected during the course of this research, i.e. the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire and the qualitative data collected from the interviews and focus group discussion. Both sets of data have been incorporated within the chapters to emphasise the specific contradictions between the two data sets and also to highlight where the quantitative and qualitative findings support one another. However, it should be noted that only 4 out of the 10 homeworkers from Company Red completed the questionnaire and therefore limited generalisations can be made in respect of the applicability of these findings to the whole sample of homeworkers. In contrast, the whole sample of 28 homeworkers from Company Yellow completed the questionnaire and consequently these findings are of more use.

The findings will be presented based on six thematic categories which have emerged from the data. These themes are based on the analysis of the literature pertinent to this research. A review of the literature identified issues which are relevant to the management of homeworkers and also matters affecting those who work from home. To mirror this structure, the six themes have been divided according to their applicability to either management or homeworkers. The six themes have therefore been organised as follows:-



This first Chapter, Chapter 4 will present the findings relevant to the management of homeworkers. 3 themes will be considered in this chapter. They are:-

1. Performance and discipline
2. Management style and status
3. Communication

Concentrating on the issues relevant to the management of employees who work at home, this Chapter will address research objective 1.

Chapter 5 will then present the findings relevant to those employees who work at home. 3 themes will be considered in this chapter. They are:

4. Flexibility
5. Influence of family and co-residents
6. Sense of belonging

Concentrating on the issues which are applicable to individuals who work at home, this Chapter will address research objective 2.

It should be noted that whilst the data has been categorised in this way, inevitably some of the themes will also be applicable to both managers and homeworkers.

For each of the two chapters, 3 thematic categories will be used as sub-sections and will present both the qualitative and quantitative data applicable to that theme. Each sub-section will begin with a brief introduction to the theme which draws on the relevant literature. This introduction will then be followed with a summary of the key findings before a more detailed presentation of the findings is provided. The sub-section concludes by summarising the pertinent issues which have been uncovered by this research. During the course of the discussions, both chapters compare and contrast the views of managers and homeworkers (research objective 3) and also examines the influence of job role, skill level and organisational size on a manager's ability to exercise control (research objective 4).

Each chapter concludes by reviewing the key comparisons and contrasts between the two organisations, together with a summary of the similarities and differences expressed by the managers and homeworkers involved in this research.

In order to assist the reader, it may also be helpful to present below a brief reprise of the characteristics of the two companies who participated in this research, i.e. Company Red and Company Yellow.

### Company Red

Company Red employs 14 data input clerks who permanently work from home. All 14 homeworkers previously undertook their role within the conventional head office environment before volunteering to work from home. Working for different departments, 3 managers and 4 supervisors are responsible for these homeworkers. The managers and supervisors are all office based. All homeworkers live within 20 miles of the company's head office and are required to attend a bi-monthly team meeting with their manager and fellow homeworkers. Interviews were undertaken with the 3 managers and 4 supervisors and also with the HR Manager. In total, 10 homeworkers attended the bi-monthly meeting and subsequent focus group. 4 out of the 14 homeworkers took the time to complete the questionnaire.

Homeworkers of Company Red have to use their own personal computer to undertake their work with their employer only paying for Broadband connection. No other financial assistance is provided. In respect of their duties, the work is repetitive. The clerks are required to input data onto the company's computer system via their broadband connection. The connection is password protected. The clerks work a set number of hours each day, depending on their contract and have hourly input targets to achieve. This target is slightly less per hour than the equivalent office based data input clerk. Following the pilot scheme, it was noticed that the internet connection was slower off site, thereby preventing the clerks from achieving the same target as they would have if working within the office.

The logging on and off times for each homeworker is regularly monitored and the manager has the facility to monitor the actual screens the homeworkers are working on and the actual input times, i.e. how long they are taking to input each individual record. In addition, quality checks are completed on random samples of the homeworkers work. Office based clerks are also subjected to the same process.

### Company Yellow

As ICT professionals, these employees work from home for the majority of their time but occasionally undertake work within their client's premises. Professionally qualified, these individuals undertake a variety of assignments and are used to autonomous working patterns. With a vast geographical dispersion, face-to-face meetings between homeworkers and their line manager can be as little as two or three times a year. The majority of line managers also work from home.

A manager, with two deputies, responsible for 28 homeworkers, agreed to participate in this research. The 3 managers and the whole team of homeworkers are vastly geographically dispersed. Of the 3 managers, one is now based in South Africa for 12 months, another is fairly local in Warwickshire, England and the final manager is based in Yorkshire. Of the 28 homeworkers, the dispersion ranges from Scotland, into Wales, a few in the North of England and a number in the South of England and only one in Northern Ireland. All 28 homeworkers completed the questionnaire and all 3 managers agreed to be interviewed.

Whilst these homeworkers are geographically dispersed, the nature of their work requires them to work in teams to provide their clients with the technical service and support they require. These virtual teams change on a fairly frequent basis as the homeworkers move on to other projects working with different colleagues. These colleagues can be based here in the UK and also abroad. For each project they are involved in, their work is overseen by a manager responsible for that particular task. This manager will change as the projects change. In addition, the homeworkers report into a line manager who is responsible for conducting a review of their performance, general welfare and career prospects etc. The homeworkers are required to submit a weekly timesheet to their line manager. This timesheet is submitted online and outlines the number of hours/days spent on a project that week. Homeworkers are also obliged to continually update their Curriculum Vitae which can be viewed by all employees of Company Yellow via the company intranet. This information is used to ascertain which homeworker is best suited to the particular projects that come on board. The electronic recording of hours worked, the requirement to update their CV and also to submit any expenses in a timely manner are all mandatory tasks. If these tasks are not performed it will negatively influence their annual pay increase. The company's performance management system is linked to pay.

## **Managing employees who work at home**

### **Introduction to the findings relevant to the management of homeworkers**

This chapter will present the findings relevant to the themes; performance and discipline, management style and status and communication. Divided into 3 sub-sections, each theme will explore the impact of homeworking on a manager's ability to exercise control. Drawing on the distinct features of the two case study organisations involved in this research, the findings demonstrate how a homeworkers lack of physical proximity and visibility a) alters the nature and intensity of managerial control, b) changes managerial status and role and c) necessitates a need to modify the communication process.

Examples will be provided throughout the discussion to highlight how homeworking at Company Red has a far more positive influence on a manager's ability to exercise control than that afforded to the managers of Company Yellow. To encapsulate the key points, the chapter will conclude with a brief summary of the pertinent findings for each of the 3 themes.

## Theme 1 - Performance and Discipline

### *Background to the theme 'performance and discipline.'*

The shift from an industrial to a service based economy has witnessed a rapid influx of information technology which in turn has boosted new forms of control. Electronic surveillance of staff allows management to enforce control through a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods. Whilst Fernie and Metcalf (1998) argue that such electronic tools abolish worker resistance, Bain and Taylor's research (2000) demonstrates how workers can attempt to claw back control in highly prescribed working environments. Supporting Bain and Taylor's (2000) work, this research illustrates the techniques used by homeworkers to gain control of their working hours. As homeworkers can avoid many of the conventional mechanisms of control (Holton, 2001), performance management systems play a more pivotal role in controlling the behaviour and output of homeworkers. Managers of homeworkers therefore have to move from a mindset of physical presence to one of outcomes and clearly defined measure and objectives (Ahshed, 2004).

*Summary of key findings applicable to the theme 'performance and discipline.'*

All of the homeworkers involved in this study are subject to the same performance management system as their equivalent office based workers. Electronic monitoring of performance is possible for those homeworkers undertaking routine work tasks. For those undertaking high skill level roles, 360 degree appraisal is used to assess the performance of individuals who are 'out of sight.' Although motivation can be affected by homeworking, homeworkers believe that this working practice has improved their output and reduced their level of sickness absence. However, ill-health and childcare issues can be used by homeworkers as reasons why they cannot undertake their work and due to the physical detachment and lack of visibility, management have limited means in establishing if homeworkers are actually telling the truth. Where possible, management use face to face meetings to reinforce expected standards of performance, although this is not always practical for those responsible for a vastly geographically dispersed workforce. The lack of face to face contact does influence a line manager's ability to impose discipline as homeworkers can, to a certain extent, avoid the wrath of their line manager.



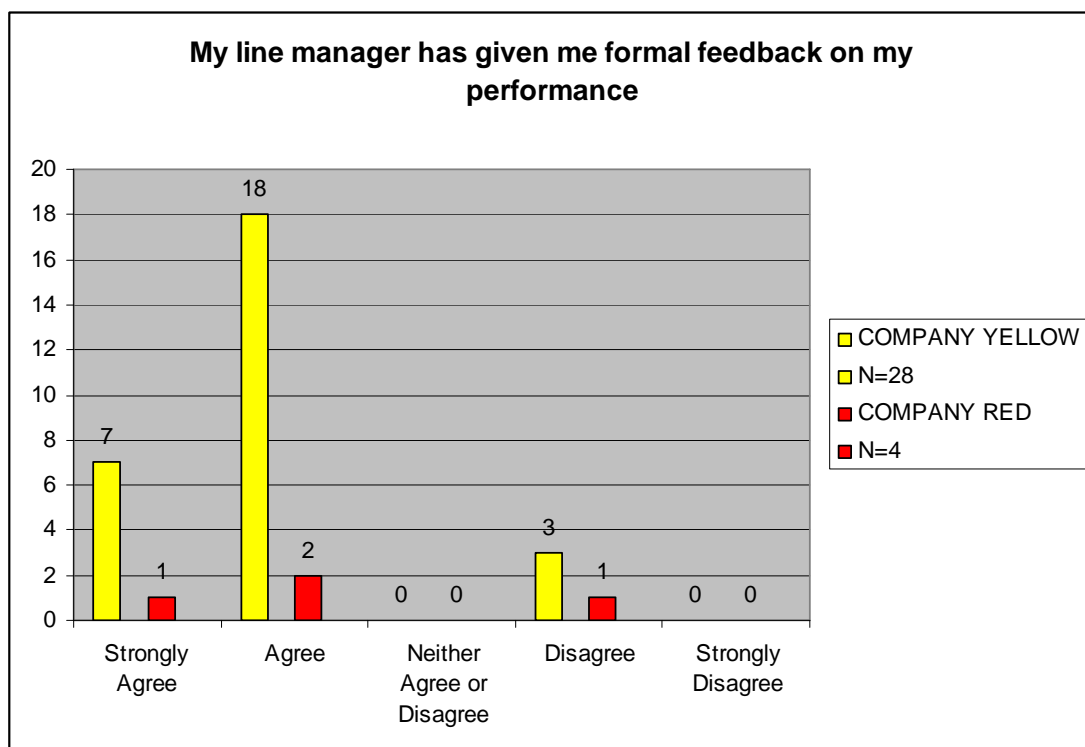
*Detailed presentation of findings for the theme 'performance and discipline.'*

- *Formal feedback on performance*

The individual performance of homeworkers is formally assessed on an annual basis.

87% of questionnaire respondents confirmed that they have received formal feedback on their performance. Figure 1 highlights that only 4 respondents from both organisations believed that they had not received any formal feedback.

Figure 1 – Feedback on Performance



Company Yellow - 25 respondents, i.e. 89.29% of the sample either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (64.29%) with this statement. The remaining 3 respondents (10.71%) disagreed.

Company Red - 3 of the 4 respondents agreed. 25% (1 respondent) strongly agreed and 2 respondents (50%) agreed. The remaining respondent (25%) disagreed with this statement.

Homeworkers are subject to the same performance appraisal system as their equivalent office based workers. From an organisational perspective, the physical location of their employees (i.e. whether they are office or home based) does not influence the method of assessment used. The relevant appraisal procedures and forms are applicable to office based staff and homeworkers.

For Company Red, appraisals are conducted on a face to face basis and a hard copy of the paperwork is completed and signed by both parties, i.e. the homeworker and the manager. The review focuses on the achievement of daily input targets, the quality of input which identifies the number of errors, the number of days sickness absence during the last 12 months and finally any development or training issues. This assessment of the homeworker's performance is deemed to be accurate as input targets and quality standards are electronically measured and recorded. A line manager explained how this worked:-

'I can if I wish go into the system and see which individual screens the homeworkers are working on and what they have done so far today. I can monitor time and speed and also accuracy because we do a check of their quality of input as well and the quantity.' CRLM4

Managers also have access to a vast array of reports which quantifies the performance of each team member. This enables the manager to compare the performance of individual members and objectively assess the contribution made by each homeworker.

As the line managers from Company Yellow are unable to directly observe the performance of their homeworkers a more complex system is used to overcome the lack of visibility. Company Yellow use a performance management system which is based on a 360 degree appraisal. As the homeworkers from Company Yellow undertake a variety of different projects and work with many colleagues, feedback is received from a range of stakeholders. For example, the manager responsible for each task, the client who requested the work and a number of other team members who the homeworker has been working with. Whilst all of this may be conducted in a virtual manner, it does mirror the system imposed within head office. Paperwork is completed online and sent confidentially to the relevant line manager. The stakeholders therefore act as the 'eyes and ears' of the line manager and consequently act as a form of control.

Adopting this process, line managers are reliant on the honesty of all parties. Free from the direct gaze of their line manager, homeworkers could manipulate the system by providing an over inflated assessment of not only their own performance but also the performance of one of their colleagues. In return for this assessment, the colleague will also provide a glowing review to their co-workers line manager. As the line manager does not see the homeworker undertaking their job role, the accuracy of the assessment is not known and could be increasingly subjective. Evidently, it is more likely that the review submitted by the client who requested the work, is an accurate evaluation of the homeworker performance.

A Line Manager from Company Yellow explained:

‘Cliques start to form. I know who gets on with whom. I’ve got a gut feeling that two of my team are not quite up to scratch but they keep having glowing reports from their colleagues. I am dubious, but I can’t prove anything yet. I think they are covering for each other – a bit like, you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours. In the office I would know. I would have proof, but now I have just got to run with the information I receive – whether I believe it or not.’

CYLM1

Whilst the receipt of the performance measures may vary between the two organisations, both Company Red and Company Yellow conduct their performance appraisals on a face to face basis. As the homeworkers of Company Red all live within 20 miles of their head office, face to face meetings are easy to arrange. As such, all appraisals are conducted on company premises. For Company Yellow, face to face meetings are more challenging due to the geographical dispersion of staff. Managers are responsible for staff that are based all over the country and therefore logistically the travel commitments can be quite gruelling. A great deal of the manager’s time can be invested in travelling to meet their homeworkers at various locations. When conducting appraisals homeworkers are requested to travel to their nearest company premises. Appraisals are never conducted in the homeworkers home, but do sometimes take place at motorway service stations or other public places.

Whilst line managers do endeavour to conduct these meetings on a face to face basis, one line manager from Company Yellow described how limited company funds can prevent this:-

'I relish the chance to see my staff. The performance appraisal is probably one of the main chances I get to meet with each individual member of my team. I certainly benefit from it and I know they do. I was really annoyed last year because I wasn't allowed to travel to Scotland to do an appraisal on one of my homeworkers. Budget restrictions meant that the company would not reimburse my travel expenses and I was left with no option other than to do the appraisal over the phone. I hated that and I felt for the member of staff.' CYLM2.

Two out of the three line managers from Company Yellow confirmed that they had conducted performance appraisals over the phone. The drawbacks of this were outlined as follows:

'For me it is simple. I cannot see if the message has really sunk in and also if they are really telling me how they feel. They can hide over the phone. When you see someone face to face, you can sort of gauge if you have their commitment, if they are motivated and want to achieve the objectives. On the phone they can say one thing but feel and mean another. I don't want to set them up to fail, so I would rather know that I have their agreement on the assessment and future plans.' CYLM1

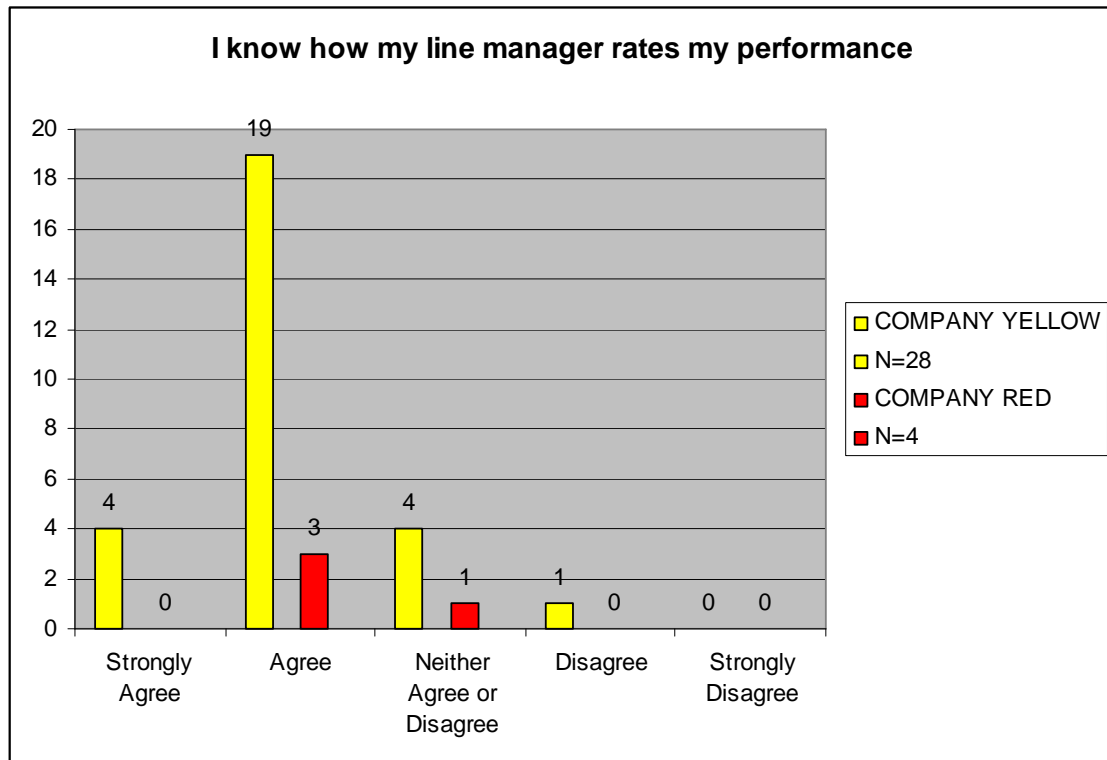
If appraisals are conducted over the phone, the line manager becomes increasingly reliant on the honesty of their homeworkers and ultimately both parties may not gain anything from the exchange. Aware of the value of face to face meetings, one line manager confirmed that even though there were budgetary restrictions imposed, he has travelled to meet with one of his homeworkers at his own expense. This comment was made informally to the researcher when the tape recorder had been turned off after the telephone interview.

The advantages of and need for face to face communication will be considered in further detail in the following section of this chapter, i.e. when exploring the issues relevant to the theme 'communication.'

Whilst managers may not always be able to provide feedback on a face to face basis, the nature of the performance measures (i.e. 360 degree appraisals and electronic monitoring), coupled with the questionnaire responses, demonstrates that homeworking does not prevent a line manager from assessing the performance of homeworkers. However, as discussed, the accuracy of this assessment varies between the two organisations.

Figure 2 identifies that over 80% of the questionnaire respondents from Company Yellow and 75% of the respondents from Company Red are aware of how their line manager rates their performance.

Figure 2 – Performance Rating



Company Yellow – the majority of respondents either strongly agreed (4=14.29%) or agreed (19=67.86%) with this statement. 14.29% neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 3.57% (1 respondent) disagreed. Company Red – no one disagreed with this statement. 3 (75%) agreed and the remaining respondent ( 25%) neither agreed or disagreed.

From the above questionnaire responses, 1 homeworker from Company Yellow indicated that they do not know how their line manager rates their performance. 4 indicated that they neither agreed/disagreed. Interpreted as a no opinion response, these may be the same individuals who in Figure 1, indicated that they have not had their performance formally assessed by their line manager. The actual reason for this lack of feedback is not known, but clearly demonstrates that some appraisals are not conducted on an annual basis. Out of sight, some homeworkers may slip through the system with the line manager forgetting to conduct all of the appraisals.

In an office environment, employees observe the comings and goings of their line manager and become aware that others are being invited to attend a performance review meeting. At home, homeworkers may not have this knowledge and are therefore unaware that reviews are being undertaken. During the telephone interviews and focus group discussion with the homeworkers, all agreed that their line manager has assessed their performance. Therefore, the reason behind the lack of appraisals could not be further explored as it was not relevant to the interview/focus group participants.

- *Increased control*

From the above discussion, it is quite apparent that, in theory, homeworkers at Company Red are subject to the same monitoring processes as their equivalent office based workers. However, during the course of the focus group discussion, the homeworkers from Company Red continually referred to their belief that they were treated differently. When enquiring about the monitoring techniques utilised by their employer, the responses included:

- 'intense.'
- 'strict rules.'
- 'we don't take the mickey.'
- 'harsh.'



A comment made in the open text box at the end of the questionnaire offers an explanation for this perceived inequity of treatment:

‘Provided I do the same job as those in the office, I feel as a homeworker I am treated differently. By which I mean as part of the homeworker team I am at the ‘front line’ so to speak in the sense that in the office if I didn’t complete my work given to me for that day there was no consequences whereas now I feel that no matter what reason I give for not having finished my daily amount of work it doesn’t seem to make a difference.’

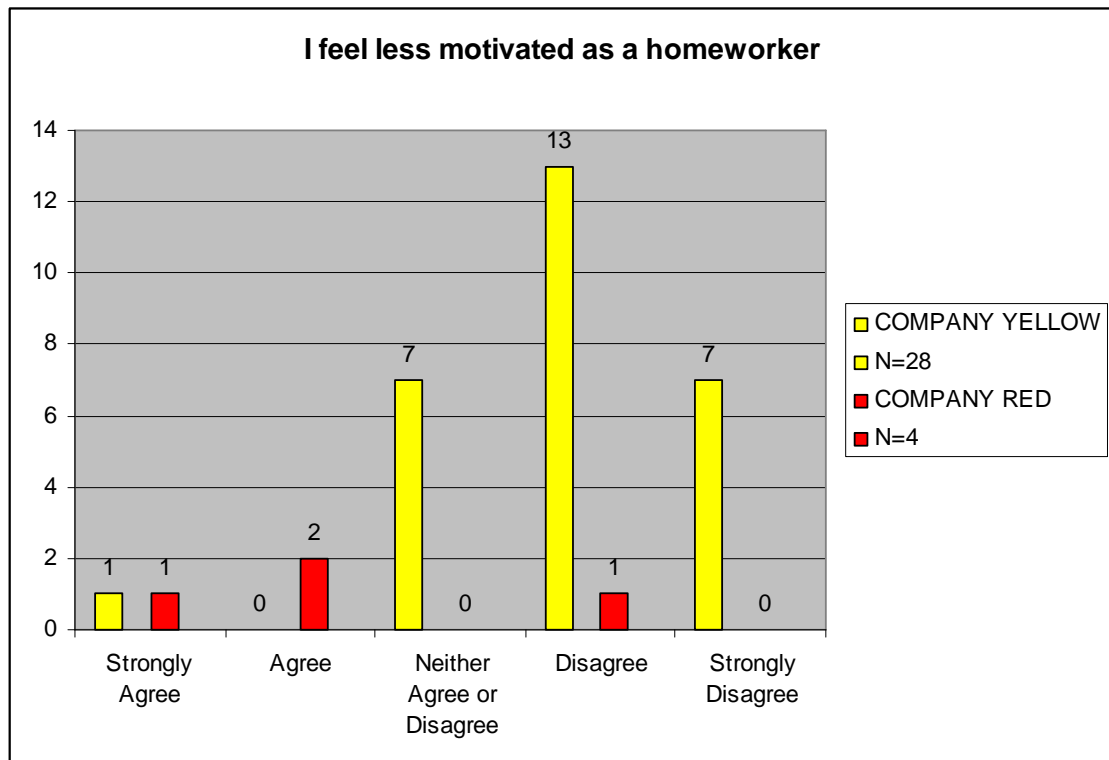
The homeworkers believe that more questions are raised if they fail to meet their targets. A focus group participant clarified this view:

‘When we worked in the office, it was okay to get up and have a walk about, go to the loo and make a cup of tea. As long as you didn’t take ages and you were seen at your desk it was okay. Now, if I haven’t met my hourly input target I feel as though I have to explain why...sorry but I was on the toilet for ages. At work, they wouldn’t bat an eyelid because you are at work and they can see you. It really gets you down sometimes.’ CRHW10

It was evident, during the observation of the bi-monthly team meeting, that this perception of unfair treatment seems to be taking its toll on the motivation levels of the homeworkers. When observing the meeting all attendees appeared much deflated, with some looking very tired. This belief was reflected in the questionnaire responses provided by 4 of the homeworkers of Company Yellow.

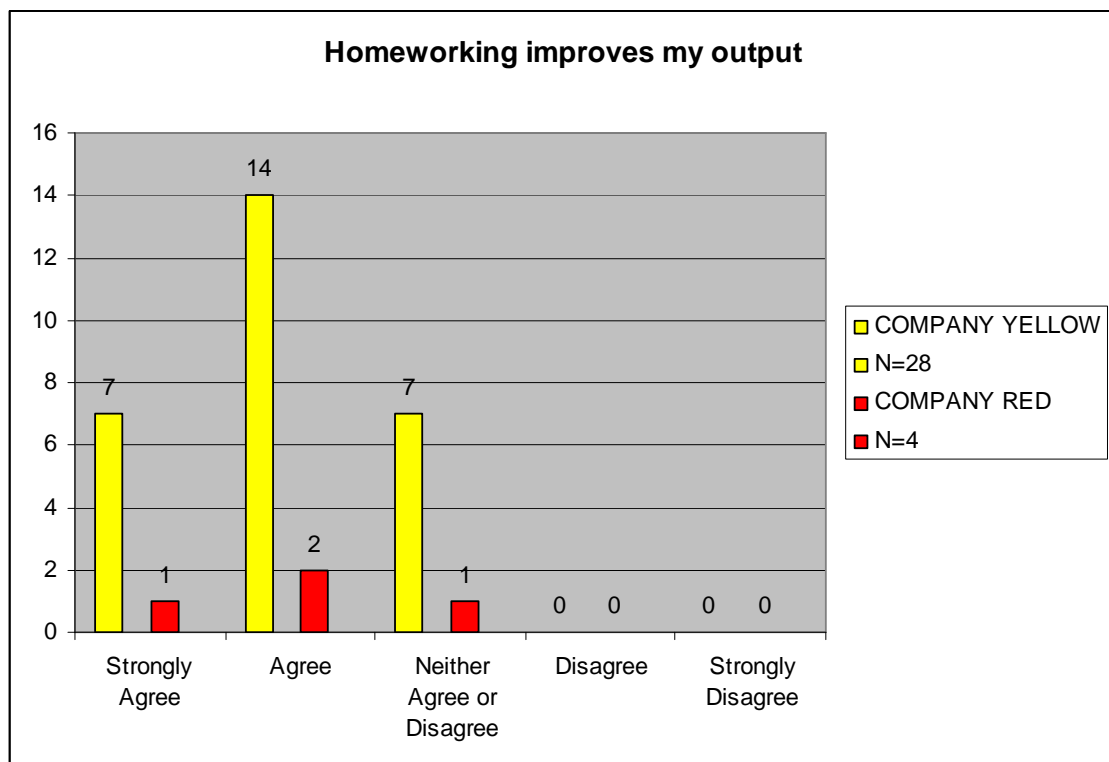
Figure 3 below shows a sharp contrast in the motivation levels of the homeworkers of Company Red and Company Yellow. 3 of the respondents from Company Red agreed with the statement – ‘I feel less motivated as a homeworker.’ Only 1 respondent from Company Yellow agreed, with 20 either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with the statement. As the interviews with homeworkers from Company Yellow were all conducted via telephone, it was not possible to directly observe their demeanour. However, the contrast in motivation levels was still evident, as all of the interview participants appeared to be very up-beat and generally happy. The reason for this contrast may be due to the increased flexibility afforded to the homeworkers at Company Yellow. This issue will be addressed in detail in Chapter 5 when considering the theme ‘flexibility.’

Figure 3 - Motivation



With low levels of motivation, it would be realistic to assume that the performance of the homeworkers from Company Red would be negatively affected. This was not an opinion shared by the homeworkers themselves. Figure 4 identifies that 75% of the respondents from Company Red agreed with the statement – ‘Homeworking improves my output.’ This view was directly supported by the respondents from Company Yellow and by management in both organisations.

Figure 4 – Homeworker output



For both companies, no one disagreed with the statement. Company Yellow – 7 respondents strongly agreed, 14 agreed and the remaining 7 respondents neither agreed or disagreed. Company Red – 1 respondent strongly agreed, 2 agreed and the remaining respondent neither agreed or disagreed.

The increased performance/output of homeworkers was confirmed by management. A line manager from Company Red described how she was initially faced with a pleasant challenge in finding enough work for her homeworkers to undertake:-

‘The biggest challenge for me in managing homeworkers is finding them enough work to do. When we did an initial trial of homeworking productivity went through the roof. In the office we would expect them to do about 28 to 30 claims per hour. We didn't know what to expect, maybe they would do another 1 or 2 more claims but it just kept on increasing with a 10% increase being a minimum. It was great at first but then I had to really struggle to find them enough work to do...what a luxury I know!’ CRLM1.

When explaining why this situation might occur, homeworkers from both organisations outlined how working at home allows them to just get on with their work and avoid many of the interruptions that you can get within an office environment. These interruptions included chit chat and gossip from colleagues, being asked to attend pointless meetings, noise from other people working and colleagues encouraging you to go for a coffee etc.

‘There is a supposition or opinion I think that if you are not in the office you are not productive and you are not really working. However, I think the opposite is true. I think at home you can do it in your own timescale and without interruptions and therefore you are actually more productive.’ CYHW9

When discussing the theme 'influence of family and co-residents' many homeworkers suggested that family can interrupt their working patterns. An alternative view is offered here. Working at home enables homeworkers to focus on the task in hand and avoid the negative influence their colleagues and line managers can place on their ability to concentrate. However, for Company Red increased output may also be due to the homeworkers perception that their performance is subject to increased scrutiny. Aware of the continuous monitoring of their performance, homeworkers may work harder to avoid management interrogation and the need to justify their daily or hourly activities.

- *Taking advantage of the lack of visibility?*

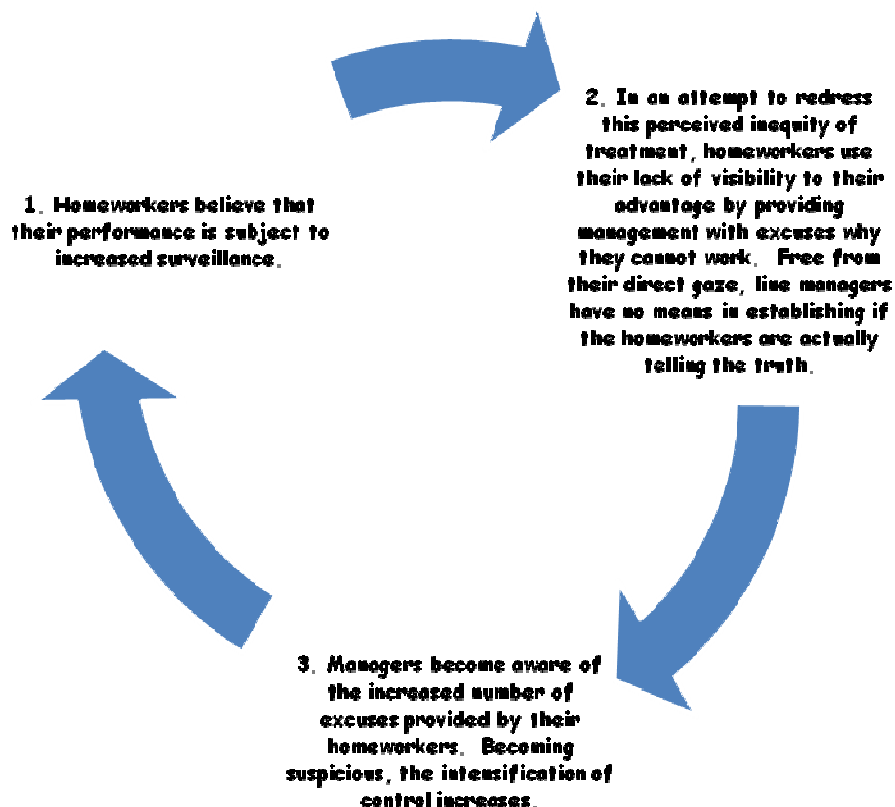
Within Company Red, the cyclical nature of control becomes more apparent when acknowledging the comment made by one line manager.

'It's very good because they're out of sight, they can use their children as an excuse not to do any work today. If they have a child who's ill or they've been summoned to the school or take the child to the doctors or something like that, they'll ring up and they'll say "I'm sorry but can I do my work at a different time." I get really annoyed about it. Especially if we have the need to call them at home and they are not there. We get very annoyed actually and we're sitting there thinking "I wonder where she's got to" and we think of all things she could have gone to. But when you ring them up and say "oh well we rang you earlier" "oh I had a doctors appointment" they've always got something to tell you, you know, they'll cover themselves.' CRLM1

The Manager describes how her homeworkers have a greater opportunity to gain control as she has limited means in establishing if they were actually telling the truth. Free from the direct gaze of their line manager, homeworkers may be using such excuses in order to redress their belief that they are subject to increased surveillance and scrutiny of their work.

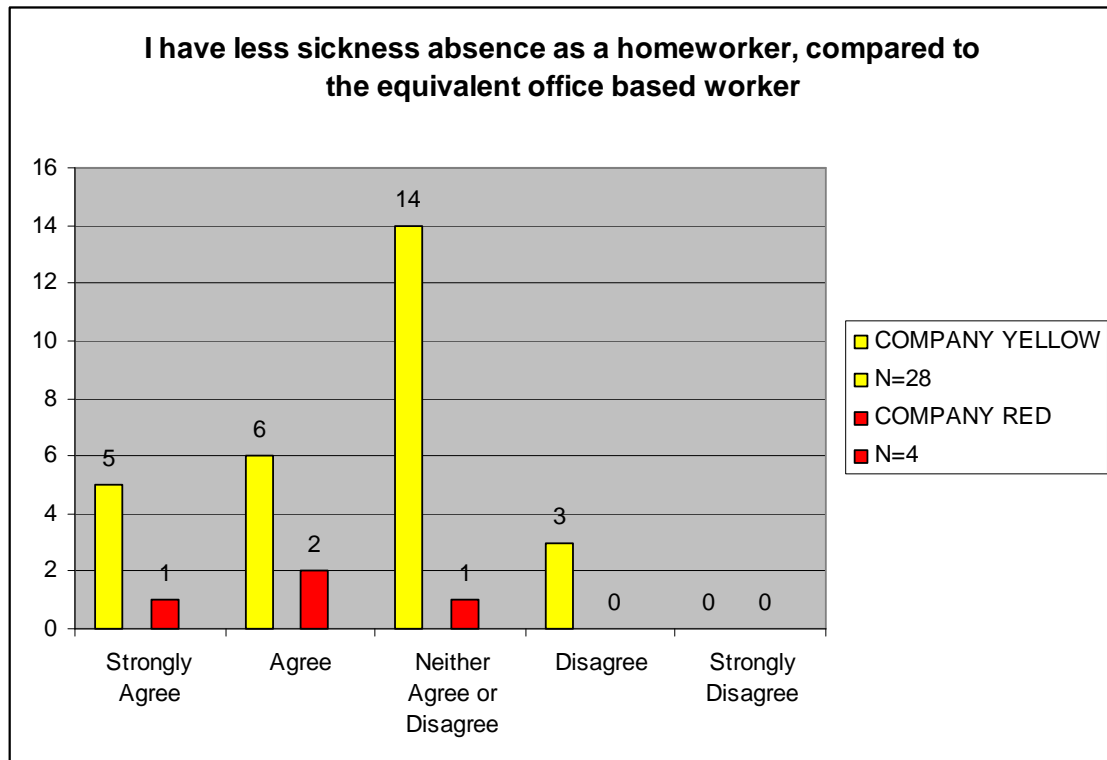
The diagram below (diagram 1) helps to explain why control may intensify in this homeworking environment:

Diagram 1 - The cyclical nature of managerial control in a homeworking environment



As the previous comment demonstrates, managers at Company Red believe that they are increasingly bombarded with excuses as to why their homeworkers cannot undertake their work. The 'excuses' generally concern the health of the homeworker. Managers at Company Red genuinely believed that their homeworkers have more frequent episodes of short-term or temporary sickness absence than their equivalent office based colleagues. This is not a view supported by the homeworkers who completed the questionnaire. 3 out of the 4 homeworkers from Company Red agreed with the statement - 'I have less sickness absence as a homeworker compared to the equivalent office based worker.' Only 3 out of the 28 respondents from Company Yellow disagreed. 1 respondent from Company Red and 14 from Company Yellow offered no opinion on this matter. Such a high no opinion response from Company Yellow may be due to the fact that sickness absence is not an issue for these homeworkers due to the flexibility afforded to them in their role. Flexibility will be explored in further detail in the following chapter. Figure 5 provides a breakdown of the responses from both organisations.

Figure 5 – Sickness Absence



Company Yellow – 14 respondents (50%) neither agreed or disagreed. However, 11 respondents (39.29%) either strongly agreed (5 respondents) or agreed (6 respondents) that they have less sickness absence as a homeworker. The remaining 3 respondents indicated that they disagreed with this statement. Company Red – no one disagreed. 3 respondents either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (50%) and the remaining respondent neither agreed or disagreed.

A manager from Company Red explained how her homeworkers seem to have more headaches than the office based staff:-

‘The excuses for not working seem to always be about having a headache. They will ring up and say ‘I am sorry I just can’t work, I have tried for 5 or 10 minutes but I just can’t focus on the screen and my head is so bad.’ I don’t know why they get more headaches.’



Although management may be suspicious and not believe that their homeworkers are experiencing more headaches, they are obliged under Health and Safety legislation to protect the wellbeing of their staff. As data input clerks, these homeworkers are regularly staring at their computer screen for the majority of their working day. Consequently, the rule regarding the need for homeworkers to take regular breaks away from the computer screen was reinforced during the bi-monthly team meeting. All homeworkers were reminded that they should take a 5 minute break every hour. When doing so they should log out and return to the main menu. It appeared that very few were actually doing this. Clearly unhappy about this continued breach of rules, strong emphasis was placed on this matter by the relevant supervisors. Homeworkers were reminded that any further breaches may result in disciplinary action.

When observing one of these team meetings it became quite apparent that these meetings are used as a means of controlling the performance and behaviour of the homeworkers. The agenda and general tone of the meeting supported this view. The meeting observed had the following set agenda items:-

- Friday working – instruction given not to complete Monday's work on a Friday evening.
- Messages – homeworkers were advised that some messages sent to supervisors are being lost. Homeworkers were reminded to use the management email address.
- System downtime – discussed problems with the server. Rules regarding payment when the server is down were reiterated.

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

- 5 minute rule break – the need for homeworkers to take a 5 minute break every hour.
- Holiday requests – homeworkers were reminded that they still need to give the appropriate notice and not just email on the day or the night before.

For Company Yellow the opportunity to reinforce company rules on a face to face basis is extremely limited as line managers only get to see their staff about 2 to 3 times a year.

When asking a line manager from Company Yellow how he thought this lack of face to face contact affected his role, his answer focused on the limit this can place on his ability to impose disciplinary issues:

‘For me it centres on discipline. You can’t strangle someone when they have made a mistake. In an office environment, you could put them in an office, close the door and make it crystal clear to them that they have just cost the organisation thousands of pounds. Saying this down the phone does not have the same effect and the stropmy email you send afterwards can be ignored because they know what it is going to say. It is funny how they never receive such emails. A virtual bollocking is just not the same.’ CYLM2.

This line manager illustrates how homeworkers are, to a certain extent, able to avoid the wrath of their manager when they have failed to complete work or made a mistake.

In addition to the use of the team meeting to reinforce company rules, all of the homeworkers of Company Red have been provided with a 'homeworkers policy.' A sub-heading within this policy is entitled – 'Homeworking Rules' and reads:

'The variety of working is so great, both in content and lengths of time, that the following listing for homeworkers offers a number of options for selection as required:

- Ensure that the work required is clearly understood; if in doubt ask.
- Check that the workstation is set up as well as possible, within domestic constraints, in accordance with supplied guidelines.
- Do the work in accordance with those guidelines, especially paying attention to rest breaks from display screen or repetitive work – it is easy when you are at home to 'forget' to take breaks.
- Try to keep the work area safe at all times, remembering children, visitors etc.
- Report any problems promptly, struggling on may seem heroic but it benefits no one if there is something not right which could be corrected if identified and reported.'

Homeworkers are asked to sign and return the policy to confirm their agreement to these rules. In contrast, the homeworkers from Company Yellow have not been asked to sign any agreements. When asking Company Yellow if they have been given any information booklets, I was advised that 'our environment is quite unique, there are lots of processes and stuff. The intranet is huge and I mean it will take you ages to get

through, there is documentation for every bit of thing.' CYHW7. Information is obviously available via the intranet, but it became quite apparent that this information was quite difficult to find – “‘yeah, I think there is some guide or something like that available on our intranet, we were sent a link once, but it took ages to find it, so I gave up in the end. CYHW8. Reading the available information is not a mandatory requirement. However, this is quite clearly the case for the homeworkers of Company Red.

*Key issues for the theme 'performance and discipline.'*

As managers of homeworkers cannot physically observe the performance of their employees, additional mechanisms of surveillance are employed to compensate for the lack of visibility. These methods include electronic surveillance and input from other stakeholders. None of the homeworkers or managers involved in this research have received any formal training in relation to working at home and/or managing homeworkers. Homeworkers undertaking routine job tasks believe they are subjected to increased monitoring and therefore attempt to claw back control by using the lack of visibility to their advantage. Virtual discipline appears to be less effective than that undertaken on a face to face basis.

## Theme 2 - Management Style and Status

### *Background to the theme 'management style and status.'*

Within a conventional office environment, management status and hierarchical authority is reinforced via the symbolic references afforded to those occupying such a role. As homeworkers work in a completely different context the social image of managers becomes irrelevant and therefore managers may have to work harder to reinforce their status and authority (Valsecchi, 2006). Adopting a leadership perspective, managers of homeworkers are recommended to focus their attention on people and abscond from mere monitoring of task completion.

Letting go of their traditional controlling practices (Hertel, 2005) managers must learn to delegate responsibility to their team and invest time in developing a level of mutual trust and commitment (Symons, 2003).

### *Summary of key findings applicable to the theme 'management style and status.'*

The managers involved in this research do not believe that homeworking has altered their approach to the management of their staff. No formal training has been provided to any of the managers following the adoption of homebased working. Access to electronic means of surveillance supersedes a line manager's need to trust their homeworkers. For those line managers who do not have access to such monitoring techniques, trust becomes increasingly important as managers are unable to directly observe the performance of homeworkers. All managers confirmed that they would not arrive at their homeworker's homes unannounced. Supporting Valsecchi's (2006)

proposition regarding the symbolic trappings of management, this research also explores the significance of personal power and influence when managing homeworkers. The managers from Company Yellow explained that their role is more focused on the management of independent peers who are all working towards the same goal in contrast to the management of a hierarchy of people. Managers of Company Red indicated that homeworking has had little impact on their managerial status and role.

*Detailed presentation of the findings for the theme 'management style and status.'*

- *Employing the same set of management principles*

All of the Line Managers and Supervisors from Company Red were asked if they considered the management of homeworkers to be any different from the management of their office based workers. The resounding response was no. The comment below is typical of the responses:

‘No, for me it is not that different. I might not see them that often but I can always contact them via phone or email and the monitoring system means I can review their progress. For me it has not been an issue. Obviously the difference is that they are not physically here, but by all accounts that makes very little difference to the way I manage them.’ CRLM7.

The view that managing homeworkers is virtually the same as managing office based staff is reflected in the fact no formal training has been provided by Company Red.

Both Managers and homeworkers have received no training at all, only the issue of a homeworking policy. Before launching the homeworking policy, a number of company representatives (management and employees) undertook a very brief brainstorm of some of the issues which might arise due to the change in work location. After the initial pilot scheme, a formal homeworking policy and risk assessment guide was issued to homeworkers and respective line managers.

Whilst there is a heavy emphasis on health and safety with forms to complete regarding an annual risk assessment, a regular risk assessment and the suitability of equipment, there is a small section on 'Authorisation for Homeworkers' and 'Supervision and Communication.' The section on Supervision and communication reads as follows:-

'The homeworker should not be out of sight out of mind. Systems should be in place to ensure well being. This includes regular contact, discussing the work and also the context (working environment etc.). Supervisors need to develop skills to do this without appearing intrusive into what is someone's personal, domestic space. Telephone calls, emails and communication database and periodic visits will together form the pattern of appropriate supervision.'

When asking a line manager from Company Yellow if he had received any training or support when he became responsible for homeworkers, he answered – 'you must be joking. Not in the slightest. I think, well I know I would have been insulted if they did ask me to attend a training course. I have worked here for a long time and I would be

insulted if someone came along and told me how to manage people.' CYLM2. This line manager certainly did not feel that he would need to employ a different skill set when managing home based workers. However, when exploring his role in more detail, he explained that although he employs the same set of management principles, the implementation and action is quite different.

The following comment illustrates how the 'action' may differ:

'I am there for my staff and they can always contact me to discuss things, but I am like a facilitator as opposed to a task manager. In homeworking I have to let them discover things for themselves and take responsibility for their actions. Whilst I can monitor them to a certain extent, I shouldn't have to because I trust them to get on with it and contact me if they are experiencing any particular problems.' CYLM3

The need to trust homeworkers was certainly an issue that one line manager wished to discuss when outlining the differences between the management of homeworkers and office based staff:-

'I think you can only do it properly once you understand and trust the people you manage. I think you do have to trust that person will deliver. The reason it worked for me is because I spent time in getting to know my staff. I wanted to make sure they had the tools to do their job and what their feelings were about working at home...I wanted to know why they were doing it and what they believed the benefits and drawbacks were from their perspective. I needed to



meet them face to face first and understand how they ticked. Once I felt I could trust them, I felt more comfortable in letting them work from home. I know I am old school, but I have to see the whites of their eyes in order to gauge if I can trust them.' CYLM3

Unable to continually see the 'whites of their eyes', managers of homeworkers who are vastly geographically dispersed, argue that increased communication via telephone and email helps them to maintain a level of mutual trust and commitment. This will be explored in more detail in the following theme 'communication.'

For the managers of Company Red, trust is not such a significant issue as they have other means in establishing if their homeworkers are actually working. For example, their computer system enables them to constantly monitor logging on and off times, screens accessed and time and accuracy of input. It was therefore not surprising that one manager from Company Red explained:-

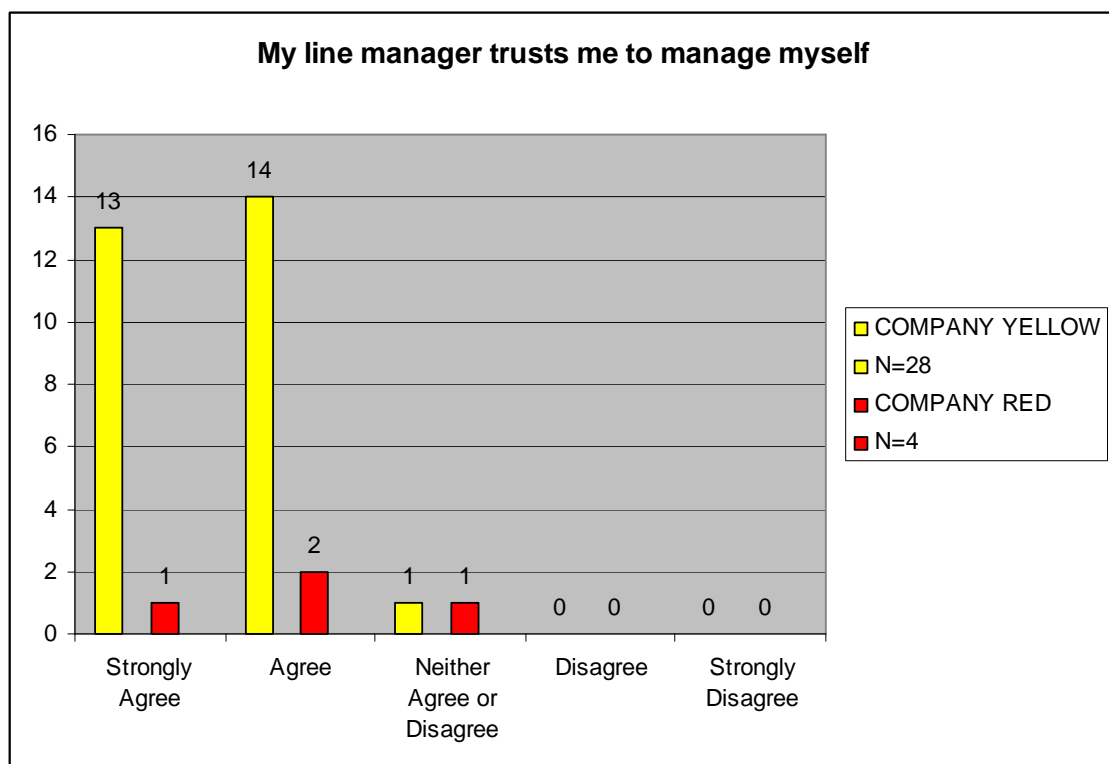
'No I don't think that they management of homeworkers is any different to that of our office based workers. I think the tools of how we manage the team are very similar to the tools we use for the homeworkers. The quality checks are exactly the same, their throughput figures and the way we run reports are all logged and completed in the same way. For me, there isn't a distinction.'

CRLM5.

These electronic means of surveillance supersede the need to trust homeworkers but for the managers of Company Yellow, trust plays a more crucial role in the employment relationship.

This feeling of trust is also reflected in the questionnaire responses as 96.43% (all but 1) of respondents from Company Yellow agreed with the statement – ‘My line manager trusts me to manage myself.’ Figure 6 identifies that no one disagreed with the statement.

Figure 6 – Trust

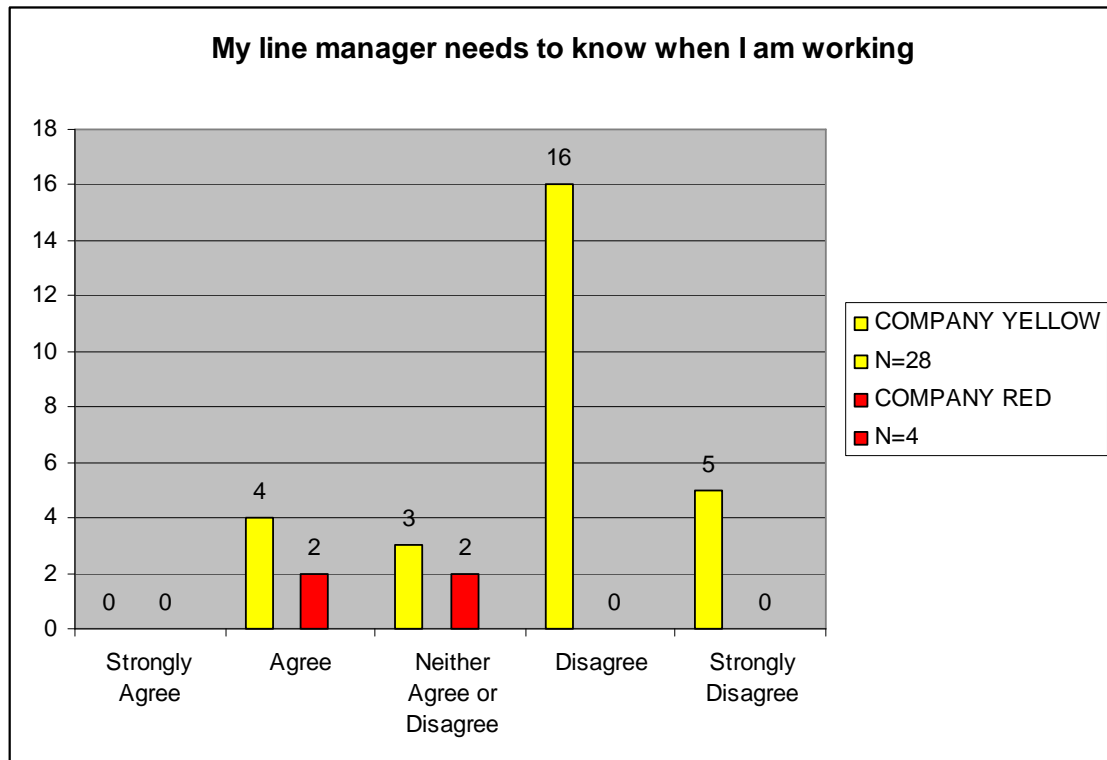


Company Yellow – Only 1 respondent indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. 50% (14 respondents) agreed and the remaining 46.43% (13 respondents) strongly agreed with this statement. Company Red – 75% either strongly agreed (1 respondent) or agreed (2 respondents). The remaining respondent neither agreed or disagreed.

Homeworkers from both Company Red and Yellow believe that their line manager trusts them. However, due to the job role and monitoring techniques employed at Company Red managers would know instantly if their homeworkers were not working.

For Company Yellow, the daily or even weekly output of homeworkers is much harder to assess and therefore the manager has to trust that their homeworkers will achieve the agreed completion date for the specific task/project they are working on. As long as the work is completed, homeworkers believe that their line manager does not need to know when they are working. The hours of work are irrelevant, as long as the work gets done. Figure 7 demonstrates how 75% of the questionnaire respondents from Company Yellow support this belief.

Figure 7 – Working time



Company Yellow – the majority of respondents disagreed. 17.86% (5 respondents) strongly disagreed and 57.14% (16 respondents) disagreed. 3 respondents neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents (14.29%) agreed with this statement. Company Red – no one disagreed with this statement. 2 respondents (50%) agreed and the remaining 2 respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

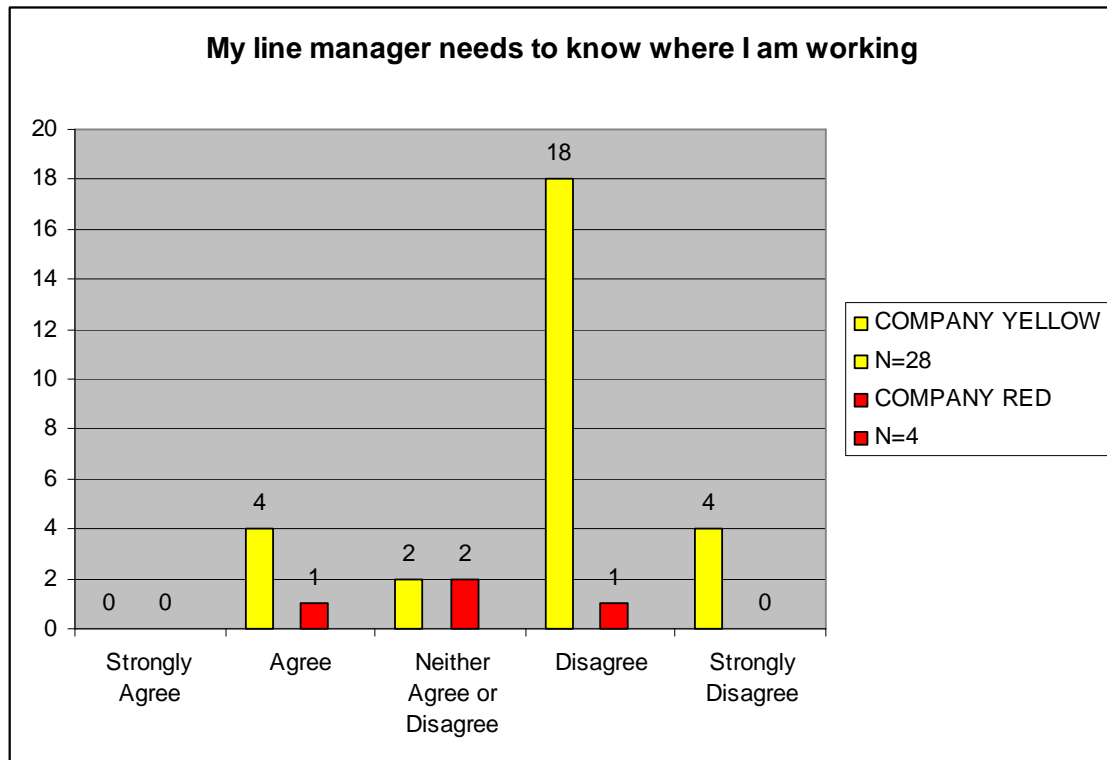
Unlike the homeworkers from Company Red, Company Yellow homeworkers have a fairly flexible approach to their hours of work. There are no core hours of work and their day does not tend to follow a set pattern. Their day is dictated by the telephone calls they have to make. Due to the international nature of their client list, these calls can be at differing times of the day and evening. In between these calls, the homeworkers are free to decide how and when they work.

One line manager from Company Yellow explains how he can often call his homeworkers at home and they are not there.

‘There have been occasions when I have called my homeworkers and they don’t answer the phone. It is not an issue. As long as they get the work done, it doesn’t matter if they have nipped out to go and see their child in the school play.’ CYLM2.

Moving away from management by presenteeism to management by outcomes, Company Yellow managers explained that they do not need to know where or even when their homeworkers are working. As long as they can be trusted to complete the work, the time and location is irrelevant. Again the questionnaire responses in Figure 8 illustrate that over 78% of the homeworking respondents from Company Yellow disagreed with the statement – ‘My line manager needs to know where I am working.’

Figure 8 – Work location



Company Yellow – the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 64.29% (18 respondents) disagreed and a further 14.29% (4 respondents) strongly disagreed. Only 2 respondents (7.14%) neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents agreed with this statement. Company Red – although 2 respondents (50%) neither agreed or disagreed the remaining 2 respondents offered a difference of opinion. 1 agreed and the other disagreed.

Company Yellow homeworkers explained that their computer equipment enables them to work from any remote location with some even indicating that they have used their laptop and worked in the car whilst waiting for their children to finish their football practice. This flexibility in work location is not a luxury afforded to the homeworkers of Company Red who explained that they are required to work at home and have not been provided with the equipment to make remote working a feasible option.

From a management perspective it is therefore much easier for the managers of Company Red to monitor the work location of their employees as they will either be at home or attending the required bi-monthly team meeting. For Company Yellow managers, the actual location of their homeworkers is harder to assess and therefore it was not surprising to learn that managers do not undertake unannounced visits to the homes of their homeworkers.

‘No I would never do that. In fact it has never crossed my mind. For a start it would take me hours to get there and then there would be no guarantee that they would be there. They could be all over the place and I would have know idea. I think they would be upset if I did that and I feel it implies that I don't trust them.’ CYLM3

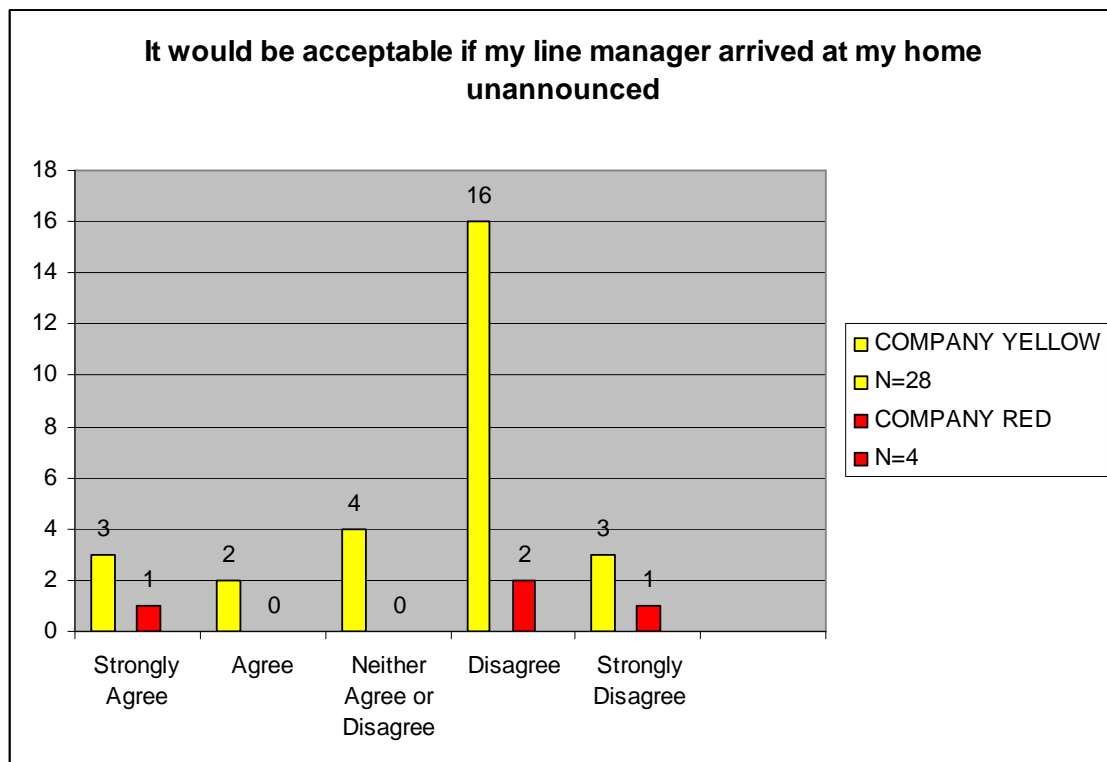
This line manager went on to explain why he feels an unannounced visit would be inappropriate:-

‘I think you have got to respect their own environment as well. The bottom line is it is their home and it's like working for the company and for themselves so no you wouldn't just turn up and knock at the door. I think you've got to have a little bit of respect for that. It is their home and at the end of the day I just feel it would be rude.’ CYLM3

Homeworkers from both organisations were asked both verbally and via the questionnaire if they thought it would be acceptable if their Line Manager arrived at their house unannounced.

The questionnaire responses detailed in Figure 9 highlight that the majority of respondents believe it would not be acceptable for their line manager to arrive at their home without prior notification.

Figure 9 – Unannounced visits



Company Yellow – the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 3 strongly disagreed and 57.14% (16 respondents) disagreed. 4 respondents neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 5 respondents indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Company Red – the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 1 respondent strongly disagreed and 2 disagreed. The remaining respondent strongly agreed.



Homeworkers suggested that visiting them at their home was not an issue, the issues centred on the 'unannounced' aspect of the statement. Indicating that they have nothing to hide, the discussion focused more on their concern regarding the tidiness of their house as opposed to the work itself:-

'Oh my word, I would spend the first five minutes thinking oh my god I haven't done the washing up and the kids toys are all over the place. I would be embarrassed. If I knew they were coming I would have hoovered or whatever and made sure there was enough milk in the fridge. Turning up like that would send me into a right old panic.' CYHW6.

Again, this comment reinforces the fact that the homeworkers are undertaking work within the domestic dwelling which is part of their private life and some homeworkers would feel uncomfortable in inviting someone into their home without prior notification.

All of the managers involved in this research stated that they have never visited one of their employee's home without prior notification.

- *Managerial status and role*

Having outlined the line manager's belief that homeworkers are not more difficult to manage than office based staff, the impact of this working practice on individual status was explored with the managers from Company Red and Yellow.

Company Red managers explained that homeworking has no negative influence on their managerial status. In fact it might even exemplify their power as homeworkers are more than aware that their line manager has the authority and opportunity to continually assess their performance.

For Company Yellow the impact on managerial status and power can be far greater. A line manager from Company Yellow was very honest when describing the differences in their role now they have responsibility for homebased workers:-

'I'll be very honest with you...when I worked in the office I could rub their faces in my superiority. It sounds awful to say but I felt the power because I had the large office and I could look out and see who was working and who wasn't. Physically they could see that I had better office furniture than them and I have a better company car. You are going to think I am awful now. But it has all changed now. I work at home and so do the people that report into me. My car is still the same but it sits on my drive for most of the week and only I can see it. I think you have to get over the materialistic references and be more confident as a person. The skills are different and I try to get to know my staff as people, rather than numbers that report into me. My staff know that in theory I sit

higher up in the organisational chart, but I think of them as all different little businesses and I am not there to tell them what to do, but to just guide and listen to them and offer advice to them when I can.' CYLM1.

This very honest account highlights the difficulty this manager has in relinquishing his positional power and accepting the need to assume a role which concentrates on personal power and influence. This was not an isolated opinion, another line manager also confirmed:

'I think that what you do get is, you get much more emphasis on personal power which is the phrase for it I think, and moving away from positional power. Whereas, in an old conventional, physically present, hierarchically organised office, the positional power plays a more significant role.' CYLM2

This line manager went on to explain that he believes he is 'managing a group of independent peers who are, by the very nature of their work autonomous. I have to just trust them to get on with it because we are all grown ups and are working towards the same goals. For me, it is not about the management of a hierarchy of people.'

When specifically asking the homeworkers to describe the primary function of their line manager, the verbal responses (provided during the focus group discussion and interviews) differed between the two organisations.

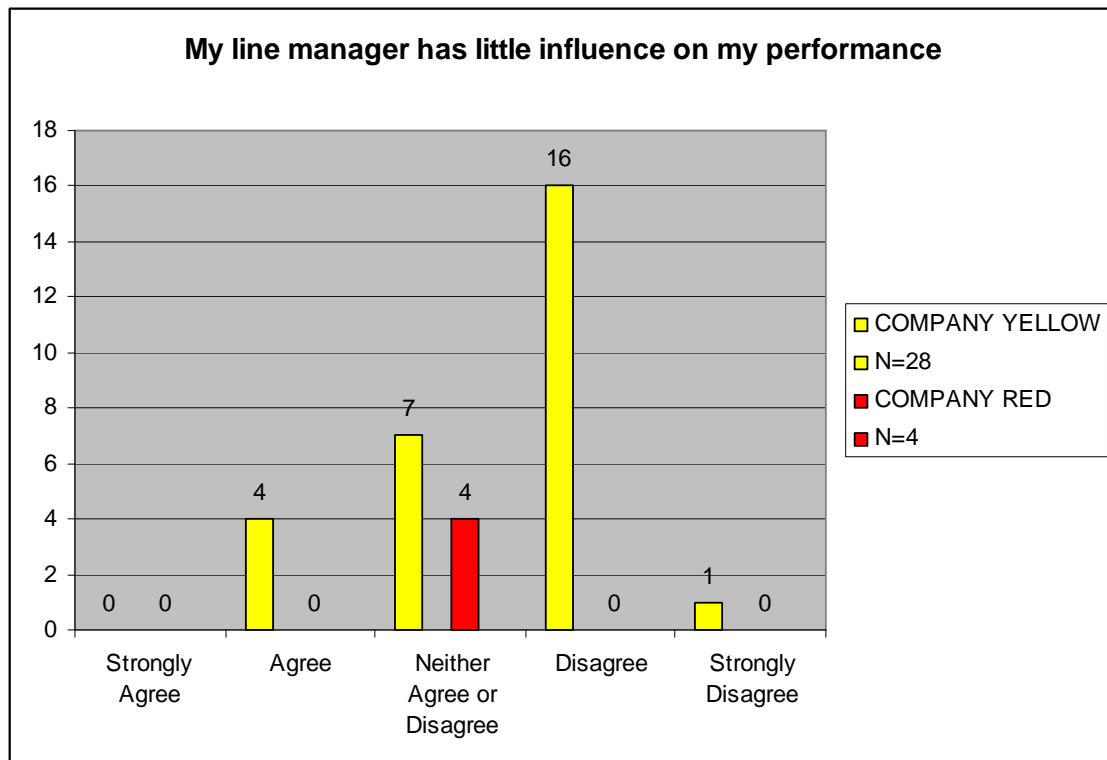
Company Red homeworkers supported the belief that their line manager is 'there to make sure I have met my targets and to monitor my performance. I have to get their permission to take holidays and let them know if I am off sick.' CRHW4

In contrast, Company Yellow homeworkers suggested the following:-

'Day to day, my line manager has little influence on my performance. They are not there to check up on me but I know I can always talk to them if I need to. Mine probably has no idea what I do. They are there to provide leadership I think. I know some are more successful than others but they should help us to achieve our career goals and achieve all that we want to achieve. They are not a front line whip to get us all to work harder.' CYHW7

Although the managers may not have the technical know how to influence the day to day performance of their homeworkers, the questionnaire respondents still believed that their line manager does have an influence on their performance. Figure 10 highlights that over 60% of questionnaire respondents from Company Yellow disagreed with the statement – 'My line manager has little influence on my performance. Unfortunately, none of the homeworkers from Company Red offered an opinion on this matter.

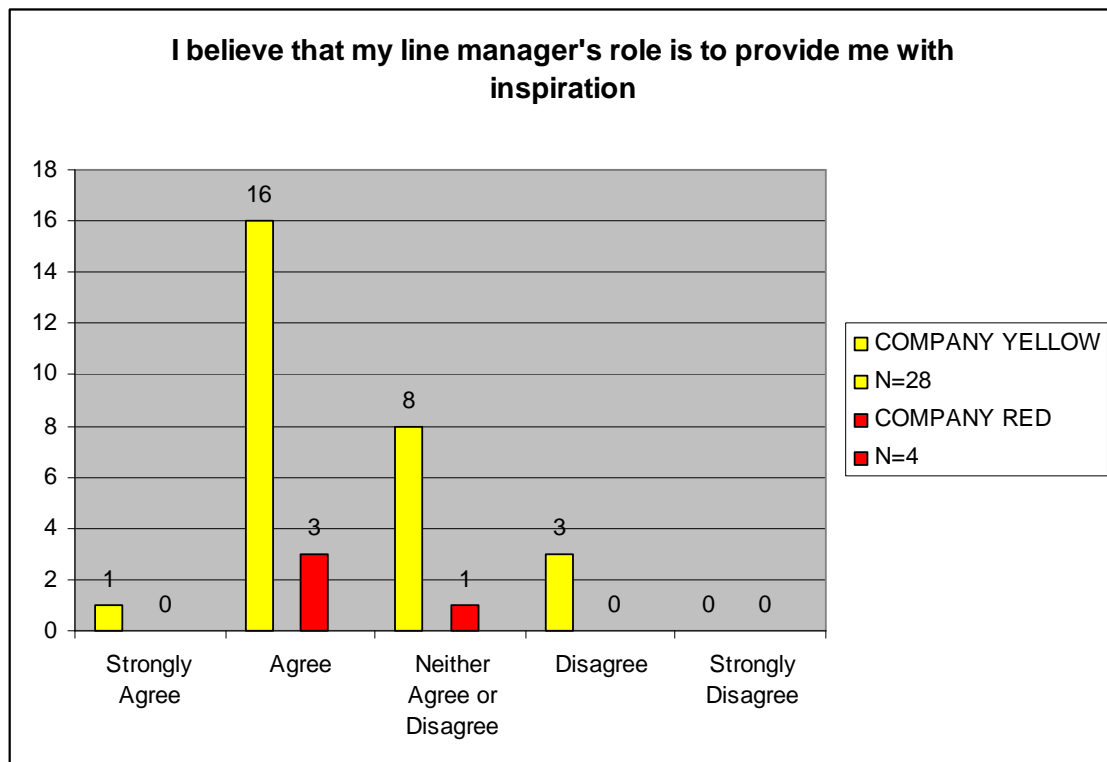
Figure 10 – Line Manager's influence



Company Yellow – the majority of respondents either disagreed (57.14%) or strongly disagreed (3.57%) with this statement. 7 respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents (14.29%) agreed with this statement. Company Red – no one agreed or disagreed with this statement. All respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

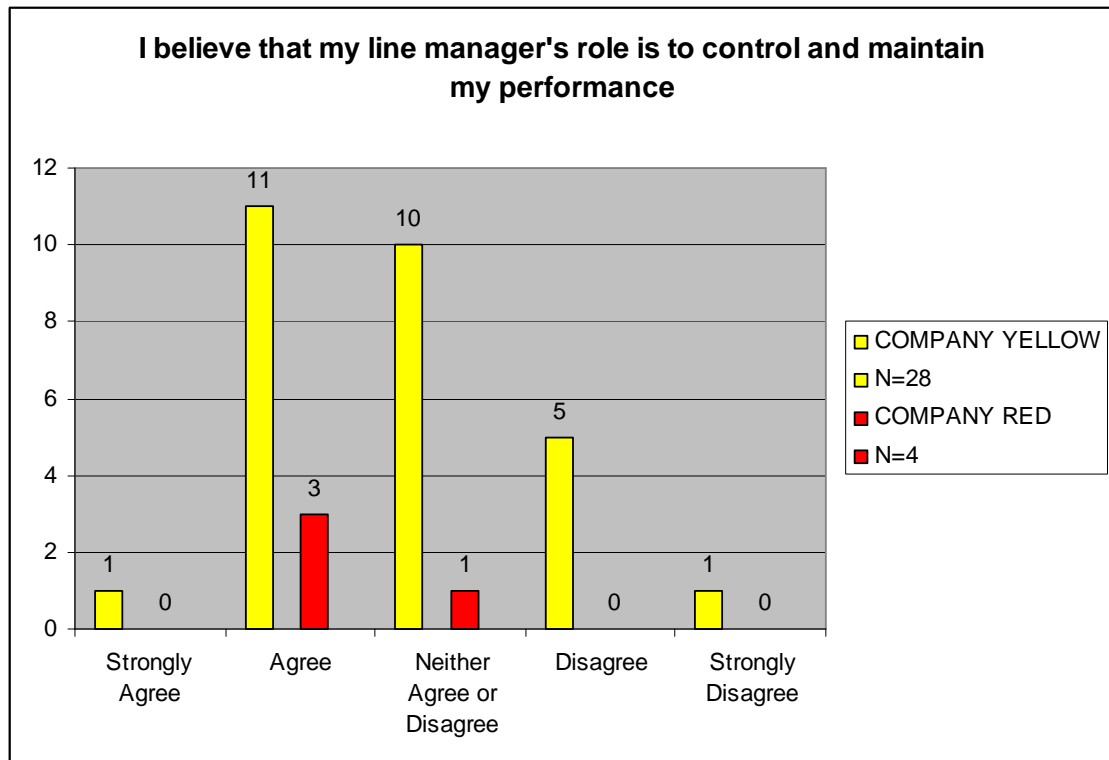
Keen to pursue the homeworkers perception of their line managers role, questionnaire respondents were also asked to indicate if they thought their line manager should control and maintain their performance and/or provide them with inspiration. The results highlight the homeworkers perception that their line manager should undertake both functional aspects, i.e. to control and maintain their performance and also to provide them with inspiration. Figures 11 and 12 provide a detailed summary of the actual responses to the relevant statements within the questionnaire.

Figure 11 – Line Manager's inspiration



Company Yellow – 17 out of 28 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. 8 respondents (28.57%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and 3 respondents (10.71%) disagreed. Company Red – no one disagreed with this statement. 3 respondents (75%) agreed. The remaining respondent indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

Figure 12 – Line Manager's role



Company Yellow – a high proportion (35.71%) of respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed with this statement. However, a larger number of respondents either agreed (11 respondents) or strongly agreed (1 respondent). 5 respondents (17.86%) disagreed and the remaining respondent (3.57%) strongly disagreed. Company Red – no one disagreed with this statement. 3 agreed and 1 indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

It was surprising to learn that over 40% of the questionnaire respondents from Company Yellow believed that their line manager should control and maintain their performance. This was not a view reflected by homeworkers who participated in the telephone interviews. The majority of the comments expressed during the telephone interviews outlined the homeworkers belief that their line manager should and does not control their performance. Homeworkers generally feel that their line manager should assist them in climbing the career ladder and also act as a mentor and confidant.

The following comment clarifies this view:

'I go to my line manager to talk things through. This is usually over the phone but I like to talk through my problem. I don't want him to tell me the answer and he most probably couldn't but at least he will be able to tell me what he did in a similar situation. I can tell him anything and I know it will not go any further.' CYHW1

The questionnaire responses for Company Red homeworkers are also surprising as they indicate that their line manager should not only control their performance, but also provide them with inspiration. The reason for this mixed response may centre on the phrasing of the statement. During the focus group discussion, the homeworkers were asked what they believed their line manager's role to be. A belief versus the reality can be quite different. In the previous theme on 'performance and discipline' the homeworkers from Company Red indicated that they felt less motivated as a homeworker. As demotivated workers the homeworkers could be looking for their line manager to take on another role, one which provides them with inspiration as opposed to continual dictation. However, this view is only an assumption and cannot be substantiated by any further comment made by the homeworkers themselves.



*Key issues for the theme 'management style and status.'*

Electronic forms of surveillance supersede a managers need to trust their homeworkers. Such monitoring techniques allow a line manager to control and maintain individual performance. In the absence of such electronic mechanisms, line managers may need to invest time in getting to know their staff before they feel comfortable in letting the employee work from home. Homeworkers from Company Yellow believe that their line manager should act as a mentor and confidant as opposed to an enforcer of rules. Company Red homeworkers believe that their line manager should control and maintain their performance. However, the questionnaire responses may also imply a homeworkers wish for a different approach from their line manager – one that provides them with inspiration. As these homeworkers believe that their performance is subject to increased scrutiny and intensive managerial control, it is possible that they are looking for a way to break the cycle and 'escape' from the continuous surveillance. Again, this hypothesis was not authenticated by any homeworker.

### Theme 3 - Communication

#### *Background to the theme 'communication.'*

Unable to rely on informal and impromptu encounters with staff, managers of homeworkers need to devote time and effort to get to know their staff. Ward and Shabha (2001) suggest that such communication should be carefully planned and considered. Responding to an individual's need for social interaction (Furnham, 2000) managers must ensure that they dedicate sufficient time to speak to their staff about issues other than those directly concerning the business and be prepared to respond to requests for help. Acknowledging the richness and value of face to face communication (Helms and Raiszadech, 2002), managers who cannot meet with their staff must be prepared to develop their communication skills, particularly their need to be a good listener. Managers will therefore need to listen to what is not being said as well as what the homeworker is actually saying. Ground rules, which include an agreed etiquette, can be beneficial for staff who become reliant on email communication as this can help to clarify expectations and avoid misinterpretation (Tyler, 2007).

#### *Summary of key findings applicable to the theme 'communication.'*

Limited face to face contact does not appear to negatively influence a line manager's ability to get to know their staff. Reliant on email and telephone communication, managers need to develop their communication skills to ensure that the 'message' is being delivered and understood.

The physical detachment of homeworkers increases the organisation's ability to control the cascade of information as homeworker have limited opportunity to access unofficial channels of communication, i.e. a discussion with colleagues in the post room etc.

Homeworkers suggest that face to face communication is important to them as it enables them to interpret and understand people's behaviour and also the culture of the organisation. Meeting someone face to face can help to explain behaviour patterns and therefore enhance working relationships. Email communication can be problematic and therefore time should be taken to carefully consider the content and tone of an email before it is distributed. Homeworkers and managers agreed that social interaction is limited as the majority of their conversations tend to be purely business orientated.

*Detailed presentation of the findings for the theme 'communication.'*

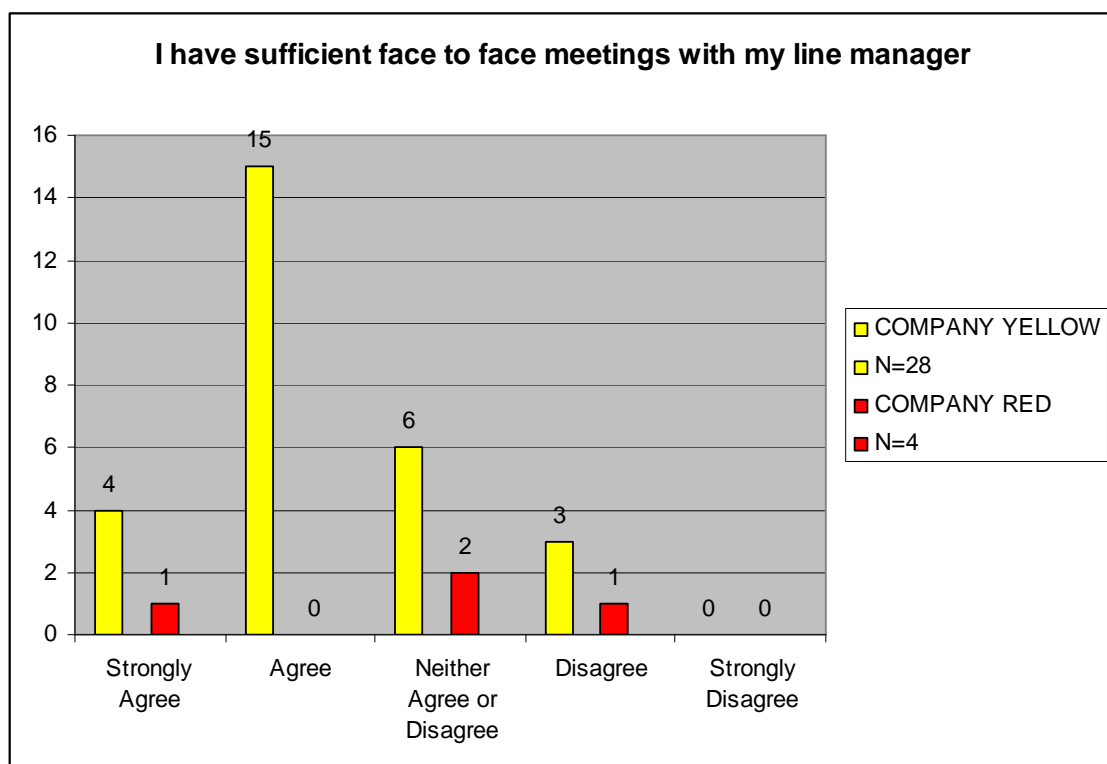
- *Communication methods*

Due to the limited opportunity Managers have to see their homeworkers on a face to face basis, different methods of communication have to be employed. These methods varied between the two organisations. Managers from Company Red use email to stay in contact with their staff. Managers are fortunate that they see all of their staff at least once every two months as the homeworkers are required to attend a bi-monthly team meeting. Managers indicated that they rarely telephoned their staff and preferred to use email. Company Yellow managers only see their staff on a face to face basis about 2 to 3 times a year. Telephone calls are the main source of communication.

Email is also used but managers explained that they would much prefer to pick up the phone and talk to their staff, rather than send an email. Conference calls are scheduled on a regular basis between team members with the line manager facilitating such discussion.

Even though the face to face contact between manager and homeworker may be extremely limited, over 67% of questionnaire respondents from Company Yellow still indicated that they have sufficient face to face meetings with their line manager. Figure 13 provides a summary of the results.

Figure 13 – Face to face meetings

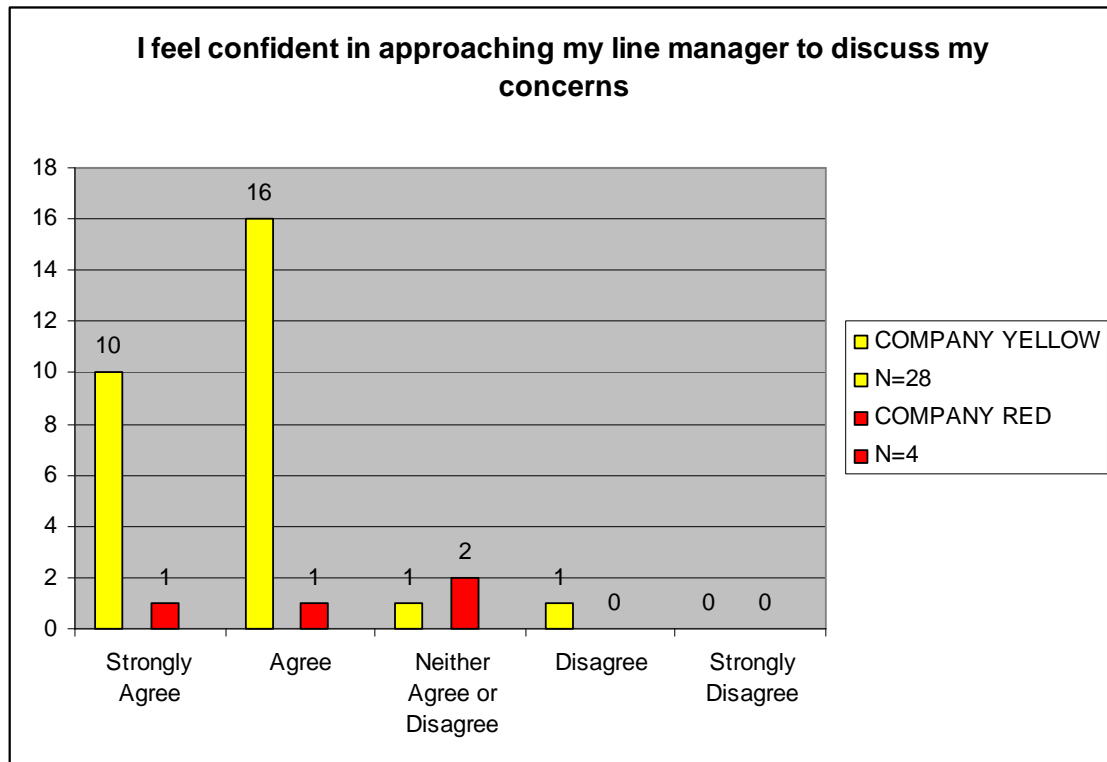


Company Yellow – 19 respondents (67.86%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. 21.43% neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 10.71% (3 respondents) indicated that they disagreed. Company Red – 1 respondent strongly agreed, 1 disagreed and the remaining 2 respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

The above responses suggest the homeworkers of Company Yellow are satisfied with the existing frequency of face to face meetings. Company Red homeworkers see their line manager on a more regular basis, however, their questionnaire responses suggest that not all homeworkers are happy with the level of face to face contact. This may be explained by the fact that the face to face meetings are usually conducted on a team basis with very little opportunity for individual meetings. When observing one of the bi-monthly team meetings, one team member made no comment at all throughout the whole meeting with two homeworkers tending to monopolise the discussion. Given the likelihood that some individuals may not feel confident in expressing their concerns or voicing their opinions in front of others, one to one meetings between managers and homeworkers may encourage a greater interaction and information exchange. To my knowledge, individual meetings only occur on an annual basis, i.e. when the manager conducts the performance appraisal.

Through the discussions with homeworkers and line managers, it would appear that in a homeworking environment more onus is placed on the employee to contact their line manager if they are experiencing any problems. The questionnaire responses to the statement 'I feel confident in approaching my line manager to discuss my concerns' – suggest that the majority of homeworkers are happy to do this. Please see Figure 14 over the page.

Figure 14 – Discussing concerns



Company Yellow – only 1 respondent disagreed. 35.71% (10 respondents) strongly agreed and 57.14% (16 respondents) agreed that they feel confident in approaching their Line Manager.

Company Red – no one disagreed. 2 respondents (50%) neither agreed or disagreed. 1 strongly agreed and 1 agreed.

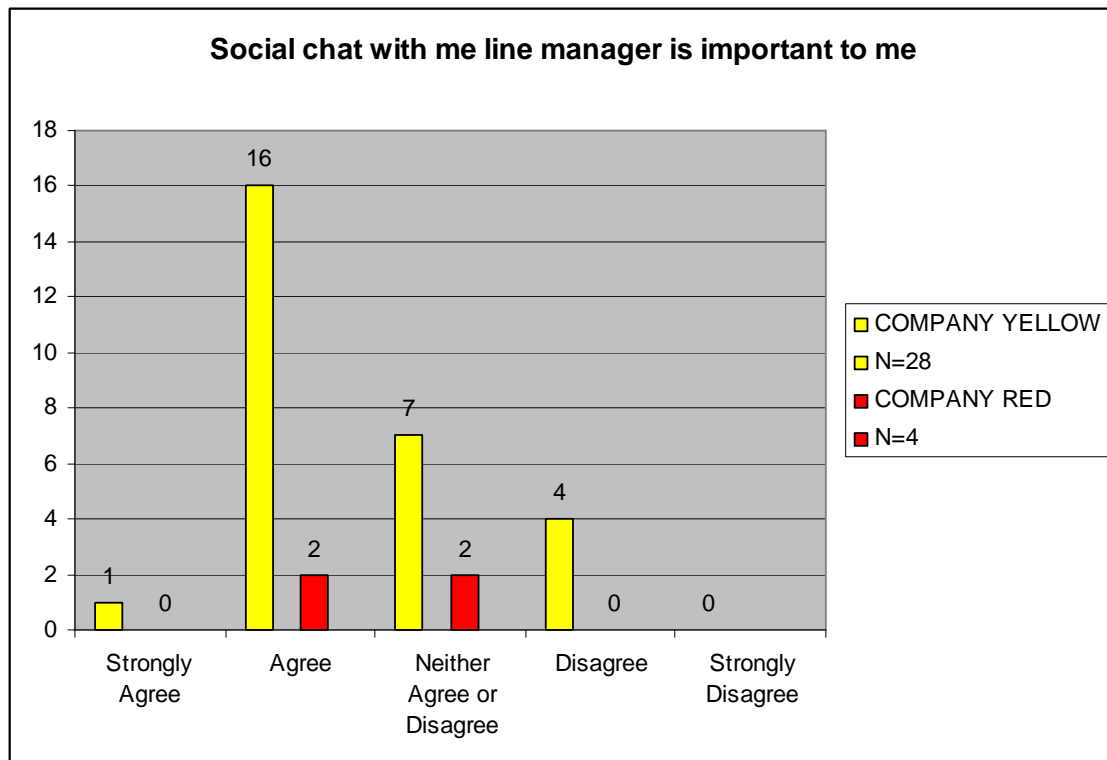
A line manager from Company Yellow expressed his worry that some managers of homeworkers ‘sideline the welfare stuff in favour of business issues.’ CYLM3. Four of the homeworkers interviewed confirmed that the majority of their interaction with their line manager is purely business focused with minimal social interaction.

A homeworker from Company Yellow expressed their opinion that managers do need to ask how things are going and be prepared to act on the comments received:-

‘A manager can’t just leave it to the annual appraisal to ask how things are going. They’ve got to ring up and ask how you are getting on. In an office environment, you’ll have those times when you both arrive at the coffee machine at the same time, or you happen to walk past each other in the corridor and say ‘hey how’s it going’ ..... so maybe the substitute for that is you’ve got to call your people when they’re not expecting it. And homeworkers have got to be honest. If they do ask you how things are going, say ‘well not good actually.’ They can only help you if they know about it. If you keep silent – what’s the point.’ CYHW2

Company Red homeworkers also agreed that the majority of their interaction with their manager is purely business focused with very little social chat. However, 50% of the questionnaire respondents from Company Red and over 60% of the homeworkers from Company Yellow agreed that social chat with their line manager is important. Figure 15 provides a breakdown of the responses.

Figure 15 – Social chat



Company Yellow – 25% (7 respondents) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed, 57.14% (16 respondents) indicated that they agreed and 1 respondent strongly agreed. 4 respondents indicated that they disagreed. Company Red – 50% (2 respondents) indicated that they agreed that social chat with their line manager is important and the remaining 2 respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

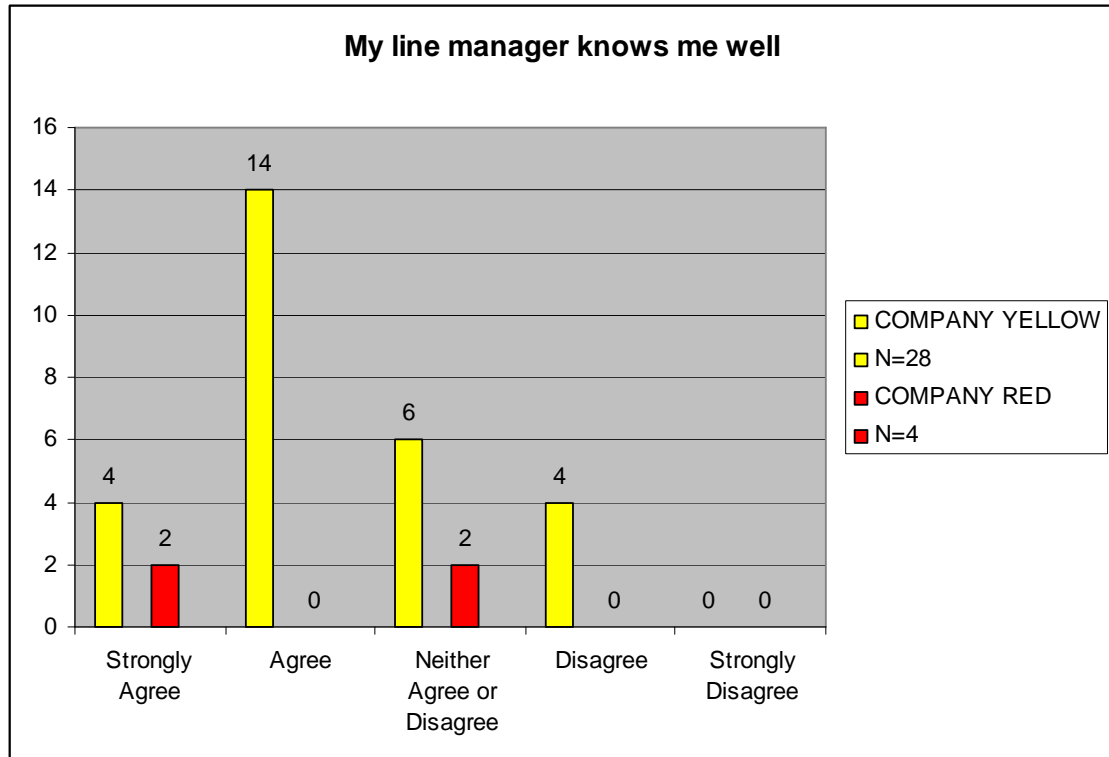


When asking the interview and focus group participants why they thought social chat with their line manager was important the responses centred on the need to build improved relationships and ultimately to get to know each other better. The following comment highlights this:

‘It’s all business, business and more business. No one really cares what is happening in your world. I could be splitting up with my wife, or just run a half marathon for charity, but no one knows and no one asks. The social side of things is important and helps you to get to know a person. Maybe if my manager knew what was happening in my life, it might help to explain my behaviour and a change in my working patterns. If they don’t ask, they don’t know and it is not a thing that I would just throw into a conversation.’ CYHW5

The questionnaire responses to the statement – ‘My line manager knows me well’ – suggest a positive relationship. 16 out of the 28 respondents from Company Yellow indicated that they felt that their line manager does know them well. 2 of the 4 respondents from Company Red suggested that they also had similar feelings. However, the knowledge by the manager may only be the ‘image’ the homeworker wants to project and it may not be a true account of their feelings. Please see Figure 16 for a breakdown of the results.

Figure 16 – Line Manager knows me



Company Yellow – 14.29% (4 respondents) strongly agreed with this statement and 50% (14 respondents) agreed. 6 respondents (21.43%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 14.29% (4 respondents) disagreed. Company Red – 50% (2 respondents) strongly agreed that their Line Manager knows them well and 2 respondents (50%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

A homeworker from Company Yellow explains how his line manager has learnt how to 'read' him and indicated that his manager is definitely in tune with his feelings and thoughts:-

'My manager is great – well certainly one of the better managers. He actually knows me well enough now that the way I word an email or when I am using the instant messaging thing, he can tell what I'm feeling. He is quite intuitive like that. Yeah, you get things like – 'you're irritated aren't you?' He can just tell by the tone of the email if I am happy or annoyed. He is quite accurate too.'

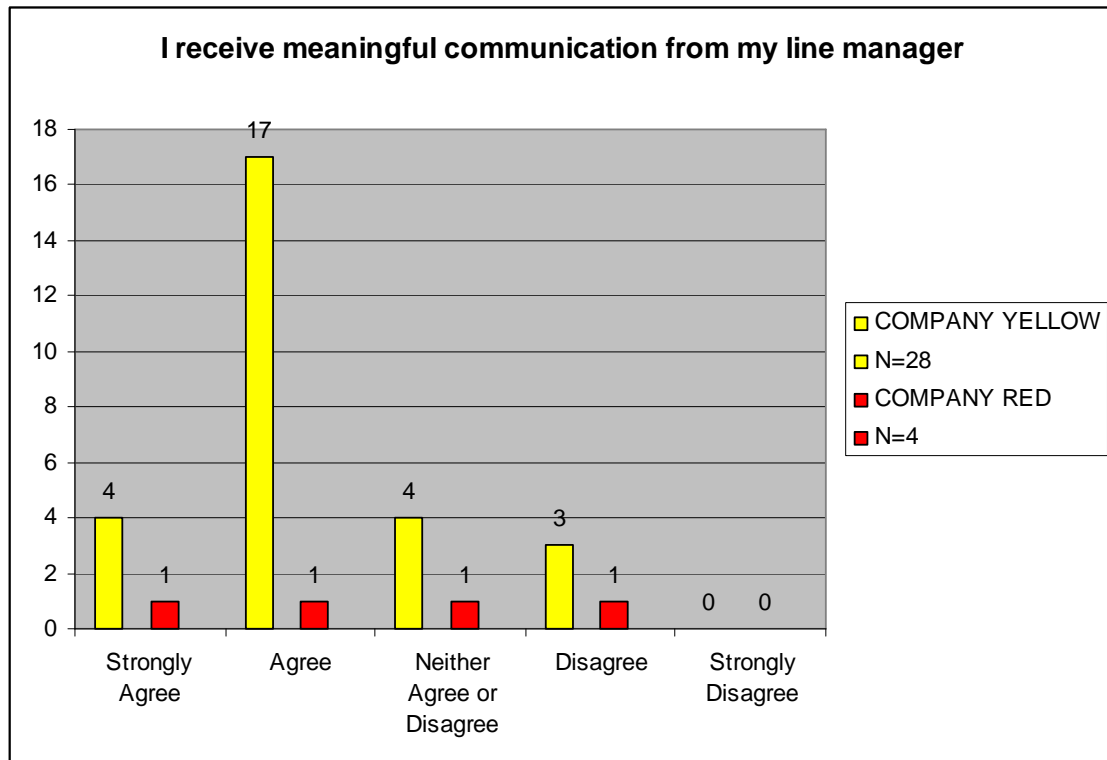
CYHW9

In response, the respective line manager confirmed that homeworking has made him think more about the communication process and consequently he believes that he has become a better communicator:

Yeah, I think you become better at raising questions. If you haven't understood something or you've misinterpreted something or somebody has misinterpreted something of yours and you don't get the reaction you are expecting, you get quicker at just thinking 'well maybe that wasn't a clear communication.' You need to go back round one more time and just see what's going on. I think it does turn you in to a better communicator.' CYLM2.

Due to the above comments, it was not surprising to learn that 75% of questionnaire respondents from Company Yellow agreed with the statement – 'I receive meaningful communication from my line manager.' Please see Figure 17 over the page.

Figure 17 – Meaningful communication



Company Yellow – 60.71% (17 respondents) agreed and 14.29% (4 respondents) strongly agreed. 3 respondents (10.71%) disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents (14.29%) neither agreed or disagreed. Company Red – a very mixed response to this statement. 1 strongly agreed, 1 agreed, 1 neither agreed or disagreed and 1 disagreed.

The questionnaire responses offer a quite favourable impression of the communication flow from management to homeworker, particularly for Company Yellow.

However, a homeworker from Company Yellow elaborated on this ‘meaningful exchange’ when discussing her belief that email communication can remove the emotion from the interaction. She described how the flow of information between her and her line manager was fairly succinct and as the communication was not face to face, she felt that her manager was not imparting their true feelings during the course of the exchange.

She explains:-

'You tend to get involved in formula. By that I mean, at the end of an email there will always be a polite response... at the bottom it will say 'many thanks for all your help' and you know that they don't really mean it, it is just a polite way to end the email, you know there is always stuff like that and you think 'oh yeah, I'm sure you are.' There is a lot of formula in it which tends to hide what's really there.' CYHW1

Implying that the communication is false, she went on to explain how the scripted approach can be employed to ensure that the manager is toeing the company line:

'For me email is a record and for the manager also. It is proof of what is said and a record that I have done what I should have done. This is the same for the line manager. It is like a script at the end of the day, so it can be false and not straight from the heart because you know the sender has mulled over it before they have sent it. It is what they ought to say, not what they really want to say. How many times have you sat looking at your screen wanting to respond to your line manager with a few choice swear words....I know I have but I know I can't. In a face to face discussion it is your word against theirs but in email it is factual.' CYHW1

A number of homeworkers from both organisations confirmed how email had initially 'put the fear of god into me' (CYHW8) and it is only through practice and patience that they have learned to take their time when preparing to send an email. One homeworker from Company Yellow explained how they tend to type the email at the beginning of the day, save it as a draft and then come back to it later and re-read it before they hit the send button.

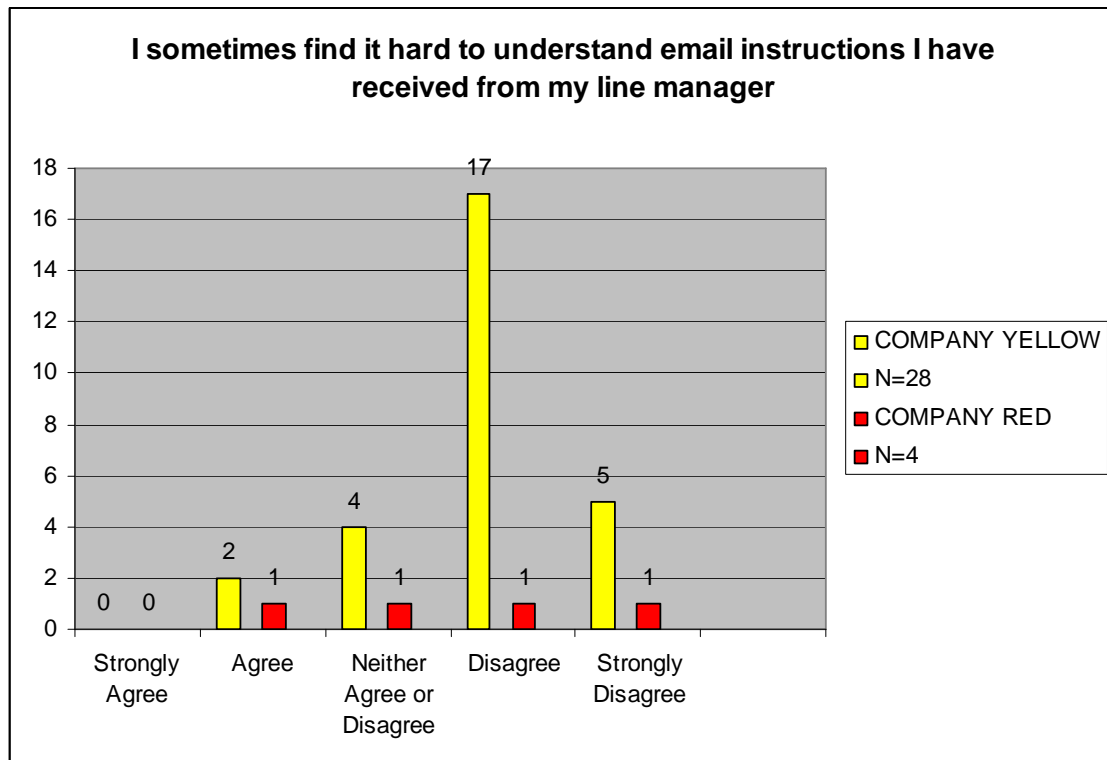
'It does depend on who I am writing the email to. The thing about email is, you can be exactly 100% explicit if you choose to take the time. In the spoken word, you can't refute it. If people take the time to write it properly...now that is a big 'if' because a lot of people type as they speak and forget to go back and re-read it. I always try, if I am sending out one which is potentially emotive, I can sometimes type it up at 7.30 in the morning, but not send it until 12 noon. I keep going back to re-read it and think about changing some of the words.' CYHW1

In agreement, their colleague describes:

'Yes, I do think you can misinterpret an email but we receive and send them all the time so you kind of learn to think before you press the enter key. But if you are new or it is something that you do infrequently, I could imagine that it would be a real issue. Unless it is really urgent I will write it and I'll save it as a draft and I'll come back to it and read it again later just to make sure.' CYHW8

Homeworkers were asked if they felt that they sometimes found it difficult to understand the email instructions they receive from their line manager. The table below (Figure 18) identifies that the misinterpretation of emails is not an issue.

Figure 18 – Email instructions



Company Yellow – the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 60.71% (17 respondents) disagreed and a further 17.86% (5 respondents) strongly disagreed. 14.29% (4 respondents) neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 2 respondents (7.14%) agreed.

Company Red – again, a mixed response to this question. However, more respondents disagreed. 1 strongly disagreed and 1 disagreed. 1 respondent neither agreed or disagreed and 1 agreed.

The reason for this response is reflected in the comments above, i.e. homeworkers and line managers become more cautious communicators and therefore ensure that the content of the email is explicit and can therefore be understood.

Nevertheless, an over reliance on email communication can eventually lead to a lack of understanding for individuals who work in teams. Rarely meeting the individuals they work with, Company Yellow homeworkers are required to interact, via email and telephone, with their other team members in order to complete a task. However, the virtual nature of their relationship can have a negative impact on team work and performance. A line manager from Company Yellow explains a face to face meeting at the start of a project can be really helpful for his homeworkers.

‘It is always a good idea to meet with someone who you are going to be working with .... You really ought to try and get and make use of that face to face meeting because it breaks down barriers that you can’t overcome via telephone and email.’ CYLM2

He went on to emphasise the role it plays in breaking down barriers and building a level of trust.

‘It’s trust actually, because on the telephone and email you can’t see the person’s face, you can’t see their reactions, the kind you get from the face, the hand movement and all that kind of stuff. So you purely hear the words and the tone of the voice. And you make assumptions that ‘Ok that is the kind of voice I can trust or that’s a dodgy voice, I’m not sure about them.’ So I feel that when I meet someone, I sort of break down barriers. When you have met them, you understand when they say a particular set of words in a certain way and it’s humorous, whereas before you may not have interpreted it as humour. Now it is

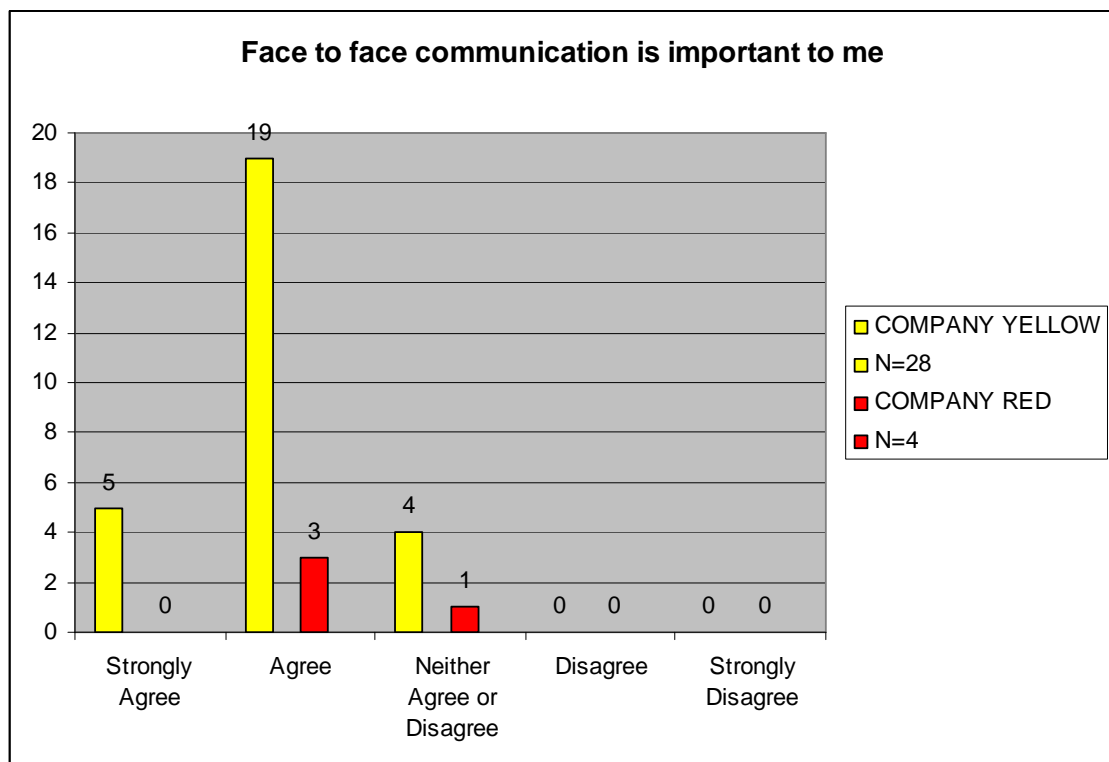


that kind of thing that I think you really need to meet the people at least once on a face to face basis and you get a better working relationship with that person as a result.' CYLM2

Homeworkers also agreed that face to face communication was important to them.

Figure 19 illustrates that no homeworker from either company disagreed with the statement – 'Face to face communication is important to me.'

Figure 19 – Face to face communication



Company Yellow – although 14.29% (4 respondents) neither agreed or disagreed, 85.72% either strongly agreed (5 respondents) or agreed (19 respondents) that face to face communication is important. Company Red – 75% (3 respondents) indicated that they agreed and the remaining respondent neither agreed or disagreed.

The value of face to face communication was described by one homeworker who confirmed that she had misinterpreted the 'signals' until she met with one of her colleagues on a face to face basis:

'I'll give you an example of misinterpreting the signals. I was working with this guy based in Italy. He was the bane of my life and everything I said he seemed to contradict it and it was just a nightmare working with him and I just thought he was a real awkward sod. And then I got to meet him face to face after I had been working with him over the phone for about a year. I understood within five minutes of meeting him that the reason we were having these head to heads was because he cared so much about the subject we were dealing with and he just wanted to get it right and explore all the angles and really make it work. I had taken that as being a real mick taker and someone who just wanted to find problems everywhere. He isn't like that at all. He is a lovely man and we get on great now we have met.' CYHW3.

A further comment made during the course of one interview, describes how face to face contact can not only help individuals to understand each other but also to understand the organisation. This comment was made when asking a homeworker if there was anything they missed from office based work.

'I think it is the formation of relationships. I mean friendships and networking and people who go for lunch together. They go and have a chat together when they go to the loo, you know the bustle down the corridor and they are nattering away about all sorts of things, all sorts of subtexts of things that are going on in

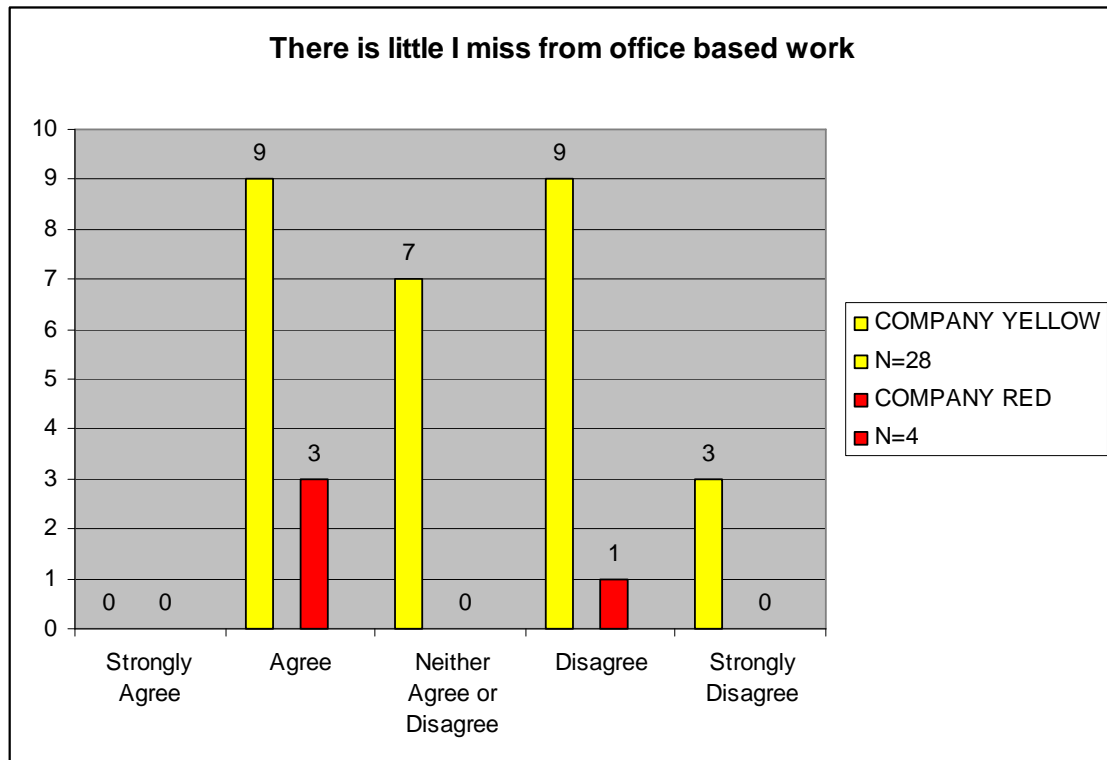
the organisation, so you do get to know the organisation and know what is really going on. At home, you can never really plug in.' CYHW4.

Another homeworker agrees that the water cooler contact can be so much more telling.

'I do miss kind of being in the office and having those water cooler conversations. Not only about what did you see on telly last night, but also the gossip. After a really heavy meeting, the conversations afterwards are more telling and you get to know how people really feel, what is the real message being sent. You see, I might think that I am the only one that feels a certain way and then I meet my mates in the photo-copier room and I realise that it is not just me.' CYHW10

Whilst the above comment identifies the value of face to face communication, it was surprising to learn that most homeworkers do not miss working within an office. Figure 20 provides a breakdown of the responses from the questionnaire statement – 'There is little I miss from office based work' were as follows:-

Figure 20 – Office based work



A contrast of opinions between the 2 companies

Company Yellow – slightly more disagreed with this statement than agreed. 32.14% (9 respondents) disagreed and 10.71% (3 respondents) strongly disagreed. 7 respondents (25%) neither agreed or disagreed and 9 respondents (32.14%) indicated that they agreed. Company Red – 3 respondents (75%) agreed that there is little that they miss from office based work and the remaining respondent (25%) disagreed.

However, during the course of the interviews and focus group discussion, homeworkers did express their opinion that one of the downsides to working at home is the restriction this places on accessing the unofficial communication channels.

A homeworker describes how the organisation is better placed to control the cascade of information:-

'I mean the thing that you miss a lot is the unofficial communication channels, because you get the official line obviously through email and all that sort of stuff but then only the official view that the company wants you to see. You don't get the rumour mill for want of a better term which is underneath, where your colleagues and so on are actually able to give you a different view on things.'

CYHW9.

When enquiring why they perceived the 'rumour mill' to be dormant, the homeworker suggested that he and his colleagues are 'quite lazy you know. We cannot be bothered to call someone to add wood to the fire. We are all too busy for that. If I was in the office, I might bump into them in the corridor and we would chat whilst we were walking in the same direction..... we would tell each other what we had heard from different parties and I would certainly put by penneth in. When we are apart from our colleagues, we have to be more deliberate in our communication and make an effort. I have thought about it before and I would say I am going to ring 'John' and ask him what he thought, but before you know it the day has gone and I just didn't get the chance. Sad isn't it.' CYHW9.

The Homeworkers involved in this research are more reliant on formal communication which is distributed via email or official letter sent to their home addresses.

Homeworkers of Company Yellow are more dependent on this method of distribution than those of Company Red. Company Red homeworkers, can if they wish, talk to their colleagues when attending the bi-monthly team meetings.

However, when observing one of these meetings, it was apparent that no time was taken after the meeting to go and speak to some of their office based colleagues. All of the homeworkers disappeared as soon as the meeting had finished and didn't hang around in the offices. Most of them appeared to head home, although they may have preferred to go and have coffee together off site and away from the eyes and ears of other Company Red employees and management.

*Key issues for the theme 'communication'*

Controlling the flow of information, managers must enhance their communication skills to avoid any breakdown in their relationship with homeworkers. Whilst different, virtual communication can be beneficial as the written word can be both clear and concise if time is taken to prepare an email. As more conscious communicators, homeworkers and managers can avoid the vacuum created by their physical detachment by undertaking impromptu telephone calls to check on individual wellbeing.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has considered how homeworking affects performance and disciplinary issues, management style and status and the communication process.

Managers and homeworkers from both organisations agreed that homeworking does improve worker output and overall performance. However, the reasons for this increase in performance differed between the two organisations. For Company Red, increased performance may be explained by the homeworkers belief that their performance is subject to increased scrutiny and therefore, fearful of repercussions, high levels of output are maintained. In contrast, Company Yellow explained how working at home can encourage them to work long hours due to their increased access to work and the vast span of available working hours. This will be considered further in the following chapter.

In respect of the impact of homeworking on a management style and status, managers and homeworkers both agreed that unannounced home visits would be unacceptable. Whilst home visits are acceptable, prior arrangements should be made as a matter of courtesy. None of the managers involved in this research have ever visited the home of their homeworkers without prior notification. When asking homeworkers to describe the primary function of their line manager, their responses reflected the managers own interpretation of their role. For Company Red, homeworkers and managers agreed that managers should control and maintain performance.

The views of Company Yellow were quite different. Managers and homeworkers indicated that managers should act as mentors and confidants as opposed to a role predisposed to positional power.

Managers and homeworkers all agreed that working at home does alter the communication process. Becoming more cautious communicators, managers and homeworkers confirmed that email communication can remove the emotion from the exchange as individuals do not feel comfortable in imparting their true feelings. Hiding behind the content of the email, these exchanges become scripted and are used as a record of the interaction as opposed to a more casual means of communication.

Similarly, both parties also agreed that the majority of their interaction with colleagues and management is purely business orientated. Most telephone calls and emails get straight down to business with no social pleasantries being exchanged. As such, management confirmed that the welfare of workers can be neglected with more onus being placed on the homeworker to notify their manager if they are experiencing any problems.

It is also apparent that limited face to face contact can negatively effect the formation of relationships. Managers and homeworkers both confirmed that virtual contact is problematic, as it can lead to misinterpretations as individuals find it harder to get to know each other. Consequently, face to face communication is desirable, especially when undertaking teamwork.



These findings have also demonstrate how variables such as job role, skill level and organisational size can influence a line manager's ability to exercise control.

In Company Red, the nature of the work undertaken by the homeworkers has a positive impact on the line manager's ability to maintain and increase the level of managerial control. Performing low skill level, repetitive tasks, managers are able to electronically monitor and assess the performance of their homeworkers. In contrast to the conclusions drawn by Felstead *et al.* (2003), the adoption of electronic forms of surveillance are, in this context, an effective method of control. Superseding the need to trust homeworkers, electronic surveillance enables these managers to view (in a virtual manner) the work undertaken and the times/hours of work. Believing that their performance is subject to increased scrutiny, the homeworkers of Company Red attempt to redress this perceived inequity of treatment and use their lack of visibility to their advantage. Free from the direct gaze of their line manager, these homeworkers frequently advise management that they do not feel well enough to work and therefore can temporarily claw back some control (Bain and Taylor, 2000). However, the decision to use such excuses does in the longer term have the opposite effect as line managers become frequently suspicious and therefore decide to intensify the level of surveillance and overall managerial control.

In contrast, the nature of the work undertaken by the homeworkers at Company Yellow can negatively influence a line manager's ability to exercise control. Unable to physical observe or electronically monitor the performance of their homeworkers, managers become increasingly reliant on the assessments provided by other stakeholders (McCready *et al.*, 2001). Managing by outcomes (Ashed, 2004) rather than presenteeism, the line manager's role is altered to one based on personal power and influence (Hertel, 2005), rather than positional power and status. With the balance of power more in the employee's favour, managers explained how homeworking reduces the effectiveness disciplinary sanctions as homeworkers are able to directly avoid the wrath of their line manager. Describing themselves to be at the 'mercy' of the homeworkers, managers, in this context, suggest that email communication can be problematic due to frequent misunderstandings and a scripted approach to the communication exchange (Pauleen and Yoong, 2001).

Having examined the issues pertinent to the managers of homeworkers, the following chapter will now explore the affects of this working practice on the homeworkers themselves.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Working at home**

#### **Introduction to the findings relevant to homeworkers**

This chapter will present the findings relevant to the themes; flexibility, influence of family and co-residents and sense of belonging. Divided into 3 sub-sections, each theme will explore the impact of homeworking on a homeworker's ability to gain control in the employment relationship. Drawing on the distinct features of the two case study organisations involved in this research, the findings demonstrate how homeworking can a) alter the available span of working hours, b) inhibit the freedom of family members and c) neglect the social needs of homeworkers.

As per the previous chapter, examples will be provided throughout the discussion to highlight how skill level, job role and organisational size can affect the balance of power in a homeworking employment relationship. Concurring with the discussions in the previous chapter, this chapter demonstrates how the homeworkers from Company Red become increasingly constrained and derive limited benefits from this working practice. Conversely, the homeworkers from Company Yellow, can due to the nature of their work, benefit from the increased flexibility afforded to them by homeworking.

To encapsulate the key points, the chapter will conclude with a brief summary of the pertinent findings for each of the 3 themes.

## Theme 4 - Flexibility

### *Background to the theme 'flexibility'*

The flexibility afforded to many homeworkers is considered to be a significant benefit to those employees who seek autonomy in their role and hours of work (Tietze and Musson, 2003). The opportunity to balance work and life commitments is particularly appealing for employees with young children or elderly relatives to care for (Hakim, 2004). As the Government has accepted proposals to change the current restrictions on an employee's right to request flexible working arrangements (under the Employment Act 2002), organisations will in the future have to consider requests from a far greater proportion of the workforce (i.e. those employees with children under the age of 16). As such work flexibility will be increasingly sought by employees. Whilst this flexibility may be particularly appealing, Sullivan and Lewis (2001) also warn that too much flexibility can lead to a loss of control as the 'choice' afforded to many homeworkers can negatively effect their performance, health and family life.

### *Summary of key findings applicable to the theme 'flexibility.'*

The homeworkers involved in this research have differing degrees of flexibility in their working hours. Company Yellow homeworkers are not required to work a set number of hours per day and can generally manage their own time and working week. In contrast the homeworkers from Company Red are required to work a set number of hours per day. However, constant computer server problems can prevent them from undertaking their work with strict rules imposed regarding the implications of this

'down-time.' Due to the increased flexibility of their role, Company Yellow homeworkers believe that this working practice has enhanced their quality of life and has had a positive influence on their family life. Whilst this flexibility is, in the main advantageous, homeworkers also warned of the need to effectively manage their time due to the possible danger that work can encroach upon their personal/family time, thereby resulting in a loss of control.

*Detailed presentation of findings for the theme 'flexibility'*

- *The degree of flexibility*

The homeworkers involved in this research have very different degrees of flexibility in their working hours.

Company Red homeworkers are all data input clerks and are contracted to work a set number of hours per day. The majority are part-time members of staff and their hours vary from between 4 and 7 hours per day. They also have daily input targets to achieve. These targets are not overzealous and are slightly less than the office based staff. Following a pilot scheme, it was noticed that the internet connection was slower off site, thereby preventing the clerks from achieving the same targets as they would have if working within the office. A reduced daily input target was therefore agreed for homeworkers. No homeworker indicated that their input targets were unrealistic. Company Red pays for the homeworker's broadband connection to enable them to access the company's software via their own internet connection. However, this remote access can be very problematic. Homeworkers frequently experience problems

accessing the company's system, with the system crashing on a regular basis. If the system crashes – through no fault of their own – the homeworkers cannot work. One of the homeworkers explained how frustrating this can be:

‘As a homeworker I feel I have less time to myself especially if the system should go down as it is hardly ever we get to take the time off our shift and even then it isn't the equivalent to the time spent waiting which seems to be somewhat unfair to us just because we have nothing else to do that can be considered ‘work’ whereas in the office there are plenty of other things to do when the verification system is down/lack of work.’ CRHW2

This view was supported by other homeworkers during the course of the focus group discussion.

A line manager described the procedure:-

If our system goes down, if the server goes down and nothing can be done for at least three hours then the clerks don't have to do their full 7 hour shift, you know, we'll knock off 3 to 4 hours. If it is down for less than three hours, say an hour or two, they still have to achieve their targets. They have to make up that time. But if it is their fault, their internet connection or computer then obviously it is up to them to get it up and running. I mean we've got a lady back in the office today because she is having problems with her broadband provider and it's really causing her issues, so she has come in today – which they can do, if we've got a spare screen they can come in.’ CRLM5

The homeworkers do have the option to come into the office, and this would not be an unreasonable alternative as all the homeworkers live within 20 miles of the office.

However, it is more than evident that there is limited amount of free space and computers within the office. When visiting the company, the HR Manager stated that the homeworking initiative has been encouraged by the company due to the limited amount of office space they have. Basically, the company is outgrowing its premises and therefore homeworking was implemented as an alternative strategy. When conducting a tour of the office building, the cramped surroundings were quite apparent with no free desk space visible. The likelihood of accommodating all of the homeworkers within the office is minimal and therefore it is unknown how Company Red would respond if all of their homeworkers asked to return to the office when the system goes down or when experiencing problems with their own internet connection.

The frustration caused by the frequent computer server problems was expressed with deep exasperation during the focus group discussion.

‘I am full-time. I have been working until 11.30 at night to try and make up the time. I am bloody knackered, it's not fair.’ CRHW4

‘I have been available to work since 6 this morning. The server was down. It is not my fault that I couldn't work. It's been a real nightmare in recent weeks. We had months of no issues and then all of a sudden it seems to go down all the time.’ CRHW9

Reiterating the inconvenience the 'down time' can cause, another homeworker explained:-

'I work part-time and like to get up at 6 and do a few hours before I take the kids to school. If the server is down, I can't do this. My supervisor will phone after 9am and tell me the system is back on again but by this time it is not convenient to me. Trying to catch up in the evening is not possible as I have to take my children to football or gymnastic or whatever.' I was available to work and it is not my fault I couldn't.' CRHW7

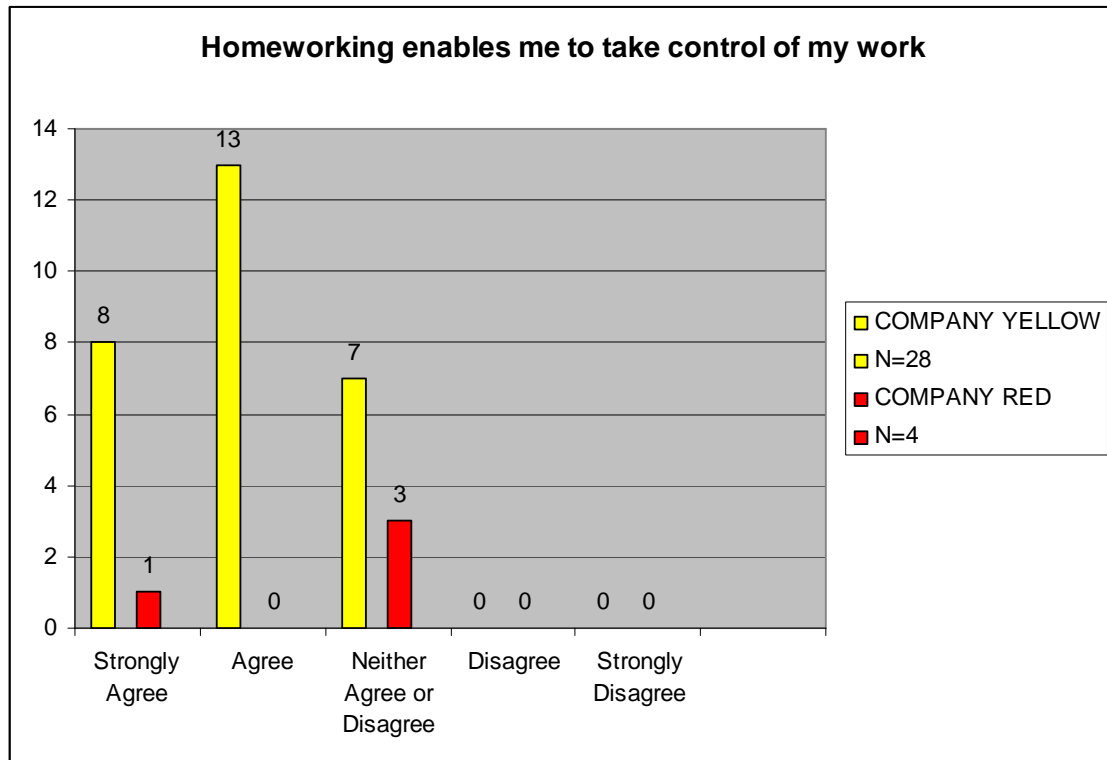
Homeworkers are available to work, but the server problems frequently prevent them from undertaking their work. Whilst management indicated that this is happening on a less frequent basis, the homeworkers advised me that it is a regular occurrence.

Homeworkers stated that they are regularly left waiting to see if the system is up and running again. In line with the three hour rule, if the server goes down for more than three hours, the homeworkers have a proportion of the workload reduced. For example, if it goes down for 4 hours, the clerks only have to work 3 hours, as opposed to their full 7 hour shift. However, the homeworkers indicated that this rarely occurs as the system seems to 'miraculously come back to life before the 3 hour deadline' (CRHW1). In this situation, the frustration deepens, as homeworkers have lost time waiting for the system to work but still have to complete their full shift. For example, if the system goes down for 2 ½ hours, the homeworkers have to make up that time when the system is working again. As the above comments demonstrate, the server problems and the strict company rules negatively affect the homeworkers ability to gain control of their working hours



and patterns. Questionnaire respondents were asked to comment if they felt that homeworking enabled them to take control of their work.

Figure 21 – Taking control



Company Yellow – 75% either strongly agreed (8 respondents) or agreed (13 respondents).

25% (7 respondents) neither agreed or disagreed. Company Red – 1 respondent (25%) strongly agreed and the remaining 3 respondents (75%) neither agreed or disagreed.

As the above figure demonstrates, 3 out of the 4 respondents from Company Red did not express an opinion on this matter. It was expected that a large proportion of respondents would have disagreed or even strongly disagreed with the statement. It was also surprising that 25% agreed that homeworking has enabled them to take control of their work. This positive response could be explained by the opportunity homeworking presents them to work outside of the normal office hours of work. The spread of available hours to work was deemed to be a distinct advantage for the homeworkers.

A line manager from Company Red explained how the opportunity to work outside of normal office hours enabled her homeworkers to work in the evening if they wanted to, thereby reducing the hours they were required to work the following day:-

'We've got one who works very early in the morning, she's got a child, she takes her to nursery, she's not of school age yet and she does her work very early and then when she comes back, and she has the most wonderful figures and she's fine because she gets on early....well not early hours in the morning - about 4 o'clock in the morning something like that and does half of it before the little one gets up and then she does a bit then when she gets back, and then when she's settled down at night, the little one, she'll do some at night and take it off tomorrow's work. They're allowed to do that.' CRLM1

As the office is closed in the evening, this opportunity would not present itself to the office based data input clerks. The flexibility afforded to homeworkers was also reiterated by another supervisor from Company Red:-

'Two of my homeworkers are part time and they sort of drop off half way through the day and carry on doing what they're doing. They both enjoy doing it. One of them because she's got a little girl in nursery where she can just go on at 5 o'clock, do it til about 8 o'clock, take her to nursery, come back finish off and then she's got the rest of the day with the baby. And then the other lady, I think she prefers it, she looks after an elderly mother and so she can do her 4 hours and then she's got all day to do what mum needs her to do. I mean sometimes one of them does do it in the evenings if she's got to go out the next

day, she'll e-mail us "I've done this last night because I can't do it in the morning". CRLMs2

A line manager from Company Red describes how working at home has facilitated greater family time for their homeworkers. –

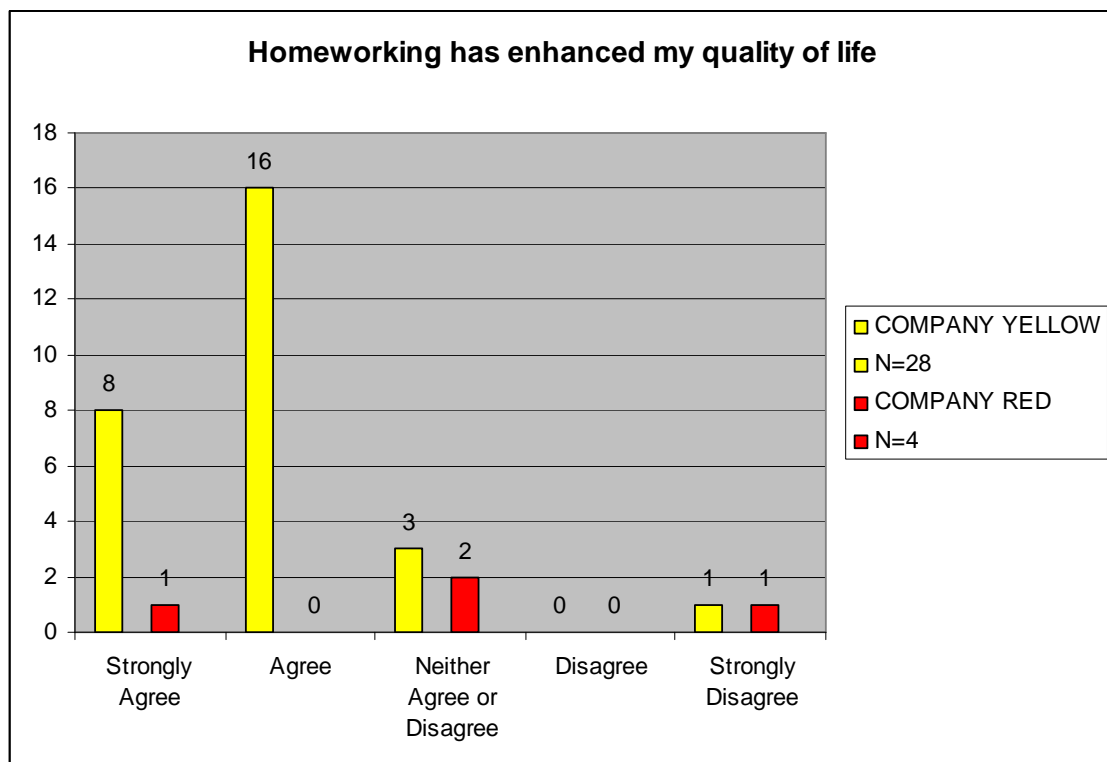
'the benefit is they can adapt working to their personal life and circumstances. At the office we are here from 9 until 5 which is a huge chunk of your day. When you want to pay your bills you can only go after work when most places are shut. One of our homeworkers gets up at 6am and works for a couple of hours, she then does the nursery and school run, comes home and works again for a few more hours, then goes to pick her kids back up and then she has got the rest of the day to spend with her family. She has landed more free time when her family are at home instead of running around and doing all the tasks that she couldn't do if she was in the office from 9 until 5.' CRLMs4

A homeworker from Company Red supports this view and explains how she can complete her household chores either before she starts work or after she has done her input –

'I normally have a load of washing on the line before 6am, after I have done my input for the day it is normally dry and then I can iron it and put it away all before the kids come back from school. If I was at work, I couldn't do this and I would have to do it all at the weekend or in the evening.' CRHW2

Some of the homeworkers work fairly unsocial hours to accommodate all areas of their life. This is particularly important for those homeworkers who have small children as it enables them to juggle work and family commitments. However, it should be noted that the computer server problems regularly contribute to the necessity to work unsocial hours in order to make up for the lost time. Mindful of server issues, Figure 22 highlights that 1 out of the 4 homeworkers who completed the questionnaire strongly disagreed with the statement - 'Homeworking has enhanced my quality of life.'

Figure 22 – Quality of life



Company Yellow – 85.71% of respondents either strongly agreed (28.57% = 8 respondents) or agreed (57.14% = 16 respondents) that homeworking has enhanced their quality of life. 3 respondents neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining respondent strongly disagreed.

Company Red – 50% (2 respondents) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. However, the remaining 2 respondents had contrasting strong opinions, i.e. 1 strongly agreed and 1 strongly disagreed.

The responses from the homeworkers of Company Yellow are much more positive and this can be explained by the increased flexibility of their working hours.

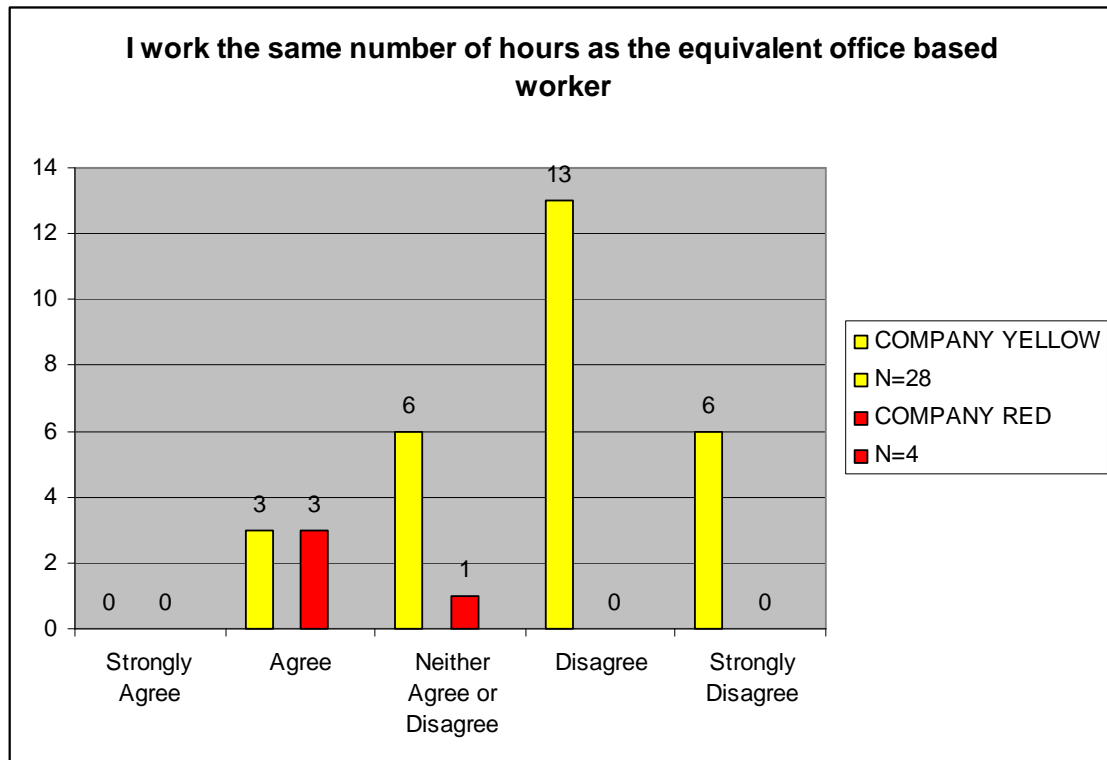
Company Yellow have a very flexible approach to the hours of work. There are no core hours of work and their day does not tend to follow a set pattern. Their day appears to be dictated by the telephone calls they have to make and because of the international nature of their client list, these calls can be at differing times of the day and evening. In between these calls, the homeworkers are free to decide how and when they work. Free to manage their own time, these homeworkers work very long hours. When discussing their hours of work, it was evident that the homeworkers believed that they work longer hours than they did when they worked within the office. One homeworker explained why:

‘When I worked in the office, security would often come along and tell me it was time to go home. When the building shut I couldn’t work anymore. When I got home, after a 1 ½ hour drive, I didn’t feel inclined to get my laptop out again and work....in any case my wife would have killed me! Working at home it is different. Work is always there and my spare room, where I work, is always open, so I can work whenever I want to. My day tends to start really early about 6.30am. I’ll go and check my emails, reply to some and then have breakfast. I will be sat at my desk by 8.00am. I always look at my emails again at night around 10pm because I am dealing with international clients who need a response. However this does not mean that I am working from 6.30am until

10pm. I tend to dip in and out of work. However, because I can, I do work at weekends as well so the hours soon clock up.' CYHW8

These homeworkers are not contracted to work a set number of hours each week, their contract stipulates that it is the hours to do the job. To comply with relevant Health and Safety Legislation and the Working Time Directive, they are required to complete a weekly timesheet stipulating the exact number of hours worked each day. When discussing this with the homeworkers, it would appear that this is not an accurate reflection of their actual hours of work, i.e. they work a significantly higher number of hours than they put down on their timesheet. The questionnaire responses support the view that the homeworkers from Company Yellow work longer hours than their equivalent office based staff. Figure 23 identifies that over 67% of respondents disagreed with the statement – 'I work the same number of hours as the equivalent office based worker.'

Figure 23 – Hours of work



Company Yellow – the majority (67.86%) of respondents either disagreed (46.43% = 13 respondents) or strongly disagreed (21.43% = 6 respondents). 6 respondents (21.43%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. Company Red – no one disagreed. 3 (75%) agreed that they do work the same number of hours and the remaining respondent indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

3 out of the 4 respondents from Company Red agreed that they do work the same number of hours as an office based worker. These homeworkers undertake work at different times of the day and in chunks of hours as opposed to one long shift, however, they do work the same number of hours. The physical location of work within the home does not result in an increase in the actual number of hours spent inputting data. Nevertheless, the server problems can result in wasted time as the homeworkers wait for the system to reboot to enable them to carry on with their data input.

Company Yellow homeworkers are not faced with such restrictions and during the course of the telephone interviews it was more than apparent that the increased span of available working hours has largely had a positive influence on their quality of life. Most of the discussion centred on the opportunity this working practice provides them to be more actively involved in family life:

‘Working at home allows me to dip out of work when I want and go and see my family if they are at home’ CYHW10.

Another homeworker from Company Yellow explains how homeworking has enabled him to have breakfast with his family –

‘I tend to get up at a more reasonable time and help get the kids up, we all have breakfast together and then I go into my office at about the time I would have been getting into the office. Working at home just gives me that extra family time which is great as the kids are growing up fast.’ CYHW9.

Company Yellow homeworker's also explained how working at home can be a real benefit to them if they have been travelling to clients offices for three or four days a week.

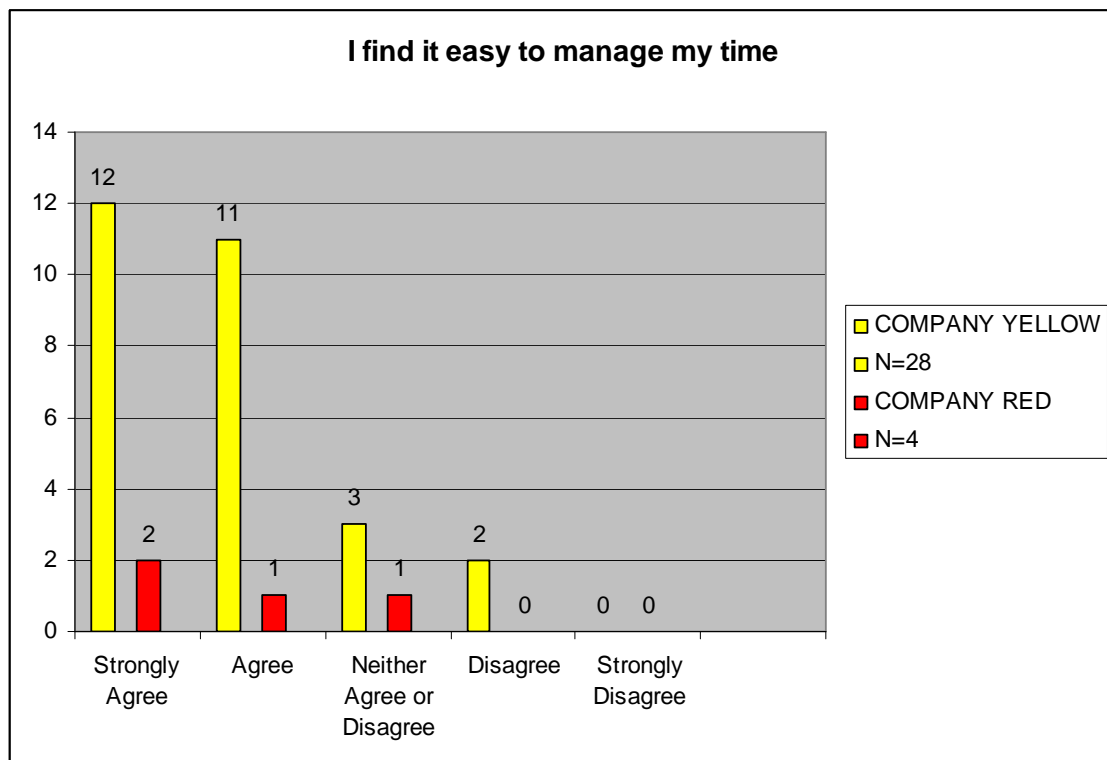
‘If you have been at a customer's site for 3 days, you can be shattered and want to relax a little when you are back at home on the Thursday or Friday. I don't mean relax because you are still at work, but as I am at home it means I can have



a slightly less intense day. I can get my washing in the washing machine and get it hung up on the line in between calls and all that sort of good stuff. It then means I am not spending my weekend doing all my domestic chores.' CYHW3.

With such autonomy in their role, Company Yellow homeworkers explained that they need to be extremely disciplined in order to satisfy both areas of their lives, i.e. work and home life commitments. When asking the questionnaire respondents if they found it easy to manage their time, the majority of respondents from Company Yellow agreed. Figure 24 provides a breakdown of the results.

Figure 24 – Time Management



Company Yellow – the majority (71.86%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they find it easy to manage their time. Over 40% (12 respondents) strongly agreed with this statement.

Company Red – No one disagreed with this statement, with 3 either strongly agreeing or agreeing that they find it easy to manage their time.

However, a difference of opinion was offered during the interviews with homeworkers and management from Company Yellow. When discussing the flexibility of their hours of work, Company Yellow homeworkers outlined how work can encroach on their personal time due to the physical location of work within their home. For example, 1 homeworker explains how the presence of work within the home can be 'incredibly tempting because I can just nip back in there and carry on with my work. If I am actually working on something and have requested something and I know the answer will appear in the evening, at 10 O'Clock at night as I go upstairs I may wander in and see if they have replied. I do try to close the door and keep out, but it is difficult to just stop yourself having a quick look at your emails.' CYHW2

Another homeworker from Company Yellow agrees working and living in the same environment can be a challenge in terms of managing your time and the number of hours you work. He advises homeworkers to 'learn to detach yourself from work. If you go to an office, you have the commuting time to switch off, if you work at home you don't have that. My spare room where I work is also my personal office, so I can't just close the door at the end of the working day as I still need to catch up on my personal business and therefore I still tend to have a quick look at my work emails even in the evening.' CYHW8.

Management offered an alternative perspective. Discussing the need for homeworkers to be incredibly disciplined, a line manager from Company Yellow explains how his homeworkers need to learn how to manage themselves or they will become sidetracked and not complete their work. 'Some homeworkers can be distracted by non-work activities such as the sudden need to watch day-time television all day' CYLM3.

Towards the end of the conversation he explained how homeworkers need to 'manage what they are doing and manage themselves because before you know it the day has gone and you are then left with no choice but to make up the hours in your time and not work's time.' I suppose that's personal choice, but I am sure some family members will get annoyed if family time is overshadowed by work time.'

Both homeworkers and managers clearly believe that self discipline is an important aspect even though they are coming at it from differing points of view. Understandably, management are focusing on the limits this working practice can place on the stimulus to undertake work and homeworkers view the location of work within the home as a temptation to work all of the time.

*Key issues for the theme 'flexibility'*

The flexible nature of work undertaken within the home offers distinct advantages to both the employer and the homeworker. For the homeworker, the flexibility is clearly linked to the benefit this has on their personal circumstances and family situation. For the employer, this working practice can improve staff retention and the performance and delivery of work. Working within the home, time – if managed properly – can be used to assist the homeworker to get ahead with their work, thereby reducing the pressure on the following working day. Whilst time management was not considered to be an issue for the questionnaire respondents, the views offered during the interviews/focus group discussion tell a very different story.

Managers and homeworkers also offered a difference of opinion on this subject with management focusing on the non-work distractions and the homeworkers expressing their concern that they could not detach themselves from work. It would seem that homeworkers do need time to adjust to the flexible nature of homeworking. It was also not surprising to learn that the respondents from Company Red believe that they work the same hours as an office based worker. This is largely due to the nature of their job role and the restrictions imposed by their employer. For Company Yellow, their job role is quite fluid which therefore enables them to manage their own time. However, the most significant findings from this theme centres on the influence technology has on a homeworkers performance. For Company Red, remote access (via their own internet connection) to the company's computer systems is problematic and on several occasions has led to a loss of control from the perspective of the homeworker.

Whilst available to work, the system failure prevents them from undertaking their duties. Homeworkers become frustrated as they feel (through no fault of their own) that the time they had allocated for family activities has to be replaced by the need to complete their daily work targets.

### Theme 5 - Influence of family and co-residents

#### *Background to the theme 'influence of family and co-residents.'*

The findings from this research support the work of Felstead *et al.* (2005) and Sullivan (2000) as the homeworkers also identified the influence their family members/co-residents can have on their working patterns. As work and home become entangled, the homeworker is increasingly accessible to their family members and as such there can be an expectation that the homeworker can be disturbed during the course of their working day. A separate dedicated workspace within the home allows the homeworker to detach themselves from homelife activities and avoid or reduce the level of interruption. As identified by Tietze (2005) a few of the homeworkers involved in this study have enlisted particular symbolic referents to signal to their household when and when they cannot be interrupted, some with greater success than others. Acknowledging that their home is still a domestic dwelling, homeworkers do not wish to inhibit the freedom of their family.

*Summary of key findings applicable to the theme 'influence of family and co-residents*

Although the questionnaire responses highlighted that family/co-residents do not negatively influence the working patterns of these homeworkers, the comments expressed during the interviews and focus group discussion reveal a difference of opinion. For family members and co-residents it can take a while for a routine to be established as all parties try to get used to the presence of work and the homeworker within the domestic setting. As none of the homeworkers were provided with any kind of formal training, the challenges and drawbacks of working at home became an evolutionary and personal process with most learning to cope as time went on. The participants from Company Yellow discussed the influence of family/co-residents from a far more negative perspective than those from Company Red. Company Red homeworkers believe that their family members offer great support to them during the course of the working day and due to the nature of their work it is quite possible that family members can assist the homeworker to complete their work tasks. For Company Yellow the assistance of family is not feasible due to the nature of their work. Company Yellow homeworkers are constantly interacting with clients and work colleagues via telephone calls and therefore their concentration is paramount. The disturbance of family members during the course of these conversations is not helpful as the homeworkers are trying to maintain a sense of professionalism and high standards of performance.

*Detailed presentation of findings for the theme 'influence of family and co-residents.'*

As identified in the previous theme regarding the flexible nature of homeworking, work can overshadow personal family time. However, the opposite situation can occur where other family members and/or co-residents interrupt the working patterns of homeworkers due to their increased access, i.e. they are at home.

This is a particularly pertinent issue for the homeworkers of Company Yellow.

Working long hours, these homeworkers are increasingly accessible to their family members. Company Red homeworkers undertake a significant proportion of their work at times when their family members are not at home, or during unsocial hours when the rest of the household is still asleep. Weekend working is not undertaken by the homeworkers of Company Red. In contrast, Company Yellow homeworkers tend to work into the evening and at weekends and due to the nature of their work, these homeworkers interact with their client base through regular conference calls, some of which necessitate evening calls. As such, they are more likely (than Company Red) to be working at times when the rest of the household is at home.

Consequently, during the course of the telephone interviews, Company Yellow homeworkers provided many examples of how homeworking can be problematic. For example:

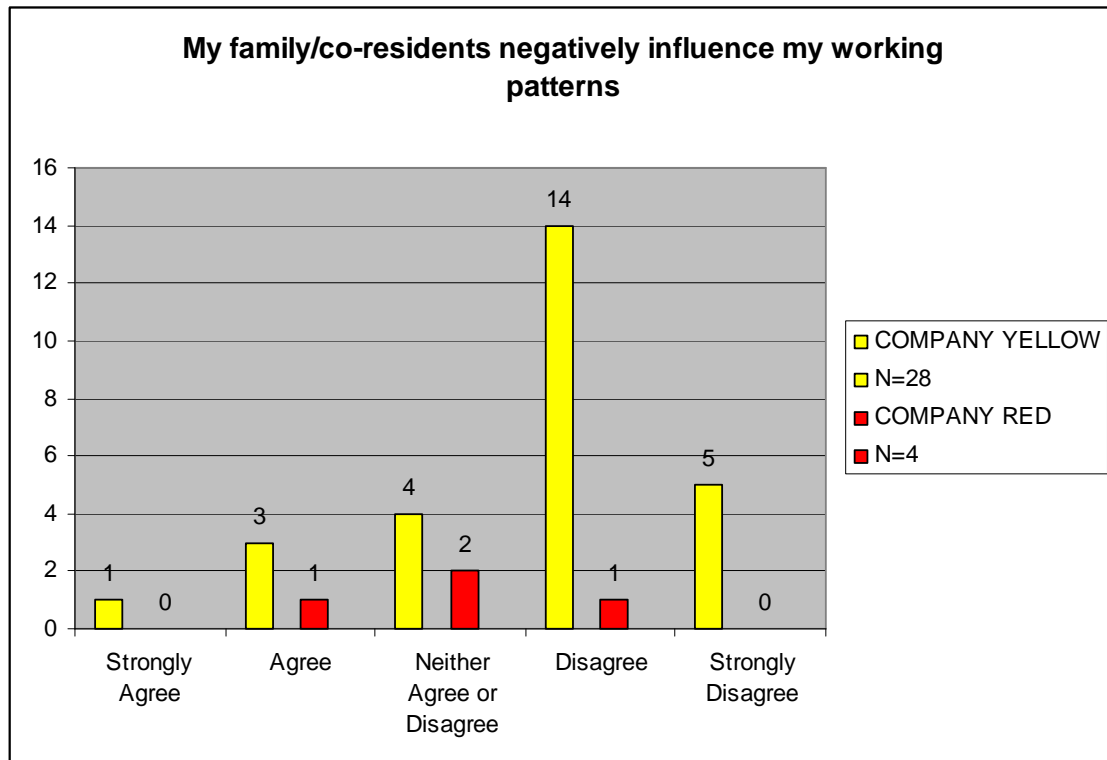
‘I know I have got a conference call to complete at 6pm and I am also aware that this is the time the kids come back from swimming or whatever. Colleagues do understand but if you have got screaming kids in the background it doesn't look good to clients. Also for me I can be really working hard and concentrating on a project I am trying to complete and the kids keep coming in and asking me to help them with their homework or whatever. I do get snappy because I was just about to crack it and then they come in and I lose my train of thought. To them a puncture of their bike it a major issue, but for me it can wait and then world war three erupts until I think, you know it is quicker just to stop what I am doing and get on with it. Otherwise I will never hear the end of it.’ CYHW2

Although the above example indicates that family members can negatively influence their working patterns, the questionnaire responses contrasted with the comments expressed during the interviews.

The responses from the questionnaire indicated that family members/co-residents do not negatively influence the working patterns of these homeworkers (Please see Figure 25).



Figure 25 – Influence of family/co-residents



Company Yellow – the majority (70.37%) of respondents disagreed with only 14.68% agreeing that family can have a negative influence on their working patterns. Company Red – 50% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. The remaining 50% had contrasting opinions, i.e. 1 agreed and 1 disagreed.

Over 70% of respondents from Company Yellow expressed their belief that family members do not have a negative effect on their working patterns. This was not the general opinion of those who participated in the interviews. The comment below was typical of the responses:

‘I have got used to it now but it takes a while. At the office, I suppose you do receive phone calls from your family.....you can always put the phone down and emphasise the fact that you have got to get back to work. At home it is not that simple. My wife will come into the room where I am working and talk to me

and I find it much harder to get rid of her...I know that sounds awful but face to face I find it harder to say 'hey look love, I got to get on with it.' I don't think she realises it and thinks she can always have a chat with me but I start to think – would you really be asking me these things if I was at the office? I doubt whether she would call me to tell me these minor things and would wait until I got home, but because I am there, then she thinks it is okay to interrupt me. I love my wife to bits but it drives me up the wall sometimes.' CYHW1

The issue here centres on the physical access family members have to homeworkers with all parties taking time to get used to this working practice. Interestingly, no homeworker had received any kind of training in relation to the influence of homeworking on family issues. The homeworkers explained that it took their families a while to get used to their working patterns and to understand how homeworking would impact on their family life. 'Initially it was a novelty factor. Up until then I'd had the traditional go out to work in the morning and come back in the evening. I think it is important to tell your family what is going to happen. At first they thought, oh dad's at home I can go and interrupt him and they've now learned that they don't. Actually now they're very good, I mean if they do poke their heads in it's normally for things like would you like a coffee.....so just because you're accessible to them, they just assume that you are available to them.' CYHW9. Establishing ground rules and the development of 'signals' seems to benefit the homeworkers and their families. One homeworker of Company Yellow recalled how he uses the door as a signal to his family if he can or can't be interrupted – 'if I close my door, they know not to disturb me, only for a real urgent problem. If the door is open and they can see me it is easier for them to communicate with me and ask if I can be disturbed.' CYHW5.

Conversely, another homeworker explained how she has informed her family 'look I am not here, I'm invisible so just carry on as you would normally and forget that I am at home.' CYHW4. Unfortunately, family members are sometimes unable to 'carry on as normal' as homeworking can inhibit their freedom, for example – 'if my wife wants to do something, I know this is going to sound stereotypical, but if she wanted to vacuum, I do actually say to her 'hey can you not vacuum at times when I am on the phone.'"

CYHW2. Domestic tasks were certainly a bone of contention for homeworkers. For a homeworker that is at home on their own during the working day, the expectation of their contribution to household chores was mentioned as potentially problematic - 'I don't really mind that much, but my wife thinks that me working at home means that when the washing machine has finished, I have got time to put the washing on the line. I get the biggest glare in the world if I don't do it, so although it is not convenient at all I try to do it for the sake of family harmony.' CYLM2. A line manager from Company Yellow who is also a homeworker agreed that there is a perception that even when you are not physically typing or on the phone, you are available to help with domestic chores. 'When I don't seem to be working hard or I am staring at my PC, my wife will walk past the room and say 'you're not working today then?' I tell her that I am and I am just thinking things through. In response, she'll say, 'right whilst you're doing that can you think and fix that broken cupboard door.'" CYLM3.

As the above discussions highlight, Company Yellow homeworkers focused on the influence of family members from a negative perspective. In contrast, Company Red homeworkers did not make any negative reference to the influence of family members. Their general view was that having other members of the family at home during the day was advantageous if only in the respect of 'someone there to make me a nice cup of tea and a sandwich so I can get on with my input' or 'someone to answer the phone so I don't get carried away chatting with my friends for longer than I should.' During the focus group discussion, the following comment was also made:-

'I love being a homeworker. I have trained my daughter to do the data input now. She is getting quite fast now. I can just leave her to it, or if I want to make a cup of tea or something, she can take over whilst I sort things out at home. I can even go into town and do my shopping if I want.....I don't know how much I should pay her.'

Whilst this comment was made in the context of a joke, it is not known whether this was fact or fiction. As these homeworkers perform repetitive tasks, the job could be easily passed to other members of the family without their line managers knowledge. As previously explained, the homeworkers are monitored by their employer, but as this is electronic surveillance, the line manager is focusing on the quantity of work completed, the speed of completion and the accuracy. They do not use web cams and therefore do not monitor the actual individual performing these tasks. Whilst this 'opportunity for assistance' was not mentioned by management during the course of the interviews, it is likely that they are aware of the feasibility of homeworking data inputs as clerks have to make use of family members time and support. Although the

homeworkers from Company Yellow are also 'out of sight' the nature of their work restricts the likelihood of their work being undertaken by anyone else.

*Key issues for the theme 'influence of family and co-residents.'*

Previous research has focused on the negative influence family members/co-residents can have on a homeworker's ability to gain control of their working patterns. This research also demonstrates that homeworking can initially be problematic for family members and homeworkers as each party gets used to work being undertaken within a domestic setting. Exploring the impact this has on the general rhythm of the household, Company Yellow homeworkers have a greater opportunity to engage with family members during the course of the working day due to the flexibility of their work. Consequently, any disturbances or interruptions are less significant. Company Red homeworkers did not consider the influence of family/co-residents in as much detail as Company Yellow. A few comments were made in relation to the assistance family members can offer. A passing comment was made in respect of the likelihood that family members can actually carry out the work tasks of the homeworker. This was a view expressed by only one of the homeworkers and therefore it is not known if other homeworkers engage their help of their family/co-residents.

## Theme 6 - Sense of belonging

### *Background to the theme 'sense of belonging.'*

According to Helms and Raiszadeh (2002:243) 'the office is not only a place to work but also a place to socialise and to be socialised into the culture of the company.' Direct social interaction during the early stages of employment helps the new employee to appreciate the acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour in terms of actions and demeanour. In a homeworking environment, informal methods of evaluating and accepting the culture of an organisation are dramatically reduced. The inability of homeworkers to have a chat at the photocopier prevents these employees from catching up with the comings and goings of the organisation and this can therefore restrict the new employee's sense of belonging. For those homeworkers who have been with the organisation for a number of years, their physical detachment and limited opportunity to supplement the official company messages with the collective interpretations of fellow workers, can lead to a reduced sense of engagement.

Consequently, organisations employing homeworkers may use training courses and implement 'buddy' schemes to control behaviour. This in turn may increase involvement, aid commitment and enable the homeworker to feel that they belong.

### *Summary of key findings applicable to the theme 'sense of belonging.'*

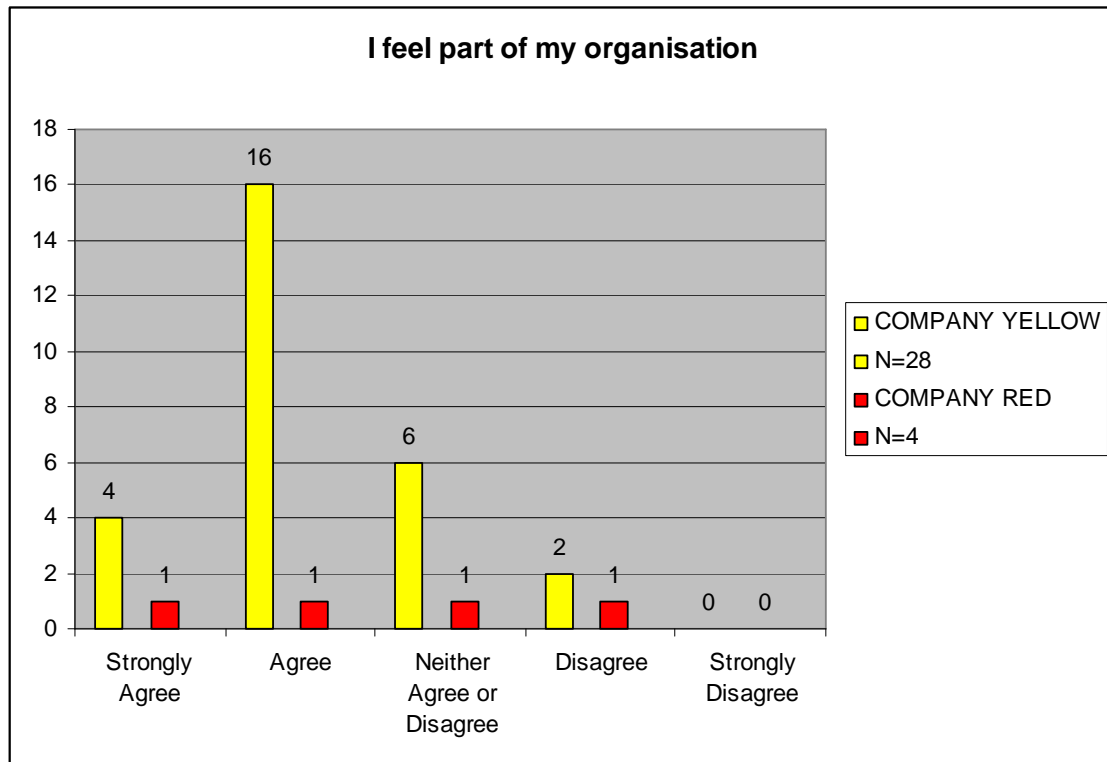
Overall, the participants in this research do not believe that homeworking has reduced their sense of belonging to their organisation. However, for those homeworkers who rarely see their colleagues or attend meetings on company premises, face to face

interaction and visits to company premises can encourage a homeworker's identity with and commitment to their organisation's culture. Agreeing with the need to 'anchor' themselves with the organisation, most homeworkers indicated that they would struggle to cope if they were new to the organisations and new to homeworking. As all of the homeworkers involved in this research have worked for their organisation for a significant period of time, they were aware of the norms and values of their organisation, prior to undertaking homeworking. Physical detachment and lack of visibility does not affect a homeworkers identification with their team. Homeworkers are provided with the opportunity to socialise with their colleagues, although few make a concerted effort to do so. Social interaction with colleagues is important to homeworkers, although this interaction is undertaken in a virtual manner, i.e. through the use of computer software packages such as MSN.

*Detailed presentation of the findings for the theme 'sense of belonging.'*

Questionnaire respondents were asked if they felt part of their organisation. Figure 26 identifies that the majority of respondents from Company Yellow and half of the respondents from Company Red agreed with the statement – 'I feel part of my organisation.'

Figure 26 – Sense of belonging



Company Yellow – only 2 respondents disagreed with this statement. 21.43% (6 respondents) neither agreed or disagreed, but the remaining 71.43% either strongly agreed (14.29% = 4 respondents) or agreed (57.14% = 16 respondents) that they feel part of their organisation.

Company Red – a very split response. 1 strongly agreed, 1 agreed, 1 neither agreed or disagreed and 1 disagreed.

- *Social interaction*

When predicting what the results might be in response to this statement, it was envisaged that the majority of homeworkers from Company Red would express a sense of belonging to their organisation. This prediction was made based on the physical proximity of their homes to their organisation's head office, the fact that they are required to attend a bi-monthly team meeting and the organisation is relatively small in size. The questionnaire results do not support this conjecture. However, questionnaire



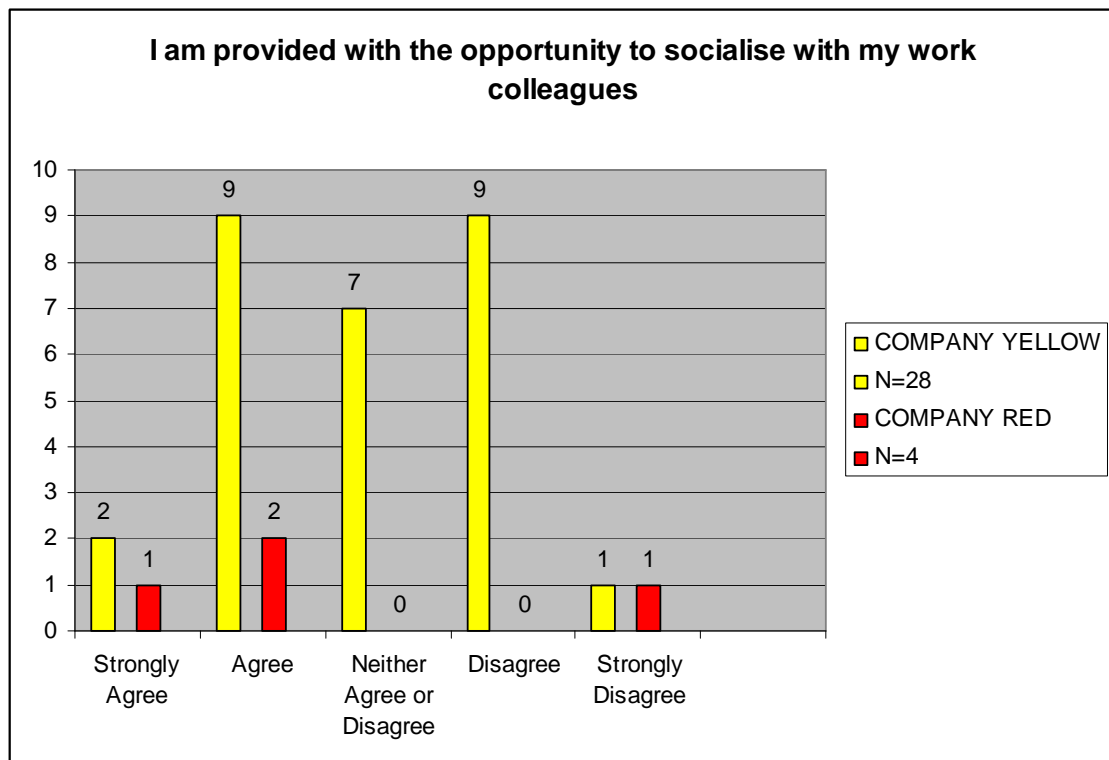
responses were only secured from 4 out of the 10 homeworkers who attended the focus group and therefore a more positive response might have been received if this line of questioning had been taken during the course of the focus group discussion. Due to time restrictions, social interaction was only briefly mentioned by one homeworker. Commenting on the effort made by line managers to involve the homeworkers in all social activities and emails, she described how amusing these emails can be:-

‘I can be merrily working away and an email pops up to say it is claire’s birthday and there are cakes available for everyone in the kitchen. It makes me smile because to begin with you think they are taking the mickey because you know you would really like one but you can’t because your at home. However, I do like it because I like to know what it going on. You see, if I know that person, I might send them an email to wish them a happy birthday. The other emails tend to be about moving your car because you are blocking someone in .... It always seems to be the same few people. For a split second you do think about your own car and then realise you are at home and it is sitting on the drive. I still like to receive all these emails because I still feel part of the team that way... does that sound silly?’ CRHW7.

In addition to the daily/weekly emails, all of the homeworkers from Company Red are invited to attend the company’s Christmas party. Unfortunately, none of them accept this invitation and prefer not to attend this function. Company Yellow also has regular company events throughout the year and again the homeworkers rarely join in.

When specifically asking the questionnaire respondents if they were provided with the opportunity to socialise with their work colleagues, less than 40% of the respondents from Company Yellow indicated that they were provided with the chance to socialise with their work colleagues. Figure 27 provides a breakdown of the full results.

Figure 27 – Opportunity to socialise



Company Yellow – slightly more respondents agreed with this statement, although it was a fairly even split. 32.14% (9 respondents) disagreed and 3.57% (1 respondent) strongly disagreed. 25% (7 respondents) offered neither agreed or disagreed. Of the remaining 11 respondents, 2 strongly agreed and 9 agreed with this statement. Company Red – 75% (3 respondents) either strongly agreed (1 respondents) or agreed (2 respondents) that they are provided with the opportunity to socialise with their work colleagues. The remaining respondent chose not to answer this question.

The relatively low response rate from Company Yellow was surprising due to the fact that the line managers confirmed that an annual budget is dedicated to such events. One line manager explained:-

‘One of the things that you lose with remote workers is that you don’t get the teaming side of things. For us, our organisation gives every single manager a budget of £25 per person, per reportee, twice a year. So I can take the team out for lunch, dinner, however I want to spend it. In fact while I was away on holiday, one of my fellow managers took his team and invited some of the others who are Warwick based, to the dogs.’ CYLM1

The homeworker's response to this matter was as follows:-

‘Yes you can get invited to these things and I don’t always go because geographically it is a nightmare to find a location that suits everyone. Somewhere along the line, someone gets a rough deal and has to drive the furthest. The social side does depend on how good your line manager is at organising such things. Sometimes they prefer to do it one on one, so you spend time only with your line manager and not as one big team. For me it is not an issue, but for others who want to see the whole team, one to one ‘treats’ are just not the same.’ CYHW1

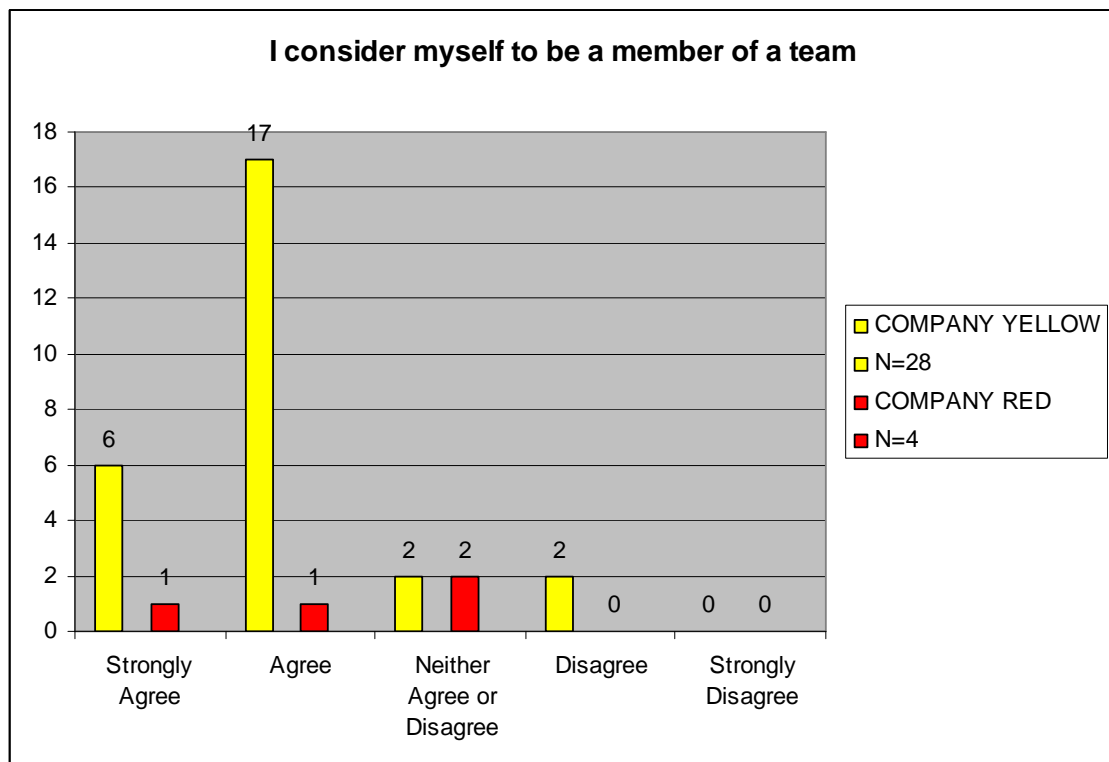
It would therefore appear that the ‘teaming’ side of the social budget is discretionary which therefore explains the questionnaire responses.

In addition to face to face socialisation, Company Yellow homeworkers also have access to an instant messaging computer software package which they regularly use to interact with colleagues. This software has a dual purpose – to allow employees to virtually converse about business issues and to also replicate corridor discussions and social exchanges. All of the homeworkers (from Company Yellow) who were involved in this study confirmed that they regularly use this instant messaging service. When discussing the practicalities of using such a system, homeworkers advised that it is an informal environment which members use to have a moan, chitchat about rubbish and take the mickey out of each other. CYHW5. Homeworkers have a very relaxed approach about using this facilities, even explaining that they don't worry about spelling or grammar and often use text type speak to make the conversation flow quickly. Access to this instant messaging service is perceived to be advantageous to team camaraderie. Company Red homeworkers also have access to a similar software package. However, when observing the bi-monthly team meeting, the homeworkers were reminded that they can use this tool. Most did not seem aware of it and were reluctant to make use of it. One of the homeworkers confirmed that she has never used it and would not feel comfortable in doing so.

- *Team membership*

Whilst only a proportion of the homeworkers have a chance to socialise with their colleagues, the questionnaire responses to the statement – ‘I consider myself to be a member of a team’ – indicate that this limited social interaction does not negatively affect a homeworkers identity as a member of their team. Please see figure 28 below.

Figure 28 – Team membership

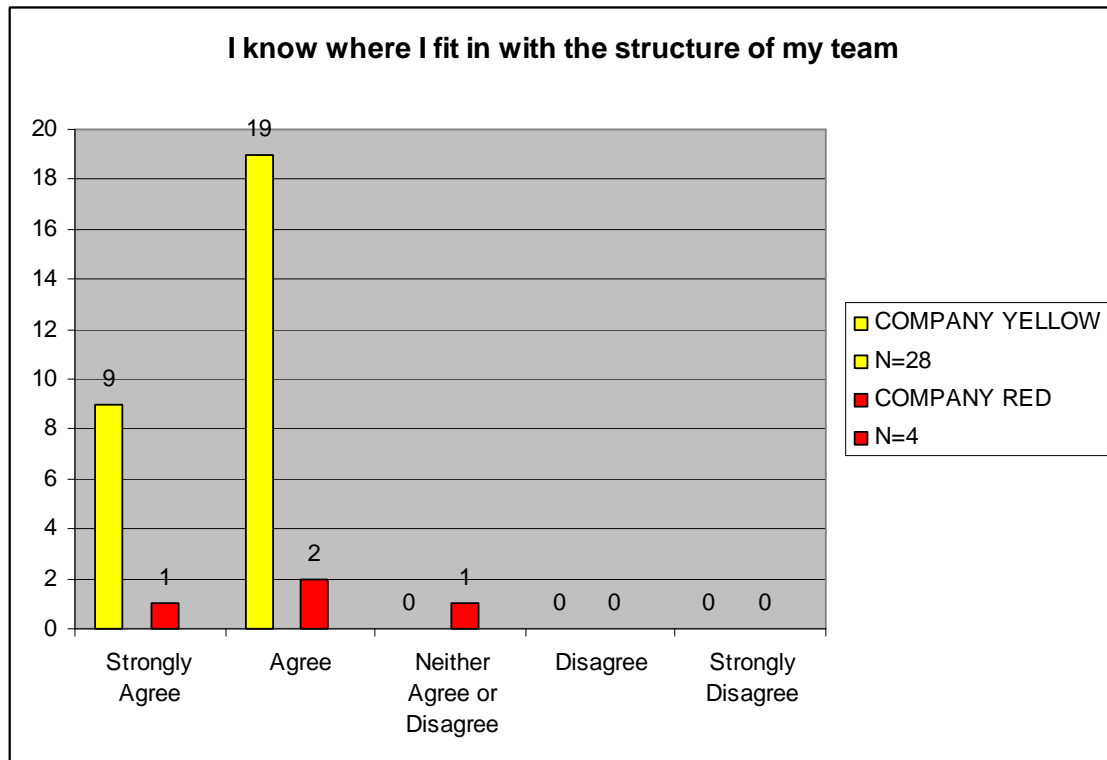


Company Yellow - the majority (85.18%) of respondents either agreed (62.97%) or strongly agreed (22.22%) that they feel part of their team. 2 respondents disagreed with this statement and 2 indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. Company Red – no one disagreed with this statement. 2 respondents (50%) either strongly agreed or agreed. 2 respondents (50%) neither agreed or disagreed.

For Company Yellow the positive responses are higher than Company Red as they are regularly required to undertake project work with other members of their team. These joint tasks can therefore unite the team and help each team members to acknowledge the contribution made by individual members. For Company Red, the nature of their work is very isolated. Individual performance does not affect the performance of other members and therefore their commonality centres only on the reporting procedure, i.e. they report into the same line manager.

However, the lack of teamwork within Company Red does not appear to affect their awareness of where they fit within the overall structure of their team. Figure 29 illustrates that no respondent from either organisation disagreed with the statement – ‘I know where I fit in within the structure of my team.’

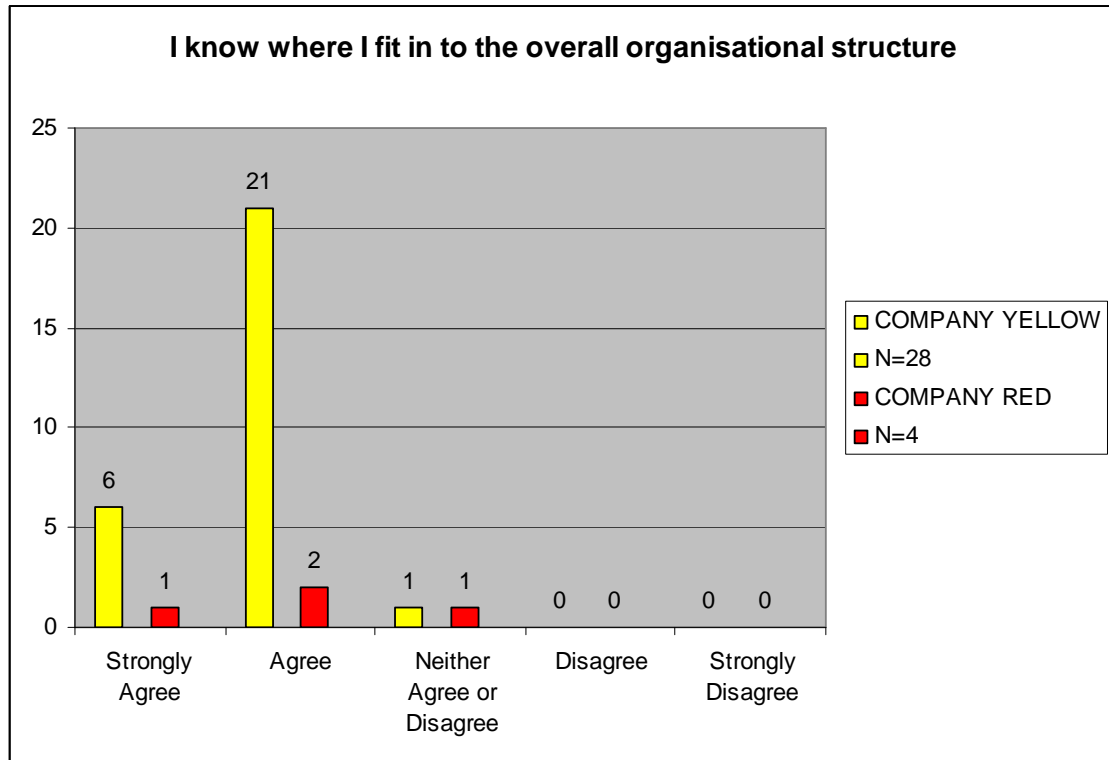
Figure 29 – Team structure



Company Yellow – ALL respondents agreed with this statement – 67.86% (19 respondents) agreed and 32.14% (9 respondents) strongly agreed. Company Red – no one disagreed with this statement. 1 (25%) strongly agreed, 2 respondents (50%) agreed and 1 respondent (25%) neither agreed or disagreed.

Similarly, homeworkers are also aware of their position within the overall organisational structure. Figure 30 provides a breakdown of the responses to the questionnaire statement – ‘I know where I fit in to the overall organisational structure.’

Figure 30 – Organisational structure



No respondent from either company disagreed with this statement. Company Yellow – 27 out of the 28 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. The remaining respondent neither agreed or disagreed. Company Red – 75% (3 respondents) either strongly agreed (1 respondent) or agreed (2 respondents) that they know where they fit in to the overall organisational structure. The remaining respondent indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Yellow has a vast intranet service which clearly illustrates the structure of the organisation. One manager was kind enough to allow me to view the relevant sections of the intranet. For example, a search for an individual revealed a significant amount of data – a photograph, reporting procedures, projects undertaken and relevant skills. All members of Company Yellow have access to this information.



Jokes were made in relation to the photographs posted on the intranet. It was evident that some of them were very old – ‘Bill’ has a photo which is obviously 20 years old, he looks like he is wearing his Sunday best....no way does he look like that now!.’

CYHW1. Whilst these photographs may be a little out of date, access to this information was deemed to be beneficial in order to ‘put a face to a name’ ..... ‘realise who I was talking to all the time’ ....’remind me that I have worked with them before.’

- *Overcoming a sense of detachment*

For the homeworkers who have limited face to face contact with colleagues and are rarely required to attend meetings on company premises, many still saw the value of visiting their organisation's offices. Company Yellow homeworkers can, if they wish, travel to one of the company's offices and make use of the hot desk facilities. One homeworker explains why he felt the need to do this:

‘Well it is all about getting the mix right. The drawback is the face to face contact being lost, the sense of belonging being eroded by the absence of people...well two things really. I think it is not just face to face, but I think it's the physical-ness of saying I am in something, a physical thing, an office, that belongs to the company that I supposedly work for. So it is not just people, it is also the physical environment as well that encourages the sense of belonging.

CYHW2

Another homeworker also believes that the hot desk facilities are extremely helpful, especially to those workers who are new to the organisation:-

‘When you are new you can go into an office and book one of the hot desks that we have. So it is not your desk but it just that you are in a space with the people and the people will help you and orientate you and you can therefore pick up the culture of the organisation in that way.’ CYHW4

This homeworker went on to explain how she believed it would be impossible for someone new to go straight out to working at home. She believes that a period of ‘anchorage’ within the organisation is required first before anyone should be allowed to work from home:-

‘I am so glad I worked for the organisation for a while before I agreed to work from home. I couldn’t have done it without first understanding the organisation. I think you have to see other people and get to know them and observe their behaviour to truly appreciate what it is all about. That period of anchorage is essential. If you can’t have that, I would try and get into the office as much as possible.’ CYHW4

The comment above suggests that a mixture of homeworking and office based work would be beneficial to new employees and also to those who wish to reaffirm their sense of identify and belonging. This was a view also supported by the Managers from both Company Red and Company Yellow:

'I would be very uncomfortable if we employed someone new who then went straight out to working at home. I would give HR a right good bollocking because I don't think we would keep them. I wouldn't like it because I think you need to see it to understand it and if you go to homeworking and you have never met anyone you are working with and you don't understand how the organisation ticks you can be in a right old pickle and I personally think you would sink. I certainly know that this is not our company's policy and I hope it stays that way.' CYLM1

'No our policy is that they would need to work here (in the offices) for atleast 6 months before they went out to homeworking. I like to put faces to names and when they are new they are still learning the job and need to see others in action...the old fashioned sitting by nellie' is important and when you are at home you might feel daft if you have to ring up all the time to ask questions about how to do things. In the office, you can ask the person next to you or ask your supervisor.' CRLM5

*Key issues for the theme 'sense of belonging.'*

An opportunity to visit the physical office premises of their organisation and the chance to interact with colleagues can assist a homeworkers sense of belonging. This interaction with colleagues does not have to be on a face to face basis, as virtual chat rooms greatly assist a homeworkers sense of team spirit and camaraderie. Access to additional information, made available via company intranet sites, can also be beneficial to homeworkers who wish to learn more about the colleagues they are working with. The receipt of 'social' emails was viewed positively by homeworkers as a method of involving them in the comings and goings within the office and/or company.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter has considered; the varying degrees of flexibility afforded to homeworkers; the positive and negative influence of family members on a homeworkers ability to gain control over their hours of work and; the impact of this working practice on a homeworker's sense of belonging and identity.

These findings have identified how the flexible nature of work undertaken within the home offers distinct advantages to both managers and the homeworkers. For managers, this working practice improves performance but for homeworkers the flexibility is clearly linked to the benefit this has on their personal circumstances, family situation and overall quality of life. Managers and homeworkers both agree that self discipline is important for individuals who work from home. Providing differing perspectives, managers focused on the limits this working practice can place on the stimulus to undertake work, whereas homeworkers view the location of work within the home as a temptation to work all of the time.

As the managers of Company Yellow are also homeworkers they consequently agreed that family members can negatively influence the working patterns of homeworkers. The homeworkers of Company Yellow described how family members can have a negative influence on their working patterns and reduce their ability to gain control of their hours of work. With no restrictions regarding their hours of work, Company Yellow homeworkers also agreed that too much flexibility can result in overzealous work tendencies with work encroaching on family time (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001).

Due to the increased span of available working hours, homeworking at Company Yellow is more likely to inhibit the freedom on family members (Sullivan, 2000) as these homeworkers regularly work long hours and at times when family members are at home.

Due to the routine nature of the work undertaken by the homeworkers of Company Red, family members could assist the homeworkers to achieve their daily input targets, thereby enabling the homeworkers to claw back control (Bain and Taylor, 2000) in an attempt to address the imbalance caused by the frequent server problems. Although available to work, these homeworkers cannot work when the system crashes and they therefore have to make up this time when the system is up and running again. The office based data input clerks are not subjected to the same rules if the in-house computer system crashes. As discussed in the previous chapter, the homeworkers acknowledge this inequity in treatment, and do where possible attempt to redress this imbalance.

Managers and homeworkers from both organisations agreed that homeworking should not be offered to new employees. All agreed that time spent within an office environment is crucial to assist a new employee to accept and appreciate the norms and values of the organisation. This period of 'anchorage' can help individuals to form relationships and get to know the people they will be working with.

These findings have also demonstrated how homeworkers of Company Red are, on balance, placed in a less favourable position than those from Company Yellow. The nature of the work undertaken by the homeworkers of Company Red, enables

management to restrict the degree of work flexibility and control their hours of work.

In contrast, the nature of the work undertaken by the homeworkers of Company Yellow has a positive influence on their ability to work flexibly. Any challenges to their autonomy come mainly from family members, as opposed to managerial constraints.

Having presented the findings relevant to managers and homeworkers, the following chapter will explore the research question in the context of the case study organisations used in this research. The most significant conclusions will be identified with the implications of this research disclosed.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusions**

#### **Aim and objectives of this research**

The aim of this research was to explore how the practice of management control differs in a homeworking environment. Contrasting organisations were chosen to explore if factors such as job role, skill level and organisational size are contributory factors in the managerial control process. As previous research has compartmentalised the perspectives of homeworkers and their managers, this research wished to address this disparity by assessing the views of both managers and homeworkers.

This thesis therefore sought to explore the question:

**‘How does homeworking affect a manager’s ability to exercise control?’**

The specific research objectives were as follows:

1. To critically explore the practicalities of managing homeworkers, in order to assess the impact of this working arrangement on a manager’s ability to exercise control.
2. To critically evaluate the experiences of homeworkers in respect of how they are managed and the specific challenges and benefits of working at home.
3. Compare and contrast the views of managers and homeworkers in order to identify any similarities and differences in the employment relationship.



4. To specifically examine the influence of a homeworker's job role, skill level and organisational size on a manager's ability to exercise control.

Significant conclusions from this study

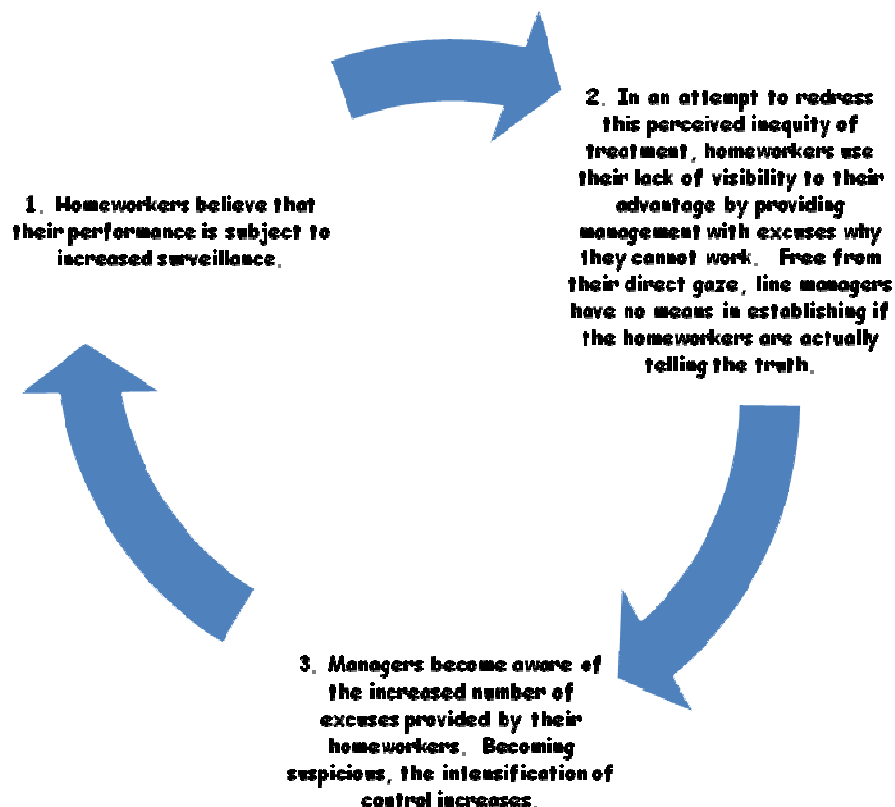
**Direct control is possible for small organisations employing workers undertaking repetitive work tasks. For larger organisations employing skilled autonomous workers, direct control is problematic.**

Supporting the views of Smith and Thompson (1998:555), the findings from this research demonstrate how the 'shadow of scientific management continues to fall over contemporary work organisations, reinforcing greater managerial control.'

Management practices in Company Red are entrenched in traditional approaches founded on the need to closely control the work and behaviour of employees. With the introduction of homeworking within their organisation, the existing systems of control have intensified due to the manager's lack of trust and increased suspicion. For these managers, control is an important aspect of their role and the adoption of electronic forms of surveillance assists these managers to control and monitor the performance of their homeworkers via virtual methods.

In contrast to the conclusions drawn by Felstead *et al.* (2003), the adoption of electronic forms of surveillance are, in this context, an effective method of control. Constrained by the constant computer system failures, these homeworkers appear to derive limited benefits from this working practice. Whilst Fernie and Metcalf (1998) have argued that electronic surveillance abolishes worker resistance, the findings from this research support the views of Bain and Taylor (2000) as homeworkers can and do attempt to claw back control. Consequently, as homeworkers seek to divert the attention of their line manager (Knights and McCabe, 1998), their actions and the physical location of work within the home, contributes to the intensity and cyclical nature of the management control process. The diagram below may help to explain the cyclical nature of managerial control in a homeworking environment.

**The Cyclical Nature of Managerial Control**



Working in a highly prescribed environment, the homeworkers of Company Red, can to a certain extent, be compared to those studied by Bythell (1978) who concluded that homeworkers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries were insecure, exploited, undefended and often unnoticed. In contrast to Bythell's (1978) conclusion, Company Red homeworkers do have secure employment terms and conditions, are protected by relevant legislation governing the employment relationship and regularly attend meetings with their line manager and other colleagues in the company's head office. Whilst these homeworkers are not an ignored area of the workforce, they are treated differently and similar to Bythell's research, these homeworkers are subject to exploitation.

Exploitation may seem a harsh word to use; however, the strict rules regarding the need for these homeworkers to make up for the computer system 'downtime' demonstrates how these workers can regularly be placed in a disadvantaged position. Management use the lack of proximity to their advantage by applying differing rules to homeworkers compared to those applicable to their equivalent office based workers. Organisations such as the National Group of Homeworking (2008) are aware that many unscrupulous employers are still taking advantage of this vulnerable sector of the labour market but the majority of their focus tends to be on securing the required employment status, rights and protection of homeworkers (Hansard, 2008). As Company Red homeworkers are in receipt of such rights and work in a non-unionised environment, it would seem that such exploitation may continue. No formal grievances have been raised by these homeworkers, which may indicate that they are fearful of repercussions or the 'exploitation' is, in reality, not that significant. However, as no formal objections have been received, this practice is likely to continue.

This situation may change in the future if homeworking becomes mandatory. To date all of the homeworkers have volunteered to work from home and therefore may be more accommodating of the 'differences.' As the company expands and more employees are given no option other than to work from home, objections may be received by those unwilling to accept these differing rules.

In contrast, homeworkers who have high task discretion and autonomy in their role as in Company Yellow, are placed in a more favourable position as they can, due to the nature of their role, manage their own time and patterns of work. Unable to monitor work, either physically or virtually, homeworking necessitates that managers redefine their role around facilitation, leadership and personal influence (Hertel, 2005 and Symons, 2003). However, managers confirmed that they were unprepared for this change and had some initial difficulties in relinquishing their hierarchical status and the material referents afforded to individuals with such positional power. In Company Yellow, homeworkers cannot be evaluated on their presence and therefore the evaluation has to be based purely on the achievement of objectives (Ashed, 2004). Managers are responsible for conducting the annual performance appraisal but are reliant on the input received from a variety of different stakeholders. The accuracy and objectivity of the performance assessments provided by such stakeholders is questionable. Managers are dubious of the glowing reports received from the homeworker's colleagues who contribute to the assessment, but have to accept them at face value as they have limited means to establish that such assessments are indeed false. Managers described the shift in the balance of power within the employment relationship, often feeling as though they are at the 'mercy' of their homeworkers.

Homeworkers can gain greater control of the communication process and can often avoid the wrath of their line manager. In this situation, trust plays a more pivotal role as managers have to trust that their homeworkers will deliver and provide an honest assessment of their performance. As a large employer of vastly geographical dispersed homeworkers, team meetings are not feasible as managers have great difficulty in getting all of their team in one place at one time to reinforce accepted standards of performance. This is not the case for Company Red, who as a small employer of homeworkers, have a greater opportunity to meet with all of their 14 homeworkers in one location as all of the homeworkers live within a 20 mile radius of the head office.

#### Managing homeworkers (Research Objectives 1 and 4)

Data collected from the two case study organisations illustrate the variations and commonality in management practice. Chosen for their distinct features, these case study organisations also demonstrate how job role, skill level and organisational size are contributory factors in the management control process. The findings specifically reveal how a homeworkers lack of physical proximity and visibility a) alters the nature and intensity of the managerial control process, b) changes managerial status and role and c) necessitates modification of the communication process.

In Company Red, the nature of the work undertaken by the homeworkers has a positive impact on the line manager's ability to exercise control. As the homeworkers are undertaking repetitive work tasks using a computer, control is easier to maintain as managers can electronically monitor the individual performance of each homeworker. Managers are able to produce reports which identify the hours of work and also the quantity and quality of work. Such measures contribute to the objectivity and validity of the annual performance appraisal. Contracted to work a set number of hours per day, these homeworkers are required to achieve daily input targets using their own computer and internet connection. Working in a fixed location, i.e. home, managers are aware of the times when the homeworkers are working and also their speed of input. If their performance falls below the required standard or the homeworker has not logged into the network when contracted to work, the manager becomes immediately aware and can address this by either telephoning the homeworker or emailing them. The manager can also formally address this at the next bi-monthly team meeting of homeworkers. These meetings are conducted on a face to face basis and attended by all the homeworkers. At such meetings the manager has an opportunity to reinforce their positional power and hierarchical position by reiterating the company rules, the expected standards of performance and control the dissemination of information. As all of the homeworkers live within a 20 mile radius of the head office, the managers could also, if they wished, quite easily visit the employee at their home to check on progress and reinforce the rules and procedures of the organisation.

As a consequence of the job roles occupied by these homeworkers, workers expect to be managed in this manner and therefore more readily accept the form of managerial control employed by the managers at Company Red.

These workers would not expect to be given complete autonomy, and opposing the advice that homeworking managers should change their management style to one based on leadership, motivation and coaching (Hertel, 2005), due to the nature of the work performed by these homeworkers, control and command is inevitable. How can you lead, inspire and motivate a team of homeworkers undertaking repetitive work tasks? Task discretion is not feasible and therefore these managers cannot be expected to abscond from monitoring mere task completion as the work is designed around the need to achieve the daily input targets. Contrary to advice that managers need to work harder to build relationships with their homeworkers (Gerke, 2006) and take time to get to know their staff, the nature of the work undertaken by the homeworkers negates the need for these managers to devote time to such activities. As long as the tasks are completed on time and to a satisfactory standard, the personal attributes of the homeworker is irrelevant. The management style adopted is also inherently linked to the culture of the organisation: one founded on hierarchical tiers, low trust relations and strict bureaucratic procedures. All of the homeworkers have worked for Company Red for a significant period and therefore these workers have already embraced the cultural norms and values of the organisation and accepted the management practices.

In contrast, homeworkers at Company Yellow would, due to the nature of their role and skill level, find such forms of control totally unacceptable. The culture of the organisation would not support a management style centred on autocratic command and control. Used to autonomous patterns of work, these professional individuals are highly skilled and would not welcome strict managerial control techniques such as those adopted in Company Red. Their perceptions of acceptable management practice became particularly apparent when discussing the suitability and possibility of homevisits. Homeworkers suggested that they would be surprised if their manager decided to visit them at home and they would also be suspicious of their intentions. They expect to be trusted and would therefore be very uncomfortable if their manager decided to check-up on them. Luckily, for the homeworkers, the luxury of a quick homevisit is not afforded to the managers of Company Yellow.

Due to the vast geographically dispersion of staff, managers would need to travel miles to visit their homeworkers, and if undertaking an unannounced visit, the manager would have no guarantee that the homeworker would be at home. Company Yellow homeworkers are not contracted to work a set number of hours per day and can consequently manage their own diary. They are also free to work at times to suit them and their working patterns are only regulated by the agreed deadline dates for the projects they are working on. Managers therefore have no idea when their homeworkers are working and also where they are working as they are also free to work at any of the company's hot desking facilities. Communication therefore becomes problematic as emails can be ignored until the homeworker decides they are working and also telephone calls can be diverted straight to voicemail as the homeworker is not free to take the call.



The balance of power is certainly in the homeworkers favour as managers do not have an opportunity to enforce their positional power. More emphasis is therefore placed on the line manager's personal power and influence.

If performance is unsatisfactory, it would not be immediately apparent to the line manager. They would only become aware if, the external client who requested the work, decided to formally complain or as a consequence of the annual performance appraisal. Unable to directly observe the performance of their homeworkers, managers are reliant on the assessments provided by a variety of stakeholders. As previously discussed, the objectivity of this appraisal process is questionable as managers are unsure if the accounts provided by other stakeholders are an honest and accurate assessment of performance. Consequently managers may have limited means in establishing the truth and controlling the overall performance assessment.

Due to the nature of the work performed by these homeworkers, it is essential that the line manager appreciates the individual strengths and weaknesses of individual team members. Rather than rely on the information received via the performance assessments, the manager has to undertake additional activities in order to get to know his staff better. In contrast to Company Red, these homeworkers work in teams and undertake a variety of different projects. They also represent the company when interacting with and working for a variety of different external clients. Knowing which person is right for each project and each particular client is essential to maintain the professional and reputation of the company. The manager is responsible for allocating the homeworkers to each project and therefore the right choice has to be made. In this situation, the manager is also reliant on the homeworkers honesty.

If the homeworker is struggling, the manager has no way of knowing unless the homeworker decides to notify their manager. As homeworkers often feel uncomfortable in imparting their true feelings via email, these managers have to work harder to get to know their staff and also listen to what is being said, but more importantly, what is not being said (Gerke, 2006 and Jahoda, 1982). As the majority of their interaction is purely business focused, managers confirmed that the welfare of homeworkers can often be neglected. Avoiding the vacuum created by their physical detachment, managers suggested that impromptu telephone calls (just to check on the individual wellbeing) could help to replicate the informal corridor discussions which occur within an office environment (Ward and Shabha, 2001).

### Working at Home

### (Research Objective 2)

Data collected from both organisations illustrated the many challenges and benefits of working at home. The findings demonstrate how homeworking can a) alter the available span of working hours, b) inhibit the freedom of family members and c) neglect the social needs of homeworkers.

This research reveals, that although initially appealing, the flexibility often afforded by homeworking, can actually be detrimental. With increased access to work, homeworkers warn of the danger that work can encroach upon personal/family time. Homeworkers therefore have to be incredibly self disciplined to prevent an 'overspill' into the opposite area of their life, i.e. work overshadowing their available family time or family negatively affecting a homeworkers working patterns (Sullivan, 2000 and

Felstead *et al.*, 2005). The influence of family and co-residents was certainly an issue which sparked much debate amongst the homeworkers, particularly those from Company Yellow. For homeworkers undertaking routine, repetitive work tasks, it is feasible that family members can undertake routine work tasks. This opportunity would not be afforded to all job roles. All homeworkers agreed that it takes time to adjust to working at home as homeworking is likely to inhibit the freedom of family members.

When discussing the impact of homeworking on their identity with and commitment to their relevant organisations, the participants involved in this research do not believe that homeworking has reduced their sense of belonging to their organisation. Homeworkers in both organisations were provided with the opportunity to socialise with their colleagues, although very few accepted such invitations. For homeworkers who rarely get the chance to see their colleagues on a face to face basis, the use of 'chat software' is beneficial as it can replicate the normal conversations they would have within an office environment. Virtual chatrooms can therefore greatly assist a homeworkers sense of team spirit and camaraderie. For those homeworkers who meet on a more regular basis, such as those at Company Red, virtual chat software is not utilised. However, the receipt of 'social' emails was viewed positively by homeworkers from both companies as a method of involving them in the comings and goings within the office and/or company.

The Homeworking Employment Relationship

(Research Objective 3)

No homeworker or manager who participated in this research had received any kind of formal training in relation to challenges and changes they could expect when working at home or managing homeworkers. The nature of this working practice does present managers and homeworkers with distinct challenges and therefore a need for relevant training is quite apparent. Managers and homeworkers need to be aware of and prepared for the many changes this method of working will have on all areas of their life. With prior knowledge, homeworkers and managers are better placed to respond positively to any difficulties they may encounter. Supporting the findings of Harris (2000:425), the managers and homeworkers involved in this research were all 'issued with an information pack and then packed off home to get on with it.' For Company Red, the 'information pack' came in the form of a signed agreement which all staff were asked to read, sign and return. For Company Yellow the arrangements were more informal as homeworkers and managers were only directed to the information and asked to read the material at their leisure. A large proportion of Company Yellow Managers and homeworkers confirmed that they had not attempted to source the available material.

Training is particularly important for those employees who are a) new to the organisation and b) new to homeworking. Managers and homeworkers agreed that time spent within an office environment is crucial to assist a new employee to accept and appreciate the cultural norms and values of the organisation. Agreeing with Helms and Raiszadeh (2002:243) 'that the office is not only a place to work but also a place to socialise and be socialised into the culture of the company' both parties agreed that it would be unacceptable for a new employee to be asked to work immediately from home.

Both homeworkers and managers confirmed that unannounced homevisits would not be acceptable. Although both parties appreciated the potential need for managers to visit their employees at home, all agreed that prior notification should be provided as a matter of courtesy. As no manager from either company had undertaken homevisits, this research could not further explore the potential problems and shifts in the dynamics of the employment relationship as unravelled by Felstead *et al.* (2003).

With limited opportunity to meet on a face to face basis, email becomes a more readily accepted means of communication in a homeworking environment. Both managers and homeworkers explained that this method of communication is problematic as it can lead to a variety of misinterpretations. During face to face conversations, individuals are bombarded with frequent non-verbal signals which are often far more telling than the actual words conveyed. Unable to read between the lines, individuals make their own interpretations of the words contained in the email and consequently this can lead to many misunderstandings.

Homeworkers and managers provided examples which highlighted how virtual teams, who have never had the opportunity to meet, are less effective than those who meet on a face to face basis.

#### Implications and value of this research

Management control in a homeworking environment is an under-researched area and this research offers further insights into the practice of management control in this context. These new insights include how variables such as job role, skill level and organisational size can influence a line manager's ability to exercise control. To date, the specific impact of these variables has rarely been examined. The diversity of work undertaken within the home has therefore been suppressed in favour of a generalised assessment of the practice of management.

As research on management control in a homeworking environment is certainly in its infancy, further investigation will be required. The case studies used in this research and the research undertaken by Felstead *et al.* (2003) are quite distinctive and therefore it would be impossible to generalise these findings to the whole population of homeworkers. Subsequent research should therefore seek to include differing variables in order to generalise the findings to a wider population of homeworkers.

### Future research

The participants involved in this research identified that working at home and managing homeworkers differs from conventional practices. As these participants were not provided with any form of training prior to the introduction of this working practice, it would be interesting to explore why organisations neglect to adequately train and prepare their staff for a homeworking employment relationship. For those that do train their staff, an evaluation of the content and its effectiveness would also be a useful activity to assist current and potential employers of homeworkers.

A further area worthy of exploration is a homeworker's length of service with their current employer. The participants involved in this research confirmed that a period of 'anchorage' within the organisation is essential before someone works at home. This 'anchorage' allows the employee to assess and appreciate the cultural norms and values of the organisation. A comparative study would therefore be beneficial to evaluate the experiences of homeworkers who have worked for their current employer for a significant period of time and those homeworkers who are new to the organisation, i.e. new starters.

Another useful comparative study could also evaluate the experiences of homeworkers who have worked within the conventional office environment prior to homeworking, and those employees who have not, i.e. individuals who have always worked at home or location independent workers.

In addition, some of the participants involved in this research described how family members and co-residents can have a negative influence on their working patterns. Adding to the limited understanding of the consequences of homeworking on family boundaries (Sullivan, 2000), it would be interesting to examine the views of the family members themselves and therefore investigate 'what is it like to live with a homeworker.'

Using the six thematic categories emerging from the analysis of the literature, it is also evident that there is a further area requiring investigation: the impact of homeworking on an individual's sense of belonging and identity. Helms and Raiszadeh (2002) have considered the value of workplace socialisation but additional research would be helpful to evaluate how and if organisations can maintain the 'invisible thread.' As identity and a sense of belonging form part of the psychological contract, it would be interesting to build on this research to then explore how homeworking may negatively affect the psychological contract.



### Final Thoughts

The erosion of physical presence and visibility does challenge conventional management practice. This research demonstrates that the nature of the work and duties performed by homeworkers are key contributory factors in a manager's ability to exercise control in a homeworking environment. Avoiding the temptation to treat homeworkers as a homogenous group and focus on the 'invisible' aspect of this working practice, future research should explore the diversity of roles performed within the home in order to further examine how skill level, organisational size and job roles alter the practice of managerial control.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Content of email sent to potential questionnaire respondents**

Dear

#### **Homeworking Research**

I wonder if you would be able to help me? My name is Kirsten Krauth and I am a doctoral student at the University of Leicester. I am currently undertaking some research concerning the issues of homeworking. For the purposes of my research, I am classifying a homeworker as someone who mainly works in their own home or someone who uses home as a base to then travel to client's offices to undertake work.

Due to the nature of your job role, you evidently have first hand experience of homeworking and as 'experts' in this area, I wish to obtain your views in order for me to fully appreciate the varying issues involved in homeworking. I would therefore be extremely grateful if you would spare a maximum of 15 minutes of your time to complete my online survey. My survey can be accessed at the following address:

<http://www.surveymshare.com/survey/take/?sid=66964>.

Completion of this survey is of course voluntary. Please be assured that your responses are completely anonymous. I would appreciate it if you could complete my survey by Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

If you do have any queries, concerns or additional issues that you would like to discuss with me, please feel free to email me at [k.krauth@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:k.krauth@coventry.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request.

Kind regards

Kirsten Krauth

## **Appendix B**

### **Management Control and Homeworking**

Welcome to my survey. My *name* is Kirsten Krauth and I am a Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management at Coventry University. I am currently undertaking research for my doctorate concerning the issue of homeworking. For the purposes of my research, I am classifying a homeworker as someone who mainly works in their own home or someone who uses home as a base to then travel to clients offices to undertake work. Due to the nature of your job role, you evidently have first hand experience of homeworking and as 'experts' in this area, I wish to obtain your views in order for me to fully appreciate the varying issues involved in homeworking. Completion of this survey is of course voluntary. Please be assured that your response will remain completely anonymous. This survey will take you no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Thank you for participating.

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### **Personal Details**

- 1) Gender
  - select here –
- 2) Employment status
  - select here –
- 3) Sector Type
  - select here –
- 4) Industry Sector
  - select here –
- 5) What is your highest qualification?
  - select here –
- 6) How long have you worked for your current employer?
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1 to 2 years
  - 3 to 5 years
  - 6 to 9 years
  - Over 10 years
- 7) How long have you been a homeworker?
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1 to 2 years
  - 3 to 5 years
  - 6 to 9 years
  - Over 10 years
- 8) Briefly describe the role you undertake.

- 9) Why are you working at home?
- 10) If you were undertaking a conventional office based role, how many miles would you need to travel each day in order to get to work?
- 0-20 miles
  - 21-40 miles
  - 41-60 miles
  - 61-80 miles
  - 81+ miles
- 11) Do you live on your own?
- Yes
- No
- 12) If you answered yes to the above question, for most of the working day are you the only person in the household?
- Yes
- No
- 13) Do you have any caring responsibilities?
- Yes
- No
- 14) Does your line manager regularly visit you at your house?
- Yes
- No
- 15) Is your performance formally assessed by means of an appraisal system?
- Yes
- No
- 16) Do you have a dedicated work station/area within your home?
- Yes
- No
- 17) Do you share this workspace with other members of your family/co-resident?
- Yes
- No
- 18) Did your employer provide you with any financial assistance to set up your work area at home?
- Yes
- No
- 19) Has your employer provided you with the necessary equipment (i.e. computer, chair, printer etc.) to work from home?
- Yes
- No
- 20) Has someone from your organisation been to visit you at home to assess your work area?
- Yes
- No

**How I cope with Homeworking**

- 21) I find it easy to manage my time  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 22) Homeworking has enhanced my quality of life  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 23) Work has overtaken my home  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 24) I can effectively manage non-work distractions when working at home  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 25) My family/co-residents negatively influence my working patterns  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 26) My family/co-residents have seen a different side to my personality since I have become a homeworker  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 27) My working day has a clear structure  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 28) I think it would be easy for someone new to adapt to homeworking  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

Strongly Disagree

- 29) Work flexibility is important to me  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 30) Homeworking enables me to take control of my work  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 31) I think homeworking would suit everyone  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 32) I feel less motivated as a homeworker  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 33) I am able to interact with my fellow workers  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 34) There is little I miss from office based working  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 35) Face to face communication is important to me  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree



- 36) Social chat with my line manager is important to me  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 37) Social chat with my colleagues is important to me  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**My performance as a homeworker**

- 38) Homeworking improves my output  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 39) My organisation values people who work long hours  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 40) I work the same number of hours as an equivalent office based worker  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 41) I am competent in the use of ICT and my other work equipment  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 42) I am aware of any promotion opportunities within my organisation  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 43) If I decided to apply for promotion, I believe my application would be given the same consideration as those received by office based staff  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

Strongly Disagree

- 44) I am provided with the opportunity to socialise with my work colleagues  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 45) I perceive there to be a 'them and us' divide between office based workers and homeworkers  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 46) I feel part of my organisation  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 47) I consider myself to be a member of a team  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 48) I know where I fit in to the overall organisational structure  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 49) I know where I fit in within the structure of my team  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 50) My employer recognises employees who achieve high standards of performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 51) My employer rewards employees who achieve high standards of performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

- 52) My employer encourages me to be both creative and innovative in my role  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 53) I feel that homeworkers are often perceived to be lacking in commitment  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 54) I have less sickness absence as a homeworker, compared to an equivalent office based worker  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**My relationship with my line manager**

- 55) I need to talk to my line manager on a daily basis  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 56) I feel confident in approaching my line manager to discuss any of my concerns  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 57) I have sufficient face to face meetings with my line manager  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 58) I receive meaningful communication from my line manager  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 59) I sometimes find it difficult to understand email instructions I have received from

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

- my line manager  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 60) I feel confident in seeking clarification when it is unclear what my line manager expects from me  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 61) I receive regular communication from my line manager  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 62) My line manager does not worry about the number of hours I work  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 63) My line manager trusts me to manage myself  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 64) My line manager needs to know when I am working  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 65) My line manager needs to know where I am working  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 66) I believe that homeworkers are more difficult to manage than office based staff  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 67) My line manager knows me well  
Strongly Agree

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

- 68) My line manager understand that I have other commitments outside of work  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 69) It would be acceptable if my line manager arrived a my home unannounced  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 70) I believe that my line manager's role is to provide me with inspiration  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 71) I believe that my line manager's role is to control and maintain my performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 72) My line manager has little influence on my performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 73) My line manager is aware of my career aspirations  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 74) I have to prove to my line manager that I am working  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 75) My line manager expects me to respond to emails immediately  
Strongly Agree

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

- 76) My line manager has given me formal feedback on my performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 77) My line manager has outlined my current strengths in respect of my performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 78) My line manager has outlined my current developmental needs in respect of my performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 79) My line manager and I have developed an action plan to address any of my development needs  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 80) My line manager encourages me to develop new skills  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 81) I have received adequate training and development to enable me to undertake my current role  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 82) I am aware of the core competencies that are valued in my organisation  
Strongly Agree  
Agree

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

- 83) I know how my line manager rates my performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 84) My line manager welcomes any suggestions that may improve individual, team or company performance  
Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Neither Agree or Disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree
- 85) Are there any additional comments you would like to make regarding your experience of homeworking? Please feel free to express your views below.  
Thank you

## **Appendix C**

### **Participant Information Sheet – Interviews with Line Managers and Supervisors at Company Red**

#### **Participant Information Sheet**

##### **Study Title**

Controlling the invisible: issues of control in homeworking.

##### **Research Question**

**'How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?'**

##### **What is the purpose of the study?**

5. To critically explore the practicalities of managing homeworkers, in order to assess the impact of this working arrangement on a manager's ability to exercise control.
6. To critically evaluate the experiences of homeworkers in respect of how they are managed and the specific challenges and benefits of working at home.
7. Compare and contrast the views of managers and homeworkers in order to identify any similarities and differences in the employment relationship.
8. To specifically examine the influence of a homeworker's job role, skill level and organisational type/size on a manager's ability to exercise control.

Due to the nature of your job role, you evidently have first hand experience of managing home-based workers and/or of working from home. As 'experts' in this area, you already have a wealth of practical knowledge concerning this topic. In order for me to fully appreciate the varying issues involved in the management of home-based workers, I wish to obtain the views of both management and worker representatives.

##### **Do I have to take part?**

Your involvement is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a Consent Form. You will still be free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

##### **What will I be asked to do if I take part?**

After providing your consent, interviews will be conducted with the relevant managers/supervisors of home-based workers. The interviews will last for no longer than an hour. The interviews will be recorded and a full transcript of the interview will be provided.



In addition to one to one interviews, I will also be observing a bi-monthly team meeting of home-based workers and their respective managers/supervisors. My role will be purely observational and you will therefore not be required to undertake any particular task that is not normally requested by your manager during these meetings.

I will also be conducting a focus group of home-based workers. This will last for no more than 30 minutes and participation is completely voluntary. Comments raised during this discussion will not be recorded. As soon as the focus group has ended, the researcher will type up a summary of the key points made during the discussion. A copy will be made available to all participants of the focus group. Individual anonymity will be protected, with no names identified in the transcript.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Participation in this research provides an opportunity for you to express your views on the management of home-based workers. Ultimately, recommendations will be developed from this research to guide employers and employees who are undertaking home-based work and managing home-based workers.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

None are foreseen.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Your employer, other participants and myself as researcher, are the only parties whom will be aware that you have taken part in this study. You may decide that you wish to tell others. The data collected will not be used in any way that is attributable to any individual. All data collected from you and others will be stored electronically at the University and will be password protected. Where data are used in research publications I will ensure anonymity and privacy of the individual in the way I report my findings.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The comments made during the individual interviews and those expressed during the bi-monthly team meeting and focus group will be ultimately analysed and contribute to the completion of a doctorate thesis and any subsequent research papers.

**Who is organising and funding this research?**

This research project is being undertaken by Kirsten Krauth, Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management, Coventry University.

**Contact for Further Information**

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me on:-

Email: [k.krauth@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:k.krauth@coventry.ac.uk)

Phone: 024 76888453

## **Consent Form**

**Name of respondent:**

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

Please initial box to indicate agreement

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at anytime without giving reason.

☐

Please initial box to indicate agreement

3. I am aware that whilst every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of the information I provide, this can only be done within the limitations of the law.

☐

Please initial box to indicate agreement

4. I agree to take part in this research project

☐

Please initial box to indicate agreement

**Signature of participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

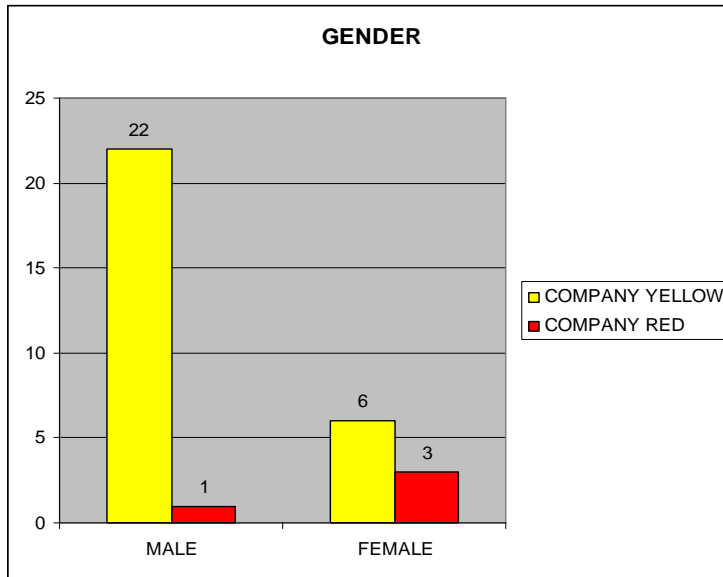
## **Appendix D**

### **Prompt Sheet/Aide Memoir used during interviews with Line Managers/Supervisors and homeworkers**

<b>Communication</b>	Face-to-face Email Telephone Social
<b>Performance</b>	Concerns/Disciplinary Issues Formal/Informal Appraisal Monitor
<b>Trust</b>	Home visits Surveillance
<b>Control</b>	Ground Rules Access Targets/Outputs
<b>ICT Competence</b>	Support Training
<b>Welfare</b>	Sickness Absence Work/life Balance Health & Safety How coping?

## **Appendix E**

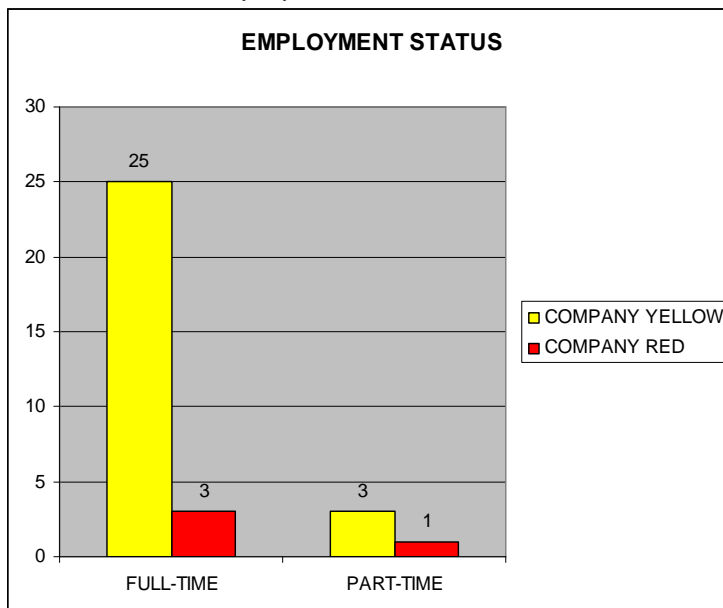
### **Question 1 - Gender**



Company Yellow - 22 respondents were male and 6 female.

Company Red - 1 male and 3 female respondents

### **Question 2 - Employment Status**

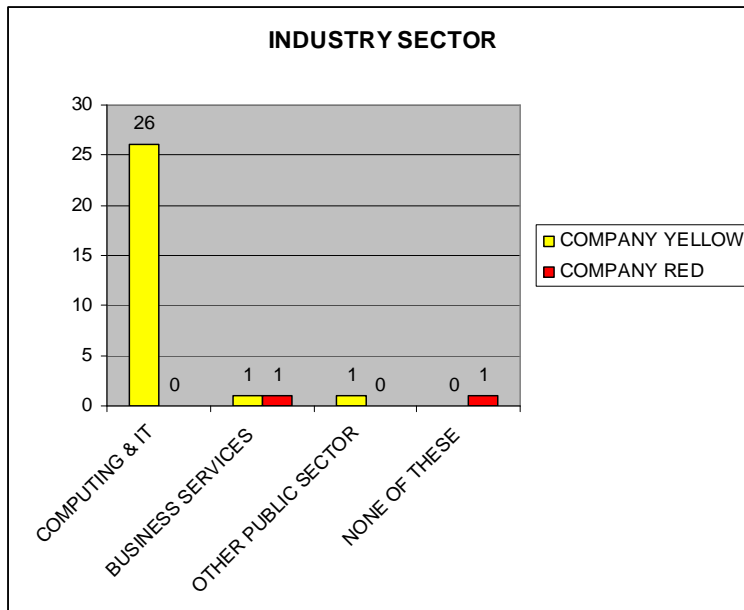


Company Yellow - 25 of the respondents were employed on a full-time basis and the remaining 3 as part-time members of staff.

Company Red - 3 respondents were full-time and 1 part-time.

### **Question 3 & 4 - Industry Sector**

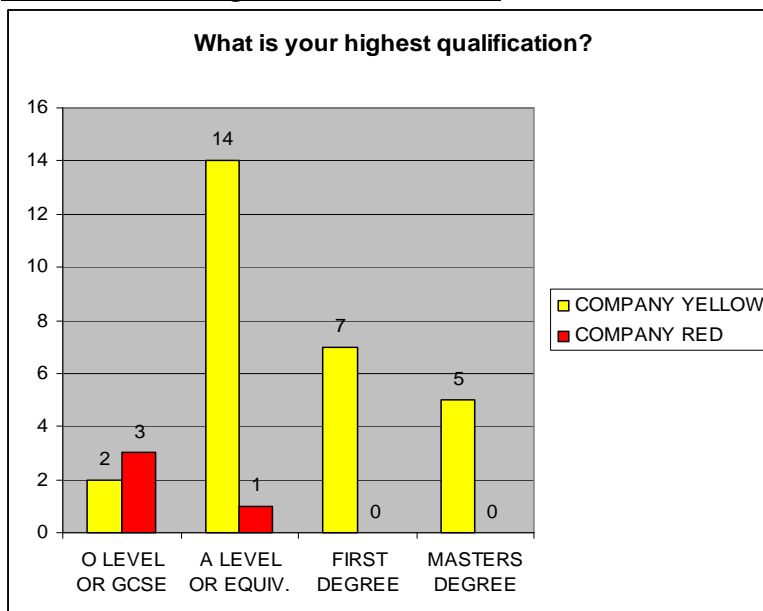
How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?



Company Yellow - 26 of the 28 respondents indicated that they worked within the Computing and IT sector. 1 respondent chose Business Services and the remaining respondent highlighted 'other public sector.'

Company Red - only 2 respondents answered this question. 1 indicated that they worked within the Business Service sector and the other suggested that their sector was 'none of these.'

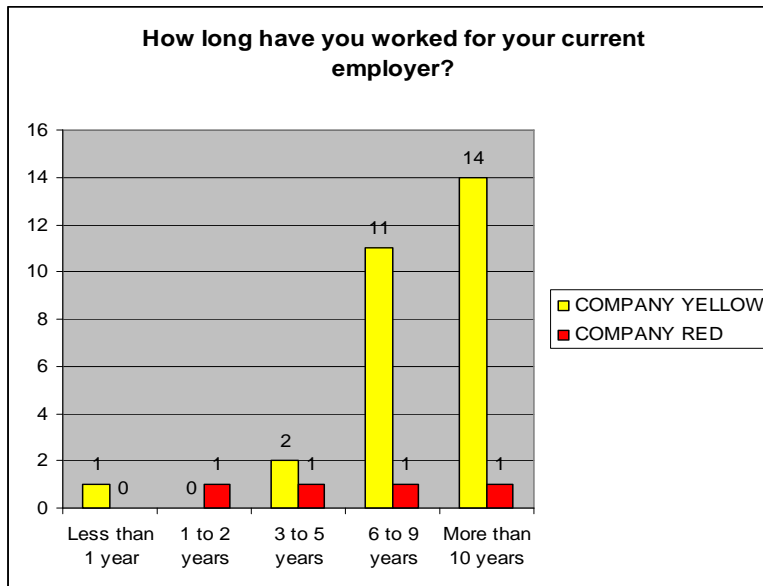
#### **Question 5 - Highest Qualification**



Company Yellow - exactly 50% of the respondents indicated that 'A' Level's are their highest qualifications. 7 respondents (25%) have a first degree and 5 respondents 17.9% have a Masters degree. The remaining 2 respondents indicated that GCSE's/O Levels are their highest qualification.

Company Red - 75% (3 respondents) have GCSE's/O Levels and the remaining 25% have 'A' Levels.

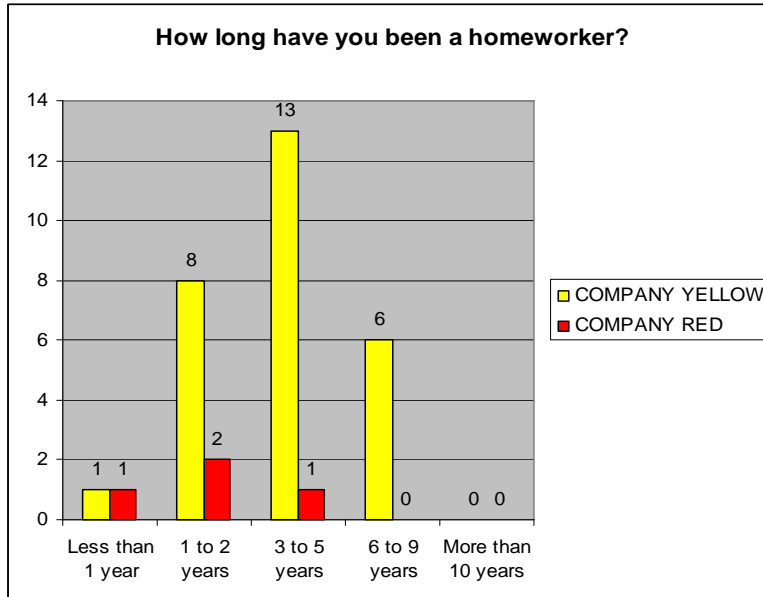
#### **Question 6 - Length of service with current employer**



**Company Yellow** - 14 respondents (50%) have worked for this organisation for more than 10 years. 11 respondents (39.28%) have between 6 to 9 years service. 2 respondents have between 3 to 5 years service and the remaining respondent has worked for this organisation for less than 1 year.

**Company Red** - 1 respondent has worked for this organisation for more than 10 years. 1 for between 6 to 9 years, 1 for between 3 to 5 years and the remaining respondent has between 1 and 2 years length of service.

#### **Question 7 - Time as a Homeworker**

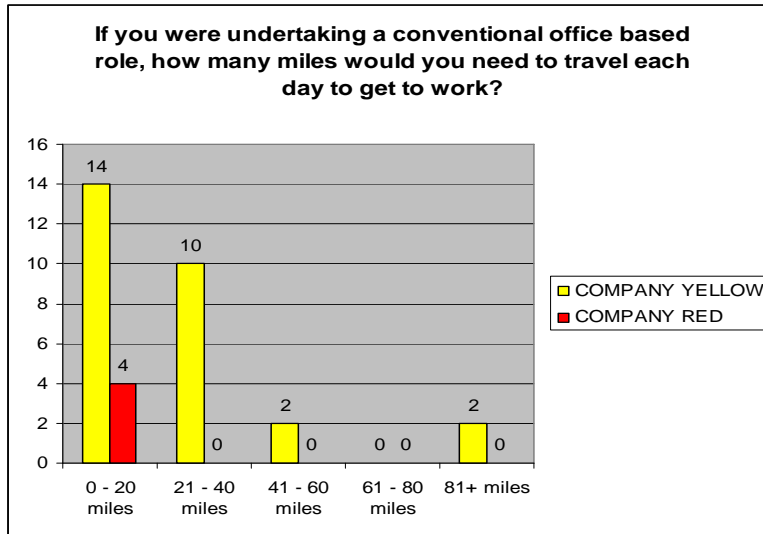


**Company Yellow** - the largest proportion of respondents (46.42%) have been a homeworker for between 3 to 5 years. 6 respondents have been a homeworker for between 6 to 9 years and 8 have only been a homeworker for between a year and 2 years. The remaining respondent has been a homeworker for less than 1 year.

**Company Red** - 1 respondent has been a homeworker for less than 1 year. 2 respondents have been a homeworker for between 1 and 2 years and the remaining respondent has been a homeworker for between 3 and 5 years.

**Please see end of this section for results for Questions 8 and 9.**

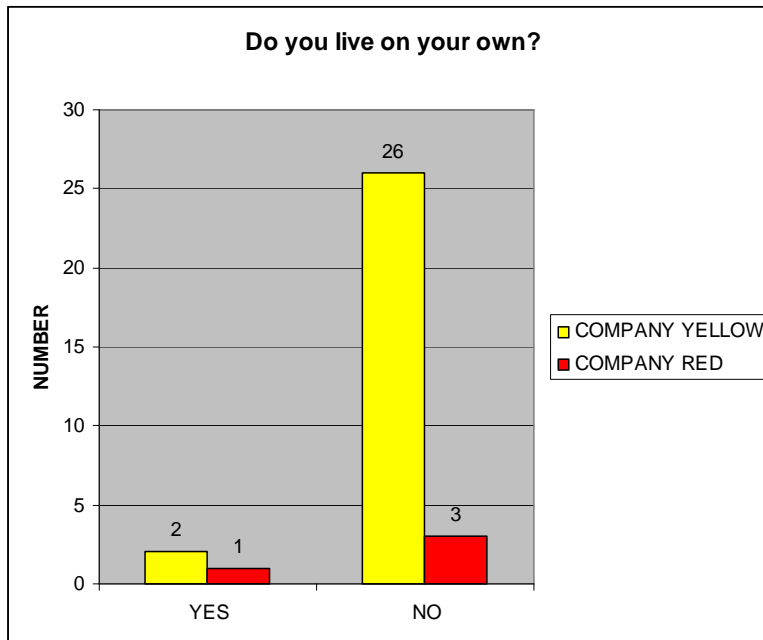
### **Question 10 - Miles to travel to work**



Company Yellow - if these homeworkers were required to travel into work each day, 14 (50%) would travel between 0 to 20 miles to get to work. 10 respondents would travel between 21 and 40 miles. Of the remaining 4 respondents, 2 would travel for 41 - 60 miles and 2 would have to travel over 81 miles to get to the office.

Company Red - All 4 homeworkers would need to travel less than 20 miles to get to the office.

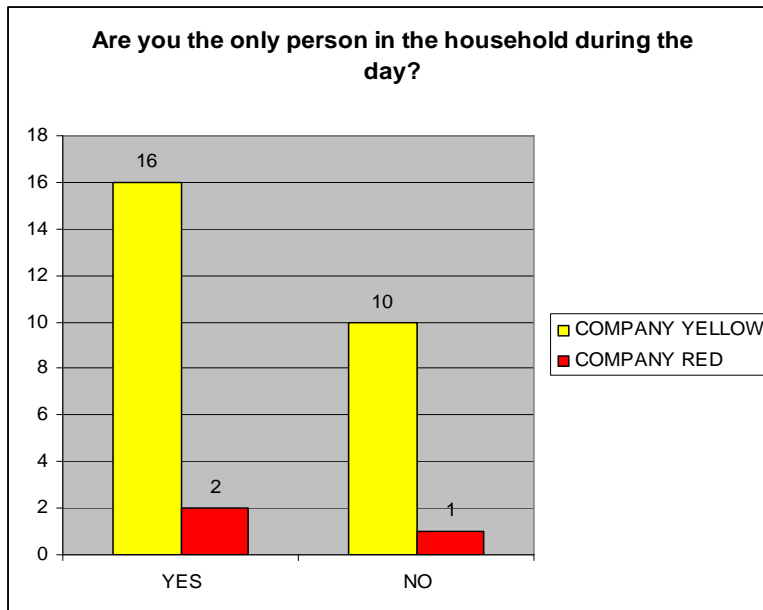
### **Question 11 - Live on own**



Company Yellow - Over 92% (26) respondents do not live on their own. The remaining 2 respondents indicated that they do not share their house with anyone.

Company Red - only 1 respondent lives on their own. 3 share their home with family/co-residents.

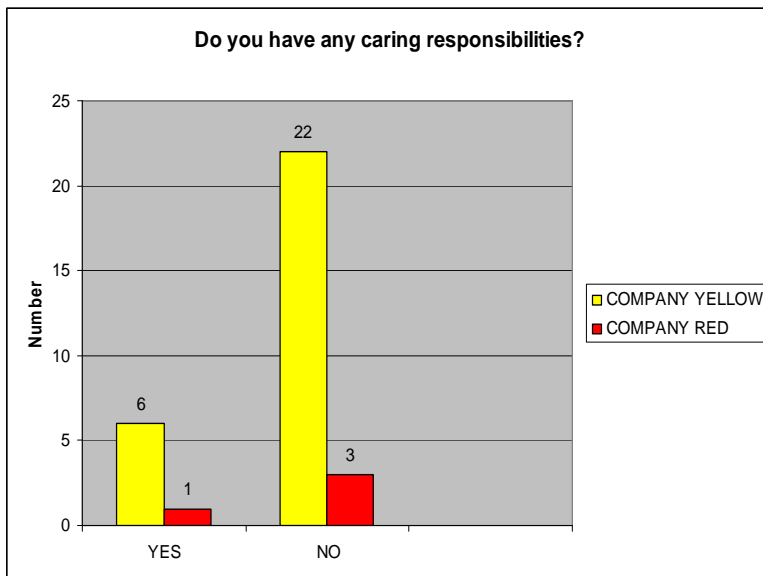
### **Question 12 - On own during the day**



Company Yellow - of the 26 respondents that indicated that they do not live on their own, 16 said that they are the only person in the household during the day and 10 indicated that others are at home during the course of the working day.

Company Red - of the 3 respondents who share their household with others, 2 are on their own during the day and 1 is not.

### **Question 13 - Caring responsibilities**



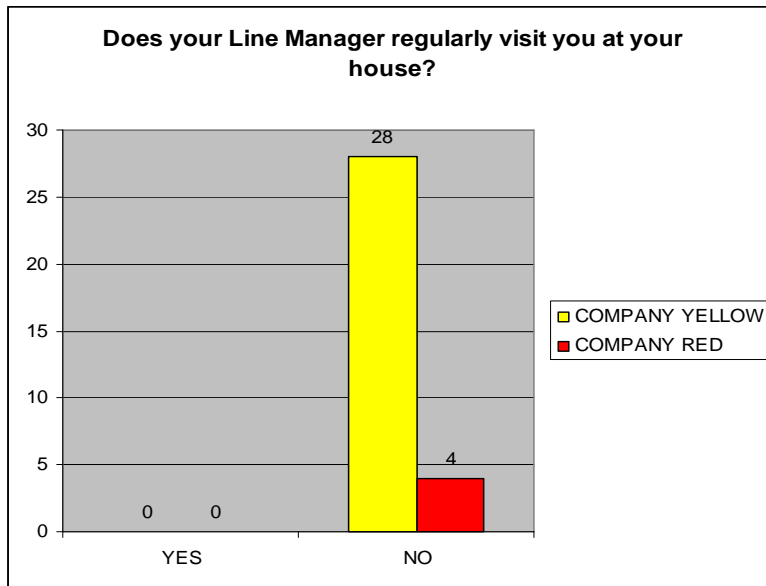
Company Yellow - 6 respondents do have caring responsibilities and 22 do not.

Company Red - 1 respondent do have caring responsibilities and 3 do not.

### **Question 14 - Line Manager visits**

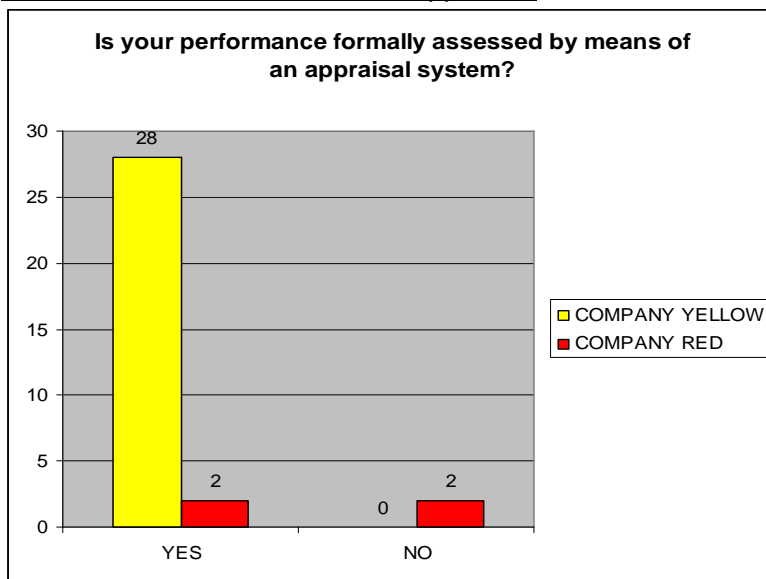


How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?



All respondents from Company Yellow and Red indicated that their Line Manager does not regularly visit them at home.

### **Question 15 - Performance Appraisal**

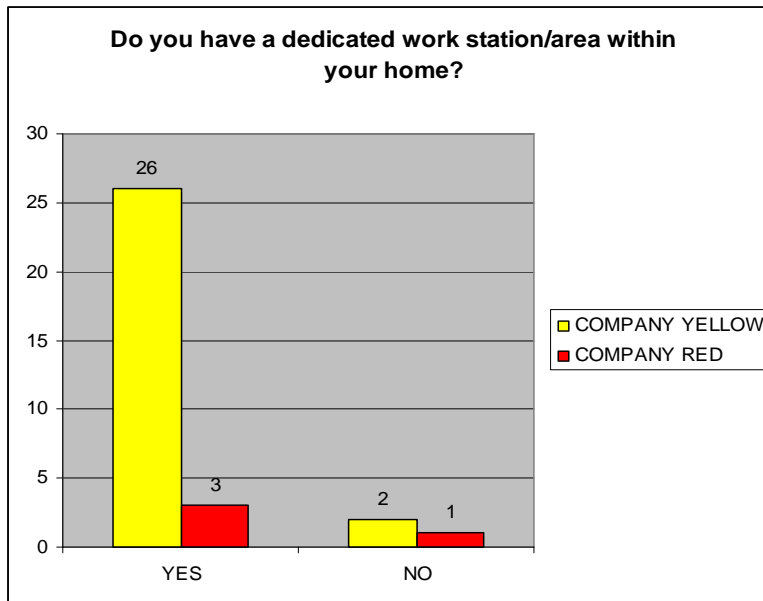


Company Yellow - the performance of all respondents is formally assessed by means of an appraisal system.

Company Red - 2 respondents indicated that they participate in a performance appraisal system and 2 suggested that their performance was not formally assessed by this means.

### **Question 16 - Dedicated work station/area at home**

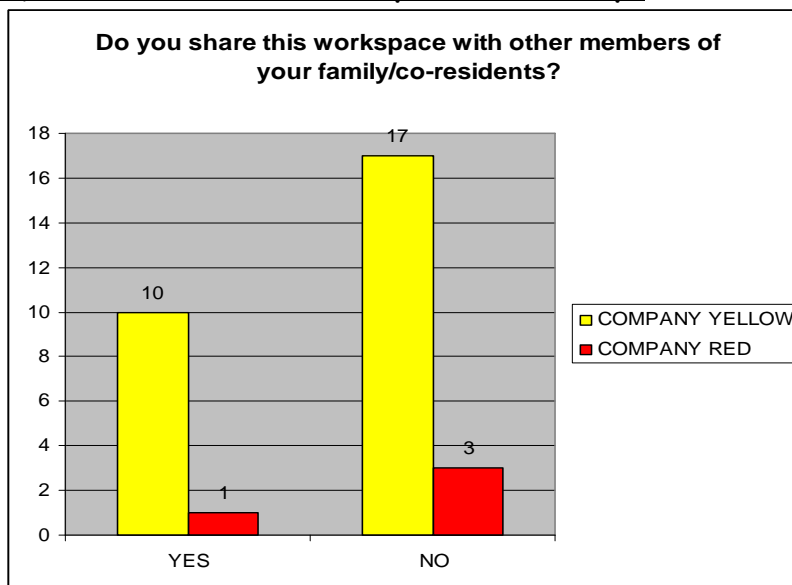
How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?



Company Yellow - 26 of the 28 respondents do have a dedicated work station/area within their home. 2 respondents do not.

Company Red - 75% of respondents do have a dedicated work area at home and 25% do not.

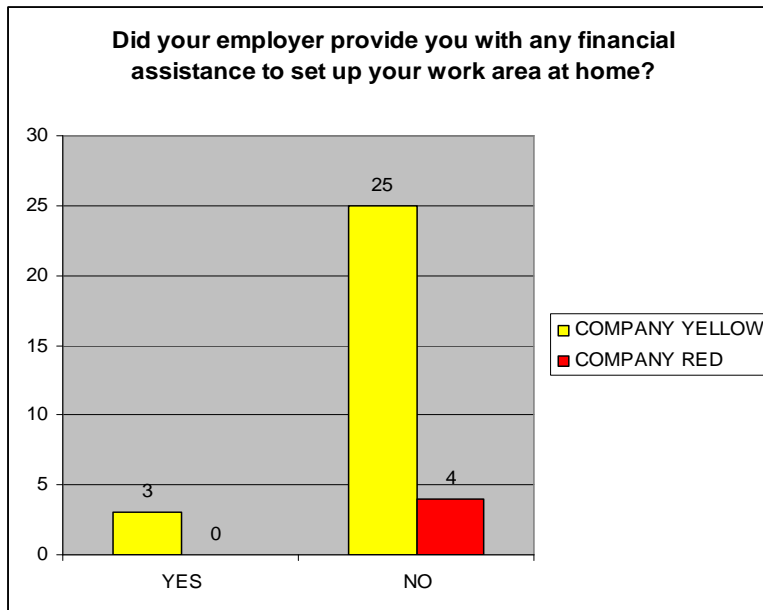
#### **Question 17 - Share workspace with family?**



Company Yellow - 1 respondent decided not to answer this question. Of the remaining 27 respondents, 17 indicated that they do not share their work space at home with other members of their family or co-residents. 10 respondents indicated that they do share this space.

Company Red - 1 respondent does share their work area with others and 3 do not.

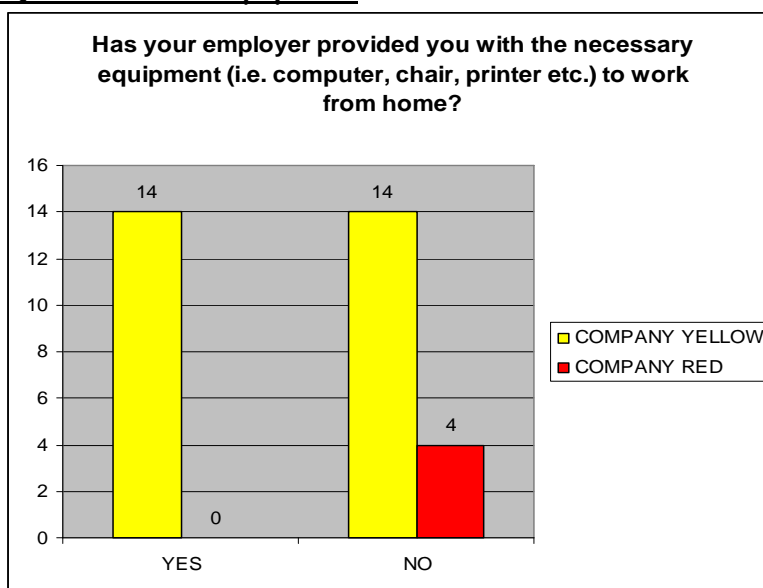
#### **Question 18 - Financial assistance**



Company Yellow - the vast majority (89.28%) of respondents had no financial assistance from their employer to set up a work area at home. 3 respondents indicated that financial support was provided.

Company Red - All 4 respondents had no financial assistance from their employer.

#### **Question 19 - Equipment**



Company Yellow - a 50/50 split response to this question. 14 respondents indicated that their employer has not provided them with the necessary equipment to work from home and 14 suggested that they have received the required equipment.

Company Red - All 4 respondents have not been provided with the necessary equipment to work from home.

#### **Question 20 - Assessment by employer**

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

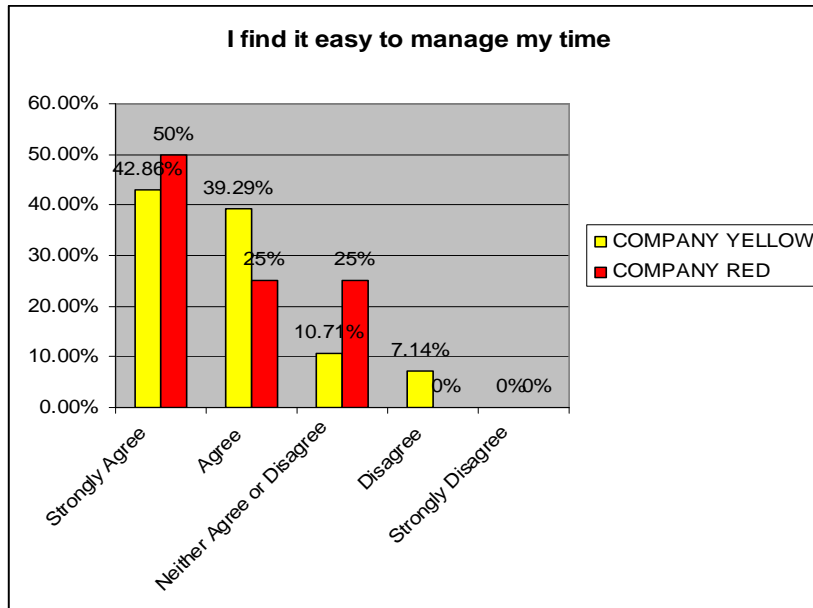


Company Yellow - All 28 respondents indicated that no one from their organisation has been to visit them at home to assess their work area.

Company Red - 3 respondents indicated that someone has visited their house to undertake an assessment and 1 suggested that this was not the case.

## How I cope with Homeworking

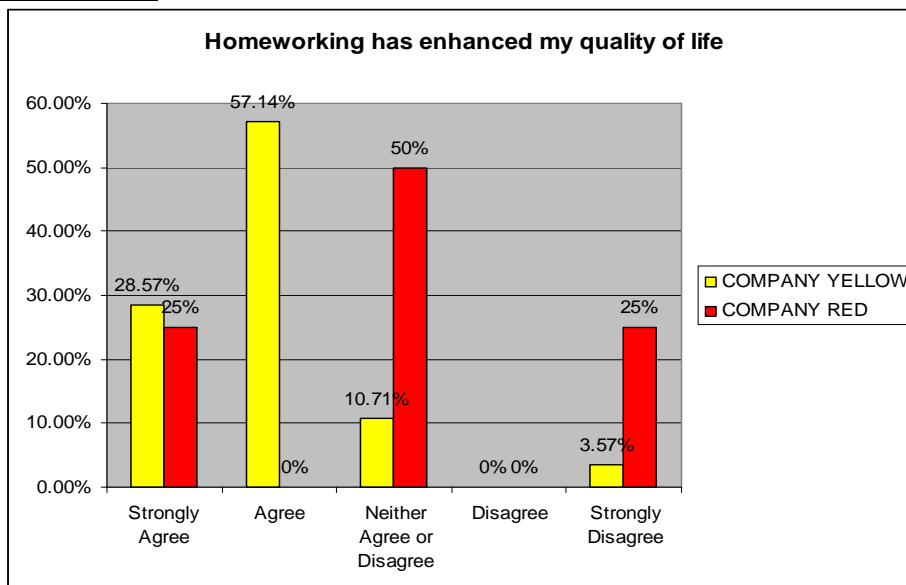
### Question 21



Company Yellow - the majority (71.86%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they find it easy to manage their time. Over 40% strongly agreed with this statement.

Company Red - No one disagreed with this statement, with 75% either strongly agreeing (50%) or agreeing (25%) that they find it easy to manage their time.

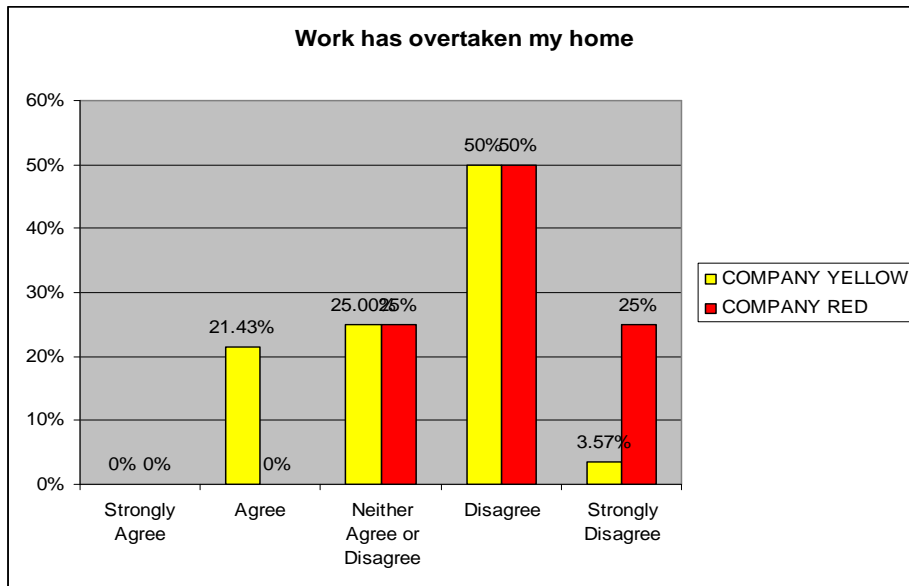
### Question 22



Company Yellow - 85.71% of respondents either strongly agreed (28.57%) or agreed (57.14%) that homeworking has enhanced their quality of life. 3 respondents neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 3.57% strongly disagreed.

Company Red - 50% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. However, the remaining 50% had contrasting strong opinions, i.e. 25% strongly agreed and 25% strongly disagreed.

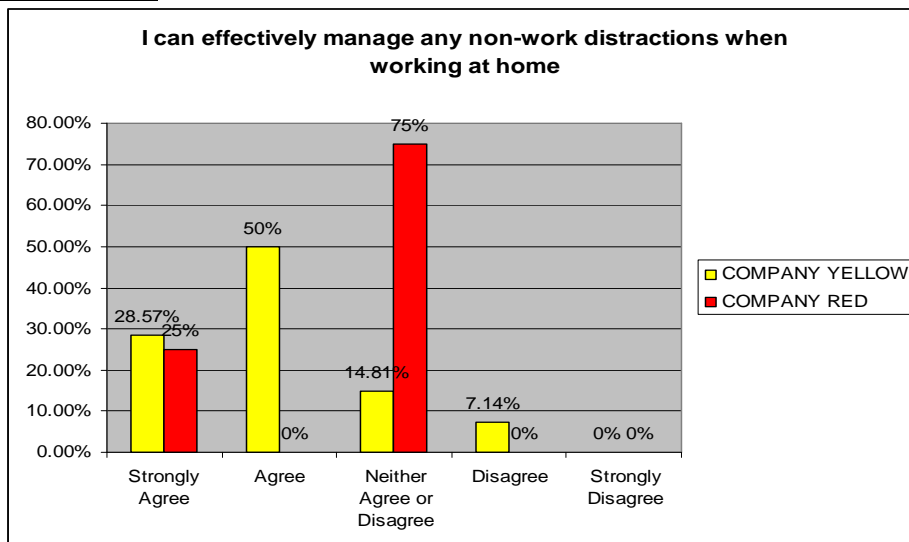
### Question 23



Company Yellow - 53.57% of respondents either strongly disagreed (3.57%) or disagreed (50%) that work has overtaken their home. 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 21.43% agreed.

Company Red - No one agreed with the statement. 50% disagreed and a further 25% strongly disagreed. 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

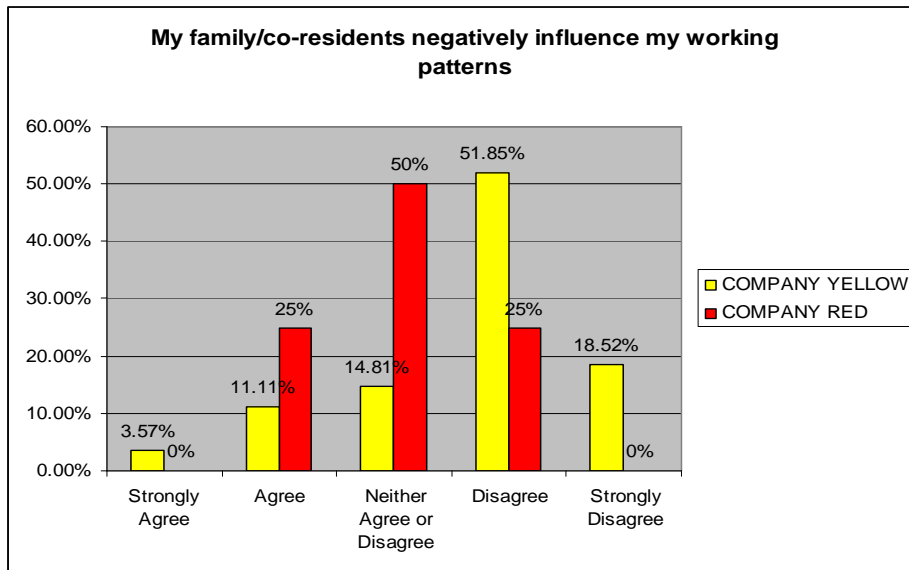
### Question 24



Company Yellow - 78.57% either strongly agreed (28.57%) or agreed (50%) that they can effectively manage non-work distractions. Only 2 respondents (7.14%) disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - No one agreed with this statement, but 75% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. However, the one person that did comment indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement.

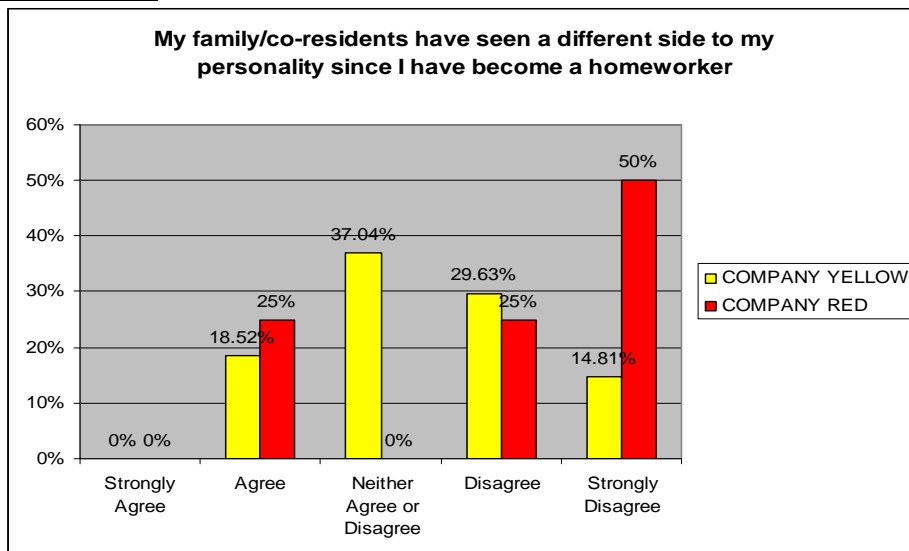
### Question 25



Company Yellow - the majority (70.37%) of respondents disagreed with only 14.68% agreeing that family can have a negative influence on their working patterns.

Company Red - 50% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. The remaining 50% had contrasting opinions, i.e. 25% agreed and 25% disagreed.

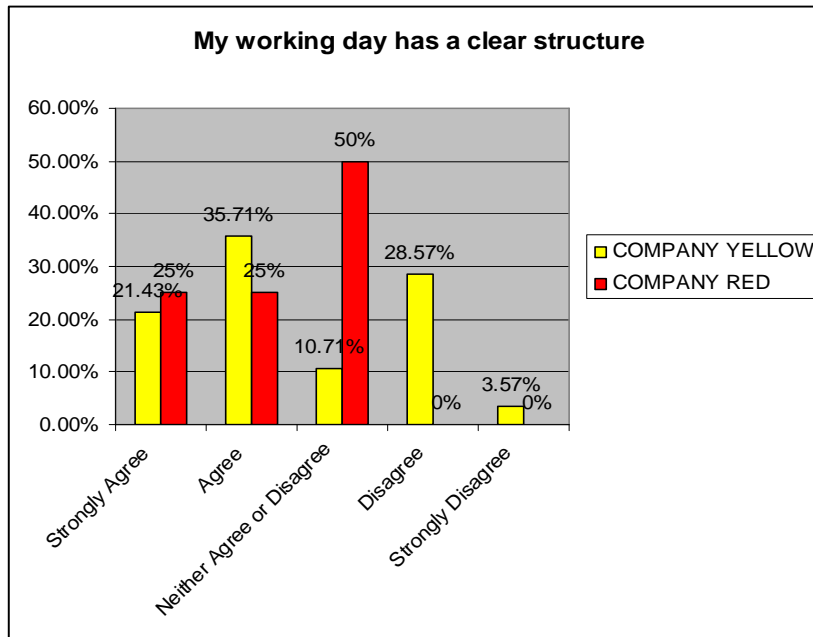
### Question 26



Company Yellow - 44.44% either strongly disagreed or disagreed. The largest % (37.04%) of respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. Only 5 people agreed with this statement.

Company Red - 75% disagreed and 25% agreed.

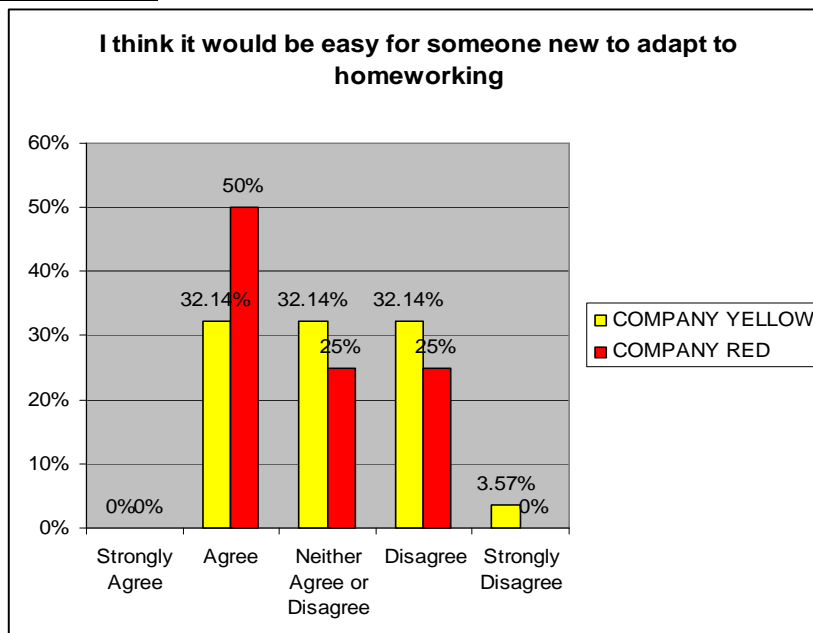
### Question 27



Company Yellow - the majority (57.14%) of respondents either strongly agreed (21.43%) or agreed (35.71%) that their working day has a clear structure. 32.14% disagreed. The remaining 3 respondents (10.71%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement. 25% strongly agreed and a further 25% agreed. 50% neither agreed or disagreed.

### Question 28

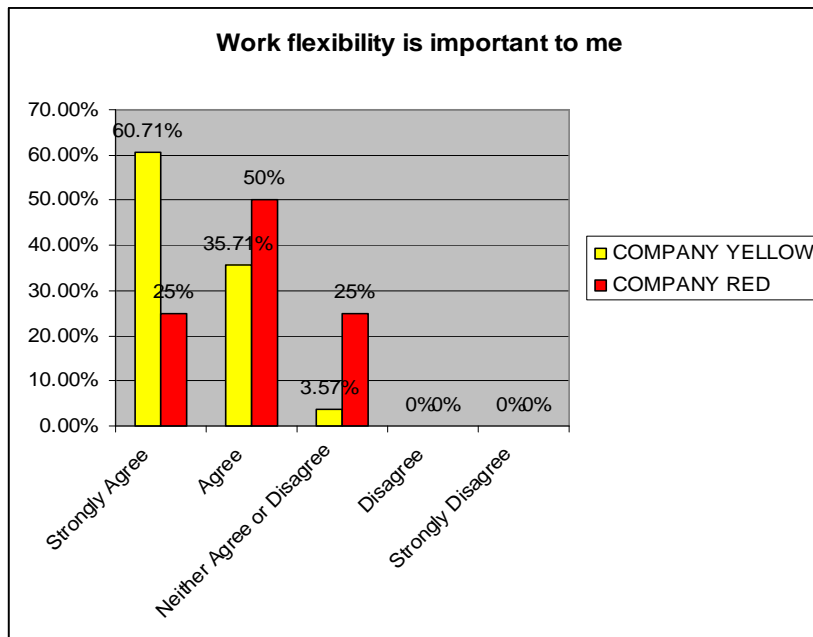


Company Yellow - Slightly more disagreed than agreed. However, there was a mixed response to this statement. 9 people (32.14%) agreed, 9 people also stated that they neither agreed or disagreed, with the remaining 10 respondents indicating that they either strongly disagreed (3.57%) or disagreed (32.14%).



Company Red - Again quite a mixed response to this statement. 50% agreed, 25% neither agreed or disagreed and 25% disagreed.

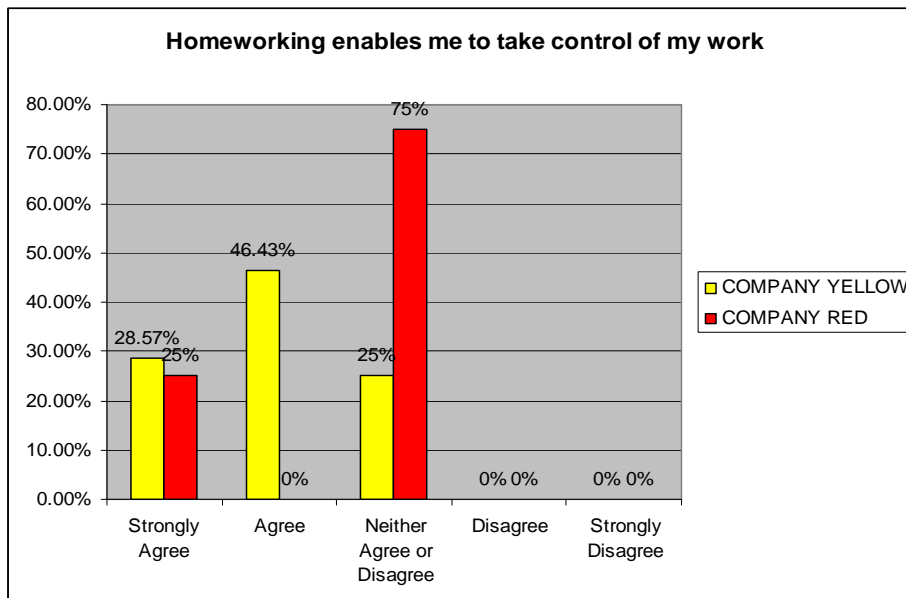
### Question 29



**No respondent from either company disagreed with this statement**

1 respondent from each company indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.  
Company Yellow - 60.71% strongly agreed and 35.71% agreed that work flexibility is important. Company Red - 75% either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (50%).

### Question 30

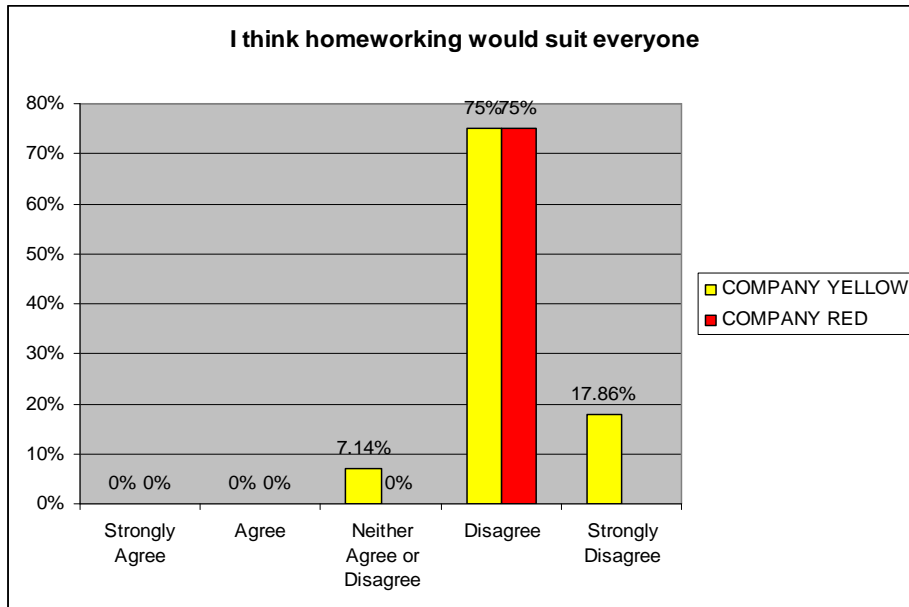


**No respondent from either company disagreed with this statement**

Company Yellow - 75% strongly agreed (28.57%) or agreed (46.43%) with this statement. 7 respondents (25%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - 75% neither agreed or disagreed, although the 25% that did comment, indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement.

### **Question 31**

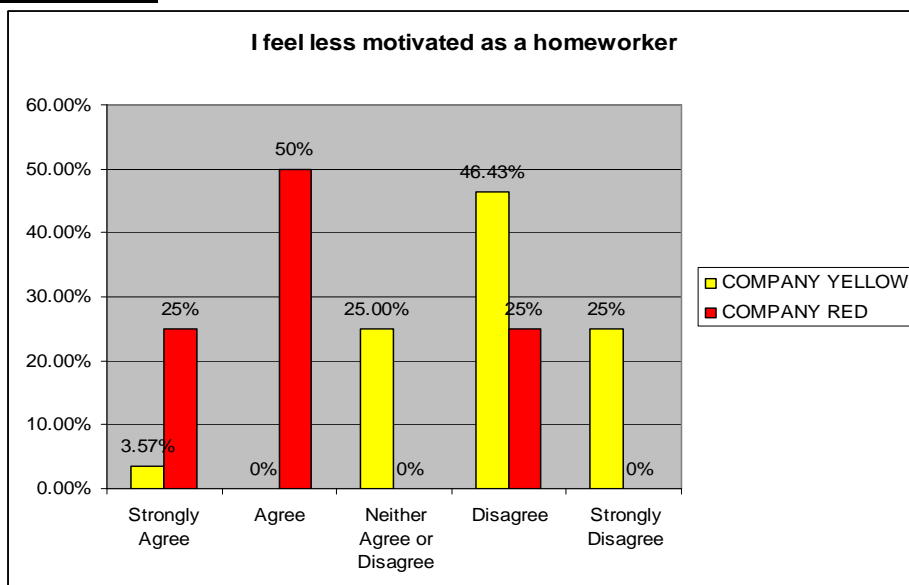


**No respondent from either company agreed with this statement**

Company Yellow - 75% disagreed and 17.86% strongly disagreed. The remaining 2 respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

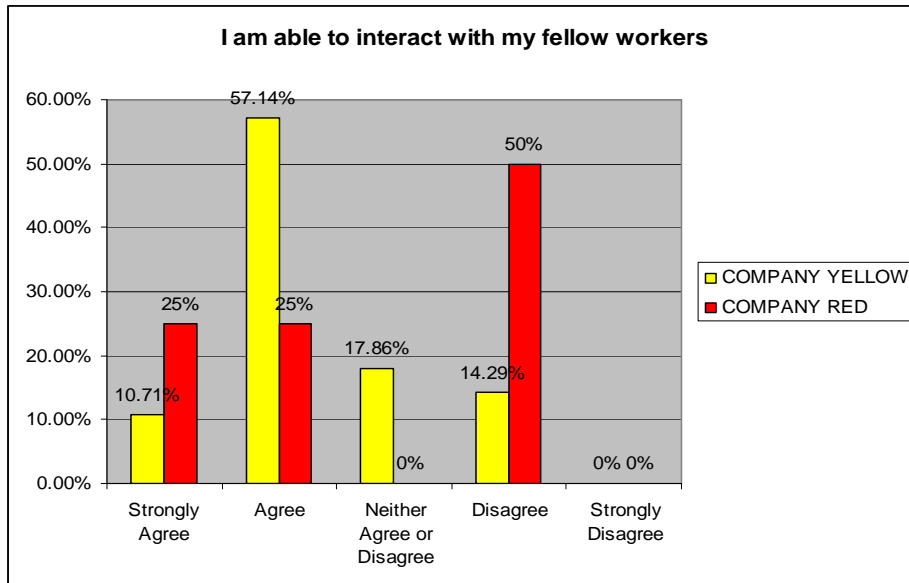
Company Red - 75% disagreed and 25% strongly disagreed.

### **Question 32**



**A contrast of opinions between the 2 companies**

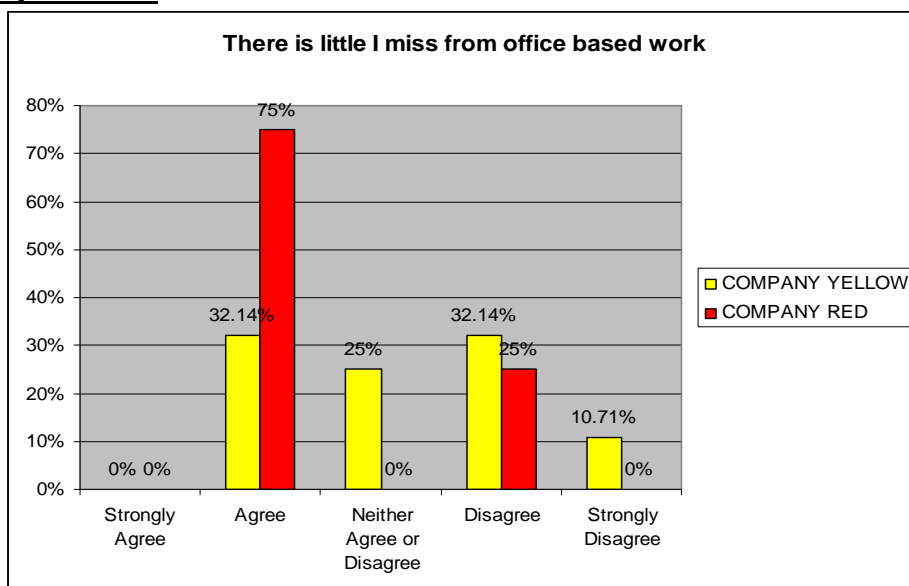
### Question 33



Company Yellow - 67.85% (18 respondents) either strongly agreed (10.71%) or agreed (57.14%) that they are able to interact with their fellow workers. 4 respondents (14.29%) disagreed with this statement and the remaining 5 neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - a split response with 50% disagreeing and 50% either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement.

### Question 34

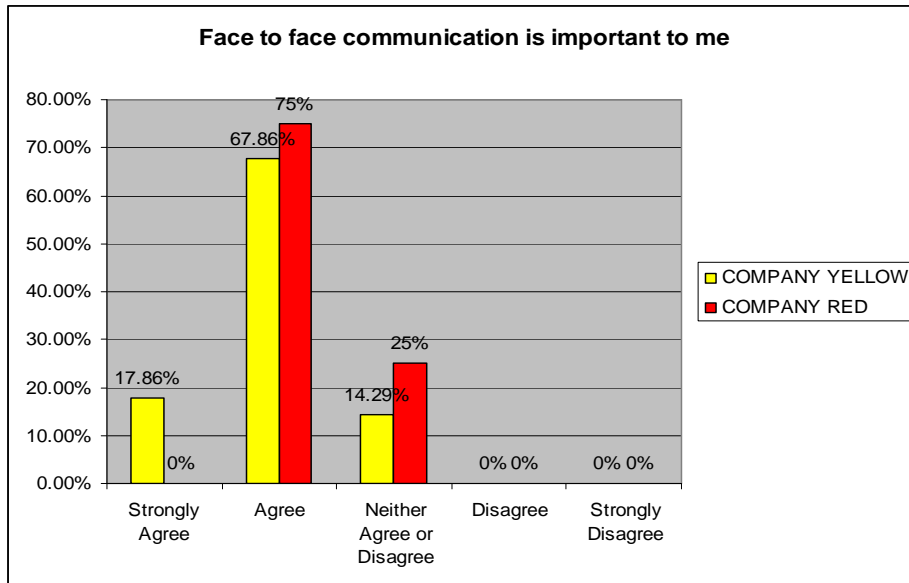


#### A contrast of opinions between the 2 companies

Company Yellow - slightly more disagreed with this statement than agreed. 32.14% disagreed and 10.71% strongly disagreed. 25% neither agreed or disagreed and 9 respondents (32.14%) indicated that they agreed.

Company Red - 75% agreed that there is little that they miss from office based work and 25% disagreed.

**Question 35**

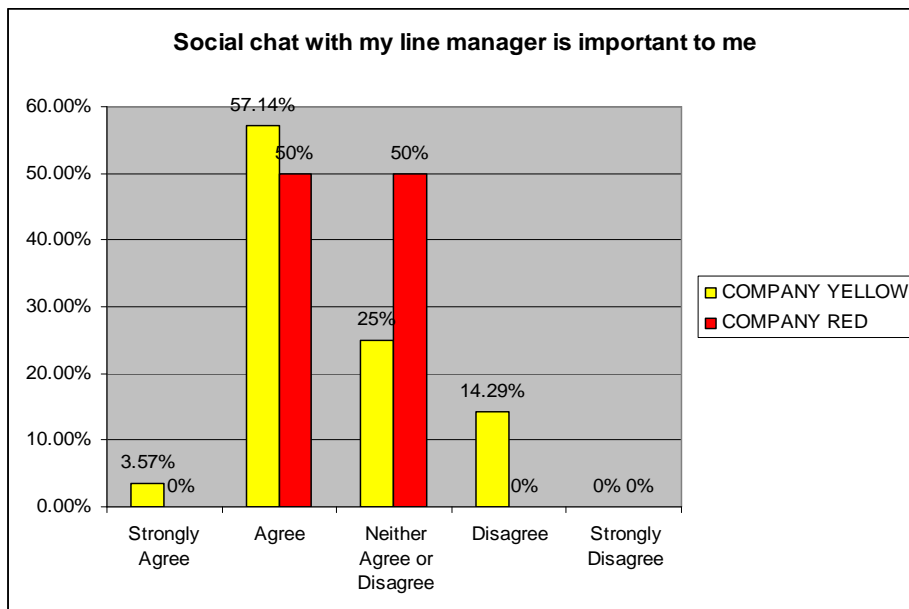


**No respondent from either company disagreed with this statement**

Company Yellow - although 14.29% neither agreed or disagreed, 85.72% either strongly agreed (17.86%) or agreed (67.86%) that face to face communication is important.

Company Red - 75% indicated that they agreed and 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

**Question 36**

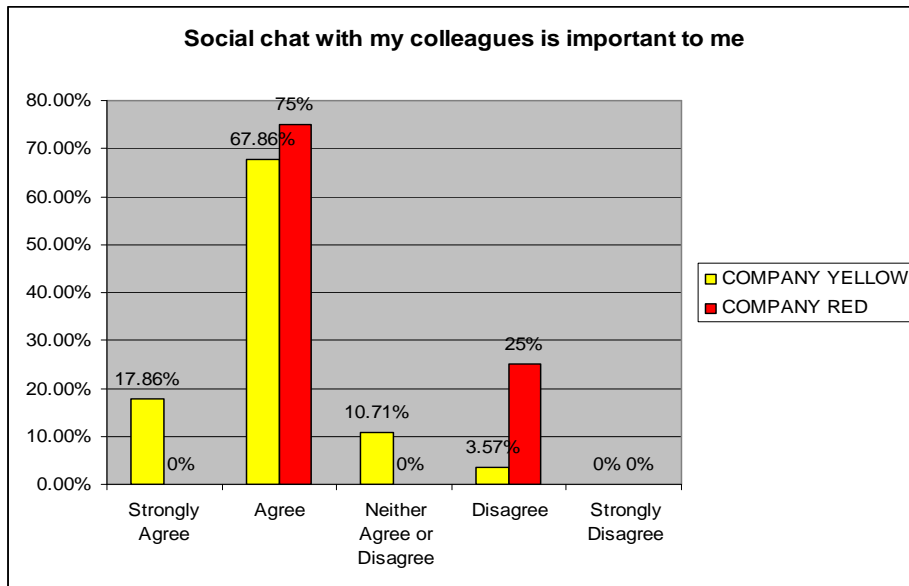


Company Yellow - 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed, 57.14% (16 respondents) indicated that they agreed and 3.57% strongly agreed. 4 respondents indicated that they disagreed.

Company Red - 50% indicated that they agreed that social chat with their line manager is important and 50% neither agreed or disagreed.

**Question 37**

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

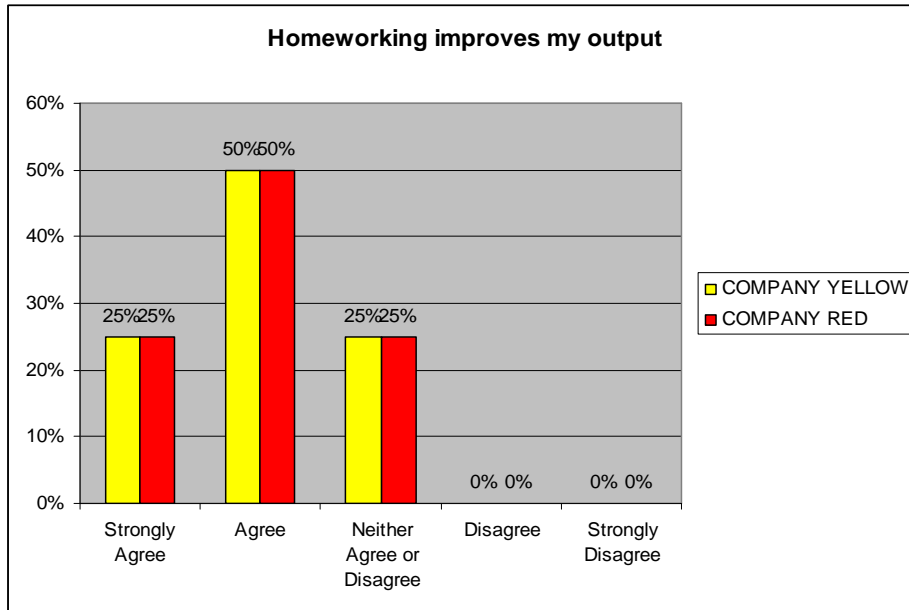


Company Yellow - 85.72% either strongly agreed (17.86%) or agreed (67.86%). Only 1 respondent disagreed and the remaining 3 respondents (10.71%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed with this statement.

Company Red - 75% agreed that social chat with their colleagues was important. 25% disagreed with this statement

### **My performance as a Homeworker**

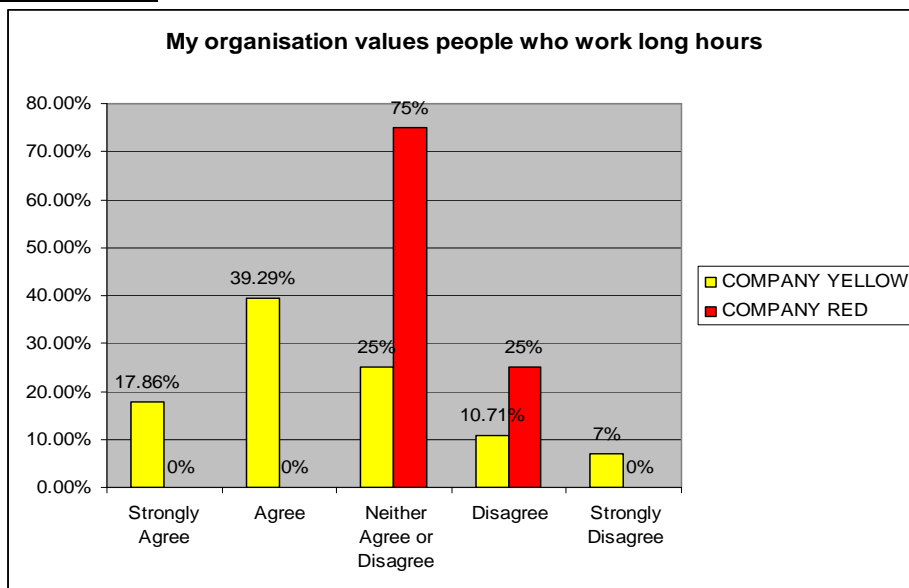
**Question 38**



**No respondent from either company disagreed with this statement**

For both companies, 25% strongly agreed, 50% agreed and 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

**Question 39**



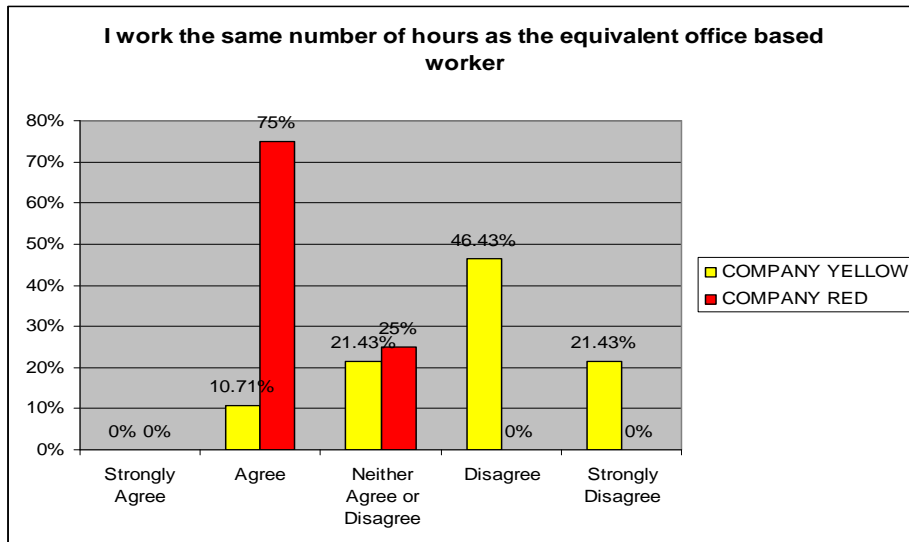
**A contrast of opinions between the 2 companies**

Company Yellow - more than half (57.15%) either strongly agreed (17.86%) or agreed (39.29%) that their organisation does value people work long hours. 3 respondents (10.71%) disagreed and 2 respondents (7.14%) strongly disagreed. The remaining 7 respondents (25%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed with this statement.

Company Red - no one agreed. However, 75% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. The 25% that did comment indicated that they disagreed.

**Question 40**

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

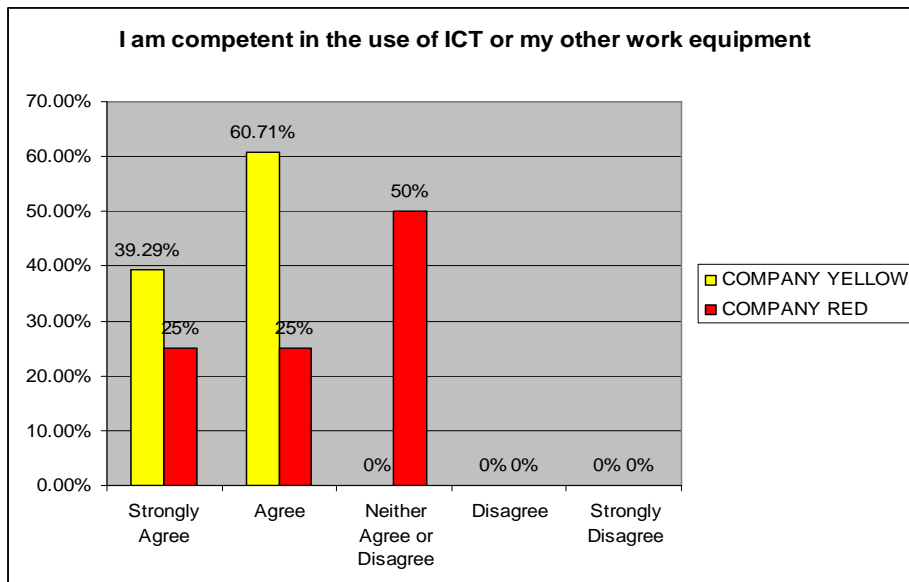


#### **A contrast of opinions between the 2 companies**

Company Yellow - the majority (67.86%) of respondents either disagreed (46.43%) or strongly disagreed (21.43%) with the suggestion that they work the same number of hours as office based staff. 6 respondents (21.43%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed. 75% agreed that they do work the same number of hours and the remaining 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

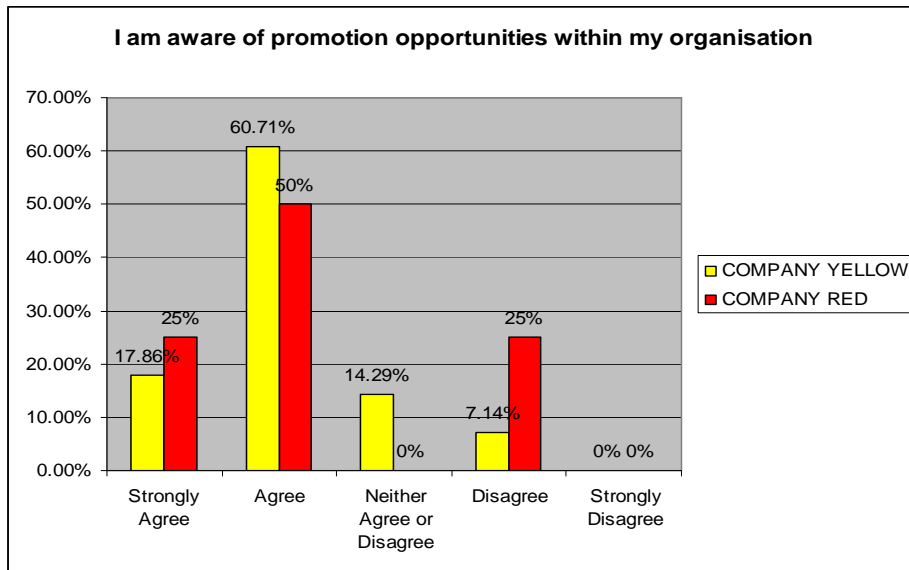
#### **Question 41**



Company Yellow - ALL (100%) respondents agreed with this statement.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement but 50% offered no opinion.

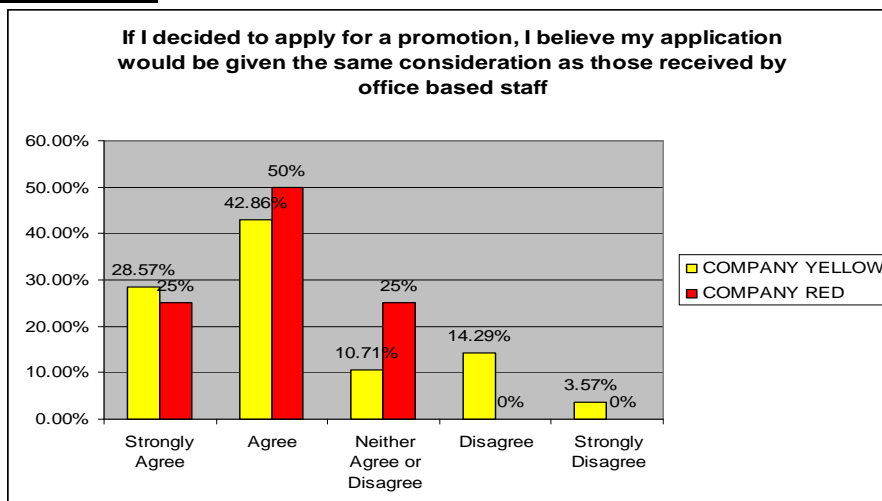
#### **Question 42**



The majority of respondents for both companies agreed that they are aware of promotion opportunities within their organisation.

Company Yellow - 78.57% either strongly agreed or agreed and 75% of the respondents from Company Red agreed with this statement.

#### **Question 43**

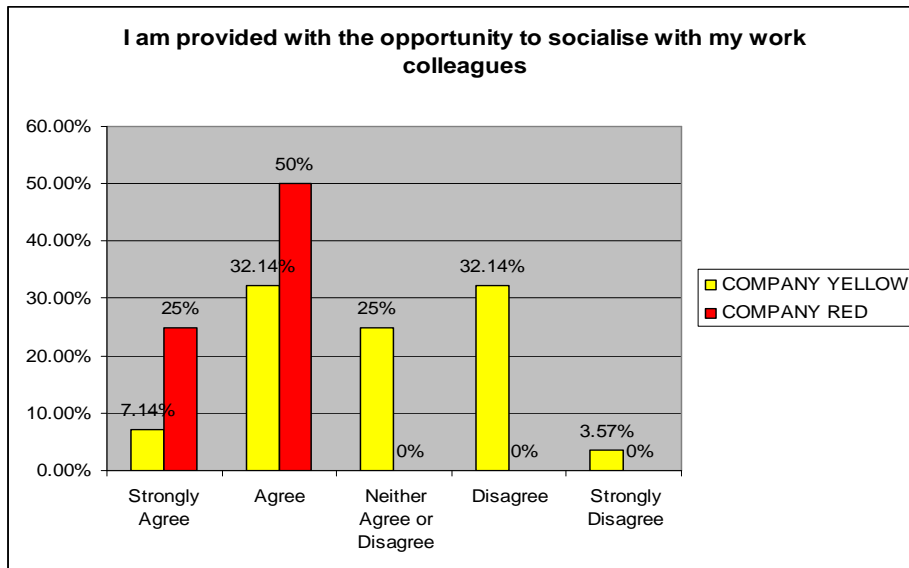


Company Yellow - the majority (71.43%) of respondents either agreed (42.86%) or strongly agreed (28.57%) that their application would be given the same consideration as office based staff. 14.29% (4 respondents) disagreed and a further 3.57% (1 respondent) strongly disagreed with this statement. The remaining 10.71% (3 respondents) neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement. 25% strongly agreed and 50% agreed. The remaining 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed with this statement.

#### **Question 44**

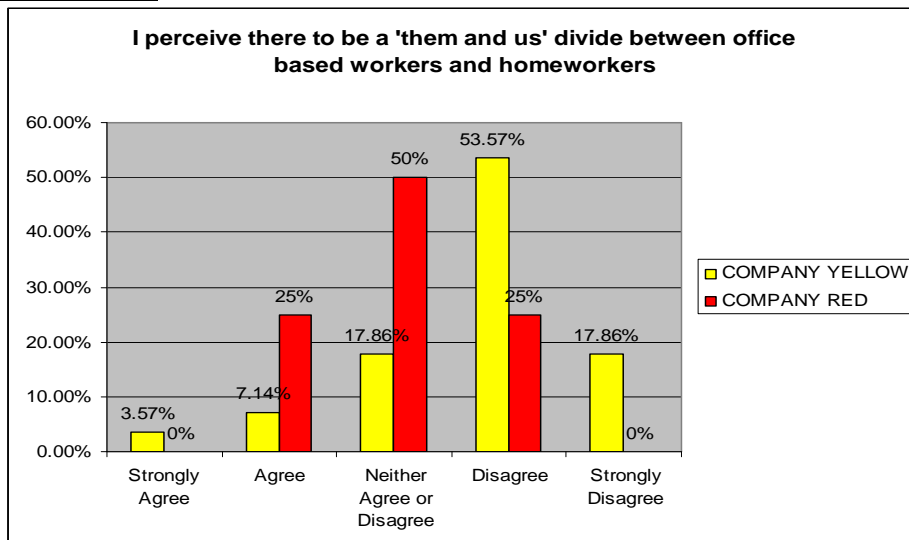




Company Yellow - slightly more respondents agreed with this statement, although it was a fairly even split. 32.14% disagreed and 3.57% strongly disagreed. 25% offered neither agreed or disagreed. 3.14% agreed and 3.57% strongly agreed with this statement.

Company Red - 75% either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (50%) that they are provided with the opportunity to socialise with their work colleagues. 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

#### **Question 45**

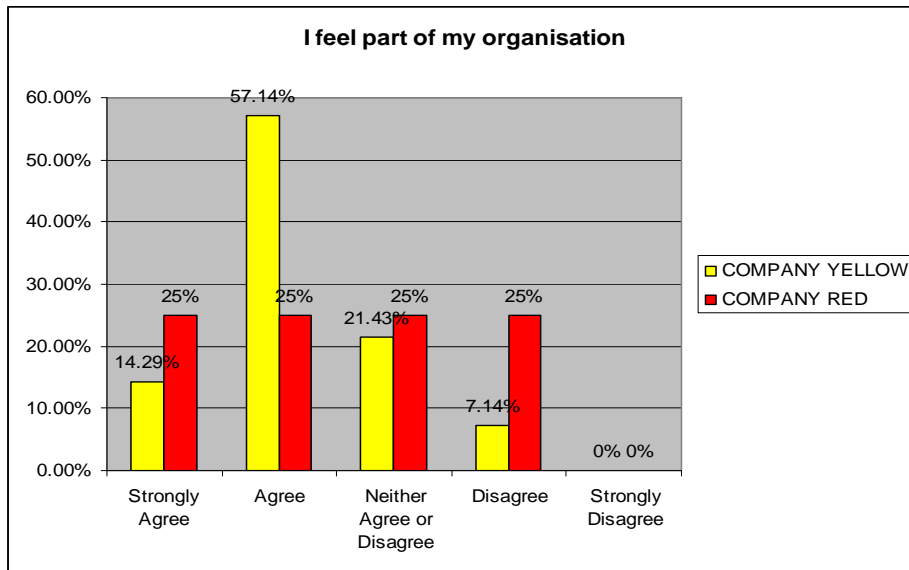


Company Yellow - the majority of respondents disagreed (53.17%) and 17.86% strongly disagreed. 5 respondents (17.86%) neither agreed or disagreed and 3 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.

Company Red - 50% neither agreed or disagreed with the remaining 50% highlighting contrasting opinions - 25% agreed and 25% disagreed that there is a 'them and us' divide.

#### **Question 46**

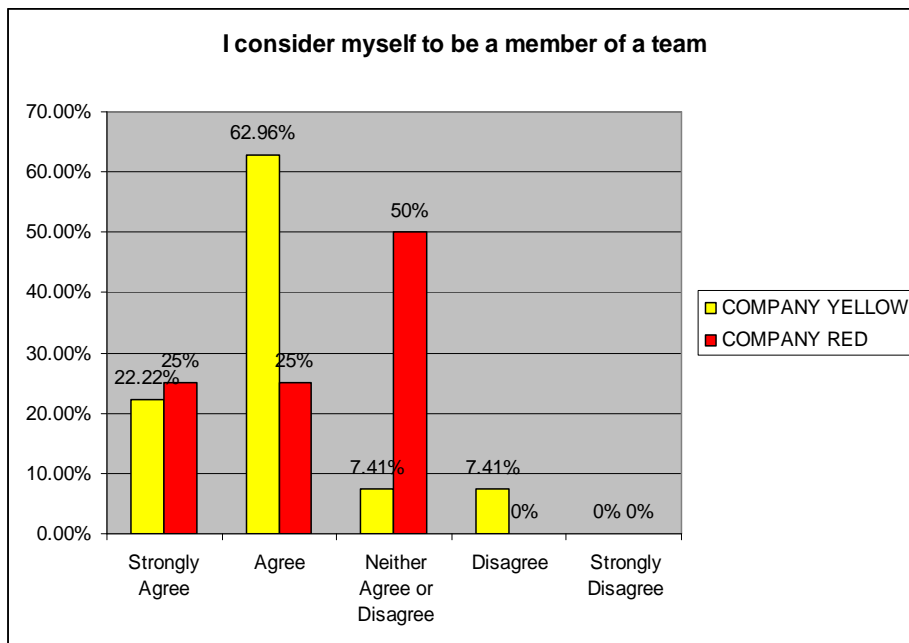
How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?



Company Yellow - only 2 respondents disagreed with this statement. 21.43% offered neither agreed or disagreed, but the remaining 71.43% either strongly agreed (14.29%) or agreed (57.14%) that they feel part of their organisation.

Company Red - a very split response. 25% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, 25% neither agreed or disagreed and 25% disagreed.

#### **Question 47**

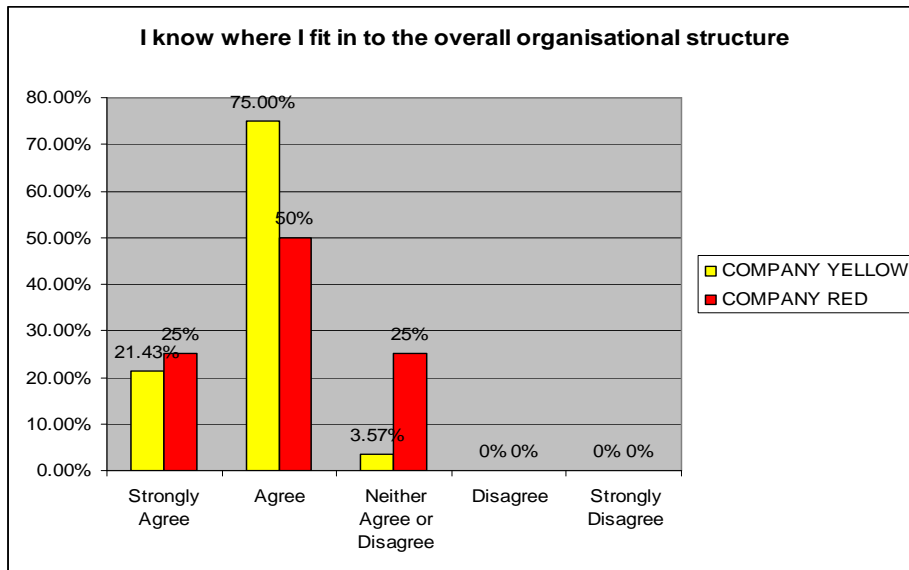


Company Yellow - the majority (85.18%) of respondents either agreed (62.97%) or strongly agreed (22.22%) that they feel part of their team. 2 respondents disagreed with this statement and 2 indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement. 50% either strongly agreed or agreed. 50% neither agreed or disagreed.

#### **Question 48**

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

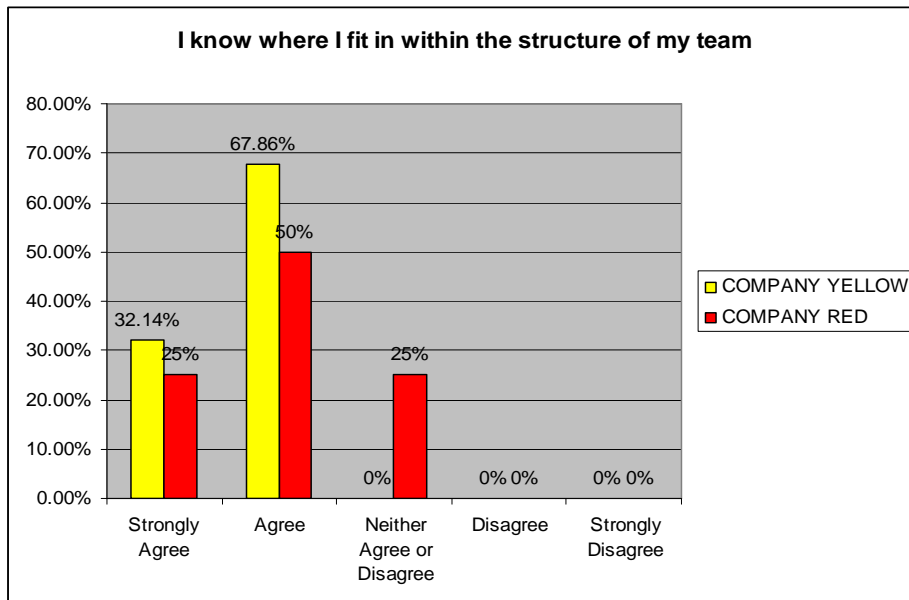


**No respondent from either company disagreed with this statement**

Company Yellow - 27 out of the 28 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. The remaining respondent neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - 75% either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (50%) that they know where they fit in to the overall organisational structure. The remaining 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

#### **Question 49**

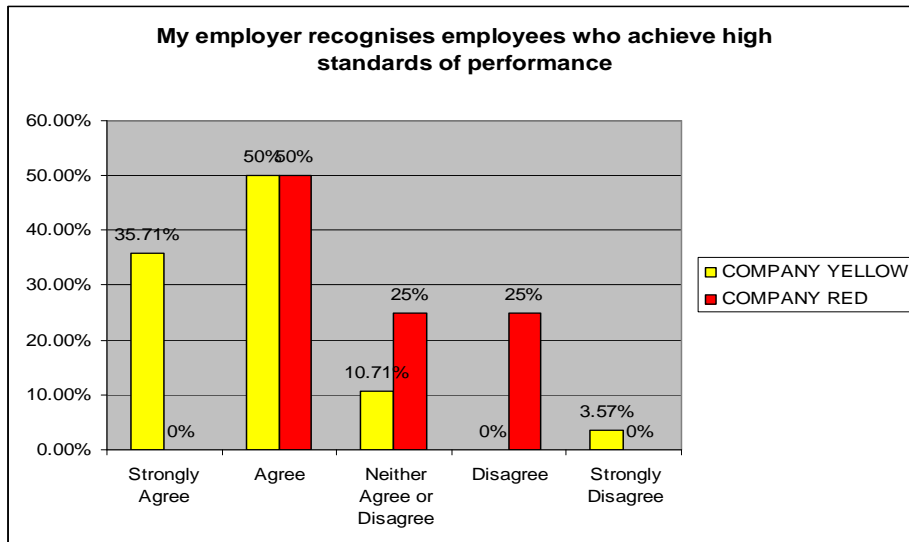


Company Yellow - ALL respondents agreed with this statement - 67.86% agreed and 32.14% strongly agreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement. 25% strongly agreed, 50% agreed and 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

#### **Question 50**

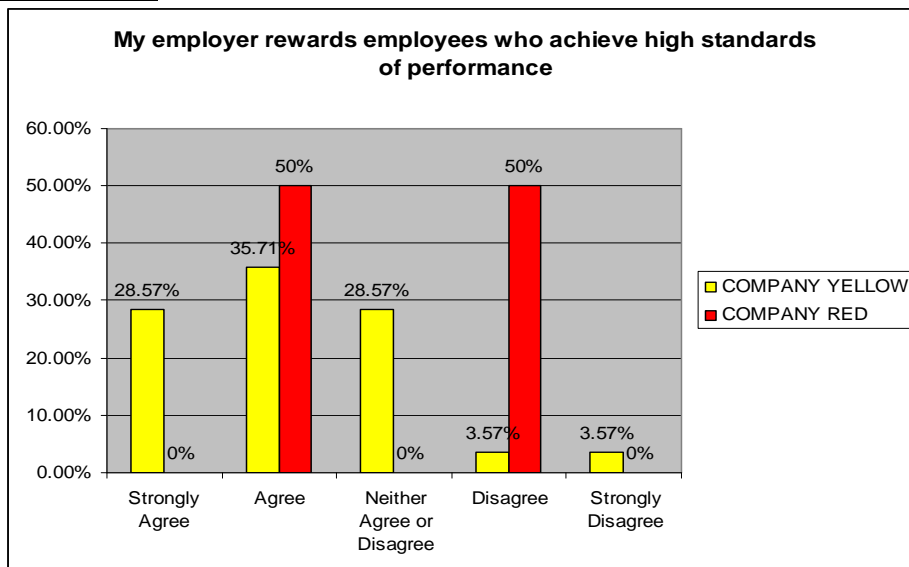
How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?



Company Yellow - the majority (85.71%) of respondents either agreed (50%) or strongly agreed (35.71%) that their employer recognises employees who achieve high standards or performance. 1 respondent (3.57%) strongly disagreed and the remaining 3 respondents (10.71%) neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - 50% agreed, 25% neither agreed or disagreed and 25% disagreed.

#### Question 51

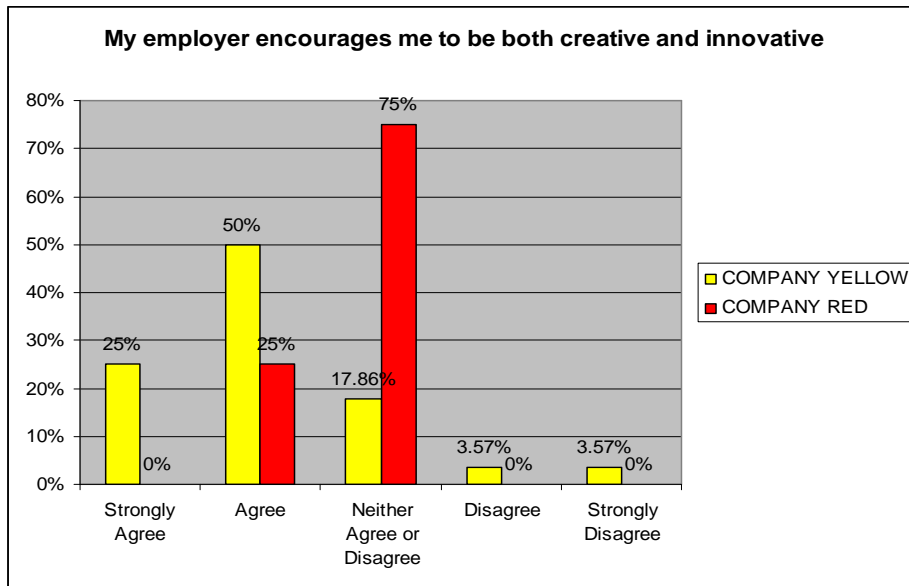


Company Yellow - only 2 respondents disagreed. 64.28% either strongly agreed or agreed and 28.57% neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - 50% agreed and 50% disagreed.

#### Question 52

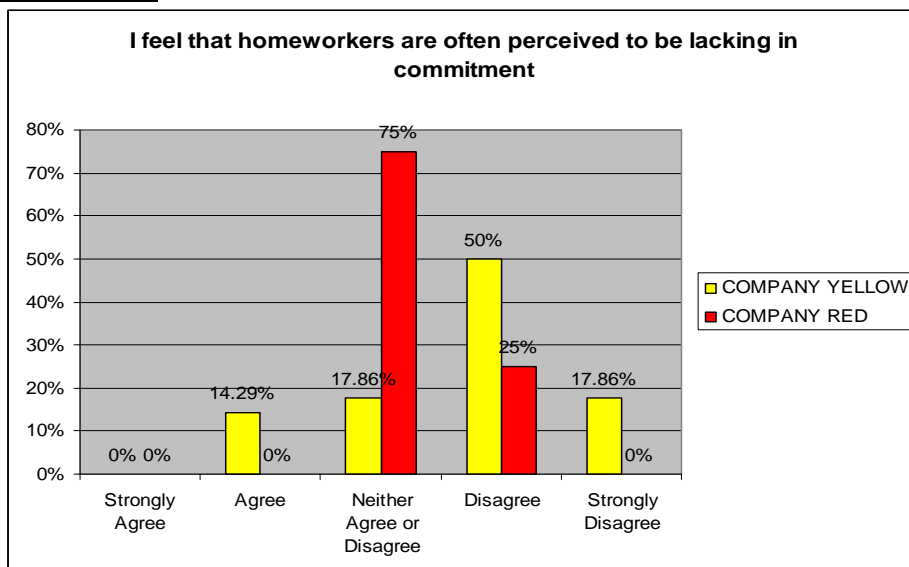
How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?



**Company Yellow** - the majority of respondents agreed with this statement. 25% strongly agreed and 50% agreed. Of the remaining 7 respondents, 5 (17.86%) neither agreed or disagreed, 1 disagreed (3.57%) and 1 (3.57%) strongly disagreed.

**Company Red** - 75% neither agreed or disagreed but the 25% that did comment indicated that they agreed with this statement.

### **Question 53**

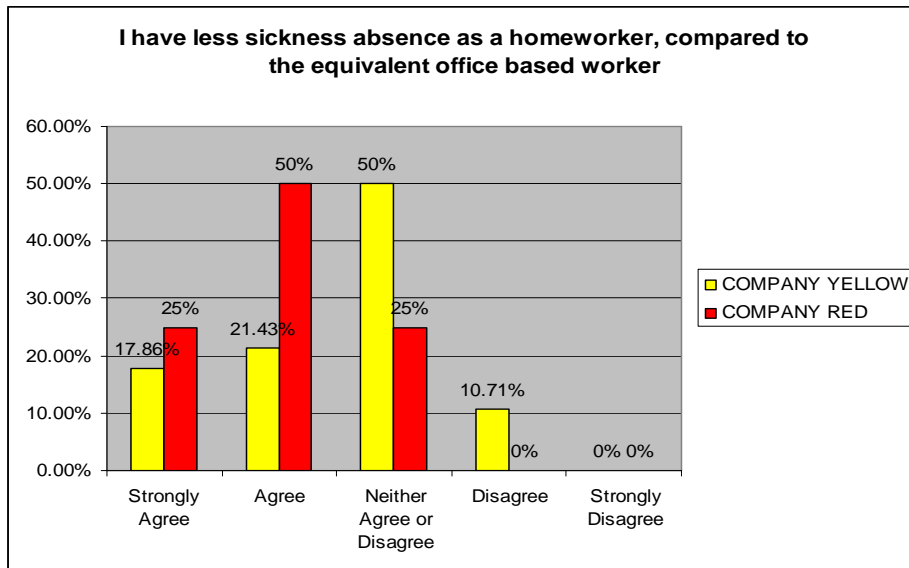


**Company Yellow** - the majority (67.86%) of respondents either disagreed (50%) or strongly disagreed (17.86%) that homeworkers are often perceived to be lacking in commitment. 17.86% neither agreed or disagreed and 14.29% agreed with this statement.

**Company Red** - no one agreed with this statement. 75% neither agreed or disagreed . 25% disagreed.

### **Question 54**

How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?

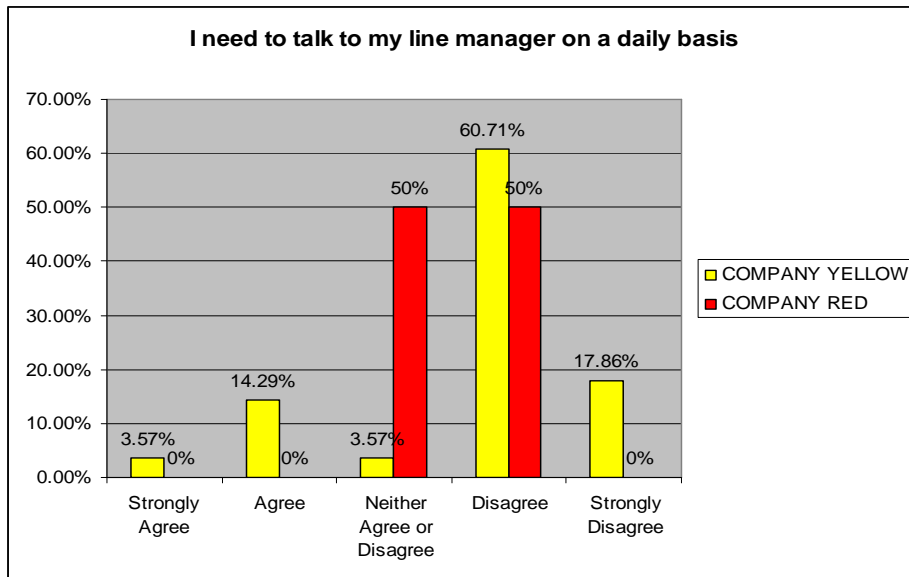


Company Yellow - 50% neither agreed or disagreed. However, 39.29% either strongly agreed (17.86%) or agreed (21.43%) that they have less sickness absence as a homeworker. The remaining 10.71% indicated that they disagreed with this statement.

Company Red - no one disagreed. 75% either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (50%) and the remaining 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

## My relationship with my Line Manager

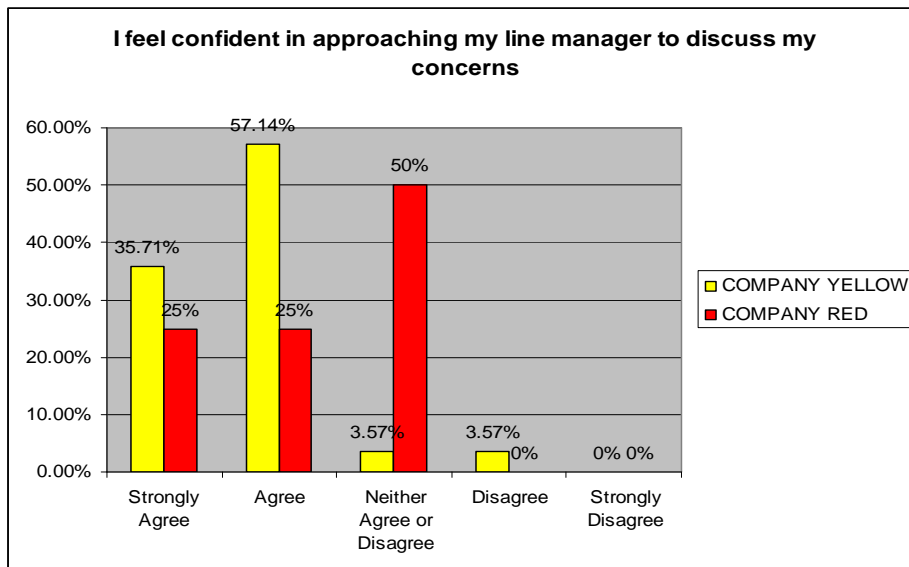
### Question 55



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 60.71% disagreed and a further 17.86% strongly disagreed. Only 1 respondent strongly agreed and 4 agreed. The remaining respondent neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - No one agreed with this statement. 50% disagreed and 50% neither agreed or disagreed.

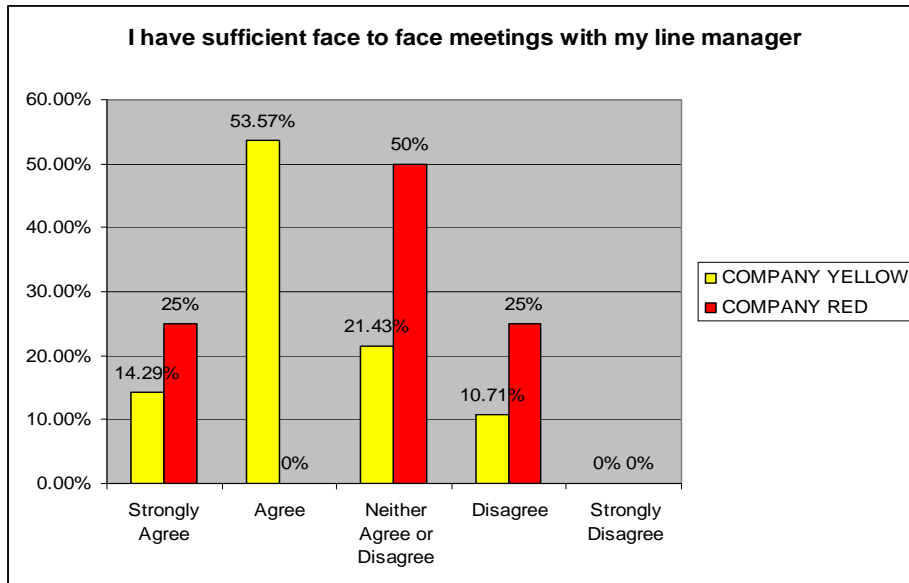
### Question 56



Company Yellow - only 1 respondent disagreed. 35.71% strongly agreed and 57.14% agreed that they feel confident in approaching their Line Manager.

Company Red - no one disagreed. 50% neither agreed or disagreed. 25% strongly agreed and 25% agreed.

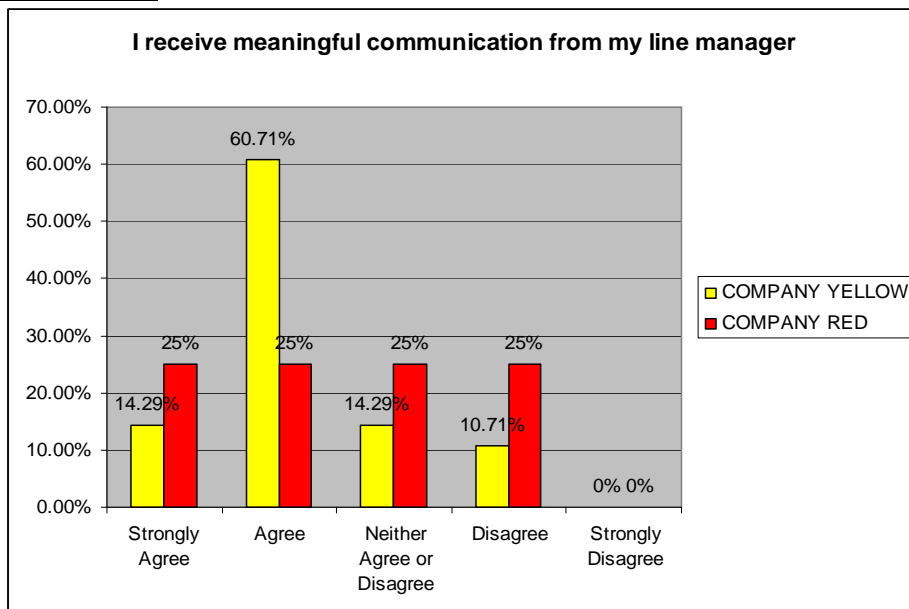
**Question 57**



Company Yellow - 19 respondents (67.86%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. 21.43% neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 10.71% (3 respondents) indicated that they disagreed.

Company Red - 25% strongly agreed. 25% disagreed and the remaining 50% neither agreed or disagreed.

**Question 58**

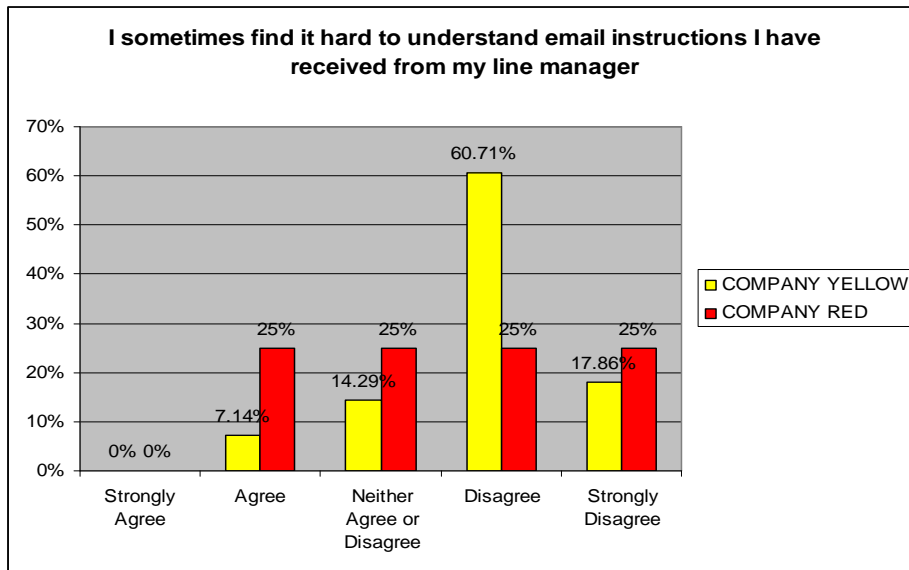


Company Yellow - 60.71% agreed and 14.29% (4 respondents) strongly agreed. 3 respondents (10.71%) disagreed and the remaining 14.29% neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - a very mixed response to this statement. 25% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, 25% neither agreed or disagreed and 25% disagreed.



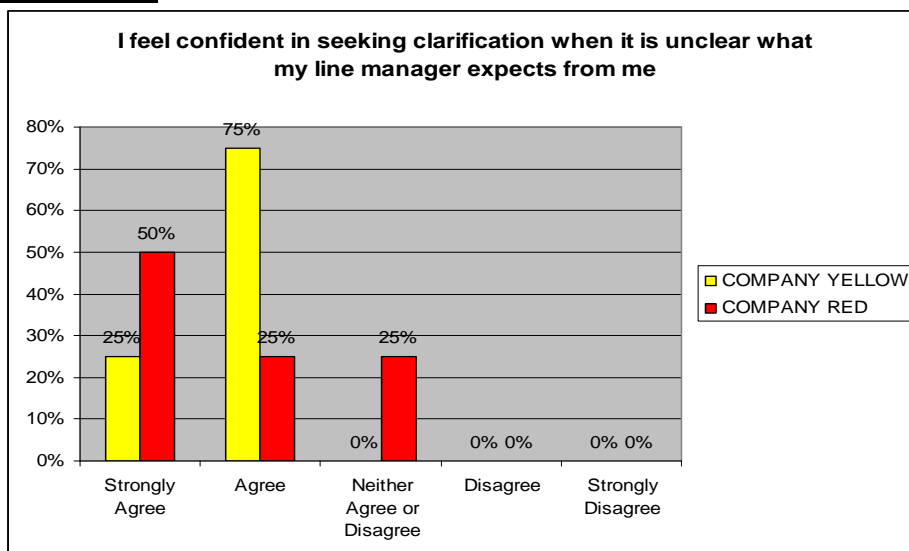
### Question 59



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 60.71% disagreed and a further 17.86% strongly disagreed. 14.29% neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 2 respondents (7.14%) agreed.

Company Red - again, a mixed response to this question. However, more respondents disagreed. 25% strongly disagreed, 25% disagreed. 25% neither agreed or disagreed and 25% agreed.

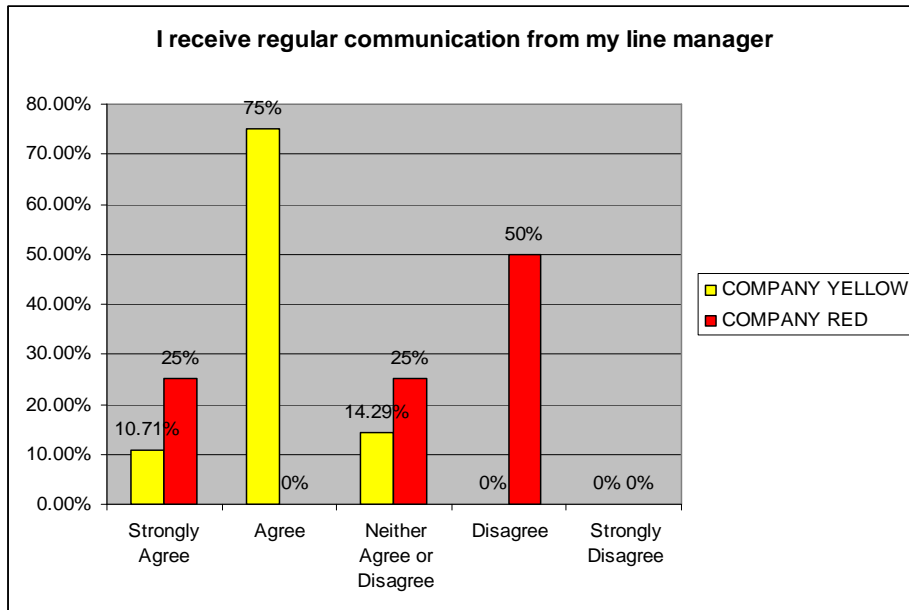
### Question 60



Company Yellow - all respondents agreed with this statement. 25% strongly agreed and 75% agreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed. 50% strongly agreed, 25% agreed and the remaining 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

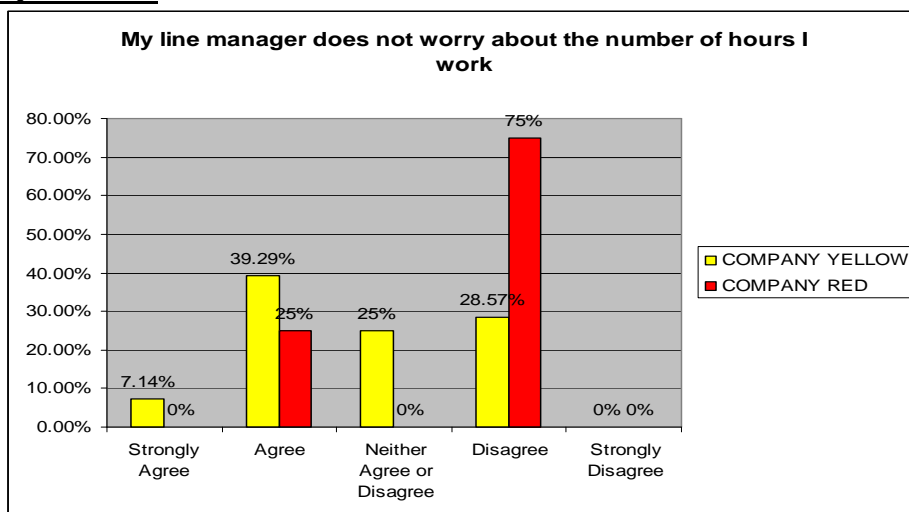
**Question 61**



Company Yellow - no one disagreed with this statement. 75% agreed and a further 10.71% strongly agreed. 4 respondents (14.29%) neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - 50% disagreed. 25% neither agreed or disagreed and 25% strongly agreed with this statement.

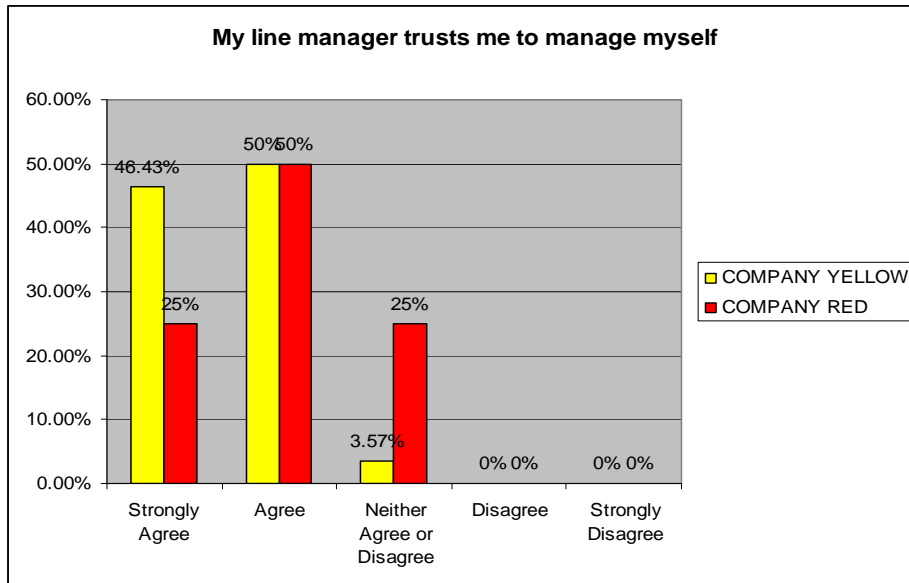
**Question 62**



Company Yellow - although 25% neither agreed or disagreed, more respondents agreed with this statement. 46.43% either strongly agreed or agreed. The remaining 8 respondents (28.57%) disagreed with this statement.

Company Red - the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement (75%). 25% agreed.

**Question 63**

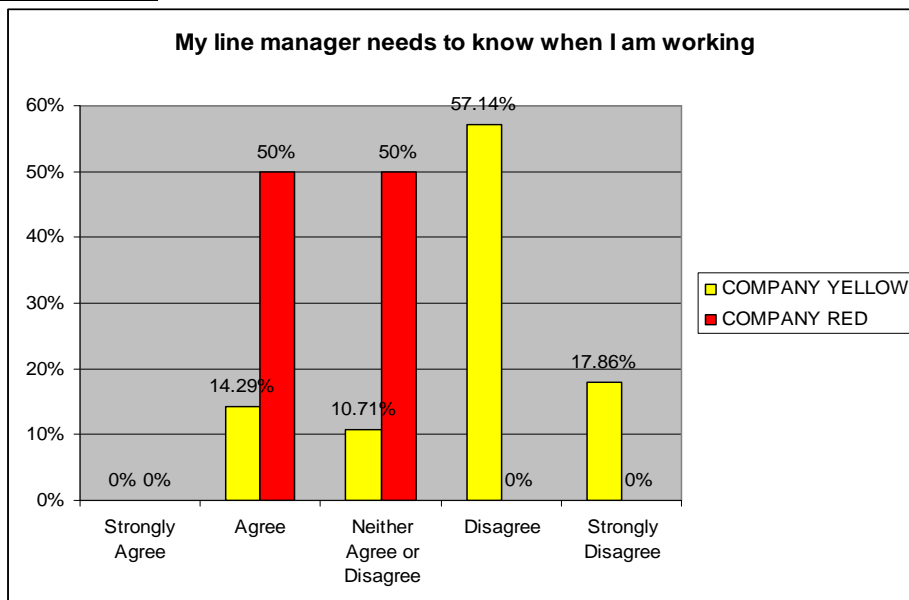


**No respondent from either company disagreed with this statement**

Company Yellow - no one disagreed with this statement. Only 1 respondent indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed. 50% agreed and the remaining 46.43% strongly agreed with this statement.

Company Red - 75% either strongly agreed or agreed. No one disagreed. The remaining 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

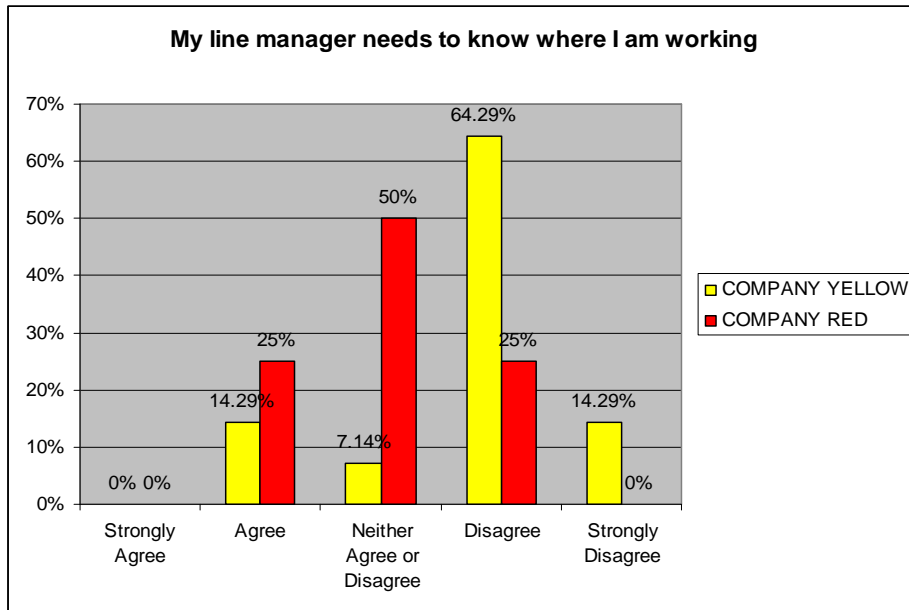
**Question 64**



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents disagreed. 17.86% (5 respondents) strongly disagreed and 57.14% disagreed. 3 respondents neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents (14.29%) agreed with this statement.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement. 50% agreed and 50% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

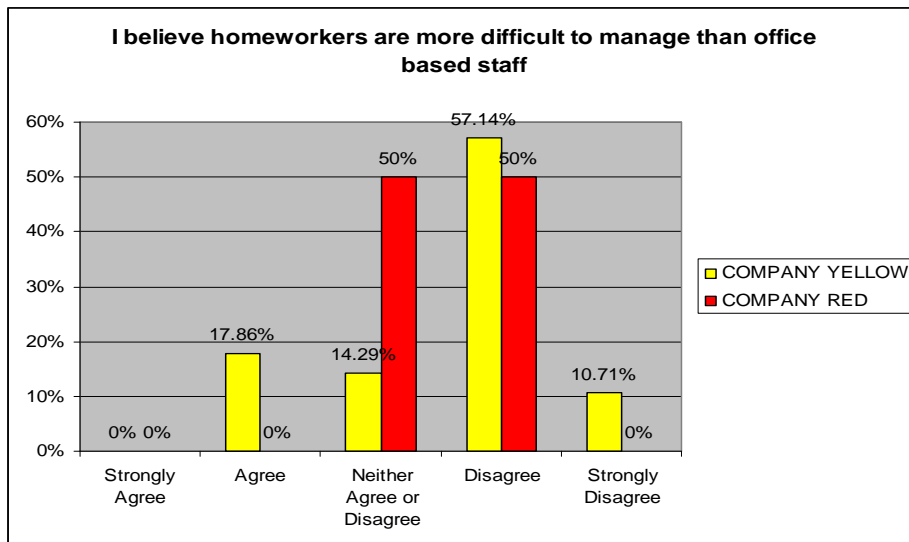
### Question 65



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 64.29% disagreed and a further 14.29% strongly disagreed. Only 2 respondents (7.14%) neither agreed or disagreed and 14.29% agreed with this statement.

Company Red - although 50% neither agreed or disagreed the remaining 50% offered a difference of opinion. 25% agreed and 25% disagreed.

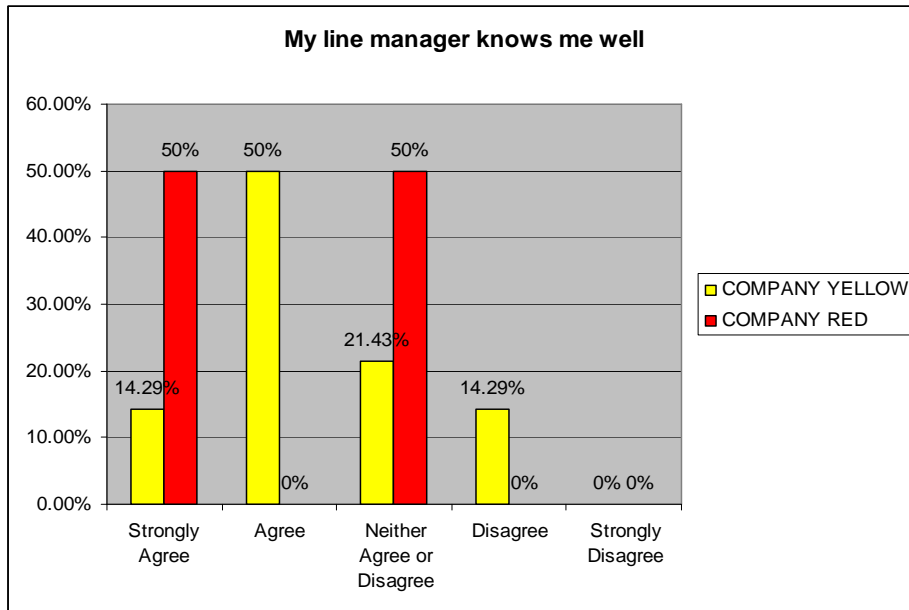
### Question 66



Company Yellow - 17.86% agreed with this statement, but the majority of respondents 67.85% either strongly disagreed or disagreed. 4 respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - no one agreed with this statement. 50% disagreed and the remaining 50% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

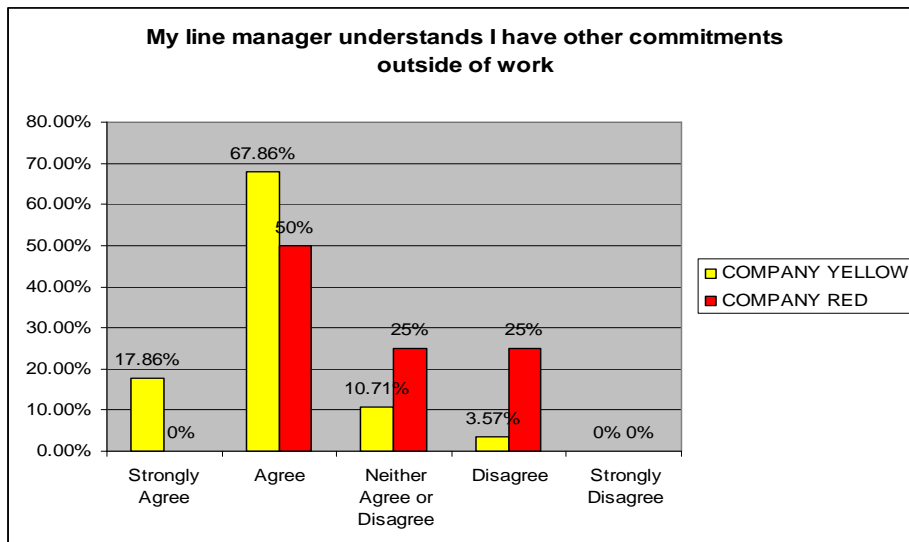
**Question 67**



Company Yellow - 14.29% strongly agreed with this statement and 50% agreed. 6 respondents (21.43%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 14.29% disagreed.

Company Red - 50% strongly agreed that their Line Manager knows them well and 50% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

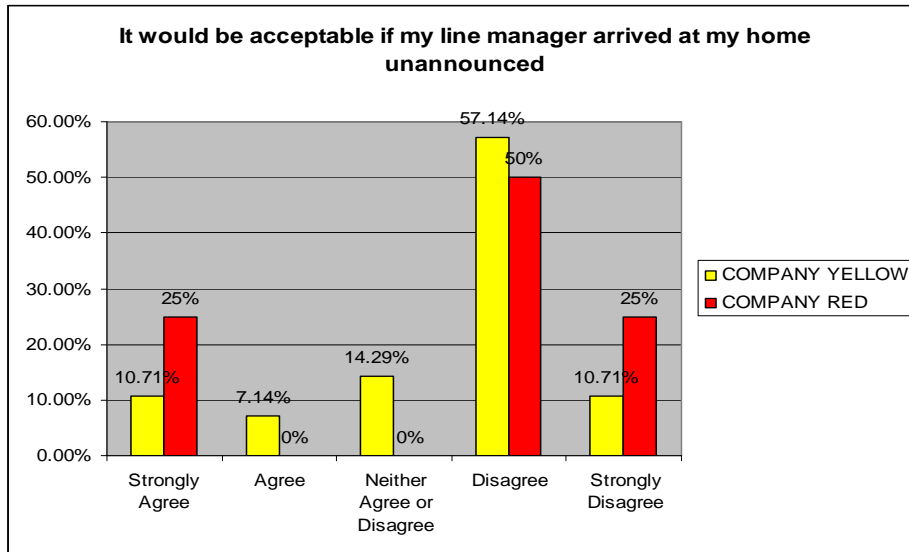
**Question 68**



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents agreed with this statement. 67.86% agreed and a further 17.86% strongly agreed. 3 respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and 1 respondent (3.57%) indicated that they disagreed.

Company Red - 50% agreed with this statement. 25% disagreed and 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

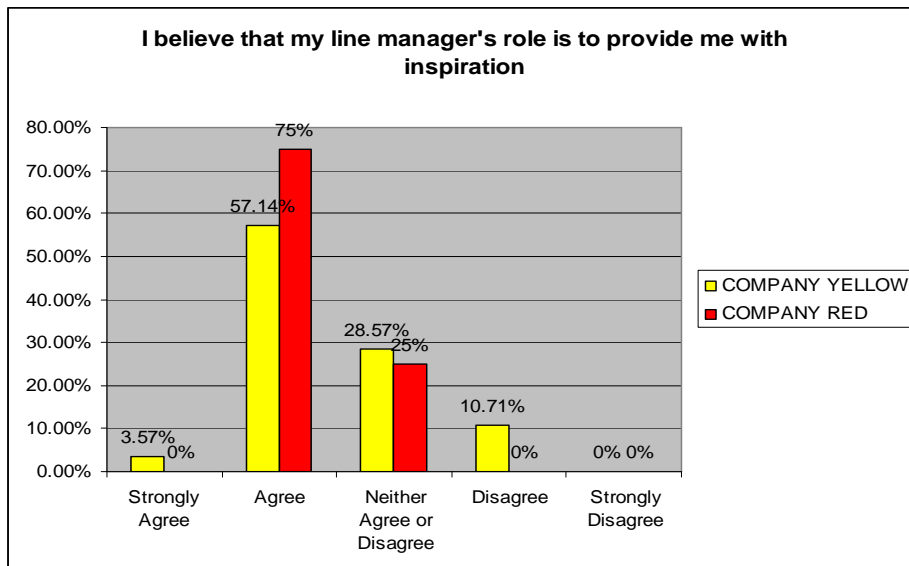
**Question 69**



**Company Yellow** - the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 10.71% strongly disagreed and 57.14% disagreed. 14.29% neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 5 respondents indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.

**Company Red** - the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 25% strongly disagreed and 50% disagreed. The remaining 25% strongly agreed.

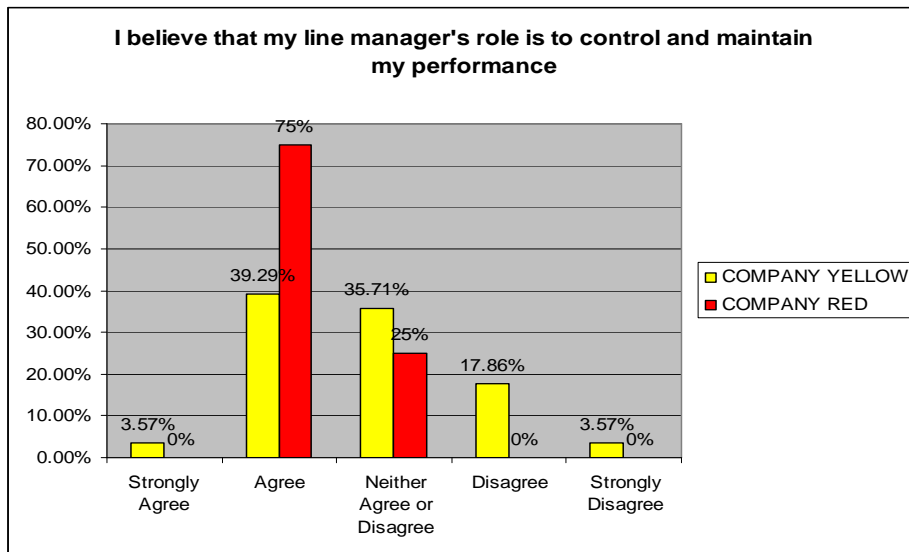
**Question 70**



**Company Yellow** - 17 out of 28 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. 8 respondents (28.57%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and 3 respondents (10.71%) disagreed.

**Company Red** - no one disagreed with this statement. 75% agreed. The remaining 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

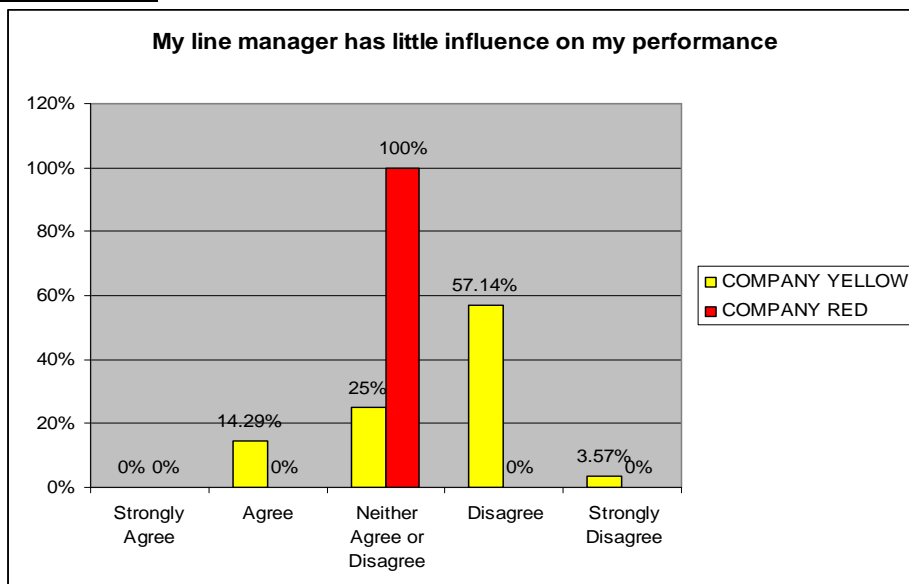
### Question 71



**Company Yellow** - a high proportion (35.71%) of respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed with this statement. However, a larger number of respondents either agreed (39.29%) or strongly agreed (3.57%). 5 respondents (17.86%) disagreed and the remaining respondent (3.57%) strongly disagreed.

**Company Red** - no one disagreed with this statement. 75% agreed and 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

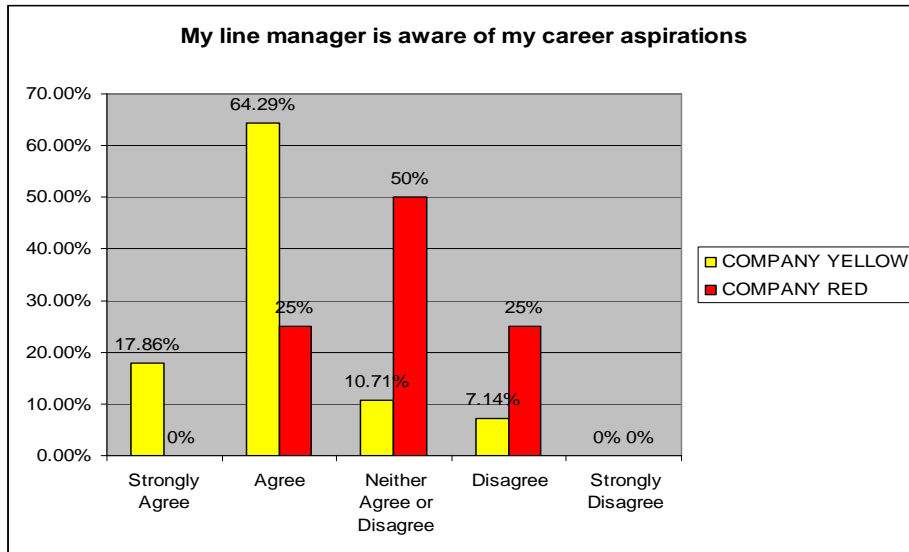
### Question 72



**Company Yellow** - the majority of respondents either disagreed (57.14%) or strongly disagreed (3.57%) with this statement. 25% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents (14.29%) agreed with this statement.

**Company Red** - no one agreed or disagreed with this statement. All respondents indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

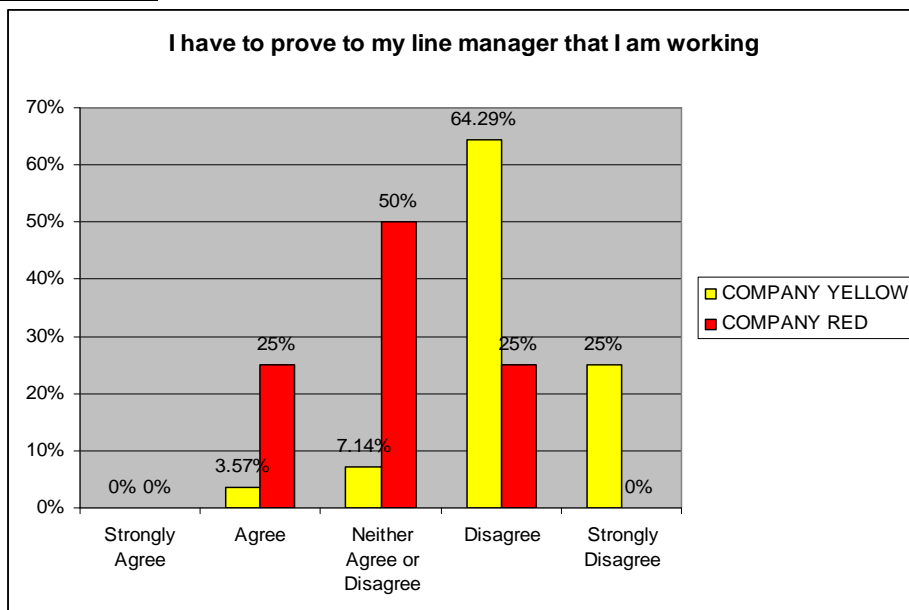
### Question 73



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents agreed. 64.29% agreed and 17.86% strongly agreed with this statement. 2 respondents (7.14%) disagreed and the remaining 10.71% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - 50% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 50% offered a difference of opinion. 25% agreed and 25% disagreed.

### Question 74

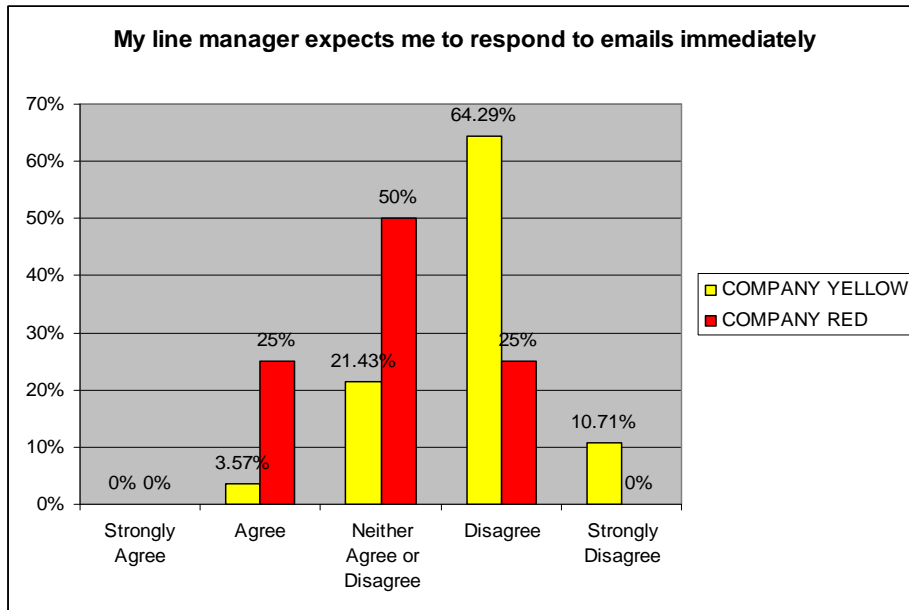


Company Yellow - 64.29% disagreed and a further 25% strongly disagreed with this statement. 2 respondents (7.14%) neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining respondent (3.57%) indicated that they agreed.

Company Red - 50% indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 50% offered a difference of opinion. 25% agreed and 25% disagreed.



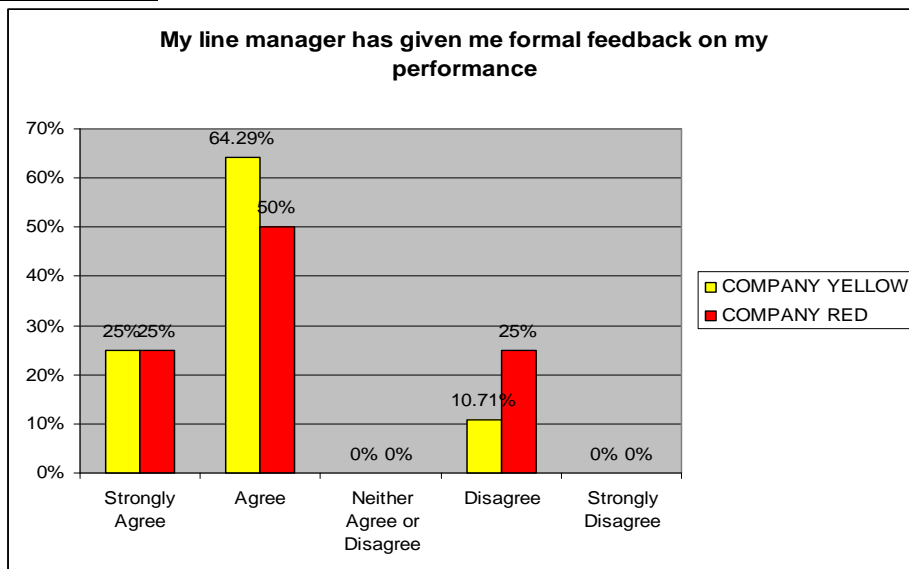
**Question 75**



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. 64.29% disagreed and a further 10.71% strongly disagreed. 6 respondents (21.43%) neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining respondent (3.57%) indicated that they agreed.

Company Red - again, 50% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed with this statement. The remaining 50% offered a difference of opinion, 25% agreed and 25% disagreed.

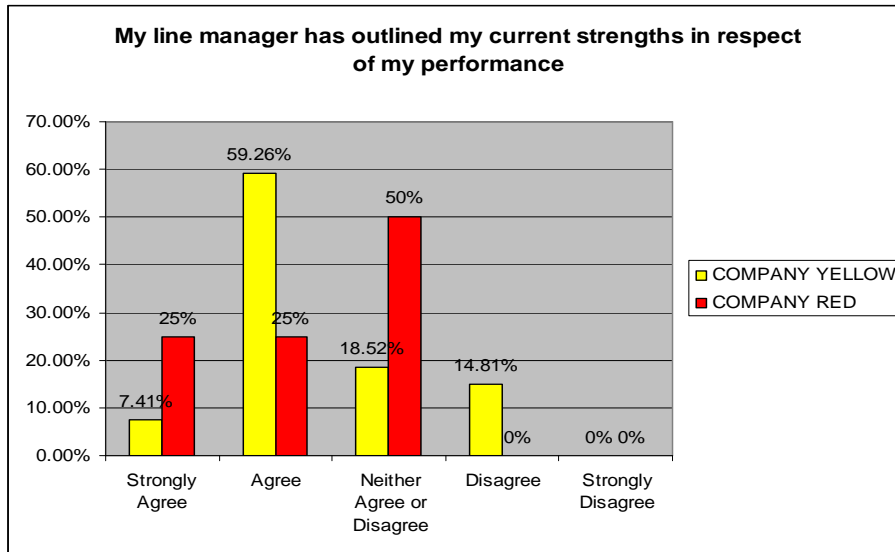
**Question 76**



Company Yellow - 89.29% either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (64.29%) with this statement. The remaining 3 respondents (10.71%) disagreed.

Company Red - the majority of respondents agreed. 25% strongly agreed and 50% agreed. The remaining 25% disagreed with this statement.

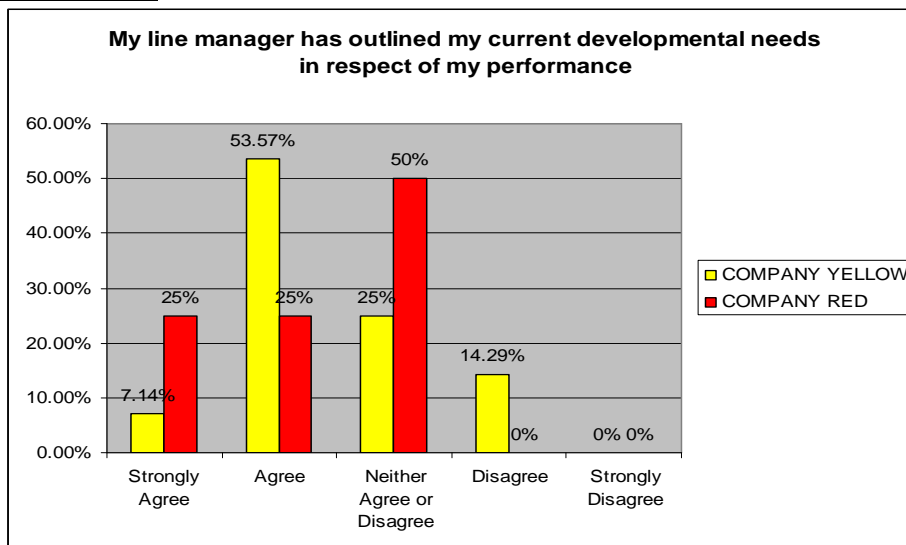
### Question 77



Company Yellow - 66.4% either strongly agreed (7.14%) or agreed (59.26%) with this statement. 5 respondents (18.52%) neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents (14.81%) disagreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement. 25% strongly agreed and 25% agreed. 50% neither agreed or disagreed.

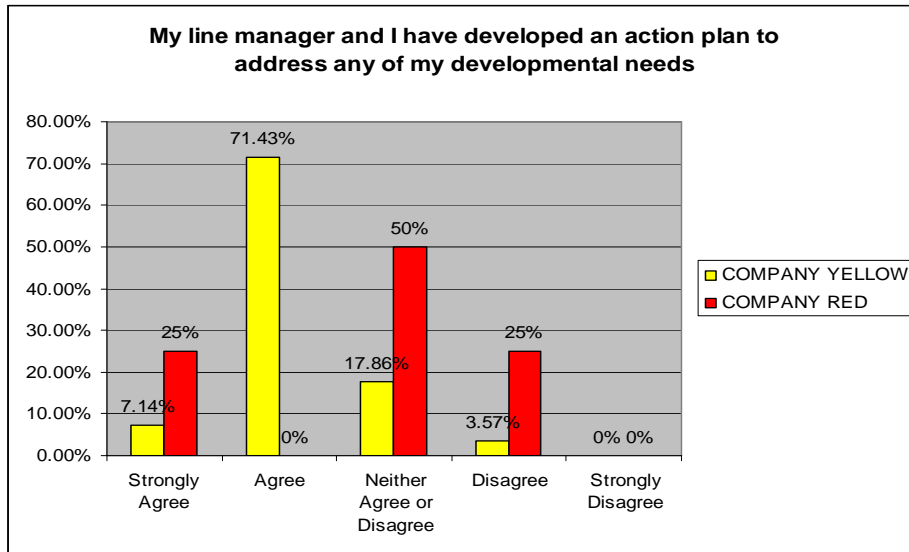
### Question 78



Company Yellow - 18 respondents out of 28 indicated that they either strongly agreed (2 respondents = 7.14%) or agreed (15 respondents = 53.57%) with this statement. 25% neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents (14.29%) disagreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed. 25% strongly agreed and 25% agreed. 50% neither agreed or disagreed.

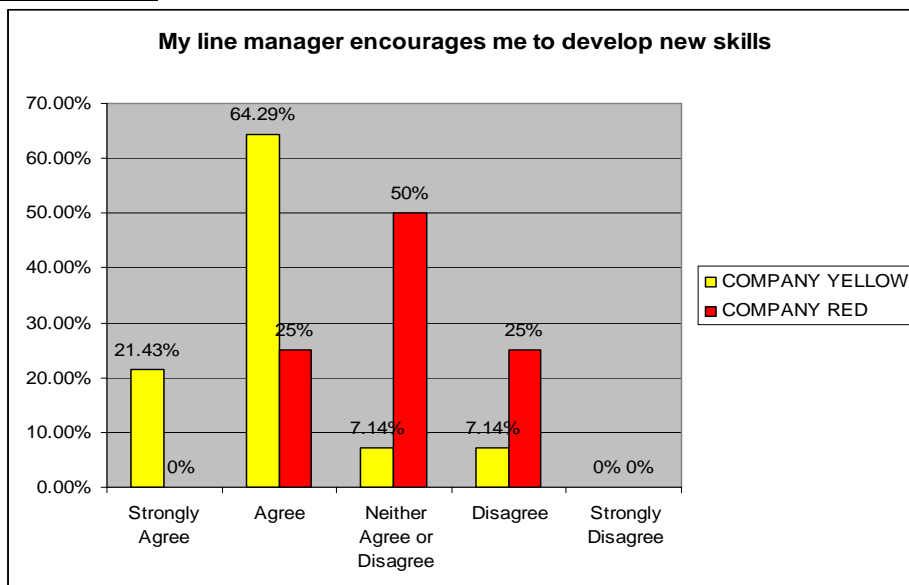
### Question 79



**Company Yellow** - the majority of respondents either strongly agreed (7.14%) or agreed (71.43%) with this statement. 5 respondents (17.86%) neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining respondent disagreed.

**Company Red** - 25% strongly agreed. 50% neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 25% disagreed.

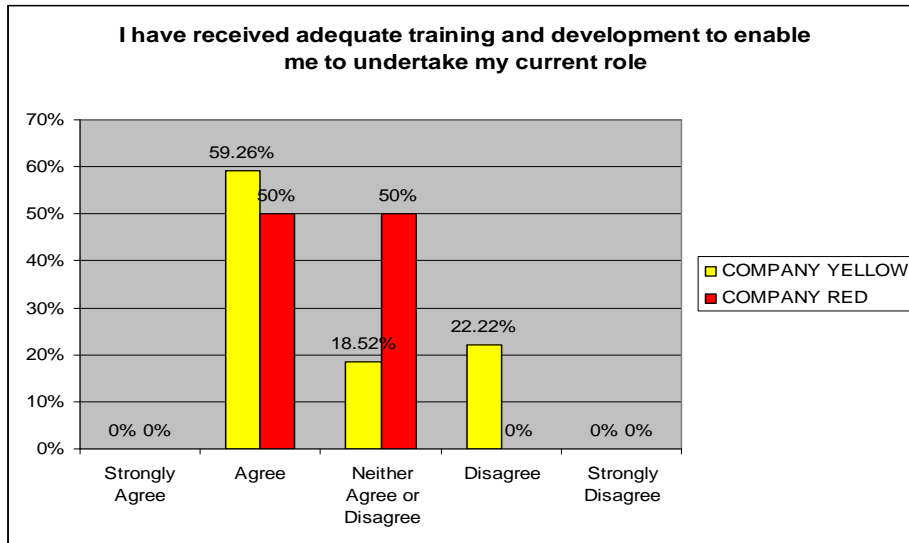
### Question 80



**Company Yellow** - 24 out of the 28 respondents either strongly agreed (21.43%) or agreed (64.29%) with this statement. Of the remaining 4 respondents, 2 disagreed and 2 indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed.

**Company Red** - 50% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed with this statement. The remaining 50% offered a difference of opinion, 25% agreed and 25% disagreed.

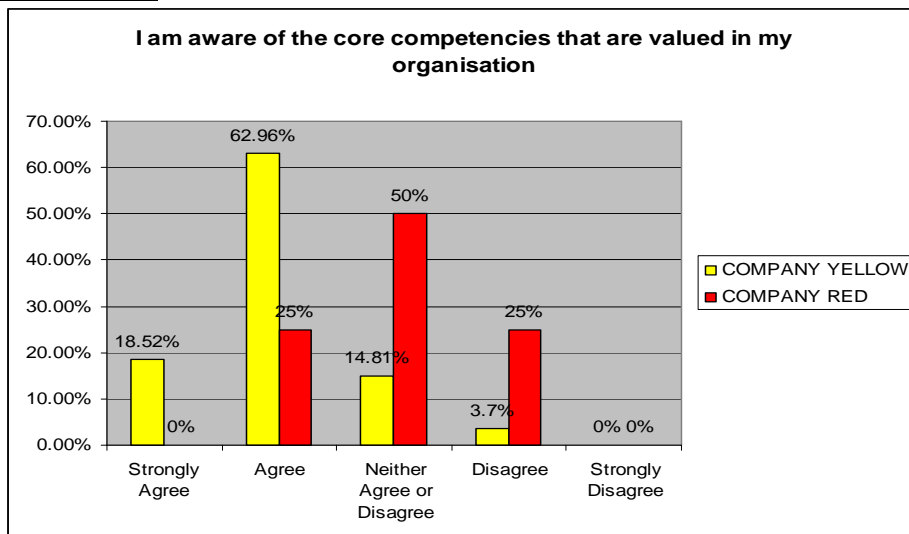
### Question 81



Company Yellow - 59.26% agreed and 22.22% disagreed. The remaining 5 respondents (18.52%) neither agreed or disagreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement. 50% agreed and the other 50% neither agreed or disagreed.

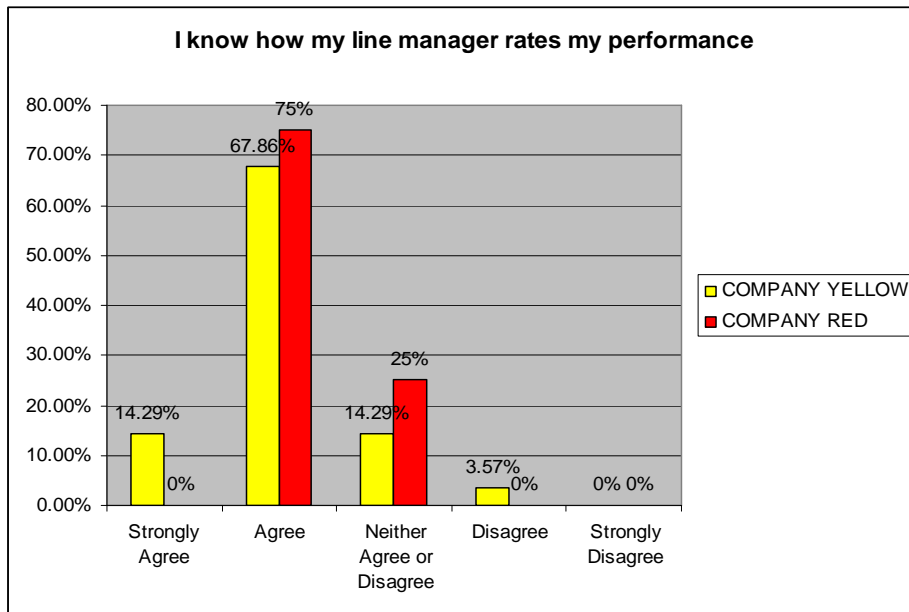
### Question 82



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents either strongly agreed (18.52%) or agreed (62.96%) with this statement. 4 respondents (14.81%) indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining respondent (3.57%) disagreed.

Company Red - again, 50% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed with this statement. The remaining 50% offered a difference of opinion, 25% agreed and 25% disagreed.

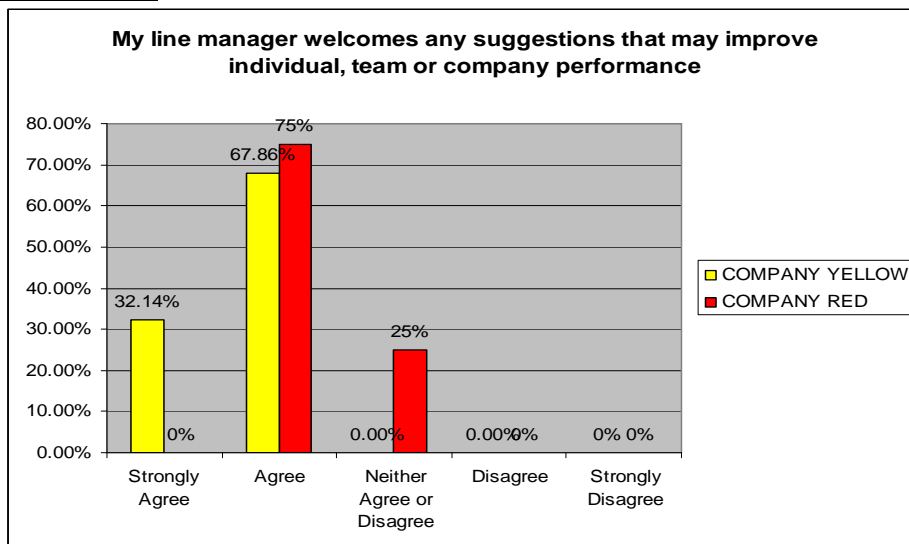
### Question 83



Company Yellow - the majority of respondents either strongly agreed (14.29%) or agreed (67.86%) with this statement. 14.29% neither agreed or disagreed and the remaining 3.57% (1 respondent) disagreed.

Company Red - no one disagreed with this statement. 75% agreed and the remaining 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

### Question 84



Company Yellow - All respondents either strongly agreed (32.14%) or agreed (67.86%) with this statement.

Company Red - No one disagreed with this statement. 75% agreed and the remaining 25% neither agreed or disagreed.

## **Appendix F**

### **Research Proposal**

#### **Research Question**

**How does homeworking affect a manager's ability to exercise control?**

#### **Research Objectives**

9. To critically explore the practicalities of managing homeworkers, in order to assess the impact of this working arrangement on a manager's ability to exercise control.
10. To critically evaluate the experiences of homeworkers in respect of how they are managed and the specific challenges and benefits of working at home.
11. Compare and contrast the views of managers and homeworkers in order to identify any similarities and differences in the employment relationship.
12. To specifically examine the influence of a homeworker's job role, skill level and organisational type/size on a manager's ability to exercise control.

#### **Researcher**

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#### **Research Methodology**

The aim of the intended research is to explore the experiences of managers and employees involved in home-based working.

In order to acquire data and uncover the various facets of this working practice, access is sought to organisations whom employ home-based workers. A mixed methods approach will be adopted, utilising case studies, interviews and questionnaires.

It is anticipated that data collection will occur in two stages. Firstly through the distribution of an online questionnaire. It is hoped that this will be achieved during January 2008. Managers will be asked to forward an email from the researcher to their homeworkers. The email will contain a URL address containing the online questionnaire.

Participation is completely voluntary and the researcher will have no way of knowing who has completed the questionnaire - anonymity is therefore fully assured. The second phase will involve telephone or face to face interviews with managers/supervisors and/or homeworkers. Participants will be issued with a Participant Information Sheet and be asked to sign a consent form. Participants can withdraw from the study at anytime without giving reason. Again, anonymity and confidentiality is assured. Timescales and access to individuals will be negotiated with each organisation who agrees to take part in this study.

### **Confidentiality**

The hard copies of the transcripts, completed questionnaires and a research diary will be stored in a secure and lockable filing cabinet. These documents will not be labelled in any way that connects them to an individual. Anonymity and privacy will be ensured, as any published findings will not be attributable to the organisation and any individual. Electronic version of the transcripts and other data collected from the questionnaires, together with types notes from any observations, will be password protected. Once the data has been analysed, it will be destroyed.