**Despite Japan’s push for 70% teleworking, some companies face roadblocks**

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| As the number of novel coronavirus infections rebounds, the government will soon once again request the economic world to increase their percentage of employees teleworking to 70%.While progress has been made to introduce teleworking systems at major corporations and within the information technology industry, no more than 30% of their employees worked from home in April and May, during the declared state of emergency. Achieving the 70% target is a challenge for companies, especially for small-to-midsize firms that are slow to adopt teleworking systems.In July, Fujitsu Ltd. decided to have about 80,000 of its domestic employees telecommute, a policy it plans to maintain, even once the virus outbreak is brought under control. Instead of paying for commuter train passes, the company began subsidizing ¥5,000 a month to cover expenses, such as electricity, which can increase due to working from home.In late July, Itochu Corp. announced that it would, in principle, allow all of its 3,000 employees in Japan to work from home. During April and May, the company had all of its employees engage in teleworking but reverted to its original system, in which they commute to the office, once the state of emergency was lifted. However, as the number of infections started to pick up once again in July, the company was forced to make frequent minor changes depending on the infection status, such as halving the number of employees coming to the office.Companies with facilities such as factories and workshops face even greater constraints. “It is difficult for the entire company to achieve the 70% target, due to us having field sites [such as power plants],” said an official of Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, Inc’s public relations section.For small-to-midsize companies, the hurdles are even higher. “At small-to-midsize companies, there are cases of a single employee being in charge of both sales promotion and accounting. For such employees working from home is difficult as separating their two tasks is a challenge,” said Kiyoyuki Yamauchi, the head of infectious disease countermeasures at the JCCI.In many cases, reducing the number of employees in charge of sales promotion is believed to have a direct negative impact on business performance and some companies lack the know-how and leeway to make investments to establish a teleworking system.However, the introduction of teleworking systems is thought to be inevitable should the future growth of the Japanese economy be taken into consideration. According to a survey conducted by the Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry in 2016, the labor productivity of companies that adopted a teleworking system was 1.6 times higher than those that did not. |

Read the full article at <https://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0006712448>

**Understanding Questions**

1. What’s the target rate from the Japanese government for company employee teleworking?
2. Which kind of companies are finding it difficult to change to teleworking?
3. What benefit did a government survey find about teleworking?

**Vocabulary**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| roadblock | rebound | in principle |
| revert | leeway | inevitable |

**Key phrases**

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| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [ can/can’t ] be accomplished remotely. |
| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [ requires / doesn’t require ] face-to-face contact. |

**Discussion topics**

* What jobs can be accomplished with telework? Which can’t?
* Can Japan meet the goal of 70% teleworking?

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| Pair Discussion – **A**1. What kind of jobs would be easy to do through teleworking?

1. Are there any of your job tasks that you can do outside of the office?
2. Do you like to work at home sometimes?
3. Do you think 70% of Japanese employees will be able to do telework?
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| Pair Discussion – **B**1. Are there any things at work that you prefer to do face-to-face?
2. Do you like reading a newspaper or reading the news online?
3. What kind of jobs would be very difficult to do through teleworking?
4. What do you like about working in an office?
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**Teleworking by industry**

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|  | **Industry** | **Is it suited for teleworking? Why or why not?** |
| A | Banking |  |
| Architecture |  |
| Restaurants |  |
|  |  |
| B | Software development |  |
| Car manufacturing |  |
| Journalism |  |
|  |  |
| C | Farming |  |
| Education (elementary) |  |
| TV |  |
|  |  |
| D | Tourism |  |
| Education (university) |  |
| Graphic Design |  |
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