

Stewards at a Distance: A Conceptual Model of Remote Work's Influence on Employee Stewardship Behavior and Managerial Governance

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of remote work has fundamentally transformed the employment relationship, challenging traditional models of managerial oversight and employee behavior. This paper develops a conceptual model to examine how the unique situational characteristics of remote environments influence employee stewardship behavior, specifically organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). By integrating insights from stewardship, agency, and organizational citizenship theories, we propose a framework that reconciles the competing logics of trust and control in distributed settings.

Our model posits that remote work creates a dual pathway: increased employee autonomy can catalyze stewardship by fulfilling intrinsic needs, while reduced social presence may erode the relational foundations necessary for such behaviors. We argue that the effectiveness of managerial governance is contingent on its alignment with this new context, making trust-based and outcome-oriented systems critical for transforming the challenges of remote work into opportunities for fostering employee stewardship. The model provides a nuanced theoretical contribution and offers actionable recommendations for organizations, managers, and employees to cultivate a sustainable stewardship culture in an increasingly distributed work environment.

Keywords: Remote Work, Stewardship Behavior, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Managerial Governance, Agency Theory.