

Hybrid working is here to stay - 7 tips to getting it right for your business

 By [Andrew Bourne](#)

26 Aug 2021

In a recent report conducted by Boston Consulting Group (BCG), which included almost 209,000 participants in 190 countries, South Africa emerged as one of the countries that would embrace 'fully remote' work. Compared to a global average of 24%, 44% of SA respondents said they want to work fully remotely. Moreover, over half of South Africans said their preference in the future will be a job that allows them to work from home at least occasionally.



Source: Getty Images

As South Africa experiences its third wave of the pandemic, many companies that had been steadily re-opening their physical offices are being forced to return to remote working. This comes as experts foresee possible fourth and even fifth waves. With both the Covid risk and changing employee preferences in mind, businesses should, if they have not already, consider implementing sustainable hybrid work approaches as a core part of their business continuity strategies.

Here are a few general tips to keep in mind for any organisation that wants to embrace the hybrid work model:

1. Improve communication

With employees scattered in different locations, communication breakdowns are common. To overcome this issue,

different communication channels can be utilised. For instance, a secure internal chat system allows employees to communicate easily and respond at their own pace. Leveraging mediums such as virtual company forums to post announcements also ensures that employees are well-informed of all the important developments in their organisation. While setting up team meetings, managers can check in personally with remote employees to settle on a time that's convenient for everybody involved. Having a poll feature in your chat system will also make it easier to get vote-ins from staff on various topics.

2. Practise empathy

This is a time of great uncertainty and employees will find solace in an empathetic work environment. It's important for managers to check in with the employees often to understand the challenges they face and offer the best possible support. For instance, if an employee has to take care of a sick family member, consider allowing them to check out as soon as they complete their work, irrespective of working hours.



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3. Make it equal

Equality and inclusion are necessary to make a hybrid workplace model successful. One reason the hybrid model is well-received among employees is because it gives them the option to choose and decide. If the hybrid work policy allows for two days of office and three days of remote work, organisations can consider letting the employees decide each week's schedule individually or among their own teams. In order to make the process bias-free, it is better to establish guidelines for both in-office and remote work, and let employees make the final decision. Organisations should treat all employees equally no matter where they work.

4. Focus on the output

One of the key business aspects that has changed considerably by remote work is performance management. Remote work provides a chance for organisations to start measuring what matters: output quality instead of hours worked, and missions accomplished instead of tasks completed. Businesses should replace micromanagement with continuous, interactive performance feedback to help employees clearly navigate their job responsibilities and expectations when they work remotely. This will help employees set realistic goals and work towards achieving them, further enabling employees to complete tasks quicker and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

5. Use technology

Technology that is well-designed, modern, easy to use, and flexible can bring remote teams together and enhance productivity. For instance, digital signature tools empower employees to sign and share documents from wherever they are, without having to waste time behind manual document signing. Similarly, implementing online meeting software helps employees organise and participate in meetings on the go. This way, employees can meet, discuss, and make decisions wherever and whenever. Overall, technology should empower employees to work at their own convenience.



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6. Hub-and-spoke offices

The hub-and-spoke model is a potential game-changer that could take hybrid workforce management to the next level. The hub-and-spoke model enables employees to either work from their organisation's central headquarters (hub) or other smaller offices (spokes), spread across a country, often closer to places where employees reside. This way, employees can alternate between remote and on-site work with ease. It allows them to occasionally meet their peers face to face for brainstorming or even a catch-up lunch and then go back to the safety of their home offices.

7. Leverage the potential of the gig economy

Hiring gig workers like independent contractors and freelancers can be very beneficial to organisations adopting the hybrid workforce model. Unlike full-time employees, gig workers are given the freedom to choose when, where and how to work. Also, these workers are paid based on the work they do and not on the processes involved.

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