

Why big business needs to update remote working policies

In line with global trends, more South African companies are offering remote work options to prospective employees, many of whom demand such an allowance as early as during the job negotiation process. Those companies reluctant to accommodate these terms are losing out on the best talent, a recent survey shows...



© Kaspars Grinvalds – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

Of the companies polled by Jack Hammer, independent executive search firm with offices across Africa as well as Los Angeles, 80% offered remote working solutions. The 20% of companies who didn't all said they had job offers turned down as a result. 50% of the companies who offered remote working said that the matter was raised during the job interview process.

"While this trend is still in its early stages locally, it is encouraging to see that companies are starting to understand and respond to the changing paradigm in today's world of work, and that most realise they have to adapt if they are going to land and retain excellent candidates," says Advaita Naidoo, COO at Jack Hammer.

She says the trend is gaining popularity mainly in tech, retail and financial services industries. And it is not just the top dogs benefiting, as more than 90% of companies offering remote working offered it at all levels of seniority.

“The move towards remote working is driven by a combination of the nature of the organisation itself, particularly where they are more tech-centric ones, and the employees who motivate for it. While most companies were still reluctant to offer remote working even a few years ago, the survey shows that there is definitely a mindset shift taking place.”



#RecruitmentFocus: Why employer branding is vital even in the midst of a stagnating economy

Sindy Peters 29 Jan 2019



Naidoo says some of the main reasons cited by the companies polled included:

- The need to attract or retain tech talent that would otherwise go to a more flexible competitor;
- the ability to reduce overall infrastructure costs;
- the impact on employee wellness as a result of better work-life balance, and
- enhanced productivity flowing from the fact that employees who are afforded flexibility are not limited to basic office hours in order to get the work done, nor losing hours commuting every day.

Most companies, however, made it clear that some in-office presence was still required, predominantly where meetings needed to be conducted face-to-face, and also to maintain a sense of connection and team cohesion.

Changing management style

Naidoo says that the growth of remote-working teams is impacting the way in which managers lead people, who these days seldom work in the same office, and might go weeks - or months – without in-person meetings.

“Managing and leading remote teams is a new skill that needs to be developed and taught in business schools, and incorporated as part of leadership development programmes,” says Naidoo.

“Remote working and managing people who are out of sight requires both a mindset change, as well as a change of work style. How you engage and communicate with people needs a big adjustment if you are to retain engagement, while capitalising on the benefits of remote working.”



#BizTrends2019: Flexible workspaces - the workplace revolution is coming

Joanne Bushell 8 Jan 2019



Drawbacks

But although the benefits are clear, remote working is not without its drawbacks for the geographically removed employee, says Naidoo.

“Very often, remote workers can expect limited opportunities for promotion, as there’s an entrenched belief that managers need to have more in-office presence, which means that despite their expertise, these workers will rarely move beyond specialist level,” she says.

And the disconnect between the remote workers and the in-office staff can be problematic.

“For example, if a company has a ‘late staying’ culture, and rewards those who are seen to be glued to their work chairs 24/7, what needs to adjust when your top performers are no longer in the office? How do you acknowledge and reward, or does the playing field remain in favour of those who play by the old rules and are willing to do the in-office long hours slog?”

These are questions that have not yet been addressed given the fact that it is still early days.”

Not surprisingly, it is the smaller, more agile businesses who are the early adopters benefitting from remote working advantages, Naidoo says.

“This is a great example of how big business is failing to catch up and revolutionise,” she says.



#RecruitmentFocus: 7 reasons to incorporate a flexible work culture

Paul Burrin 7 Jan 2019



“The sometimes stodginess of large corporations’ policies means they struggle with flexibility, resulting in them losing out on the best talent because of an inability to adjust.

“We’re seeing this most evidently when it comes to the hiring of top tech talent – which remains one of the biggest challenges given the scarcity of resources in relation to demand. One way for big business to shift the needle on this is to seriously consider reviewing and updating policies around remote working.”

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>