

After 30 years of workplace evolution, who's your tribe?

The world has changed considerably since Regus set up its first flexible office space back in the late eighties.



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In 1989, Sir Tim Berners-Lee came up with the idea of the World Wide Web, the Berlin Wall came down bridging East and West, and the first Global Positioning System satellites went into orbit.

The impact of those events reverberates through society to this day, changing both how we live and work. While flexible workspace may not seem as historically monumental, it too has played a part in shaping how people work in 2019, with 85% of businesses introducing or considering a flexible workspace policy in the past 10 years.

So, to celebrate 30 years of Regus offices, we have looked at the new 'tribes' of workers that exist today, thanks to changes to the way we work.

The old fashion 9-5ers

Let's remind ourselves of the 'regular' working type, the steady employees who clock in at 9am and leave by 5pm. While we may still consider this to be an 'average' working pattern, a recent survey by IWG, the leading global workspace provider, found that 50% of employees globally are now working outside of their main office headquarters for at least 2.5 days a week and 85% confirm that productivity has increased in their business as a result of greater flexibility.

Side hustlers

These are the workers who have a side project or business alongside their main gainful employment. This could be for additional income, to develop and hone new skills, or to set up their own business. More and more South Africans are taking up side hustles to supplement their income. According to Moneyweb, one in three South Africans are taking on additional jobs to make it through the month.¹ Most of these individuals are doing something poles apart from their current roles to boost their income.

It's been argued that the increased uncertainty about job security and difficulty finding work can foster a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurialism. Those that came of working age during this time have this instilled in them and have continued it beyond the 10-year anniversary of the recession.



Multi-hyphen workers

Can be called freelancers, self-employed or those with portfolio careers: whatever the name, working for oneself in a career that utilises a personal passion or skill is on the rise. Currently, over 10% of South Africa's workforce is self-employed.

Much like the side hustlers, the multi-hyphens are partly driven by the fallout from the economic crash. There are other influences behind this trend, however. Many prefer the working style of sourcing numerous income streams that utilise their varied skills, talents and interests. According to a report released by the International Labour Organisation, the most common answer for why people are self-employed is "to gain greater independence".

Digital nomads

Also known as global grasshoppers, these free-spirited workers pick up freelance employment in different cities and countries around the world. Seen as aspirational by many, this working style offers personal freedom, the opportunity to travel and a rewarding work-life balance.

From copywriters to computer programmers, people with online-based jobs can take advantage of the remote nature of their work from anywhere. Of course, it's not all plain-sailing or working with an ocean view. Organising visas can be costly and time consuming, tax returns can become extra complicated and you may have to contend with fluctuating currencies. Of course, there's also the added difficulty of finding new work in different places.



The digital nomads are coming and bringing economic benefit with them

Andrew Robinson 4 Jul 2019



Flexible workers

From fully remote roles to requesting office hours that support working parents, these concepts of flexible working are increasingly available. But as the above working styles show, there is far more to flexibility than hours and location.

We've seen great change in just 30 years of flexible workspaces, and with the increasing application of AI, robotics and machine learning, we expect office space and the world of work to evolve even further over the next 30.

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