Telecoms allows business as usual, but from home

While many staff members may finally be receiving what they assume to be the best solution - working from home - both employees and employers need to understand what remote working truly entails and what bearing it has on performance, especially during the lockdown," says Arnoux Maré, CEO of Innovative Solutions Group.

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"Employers have an arsenal of tools to ensure their personnel continue delivering the same level of quality work when they are telecommuting, as they do when working from the office. There are contracts and Key Performance Indicators from a labour law perspective that hold both employees and employer accountable. From a production management standpoint, there are a series of apps and software to monitor the organisations' performance as well," continues Maré.

According to Global Workplace Analytics, 80 to 90% of all employees say they prefer working from home. But managers may not be warm to the idea of not having physical oversight over their teams, especially if their employees are not well acquainted with the organisation or its value systems.

Maré says that the management of expectations as well as trust is at the core of having a productive off-site team. Coupled with vigorous support from management, employers can break down major projects into bite sizes, setting daily, or weekly targets to assist the uninitiated build up confidence in working remotely.

"Employers must treat remote staff as if they were working in the office. Once deliverables have been communicated, trust that telecommuting workforces will do their job with the same level of dignity. Companies can also set guidelines such as turnaround times on deliverables and state when work calls or texts are permissible to avoid overworking employees," Maré continues.

Effective strategies

Outside of disaster management, using telecommuting can also prove effective for employee and organisational well-being.

Companies with work-from-anywhere policies can boost employee productivity, reduce turnover, and lower organisational costs, according to research at Harvard Business School. A Stanford study found that employees who work from home are 13% more productive compared with their in-office counterparts.

But before managers rush to advocate for every employee to work from home, Maré mentions that there are a few basic elements that have to be met.

"If an employee is expected to work from home, then the company must provide them with the means to effectively execute their jobs, such as laptops, software, a phone or data allowance. Furthermore, the organisation must be confident in an employee's ability to work off-site and this may require training or some form of induction," Maré explains.

He says that regardless of the academic literature, not all organisations can allow their employees to work from home. Furthermore, if employers fail to capitalise on certain fundamentals, no amount of working from home can improve employee efficacy and minimise staff turnover.

Maré says while it may seem counter-productive to managers who are used to managing their employees' actions, having a remote team means the employers' focus should be on their staff's goals and not activity.

"Managers also need to be aware that employees no longer commit to 15-20 years in a single company. Employees are all about learning and skills development. To ensure higher engagement and performance, employers must take a personal interest in their team's learning and life goals, aiming to connect their staff's interests to the goals of the company," concludes Maré.