

Is remote working here to stay?



THE Covid-19 era of work and life has been a crazy rollercoaster ride for us all says Clear Sky recruitment managing director Ross Porter.

The Caerphilly-based jobs business boss says life was seemingly paused for many months last year and parts of it are still not back to normal today. As we all work to get past Covid-19 and the long-lasting impact on work and life, one thing has surely changed for good — the corporate office.

Remote work is king

From what I can gather, the overwhelming majority of people would opt for remote work over in-office work. This is a huge shift from previous decades in which the majority of people had never experienced even a single day of remote work.

In most cases, people now have the technology at their disposal to perform at a high level from any location, so it makes sense that they would prefer to avoid their usual commute, office clothes, and many other things that bother the average office worker.

Some of the people I have spoken with about remote working have told me that they would even take a salary cut just to continue working remotely!

It's clear that the people want to maintain remote work, and they're literally prepared to pay for it.

Adjusting to the new normal

Just because employees are fond of remote work, that doesn't mean employers feel the same way. But should they?

I personally think that companies not offering remote work may struggle to attract applicants, and might even have to increase salaries to attract talent willing to work in the office.

As a recruiter, this is hugely important information for recruiting purposes. In order to attract top talent, employers must consider the option of a hybrid approach or even a



Is home working here to stay?

remote-first setup.

While recruiting for remote roles can be more difficult at times, due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, recruiting professionals are becoming increasingly more adept at this process as the year goes on. And for good reason. Companies offering remote work are offering more than just that, and it means a lot to their employees.

They're offering freedom, autonomy, and trust. They're straying away from the old-school office environment that so many dislike. And by embracing remote work, companies are giving themselves a head-start towards attracting the nation's top talent.

Keeping current employees happy

While recruiting can be hugely helped by offering remote opportunities, we should not forget about current employees, either. Some may argue that employees may even need a continued remote work offering from their current employer to stay at their current job.

This is a huge challenge for HR professionals who are not used to monitoring culture and working environments with remote employees. But I believe that in order to retain and attract the best talent and to keep them happy at work, then, remote opportunities are key.

The British Chambers of

Commerce recently released new figures showing that 66 per cent of businesses surveyed were offering remote working to employees.

The data, from a survey of more than 900 businesses conducted in April 2021, also shows nearly three quarters of businesses expect to have at least one employee working remotely over the coming year, with the average expectation among those firms being just over half of their employees working remotely.

- A new BCC survey of more than 900 UK firms shows that remote working was by far the most common form of flexible working offered at 66 per cent - however only 54 per cent of B2C services firms could offer it, against 80 per cent of B2B services firms

- 72 per cent of businesses say they will have at least one member of staff working remotely over the next 12 months, with those firms expecting an average of 53 per cent of their workforce to be working at least some of their hours remotely

- Mental health and wellbeing of employees were cited by 55 per cent of respondents as a barrier to remote working. Others mentioned requirements for face-to-face contact with staff or customers (41 per cent) and requirements for physical

presence to operate equipment (33 per cent) as barriers

- There were some major sectoral differences in the results - 80 per cent of B2B services firms (such as finance and law) were able to offer working from home, while only 61 per cent of manufacturers and 54 per cent of B2C services companies (such as hospitality and retail) offered this. For manufacturers and B2C service firms 21 per cent were not able to offer any of the flexible working options proposed, in comparison to only seven per cent of B2B service businesses.

- Flexitime or staggered hours were offered by 38 per cent of firms and part time hours by 36 per cent, while working from different locations was on offer from 32 per cent. Only 15 per cent offered all jobs flexible as standard and the proportions offering options such as job sharing (eight per cent) and self-rostering of shifts (seven per cent) were low.

- When asked what they considered barriers to implementing remote working in their businesses 55 per cent of firms said staff morale or mental health and well-being. In addition, 30 per cent of respondents pointed to fairness to staff whose roles cannot be performed remotely. Firms also cited monitoring productivity (28 per cent), poor internet connectivity (26 per cent) and

issues with IT (24 per cent) as barriers to implementing remote working.

- There were further sectoral divides in the responses. For instance, 53 per cent of manufacturers cited requirement for physical presence to operate equipment, whilst in B2C service firms the proportion was 35 per cent and B2B service businesses only 16 per cent. Thirty nine per cent of manufacturers also cited fairness to staff whose roles cannot be done remotely, the figure being 29 per cent for B2C service firms and 25 per cent for B2B services.

Working from home is by no means the only option in which people can work flexibly. There are other flexible options available to all businesses including those which require onsite presence, for example, job sharing or self-rostering of shifts. Businesses need to attract the most talented individuals with the skills they need to be successful and flexible working enables employers to unlock new pools of talent. I believe that by offering flexible working will help attract the very best talent businesses need to fuel growth and rebuild our economy.

- **Ross, of Blackwood, has been running his own recruitment business since 1999. Clear Sky Recruitment has a presence in Caerphilly & Newport**