

Survey provides insight into struggles of remote workforce

While people across the globe continue to work under the 'new normal' conditions created as a result of the pandemic, the team at GetApp were interested to explore the topic of how businesses and employees of South Africa have experienced this new world order of work. They wanted to find out if this was something workers prefer to the 'old normal'.



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To unravel the complexities of the current working environment, GetApp asked over 450 South African employees about their experiences of hybrid and remote working since the start of the Covid-19 crisis.

Covering everything from work preferences to perceptions of their personal performance, the results highlight insights that could help employers to better support to their remote workforce.

Almost half prefer this new way of working

Of those surveyed, 42% work at home full-time with the remaining number split into a hybrid model of 2-3 times a week, once a month or once a week.

The majority of those, 47%, having had the experience of working remotely either full-time or in the hybrid model, would prefer to do this on a full-time basis going forward. This is followed by 31% who would prefer to work from home 2-3 times a week as depicted below:

- 47% full-time
- 37% 2-3 times a week
- 14% once a week
- 7% once a month
- 6% rarely
- 5% never

Looking at productivity, 31% say they perform better working remotely. For about 22%, reasons like distractions, difficulty enjoying the benefit of technological access and connectivity, difficulty collaborating with their peers or being unable to draw distinctions between work and home life, say that they perform better at the office.

Striking the work-life balance is a challenge for many

Despite a widespread acceptance of remote working, there is one issue that remains a challenge for staff – maintaining boundaries between home life and the world of work. When asked if they had managed to set healthy work/life boundaries for themselves, almost a third (22%) had failed to do so or had only minimally established boundaries:

- 9% of respondents had set no boundaries
- 20% had minimally established boundaries
- 42% moderately established boundaries
- 29% had completely established boundaries.

Similarly, 9% with their direct manager, and 8% with their team.

This struggle to set and maintain boundaries may be partly responsible for another trend revealed by the survey: Most employees are feeling pressured to work longer hours than they would if still office based.

These excessive hours are taking their toll on health and wellbeing

Respondents confirmed a range of issues were presenting them with challenges on a regular basis. The most prominent challenges include:

- 51% of people getting work calls before and/or after work hours
- 43% of people working more hours than is standard for their job
- 38% pressure to answer work emails on weekends
- 38% having family members/housemates not respecting time and/or workspace
- 32% use personal devices for work functions
- 29% quick turnaround that require after hours work
- 13% difficult keeping secure information private due to sharing of space
- 2% other

Finding ways to address these issues for employees would go a long way to addressing the issue of work-life balance.

27% of respondents believe their home office is insufficient

GetApp's survey results suggest a significant proportion of the South African workforce is in need of additional support from their employer to better adapt to remote working practices.

GetApp asked respondents if they considered their home office setup sufficient to ensure productivity when working remotely. The most popular response, with 69%, confirmed most have everything they require. However, almost a third (27%) said they need a more comprehensive home office environment to work effectively.

Respondents also shared a number of their tips for effective remote working. Many focused on the need to both establish clear work-life routines and boundaries, and communicate these to the people around you – in your personal and professional life. In addition, the importance of keeping to regular hours and taking regular breaks was highlighted by numerous people.

Survey methodology

Data for this study was collected in November 2020 from an online survey of 450 respondents that live in SA. To participate in the survey, respondents had to be:

- Employed full-time or part-time, or self-employed
- Working for a company with at least two people
- Working remotely sometimes or all the time since Covid-19.

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