

Coronavirus - the litmus test for remote working

Remote working, the working style that allows people to work outside of a traditional office environment, is already a growing trend around the world but is likely to receive a substantial boost from coronavirus (Covid-19) fears.



Linda Trim, director at workplace design specialists Giant Leap, said that even before the outbreak of the pathogen, there had been a cultural paradigm shift and growing acceptance of ‘working from anywhere’, even by giant, established companies such as Amazon and Apple.

“The coronavirus has accelerated this trend,” said Trim, “it’s giving us a glimpse into the future when even more people are expected to work from home.

“ *It will likely prove a real time litmus test not only to see if businesses can carry on functioning effectively during an emergency event, but also if companies could give their employees more freedom from the office in the future.* ”

Trim noted that the real test of a company’s ability to allow its employees to work remotely always comes down to excellent IT organisation and preparation.

“Thanks to digital transformation and cloud computing, many businesses have probably already migrated a lot of work to the cloud. Collaboration tools should also be in place.”

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, many businesses have told their employees to work from home and connect through videoconferencing like Skype and Zoom, team messaging apps like Slack and via online meetings and chat apps like Whatsapp.

Other tools include Google Drive, which is a cloud storage platform that keeps files in one secure and centralised location. Remote workers can store and share documents, spreadsheets, and slide presentations.

For large files that are too big for regular email, Dropbox offers various features for managing remote employees who can sync, share and collaborate on documents.

Trim noted that the remote working trend is based on sound principles of reducing people's carbon footprint by not travelling in to work each day. Equally, smaller offices are needed if people work from home, further reducing carbon footprint and potentially dramatically cutting the costs of needing more office space.

Remote workers tend to be happier too and the option to work from different locations is an increasingly expected norm by younger workers entering the workforce.

"Employers must understand the different ways that Gen Z, those born in the mid 90s, work and ensure they are able to attract and retain them into the workforce, particularly in the midst of a skills gap in many sectors.

"To do so, companies are likely to appeal to Generation Z's desire for a career with a purpose and well-being, something that is easier to offer by creating work choice.

"The next few months are likely to lay the groundwork for an even greater acceptance of remote working as business will do all they can to reduce the risk of coronavirus spreading," Trim concluded.

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