

## Does Homeworking Really Work?

(By George Kemish)

I have seen so much written about how the COVID experience will generate a greater movement towards remote working; with the demise of the office and other work spaces. The following quote has also come to my attention recently: 'More than half of Brits are happy with work-life in lockdown'. However, there is always two sides to every coin, both from the employers and employee's viewpoint.

In my article 'What is the New Normal' I pointed out the need for businesses to create their own future and, to do this, there is a need for them to design the 'right' structure for the organisation; a structure that can support the strategies, capabilities and culture required to encourage their employees to innovate and create the future for their business. I also pointed out the need for businesses to be able to react to change in the external environment with speed and scale. In many cases remote working is likely to stifle innovation and creativity due to the inability to develop the organisation to a point whereby it meets its full potential.

I think that some business leaders tend to forget that much of the Continuous Professional Development, required by their staff in order to add value to the organisation, comes from learning from colleagues and team leaders (in the workplace). Whilst some organisations may be able to continue with remote working, I think that most will find that they will lack the 'tacit' knowledge that ensures organisational success. When I posted this comment in response to an article written by Kelly Hunstone, Kelly summed it up quite nicely in her reply. Her words: 'Learning from others around you leads to personal growth. That can't be achieved on a zoom call'. Some years ago, I left an employment due to becoming depressed due to a lack of opportunity for professional development. In the current working environment where Millennials are impatient to start 'climbing the ladder' a lack of professional development is likely to result in a high turnover of staff; with a resultant increase in recruitment and training costs. When looking at remote working from an employee viewpoint, mental health can also become a concern.

Firstly, employees living and working in a large house with space and light may not feel as 'confined' as those living in a small flat. Furthermore, working remotely stifles the ability to find the support that would normally be available in the workplace, from colleagues, team leaders and HR professionals, when faced with stressful situations both within and outside of the working environment. This is especially a concern when you take into consideration that many people find it difficult to talk about such problems. They might find it easier to confide in a close friend (colleague) than they would in talking about mental health issues with their employer. From an employer's point of view, this could easily result in a lack of engagement and reduction in productivity.

Whilst I am not suggesting that consideration should not be given to moving towards remote working in some circumstances; I am suggesting that there are a number of areas of concern that would need to be given serious thought before proceeding in that direction – from the viewpoint of both the business and the employee.