

Switching time indicators with KPIs in managing a growing remote workforce

How and where we work is changing - flexitime, home based jobs and remote workforces are growing trends in the South African business environment. While this flexibility is a selling point for employers and highly sought after among workers, companies need to consider how this can change the way they manage their payrolls. This according to Arlene Leggat, executive at the South African Payroll Association (SAPA).



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“People want a better work-life balance and they want to be able to work how, where and when they like. An increasing number of South African businesses are accommodating these needs not only to attract and retain talent but out of necessity,” says Leggat.

“ *A business that wants to enable a remote workforce can't function as a clock-watching shop.* ”

The 2017 TomTom Traffic Index showed that Cape Town and Johannesburg are the most congested cities in the country and people lose days and possibly weeks each year due the time they spend in their cars travelling to and from work. This congestion also has a broader impact on the economy. According to former Johannesburg mayor, Parks Tau, the economic impact that results from congestion in South Africa is over R1bn per year.

“Spending hours in traffic each day, whether travelling in one's own vehicle or using public transport, is not conducive to having a good work-life balance and it's not helping a company's bottom line or the South African economy. The technology that we have at our disposal, such as smartphones and internet connectivity at home, means that for many roles it's no longer necessary to work from an office every day,” says Leggat.

Switching to output-based deliverables

One way that a remote workforce impacts payroll is through the lack of work time indicators that have traditionally been

drawn from access control and/or time and attendance systems. If a company relies on security systems to track the movement of staff to determine their remuneration, then they may need to consider other ways of measuring a person's output.

“A business that wants to enable a remote workforce can't function as a clock-watching shop. Employers need to not only be more trusting and open-minded for this to work, but they will need to restructure many employees' roles so that their remuneration is based on Key Performance Indicators and output as opposed to time spent on the premises,” says Leggat.

A solution that companies can consider is to enforce 'core business hours' for all employees, regardless of where they are based. A company could, for example, make their core business hours from 9am and 2pm and office-based, as well as home-based workers, are required to be online and available for meetings and calls during these times.

Trust, responsibility and accountability is key

Before overhauling your business structure to include remote working, companies need to fully understand how they are going to assess employees' output and time-based work. “There are ways to track the time a person spent on a company's network or systems, but instead of policing people, it's better to create a trusting relationship with employees so that responsibility and accountability issues are understood and ironed out from the beginning,” concludes Leggat.

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