

# 5 remote work and hiring trends influencing workforce decisions

 By [Andrew Bourne](#)

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Businesses around the globe have spent the better part of 2020 adjusting to the new reality of remote working. While a few companies have reopened their premises and allowed employees to office full-time, many companies have either gone fully remote or adopted a hybrid model that incorporates a '2-3 days in office' requirement for staff. In fact, recent research shows that 88% of South African enterprises now have permanent remote work policies in place. With workplace regulations also becoming stricter, buzzy office spaces might soon become part of a pre-Covid era.



Image source: Getty Images

Here are a few ways that remote work will shake up individual lifestyles, business operations, and functional areas like human resources:

## 1. A hybrid work model that supports work from 'anywhere+office'

The adoption of the hybrid model of work, which is a combination of remote work and onsite work, will continue to increase in the post-Covid world. While some employees will prefer work-from-home as it allows them to be more productive, provides flexibility, prevents the office commute and supports location independence, others will opt for office as they feel face-to-face interactions with peers are necessary to be productive. Organisations may also adopt a model where employees are required to come in to the office only a few days a week.

## 2. Hub-and-spoke offices

An office style that might gain further traction is the hub-and-spoke workspace. Organisations may have their central headquarters (hub) for periodic team gatherings and strategy discussions, and a network of small satellite offices spread across various small towns or rural villages in a country.

The model promises dual benefits. Small offices substantially reduce operational costs for organisations, while also allowing employees to work in an office that's closer to their hometowns. This will subsequently bring forth a true

revitalisation of smaller towns and cities, as businesses slowly realise that they don't need to be based in a metro in order to achieve success. In fact, employees are already leading the way in this regard, with many South Africans increasingly 'semigrating' to the coast and smaller towns.

### 3. Adoption of HR tech

As remote work continues to take off, the adoption of cloud-based HR technologies will increase to provide seamless employee experience while working remotely. These technologies also help keep employees engaged and productive. Many organisations will turn to HR tech for functions like virtual hiring, onboarding, learning and development, performance management and smart decision-making.

### 4. Remote hiring

The way organisations hire employees changed drastically in 2020. In-person interviews were quickly replaced by video interviews. This trend will continue well into 2021.

- Companies will try to mimic the time-tested format of "test followed by interview" to evaluate a job applicant. However, the ineffectiveness of those practices will become evident in the remote-first world, and they will scramble for new approaches that address the core of the problem.
- The focus will shift instead to automated and manual evaluation of historic proof available online of a person's capabilities, as demonstrated by their contribution to open source technology platforms, YouTube, Instagram, Dribbble (user interface design), Medium, Facebook, and Twitter (marketing and content writing).
- Soft skills like communication, collaboration, teamwork, and adaptability will be given more importance while evaluating applicants.
- Diversity and inclusion will become an integral part of the recruitment strategy and many organisations will be able to improve workforce diversity with remote work.
- From an applicant's point of view, the best talent will look for companies that offer remote work, flexible policies, better health cover and enable more family-time and a lower cost of living. Perks like gourmet cafeterias, gyms, game rooms, nap pods, and unlimited free snacks will lose their appeal.

### 5. Changing performance assessment trends

One of the key business aspects which has changed considerably by remote working is performance management. Organisations will start measuring what matters: work done instead of hours worked, and visions accomplished versus tasks completed. Some companies are making performance reviews an ongoing process, giving up annual routines. Continuous feedback will become an essential aspect of employee management, which will help the workers clearly navigate their job responsibilities and expectations when they work remotely. Rethinking the goal-setting approach and identifying core measurement functions is the first step towards sanity in this new normal.

## No stopping evolution

Ultimately, the events of 2020 accelerated existing trends by forcing businesses to embrace the paradigm shift in workforce management and employee experience. While there will always be resistance at different levels, it's clear that there's no going back to the pre-pandemic normal. These trends will continue to shape the world of work in 2021. If anything, change isn't such a bad thing if we're now working smarter as opposed to harder.

## ABOUT ANDREW BOURNE

Andrew Bourne is Zoho's regional manager for the Africa region and is based in Cape Town, South Africa. He has more than 15 years of experience in sales and marketing and has spent the last five years focusing on the implementation and testing of various business technologies. He is very passionate about Zoho and has exceptional insight into the business and marketing world.

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