

Four reasons why our current work model is obsolete

By Jainita Khatri

4 Dec 2017

In 2015, the World Economic Forum predicted we were on the cusp of the [Fourth Industrial Revolution](#) and now we're here. Rapid growth in areas which were relatively unknown a decade ago, such as artificial intelligence and robotics, mean there'll be fewer permanent job openings and more remote work opportunities in the near future.



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In September 2016, [A Workplace Revolution Report](#) done by Regis surveyed more than 20,000 people in 100 countries, including South Africa. The results showed we're on the brink of radical change in terms of what we consider a "workplace". Over half (54%) of those interviewed work remotely for two and a half days a week (or more) and in South Africa 74% of those surveyed said working closer to home improves their productivity.

Here are four reasons why our current work model is obsolete.

1. Connectivity

"I'm very excited about having the Internet in my den." Steve Jobs (1994)

While economic predictions for South Africa look bleak, the country is experiencing a boom in internet access in terms of connectivity. According to [World Wide Worx](#), online users are projected to reach 22.5 million by the end of 2017. While the majority of internet users are on mobile, people are being encouraged to work remotely via many of the public Wi-Fi options or hot spot desks available in urban areas.

2. Business

"I've never been one to work from an office. I get most of my work done very remotely." Richard Branson.

Richard Branson believes companies following a regimented nine to five, in-office working structure are "[getting left behind.](#)" In Forbes' article, the [Seven Business Benefits of Having Remote Employees](#) the list includes lower costs, less overheads and an access to a wider talent pool, which I've found to be true. Outsourcing employees actually gives a unique flavour to your business as you have such a diverse range of people contributing. In terms of the bigger picture for South Africa, a [Fintech report](#) in 2015 said that remote working via the internet could boost South Africa's economy by R17bn annually, something we need to leverage on.

3. Customisation encourages motivation

"We don't live in the age of standardisation; we live in the age of customisation." Gautam Khetrapal

In his [TEDxUTP Talk](#), entrepreneur Gautam Khetrapal discusses how linearity and conformity are becoming obsolete. For workers, being able to customise their work environment appears to motivate them. More than 75% of managers and staff surveyed at businesses around the world with workplace flexibility said they saw an increase in employee engagement and satisfaction; with over two-thirds reporting an increase in motivation. Results from a [Deloitte Millennial Survey](#) put this even more succinctly in terms of millennial employees, saying "76% of millennials prefer a more creative, inclusive culture rather than an authoritarian, rules-based work approach."

And if that's not enough to convince you to move off your office chair and into the future world of remote working, spare a thought for our country's public transportation crisis as well as the fact that those of us lucky enough to have cars are emitting approximately 4.7 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year.

4. Social philanthropy

"A certain amount of corporate philanthropy is simply good business and works for the long-term benefit of the investors." John Mackey

Full disclosure here: this is something close to my heart and the way I do business. Social philanthropy and working from home mesh together beautifully when designing a business, particularly with women in mind.

It's a future work imperative to have a flexible work option for mothers or parents needing to be near their children (especially babies). Key reasons for this are safety, breastfeeding, and peace of mind. In addition, the broader societal impact means toddlers growing up feeling more secure and parents feel less stressed.

As the world evolves, we have to change our way of organisational design and operation. A new business model must make both business sense and individual sense. Technology is an enabler - it empowers more effective and efficient ways of working. Moving away from an obsolete office-bound job inspires better creativity and higher quality work. It does require discipline and a different management approach from traditional methods, but it's worth it.

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