



Hybrid Working

The new normal?

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, the challenge for businesses was mainly about how to remotely manage employees who work in the field or are 'on-the-road. In this respect, workforce management solutions, such as Synergy Workforce, are able to effectively help manage the time and efficiency of employees from clocking in and out, through to scheduling and productivity planning, analysis and management.



The pandemic, however, has transformed the way organisations of all sizes have had to think about how they can supervise and motivate employees, who out of necessity have had to work from home. The trend towards home and flexible working was already accelerating, but the events of 2020 has seen it go into overdrive.

Out of this adversity has come the opportunity for businesses to evaluate whether they need to continue to incur the significant costs associated with having all their employees working in centralised office environments. In this respect, British Airways (BA) are by no means alone in deciding to close its UK headquarters and embrace the cost benefits of home working, whilst Reach, the publishing group behind the Daily Mirror, has also announced that 75% of its employees will now be working permanently from home and that it will be closing many of its offices throughout the UK.

Many employees, whilst initially having to adjust to working at home, are seeing the value of not having to travel to and from an office each day. Apart from saving on the cost of commuting, people have also recognised that an increase in remote working employment opportunities means they can have the freedom to live wherever they choose.

Microsoft has reported in its 2021 World trend Index that 73% of workers surveyed want flexible remote work options to continue. Separately, Karin Kimbrough, Chief Economist at LinkedIn, has stated that since March 2020, the social media platform had seen four times the number of jobs offering remote working and that this trend is reflected in the number of job seekers. It is not perhaps surprising therefore that estate agents in Cornwall, are seeing a significant increase in enquires from people looking to move into the area.

Conversely, as reported in *The Telegraph* at the end of March 2021, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, has warned bosses that *'staff may quit if they are not allowed to work from the office as the UK emerges from lockdown'*. In the newspaper's article, the chancellor *'urged firms not to abandon the office altogether'* and stated that *'employees would "vote with their feet" and could consider leaving for a rival if made to work from home full time'*.

Flexible working options

Although there may be conflicting views, what is clear is that the pandemic has significantly impacted on the way businesses need to manage their human resources in the future. To do so efficiently and without incurring increased administration costs, they may need to invest in flexible, 'hybrid' type workforce management solutions.

These solutions will need to seamlessly meet the requirements of companies that employ a mix of those who work from the company's offices and those from home, (perhaps for just some of their working week), as well people who are field based or are mobile. As such, they will need to provide employees with the option to clock in and out with a physical device on one day and via a mobile App on another day, with the data being processed in real time in the same way.

Managing a remote workforce

With the empowerment of remote working employees to flexibly manage their time and workloads, comes the responsibility to ensure colleagues, in the absence of regular face-to-face engagement, continue to feel motivated and valued. This means that processes need to be in place to make it as easy as possible for them to achieve their set tasks and that motivating hygiene factors are tailored to meet their individual needs. These can be as simple as ensuring there is clear direction for the job in hand, the provision of timely feedback and appraisals, the efficient processing of expenses and prompt remuneration for those on hourly based work contracts, as well as making it effortless to request and receive approvals for annual leave.



From a business management point of view, remote working presents a series of challenges in terms of monitoring productivity without introducing cumbersome paperwork trails and without increasing human resource management administration costs.

New processes, which might have to be implemented to manage employees who might now be permanently working from home, will need to be dovetailed with existing systems used to manage office-based employees. How do you, for example, make it easy for remote workers to clock in and out and schedule their tasks, whilst obtaining data which will help you analyse productivity and ascertain if employees might need additional guidance and training in order for them to do their jobs effectively?

Fortunately, technology has come to the rescue, with workforce management solutions from manufacturers, such as Synel, offering integration with a wide range of popular third-party accounting, payroll, CRM, ERP/MRP and HR systems, enabling captured data to be easily exported for payroll processing or HR management purposes. In addition to significantly reducing the time it takes to get the information

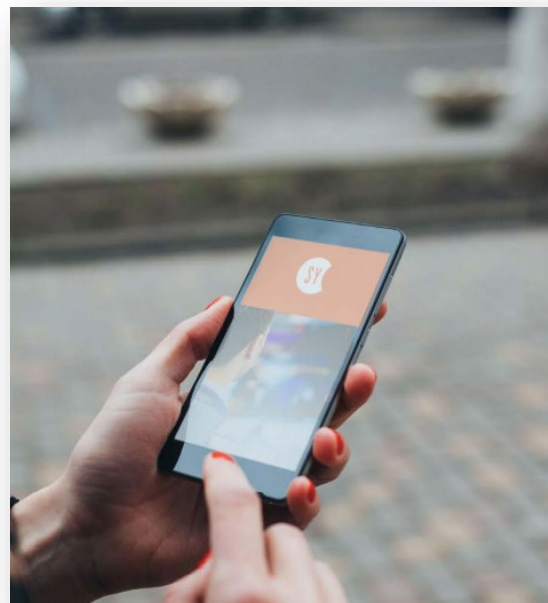
Browser-based portal for home-based workers

It is recommended that you source a workforce management solution which features a browser-based portal. This will allow colleagues working from home to easily access their workforce management portal and perform actions such as to register the time they start and finish work each day, record their break times and any absences due to sickness. It will also enable them to request time off for holidays, and even perform activities such as submitting expenses and access company documentation relevant to their work in a very secure way from a centrally stored location. Managers will also be able to access the portal to perform activity such as approving expenses and holidays.

Mobile App for field-based employees

Whilst field-based employees may from the comfort of their home prefer to use a browser-based portal for certain activities, such as uploading/downloading documents and booking time off, it will also be preferable to invest in a workforce management solution which comes with a mobile App.

With the ability to run on iOS and Android devices, the App must be able to combine the data captured with technology such as geo-fencing and QR codes which will ensure that employees are in the right location to perform specific actions. This will ensure a business is able efficiently monitor and manage the productivity of their workforce in real-time, as well as provide individual employees with the convenience of clocking in and out, submitting expense claims and performing a host of important functions via their mobile devices.



Summary

There will undoubtedly be an increasing number of employees and managers working from home or on flexible arrangements into the future. A workforce management system is designed to help organisations get the most out of their workforce, as well as realise real-world savings through introducing efficiency and accuracy.

Choosing a workforce management provider that can satisfy any mix of office based, field and home workers will enable you to efficiently monitor productivity and deliver efficiency wherever the workforce is based. Some, such as that offered by Synel, are easily scalable and are therefore suitable for companies of any size. Equally important, the solutions can be customised to reflect the operational requirements of individual businesses, thus delivering real-world Return on Investment (ROI).



+44 (0)208 900 9991

sales@syneluk.com

www.synel.co.uk