

Managing People & Performance using a mix of Office based and Working from Anywhere (WFA) teams

An overview of key issues for
consideration in getting organised



The Context

Increasing the number of employees and managers who work from anywhere (WFA) and implementing new operating models to meet the current organisational challenges requires a rethink of how people and performance are managed

- For most organisations, until now WFA has been adopted using a 'by exception' model.
- The standard operating model for work teams has, by and large, been built around co-location and personal interaction for most organizations.
- With this very familiar and long-term model being urgently and significantly shaken up by recent unpredicted external factors, the way in which people and performance are managed efficiently and effectively needs to be carefully reassessed to determine whether it remains 'fit for purpose'.
- We are already seeing a range of operating models being tried out, including:
 - Closure of all offices and remote working only being adopted
 - Rostering of employees through an office space to avoid large numbers – with those not rostered into the office working from anywhere
 - 50/50 splits of employees effectively 'tag teaming' across a working week
- Under any of these models, the traditional methods for managing people and performance won't work efficiently and effectively.

The Context

People management practices must evolve quickly in order to deliver an engaged and productive workforce

- The typical people management model in a work setting usually relies heavily on co-location and observation – both in a managerial sense and also a collegiate one.
- Being routinely co-located and 'around each other' is a fundamental ingredient and assumption upon which much of the usual people management approach is founded.
- Dependent upon the model adopted by an organization to respond to the current changed circumstances, the nature of the relationships between employees in work teams and their managers will change a little or a lot.
- Under any circumstance it is unlikely to remain unchanged.

What are some of the issues associated with continued use of existing approaches to people and performance management?

The following are some suggestions to inform the early assessment of key people management issues

- What are some of the likely key people management issues resulting from WFA changes?
- We think the key issues will include:
 - Sudden interpersonal disconnection from the work team – without any obvious way to fill the relationship-based void
 - The disappearance of familiar workplace communication channels to test thinking and validate ideas with co-workers and managers
 - Lack of clarity about how work is assigned, reviewed and finalized
 - How people and work-related issues are managed
(e.g. how employees are coping with changes to what they are doing, how and where their work is done and with whom.)

Signposts to improve people and performance management arrangements in a WFA setting

The following suggestions help clarify the focus for the people and performance changes that we think need to be considered as WFA is introduced and operated

- How are the WFA vs office-based roles and responsibilities in any new operating model being determined? Wherever possible are assessments of the roles, employees and work that might be best suited to WFA arrangements being properly taken into account before decisions are taken? Where it isn't working, what support options are available and being enacted?
- What guidance and support is being given to managers and employees in terms of what stays the same with how people and performance management is being managed in a WFA setting?
- Have your Executive team been provided a single, transparent and reliable reporting and analysis framework ? Does it regularly capture key people and performance data ? Is it routinely used by the Executive team and managers to understand 'what, how and why' employees and business areas are coping with the changed work environment.
 - This can assist to quickly assess where performance is good, where it isn't, the linkages to how people are coping with the organizational changes and opportunities to build confidence, share successes and intervene early in the areas where people and performance might be struggling to cope.

Signposts to improve people and performance management arrangements in a WFA setting

Building on these key issues, we suggest the following activities to begin efficiently and effectively implementing the people and performance changes needed to support WFA arrangements

- Form a small team of HR, IT and experienced business managers to assess WFA opportunities and potential employee candidates – as well as employees and roles that might be better suited to remaining within the office-based environment.
- Establish an organisational view of what stays the same and what changes under a WFA model. Then develop a clear and consistently communicated narrative that is shared with all employees.
 - Don't be afraid to adjust this over time – its better to explain changes than leave individual employees and managers to figure it out for themselves.
- Develop practical guidance and tools for employees and managers to support them succeeding within the changed working environment.
 - We are suggesting the creation of the WFA Toolbox – a single point of entry into a full suite of guidance around how things are to work in the WFA setting.
 - This is likely to be a combination of existing people and performance content, and some new material that provides the connection to varied working arrangements.

Signposts to improve people and performance management arrangements in a WFA setting

Building on these key issues, we suggest the following activities to begin efficiently and effectively implementing the people and performance changes needed to support WFA arrangements

- It is critical to establish a way to regularly and consistently 'take the temperature' of the workplace.
- Ensure that your people can let the organization and its leaders know what's working and what isn't via a 'single source of truth'.
- We suggest that this can be best facilitated via a simple, repeatable and frequent (especially in the early stage of the WFA changes) on-line survey style tool.
- This survey style tool can quickly provide data to the organization on how people are coping, what's working well, what isn't and an opportunity to share successes and address problems as close as possible to 'real time'.

Signposts to improve people and performance management arrangements in a WFA setting

We think conducting regular simple online surveys will provide a constant focus on the WFA approach to working and has a number of key benefits

These benefits include:

- Providing a single reference point to help manage people and performance that consistently collects, analyses and reports on performance – rather than relying on multiple systems and processes, all of which were built for a different business model.
- Assisting to monitor WH&S performance and provide early opportunities to address any unforeseen or emerging issues early – especially as they might relate to how employees and managers are coping with the changes to how work is done.
- Supporting all employees and managers via a single communication mechanism to enable issues to be raised, considered and addressed.
- A reduced risk for the organization in terms of any potential disconnect occurring between the reality of work as it is actually experienced by employees and managers, and the perceptions of how the work is being done and how the business model is operating at the key senior decision-making levels.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the ideas and issues raised, please contact one of the team.

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