

Will there be a New Normal

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Introduction

Ever since the global pandemic and the lockdown in most countries took place, there has been much discussion around the issue of 'what is normal?' After reading many articles speaking of the future, several points have been raised on what will happen when the lockdown is lifted. One thing is for sure: things will not go back to the way they were. A writer on LinkedIn stated that "if you do things the same after the lockdown, then you have not learnt anything new". This is true as many people and companies have learnt numerous lessons regarding the world after lockdown.

In this article, we will explore some potential new ways of life and business after the pandemic has cleared but the fact is, the Corona Virus will still be there for the next two years (BBC News, 2020). Does this mean though that the world can or should live under lockdown for good? No. This has pushed the need for a new way of reimagining the future

How will people work?

Since I can remember, people have been working traditionally, in the sense that everyone goes to an office and sits at a desk. With this, comes transport costs and the cost of time commuting to and from work. I have asked many people in Harare about the amount of time it took them going to work and going home at the end of the day. A large number reported an average of about three hours each day. In these three hours, time is consumed by waiting for transport and transitioning from one mode or another. Some people may argue that this time can be used productively by reading books or doing other things. While this may be a thoughtful take on it, not everyone manages to focus on a bus or a train full of other people, with music playing.

The above argument is not to say that going to the office for work should be banned because everyone is different and we all work differently. A better approach is for an organisation to

go to its employees and conduct thorough research on what new ways of working can be done in the workplace. The Barclays CEO in the UK, Jes Stanley says that "A big-city office may be a thing of the past". This goes to show that many leaders have already started to think of an alternative and possible cost-reducing ways of conducting their business going forward. Some jobs do not require the office presence each day of the week. By allowing employees to work from home if they want to can bring multiple benefits for the organisation and the employee. Additionally, the management team would need to find a comprehensive solution for properly managing this and ensuring that objectives are met.

Many large organisations have started paving the way towards reimagining what work will be like. It is mostly IT businesses that can do this but other fields can learn from them while tailoring the programme

to the way that they work and what their field requires. According to Harper (2020), these are some of the giant business that has begun to adopt this new lifestyle of working:

- Amazon has decided to give employees the option to work from home until at least October of this year. They have realised that there is no rush in trying to get everyone to come back to work.
- Facebook plans on extending their work from home strategy until the end of this year. They have decided to take this initiative in the hopes of permanently inputting remote working in the future.
- The Mastercard organisation has also decided that their employees can work from home until they are “ready” to return the office. Although this may not be an outright statement to say that they plan on going into remote working in the future, their executive team has certainly put the wellbeing of their employees in mind.
- Twitter and WPP have decided that their employees also have the option to work from home or go to the office.

By looking at these companies’ initiatives on their take on the future and the how work will be conducted, it is not only evident that they are thinking of ways of making the work-life more conducive for employees but. Employee health and wellbeing is being taken seriously?

Who will the future of work negatively affect?

As much as the drive towards remote working maybe a win for most people, it is no doubt that some will not be as happy as others. Leaders who do not have the necessary leadership qualities needed to lead a team may find challenges when it comes to this. It has been noted that, managers who are used to micromanaging employees will struggle as the usual managing from the office may become a thing of the past. Other employees who are used to seeing colleagues daily may find the new arrangement to be strenuous. They will need added support socially and emotionally, especially for those that live alone.

This is the time for managers and subordinates to upskill themselves as the working world has already started to shapeshift into something else. By both parties being active in how they can contribute to the success of working from home, it will be alright. It is an uncomfortable time for many but also a time for opportunities as well.

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