OPINION PIECE

Nine types of 'remote-work personalities' to look out for in your colleagues

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Working remotely is not every employee's cup of tea. Some employees cope well, while others feel overwhelmed engaging with remote technology to get their work done. A wide range of employees with diverse 'remote-work personalities' have emerged during the lockdown.

Are we really aware of the capabilities, passion and what drives our colleagues? Here are some of the major 'remote-work personalities' to be on the lookout for:

The eager beaver. The eager beaver is a workaholic and needs to keep busy all the time. All operations within eager beaver's organisation have been stopped and staff have been requested to take annual leave during the lockdown. The eager beaver however feels that this is an opportunity to work on improving the systems within the organisation. The manager approaches the eager beaver and requests that all work should be stopped as colleagues who are unable to contribute to the organisation are placed in a bad light.

The backbone of the organisation. This category of remote worker is one of those employees who is highly dedicated to the company. The first priority of the backbone is to take care of the needs of corporate clients. The backbones are able to easily adapt their work style and find it easy to slip into working remotely from home. The backbones' home life, leisure activities and personal life however take a dip as they are totally focused on meeting deadlines and works till late in the evenings, sometimes more than 12 hours on a daily basis, just to ensure that operations run smoothly. The backbones spend weekends as well as cultural festival days working to ensure that clients' needs are met. The backbones however realise that they spend more hours working remotely from home than when being physically present at the office.

The efficient employee. This type of employee prioritises tasks and will inform you as a colleague when you can expect a response to your request. This type of employee completes a task and then moves on to the next assignment. This type of employee will only engage in tasks during work time and does not work over weekends or evenings.

The opportunity grabber. Where possible this type of employee tries and completes more than the expected tasks. This type of employee takes the opportunity to learn new software programs and engages in online activities that are career enhancing and thus staying ahead of the pack.

The hide-and-seek employee. While these employees seem to get their work done efficiently and effectively at the office, this is far from the truth. These individuals are good at 'hiding' behind their colleagues. Their colleagues don't want the team to look inefficient so they 'cover up' for their colleague by doing some of the tasks they are aware they cannot handle, and at which they are inefficient. Working remotely, the hide-and-seek employees have lost their 'safety net'. The manager delegates work remotely to this type of employee only to discover that tasks that the hide-and-seeker once did promptly and efficiently, are duties which are beyond the persons' capabilities.

The manager sends a step-by-step manual on how to complete tasks, but the employee still struggles. The manager assists by taking on some of the hide-and-seeker's tasks and ends up working insane hours doing two people's work. This continues for a few days until the manager can no longer cope with the double shift and becomes firm with the hide-and-seeker. The hide-and-seeker is now forced to learn the job as the individual is exposed and can no longer hide behind colleagues.

The opportunist. This type of employee spends most of the data bundles provided by the organisation to conduct remote work on personal entertainment. The opportunist usually runs out of data by mid-month and finds it difficult to conduct company work. This type of employee then requests additional data bundles from the company and delicately balances the use of data bundles on entertainment and company use till the end of the month.

The see-me-work. The see-me work employee engages in addressing tasks remotely that will gain the manager's favour. This type of employee wants to show the manager that creative solutions to issues facing the organisation are put into place. Messages from colleagues that this individual feels can be placed on the back burner are not even responded to, leaving the sender in a state of frustration.

The slow-Joe. This type of employee takes a few days before responding to messages. In most cases this type of employee is overwhelmed in trying to balance work and home life. This employee gives precedence to home and family and refuses to get involved in new projects due to family commitments.

The vanisher. This type of employee does not respond to any messages. They have simply vanished from the surface of the Earth. A day, a week and a month can go by without them responding to messages.

As illustrated by these few examples, employees are diverse in how they operate remotely. While some may be extremely productive and efficient in the office, their remote-work behaviour may seem at odds with how they perform and present themselves in the workplace. Remote work should be approached with caution, as some employees may use it to get away from work responsibilities. Regardless, we need to accept that not all employees will be able to handle and cope with remote work.

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on the Hatfield Campus, Pretoria. This 112-year-old institution is also the largest producer of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country that has a Faculty of Veterinary Science which is ranked top in Africa, and overall has 120 academic departments, as well as 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 55 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes.

UP is one of the top five universities in South Africa, according to the 2019-2020 rankings by the Center for World University Rankings. It is also ranked among the top 100 universities worldwide in three fields of study (veterinary science, theology and law), and among the top 1% in eight fields of study (agricultural sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, environment/ecology, immunology, microbiology, plant and animal sciences and social sciences).

In June 2019, the annual UK Financial Times Executive Education Rankings once again ranked GIBS as the top South African and African business school. The University also has an extensive community engagement programme with approximately 33 000 students involved in community upliftment. Furthermore, UP is building considerable capacities and strengths for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by preparing students for the world beyond university and offering work-readiness and entrepreneurship training to its students.

As one of South Africa's research-intensive universities, UP launched the *Future Africa Campus* in March 2019 as a hub for inter- and transdisciplinary research networks within UP and the global research community to maximise 4IR innovation and address the challenges and stresses our continent and world is facing. In addition, UP also launched the Javett Art Centre in September 2019 as a driver of transdisciplinary research development between the Humanities and other faculties. In 2020 UP will launch Engineering 4.0. as a hub not only for Smart Cities and Transport, but also to link the vast resources in technology and data sciences to other faculties via Future Africa. These initiatives are stimulating new thinking at the frontier of 'science for transformation'.

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