



Embracing Flexibility: How to Successfully Work from Any Location

In the wake of unprecedented changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, the landscape of work in New Zealand has seen a significant shift. The rise of remote work and increased reliance on online communication tools has unlocked new possibilities for professionals to work from any location. As a senior employment relations and human resources consultant, capitalising on this flexibility not only enhances my work-life balance (making me happier and more productive) but it also enables me to deliver services to a broader client base. Here's how a professional services firm can seamlessly navigate the realm of remote work while ensuring effective communication with its clients.

1. Leverage Online Communication Tools

Given that a substantial portion of my client interactions are electronic or through telephone communication, leveraging online tools has been crucial. Platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Skype offer seamless virtual meetings and ensure real-time, face-to-face communication. Familiarising myself with these, and other similar tools that some of my clients use, enhances the quality and effectiveness of client interactions.

2. Adapt to Changing Employer Practices

Post-Covid, many employers have embraced online technology not only for day-to-day operations (such as online leave management and health and safety reporting) but also for functions such as recruitment interviewing, training, and staff meetings. Aligning my work practices with these changing trends better enabled me to be positioned as a professional who can seamlessly integrate into more diverse organisational environments. I have embraced the digital shift in employer practices and have stayed up to date about emerging tools and technologies in the HR field. It possibly helps that I've always been an early adopter of new technologies, and I also know when to seek expert advice about the possible options.

3. Clear Communication Protocols

To overcome potential challenges with remote working and online communication, it helps to establish clear protocols with your staff, contractors, and clients. Agreeing preferred communication channels, setting expectations for response times, and ensuring both parties are comfortable with the technology used all support more effective communication. This not only streamlines the workflow but also builds trust with clients. And always remember to cover off how you will meet your legal obligations, such as Privacy Act obligations. When embarking on remote working, security and storage of information must be considered.

4. Flexibility is Key

Working from any location is synonymous with flexibility. To operate this way, I have to demonstrate my adaptability by being open to various communication modes. Whether it's email, video calls, or phone conversations, flexibility fosters collaboration and accommodates the preferences of different clients – and in my case, different employers.

5. Boundaries and Correct Employment Arrangements

It's also important to maintain boundaries. Do you allow clients to contact staff outside of ordinary work hours and staff to undertake work on those occasions? I let my clients know that if I'm available when they call or email outside ordinary business hours, then I will take work calls and reply to emails. However, I am clear that this won't always be possible as I am not always available, and then I will respond the next business day. Do you address your expectations about availability adequately in your employment arrangements? Some staff may really enjoy a flexible working arrangement that allows them to take time for themselves during usual business hours and then to complete some work outside those hours and/or on the weekend, for example.

6. Cybersecurity Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of HR/ER work, it's essential that I am extra vigilant about cybersecurity. What are some of the ways I do this? I ensure that the online tools I use are secure, my PC is encrypted, my company has the right insurances in place, and I educate clients on best practices for safeguarding sensitive information. This not only protects my clients, but it also reinforces my commitment to ethical and secure HR/ER practices.


7. Continuous Professional Development

Stay at the forefront of industry trends by engaging in continuous professional development. I attend webinars, virtual conferences, and online courses related to HR/ER practices and technology. This not only enhances my knowledge base but also assists to position my business as not only an expert in HR/ER but also in utilising contemporary tools.

8. Regular Check-ins

I am really fortunate to have regular contact with many of my clients. Maintaining strong relationships with clients is important to me, and one thing that regular check-ins provides, is the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the communication methods used. Monitoring my remote work practices and being proactive in addressing any issues or concerns is essential. My Marketing and IT providers help immensely with this. Regular communication with my clients also ensures that we are on the same page regarding expectations and deliverables.

Embracing the ability to work from any location is not just a trend; it's a strategic advantage. By effectively navigating online communication tools, adapting to changing employer practices, and prioritising clear communication, I believe it helps me position my company as a dynamic HR/ER consultancy ready to thrive in the evolving landscape. Stay connected, stay flexible, and let the digital realm become your workspace without boundaries. If you would like a further discussion about this, or you would like some assistance regarding flexible working arrangements for your team, don't hesitate to contact me.

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