

'LAWS OF ATTRACTION'

STUDY: WFH MAY REMAIN POST-COVID-19

JobStreet survey finds many big firms have embraced work-from-home arrangement

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WHILE the government has allowed 100 per cent of the private sector workforce to return to offices, it appears that working from home has become the norm and will remain so even in post-Covid-19 pandemic Malaysia.

This is because many companies, especially multinational corporations, have embraced the full work-from-home (WFH) system or a hybrid of office and home arrangement for their employees, with all the mechanisms and settings already secured.

A survey by JobStreet reported that multinational corporations, the information technology (IT) industry and larger organisations with high-salary employees based in Kuala Lumpur were

more likely to opt for the work-from-home arrangement.

However, it found that smaller organisations, local businesses and executive-level decision-makers were less inclined to do the same.

JobStreet country manager Simran Kaur said there was no one-size-fits-all approach to promoting remote working cultures.

"A Malaysian study called the 'Laws of Attraction', carried out by JobStreet last year (following the onset of the pandemic) found that 27 per cent of human resource decision-makers would continue endorsing more hours working from home, while 30 per cent would recommend fewer hours working from home.

"The willingness to work more hours from home was more apparent among organisations with more than 501 employees (37 per cent), those that have been operating for three to four years (38 per cent), organisations with higher-salaried employees (37 per cent), and those belonging to the IT sector (38 per cent).

"Employers who would like to see fewer hours working from home were more likely to be local businesses (33 per cent), organisations with employees of 50 or fewer (35 per cent) and executive-

level decision-makers or business owners (39 per cent)," she told the *New Straits Times*.

Simran said 48 per cent of employers in the survey lamented that the new norm had resulted in reduced productivity as the WFH arrangement had taken a toll on their physical and mental health.

These employers, she said, would welcome their return to office workstations following the government's decision to revoke the WFH directive for management and supervisory staff starting yesterday.

The survey found that the WFH lifestyle was well-received by employees, especially Gen-X and Gen-Y employees.

"Working from home is of particular interest among Gen-X employees (72 per cent) and Gen-Y (71 per cent), followed by Gen-Z (64 per cent) and Baby Boomers (66 per cent).

"This underscores the positive reception Malaysians have to a WFH arrangement, with a shared approval rating of higher than 50 per cent across generations," she said.



Organisations can use the new norm as a driver of work-life balance in the post-pandemic world, according to Simran Kaur (inset). FILE PIX

Therefore, Simran said organisations could still reframe and use the new norm as a driver of work-life balance in the post-pandemic world.

She said this working lifestyle complemented employees who found themselves uninspired by challenges in traditional office environments, such as noisy colleagues, longer-than-usual lunch breaks and loud pantry conversations.

"Working from home equates with comfort, but it might get too comfortable for some. So as long as employees behave responsibly, they might be more productive working from home.

"WFH can make employees savvy at using apps, such as Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom and Facetime. They tend to be quick to adopt new technologies."

Simran, however, said the WFH setting could blur the lines between personal and professional lives, leading to loneliness, burnout and high turnover rates.

"There are situations where consumer protection or data security may deter employees from gaining full access to their organ-

isation's systems. For these positions, it may be best for employees to log in from the office."

Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman urged employers to put in place effective policies and safeguard measures, such as the Safe@Work programme, when work-from-office resumes fully.

"The Safe@Work programme places workers based on the 'Safe Work Bubble', which isolates close contacts of workers at their accommodation, workplace and workers' vehicles.

"Such an arrangement will enable employers to continue operations without serious disruptions and prevent the formation of new Covid-19 clusters."

Syed Hussain hoped the government would extend the programme, which is open only to the manufacturing sector and its related services, to all industrial sectors.

He advised employers to consider allowing certain employees to continue working from home, based on the nature and requirement of their jobs.