ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 5 - number 155 Wednesday 21 april 2021

The fate of remote working: will people return to the office?

We read conflicting opinions on whether or not to return to the office post pandemic. Who will stay to work from home? Will it really be possible to say goodbye to telecommuting?

In this pandemic year, remote work has taken over due to force majeure. Despite initial difficulties, due to a lack of training on the **tools for agile working**, from videoconferencing software to the **eLearning platform** dedicated to online training, many companies have found this new way of working useful, as well as necessary. The question now is how will companies do it? Will they continue to use remote work and with it, distance learning? Will they adopt hybrid solutions, including **blended learning**, or is it all back to the office? Here are the trends on the future of agile or **smart working**.

Remote working: pros and cons

Before we see what Google and other big companies think about remote working, we can summarize the still ongoing debate about how this exceptional year has changed our conception of work in the classic comparison between pros and cons. The former are definitely greater:

Pros of remote work

- Greater flexibility and productivity
- Savings on transportation and fixed costs of locations
- Reduction of traffic and CO2
- Better balance between leisure and family (although, often, the greater freedom depends on gender)

Cons of working remotely

- Lack of live social interaction
- Difficulty in using enterprise IT systems

With a system that promotes remote interaction, such as **social learning** tools in your LMS (learning management system), and proper training in the use of IT tools, these shortcomings can be easily overcome.

The future of remote working: what studies say in Italy

In November 2020, at the height of the second wave, a conference of the Digital Innovation Observatories of the Politecnico di Milano had no doubts about the strong "push for remote work". According to the data collected, it went from **570 thousand remote workers in 2019** to more than **5 million in 2020**, with remote employees amounting to 97% of the workforce for large companies, 94% for public administration and 58% for small and medium enterprises, SMEs. According to the same study, remote work will not disappear in the future but will be added to "office" work, giving way to a hybrid solution.

How many people will work remotely in Italy?

As we have seen in a article about the **numbers of smart working in 2020**, according to the Politecnico di Milano, in the next few years in Italy there will be at least 5.35 million agile workers distributed in this way:

- 32.2% in large companies
- 27,7% in public administration
- 22.9% in micro enterprises
- 17.2% in SMEs

Remote work days will be 2.7 per week for 70% of large companies, 1.4 remote days in the public sector. In Italy, the answer seems therefore a **hybrid model**.

Investments in workspaces and **digital training** are the prerequisite to keep agile work alive.

The Google and Goldman Sachs model: working remotely in the office!

In contrast to the speed with which **Google** had opted for remote working, from September 2021 offices will reopen, but on a voluntary basis. According to a BBC article, there will remain the possibility to work from another country for 14 days a year and remote working can be extended exceptionally by another 12 months, but it seems that managers are pushing for a return to the office. For **Microsoft and Facebook**, still in agile working, you have to remain flexible and adapt as the situation evolves. For security reasons, **banking and financial institutions** such as Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and Barclays, have come out strongly against working from home. The question is whether meetings or training with multiple people will be held via video conferencing, even staying in the same building, to avoid assemblies.

Workation and havens for remote work

As proof of the lasting nature of agile work, public and private offers of services and **incentives for those who want to work from home** are beginning to multiply. Some apps offer companies stays immersed in the most beautiful landscapes of Italy from which the most deserving employees can work. Several states, known as dream vacation destinations, have begun offering special visas for those who work remotely. From Mauritius to the Bahamas, there are tax breaks of up to 90% for those who want to stay in the country for a year, bringing with them their agile work and income from a minimum of $2000 per month. Instead, there are those who decide to return home, as highlighted by an article in the Financial Times, according to which the number of smart working Italian employees who decide to work from home in their home country, especially in Southern Italy, can have a positive impact on the loss of the working population.

In this pandemic year, many companies have been able to see that remote working has more benefits than costs. Therefore, especially large and micro businesses will continue to keep remote work alive, at least half of the days per week. Others are pondering a return to the office or a mixed solution. The challenge for Italian companies is to continue to train employees on digital tools to keep motivation and productivity high. eLearning is the ideal ally for agile and blended work.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator