

THE CPA AUSTRALIA WORK ENVIRONMENT SURVEY 2016

SURVEY REPORT

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BE RECOGNISED.



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ABOUT THE SURVEY

The *CPA Australia Work Environment Survey 2016* was conducted by CPA Australia from 25 May to 1 July 2016. The survey received 680 respondents from members and non-members around the world, of which 50.3 per cent were women, 47.2 per cent were men and 2.5 per cent preferred not to disclose.

The locations that had the greatest number of respondents were Australia (406 respondents), Hong Kong (107 respondents) and Singapore (86 respondents).

The ages of respondents were:

- under 30 – 6.3 per cent
- 30 to 39 – 26.6 per cent
- 40 to 49 – 34.0 per cent
- 50 to 59 – 25.6 per cent
- 60 and above – 7.5 per cent

Of the respondents:

- 248 held senior positions (President, CEO, CFO, COO, Director or General Manager level)
- 403 held junior or middle management positions
- 29 were sole proprietors/self-employed.

Not all tables in this report add to 100 per cent. This is due to some options which only a small number of respondents selected not being shown in those tables and/or due to rounding.

OVERVIEW

Big salaries no match for good workmates and flexibility

CPA Australia's work environment survey shows that flexible work arrangements and the calibre of people employed by an organisation are the two most important factors that attract people to jobs.

The survey, with 680 respondents from Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and New Zealand, showed that 20.3 per cent of respondents nominated flexible work arrangements as the most important factor influencing why they would take one job over another.

Coming in just behind, 20.2 per cent of survey respondents indicated that the prospect of working with good people – and working for good people was the second most selected factor attracting them to a job.

Despite this, the survey found that salary remains an important consideration for job seekers, with 18 per cent of respondents indicating it is the most important factor in attracting them to a job.

The results reveal some of the challenges for business in attracting and retaining the best people.

With flexible work arrangements being the most important factor attracting people to a job, businesses clearly need to offer more than just competitive salaries if they are to attract the best and brightest talent to their organisation.

With respondents being nearly as likely to nominate working with good people as the most important factor that would attract them to a job, businesses should consider fostering and investing in a positive workplace culture. This will help ensure businesses can attract staff who will, in turn, make a positive contribution to the company culture and help to retain valued staff.

The survey found that men were far more likely to nominate salary as the most important factor, while women were more likely to nominate flexible work and the people they work for and with as the key influencing factors in making a decision about whether to take a job.

Not surprisingly, respondents under the age of 40 cited career progression opportunities as a far more important factor that would attract them to a job than older respondents.

Ranking low on the list of factors that would attract people to a job were non-salary benefits such as a company car, support for professional and personal development, and having a private office.

Australian respondents were more likely than respondents from Hong Kong and Singapore to choose flexible work arrangements and the people they will work for and with as the major factor that would attract them to a job. Salary ranks more highly in Hong Kong than it does in Australia and Singapore, while career progression is a bigger factor in Singapore than it is in Australia and Hong Kong.

Flexible workers believe they are more productive but less likely to be promoted

The survey also showed that respondents believe working from home or remotely has a positive impact on their productivity, but nearly half of respondents, regardless of gender, believe it has a negative impact on their prospects of promotion.

The survey results indicate that for working remotely to be effective, organisations need to ensure they evaluate their employees on the value they bring to the business, rather than on the amount of hours they spend in the office.

The survey results also indicate that employees need to have confidence there is a level of objectivity in how their performance and promotion opportunities are evaluated. Judging an employee on the amount of hours they put in at the office should not be the basis for decisions about career advancement.

Survey respondents were more likely to believe that working from home or remotely had a positive impact on the quality of their work (49 per cent) than not (13 per cent). This view was held by a significantly higher percentage of respondents from Australia (55 per cent) than from Hong Kong (36 per cent) and Singapore (33 per cent).

Nearly two-thirds of respondents -- regardless of age, gender or location -- also believe that working from home or remotely has a negative impact on collaboration with their team (63 per cent), with respondents from Hong Kong being somewhat more likely to state that working in such a way has a negative impact on team collaboration (71 per cent).

The results suggest working from home or remotely should complement time spent working within an office environment so team collaboration is maintained.

The survey also puts numbers around something employees and employers have always known, while open plan spaces support collaboration, many people find open plan offices hinder their ability to be effective at work.

Most respondents believe that open plan offices have a positive impact on team work and collaboration (65 per cent). Younger respondents and respondents from Hong Kong and Singapore are much more likely to have had positive experiences with open plan offices, both in terms of their productivity and team work.

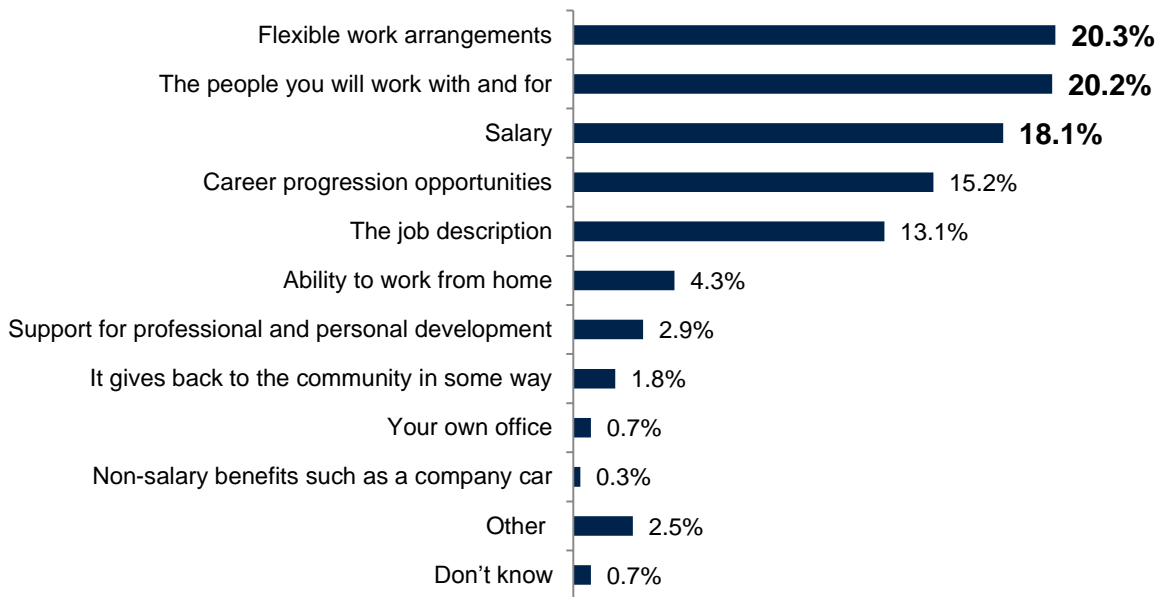
Current office design trends incorporate areas for collaboration and quiet areas. The survey suggests employers should give consideration to this mixed approach to office design in order to maximise productivity, team work and collaboration.

Acknowledging different working styles and trying to accommodate them where possible will ultimately lead to more productivity and increased staff satisfaction.

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS

FACTORS THAT ATTRACT PEOPLE TO JOBS

What is the most important factor that would attract you to a job?



Top four factors that would attract you to a job – by gender, age and location

	Gender		Age			Location		
	Male (n=321)	Female (n=342)	Under 40 (n=224)	40 to 49 (n=231)	50 and over (n=225)	Australia (n=406)	Singapore (n=86)	Hong Kong (n=107)
Flexible work arrangements	16.2%	24.0%	16.5%	22.9%	21.3%	24.9%	10.5%	10.3%
The people you will work with and for	17.5%	22.5%	18.3%	17.8%	24.4%	22.7%	11.6%	15.0%
Salary	25.2%	11.7%	17.9%	21.7%	14.7%	13.3%	18.6%	35.5%
Career progression opportunities	15.6%	14.3%	24.6%	11.3%	9.8%	10.3%	31.4%	21.5%

The most important factor influencing why someone would take one job over another or seek a new job are more varied than merely salary considerations. This does not however mean that an employer can attract the best employees with non-salary benefits alone as salary remains an important consideration. Nor does it mean that an employer can attract and retain the best staff on salary alone.

Male respondents were far more likely to nominate salary as the most important factor that would attract them to a job than women, while women were somewhat more likely than men to nominate flexible work and the people they work with and for as the key influence as to why they would take a job.

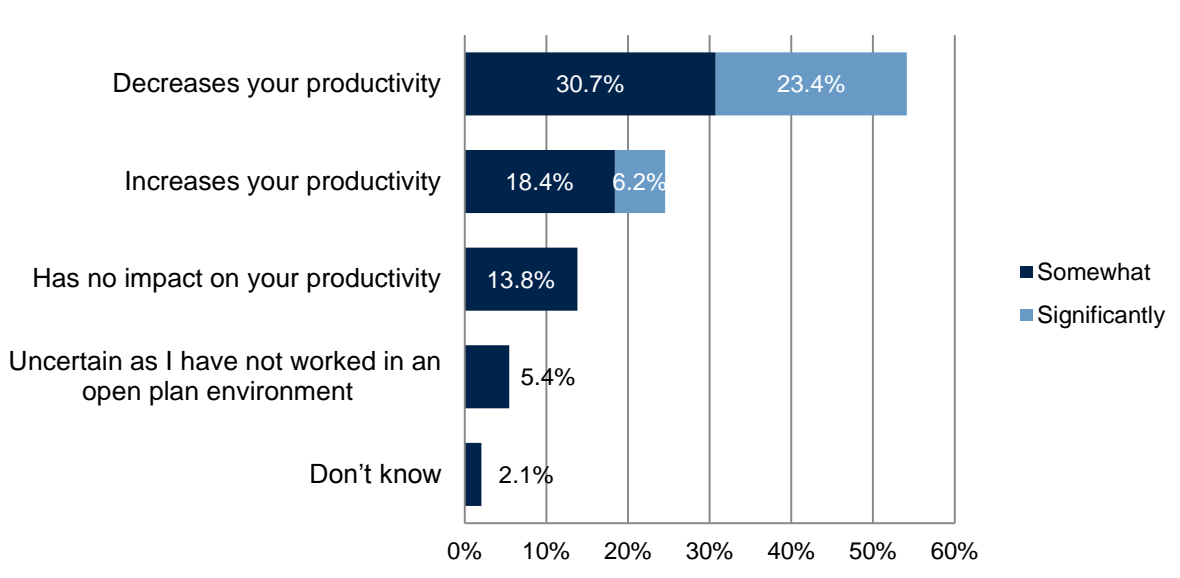
For younger respondents, career progression opportunities were a significantly more important factor that would attract them to a job than respondents aged 40 or over. Flexible work arrangements is somewhat more important for those 40 or over while those 40 to 49 were the most likely to nominate salary as the key factor that would attract them to a job.

Respondents from Australia were more likely than respondents from Hong Kong and Singapore to choose flexible work arrangements and ‘the people you will work with or for’ as the major factor that would attract them to a job. Respondents from Hong Kong were significantly more likely to nominate salary as the most important factor that would attract them to a job than respondents from Australia and Singapore while ‘career progression opportunities’ is more important in Singapore than Australia and Hong Kong.

Respondents who indicated that they hold more senior positions were more likely to state that salary and the people they will work with or for are the most important factors that would attract them to a job, while flexible work arrangements was the most important factor for those in junior or middle-level positions.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS OPEN PLAN OFFICES

Attitudes towards open plan offices – impact on your productivity



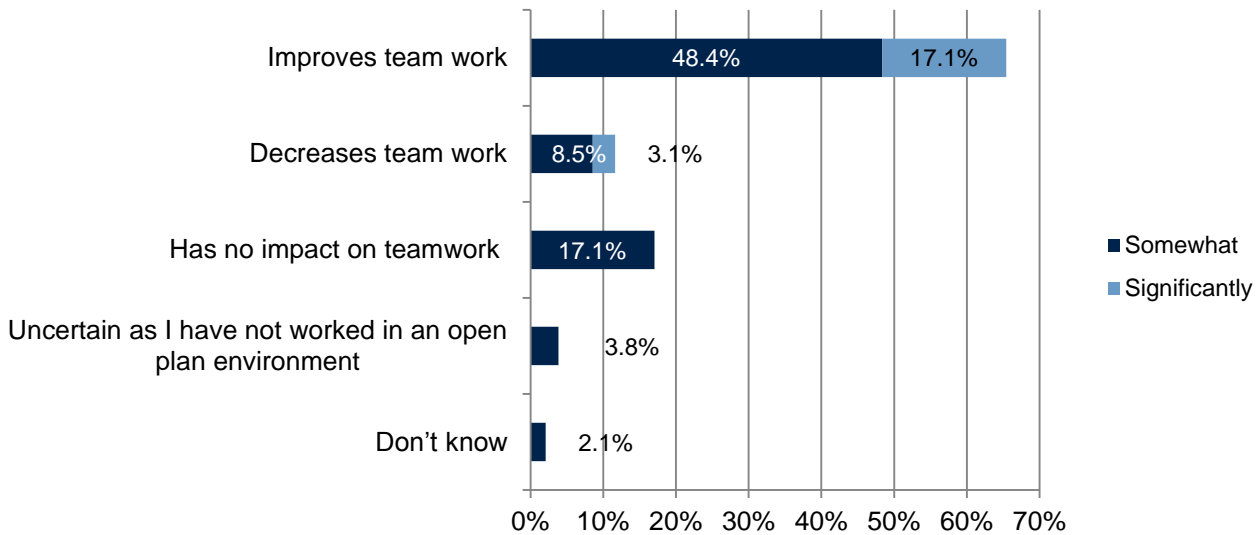
Attitudes towards open plan offices – impact on your productivity – by gender, age and location

	Gender		Age			Location		
	Male (n=321)	Female (n=342)	Under 40 (n=224)	40 to 49 (n=231)	50 and over (n=225)	Australia (n=406)	Singapore (n=86)	Hong Kong (n=107)
Increases your productivity	23.1%	25.4%	31.7%	25.1%	16.9%	18.0%	45.4%	34.6%
Decreases your productivity	53.3%	54.7%	47.8%	58.0%	56.5%	67.0%	23.3%	31.8%
Has no impact on your productivity	15.9%	12.3%	12.5%	10.8%	18.2%	10.3%	22.1%	18.7%

A majority of respondents believe that open plan offices have a negative impact on their own productivity, regardless of the job position the respondent held. Respondents from Australia were significantly more likely to state that open plan offices have a negative impact on productivity than those from Hong Kong and Singapore. Respondents from Hong Kong and Singapore were actually more likely to find that open plan offices actually increase their productivity.

The older the respondent, the less likely they are to find that open plan offices increase their productivity.

Attitudes towards open plan offices – impact on team work and collaboration



Attitudes towards open plan offices – impact on team work and collaboration – by gender, age and location

	Gender		Age			Location		
	Male (n=321)	Female (n=342)	Under 40 (n=224)	40 to 49 (n=231)	50 and over (n=225)	Australia (n=406)	Singapore (n=86)	Hong Kong (n=107)
Improves team work and collaboration	63.6%	68.1%	70.1%	63.2%	63.1%	63.8%	76.6%	65.4%
Decreases team work and collaboration	11.5%	11.1%	9.4%	13.0%	12.5%	12.6%	7.0%	13.1%
Has no impact on team work and collaboration	19.0%	14.6%	13.8%	19.9%	17.3%	20.0%	8.1%	9.4%

A majority of respondents believe that open plan offices have a positive impact on team work and collaboration. This is regardless of gender, age, location and position held. Respondents under 40 and those from Singapore were most likely to nominate open plan offices as having a positive impact on team work and collaboration.

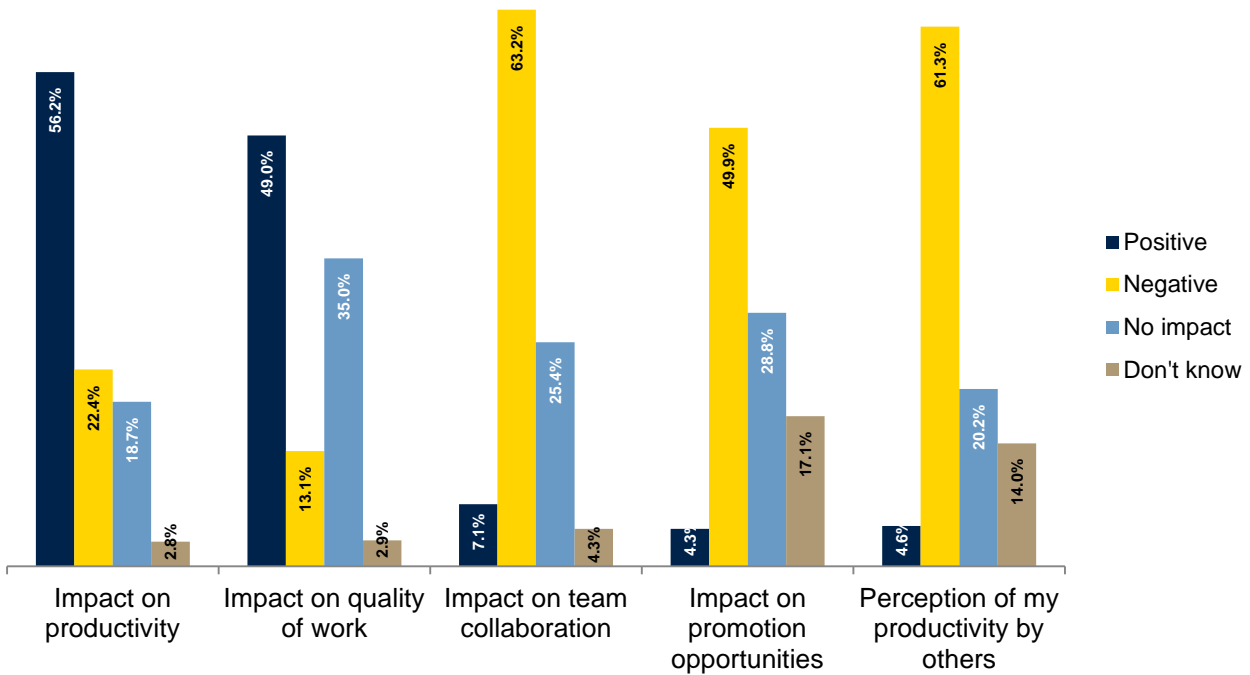
Summary

Open planned offices are much derided by employees, however businesses persist. One reason why businesses continue with open planned offices is that many employees do find that such a layout improves team work and collaboration. However, many also find that such a layout has a negative impact on their own productivity. This helps explain the current trend in office design where there are dedicated collaboration areas and quiet areas. Given these results, we would suggest that employers give consideration to this mixed approach.

Younger respondents and those from Hong Kong and Singapore are much more likely to have had positive experiences with open planned offices, both in terms of their productivity and team work. It may be beneficial for people considering workplace design to look at office layouts and workplace cultures in those two places to find out why open plan seems to work much better in those locations than in Australia.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORKING FROM HOME/REMOTELY

Attitudes towards working from home and/or remotely



Attitudes towards working from home and/or remotely on your productivity – by gender, age and location

	Gender		Age			Location		
	Male (n=321)	Female (n=342)	Under 40 (n=224)	40 to 49 (n=231)	50 and over (n=225)	Australia (n=406)	Singapore (n=86)	Hong Kong (n=107)
Improves your productivity	55.1%	57.6%	58.0%	58.4%	52.0%	64.8%	37.2%	40.2%
Decreases your productivity	26.8%	19.0%	19.2%	20.8%	27.1%	16.5%	31.4%	36.5%
Has no impact on your productivity	15.3%	21.1%	19.2%	19.1%	17.8%	15.8%	31.4%	18.7%

A majority of respondents believe that working from home and/or remotely has a positive impact on their productivity. This was particularly so for respondents from Australia

This result may in part reflect the differing attitudes towards open plan offices in Australia compared with Hong Kong and Singapore. That is, with significantly more respondents in Australia of the opinion that open plan offices have a negative impact on their output, it is understandable that some feel the need to find alternative work arrangements whereas in Hong Kong and Singapore, where attitudes to open plan are more positive, there may be less of a need to find alternative places of work.

Another factor possibly influencing the differing attitudes towards working from home or remotely is the average house size in Australia are larger than Hong Kong and Singapore, making working from home in Australia possibly a more attractive proposition.

Further, workplace culture may be another factor influencing attitudes towards working remotely, however as the survey results show, respondents in all three markets typically feel that working remotely potentially has a negative impact on their career.

Attitudes towards working from home and/or remotely – impact on quality of work – by gender, age and location

	Gender		Age			Location		
	Male (n=321)	Female (n=342)	Under 40 (n=224)	40 to 49 (n=231)	50 and over (n=225)	Australia (n=406)	Singapore (n=86)	Hong Kong (n=107)
Improves your quality of work	49.2%	50.3%	48.2%	55.0%	43.6%	55.4%	32.6%	35.5%
Decreases your quality of work	15.9%	10.8%	9.4%	13.0%	16.9%	8.9%	17.4%	26.2%
Has no impact on your quality of work	31.2%	37.1%	37.5%	31.2%	36.4%	33.3%	48.8%	32.7%

Respondents were more likely to be of the opinion that working from home and/or remotely has a positive impact on the quality of their work than not. This view was held by a significantly higher percentage of respondents from Australia than from Hong Kong and Singapore.

Attitudes towards working from home and/or remotely – impact on team collaboration – by gender, age and location

	Gender		Age			Location		
	Male (n=321)	Female (n=342)	Under 40 (n=224)	40 to 49 (n=231)	50 and over (n=225)	Australia (n=406)	Singapore (n=86)	Hong Kong (n=107)
Improves team collaboration	6.5%	7.6%	9.4%	7.8%	4.0%	5.7%	11.6%	8.4%
Decreases team collaboration	63.2%	64.6%	61.6%	61.5%	66.7%	61.6%	64.0%	71.0%
Has no impact on team collaboration	25.2%	24.0%	25.5%	25.5%	25.3%	28.3%	24.4%	13.1%

A majority of respondents believe that working from home or remotely has a negative impact on collaboration with their team, regardless of age, gender, location or position held, with respondents from Hong Kong and those holding senior positions being somewhat more likely to state that working in such a way has a negative impact on team collaboration.

While working from home is one element in creating a more flexible workplace, working from home or remotely for most occupations should only supplement work within an office rather than replace it.

Impact of working from home and/or remotely on promotion opportunities – by gender, age and location

	Gender		Age			Location		
	Male (n=321)	Female (n=342)	Under 40 (n=224)	40 to 49 (n=231)	50 and over (n=225)	Australia (n=406)	Singapore (n=86)	Hong Kong (n=107)
Improves your promotion opportunities	4.4%	4.4%	6.3%	3.9%	2.7%	2.2%	8.14%	8.4%
Decreases your promotion opportunities	50.2%	49.4%	42.0%	53.3%	54.2%	54.7%	45.4%	40.2%
Has no impact on your promotion opportunities	28.0%	30.4%	30.4%	29.4%	26.7%	26.6%	30.2%	31.8%

Respondents were most likely to be of the opinion that working from home or remotely will have a negative impact on their promotion opportunities. This result is regardless of gender, age, location and position held.

If employers are seeking to build flexible workplaces to help attract and retain the best employees, it is important that employees feel that working from home has no impact on their promotion opportunities.

If employees perceive that working from home can damage their promotion opportunities, some may find it better to seek out new opportunities – opportunities where working from home does not have a negative impact on their career aspirations.

Further, particularly in Australia where most employees find open plan offices disruptive, employers should where possible provide different ways to work to improve productivity, which should in turn improve profitability. If employers are seeking to improve productivity, allowing employees to work from home is one element of achieving that - however working from home is unlikely to lead to a meaningful improvement in productivity where employees feel discouraged from doing so as it may have a negative impact on their careers.

Impact of working from home and/or remotely has on the perception of my productivity by others – by gender, age and location

	Gender		Age			Location		
	Male (n=321)	Female (n=342)	Under 40 (n=224)	40 to 49 (n=231)	50 and over (n=225)	Australia (n=406)	Singapore (n=86)	Hong Kong (n=107)
Positive impact	5.0%	4.4%	6.3%	5.2%	2.2%	1.7%	9.3%	9.4%
Negative impact	61.1%	61.4%	56.3%	65.4%	62.2%	67.2%	51.2%	47.7%
No impact	20.3%	20.2%	22.8%	19.9%	17.8%	16.0%	25.6%	29.0%

A majority of respondents believe that working from home or remotely has a negative impact on how others perceive their productivity, particularly amongst respondents from Australia. Respondents who indicated they held senior positions also strongly indicated that it has a negative impact on how others perceive their productivity.

Again, if employers want to build a more flexible, productive work environment, working from home should not by itself impact how others, including their manager perceive an employee’s performance. This could have negative impacts on performance reviews, unnecessarily damaging careers and bonuses (if applicable).

Attitudes towards working from home will only change if leaders within an organisation do it and it is freely available to other staff where appropriate. If an organisation wants to create a flexible workplace that includes working from home, leaders should on occasions work from home during business hours.

Summary

Many workplaces offer staff the opportunity to work from home or remotely and those employees that do find that they are more productive when they work from home and the quality of their work is higher. However, working from home does come at the expense of collaboration with their team.

Working from home can also come at a personal cost, with a majority of respondents finding that working from home can have a negative impact on their promotion opportunities. Further, it could have an impact on how others, including their managers perceive how hard they work when working remotely.

Giving people the tools and opportunity to work remotely is one aspect of building a more flexible workplace that can appropriately adapt to the needs of the employee however if an employer is going to make a success out of this, people working from home should not perceive that it could have an impact on their career and how others perceive their work ethic.