

Rise of the FIZO worker

EMPLOYEES ARE FINDING WAYS TO INCORPORATE WORK WITH HOLIDAYS TO BRING MORE FLEXIBILITY TO THEIR LIVES

CAREERS

VANESSA CROLL

The fly-in-fly-out workforce has long been part of Australia's employment landscape but now a new lifestyle-focused employee is emerging: the FIZO fly-in-Zoom-out worker.

These modern workers, according to demographer Bernard Salt, have had almost two years to prove to employers they can be reliable and productive while undertaking their duties away from a traditional office space.

These FIZO workers have already realised the benefits of the hybrid work/home model and are finding ways to incorporate work with holidays to bring more flexibility to their lives.

For 25 years, Salt has tracked the proportion of employees working from home and says in that time since 1996, it remained at five per cent of the Australian workforce.

"The great shift that has taken place with the pandemic has been work-from-home," says Salt who, in partnership with ServiceNow, looked at 100 Years of Workflow to make predictions about the future of work in Australia.

"In a post-Covid world, instead of 5 per cent of people working from home, I would expect it to be more like 10 or 15 per cent.

"That means a net extra one million workers working from home, not necessarily full time, but maybe in a hybrid model."

LIFESTYLE SHIFT

Salt predicts people will continue to move, not necessarily permanently, for lifestyle reasons and will negotiate more flexible arrangements with employers to allow this.



Catherine Wilcox integrates her work in marketing with family holidays. Picture: David Caird

"You might spend a month or two months working from home in Noosa or in Cairns or in your parent's place at Dubbo," he says.

"So this is not a permanent arrangement, but it would be a way in which you can leverage a lifestyle shift, probably a seasonal thing, where you can reconnect with family and friends.

"I call that fly-in-Zoom-out, the FIZO effect.

"This is all coming about because Australians' number one driving priority is lifestyle."

With the country's current skilled labour shortage and much talk about next year's "Great Resignation", Salt says now is the time for employees to lock in new arrangements.

"I think the power balance is

shifting towards employees, particularly at this time," he says.

"Now is the time to set a deal with your employer because of the skilled labour shortage in particular and also employers have learned over the past 18 months or so that people can be productive and they can be trusted.

"The next generation of workers will want greater flexibility and greater control over how and where they deliver their workplace value.

IMPACT ON PAY

"In an ideal world, we would certainly not need to sacrifice any remuneration, especially if you are delivering workplace value that makes a commercial contribution or impact contribution to your workplace," Salt says.

"There's no logical reason why that should decrease.

"And in actual fact, if there is a labour shortage as there is, then you should actually start to see wage growth."

FAMILY BONDING

Catherine Wilcox started her new role in marketing during Melbourne's lockdown last year and has since managed to seamlessly integrate work with family holidays.

Along with her husband, Mark Petzner, Wilcox took her toddler for a holiday in Byron Bay in March and they were able to combine their work with beach trips and leisure.

She says they are planning to do the same again over the summer break when they stay with extended family, many of whom expect also to be working during the holidays.

"One of the only great things to come out of Covid is that workplaces are so much more flexible," Wilcox says.

"So we're assuming that after the Christmas break in January, there'll be 10 of us in a house and four of us will be able to work."

Ask the question

Ready for a conversation with your boss about more flexibility at work? Consider these tips from Leslie Tarnacki, SVP of Human Resources and general manager of WorkForce Software Australia.

Be confident: You are not alone in asking for more flexibility. Your boss likely knows 47 per cent of your peers in Australia and NZ are looking to quit their jobs rather than lose flexibility of when and where they work. Add your voice, that's how change happens.

Be respectful: Change is challenging, it can bring out big emotions. Be respectful of your own needs, and those of your employer. A hybrid work arrangement can be a win-win situation. The motivation for asking is about respecting your own personal and professional value. The conversation is about articulating how it's also to their advantage.

Be prepared: Have you shown yourself to be capable, reliable and productive during the pandemic period? Your boss was facing their own challenges and may not remember specifics of how you used technology, checkpoints or other techniques to stay on top of your workload during lockdown. Be prepared with examples from your own experience, and if you want to go the extra mile, research how your competitors or other industries are using modern workforce tech to provide more flexibility.



BERNARD SALT