

‘Working from home full time is negative for business and employees’, says Bristol boss

Since the Government lifted all Covid-19 restrictions in England in February, many people have returned to the office.

The pandemic has changed ways of working, with large numbers of UK firms now offering a hybrid option – where employees split their time between home and the workplace – or even giving staff the chance to remain working from home full time.

But one Bristol boss does not believe homeworking is conducive to running a successful company. In fact, Alex Davies, founder and chief executive of investment firm Wealth Club, would go as far as saying allowing staff to work from home can have a negative effect on a company.

“The pandemic showed that we could function working from home. However hybrid working presents more challenges in my opinion,” he told *BusinessLive* .

“At least when we worked from home everyone was at home. Now John will be in on a Monday and Wednesday, Mary will have Monday and Friday off, for example. This makes it even more difficult to run a business.

“Without a doubt for some employees hybrid working is more pleasant. You can spend more time at home, potentially more time on your own things but overall for most businesses it is a negative thing and if it is negative for businesses it will end up being negative for employees too.”

Mr Davies acknowledges that hybrid and homeworking “can work for some businesses”, but says his firm has found it “much better” returning to the workplace.

During the pandemic, Wealth Club, like most other firms, shifted to homeworking – but in September 2021, staff returned to the company's offices in Clifton.

“For entrepreneurial businesses such as ours we have found it much better being back in the office,” he said.

So what are the benefits? Mr Davies argues it's much easier to innovate and solve problems being in the office – and believes it's good for people's mental health, too.

“Running a good business requires a culture of collaboration, collective drive, innovation and passion, and this is difficult to maintain when you are not all together,” he said.

Since September, the company has grown its headcount from 20 to 29 staff, with Mr Davies attributing the expansion of the business to its return to the office.

“We have found it much easier to recruit, train and motivate people, much easier to innovate, easier to instil and maintain our culture and, something which is not to be sniffed at, it's much more fun for everyone who works in the business.”

Mr Davies also believes young people are being “robbed” of all the fun of working in an office – as well as the chance to learn.

“Just imagine being a 21-year-old getting your first job and it involves sitting in your bedroom. You are in effect being robbed of all the fun of working in an office and also many of the chances to get really good at what you do and learn from inspiring people.”

According to the businessman, Wealth Club is still able to be flexible despite staff returning full time. Some employees only work four days a week, and some come in earlier and leave earlier to fit around their lifestyles.

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Mr Davies said the firm did not force employees to return to the office – people gradually came back themselves.

“Fundamentally we are social creatures, for a lot of people work is a big part of their social life,” he added.

“You will never build the same comradery in a video call or one night out every six months as you will by sitting directly with a group of people day in day out. And this comradery isn't just good for the people who work in your company, it is good for business.

“If people enjoy coming into work each day it is likely they will be far better at their jobs and customers will be happier.”

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