

Coworking spaces offer loneliness lifeline for growing numbers of remote workers

Submitted by: Kin Communications2

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- Half of UK workforce expected to be working remotely by 2020
- Office Freedom offer coworking spaces to combat the biggest drawback to remote working - loneliness.
- Field expert and psychotherapist Dr. Aaron Balick says that loneliness is amongst the biggest contributors to poor mental health.

This year working life charity CIPD surveyed 6,000 workers, finding that more than half (54%) worked flexibly in some way in the last year. Part of this is remote working, which has increased amongst UK workers by nearly a quarter of a million over the last decade.

These trends reflect the view of the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM), who have referred to flexible working as “the new normal”. Half of the UK workforce are expected to be working remotely by 2020, as this way of flexible working becomes a feature of most employer business models.

Amidst this there is one big disadvantage to remote working – loneliness. A study compiled by the New Economics Foundation estimated that 1.2 million Brits suffer from chronic loneliness, costing employers £2.5 billion a year because of the effect loneliness has on health. Flexible remote workers make up a sizeable proportion of that figure, with this type of working synonymous with isolation.

This is where Office Freedom have emerged as a lifeline for workers. They offer coworking spaces which negate the need to work remotely from home, and which ensure people don't become exposed to the social isolation which plagues so many Brits.

The importance of this role isn't lost on Richard Smith, Founder and CEO of Office Freedom, who says:

“Coworking spaces can help combat the issue of loneliness associated with remote working. Modern flexible office space provides a habitat that supports staff wellness and welfare and promotes a culture of collaboration, social inter-action and productivity. The choice of flexible workspaces is huge, facilities are first class and there's a wide range of attractive options for remote workers.”

The need for coworking spaces has grown exponentially over the past year, and the movement towards flexible remote working shows no sign of abating. Richard believes that coworking spaces ensure that remote workers are not lone workers.

Employees don't have to accept being lonely as a trade-off for the advantages of flexible and remote working. This sentiment is felt across the industry – psychotherapist and director of Stillpoint Spaces International Dr. Aaron Balick says:

“Those working remotely will have special challenges in combating loneliness and will do well to make special efforts to develop positive social networks. Given that we spend about one third of our life in

work, relationships in the workplace can be an important contributor to mental wellness”.

He has prepared a helpful guide to help those who work remotely combat loneliness:

- “1. Skype meetings, emails, and Slack messages are not enough to combat loneliness. Ensure that there is enough “facetime” during your work to keep you connected to others.
2. Just because you work independently doesn’t mean you should be working all the time. Keep a calendar, and make sure there are real-time live social events in that calendar every week.
3. When you are with friends, put your phone down. Keep work and socialising as separate as you can.
4. Find a social network of people who share the same work interests as you do – join a meetup or Facebook group – but online connection isn’t enough. Go to events.
5. Try to avoid too much uninterrupted screen time. Work in an environment with others – ideally one where you can share ideas – but also frustrations and successes.
6. Remote workers don’t get a “water cooler” so you have to make one. Set up regular support, chat, and gossip sessions with people in your sector.
7. Keep at the top of your game. Go to courses and keep yourself educated about the latest developments in your sector. This can keep you happier, well networked, and at your learning edge.
8. Social isolation breeds further withdrawal. If you’re feeling down and notice you haven’t gone out in a while – make yourself get out there. Don’t sink into a vicious cycle of loneliness, isolation, and depression. You have to actively fight it.
9. If you’re working from home, change things up. Find a café, library, or co-working space where you increase the chances of running into someone with similar interest.
10. Freelancers aren’t always “free” – without a fixed calendar they can allow work to takeover life. Take charge of your calendar and make social engagements as important as work obligations.”

Flexible remote working isn’t merely an employment trend – it’s here to stay. But the loneliness associated with it need not be.

NOTES TO EDITORS

For further information or high res images contact Cash@imnngroup.co.uk or 020 3958 7193.

Additionally, you can contact David Carter at Office Freedom directly on dave@officefreedom.com.

ABOUT OFFICE FREEDOM

Founded in 1993 by Richard Smith under its former name SOS Search Office Space, Office Freedom was the first real estate specialist to provide global tenant-rep services to clients seeking Flexible Workspace and Coworking space. Having pioneered this marketplace, it has now advised more than 38,000 clients and currently lists more than 13,000 offices across six continents. Today, it offers the full spectrum of flexible workplace solutions, including serviced offices, coworking spaces, flexible leases, meeting rooms, virtual offices, day offices and business continuity space.