

WORK FROM HOME GUIDELINES

The global pandemic caused by the coronavirus Covid-19 has already disrupted how we live, interact with one another and now, how we work. In an attempt to slow down – and ultimately stop – the spread of the virus, the South Africa President announced that the country would be placed in lockdown for a period of 21 days beginning midnight on Thursday 26 March 2020 and anticipated to end at midnight on 16 April 2020.

This means that all citizens are required to stay at home and that businesses, including ours, will have to suspend normal operations to comply. However, in order to ensure business continuity and service delivery, you will be asked to perform your duties, as far as is reasonably possible, from home.

Having most of our staff work from home is untested, and until this virus struck, would have been unthinkable. So, these are uncharted territories for us. The following guidelines have been provided to assist in managing this time of “business unusual”.

What happens now?

- We will advise you of our expectations relating to your usual duties and how these can be achieved from home.
- We will enable you, as far as is reasonable, to conduct your duties from home (connectivity, virtual access to company systems etc).
- We will monitor the situation and maintain close contact with you to manage any changes necessitated by this fluid and evolving situation.
- We anticipate a return to work at the conclusion of the 21-day lockdown period. Please ensure that you’ve made all arrangements for childcare/family responsibility to enable you to return when required.

What we expect from you

- Continue to perform your daily duties and responsibilities during this period as though everyone was at the office. Maintain the highest levels of productivity possible, we need to ensure that business continuity as this is critical for future sustainability.
- This is not a paid break; our business needs must continue to be met.
- All usual company policies and procedures apply during this period, irrespective that you will be working off-site, and we expect employees to comply as they normally would, acting in good faith.
- Act responsibly and honestly, ensure that you communicate any problems encountered to the relevant person or department and continue to meet the requirements of your employment contract.
- Ensure that you make every effort to learn and understand technology available to work effectively. E.g. hold client meetings by video-conferencing platforms (such as Skype/Zoom), not telephone wherever possible and don’t postpone any meetings waiting for this to end!
- Obtain any required documents electronically as far as possible, ensuring that we maintain appropriate security measures – please contact IT or your direct manager to discuss possible different ways of achieving this.

Communication is Key!

Besides the fears created by COVID-19, the JSE All Share Index has lost 27% year to date (6-year low) and investors are currently particularly fearful, uncertain and at risk of over-reacting and making poor decisions.

This lockdown will fundamentally alter the way we all do business and will likely serve to amplify client uncertainty and frustration. It is thus essential that client communication levels are not only maintained during this period, but that they are increased.

Although written client communication (e.g. emails) is important, direct communication via telephone and preferably videoconference (Teams, GoToMeeting, Zoom and WhatsApp Video) allowing clients opportunity to ask questions and air their concerns will add great value.

It is recommended to business heads that client communication strategies related to these uncertain times be established and implemented.

This above section is of specific relevance to all client- and supplier-facing team members but are good principles to follow generally to remain connected with colleagues during these difficult times.

Managing your Health

- Act responsibly and ensure that you fully comply with the prescriptions of the lockdown period.
- If you must leave home (for essential services as prescribed) maintain social distancing, don't touch people, avoid crowds and take the necessary hygiene precautions.
- Phone a doctor for further guidance if you show symptoms of Covid-19 (high fever, aching muscles, sore throat, respiratory illness, coughing) OR
- Contact the Public Hotline (0800 029 999) or Dept of Health WhatsApp number – 0600 123 456 (type "hi" to connect)
- Most importantly! Self-quarantine while ill or symptomatic (i.e. keep distance from people you live with until all symptoms have disappeared – try use a separate toilet as well – you are likely to only get a very mild case if you do get it and may even question whether you have it – but do everything in your power not to pass it on as the elderly and immune compromised may not be so lucky. Ask others to go to the pharmacy or shop for you).
- Advise your line manager immediately and apply for sick leave in the ordinary manner when ill.

This uncharted territory for us all. We must all act in the best interests of the Organisation to ensure that we keep the business financially viable and sustainable in order to protect all our jobs. But please rest assured that when decisions are made, we will endeavour to be as fair as possible, keeping your health and well-being in mind. Similarly, we expect all employees to put whatever extra efforts may be required for our business to pull through this difficult and testing period and hopefully be better for it.

This is a time for us all to pull together and to make compromises to protect ourselves, each other and our futures.