Reading the Roadmap out of Lockdown: why automatic return to the office is not the way forward

Feb 19, 2021 *by* London-TV *in* Business

The Prime Minister's "roadmap out of lockdown" is expected to be set out on Monday 22nd of February as the Government look to ease some restrictions as early as March and help the UK get back to normal in the second half of 2021.

Many business leaders will be looking for indications as to when their employees can return to the office, with data from the ONS has showing that home working is currently at a level not seen since last June with 36% operating exclusively at home in the last seven days.

This is, however, unlikely to happen quickly, or go completely back to the way things were in 2019. Research from Theta Global Advisors shows that 26% of finance teams will not be returning to the office with other employees and will now work at home for the majority of the time, while 45% of business leaders say they see the working environment changing for the better due to the impact of COVID-19.

So how should business leaders aim to gt employees back, and why shouldn't their plans be based around Government dates and reopening goals?

Chris Biggs, Partner at Theta Global Advisors – an accounting and consultancy disruptor – has commented:

"This period has shown that employees working from home can be productive and while some teams will have to return to the office for necessary collaboration, I don't see offices reaching the occupancy levels of 2019 for a long time.

Business leaders should not rush to get everyone back as soon as the Government announces a start date. They should instead use common sense and judge on a case-by-case basis if their employees want to come back or feel safe to do so. Each person has experienced the pandemic differently, whether that be through home-schooling, being stuck in one room or enjoying not having to commute. So employers should not implement company-wide policy and rather let employees decide their preference.

Generally, younger people will be more keen to get back to the office for the collaborative and networking opportunities it presents while some will feel more comfortable at home. Dealing with these conflicting views really just takes common sense, something that I do see increasingly coming from business leaders previously set in their ways."