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Is workplace flexibility the new trend?

■ Arjun Shankar

As the world has entered the digital age, 'anytime-anywhere' has become the catchword for most of what we now do in life. Today, we can do our banking on an anytime-anywhere basis, we can learn online without ever setting eyes on a classroom, we can get medical advice remotely and yes, we can even work, from anywhere, at any time owing to the 'all-connected' digital environment.

The last point is of special relevance as 'anytime-anywhere flexibility' is transforming the very nature of the world of work. It is altering the manner in which people leverage the modern workplace and contribute to organizations without being actually physically present in an office set-up.

In fact, thanks to the pervasive digital technologies, 21st century job seekers are enjoying tremendous freedom. They can choose to be stay-at-home workers, who remain efficient and productive even while they remain in their comfort zones. A variety of collaborative and personal productivity tools, and falling bandwidth costs have helped in this transition. Also the decisive shift from paper-based work to e-work, and the rise of service industry roles have accelerated this trend.

Workplace flexibility is the new reality and increasingly, both men and women with specific requirements are opting to take this path to better manage their time and achieve work-life balance.

The landscape began to change

as the number of women in the workforce went up and innovative HR methods were needed to hold on to this growing, extremely valuable group of workers. The concept of workplace flexibility was born and became the new success mantra for job seekers, particularly women. Today, however, men with a high employability quotient and expertise are also seeking companies that allow flexible working hours.

A growing number of millennials, especially those who reside in tier 2 and 3 cities, are also taking the workplace flexibility path. Many are doing so to realize their dream of working in mega-corps open to these arrangements, which are in metro cities, the action hubs for career building.

This is a trend that showcases the emergence of the gig economy—a term being used to describe a situation where more and more people are even entering into short-term contracts and freelance work.

For the HR of new age companies, flexible workplaces and gig economy are proving to be a significant advantage and a perfect way of leveraging digital. Owing to gig and digital, organizations that have problems finding affordable talent in tier 1 cities, are reaching the skills they badly require without having to set up shop in the places where they can find them. Workplace flexibility may well become the new normal in the future.

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