

SMEs at the forefront of hybrid work transformation in SA, new survey reveals

Results from a survey conducted by Venture Workspace showcase a shift towards the hybrid work model, with small businesses and SMEs at the forefront of this transformation.



Source: [Unsplash](#)

In an era marked by unprecedented change, the traditional office paradigm is undergoing a transformation. The allure of hybrid work is undeniable, championed by professionals, entrepreneurs, and a pool of skilled talents.

This shift has fuelled a demand for top-tier coworking spaces across South Africa's major cities.

A snapshot of the changing landscape

Venture Workspace, a coworking service provider, undertook the survey focusing on 94 South African businesses, the majority of which were small businesses that are steadily becoming the cornerstone of the economy.

The findings showed that a staggering 60% of respondents have embraced the hybrid work model, choosing coworking spaces as their new work sanctuaries. Even more compelling, 44% have resolved never to return to the confines of a traditional office.

This paradigm shift is primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which disrupted the very fabric of work, motivating businesses to reimagine their operational models. Nearly half of the 60% of survey respondents occupying coworking spaces, admitted to making the switch post-pandemic.

Louis Fourie, co-founder of Venture Workspace explains, "Covid made people re-evaluate how they want to work and play, the desire for a better work-life balance is now a defining factor in the choices made by workers."

Less time in front of a wheel

Forty-one percent of respondents identified the convenience of having everything they need at their coworking space as the most significant benefit. This was closely followed by not wanting to sit in traffic, with 23% citing it as a major advantage.

According to Fourie, the rise of suburban coworking specifically, is not just a global trend, but a phenomenon sweeping South Africa. "Workers have realised that they don't need the swanky office in the CBD. Instead, they prefer a working space that is close to their homes and their kids' schools. The traditional office is fast becoming a thing of the past."



Hybrid workers are happier, healthier, more productive - global survey

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Fourie and his business partners opened up coworking spaces in 2019 across various suburbs in Cape Town, and most recently in Fourways Johannesburg, when they noticed a need for affordable working solutions that speak to a more harmonious way of life.

Unsurprising, the survey respondents revealed that shared workspaces significantly enhance their productivity and happiness.

Coworking is here to stay

Furthermore, the findings declare that 43% of respondents would return to a traditional office space only if they had to. An overwhelming 99% felt safer working from coworking spaces and considered the convenience and flexibility offered by such spaces higher than the sharing of amenities.

The trend towards short-term leases is on the rise too, not only for small businesses and startups but also among larger companies. This financially savvy move aligns with the uncertainties of our times and complements the burgeoning hybrid culture.

When asked why businesses in South Africa should consider coworking solutions, 36% of respondents emphasised the cost-effectiveness, 29% cited its suitability for the hybrid work model, and 24% recognised it as a solution to load-shedding, given coworking spaces' provision of backup power.

Fourie summarises by warning that shared workspace is more than just a trend; it's a lasting shift in office real estate. "Shrewd businesses, entrepreneurs, and other operators keen on adapting to the modern work environment, should take note if they want to thrive in the evolving workspace landscape."

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