THE PROS AND CONS OF VIRTUAL TEAMS

IT'S NOT UNCOMMON TODAY FOR PEOPLE TO WORK IN TEAMS THAT THEY NEVER MEET IN PERSON. BUT BEHIND THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS, EMPLOYERS NEED TO MITIGATE THE POTENTIAL DOWNSIDES OF REMOTE WORKING

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IMPROVEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY mean it's feasible for people to move to another continent and still work efficiently. In fact, many companies are setting up small, global teams that work closely together, but seldom meet. Does this represent progress for both employees and employers? Or is it just a way for companies to reduce office costs?

Carly Parrott, Counsel in the employment team at Carey Olsen in Guernsey, thinks there's far more to it than that. "Technology is an enabler – its constant development fosters and supports remote and flexible working that's focused on output and productivity. Teams can now be virtual. Employers can radically increase their talent pool by recruiting globally and ensuring their teams have the right people with the right skills in the right jobs, irrespective of location."

She adds that this is particularly relevant to Guernsey, where local skills can be restricted and the possibility of recruiting and bringing skilled workers into Guernsey is often difficult.

Jensen Nixon, CEO of tech R&D company Web Administration Resource Management (WARM), takes a similar view towards Jersey, arguing that global working is as much about employee recruitment as retention.

"In Jersey, we have a limited talent pool and companies that consider remote working can benefit themselves and the employees," he says. "From enhanced productivity, fewer distractions and higher savings, to better retention rates, geographical expansion and penetration of new markets, there are multiple benefits of working with a distributed team."

However, remote and flexible working only works if an organisation has three key ingredients – trust, mutual purpose and connectivity. Parrott believes that if one of these factors is missing, it simply won't stick. And when it comes to connectivity, location remains important.