

5 traits of successful remote workers

Recruiting the right talent is arguably the most important element of a successful work-from-home (WFH) strategy for any business - even more so than providing the right tools. Business process outsourcing solutions provider, Merchants, who build and run contact centres on behalf of their clients, deployed over 2,000 agents to WFH during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this, the business carried out a study on its top and bottom performers, both in-office and working remotely, to identify the prevalent traits of successful remote workers.



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Previously deployed as a disaster recovery tactic, WFH has now been implemented by millions of businesses across the globe, to drive business continuity in an ever-evolving world. A 2021 study by the Boston Consulting Group found that 53% of South Africans said they would give preference to a job that allows them to work from home some of the time, while PWC found that WFH was part of the top 10 work preferences in SA.

“While WFH might be a popular option amongst local employees, many business leaders have learned that some employees are better suited to working from home than others – especially true in the contact centre environment, where providing a positive customer experience is increasingly important for success,” says Merchants CRO, Mathew Conn.



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According to Merchants research, those agents working remotely are most successful when they are:

- **Detail orientated:** The ability to remain focused on the finer details of a customer’s challenges drove top WFH performers.
- **Disciplined and committed:** The ability to remain disciplined and committed to servicing customers timeously,

without the requirement for a line manager to constantly check in with the employee is a key driver for success.

- **Empathetic and caring:** Top performers are able to empathise with customers, whilst guiding the customer journey with their technical expertise.
- **Prioritised personal integrity:** Top performers are able to strike the important balance between managing their daily routines while providing customers with the best possible service – successfully living out the business’ values.
- **Respectful and well-mannered:** The ability to remain respectful in engaging with customers, fellow employees and line managers is key to success and has seemingly increased in those working remotely.

“While we understand the experience and ability of our agents, this period has allowed us to truly understand what attributes an employee needs to deliver a quality service when in a remote location – and will continue to be the basis on which we drive our WFH strategy forward,” says Conn.



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For those agents working in office, 2020's top performers were:

- **Adaptable:** The ability to respond to changes in the workplace environment has been increasingly important during the pandemic.
- **Articulate:** The ability to clearly communicate to customers through written and verbal mediums remains a top driver of success within the contact centre, as more consumers choose to use mediums like email and chat functions to contact brands and businesses.
- **Disciplined and committed:** The ability to remain disciplined while being introduced to new ways of work has been an important shift for contact centre agents.
- **Desire to make a difference:** Our top performing in-house employees have the innate desire to have a positive impact in the lives of others, without being motivated by self-interest.
- **Have a positive attitude:** The ability to remain positive and engaging with customers even when the external environment is not favourable has been imperative to success, as the world faces ever evolving circumstances.

“By understanding what behavioural traits drive top performers, businesses will be able to design and carry out the correct training and development programmes to ensure that all new and existing employees are working in roles that are well-suited to their personality type, in which they can grow and flourish. Businesses should be looking to develop the talent they need to drive business continuity and success in the modern business environment,” says Conn.

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