

Careers

WORKING A CAFE ROSTER

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AUSTRALIA'S remote workers are spending up to two hours a day at cafes – and many are switching their cameras off during work meetings to hide their location from their boss.

Exclusive findings from reservation platform OpenTable reveal almost half of remote workers are working from cafes and other venues, with many admitting two hours is their normal length of stay.

But most are hoping to keep their “WFC” habit secret, with four in five of those who have embraced the trend saying they turn their camera off when joining a meeting from a hospitality venue. Thirty per cent admit they would not tell their boss they do their work from a cafe, the research finds.

Why the secret?

Productivity expert Donna McGeorge is not surprised so many people are opting to work from cafes, and says bosses should not be either.

She believes silence is best for focused work. But she notes some evidence suggests hospitality venues can be “reasonably productive places to hang out”, as demonstrated by apps that recreate the ambient sounds of a cafe to boost creativity.

“Bosses aren’t silly – they probably are aware (that people are working from cafes),” McGeorge says. “But if

you’ve got the type of relationship with your boss where you are hiding from them that you’re working from a cafe, then working from a cafe is the least of your problems.

“Have honest conversations with your boss about where you work so that if there is ambient noise (during calls and online meetings) they know what it is.”

Know the rules

It’s imperative to remember cafes are not primarily a place for work, so those using them as such must be respectful to other patrons, McGeorge says.

Loud phone calls are best kept for home, and briefcases – as well as cords for charging laptops and phones – should not become tripping hazards for cafe staff or diners.

Most importantly, McGeorge says workers must purchase food and drinks throughout their stay to “pay” for the electricity, Wi-Fi and table space they are using.

“You should be ordering a drink at least every hour to 90 minutes,” McGeorge says. “Or as an alternative (to ordering), maybe slip (the cafe owners) 50 bucks.”

Survey participants commented that basic work-from-cafe etiquette also includes not complaining about a venue’s noise levels and leaving as soon as it becomes apparent other diners require the table.



Kathryn Ingler prefers to work without household distractions.

Workers welcome

OpenTable senior director Drew Bowering expects WFC to become a popular way to break the monotony of working from home.

Bowering says most hospitality venues welcome workers, noting they typically visit at non-peak times when tables would otherwise be

empty. “Any table that’s not being used for an hour is wasted so having workers there (who are also purchasing drinks and meals) does give you an incremental income,” he says.

“Sometimes workers just need the hum and ambience of a cafe to get into the (work mindset) zone.”