

# Gulf Business

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# 100 MOST POWERFUL ARABS 2023

**P.24 FUNDING THE FUTURE:** Gulf sovereign investors are playing a bigger role than ever before in the global market

**P.68 25 YEARS ON...** How home-grown consultancy firm Røya International has carved a niche for itself in the region's hospitality industry

FROM ESTABLISHED  
ICONS TO NEW ENTRANTS,  
WE PRESENT OUR FLAGSHIP  
ANNUAL LIST OF THE  
WORLD'S MOST PROMINENT  
AND INSPIRING ARAB  
PERSONALITIES

COMMENT



more flexibility and self-determination, but it can also “lead to new forms of (self-)exploitation,” warns Erin Kelly, Professor of Work and Organization at MIT’s Sloan School of Management. “That happens, when flexibility is merely a shorthand for being available around the clock, for being constantly on demand.”

**FROM DIGITAL OVERLOAD TO EXHAUSTION**

Yet, being constantly on demand is the new normal for too many leaders in the hybrid workplace: a brief chat message here, a quick ping there, a subordinate is calling to request urgent advice. And all while heading into the next virtual meeting. This is the executive grind I have witnessed as a productivity expert over the last three years. Hybrid work arrangements significantly add to the digital overload executives face on a daily. Not least because leaders are tasked with managing more fluid and more complex team constellations which increase their load in coordinating and structuring work. Is it then really a wonder that such arrangements are a major contributor to executive exhaustion?

**IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY**

However, there is a silver lining: Hybrid work is what we make of it. Corporations and executive leaders can shape the rules of the game. To do so effectively, they need to follow three fundamental rules:

**Rule 1:**

**Manage attention instead of time**

Attention is the new currency. Leaders need to primarily manage attention, not time, in the hybrid workplace. Doing more in less time simply doesn't cut it anymore. Instead, executive productivity and success are primarily determined by how effectively leaders can focus their attention on deep work. According to Cal Newport, an expert on technology and culture who popularised the term, deep work encompasses “activities that happen at the upper boundary of your cognitive abilities” and thus need to be “performed in a state of distraction-free concentration.” While deep work has grown increasingly important to generate value in the information economy, leaders’ abilities to perform

“Flexibility is merely a shorthand for being available around the clock, for being constantly on demand”



ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES/ZHUWEIY149

Executive leaders are more exhausted than ever – and hybrid work could be the culprit

Corporate leaders are stretched and stressed as never before. According to data from insurance provider Bupa Global, 96 per cent of executives in the UAE experience significant levels of mental distress, and one in five report distressing signs of burnout. Their hope: hybrid work arrangements will reduce both their workload and stress levels. Such hopes, however, may be misplaced. All too often hybrid work is the culprit, not the cure.

**HYBRID WORK IS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD**

We must face the harsh reality. As hybrid work models have become the most dominant form of employment, it's become obvious that they are a double-edged sword. Yes, hybrid work can lead to

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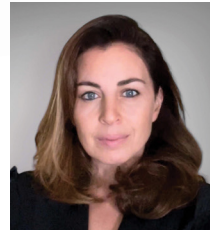
## COMMENT

# Global brands need a glocal strategy

To be relevant and appealing on a local level, international brands must tap into the power of glocalisation



ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES/CSA IMAGES



**B**randing internationally can be a complex and challenging process, and it's a crucial consideration for companies that want to expand their reach and increase their revenue. Any textbook approach will tell us that the ingredients for success include a combination of cultural sensitivity, appropriate linguistic adaptation, legal compliance, market research and consistency.

Let's take a look through some of the pitfalls experienced by companies who have had to overcome the hurdles they encountered during regional expansion.

## **01. Cultural sensitivity: The importance of understanding local customs and values, respecting and adapting branding and marketing materials to align.**

In the 1980s and 1990s, McDonald's attempted to enter the Italian market, but faced strong resistance from local restaurant owners and consumer groups who saw the company as a symbol of American cultural imperialism. These groups accused McDonald's of not respecting Italian culinary traditions and using low-quality ingredients.

McDonald's also faced legal challenges, as the Italian government passed a series of laws aimed at protecting traditional Italian cuisine and restricting the expansion of fast-food chains. These laws included regulations on the



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such work is decreasing in an ever-expanding sea of digital noise. By now, we are losing 28 per cent of our working time to distractions, according to *The Economist Intelligence Unit*. To protect their attention and their well-being, executives need to ruthlessly cut through the noise.

### Rule 2:

#### **Keep your frenemies at bay**

Digital collaboration and communication tools such as Zoom, Slack and instant messengers such as Microsoft Teams are simultaneously our workplace friends and enemies. On the one hand, they allow teams and units to work remotely and asynchronously. On the other, they are by far the biggest distraction to leaders' workdays. Being constantly reachable is like being a barista who spends all day taking orders, rather than preparing actual coffee. Taking orders is only a means to an end. The same holds true for Zoom, Teams and Slack. Leaders need to limit the time they are available across digital channels. They need to follow the barista principle: Limit your orders to make premium coffee.

### Rule 3:

#### **Negotiate availability and reaction times**

Constant availability and instant replies can quickly become the unspoken norms in teams and organisations. Executives and employees can feel that they must be constantly present and visible on communication channels, notes Kelly. To avoid a vicious cycle of digital overload, leaders need to negotiate collaboration and response times with their teams and ask the uncomfortable question: "Why does it not feel safe to keep the instant messenger on red?" Executives are neither shirking their work nor responsibilities by setting digital limits. Instead, they're allowing themselves and their employees to make space for what matters.

Implementing these three rules is not an easy process. It is both time-consuming and involves several iterations. But leaders who chose to ignore the effects of hybrid work on wellbeing do so at their peril. Let's get hybrid work on a healthier footing - for executives, their employees, and their companies. ●