

ECE AS AN EMPLOYER

CLEVER CONCEPTS FOR CLEVER MINDS

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MODERN WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

After a year of a pandemic and working predominantly from home, the requirements when it comes to future working hours and work locations are changing. ECE is continuing on this path together with its employees in order to find the right solutions for individual needs.

The company has already offered employees the option of working flexible hours and the ability to work remotely for many years now. As a result of the current situation, the desire for multi-local work is growing even stronger.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM WORKING AT HOME

Higher levels of concentration and greater productivity, efficiency, no need to commute, an improved work-life balance, and a more flexible daily schedule – the benefits of remote work are becoming even clearer after a year of intensive experience. As an employer, ECE has been relying on the self-responsibility of its employees for years. Equipped with mobile devices, cloud solutions, and MS Office 365, they are able to work from any location. Remote work has been possible at ECE since 2018, and has been systematically expanded and enhanced since then.

However, after a year of working almost exclusively from home, disadvantages have also become apparent – many employees miss the opportunity to engage directly with coworkers, customers, or service providers, to collaborate on creative solutions, to network, and to experience and develop our corporate culture. Completely eliminating the office is not an option. Now the job is to leverage the best of both forms of work for our collective success. In the future, ECE wants to establish an activity-based, hybrid work model that combines in-person and remote work.

ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESSFUL WORK MODELS

To ECE, one thing is clear: work is too multifaceted for there to be a one-size-fits-all solution to a successful work model. The respective tasks will continue to determine how people work in the future. Similarly, the living situations and skills of ECE employees are equally diverse.

“Whether they designate two specific days on campus, work predominantly remotely, or use the collaboration spaces at the office more intensively, our employees



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will agree on a shared set of rules as a team,” says Claudia Theisel, Director People & Office Management at ECE Group Services. “We’re analyzing the different needs based on the range of duties, i.e., what does the team do, what do individual employees do, and how can we achieve the goal of completing the job in question in the best possible way? The goal also determines the most suitable work model.”

Developing solutions together and discussing the future form of collaboration as a team is how the company is identifying the successful work models of the future. Even if different requirements and a variety of job profiles exist at the different companies, the shared self-image of ECE as a group acts as the common bond. An overarching framework will continue to exist, as ECE had already put its Mobile Working Policy in place – which allowed employees to work remotely for up to four days a week – prior to the coronavirus pandemic. The company is now adapting this framework according to the requirements of the job and the needs of the employees.

But a firmly defined framework will continue to be in place in the future. Provided that an employee’s job involves typical work at a PC, he or she can work remotely for a minimum of 20 percent and a maximum of 80 percent of his or her working hours. That being said, everyone will need to decide for themselves where the focus will lie. Aside from that, ECE is taking an iterative approach – teams are encouraged to try different ways of doing things, to be flexible, to identify successful models individually, and to implement them for their team. The results are what counts. >

80%

THE PERCENTAGE OF WORKING HOURS EACH EMPLOYEE CAN WORK REMOTELY



**CLAUDIA THEISEL,
DIRECTOR PEOPLE & OFFICE
MANAGEMENT,
ECE GROUP SERVICES.**

tage of desk sharing, where I have a large monitor at my disposal, for example. In the future, employees will be able to flexibly book not only conference rooms, but also an office workstation. This is relevant for all those colleagues who work predominantly remotely and only occasionally at the office. Even before the pandemic, a CBRE study found that at most companies, no more than 65 percent of employees were on site at any one time. The sharing ratio in many companies' current plans often stands at 2.3 – meaning 2.3 employees share a single desk. At ECE, we're basing our plans on 60 percent occupancy over the medium term," says Theisel, commenting on the company's current infrastructure planning.

ACHIEVING SUCCESS WITH THE RIGHT TALENT

It isn't just the way the workplace and working hours will be organized in future that make it clear that flexibility, agility, and a willingness to break new ground play an essential role in the success of a company. As an employer, ECE will continue to focus on employees with this mindset in the future – when recruiting, the company pays particular attention to how willing applicants are to embrace change and how quickly they can adapt to changing requirements. Being open to repeatedly learning and trying out new things, developing creative solutions, and collaborating as part of a team are the skills that the company has been emphasizing for years and are more important today than ever before.

ECE is popular with applicants that have the right mindset because the company's business model epitomizes a high degree of transformational readiness. Through its transformation from a shopping center developer to a real estate developer and real estate manager, the company is demonstrating how flexible and agile it is in keeping with the times.

Theisel's conclusion: "We appeal to people who find playing an active role in shaping transformations exciting. We embody agility, which appeals to applicants. And at the same time, we're a solid family-owned company that has operated successfully on the market for many years. This is a good mix, which is what the applicants also tell us: a foundation of values and a long-term approach, along with exciting challenges and many changes. Crises particularly represent opportunities to emerge from them stronger than before. I find it both fascinating and highly motivating to see the flexibility and creativity that our employees demonstrate in adapting to any situation. This is precisely the spirit that we convey to our new employees and that they, in turn, appreciate in us." //



Theisel explains the approach as follows: "Similar to a toolbox from which everyone can pick the most suitable tool for them, we can provide recommendations and analyze how employees use implement them. To me, the important thing is to have as few rules as possible and really only the ones that are absolutely necessary. We are setting the rough guidelines based on applicable labor law and our existing policies. The teams are responsible for structuring things within this framework. In this process, the focus is always on one overarching question: What do we need to do to ensure that ECE can operate successfully and what kind of environment can we create to best support this? Each employee will then have to ask themselves: what do I need today to accomplish the tasks I intend to do, and what's the best place to work for this purpose?"

THE OFFICE OF THE FUTURE

The year of working from home has impressively shown that the office remains the perfect environment for purposeful collaboration. Networking with colleagues, initiating creative processes together, learning from each other in workshops, and exchanging ideas and opinions – that's what many employees particularly missed while cooped up in their home office.

According to a study by the Technical University of Darmstadt, the office will remain the main place where people work on a daily basis over the long term, and modern offices continue to be viewed as an asset to help attract the best skilled workers. ECE continues to see the office as the place where productive interactions take place and the corporate culture is cultivated and refined. This results in the requirements that future office space design must meet. With modern and flexible concepts that support both remote working and on-site collaboration, ECE intends to continue creating modern working environments. The company offered collaboration spaces and team spaces even before the coronavirus pandemic, and the numerous conference rooms can be used in a number of different ways.

"In the future, we'll be making even more intensive use of our multi-space areas and social spaces. We want to reinforce this benefit of the office by adding team and project areas. At the same time, this affects the infrastructure on site – when I come to the office, I do so primarily to interact with coworkers, so I don't need my own desk. If I need some peace and quiet at the office to get something done, I can take advan-