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Flexible executive roles the key to securing Melbourne's future as a global city of choice

The Economist Intelligence Unit has once again ranked Melbourne as the 'World's Most Liveable City'.

The liveability of a city relies in large part on its ability to attract and keep those businesses and workers who have a choice where they reside, so it is important for civic leaders to understand what informs their decisions.

As managing director of a firm that finds and appoints executives with large organisations, I believe the key criterion for the future for both managers and companies will be flexibility.

For the manager, leader or executive this means more flexibility around the working week, or shorter-term assignments, or even a preferred independent worker approach through interim gigs, from three months to two years.

This is a recent development that I believe may become a standard option for executive positions in the future because it allows organisations to fill positions very quickly, and for fixed periods, while allowing highly experienced and skilled executives to work on projects that interest them and where they can make an immediate impact.

In the Harvard Business Review's 'Rise of the Supertemp', Jody Greenstone Miller and Matt Miller write:

Today technology makes it easy to plug in, the corporate social contract guaranteeing job security and plush benefits is dead or dying, and 80-hour weeks are all too common in high-powered full-time jobs. The surprise may be not that top talent is looking for ‘permanent temp work’ but that anyone who has a choice would want a traditional job.

The supertemp or flex executive role differs from temporary positions of the past in that it is designed to be short to mid-term and to fill immediate leadership needs, such as change management or short-term contracts that require deep experience and a versatile skill set. And for many of the flex execs this is their chosen work path rather than a placeholder on route to a permanent position.

On the company side, flexibility means offering workers options in shifts, number of hours worked per week, job descriptions and, when possible, location.

For example both Telstra and NAB, headquartered in Melbourne, declared that every job should be flexible, making these companies national leaders in employment flexibility.

So how will Melbourne fare when it comes to delivering flexible work opportunities?

The Committee for Melbourne’s MELBOURNE 4.0 taskforce is developing a City Strategy Model that distinguishes categories by their sensitivity to change. A model done in Amsterdam rates both the Labor Market and Business Climate as ‘very sensitive to change’, and I imagine this is no different for Melbourne.

I can tell you from my own experience that flex execs is the fastest growing area of our business, and that the sectors most of our clients are in understand and appreciate the need for agility and flexibility. And that bodes well for our future workforce.

Melbourne is fortunate to have a significant amount of large enterprises headquartered here, and that number is growing.

These enterprises create a demand for more talent resources, and our geographical accessibility enables easy access to talent, and vice versa.

We have excellent infrastructure, including high-speed broadband, and thus execs can work anywhere anytime. Melbourne is a contemporary, creative city; it offers the best of the best when it comes to food, wine, sport and culture.

If managers and leaders are looking for a city to call home and for access to work options, I am confident our city will be positioned for many years to come as better than any other in Australia, and one of the best in the world.