**NEWS ARTICLE**

Agile working allows AECOM to increase its digital footprint in international projects

**08 May 2023:** As its involvement with international projects increases, globally trusted infrastructure firm [AECOM](http://www.aecom.com) is making use of the hybrid approach to afford its employees the flexibility to spread their work time between working in the office and from home. This model is an offshoot of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown, which saw AECOM take advantage of the digital strategy it had already implemented a few years prior.

Coupled to the hybrid approach is the concept of the agile workplace. It means employees do not have permanent desks but use an app-managed hot desking system whereby they can also book meeting rooms as and when they need them, explains **James Anafi**, Associate Director – Rail, Africa at AECOM.

The hybrid approach is ideal for the rail team as it is virtually doubling in size year-on-year as it grows to match the expanding work demand. Team members have the flexibility to work some days at home and other days in the office for in-person team interactions that also aid quick assimilation of new members.

“The approach suits what employees want to achieve when they are in the office, so it is good for the overall team as well,” says Anafi. For example, employees can book desks next to each other if they need to collaborate. In addition, social areas are available, while there are also quieter secluded areas for more intensive work that requires dedicated concentration.

“Agile work practices offer employees greater freedom to choose when, where and how they want to work, combined with the flexibility of working remotely. This is invaluable in terms of work scheduling, as our projects are often based in other parts of the world and in different time zones,” says Anafi. For example, client meetings often need to be scheduled outside of what are considered normal working hours in South Africa to accommodate international clients.

**Isak Malherbe**, Associate Director – Surface Water Management, Africa at AECOM has a local team spread out over multiple offices in Cape Town, Centurion and Durban that needs to collaborate on projects as a single unit. “In terms of agile or flexible working, as we refer to it, the overriding principle is that it works for the client, the company, the team and its individual members. It is important to strike that balance and accommodate the needs of all at the same time.”

The autonomy engendered by agile working “means the company does not focus on where you work, but on what you are producing and the time and effort expended to achieve a deliverable,” explains **Jeyrisha Stagman**, Digital Solutions Business Analyst at AECOM.

“Personally, it has helped me create and achieve that work-life balance. A lot of us have families and other responsibilities. Just being able to create a schedule where you can juggle different tasks and responsibilities is beneficial in terms of your overall well-being. It also allows you to give of your best in every single one of those different avenues.”

Stagman adds that agile working teaches employees the value of being able to work independently, and to be accountable for their own targets and output. “That has definitely been a move in the right direction since the coronavirus pandemic,” highlights Stagman. She adds that, more importantly, AECOM has the tools in terms of technology to be able to deploy agile working effectively across the entire business.

Anafi highlights that agile working reflects the AECOM culture of global collaboration and interaction. “It is precisely because of this capability that we can participate fully in international projects. We are not confined to set hours and the team is exposed to different technologies in terms of remote working. We can see things happen real-time in different parts of the world. That flexibility allows us to work across different regions simultaneously, which is a definite advantage.” This business model immediately makes AECOM attractive and highly sought after for a range of international projects in diverse locations and industries.

**Stacie Moorhead**, Technical Director at AECOM in Cape Town, says her team focuses predominantly on largescale global projects in different geographies. “The ability to be agile is twofold. Growing a team from scratch is difficult without any in-person time, so having set days in the office is actually very important to catch up as a team. However, at the same time, having more time to devote to personal wellbeing is equally important.” A typical example of this is that agile working effectively mitigates the stress and dead time associated with the daily commute to and from the office.

Malherbe says the main benefit for clients is that AECOM’s curated expertise and experience are available globally and virtually instantaneously wherever it is needed. “Communication channels are more open and adaptable, which expedites the work itself. If a team is fixed in one physical location and is unavailable at any point, it impacts on our ability to service our clients. From that perspective, agile working is essential, particularly when clients rely on our ability to respond rapidly, including multiple requests from multiple clients at the same time.”

Another consequence is that clients no longer need to depend on one AECOM office in a particular region but have access to its global operational base. Agile working allows projects to be allocated strategically to different offices around the world, with the focus on a single outcome for the client.

“Our tactical approach to international projects is to involve several regions for around the clock collaboration. This is invaluable from a client perspective as it speeds up the delivery time and output significantly. It works seamlessly for us, and we can even be called into a meeting anywhere in the world to discuss anything we need to with the client. There is no longer any restriction in terms of time or geography on the service that AECOM delivers globally,” concludes Malherbe.

***Ends***

**Notes to the editor**

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