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Ignacio graduated from Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB). He completed an LLM in Admiralty at Tulane University and is a Specialist in Labour & Employment Law (UCAB, Summa Cum Laude). He completed the Training Programme on International Labour Standards (ILS) offered by ILO's International Training Centre and the International Labour Office. The course covers the ILS and their application in local jurisdictions. Ignacio advises local and international companies

in Venezuela, and coordinates regional counsel for leading multinationals in commercial, civil and corporate law; labour & employment; insurance; technology, data privacy & protection; regulatory law.

He is a member of FEDECAMARAS's Labour Affairs Commission, and was an advisor to the Presidential Commission's Subcommittee on Labour Risks, Social Security reform. He was a member of the Ministry of Labour's Legislative Team to reform social security and labour legislation, and advisor of the National Assembly's Commission of Social Development to reform labour legislation and the Social Security System, and draft occupational health and safety legislation.

Ignacio co-authored the book "Ley Orgánica de Prevención, Condiciones y Medio Ambiente de Trabajo (LOPCYMAT). Compliance and Responsibilities. Analysis and Experiences 2005-2010." This is a landmark work in the area of Occupational Health & Safety.

Ponte Andrade Casanova (PAC) offers high-quality legal services to leading multinational corporations and their subsidiaries, as well as local companies and individuals in Venezuela.

The firm offers advice to industry, commerce, and individuals, and specialises in civil law; commercial law; technology, media & telecommunications (TMT); procedural law; labour law; tax; administrative law; occupational health and safety; banking and insurance law. Among the firm's clients are national and multinational companies in areas like entertainment, digital streaming, VOD and OTT broadcast, and advertising; e-commerce; technology; banking; insurance; telecommunications; household products; food and beverages; oil and mining; among others.

PAC has an alliance with Venezuelan investment firm Grupo Fivenca and actively works with Tamanaco Consulting Group on projects funded and commissioned by the Center for the International Private Enterprise (CIPE). The firm is actively involved with the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Production (FEDECAMARAS), the Venezuelan American Chamber of Commerce (VENAMCHAM), and the Venezuelan Association of Private Equity (VENECAPITAL). The firm participated in the ILO's 109th Session, 2021. PAC has cultivated relationships with law firms throughout Latin America. The firm is part of IR Global, one of the largest professional services networks in the world.

QUESTION ONE
How will increased hybrid working impact commercial decision making – and how can businesses successfully communicate their commercial goals to disparate hybrid workforces?

In Venezuela, hybrid work isn't regulated by any law. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this mode of work has had important growth in the form of home offices, virtual meetings and the creation of a 'new normal' in workplace culture. It created a new future for employment that has allowed the adoption of a hybrid

model of work, both formally and informally, and the possibility of working in multiple workspaces that adapt to each employee.

This brings about new workplace patterns and policies that provide flexibility to employees. Those policies are oriented towards greater productivity rather than work schedules, creating shared virtual workspaces. The rise of hybrid work will have negative and positive effects on decision making, depending on how satisfied the worker is with their workspace, and how this environment harmonises with technology. Employers must be conscious that, in Latin America, a significant number of workers don't have adequate housing, nor the socio-economic conditions that would allow them to work comfortably from their homes without being negatively impacted by their environmental conditions, family responsibilities, or supply of public services.

Companies must take stock of the conditions that their employees work in, to avoid a hybrid workforce that finds itself on unequal footing. A hybrid work plan depends on the workforce's technological equipment, access to the internet, electricity, secure connection to the company's servers, and even family conditions.

QUESTION TWO

Are there businesses in your jurisdiction that are reticent to allow long-term hybrid working? What are the commercial risks for those who refuse requests for partially remote working?

Hybrid work isn't regulated in Venezuela, and instead is treated like working from home (trabajador a domicilio) according to the Labour Law. For this reason, the employer may be reticent towards allowing hybrid work. That said, during the pandemic we saw the Venezuelan business sector promote hybrid work as a way of avoiding contagion, and as a consequence of a lack of public services and access to fuel.

The labour market also responded positively. In Venezuela, pressure to develop hybrid work schemes is due to a series of crises in operational and business continuity that have generated great maturity in many organisations with regard to hybrid work. Future regulations in Venezuela must set employer's and workers' rights and obligations, in relation to hybrid work, that meet international standards. That should include the employer's obligation to supply workers with the necessary technology to carry out their tasks away from the workplace; the right to physical and mental integrity; the right to digital disconnection; ensuring the employees' rest, and; a prohibition from making requests outside of working hours

The elements that could cause some reticence on the part of employers are the lack of supervision over the employee's work, and the possible cases that an employee might only be pretending to work. Given the lack of regulations on hybrid work, we see no commercial risks for those who refuse requests to work in this matter, except those derived from the growth of hybrid work, and the social and labour pressure it exerts on employers.

QUESTION THREE

Hybrid working can have a significant impact on revenue maximisation – how can businesses generate commercial advantages from a hybrid future?

TOP TIPS
Securing commercial success in a hybrid future

- ✓ Successful hybrid work requires empathetic leadership to manage the organisation in the right direction, a structure that allows employees to work effectively and efficiently, and the cautious direction of resources towards building culture and continual learning.
- ✓ Invest in equipping the workforce with tools and skills necessary for higher autonomy. Train managers on how to measure performance equally and fairly for workers in a variety of locations and time zones.
- ✓ The success of a connected workplace depends on an organisation's ability to embrace a flexible culture, support its workforce with technological infrastructure, and provide an environment where innovation and productivity can thrive.
- ✓ Time management is an important skill. In a hybrid environment, employees and managers need to set priorities by hour, by day, by week, and structure their time to address the most important tasks.
- ✓ Security is a number one priority for customers, especially in this transition from remote work to hybrid, so digital transformation cannot happen without security transformation. Educating employees in cyber security best practices, personal device usage policies, and common threats and how to identify them can go a long way toward repelling a wide range of cyber threats.

Before the pandemic, policies, processes, and ways of working originated from the fact that employees spent most of their time working from the office. Now that many people are combining their homes and offices into a single workplace, we must analyse how this can have an impact on productivity and the company's profits, given that hybrid work is a gradual change of focus from the workplace to the purpose of the work itself.

In this new workplace culture, for this to generate competitive advantages they must establish clear guidelines regarding routines, tools and tech, risk and control, as well as flexibility and freedom of choice to ensure a motivated, collaborative, and productive workforce.

Effective communication is fundamental, and it can be achieved through the nurturing of better relations through collaborative hybrid work teams. Hybrid work can contribute to the betterment of workers' wellbeing by reducing the time it takes to commute, the freedom to set their own schedules, and the rise of extra free time for personal activities. It can also optimise work by carrying out individual tasks remotely and carrying out group activities in the office. The hybrid work model must avoid differences and friction between those who work from the office regularly, and those who mainly work remotely.