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## A NEW VIEW & A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Could a remote coworking retreat take your career in a new direction?

**T**he myth of the “seven-year itch” has been disproved in terms of relationships, but there still may be something to it when it comes to careers.

Whether it’s because employers don’t reward loyalty and longevity the way they used to, or because entrepreneurship tends to be increasingly glamorised, the numbers don’t lie: millennials are switching jobs, roles and industries at a younger age and more often than generations before. As a result, career progression has the potential to be big business, and one new industry making the most of this trend is remote coworking.

Thanks to the fact it’s increasingly easy to work remotely, the option of a retreat is no longer just for those who can afford to take a month off from everyday working life – as Michael Youngblood, co-founder of remote coworking startup Unsettled, discovered when he posted a Facebook status asking if any friends would be interested in joining him on a working vacation in Bali. He received 42 affirmative answers. The demand was obvious so he founded Unsettled.

Youngblood’s co-founder, Jonathan Kalan, maintains that the pair’s start-up set the remote coworking trend, but there have been plenty of businesses eager to follow in the enterprise’s adventurous footsteps.

The pack promises: “You’ll never be the same.” Remote Year offers longer-term stays – either four months or, as the name suggests, a full year – and the simple but eye-opening proposition that: “You don’t have to choose between work and travel.” Other remote coworking options

operate from a fixed location rather than a revolving schedule of destinations, while Co-Work Paradise suggests a summit-style schedule for “visionairs” and “A place to face your inner dragon.”

### TAKING BACK YOUR LIFE

So what’s the psychology behind the impulse for some serious soul-searching that extends into the office?

Human behaviour and performance specialist John Demartini explains that for many, it’s simply a case of realising the first time that they can work remotely or work and travel.

Having had someone else take responsibility for our choices throughout our childhoods and our teen years, we tend to run on autopilot in our 20s.

“Between mothers, fathers, preachers and teachers, 20-somethings are subordinating to people who basically run their lives and their morals,” said Demartini. “But when they hit their 30s, sometimes 40s, they realise that they are now the same age as all

these people that they listened to. Then they realise that they gave these people all their decision-making power.”

Of course, those joining a working retreat do so for various reasons, one of which is a complete career reassessment and restart in life. It’s easy to see why the two-for-one deal of an extended holiday and time to focus on yourself and your plans makes for a desirable combination, and it’s well-suited to a range of life stages. When it comes to age, there’s really no such thing as “average” on the trips – ages range between 19 and 75. But for many, it can be a little difficult to understand the point of combining business and pleasure –

why not just go on holiday and come back, refreshed, and get back to work?

For some, an Unsettled trip serves as a later-in-life gap year for reassessing priorities and considering whether to change course in career. For others who’ve already made the leap into starting a new business or freelancing full-time, this is a time for focus on strategic goals – and there’s a good possibility that fellow travellers might become future clients, customers, consultants or suppliers.

“The unique advantage is the global perspective,” Kalan said. “If you look at the world today and how connected we are, it’s impossible to say that experiencing different places and cultures is not beneficial. And when travelling you’re a slightly different person, a more open person – it opens you up to more opportunities that serve you personally and professionally.”

### TRAVEL THROWN IN

So, could it work for you? The price of a trip ranges between \$2,000 (R27,000) and \$3,000 (R40,600) depending on the destination. When costing the trip, its organisers aim to price it at around what it would cost participants to live for a month in their own country – a good deal when you’re getting an overseas trip thrown in. Unsettled experience leader Lynne Scullard explains that an insider’s look at the lifestyle and culture of a destination is a significant part of the appeal of Unsettled because it’s rare to be able to get this kind of experience, and it’s richer than taking a voyeuristic peek into locals’ lives via something like “township tours” that have a tendency to romanticise poverty. About one-third of those joining the trips are creatives, one-third

entrepreneurs, and the remaining third professionals from bankers to once, notably, a racehorse jockey.

Mel Cook and Wendy Dixon are the duo behind the Cape Town chapter of creative workshop Ladies, Wine & Design, and their story begins on an Unsettled retreat. On what motivated her to take the trip, Dixon said: “I was in desperate need of a break but I wanted my time away to be more purposeful than a wild solo escape trip. Unsettled gave me an opportunity to travel and to be productive about figuring out the next step in my career.”

When she and Cook met, the two connected through their work ethic and passion for design. The pair found that their values aligned and began planning ways to make use of their unique strengths while empowering others who found themselves at a creative crossroads.

“I think there is something to be said about removing yourself from the environment that you’re used to working in to get some perspective,” Dixon said. “I found a great amount of focus on my trip and a lot of complicated thoughts I had in my head fell into place.”

With old habits broken, she was able to pour her focus into a project that genuinely held her passion.

Far from being chronic job-hoppers with no sense of direction, millennials are intent on finding work that provides meaning and an income – and re-evaluating might be the way to do that, whether new priorities mean a new job or not. As Demartini put it: “You can go and do what you love, and get other people to do what you don’t find inspiring, or you can link what you’re doing to what you value – and find the job you’re doing now could help you get what you want.”

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