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## WPP Australia staff face get back to the office directive



By [Chris Pash](#) | 10 January 2025

1 Comment

The more than 3,000 staff at WPP Australia, including at GroupM, Ogilvy, Mindshare and Wavemaker, are about to have their working from home days cut.

WPP is the first of the global advertising groups to mandate four days in the office, starting in April.

Previously the group's head office in the UK wanted three days and many of the international offices and agencies followed local norms.



Credit: Lucia Macedo

Insiders say the directive by CEO Mark Read applies to all markets equally.

"It's important that we take a consistent approach across our agencies, who will communicate the requirements to you in detail," Read told staff in a memo.

The necessity of working from home during the early dark days of the pandemic proved that the office wasn't the secret to productivity.

"Most people can be trusted to work without direct supervision. And, with today's technology, fluidity of communication is not hugely affected," according to [Elie Angell](#), business director, TrinityP3.

One, apparently tongue in cheek, [comment on Glassdoor](#), where anonymous information on working conditions can be shared: "WPP mandates four days per week in office. Which means employees still have 3 days per week to work from home."

A creative director replied: "If I work past midnight, does that count as 2 days? Because that happens all the time."

And an art director: "Oh god please no. I can't get any work done in the office because no one will shut up and it's so distracting in there. I only get real work done once most of the office clears out by 4:30. I feel like agencies are going to see their productivity go way down if they implement rigid office hours."

In Australia, WPP made it into [LinkedIn's list of top companies in Australia to work for](#) in 2022 but this may be harder to achieve in the future.

Recruiters say [three days a week at the office has emerged as the standard](#). Four days isn't as attractive to talent seeking roles.

"Full-time roles working onsite are still very much undesirable," according to Lee Shorter, practice manager, design & technology at recruiters Aquent Australia.

"I'd say on the whole there are more agencies wanting this than for in-house roles, again highlighting the lack of flexibility as a key reason why agency folk look to make the move brand-side."

The shift won't be easy for WPP, and any holding company following.

Most have been cutting back on office real estate, pulling down overheads and improving profit margins in a tough market.

Read at WPP has flagged the problem, a need to "address capacity requirements".

"We know that for some colleagues this new policy will require adjustments to their routines and arrangements, which is why it will not come into effect until April — giving people time to make any changes they need to," Read said in his company-wide note.

"There is also work to do between now and April to ensure we make the best use of our workspaces.

"Our WPP campuses offer superb working environments in beautifully designed buildings with leading environmental credentials.

"But it will take detailed planning in the coming months to address capacity requirements and other related areas, and I'd like to thank the teams who are already hard at work figuring that out."

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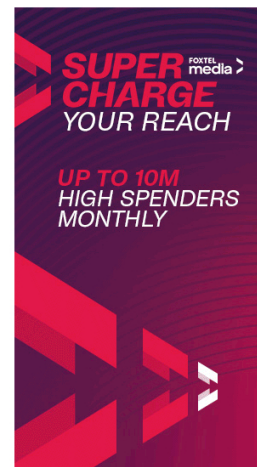
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And the reason for going to four days is down to getting the "best" from the work force.

"Teams of talented individuals, working towards common goals, are what drives growth for our clients and our agencies," said Read.

"I believe that we do our best work when we are together in person. It's easier to learn from each other, it's a better way to mentor colleagues starting out in the industry, and it helps us win pitches as a truly integrated team.

"The data from across WPP agencies shows that higher levels of office attendance are associated with stronger employee engagement, improved client survey scores and better financial performance.

"More of our clients are moving in this direction and expecting it of the teams who work with them. For all these reasons, spending more time together is important to all of us."

But there will be some who won't be in the office four days.

"There will be a clear process to request additional flexibility — including for those with caring responsibilities, health issues and other considerations," Read said. "Some roles that have always been fully or largely remote will continue as they are."

WPP has been restructuring in a tough advertising market, merging agencies, consolidating back office functions and seeking better productivity via AI investments.

In the [September quarter](#), revenue less pass-through costs, a metric used by WPP, showed like-for-like at 0.5%.

Read is aiming to turn around weak growth, seeking higher margins and improved cash generation.

WPP is seeking annualised net cost savings of £125 million (AUD240 million) in 2025, with 40% to 50% of that expected to be achieved in 2024.

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As an award winning creative I really appreciate articles like this. I'll be adding WPP to the list of legacy agencies that I'll never work for. Cheers!  
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