NEW NORMAL: NEW NORMS IN THE WORKPLACE
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The country has one of the most competitive labor force not just in the entire Asia-Pacific Region but in the world. Filipinos are everywhere to be found in the Earth be it in the field of education, health and medicine, engineering, customer service, technology and even agriculture. Filipinos are indeed great contributors in the economic development of the country they serve and the Philippines as well. Going to the office or workstation has been a normal activity of their daily lives and sometimes they even make it the extension of their homes.

However, with the current situation being faced by almost of the countries in the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work arrangements of the people drastically changed. Most of the country’s public and private employees have sudden shift from working in the office to working from home with the exemptions of the essential workers in the food industries, peace and order, and medical workers or those we call as “frontliners”. This change in the work arrangements was in accordance with the Republic Act No.11469 also known as the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act”. This law was enacted last March 2020 granting the President additional authority to combat the COVID-19. According to the article published online by the Office of the Presidential Spokeperson dated March 24 this year, there was really an urgent need to implement measures that will help address the health scare brought about by the pandemic in our country. And due to this, President Rodrigo Duterte was enforced to order quarantine measures that prevent the spread of the virus. The Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) implemented have forced most of the workers to conduct work from home scheme.

It is true that the virus greatly affected people from all walks of life most especially those in the marginalized sectors. While the country is in the current battle with the COVID-
19, it is also equally important to open the economy so Filipinos will not starve to death. The work from home scheme will definitely give opportunities among public and private employees to continuously provide necessities for their families and on the other side helping the government and the economy to be competitive in the midst of the pandemic.

But workers are still in the adjustment period with this work from home arrangements. There are challenges identified which affected this new norm in the workplace. One of the challenges is the availability of the internet in their homes. It cannot be ignored that not all workers can afford high-speed internet connection or WIFI but rather rely on the mobile data. Meetings and conferences are now being done online to avoid mass gathering. Online chat and video conferencing platforms like that of Zoom, Google Classroom, Skype, Viber and Facebook Messenger are only some of the many means of communication being utilized by the workers and even by the students who are having online classes.

COVID-19 is really a big threat to everyone and it is imperative for the government to determine means on how to counteract the effects of the virus. The work from home scheme is just one of the means to continuously live and enjoy life while the pandemic is still there. People are also not encouraged to just rely on the subsidies being given by the government but to also find ways on how they will continue with their lives. Sometimes we just need to embrace the new norms in this new normal.

References: