



traffic congestion

flexitime improves both morale and motivation among staff."

Certainly, flexitime seems more feasible in the services industry and for those employees who are office-bound. The logic is that flexitime is simply not practical in manufacturing or long-distance haulage, for example. But even that paradigm is slowly changing. As the UK's K3 Business Technology Group opines, "Flexible working is part of the solution for many manufacturing and distribution companies facing shrinking order books to maintain the nucleus of their skilled staff. Businesses realise the value of the skills, knowledge and experience of a loyal workforce. Without them, they will not be able to react fully to an economic upturn."

Patrick Karani of the Development Bank of Southern Africa made the very pertinent point that, "Roads are effective but not efficient modes of transportation." They are even less so when choked with traffic. Our's is a country where the government insists on spending far more money on expanding existing roads and building new roads than on extending viable public transport. Let's face it – public transport in this country is either non-existent, irregular, impractical or downright dangerous. We, therefore, need to do everything we can to curtail our time spent on the roads, and especially at rush hour.

To conclude: Traffic congestion is worsening, and traffic is an enemy in our midst. Every feasible, reasonable effort must be made to stop the ecologically unsustainable, stress-inducing madness that is the eight-to-five obsession in this country.

Author H G Wells wrote, "Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race." Fine sentiments indeed, except try riding a bicycle to work in Johannesburg, or Durban, or in most places in South Africa. For now, we must make do with our enslavement to the motorcar and the taxi. As such, we need to be more open-minded and even radical about the very way in which we get to and from work. ■

three times the risk of having a heart attack within an hour. Many of those interviewed had been driving in heavy traffic within one hour prior to their heart attack. "One potential factor could be the exhaust and air pollution coming from other cars," Annette Peters, a researcher said. "But we can't exclude the synergy between stress and air pollution that could tip the scale."

THE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY MOTIVATION

Employees stuck in traffic for long periods, sometimes even hours, every working day cannot be good for efficiency and productivity. As traffic gets worse and more time-consuming for many employees, so it becomes one of the most hated aspects of the working day. A Regus study released in March found that traffic congestion and crowded public transportation systems were the top causes of stress and declining productivity among Hong Kong employees. As the study stated, "No business wants employees turning up to work already exhausted and stressed out, unable to function properly during the working day."

Flexitime or any variation thereof is definitely one means to combat the ever-

growing sprawl that is traffic. Allowing people to come to work and leave work at different, staggered times, for example, should go some way to easing traffic burdens, in that the "rush hour" will become less defined, more dispersed. There have been countless studies on the benefits of flexitime for employees. Pursuant to its Hong Kong employee study, Regus stated that, "...we advocate flexible working locations and hours to avoid all these [traffic-related] stresses and strains which can have such an adverse effect on employees' throughput, motivation and happiness. Travelling to a work location closer to home, especially outside peak hours, is often the best way to avoid sources of stress for a happier, calmer and ultimately more fruitful day's work."

Michelle McGinty wrote in *The Independent* that, "Flexibility is the 21st century buzzword in the workplace." She goes on to cite how, "the figures supporting more flexible working are persuasive. A recent study revealed that 70 per cent of senior executives who were in a job-share were generating 30 per cent more output than one person doing the same job. And another study revealed that 85 per cent of human resources managers believe allowing

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