

Insights into the 24by7 Model

A 24/7 economy does not mean…

… an individual working continuously for 24 hours. Rather it means that a country’s economic activities are ongoing and many activities are happening concurrently. Most of us are used to starting work at 9 a.m. and finishing at 4 or 5 p.m. However, the rigidity of this traditional work schedule is hampering the effective growth of our economy. As most offices and shops close their doors as from 4 or 5 p.m., this means that economic and also social activities come to a standstill and our towns and villages are transformed into desert and dormant areas every evening. We believe that the 24 by 7 concept, which would entail extended hours of operation, would be beneficial to both our economy and our society. Those who have travelled to major cities know that this model is possible and viable. Dubai, Hong-Kong, Singapore, London and New York are cities where economic activity and social life do not stop at 5 p.m. These hubs enjoy a very high rate of commercial activity thus impacting positively on their attractivity for tourists. They also enjoy very good economic growth thanks to extended office hours. A new vision for Mauritius We believe that this model can also be applied to Mauritius. Just imagine... Imagine being able to carry out office transactions and to have access to administrative services until late in the evening, to do late-night shopping, to attend social events at any time of the day...

Not only are these outcomes desirable, they are also important for the future of our country. Though Mauritius is a small island developing state, our ambitions and expectations for economic and social development have always been high and rightly so. Despite the onslaught of external factors of destabilisation, we have always been able to resist and overcome the obstacles to our economic development. The current economic situation with a looming recession poses yet more challenges to our small nation. And again, we think that we can make it by adopting the 24 by 7 culture. Transforming our economy into a 24 by 7 one will indeed represent a boost to our development not only for short or medium-term gains but also for sustained growth. Of course, such a model requires proper planning, adequate infrastructure and more importantly flexibility on the part of all actors, including employers and employees. It should again be stressed that 24 by 7 does not mean that an individual will work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Rather, it means that the economy will operate on extended hours (ideally 24 by 7) thanks to alternative work practices such as flexi-time, shift work, etc. This will require a new mindset both for our workforce and for our employers. Our workers need to become more flexible to adapt to different hours of work and employers need to review their organisational plans and HR policies to provide more motivation to workers. If all stakeholders collaborate in this project, we do believe that our nation will become stronger economically and socially.

In a nutshell, we believe that the 24 by 7 or extended hours model can:

- give access to goods and services on a 24-hour basis including public transport for all;
 - increase leisure, entertainment and late night shopping facilities offered after office hours;
 - allow employees to achieve better work-life balance through flexible work practices (e.g. a parent can adjust his/her working hours to be with the child);
 - provide more choices as well as employment opportunities, including for those who wish to be involved in various types of jobs and activities (for instance, disabled people and women can take up jobs as per their convenience);
 - attenuate traffic congestion and demand for public transportation at peak hours (since all officers do not need to resume duty at the same time in the morning);
 - lessen pressure and stress on employees to reach their work place at peak hours in the morning;
 - reduce break-ins and other crimes since there would be more "eyes on the street" round the clock
- Additionally, we believe that the 24 by 7 economy can:
- enhance productivity at the work place;
 - reduce skills shortage;
 - encourage the widespread use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to foster innovation in the way we work;
 - encourage the development of clusters so as to enhance service delivery;
 - foster an effective entrepreneurial environment that will nurture the development of SMEs;
- Above all, this initiative is meant to:
- allow Mauritius to be part of global supply chain networks;
 - improve the international competitiveness of the productive sectors of the economy, thereby promoting economic development;
- Provided it is well planned and managed, the 24 by 7 economy can only widen the circle of opportunities for ALL.