

## Students

As tomorrow's employees and employers, you will be part of the generation which will live in an increasingly competitive, technology-driven and globalised world. Mauritius has already started its journey towards becoming a 24/7 economy and you will surely be working and living in such an economy when you enter the workforce. What is a 24/7 economy? A '24/7' or 'round-the-clock' economy does NOT mean that people have to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Instead, it means that it is the country's economic activities which are ongoing and operational on a 24-hour basis. As future employees, you will definitely maintain your standard 35-hour or 40-hour working week but will be working differently. The main difference is that business activities will not cease or come to a standstill at 5pm. Mauritius will no longer be 'closed for business' at 5 pm! Why should we embrace the 24/7 economic model? Most people complain about the lack of activities after 5 pm and rightly so. In this day and age, it is inconceivable that people cannot pay their bills, do their shopping, or socialise after work because most facilities are closed. The scene of someone running to catch the last bus is only too familiar. A 24/7 culture is believed to be the panacea to these 'problems' to a large extent. There are also other multiple reasons that justify the shift to this new paradigm. Most of them are related to the changing nature of the economy. Indeed, the future of employment opportunities is closely linked to the ability of our industries (from manufacturing to services-oriented industries) to respond to the challenges of globalisation, increased competition and to the need of customers who increasingly demand goods and services on a 24-hour basis. As such, our traditional 9am-to-4pm model poses a serious threat to our ability to compete against other players on the international scene but also to respond to the growing demands of a domestic market geared towards modernity. A 24/7 culture is characterised by the adoption of alternative and flexible work practices

You may be used to seeing adults around you who have, up to now, always worked under the standard 9am-to-4pm time schedule. How will the 24/7 work culture change this? Why should you, as the workers of tomorrow prepare to work any differently? A 24/7 economy is intrinsically linked with the adoption of what is known as Alternative Work Practices. As employees, you will not work more, but differently! The widespread usage of state-of-the-art and innovative information technology (IT) and communication devices (e.g. information systems, emails, mobile phones, PDAs etc.) has made the traditional concept of the 'stationary office workplace' obsolete for many jobs across various industries. For instance, flexible work practices such as flexi time, telecommuting, work from home and shift work can be used as tools to ensure round-the-clock operation with proper negotiation between employers and employees so that everyone benefits from the arrangements. As employees, you will be able to better balance your social and personal obligations with work. Young graduates are increasingly requesting these new work practices from their employers. Moreover, several HR studies have revealed that employees' flexibility is becoming today's preferred 'work benefit' surpassing other typical benefits such as 'car and travelling allowance' and 'pension funds'. In a society which has moved from the agrarian model to the industrial model and now to the knowledge-based society, the transformation into a 24/7 economy is in fact a natural one. As tomorrow's workforce, you will be privileged to live life in the modern 24/7 society where the mantra will be 'Live Life 24/7!' A number of soirées spéciales is scheduled in the forthcoming months in a number of popular venues and nightclubs to explain and promote the concept and gain your support.