

Stefan Botha  
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Forward

Dear Optimi family

Hope all is well. As you will know, South Africa's COVID-19 lockdown regulations were adjusted to level 1 from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October. The 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of COVID-19 infections have subsided, and the number of new daily infections have reduced to 730 (7-day average on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, see the graph below), the lowest it has been since the start of the 1<sup>st</sup> wave in May 2020.

As a result of this positive change, our daily lives are slowly returning to normality. Our roads have become busy, restaurants and shopping malls are again filled with people, and larger gatherings have resumed. While the risk of infection is still real (and you should continue to be vigilant and keep to the necessary safety precautions), we can now also reduce the restrictions at our various Optimi sites and offices.

This e-mail serves to inform you of 2 important matters: Optimi's return to office policy, and our COVID-19 vaccination policy.

### **Return to office policy**

We have now become used to working from Home as the "new normal". The Optimi EXCO however believes that remote working has had a negative impact on our productivity, our team interaction and cohesiveness, individual mental health, and our overall business performance. After detailed consideration, and in line with the relaxing of lockdown regulations, we have taken the decision to implement a return to office policy. All Optimi sites and offices are currently open for business, and all employees are required to have an office presence by latest 1 November 2021 (explained in more detail below). The only exception will be our Cape Town office, which is currently closed for renovations (some of our employees in Cape Town are using the IT Academy office as a temporary measure).

While the specific requirements for each team returning to the office will be established by the various Heads of Department, our expectation is that employees should return to the office for at least 2 days per week. Given that the COVID-19 virus still poses a risk, Heads of Department will be required to coordinate attendance such that our daily occupancy does not exceed 50% of total office capacity, in order to ensure that adequate social distancing and other safety protocols are observed. The wearing of suitable facemasks will remain a requirement in our sites and offices. Should a particular staff member have a medical reason as to why they may not return, please discuss this with your direct manager. Our Human Resources department will monitor the implementation of this policy to ensure that it remains fair and safe.

As previously communicated, we remain committed to allow a flexible working arrangement in the longer term. This will obviously depend on the requirements of your role – some employees will perform better when they work from home for a few days per week, while others need to be in the office full time to be able to do their jobs.

**COVID-19 vaccination policy**

As an organisation we have a responsibility to ensure that our working environment is safe. We therefore need to balance the above business requirement (returning to work) with the health and safety of our employees. To this extent, the Optimi EXCO has taken the decision that no employee will be allowed on any of the Optimi sites and offices from 1 January 2022 unless they are able to produce valid proof of full COVID-19 vaccination, or a negative PCR test on a weekly basis.

As an employer, Optimi encourages our staff to be vaccinated. Peer-reviewed research has proven that the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination far outweigh the risks, and that it significantly reduces the risk of transmission to others. We do respect the rights of individuals to have freedom of choice, so will not force any person to be vaccinated. It does however remain the responsibility of each staff member to ensure that they are able to perform their duties as expected, and be present at the office where work requirements dictate.

In our recent employee survey on the above matters, we realised that a large section of our staff is still unsure about their decision to vaccinate. As part of our ongoing employee health and wellness drive, we will provide an opportunity for employees to engage with a credible expert during a webinar on this matter (HR will send details in due course).

I trust that you find the above in order, and look forward to seeing you back at the office soon. Heads and Managers – please make sure that all your team members have received this e-mail.

Kind regards,

**Stefan Botha**  
Chief Executive Officer

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