

Flexible Working

A Worklife Company Paper Coach



The Business Case for Flexible Working

The business world is more competitive than ever. Technological advances are rapid. Customer expectations have increased. Many businesses now have to work longer hours or provide a 24 hour service.

Many elements combine to make a successful business: finance; products and services; marketing; technology; innovation; and importantly, people. Management priorities need to be allocated appropriately and effort applied where 'bottom line' improvements will follow.

People are the most important resource for almost all organisations. The application of their skills and knowledge in producing goods and services, dealing with customers and processing transactions is the business.

Recruiting the best, keeping trained staff and maintaining productivity means ensuring terms and conditions which attract and motivate people.

For both men and women, juggling work and home commitments is an increasingly difficult balance to achieve and a source of considerable lifestyle stress with knock on effects for performance at home or at work.

Properly planned flexible employment practices that enable

What is Flexible Working?

Flexible working can be defined as any change to working hours, place of work and patterns of work for employees, and can be business or employee driven.

According to CIPD, flexible working "relates to an organisation's working arrangements in terms of working time, working location and the pattern of working".

The best working arrangements are those that most closely meet the needs of both the business and the people who work there. The key is flexibility.

Companies are introducing flexible working arrangements because of the benefits to their businesses. They reflect the changing needs of both customer and employee.





employees to achieve a better work-life balance can lead to significant business improvements. These benefits can be costed and monitored.

Flexible working can be defined as any change to working hours that are outside the traditional 9 to 5 Monday to Friday practice. There are many types of flexible working and these are outlined in this guide, defining the business case for worklife balance and flexible working is key to getting started. To quantify the business case, begin to measure the general indicators of imbalance and the cost of these to your organization or team. The general indicators are:

- Absence
- Turnover of staff (attrition)
- Stress and pressure
- Workload and overwork
- Long hours
- Diversity challenges
- Productivity
- Reduced employee satisfaction or morale
- Reduced customer satisfaction or loyalty

It is also important to understand these issues by

cutting the data in a way that identifies if there are any specific 'hotbeds' of imbalance. For example, a specific department may have high absence or workload pressure, or a specific group or grade of employee. By measuring imbalance in this way, you will gain clarity about certain priorities and as a result, plan your initiatives.

Whilst the need for flexibility applies to all staff, some organisations prefer to begin by focusing on those who have a legal right to request it. In my experience it works better if it is 'flexibility for all' and 'reason neutral' in order that the system is easier to administer and legal issues or backlash do not occur. Many worry that it will be 'opening the floodgates', but the fact is that about 72% of your workforce will want to retain their current working pattern, and you will only need to cater for the remaining 28%. Flexible working creates choice. Those who feel as though they have no choice but to work for an out of date management system and culture.





1440 minutes in a day... so why cram work into the daylight hours?

Every day at midnight, we each get 1440 minutes given to us, and yet we cram the working day into the daylight hours between 9 and 5. The result is traffic jams, busy commutes, unproductive people working against their body clock, children woken, dressed and dispatched to childcare providers and businesses out of sync with other time-zones. Flexible working allows you to stagger hours to suit business, the customer and people's personal lives.

It is time to cut time differently.

Customer Need

What if you were able to consider optimum business hours to suit your customer's buying cycle? When does your customer need you or want you? Some companies need to work 24 x 7, 365 days of a year like a hospital, or global delivery organisation, but some do not and so a 24x7 operation is not beneficial. Other organisations experience cycles, or seasonality like a restaurant, shop or consultancy. In these organisations, they may have peak months, peak weeks or cycles within a day. Others work more project based with massive demands for short bursts of time.

Look at the data, when are the peaks and troughs, when are the cycles in your business? Once you know, you can then consider the right type of flexible working to suit your organisation.

Personal Need

Flexible working is good for the reasons and seasons of people's lives too.

Providing flexibility is the most effective method of attracting and retaining diversity of staff. For

example, people over the age of 50 often want to reduce hours to take up other life pursuits, and parents sometimes need to look after children during school holidays. Why not combine the two generations to create a job share over a year? The older person can cover the school holidays when the father is at home with the children, and the father can cover term time, when his job share partner is enjoying his own life pursuits. This is a win-win for everyone: the organisation gets the job done and the employees meet their work and life goals.

People need flexible working for reasons – usually short term and to serve a need that they currently have, or for seasons – usually longer term and to serve an on-going need. The first rarely affects terms and conditions of employment, the second usually does (there are some exceptions).

Implementing Flexible Working

If flexible working is new to your organisation, then why not focus on one area to pilot new ways of working? Focussing on one area allows you to test and measure the impact before rolling it out. For example, a 'Focus on Fathers' initiative can explore what kinds of flexibility works for dads in the organisation and why some men may feel reticent to try part-time working or apply for parental leave. Alternatively, you may wish to focus on a specific group, like carers, generations, ethnic backgrounds or faiths or a department or function that has a business need for flexibility. Each area of focus is legitimate, but make sure that you always retain a vision of 'flexibility for all'.

The Benefits

Benefits to the Organisation	Benefits to the Employee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced attrition • Reduced absenteeism • Reduced costs • Increase in staff loyalty • Improved productivity • Improved morale and motivation • Improved customer satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased job satisfaction • Increased flexibility • More time for family and other interests • Increased trust • Improved working relationships • Reduced stress • Improved time management

Considering Applications for Flexible Working

Managers have a legal duty to give serious consideration to requests for flexible working from working parents and carers. Other requests should also be considered. You will need to look at how different situations can be accommodated in a way that does not affect the business need. Flexible working should be based on personal circumstances and business need. Key points are:

- **Be Fair.** This is not about treating everyone exactly the same. This is about supporting a consistent approach to evaluating requests based on business and employee need. Use the information and procedure in this guide to apply consistency for each application.
- **Talk to Employees.** It is easy as managers to always talk to employees about tasks and objectives. We often forget to get to know about the general things that affect them outside work.
- **Change Measures.** You may need to change the emphasis away from input in terms of hours to output in terms of results. Think creatively about how you can make it work not why it won't.

There will always be circumstances where, due to the needs of the business, you may decide that you are unable to accept a request. In such circumstances, where there is a clear business ground, you may do so. A business ground for refusal must be from one of those recorded in legislation – so check with your HR team or employment lawyer.



Types of Flexible Working

The law allows eligible employees to request:

- A change to the hours they work (generally reduced hours)
- A change to the times when they are required to work (rearranged hours)
- A change to the location from where they work from (e.g. work from home)

At a simple level this might be an application for a working pattern such as to start work half an hour later to take a child to school and make up the time later in the day. Or, it may involve a more complex change that could affect an employee's overall pay and other terms & conditions of employment.

There are several types of flexible working arrangements, within these three broad categories.

- **Rearranged hours.** The options here are for annualised hours, staggered hours or flexitime working
- **Reduced hours.** The options here are for part-time working, job-sharing or term-time working
- **Work Location.** This includes working from home on either a temporary or a permanent basis.

The implications of each are outlined below to help you consider the feasibility of any requests for flexible working



Flexible Working Matrix

Flexible Working Option	Things to Consider	Benefit to Employee	Benefit to Organisation
Re-Arranged Hours			
Annualised hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Min and Max Hours Changes at short notice to roster Overtime payments Accumulation of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased blocks of time at certain times Ability to modify work patterns to suit personal circumstances Level salary every month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resourcing matched to peak times Absenteeism reduced Reduces overtime costs
Flexitime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Impact Health and Safety Work time guidelines Rest times Logging and measuring time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance work and home commitments Miss out on rush hour traffic Less interruptions Extra Hours = extra time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced clock watching Reduced absenteeism Recruitment and retention Resourcing to match peak times
Reduced Hours			
Part-time working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of hours worked Communication Meeting times Access to training Tasks and time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to work and earn when otherwise may not be able to Keeps skills up to date Part of a team, relationships and friends Balancing work with life demands Reduces childcare costs for parents Increased morale and job satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced absenteeism Recruitment and retention Resourcing to match peak times Skill sets, experience and motivation Encourages process and not task focus
Job sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours worked Shared or Divided responsibility Handover arrangements Meetings and communication Training 		
Term time working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication during absent periods Salary averaged out over 12 months Cover for holidays Duration of term time contract 		
Breaks From Work			
Career breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligibility Length of break Communication Re-entry and integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a break with confidence to return Continued contact with team Time for family commitments Prevents burn-out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention of experienced employee Refreshed and rested employee on return Reduces stress and burn-out
Shorter breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of Break Pay and benefits Communication Other ways—compassionate leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time out at short notice for emergency Time for family commitments Reduced worry and stress about work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced costs due to sickness absence Improved employee commitment Improved employee satisfaction
Changes in Work place			
Working From Home Flexi-Place Tele-working Company Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Job content Resources, Insurance etc. Health and Safety Provision of work Meetings and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No or less commuting More control over when and how they work Improved quality of work-life Less interruptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved productivity Reduced absenteeism Reduction in facilities costs Improved recruitment and retention

You can't throw technology or people at it!



Technology is one investment that can be made to support the success of flexible working. However, you cannot just throw technology at it, and hope that it solves the flexible working challenge. You will need to look at:

The culture – will employees be trusted with the technology they are given? How will you manage the fears about security, misuse and ownership? Will employees be able to use their own technology? For Culture, think trust, honesty and respect for diversity.

The management skills – Are managers equipped to support flexible workers? Virtual workers? Managers must be skilled in not only managing the time and task of flexible workers, but emotionally intelligent enough to manage the relationships, emotions, performance and communication within and beyond their teams.

Employee Expectation – where employees are involved in the design and implementation of flexible working, it succeeds. Create employee dialogue groups, online social media pages and face-to-face events that ensure the sustainability of morale and motivation.

Once these things are in place, the next step is to ensure the technology itself supports the individual.

That means:

- Use of Virtual Meetings, webinars and training like Citrix GoTo products and services (remember, you can currently invite up to six people onto a GoToMeeting Face to Face! Work with your employees to ensure that there is a hi-speed broadband line in their home and that they have access to your servers – internal or cloud.
- IT support - Remove the barriers, IT functions should act like an internal business, delivering service to an internal customer. Look for ways to encourage creativity and investment in the management of the virtual worker. Encourage your IT function to benchmark best practice.

teams can get together – physically or virtually. Design ways in which employees can be involved in projects and activities beyond the task they do. HR support – HR and L&D should define the strategy and implementation of practices that remove the barriers to people working flexibly. They must ensure that processes, like performance management and reward & recognition, are designed to support managers to manage the flexible worker. Remember, a line manager may rarely see an employee, so Appraisal and benefits systems must take this into account.



The Human Touch – we are herding animals, and so when expecting people to work virtually, it is important to provide access to times when

Flexible Support



The Worklife Company has over 15 years of experience supporting organisations and individuals to design, implement and track flexible working. Whether it is support to understand employee needs, or a Worklife Evolution® diagnostic to understand your organisation's culture and readiness, we have the experience to support you in a pragmatic and practical way.

Our coaches and consultants are experienced in flexible working, worklife balance, diversity, management development and organizational change. We pride ourselves on our integrity, our teamwork, our customer focus and our ability to create great places to work.

Flexible working is now a business imperative. It is time to change the way that work works... for your business, for your employees, for your communities and for our planet. It is time to make a difference.

Culture Change

Management Development

Business Case Analysis

Gender Difference

Employee Focus Groups



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Development Coaching

Work Pattern Design



Employee Surveys

