

Introduction

Workplace flexibility encompasses the full range of options that offer ongoing benefits to organizations, employees, and communities, for example:

- Scheduling of hours (flextime, compressed workweeks, shift flexibility).
- Amount of hours (part time, job sharing).
- Place of work (telecommuting, seasonal relocation).
- Management of time (meeting-free flexibility, report late).
- Organization of career (off- and on-ramps, leaves of absence).
- Other time off (personal days, floating holidays, vacation buying).

Sustaining a flexible workplace is critical to business success for many reasons. A flexible workplace:

- Supports employees' work-life effectiveness and helps enable employees to be the best they can be both on and off the job.
- Helps their firms stay competitive in attracting the emerging workforce (including new graduates and older workers) and retaining quality employees.
- Helps organizations and individuals reduce their carbon footprint.
- Provides a tool that can be used in a variety of ways during tough economic times — to offer an alternative to layoffs, to reduce commute time and fuel expense, and to help keep employees engaged and committed as the business focus changes and budgets are tightened.
- Contributes to contingency planning for natural disasters, pandemics, and other crisis situations.

In leading companies, flexibility is no longer merely about accommodating highly valued talent. Business leaders are learning how to position flexibility as a powerful management tool used to accomplish work more efficiently, while caring about the needs of employees and bringing strategic value to the organization. When most successful, flexibility becomes an everyday part of the organization's culture, where employees and managers discover a variety of creative ways to schedule and accomplish work.

As employees everywhere strive to juggle all of their work and life commitments, workplace flexibility has hit primetime with flexible work arrangements (flextime, compressed workweek, part time, job sharing, and telecommuting), informal ad hoc flexible options, shift flexibility, and flexibility that enables career breaks. In the most advanced stage, workplace flexibility becomes a part of the culture and an elemental component in the daily workplace.

Telework Enhancement Act of 2010

On December 9, 2010, President Obama signed the Telework Enhancement Act into law, which aims to significantly boost teleworking by federal employees. The law requires all federal agencies to establish telework policies within six months. The act establishes all of the following:

- The head of each executive agency must establish a policy under which eligible employees of the agency may be authorized to telework, determine eligibility, and notify employees.
- Creates an interactive telework training program and a central telework website.
- Provides that each agency must have a telework managing officer to be devoted to policy development and implementation related to agency telework programs.

According to the act, **telework** or **teleworking** is a work flexibility arrangement under which an

employee performs the duties and responsibilities of the employee's position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.

Limitations

An employee may not telework under a telework policy if either of the following apply:

- The employee has been officially disciplined for being absent without permission for more than five days in any calendar year.
- The employee has been officially disciplined for violations of subpart G of the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch for viewing, downloading, or exchanging pornography, including child pornography, on a federal government computer or while performing official federal government duties.

Participation Requirements

The required policy must:

- Ensure that telework does not diminish employee performance or agency operations.
- Require a written agreement that meets both of the following stipulations:
 - Is entered into between an agency manager and an employee authorized to telework and outlines the specific work arrangement to which the parties have agreed.
 - Is mandatory in order for any employee to participate in telework.
- Provide that an employee may not be authorized to telework if the performance of that employee does not comply with the terms of the written agreement between the agency manager and that employee.
- Except in emergency situations as determined by the head of an agency, the option to telework does not apply to any employee of the agency whose official duties require on a daily basis (every workday) either of the following:
 - Direct handling of secure materials determined to be inappropriate for telework by the agency head.
 - On-site activity that cannot be handled remotely or at an alternate worksite.

For example, Border Patrol agents, Veterans Affairs Department nurses, prison guards, and Transportation Security Administration screeners would not be permitted to telework.

- Be incorporated as part of the continuity of operations plans of the agency in the event of an emergency.

Agencies also must set up interactive training programs for employees and managers, designate high-ranking telework managing officers who would set policies and report to the agency head, and incorporate teleworking into their continuity of operations plans to keep running during snowstorms, terrorist attacks, or other emergencies.

Prohibited Discrimination

All teleworkers and nonteleworkers must be treated the same for all of the following purposes:

- Periodic appraisals of job performance.

- Training, rewarding, reassigning, promoting, reducing in grade, retaining, and removing employees.
- Work requirements.
- Other acts involving managerial discretion.

Definitions, Benefits, and Common Approaches

This section provides an overview of various types of workplace flexibility (flextime, compressed workweek, job sharing, part-time work, telecommuting, and other time-off flexibility), potential benefits to employees and employers, and practical examples.

Flextime

Flextime is when the workday start and end times differ from the workgroup's standard, yet the same number of hours per day is maintained. Some potential benefits of offering flextime are:

- Improved efficiency if work schedules match employees' most productive hours.
- Employees retain more control over scheduling personal responsibilities on either end of the workday.
- Allows for commuting to and from the workplace outside of peak rush hours.

Some common approaches to providing flextime are as follows:

- **Core hours:** Established range of time when everyone must be at work with flexibility on either end of the workday. For example, core hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., but employees may start as early as 7 a.m. or leave as late as 6 p.m.
- **Daily flex:** Regular daily schedule that varies from the standard, such as working from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Variable flex:** Ability to take time off during the workday to attend a school function, doctor's appointment, and make up the time on either end of the workday or later in the week or pay period.
- **Summer time flex:** Work hours differ during the summer months. For example, a summer plan might apply where the employees' workload during the months of May to September is not as demanding. Under the plan, employees are permitted to work an extra 30 minutes Monday through Thursday in order to leave work at 12:30 p.m. on Fridays.
- **Day-of-the-week flex:** Work hours are flexed on a particular day of the week, such as Fridays.

Compressed Workweek

A **compressed workweek** is a full-time option that enables employees to work longer days for part of a week or pay period in exchange for shorter days or a day off during that week or pay period. A few potential benefits of offering a compressed workweek are:

- Improved productivity if some work can best be accomplished during quieter times of the day.
- More days off.
- Decreased number of days that employees commute to and from the workplace.
- Allows for commuting to and from the workplace outside of peak rush hours.

Some common approaches to providing a compressed workweek are as follows:

- 4-day workweek (also called 4/10): 10-hour days.
- 3-day workweek (also called 3/12): 12-hour days.
- 4½-day workweek: Four 9-hour days and one 4-hour day per week.
- 9-day biweekly (also called 9/80): Working 80 hours in 9 days (typically 8 days at 9 hours and 1 day

at 8 hours) and taking the 10th day off. Employers must remain compliant with all applicable state and federal overtime laws when implementing this option.

Part-Time Work

Part-time work equates working fewer than 35 hours in a week. Some potential benefits to offering employees the option of part-time work are:

- Retention of employees who need to scale back work hours to manage family situations or other personal needs.
- Expansion of the potential labor pool to individuals needing/desiring to work but not at a full-time rate (retirees, students, persons with disabilities).
- Provision of time off for education purposes — to complete a degree or take continuing education courses.
- Provides an option for a gradual return to work after maternity or other leaves.
- Allowance of a gradual entry into retirement.
- Alternative to layoffs.

Some common approaches to offering employees the option of part-time work are as follows:

- 80 percent of full-time (32 hours per week).
- 60 percent of full-time (24 hours per week).
- 50 percent of full-time (20 hours per week).

Job Sharing

Job sharing occurs when a full-time position is shared by two people, each working part-time hours. In addition to the potential benefits of working part time, some potential benefits to job sharing are:

- Broader range of knowledge, skills, and experiences to a position because two people are sharing the job.
- Cross-training and skill enhancement opportunities for each partner.
- Continuity of coverage when one partner is sick, on leave, or on vacation.
- An option for employees who want to reduce their hours, but whose jobs cannot be accomplished on a part-time basis.
- Alternative to layoffs.

Some common approaches to job sharing are as follows:

- **Alternated weeks:** Each employee works one week on, one week off.
- **Shared workdays:** Each employee works 4 hours per workday.
- **Overlapped schedules:** Each employee works 2½ days per week with a Wednesday overlap.

Telecommuting

Telecommuting occurs when an employee is working from a remote office location one or more day per workweek. Some potential benefits of allowing employees to telecommute are:

- Expanded recruitment pool geographically.
- An alternative to relocation.
- Reduced office space and associated costs.
- May assist in accommodating employees with disabilities.

- Reduced organizational and individual carbon footprints.
- Decreased wear and tear of transportation infrastructure.
- Reduced or eliminated commute to and from the workplace.
- A work environment with fewer distractions.
- Facilitated ability to work during “personal best time.”
- Decreased employee work-related spending (fuel, business clothing, and meals).

Some common approaches to telecommuting are as follows:

- **Home office:** Designated office space at an employee’s home.
- **Satellite or neighborhood office:** Remote office established by one or more employers, typically in a community with a large concentration of employees.
- **Hoteling:** Designated shared workspaces at a company location are reserved by employees who work remotely, but occasionally come into the office.
- **Traveling:** Working primarily on the road or at client locations.

Note: Further in-depth telecommuting information is located in **Telecommuting**.

Other Time-Off Flexibility

Employers also have the option of providing other time-off flexibility. Employers and employees may select from a wide range of flexibility options that enable time away from work or create uninterrupted time during the workday. Some potential benefits of providing other time-off flexibility are:

- Options for employees to take limited or extended time off from work to manage various family and personal situations, volunteer in the community, or take a longer vacation or career break.
- Creates “quiet time” during the workday for catching up on projects (meeting-free flexibility options).

Some common options to other time-off flexibility are as follows:

- **Personal days:** Fixed number of days off with pay for personal reasons (organizations may specifically designate a number of days/hours for volunteer work or attendance at school activities).
- **Paid time off (PTO) banks:** One bank of time off for sick leave, vacations, emergencies, and other personal reasons.
- **Leaves of absence:** Extended paid or unpaid time off for maternity, paternity, adoption, education, and volunteer work.
- **Phase-back:** Ability to return from a leave of absence gradually by working fewer days or hours and ramping back up to full-time.
- **Sabbaticals:** Paid or unpaid time off (typically one to six months) for personal renewal or volunteering offered to employees after a specified length of service.
- **Flex Year:** Work full time for part of a year and then take a leave of absence or work reduced hours for the remainder of the year.
- **Emergency flexibility:** Fixed number of days off with pay for emergencies; organizations may allow time to be taken in hourly increments.
- **Report late:** Ability to report late to work and make up the time at the end of the workday.
- **Vacation buying:** Allow employees to pay for a specified number of additional vacation days each year.
- **Vacation borrowing:** Allow employees to borrow one or more weeks of vacation from the following year.
- **Vacation sharing:** Allow employees to give their vacation days to another employee who needs

additional paid time off due to an illness or other personal situation.

- **Day-at-a-time vacation:** Allow employees to take mini-vacations instead of using one full week or more.
- **Floating holidays:** For businesses that are open on holidays, allow employees to work on the holiday at regular pay and take another day off of their choosing.
- **Shift flexibility:** Allow employees to work with co-workers to adjust their schedules by trading, dropping, or picking up shifts.
- **Meeting-free flexibility:** Establish blocks of time by workgroup, division, or organization-wide when no meetings are scheduled. For example:
 - **No meeting hours:** Designate one hour each day as “quiet time” when no meetings are scheduled and when employees are encouraged to work individually without interrupting co-workers.
 - **No meetings days:** Select one day a week when no meetings are scheduled.
 - **No meetings weeks:** Select one week or more each year when no meetings are scheduled.
- **Career flexibility:** Offer opportunities for employees to customize their career paths including “off-ramping” and “on-ramping” at various points throughout their careers. Off-ramping might involve taking a leave of absence, scaling back work hours, taking on a job without travel requirements, or stepping down from supervisory responsibilities. During a leave, employees may stay connected to the workplace by receiving email communications, attending training programs, or participating in workgroup meetings.

Accomplishing Work Through Flexibility

In successful companies that utilize flexibility, it is the way they do business. That is, these firms understand that flexibility is a way to enhance employee ownership and participation without sacrificing results and productivity. In fact, efficiency and the bottom line are improved. With good communication and a highly motivated and committed team, companies may easily generate profitable employment that meets their financial, professional, and personal goals. Clients and customers benefit as well, with professional services and project deliverables completed on schedule and at competitive rates.

Communication Is Key

Communication is central to the success of workplace flexibility. Clear ground rules about how to implement flexibility and evaluate work performance are necessary to ensure the arrangement is working and meeting business needs. There must be measurable input/output and standards to make the arrangement work. Once a flexible arrangement is approved, reviewing the agreement regularly (for example, every 30, 60, or 90 days) will help ensure it is working and meeting business needs. All flexible arrangements should be reviewed to ensure they remain efficient and profitable.

It is also important to establish effective communications between employees and managers. For example, working with flex-options mentors, a company may enhance their virtual work program. To improve communications, companies may implement text messaging for their home-based employees to better collaborate and more quickly resolve problems. These enhancements may prove to increase revenue by maximizing employee effectiveness.

Focus on Results and Team Input

In moving toward a more flexible work environment, employers should adhere to the concept of placing emphasis on results rather than time an employee physically spends in the workplace, behind a desk. This is particularly difficult in some business sectors where hours clocked at the desk have

been, and continue to be, highly rewarded. In a flexible environment, however, work is defined differently. Focusing less on the where, when, and how work gets done and more on actual results — that is, what the employee produces — is central to creating and maximizing workplace flexibility.

One of the most proven methods of affirmatively responding to a request for flexibility is asking the employee, or employees, to propose a workplace flexibility solution and a strategy for its execution. Employers may also ask the team, or group of employees, to help develop strategies for creating workplace flexibility, which can generate creative workplace approaches and high workplace results.

Support for Flexibility

In a business or an organization where flexibility is the norm, it is fully integrated in business operations and processes. There is no stigma attached to flexibility and flexibility is supported at the highest leadership levels; for example, implementing company-wide family-friendly policies and flexibility as core principles for all personnel. However, flexibility should be a two-way street rather than an entitlement, because successful arrangements require mutual respect, a healthy give-and-take, and mature communication.

Flexibility is also a means in which an employer can give back to hard-working employees. Building and sustaining a culture of flexibility gives businesses an extraordinary advantage over others in that employees are more loyal, more productive, and less apt to leave.

Implementation of Flexibility in the Workplace

Beginning

It is often best to begin flexibility on a small scale or through a pilot program. If successful, the program can be expanded if the employer or manager and the employees are comfortable with the arrangement. For example, in a telecommuting arrangement, an employer may choose to begin with one or two telecommuters working from home one or two days a week and gradually build from that point, if appropriate. Start with a low-risk trial program.

Employers may elect to survey managers about their flexibility needs and pilot a program with the management group. The pilot could help identify and address challenges. In starting small, or with a pilot, a flexible arrangement can be more easily assessed for its effectiveness and modifications can be made on a more manageable scale.

Workplace Culture

A written policy may be one indicator as to whether a firm or organization is committed to workplace flexibility, but a key determinant is the culture — where flexibility is embraced at the highest levels with processes and policies in place to accommodate and encourage flexibility. An employer may implement the appropriate policies and processes present, but the business case for flexibility exists when the principals are embraced by the highest level of the organization and managers speak the language of flexibility, accommodation, and inclusion. For example, an organization may offer guidance and support for employees seeking a flexible work arrangement through workplace programs that encourage employees to create proposals enabling them to work from home on a regular basis.

A culture of flexibility can be demonstrated in multiple ways — processes, policies and other tools. More significantly, authentic support at the highest levels creates a fertile environment for flexibility because employees feel comfortable discussing and using flexibility without repercussion, and a

consistent approach and attitude toward flexibility is represented throughout the organization.

Evaluating Employee Proposals for Flexibility

Flexible options should not be implemented merely for flexibility's sake. It is important to determine creative ways to get the job done that support business priorities while meeting the needs of employees. Organizations that provide employees with guidance or support in proposing flexible work arrangements may have better outcomes in creating positive and lucrative results. Such support and engagement also helps to ensure that all parties are likeminded with respect to understanding what is being requested and how proposals parallel business goals and priorities, or potential restrictions in granting the full request.

For example, an employer may implement a request process that includes both of the following:

- A form that leads the employee through a series of questions to help describe the proposed work arrangement, and how it will sustain or enhance the employee's ability (and the team's) in accomplishing business objectives.
- Providing management with positive guidance in terms of assessing employee proposals.

Alternatively, an employer may institute an employee task force as an effective model that leads to an organic solution in assessing flexibility. Such initiatives may help redesign jobs or how work is done, leading to improvement in actual results. Since more people are requesting flexibility as a pre-condition for employment, business owners and managers can also think more proactively about positions they post, for example:

- Can the job be done on a flexible basis?
- Would a compressed workweek, telecommuting, part-time or job-share arrangement work for this position?

Thinking proactively, tapping into the team and providing employees with guidance and support when they propose working flexibly can lead to better outcomes for the organization.

Communication

A new workplace flexibility policy may easily be communicated to the entire organization through company email that highlights the fundamentals of the new flexible work options policy, an all-hands meeting, and/or a community website that provides the full policy, forms, and accessible copies of all released communications. Managers and supervisors should also be specifically notified of the policy and their role in the process. Employees should be encouraged to speak with their supervisor and/or contact the appropriate human resources representative if they are interested in exploring potential flex-time options.

Tools to Get Started

Manager Tips: Fundamentals of Creating a Flexible Workplace

The following are basic tools to help managers create more flexible workplaces:

- **Create a business proposal approach.** Design a process where employees submit a proposal describing how their work will be accomplished, how they will maintain or improve productivity, and the impact their request will have on various aspects of the business. (For requests for occasional flexibility, a formal business plan may not be necessary.)

- **Establish a review process.** Review all requests for flexibility submitted by employees. Some requests will not be implemented due to the nature of a job, staffing needs, customer/client constraints, or employee performance. If the proposed arrangement is unworkable for business reasons, brainstorm and consider other options.
- **Consider an employee's performance.** Employees who have not demonstrated strong self-management skills and high levels of dependability are typically not the best candidates to work a flexible arrangement. However, keep in mind that there will be some situations when flexibility is exactly what an employee might need to resolve a personal issue that has affected their job performance.
- **Involve the team.** Prior to approving an arrangement, ask the employee to share their proposal with team members, discuss any issues, and brainstorm solutions.
- **Clearly outline expectations.** Discuss performance expectations, including work accomplished, communication, and attendance at meetings, with the employee prior to commencing the arrangement. Ensure that the focus will be on the employee's work performance, consistency of contribution, and results — not face time.
- **Conduct frequent reviews.** Treat the new arrangement as a pilot for three to six months. Establish measurements and review the success of the arrangement at regular intervals.

Employee Tips: Considering a Flexible Work Arrangement

The following is a brief overview of employee tips and considerations that may be helpful to incorporate into an employee's workplace flexibility guidelines and request process. Some employers create self-assessment and business proposal forms to guide employees through questions to consider as they develop their proposals for workplace flexibility. These tools help ensure that the request meets the needs of the employee and the demands of business.

Employee Self-Assessment

The first step to requesting a flexible work arrangement is for an employee to consider their work style and think about why they want to work flexibly. Employees with the best chance for success are those with a history of good performance at work and strong self-management skills such as:

- Taking initiative.
- Using sound judgment when making decisions.
- Meeting deadlines.
- Managing multiple priorities effectively.
- Listening well.
- Communicating clearly.
- Organizing work effectively.

Depending on each employee's personal situation, they may also need to consider any impact that workplace flexibility will have on their dependent care responsibilities and expenses, household finances, and benefits coverage.

Employee Proposal

Upon completion of a personal assessment, an employee's next step is to develop a business proposal to present to a manager demonstrating how the employee will sustain or enhance their job performance. Formal business proposals may not be required for every type of flexible option — or for occasional or ad hoc schedule or workplace changes. Employees should verify with the appropriate manager the type of proposal required for their specific workplace.

Proposal Considerations

Employees should consider the following when preparing a proposal for a flex-time option:

- What type(s) of flexible work arrangement(s) are you interested in? How long do you plan to work the arrangement(s)? What hours and days are you proposing to work and from what location(s)?
- Are there specific hours and days that you must be present at work in order to accomplish your job responsibilities? Does your proposed flexible option accommodate these?
- Can you complete all of your current job responsibilities while working a flexible schedule? What adjustments, if any, will you need to make to accomplish your work?
- How will you continue to meet deadlines and be available for critical situations that may arise on the job?
- What are the anticipated benefits and challenges of this new arrangement with regard to your ability to get the job done and the impact on your internal and external customers, employees (if you are a supervisor/manager), co-workers, manager, and the company?
- Will working a flexible arrangement allow you to accomplish your short- and long-term career goals? If yes, how? If no, have you considered adjusting your goals?
- How — and when — will you and your manager assess the effectiveness of your arrangement?
- If you supervise a team of employees, how will you ensure you are available to meet their needs? How will you manage differently if you are on a flexible schedule?
- How will your communications with your team, co-workers, managers, and customers differ once you are on a flexible schedule?

Upon presentation of a business plan, employees should be ready to work with their manager to fine-tune the plan, suggest other options, and prepare for implementation. Employees and managers should discuss and fully understand all expectations related to the employee's performance and communication. Additionally, a determination should be made as to how the arrangement will be measured. For example, how will the employee know the arrangement is successful? Success may be determined by asking for and listening to feedback from your colleagues, manager, and customers/clients.

Manager Tips: Reviewing and Implementing an Employee's Proposal

While reviewing an employee's proposal, a manager should be open to discuss requests for additional flexibility and consider all alternatives, not just the one the employee initially proposes. If the initial proposal does not meet business needs, managers may discuss what modifications might result in an acceptable solution.

Managers must also ensure the employee's proposal addresses how all responsibilities will be met or exceeded and includes contingency plans. For example, a manager should:

- Discuss any impact on the team and customers/clients and define techniques to ensure ongoing communication and to measure success.
- Involve team members. Team members should review the proposal with the employee before it is presented to the manager. This permits co-workers to express any concerns and offer solutions. Additionally, if employee requests overlap or otherwise conflict, individuals should be encouraged to work together to develop alternative solutions.
- Discuss with the employee about how a particular flexible work arrangement fits into their short- and long-term career goals.

Importantly, work-life conflict may be a contributing factor to poor performance. Managers must be sure to address the performance issues up front before considering a flexible arrangement.

Job Expectations

Defining job expectations is crucial when discussing a flex-option work plan. The following elements should be reviewed and clarified prior to entering the plan:

- Identification of work requirements that cannot be changed, such as coverage during certain hours.
- Identification of workgroup requirements, such as defining core business hours when all employees are at work.
- Establishing measurable goals and objectives.
- Specifying with the employee regarding how management will handle certain business requirements to avoid misunderstandings, such as:
 - Regular team meetings where attendance is mandatory. Is participation by conference call an option?
 - Informal communication with employee. When will email suffice?
 - Business travel requirements.
 - Face-to-face customer/client interaction.
 - Regular phone coverage, if necessary.
 - Extended hours during peak business cycles (budget time).
 - Availability to customers/clients and co-workers.

Modifying the Proposal

Managers who are undecided after reviewing an employee's proposal may consider the following options:

- Identify specific concerns and discuss them candidly with the employee.
- Involve the employee (and the team, as appropriate) to identify solutions.
- Consider different hours or days, or combine approaches/options.
- Pilot the arrangement for 90 days or another definite timeframe.
- Implement the arrangement at a later date when business conditions change.

Implementing an Arrangement

Upon implementation, managers may also want to consider piloting the flex-time arrangement to ensure employees understand expectations and understand that the arrangement will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. For example, blackout periods (where the flex-time option is not available) must be defined and communicated to employees.

Importantly, management demonstrates support for flexibility by introducing the arrangement to the team, describing any changes to the work process, and encouraging ongoing open discussion and feedback.

Reviewing an Arrangement

When reviewing the arrangement, management should:

- Evaluate the arrangement frequently, starting with 30, 60, and 90 day reviews.
- Review whether goals are being met in a timely manner and if productivity is being maintained.
- During the reviews, discuss any specific issues, including the ability to complete assigned work, communications, effect on co-workers and customers/clients, and technology.

Ending an Arrangement

Flexible work arrangements are not perpetually tied to a position or employee. If business and/or personal needs change, the arrangement may be modified or ended by the employee or manager. However, this process must be communicated and in certain situations, an employee may have to wait until vacancies occur to return to a previous work schedule or work location.

Approaches to Workplace Flexibility Chart

Types/Definitions of Flexibility

Flextime: Workday start and end times differ from the workgroup's standard, yet the same number of hours per day is maintained.

Potential Benefits of Flexibility

- Improves efficiency if work schedules match employees' most productive hours.
- Gives employees more control over scheduling personal responsibilities on either end of the workday.
- Allows commute outside of peak rush hour.

Examples of Approaches to Flexibility

Daily flex: For example, working 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on a regular basis instead of 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Variable flex: The ability to occasionally take a break during the workday to attend a school function, doctor's appointment, etc. and make up the time on either end of the workday.

Core hours: Everyone must be at work during specified core hours, but can flex on either end. For example, core hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., but employees may start as early as 7 a.m. or leave as late as 6 p.m.

Summer time flex: Work hours differ during the summer months. For example, starting work at 7 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m.

Day-of-the-week flex: Work hours are flexed on a particular day of the week, such as Fridays.

Compressed Workweeks: Full-time options that allow employees to work longer days for part of a week or pay period in exchange for shorter days or a day off during that week or pay period.

- Improves productivity if some work can best be accomplished during quieter times of the day.
- Provides more days off.
- Decreases number of days employees commute.
- Allows commute outside of rush hour.

Part time: Working less than 35 hours a week.

- Retains employees who need time off to manage family situations or other personal needs.
- Expands labor pool (for example, retirees, students, persons with disabilities).
- Gives employees time off for education purposes – to complete a degree or take continuing education courses.
- Provides an option for a gradual return to work after maternity or other leaves.
- Allows gradual entry into retirement.

In addition to the potential benefits of part time:

- Brings broader range of knowledge, skills, and experiences to a position.
- Provides cross-training and skill enhancement opportunities for each job share partner.
- Allows continuity of coverage when one job share partner is sick, on leave, or on vacation.
- Provides an option for employees who want to reduce their hours, but whose jobs cannot be accomplished on a part-time basis.

Job Sharing: Full-time position shared by two people, each working part-time hours.

4-day workweek (also called 4/10): 10-hour days.

3-day workweek (also called 3/12): 12-hour days.

4 1/2-day workweek: Four 9-hour days and one 4-hour day per week. (Some organizations implement this approach for summer months only.)

9-day biweekly (also called 9/80): Working 80 hours in 9 days (typically 8 days at 9 hours and 1 day at 8 hours) and taking the 10th day off. Be sure to check federal/state overtime laws when implementing this option.

80% of full-time (32 hours/week).

60% of full-time (24 hours/week).

50% of full-time (20 hours/week).

Alternate weeks with each working one week on, one week off.

Share workdays with each working 4 hours.

Overlap schedules with each working 2 1/2 days a week with a Wednesday overlap.

Telecommuting: Working from a remote location one or more days a week.

- Offers alternative to relocation.
- Expands recruitment pool geographically.
- Reduces office space and associated costs.
- Can accommodate employees with disabilities.
- Decreases wear and tear of transportation infrastructure.
- Reduces or eliminates commute.
- Provides an environment with fewer workplace distractions.
- Facilitates ability to work during “personal best time.”
- Decreases employee work-related spending (transportation, business clothing, meals, etc.).

Home office: Designated office space at employee’s home.

Satellite or neighborhood office: Remote office established by one or more employers, typically in a community with a large concentration of employees.

Hoteling: Designated shared workspaces at a company location are reserved by employees who work remotely, but occasionally come into the office.

Other Time Off Flexibility: A wide range of flexible time away from work.

- Provides options for employees to take limited or extended time off from work to manage various family and personal situations.

Personal Days: Fixed number of days off with pay for personal reasons. (Organizations may specifically designate a number of days/hours for volunteer work or attendance at school activities.)

Paid time off banks: One bank of time off for sick leave, vacations, emergencies and other personal reasons.

Leaves of absence: Extended paid or unpaid time off for maternity, paternity, adoption, education, volunteer work, etc.

Emergency flexibility: Fixed number of days off with pay for emergencies (organizations may allow time to be taken in hourly increments).

Report late: Ability to report late to work and make up the time at the end of the workday.

Vacation buying: Allow employees to pay for a specified number of additional vacation days each year.

Vacation borrowing: Allow employees to borrow one or more weeks of vacation from the following year.

Vacation sharing: Allow employees to give their vacation days to another employee who needs additional paid time off due to an illness or other personal situation.

Day-at-a-time vacation: Allow employees to take mini-vacations instead of using one full week or more.

Floating holidays: For businesses that are open on holidays, allow employees to work on the holiday at regular pay and take another day off of their choosing.

Shift flexibility: Allow employees to work with co-workers to adjust their schedules by trading, dropping or picking up shifts. This may be planned ahead or accomplished on the day of.

Meeting-Free Flexibility:

Establishing blocks of time by workgroup, division, or organization when no meetings are scheduled.

- Allows employees a block of work time with fewer interruptions.
- No meeting weeks allow employees to take vacation or other time off without missing meetings.

No meeting hours: Designate one hour each day as “quiet time” when no meetings are scheduled and when employees are encouraged to work individually without interrupting co-workers.

No meetings days: Select one day a week when no meetings are scheduled.

No meetings weeks: Select one week or more each year when no meetings are scheduled.