

Workplace Flexibility Ideas



What is Workplace Flexibility?

- ✓ Workplace flexibility is a way to define how, when and where work gets done, and how careers are organized. Flexibility is a strategic business tool to respond to the changing economy and changing workforce.
- ✓ *Flexibility must work for both the employer and the employee.* Flexibility calls for the same kind of shared responsibility and accountability as the other components of an effective workplace.

Achieving Workplace Flexibility

Here's how several employers integrate flexibility into the workplace:

A Culture of Flexibility

Insurance company

Owner: *"I want to attract people who live their lives with passion and energy, and bring that into the office with them each day. Flexibility helps me do that. We have fun, provide a wonderful service to a great group of clients and have very little turnover, which goes right to the bottom line. Everybody wins!"*

- Everyone works at home one day a week.
- All staff members take a three-hour break one Friday afternoon each month – for doctor appointments, running personal errands, etc.
- Everyone gets extra time off every five years (e.g., a month, week, day, etc.)
- Staff members have flexible workday start times.

Design firm

CEO: *"Employees have been diligent in upholding client demands to ensure they can retain this flexibility; indeed, the effects on business results have been so positive, that clients and competitors alike have voiced interest in implementing similar programs in their own offices."*

- Some staff work four 9-hour days and shortened Fridays.
- Many employees work from home one day a week.
- Employees say cutting drive time alone gives them more time to spend with their families.

Time Off and Leaves

Architecture firm

Business manager: *"Everyone is handled case by case. We all have another life outside of work... We provide a great work environment, and that's enabled us to attract really great people who work very hard."*

- Employees receive "benefit hours" (extra flex time) each year to use any way they wish.
- Time is granted for employee educational opportunities – and if the firm expects to benefit from time spent in the classroom, it picks up the tab.
- Volunteering during the workday is permitted and encouraged.

Workplace Flexibility Ideas (continued)



Flex Time

Government agency

Office manager: *“Employees want our flexible work arrangements to be successful, so they readily readjust when work demands require changes.”*

- Employees work 80 hours every two weeks, but exactly which 80 hours is up to them and their manager. Every two weeks employees confirm their schedules for the 14 days ahead so there are no surprises.
- Technology is critical to the flexible environment, but nothing very exotic is needed. Laptop computers, cell phone and an e-mail program allow employees to communicate with each other wherever they are.

Medical testing laboratory

CEO: *“This is a great alternative for staff – and a good deal for our company, too, which has more than doubled its employee base [in 12 years] while cutting its turnover rate [in half].”*

- Staff can alternate seven days off at a time with seven days on. Their workdays are 10 hours each, so staff log 70 hours in all during a 2-week period, but they are paid for two 40-hour weeks.
- Each worker is paired with a counterpart handling the opposite schedule. The two cover for each other if they have scheduling conflicts.
- Staff can opt for a 4-day, 10-hour schedule as well as the conventional five-day-a-week option.

Reduced Time

Executive recruitment firm

CEO: *“You don’t have to give everyone the same special treatment; you just have to treat everyone specially!”*

- Most employees can move with no difficulty from part time to full time and back again.
- Job-sharing is an option for two employees who both want to work part time.
- Employer addresses all employees’ special needs on a case by case basis.

Nonprofit housing agency

Employee: *“We could all be earning a lot more money in the private sector... what keeps us here is the agency’s strategy of providing us with a great, flexible work environment.”*

- Part time schedules are available at all levels.
- Employees may reduce their hours temporarily for a few weeks or months.
- Part time employees aren’t penalized by being put on a slower career track. The agency posts all open roles and anyone can apply.

Responsibility and Accountability

Medical facility

CEO: *“We offer nurses and all other employees great latitude in choosing how much they want to work and when they want to work, right down to the timing of their breaks.”*

- Staff members are allowed to choose the shifts they work. Big calendars are posted in the employee lounge and people fill in the days and hours they want to work. (Staff need to work at least 24 hours a week in order to retain their benefits.)
- Extensive cross training allows staff to cover various areas of the hospital and makes schedule conflicts easy to resolve among each other.
- Throwing hierarchy aside helps offset the strains people feel struggling with important but tedious work. A nurse manager will help out staff nurses when needed.