

5 TIPS TO MAKE FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUESTS WORK FOR YOUR BUSINESS

1. Communication Must Be Your Top Priority

As is true for any business, communication is key for effective working, not just between the employer and the employees, but also amongst team members. When team members are working flexible hours or even remotely, communication is made much harder. It is therefore imperative that you have a strong communication plan in place if flexible working is to succeed.

In the first instance, the flexible working individual must ensure that anyone who may be affected by their new arrangements, for examples managers, colleagues and clients, are aware of when they're available and know how to contact them during business hours. Secondly, as a manager, you must ensure there teams can continue to work and collaborate as effectively as before. You cannot afford gaps in productivity. Set up regular team meetings in person, as face time is still important, and organise virtual conference calls for the flexible worker to attend. Plus use collaboration tools, like Yammer or Google Docs, to keep everyone talking. Thirdly hold regular reviews with all your employees, not just the ones working flexible hours, to give them the opportunity to voice any concerns. It's critical flexible working works for the business and not just the individual.

2. Measure Goals And Be Results Focused

Set specific goals, targets and objectives so that you can monitor the employee's work and keep track of what your employee is working on. Targets are incredibly motivational. Plus we have found that staff are happy to accept this level of micromanagement in exchange for the increased work-life balance flexible working offers.

3. Trusting Your Employees Is Vital

Successful flexible working may take a change in attitude. If you're used to monitoring people's work ethic by how many hours they spend at their desk, then a different approach is required. With employees working from home or spending less time in the office, trust between the employer and employee is crucial. You need to trust them that they're going to get the work done.



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This is where measurable goals and outcomes are important in flexible working. Being more results-focused and organising workloads into specific tasks with measurable objectives, means you can more easily monitor productivity and measure what work is actually being accomplished. Knowing the individual is working effectively will build trust.

4. Use Technology To Your Advantage

Flexible working, especially for employees working remotely, is only really possible with today's technology. The use of wifi, smartphones, tablets, and apps like Skype, all make flexible working a practical consideration for businesses. When planning how to implement flexible working, make sure you're using technology to its full potential. For example, there is sophisticated remote working software that will allow screen sharing whilst communicating over the phone. Conference calling with Skype and Google Hangouts can also effectively ensure employees are still getting face time with the rest of the team.

As already mentioned, communication and continued collaboration is key for effective flexible working methods. Using project management tools, like Basecamp, will allow all team members to stay up-to-date with progress of projects. Additionally, online communication tools, like Slack, will ensure your employees are still talking.

5. Train Managers To Organise Flexible Workers

To ensure flexible working arrangements are beneficial to your business, all parties concerned need to be directed with how to manage new ways of working.

Train line managers to ask questions in relation to the specific goals you have set and to challenge their team when necessary. Ensure they develop best ways to communicate with staff who are no longer working to the traditional 9-5 structure and that they ensure all members feel invested in, to ensure they continue to work towards the shared goals of the company.



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