



Could flexible working hours work for you?

When running your own business employing the 'right' people to help you is vitally important.

As the employment arena changes with the times, it is now no longer a case of simply advertising for full-time 9 to 5 roles. Offering 'flexible working' can open vacancies up to a wider audience which can be a great benefit when looking for new members of staff.

There are numerous types of flexible working, for example:

- Part-time – working less than full-time hours, usually by working fewer days
- Compressed hours – working full-time hours but over fewer days
- Job sharing – two people split the hours of one full-time job
- Working from home – carrying out some or all of the job at home, or somewhere else apart from the normal place of work
- Flexitime – generally the employee works 'core hours', for example between 10am – 4pm but can start and finish flexibly (within agreed limits) as long as they work the full amount of hours contracted
- Annualised hours – working a set amount of hours per year which can be done flexibly around when there is extra demand or set core hours
- Staggered hours – working full-time hours but having a different start and finish time to other employees

For the employee the opportunity of flexible working can enable them to work around family commitments, decrease commuting time and fuel costs, offer greater job satisfaction, less stress and a more balanced work-home life.

The advantages for the employer is the knock on effect from the above – increased morale and commitment, reduced absenteeism and the ability to recruit the most suitable person for the job as the amount of applicants should be greater.

However, there can be disadvantages too. It takes a certain amount of trust to allow an employee to work from home as you can't keep an eye on what they are doing, unlike when they are in the same office as you. Customers may automatically expect to speak with the same person whenever they contact the office - it is difficult to keep the continuity if the employee they regularly deal with is part-time. You may also need to allow for 'handover' time between different members of staff as one starts and one leaves. Any regular full-time staff may begrudge those on flexible contracts and want to change their working hours. If an employee has worked for you for 26 weeks or more, they are entitled to make a 'statutory

application' to request flexible working. You must deal with the request in a 'reasonable manner'. We would suggest visiting www.gov.uk/flexible-working for the correct procedure.

Overall, the advantages generally outweigh the disadvantages. Flexible working is becoming more and more popular and as the employer you may well benefit from increased staff morale which also links to increased productivity.

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