



April 2019 Newsletter

Flex Success: Exploring Creative Work Arrangements



Ask any employee, in any industry and at any level, about what truly matters, and you're likely to hear some variation or combination of the same themes: time, flexibility and balance. Add a life change to the scenario—a new family member, an injury or illness, a tragedy or natural disaster, perhaps—and these values become even more apparent and meaningful.

Today's most attractive and relevant companies recognize that work is just one part of an employee's full life, and they are finding creative ways to show it. With a well-thought approach (and without compromising company success), you, too, can offer the kind of workplace flexibility that modern workers cherish.

Two-Way Perks

Alternative work arrangements can be great for employees *and* great for business. Job flexibility appeals to employees for a variety of reasons. New parents might want to ease their transition back to work after a leave; those with school-aged children could welcome the chance to volunteer regularly in the classroom; employees with an injury might have work restrictions during recovery; and those caring for aging parents could need regular business hours for medical and other appointments. Generationally, Millennials typically treasure the autonomy to manage their own workdays, and Baby Boomers not yet ready for full retirement might still like to pursue occasional weekday hobbies and outside interests. Whatever the motivation, and whether a temporary solution or long-term request, flexible work arrangements can reduce employee stress and boost happiness.



It's no secret that satisfied employees are engaged employees who feel more bonded and loyal to their employers, so alternative work schedules can be seen as a strategic retention tool. Such policies are also proven to decrease worker tardiness and absenteeism. Further, as these types of employee-friendly policies become a part of your organization's culture, they serve as a powerful attraction tool.

Creative Possibilities

The conventional 40-hour, nine-to-five workweek is becoming less commonplace as forward-looking companies see the promise of creative work arrangements, including:

Flexible/staggered work hours. Sometimes as simple as supporting your employees in dodging the heaviest commute hours, these arrangements permit individuals to adjust their daily start and end times. For employers, the staggering of employee hours may deliver the added benefit of longer office-hour coverage.

Work from home/telecommuting. Technological advancements, such as video conferencing, instant messaging and collaborative web-based applications, allow workers to be productive anywhere, anytime. Work-from-home or telecommuting arrangements are particularly suited to project-oriented work by independent employees.

Compressed work schedules. Alternative work weeks, such as working four ten-hour days per week or nine workdays every two weeks, give employees the opportunity to spend longer, more focused in-office days and be rewarded with a personal day every week or two.

Abbreviated/part-time work. Particularly conducive to seasonal jobs or those with peak demand during predictable times of day, part-time arrangements can mean working only the busiest months of the year or hours of the day.

Job sharing. For compatible candidates who trust one another and have great organization and communication skills, job sharing can provide employee flexibility while affording an employer two perspectives, skill sets and strengths in one position.

Any and all flexible work arrangements must comply with local, state and federal regulations, including the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Employers will need to investigate how various arrangements might impact company benefits eligibility and vacation accrual, wage orders and overtime requirements, and more. The compliance experts at Leap Solutions can help you navigate these matters with confidence.



Keeping it Real

Creative work arrangements are only successful when they work smoothly for both employee and employer, and the company continues to meet business needs. To that end, keep in mind:

Feasibility. Evaluate the feasibility of flexible work schedules on an individual basis. The arrangement should be appropriate to the employee's work style and performance history, doable for the nature of the work, viable given the environment and available technology, and acceptable to the supervisor and department.

Precedent. Employers sometimes fear that approving a flexible work schedule for one employee could establish a precedent for the company. Consider including in your employee handbook a policy outlining how alternative work arrangements will be considered on a case-by-case basis, free of favoritism and discrimination, and carried out with transparency, consistency and fairness.

Performance. From the outset, employers should establish clear guidelines, expectations and accountability for flexible work arrangements. Determine how objectives will be met, essential duties will be fulfilled and performance will be measured.

Visibility. An employee with an alternative arrangement often worries about the “out of sight, out of mind” factor. To help combat it, employers can request regular meeting attendance (remote or in person); designate core days or time frames where all employees are present; and stay purposefully mindful of the employee as project, training and advancement opportunities arise. The employee should also make an intentional effort to fully engage with work, maintain connections with coworkers and demonstrate ongoing commitment to the company.

Pitfalls. Proactive employees and employers should anticipate and take steps to avoid common pitfalls to alternative work arrangements, including an employee feeling pressured to cram a fulltime workload into a part-time schedule or manage both a job and dependent care at the same time. Any arrangement that places an unreasonable challenge on the employee or an undue burden on the employer is destined to leave someone—or everyone—feeling overwhelmed and ineffectual, frustrated and resentful. All parties should be realistic about what’s possible and open to revisiting policies as appropriate.

Sustainability. Creative work arrangements should be evaluated regularly and adjusted accordingly as both employer and employee discover what does (and doesn’t) work and as conditions change. Mutual trust and solid communication are paramount for success.

Getting it Right

Work-life balance is hugely sought after by most of today’s workforce, and simple, virtually cost-free allowances can make employees feel valued as whole, well-rounded individuals. Flexible work arrangements are perks that can make all the difference in getting fantastic candidates in the door and rewarding existing employees for their contribution while keeping them thriving, happy and loyal.

At Leap Solutions, we practice what we preach. We wholeheartedly embrace the kind of workplace flexibility that supports all Leap employees in leading full and deeply satisfying professional *and* personal lives. Let our expertise guide you in exploring these types of creative work arrangements for your own organization!

ARE YOU READY TO LEAP? ®