

MAKING FLEXIWORK ARRANGEMENTS A SUCCESS

(Excerpts from “Successful Work-Life Balance” by Sher-li Torrey & Ruth Wong)

Whenever Flexible Work Arrangement is implemented, it's important to consider the following factors when trying to make it work:

The greatest issue that supervisors may have is developing trust and managing outcomes. As an employee who takes on Flexiwork Arrangements, it's important to have self-discipline, good time-management skills and a good attitude. Some areas to focus on (For both Employers and Employees):

(A) GOOD COMMUNICATION – BUILDING TRUST

'Out of sight, but not out of mind' is a good motto to follow when Flexi-work arrangements are implemented. It's good to ensure that there is a clear weekly schedule set up for the Flexi-work employee, so that co-workers and supervisors know how (or when) to contact him/ her. Having clear, distinct communication via:

- Emails
- Phone (Including Mobile Phone)
- Weekly (or bi-weekly) meeting/ Department gathering

is essential to having clear communication channels.

(B) ENSURING AVAILABILITY

Departmental or Company-wide gatherings, meetings and briefings should take into account the Flexiworker's availability. Scheduling these important events on days or times when the Flexiworker is physically present in the office ensures that all communication is disseminated.

The Flexiworker should also be honest and open about how she can be contacted in cases of emergency. This helps to show commitment on her part.

(C) CLEAR AND FAIR SUPERVISION

Supervisors of Flexiworkers may have to be more effective in delegating. Assign duties that can be carried out independently; set goals that have clear outcomes or key performance indicators; As a flexiworker, consider your supervisor as a resource for guidance, rather than an overseer.

Remember: There might be some glitches at the beginning, but do not abandon the plan before giving it a chance.

(D) DISTINCT REPORTING STRUCTURES

Before taking on a Flexi-role, it's essential for the employee to discuss the reporting structure with her supervisor. Be very clear about who is reporting to whom. Discuss the frequency, amount of detail required, the necessity criteria etc at the beginning.

If the Flexiworker has subordinates reporting to her, the same detailed discussion needs to be clear. Let subordinates know how they can reach you – when? How often? About what issues?

(E) DEFINED ROLES & OBLIGATIONS

It's essential that supervisor and Flexiworker start off by stating what is expected of each other. The clearer and more explicit the definition, the lesser the chance of miscommunication in the future.

(F) RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT & COMMITMENT

Key performance indicators must be clearly stated before commencement of any flexi-work arrangement. Supervisor should establish outcome goals, milestones and timelines from the beginning. Clearly state what tasks need to be prioritise.

If these points are clearly stated, it minimizes chances of miscommunication later. Employers can be assured too that individuals with productive work histories typically will remain productive in a changed environment, especially if the changed location has been requested to meet a personal need or preference.

(G) BEWARE OF ISOLATION

Employees who work from home can feel isolated. In addition, there is a lot of self-discipline required to ensure productivity. Be aware of this and be thankful for the arrangement that helps you achieve work-family balance.

On the other hand, supervisors may feel uneasy if their staff members are not in sight. Focus on the deadlines – to ensure that productivity is met. Part-timers may feel left out or second-class. Supervisors and co-workers can help them feel connected by looking for, and correcting patterns in the work or the schedule that create unnecessary isolation, by making sure that meetings are scheduled at times they can attend and providing positive feedback on good work. Proper communication of important developments is also very important.

(H) ACCOMMODATE CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES

One of the best practices when Flexiwork is implemented is to be aware that aspects of the Flexiwork arrangement may have to be adjusted. This could be due to the change of a job function, personnel changes (such as a different supervisor) or even changes in the dynamics of a team.

Both flexiworker and supervisor should ideally be ready to accommodate changes accordingly, without compromising on productivity.