

Flexible Working Makes Great Business Sense

Flexible working enables you to employ the best people for the job, to work at times when you most need them as well as in ways that meet their needs. It promotes equal opportunities and helps to broaden the diversity of your workforce.

It results in motivated, satisfied, loyal and skilled employees, minimised staff costs and maximised productivity, which all leads to **reduced costs and increased profitability** for your business.

It makes great business sense to provide flexible working, but what does it mean in practice?

- ✓ part-time hours
- ✓ a flexi-time system
- ✓ annualised hours - hours are worked out over a year
- ✓ term time only working
- ✓ compressed hours - weekly hours are worked over fewer days
- ✓ varied hours - different start, break and finish times
- ✓ job sharing
- ✓ home working / remote working
- ✓ holiday purchase schemes - salary sacrifices in return for increased annual leave
- ✓ a flexible approach to allowing unpaid leave

Anyone can request flexible working but from the 6th April 2009, the following employees have a statutory right to make such requests:

Any employee has worked continuously for you for 26 weeks and

- ✓ has a child under 16 or a disabled child under 18 who receives Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- ✓ is responsible for the child as a parent / guardian / foster parent
- ✓ are the spouse, partner or civil partner of one of these and care for the child
- ✓ are a carer who cares, or expects to be caring, for an adult who is a spouse, partner, civil partner or relative or a person who lives at the same address as you

As an employer you are legally required to consider any flexible working requests from the above, and to only reject it if there are good business reasons for doing so.

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It makes business sense to consider flexible working for all employees, not just those who have a statutory right to request.

In tough times when pay rises or bonuses may not be affordable, looking for other ways to motivate and satisfy your staff can help you to attract and retain the people you need for your business to succeed. The war for talent is ongoing and a strong workforce has never been more essential!

Also introducing flexible working that could enable some staff to reduce their working hours may be a cost cutting exercise that prevents or reduces a need for redundancies.

As an employer you also need to take the following into consideration when considering your flexibility of approach in the ways that you employ staff:

Parental Leave: employees in the following circumstances can request to book blocks of unpaid leave:

- ✓ parents can take up to a total of 13 weeks leave until their child is 5
- ✓ adoptive parents can take this leave up to the 5th anniversary of the placement or until the child is 18, whichever is sooner
- ✓ parents of a disabled child who receives DLA can take up to a total of 18 weeks leave until their child is 18

Time off for dependants: employees are entitled to unpaid time off work to deal with emergencies involving a dependant. This may be a spouse, partner, child, parent, anyone else living in the household as a member of the family, or anyone who reasonably relies on you for help in an emergency which might include a neighbour or friend.

Employers can reap the benefits of getting it right when employees make such requests, and well established flexible working processes means that this needn't be a high cost to the business.

Challenge Manager can support you in introducing cost effective Flexible Working Practices that help you attract and retain the best employees, and that maximise productivity and profitability in your business.

We also offer a FREE HR AUDIT to all Chamber members; contact Sam on 07816 316598 or sam@challengemanager.co.uk for a review to ensure that you are legally compliant.

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