

Diversity Australia

All Genders | All Ages | All Cultures

BALANCE Work and Life



Top tips to create a more flexible working environment

Consider flexi-time instead of rigid hours

Do you have staff sitting in traffic for ten hours a week just so they can be at their desk during the specified work hours? In cities with heavy rush hour traffic there are thousands of productive hours being wasted every day. Allowing employees to start and finish earlier or later in the day can make a huge difference to travel time and job satisfaction levels with little or no change to the day-to-day business. Even if they're not struggling with traffic, some employees may like the option to start and finish the day a bit earlier leaving them more daylight hours for family or friends.



Offer compressed hours or a flexible working week

Consider going beyond sliding start times and allowing employees to reconfigure part of their working week – for example four extended work days and one half-day – to accommodate family or other personal commitments. Taking their son or daughter to swimming one afternoon a week might be the difference between a conflicted parent and a contented parent with more focus for their work.

Take a measured approach

Flexible working arrangements need to work for the employer, employee and the wider team or they won't last. Set clear expectations around the privilege of working remotely and be transparent about how outputs will be measured.

A time to meet

Businesses introducing flexible hours can consider setting core hours (or days) when all employees have to be in the office, for example between 10 and 2pm. These core hours are a good time to schedule important face-to-face team meetings so no one is excluded from critical decisions or projects. Teams should be directed to support flexible working arrangements by setting meetings during these core hours. Face-to-face time with colleagues is important but virtual communication tools like Skype and FaceTime make good back-up options. Restricting meetings to core hours or days will have the added bonus of creating productive, meeting-free time for employees.

Make it mobile

If your business is primarily office-based, when your workplace computers are due for their next upgrade consider purchasing laptops instead of desktop PCs. Many roles don't rely on a fixed physical location so it makes sense to choose devices that can move with the employee.

Set the tone for a supportive environment

Providing flexible working hours and technology to support working offsite will all come to nothing if the workplace culture doesn't support flexible working arrangements. If people smirk and roll their eyes about colleagues "working from home" the arrangement is set up to fail. Support needs to come from the top and it should be evident in company policy. To convince stubborn opponents try sharing recent research on teleworking from AUT's Work Research Institute which can be found on diversityworks.nz.org.nz/research

Remote controls

To support employees working beyond the office walls requires more than a mobile device – employers also need to think about access to work email accounts, files, documents and the internet. Don't withhold the tools and network access that employees need to be productive. Do make sure you invest in good security software and business insurance before allowing remote working arrangements.

Other resources

- Book in for a Diversity Review BALANCE: Work & Life event to learn more about the flexible working arrangements that could work for your business. diversity.com.au
- Visit the Diversity online library to source texts on worklife balance and health and wellbeing which can inform thinking in the development of policies and initiatives to support flexible working best practice.

