

Embracing Change and Flexibility: Things you Need to Know

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Working versatility has become more popular and appropriate, with technological advancements making it much easier to function remotely and remain connected to your team. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced millions of people to work from home which has allowed businesses to rethink how work is organised and bring their policies into the 21st century. Workplaces are changing rapidly resulting in employees working more flexible than the normal eight to five working day. At the same time, technological advancements are also transforming the nature of tasks and skills needed in the workplaces.

What is flexible or agile working?

Workplace flexibility doesn't just mean working remotely. Flexibility is the paragliding term used to describe any position that breaks a standard eight to five, five-day structure's conventional norm. Individuals with theoretically greater control about when, where, or how to fulfil their specific roles stand at its heart. The term covers all types of part-time work, including compressed hours, flexitime and job-shares, remote working—anywhere outside of a standard office environment—and freelance, contracting and portfolio careers. It allows for "agile" working practices in larger firms, output-based contracts and virtual teams, where team members are based in different locations.

Flexibility for the workers is an important attribute. Flexibility on the job requires the willingness to react readily to changing circumstances and expectations. It's just worth being versatile when it comes to jobs. Employees who treat their work with a versatile attitude are typically respected more by employers. A study conducted by [ManpowerGroup Solutions](#) reported that approximately 40 per cent of work applicants worldwide said flexibility in schedules is one of their top three factors in career decisions. Employers need to recognise that flexibility in the workplace is more than offering schedules for workers that better match their needs, or enabling them to work on other days from home. The authors of the study said versatility covers a wide variety of job arrangements including:

- Flexible arrival and departure times
- Full-time work from home or location independence
- Choice and control in work shifts
- Part-time work from home
- Compressed shifts or workweek
- Opportunity for sabbaticals or career breaks
- Unlimited paid time off
- Caregiving leave

Why is flexible working important?

New research by [Stanford](#) showed that workers who worked flexibly were model workers in several respects. Employees who worked flexibly were more efficient and happier than their nine to five counterparts when measured over nine months, though they often worked long hours and took less sick days off. This was then repeated in a second study carried out at a [Fortune 500](#) company in which workers who worked flexibly were happier, less likely to burn out and overall better off mentally than their peers. The training they and their supervisors received on how to move attention to performance rather than face time was crucial to the success of the flexible work cohort.

So is this development a force for good or something to fear? And what is the prognosis for workplaces of the future? The Coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the future of work and given us the chance to speed up our digital transformation. The change is happening very fast hence there is a need for humans to be more agile so that they can be able to adapt to the change and succeed. Our brains need to adapt quickly and be very flexible because there will be a constant shifting of skill-sets, expectations and workplaces. The ability to see change will be an opportunity to grow and innovate. The following are the benefits for businesses in embracing this change and flexibility for the future of work:

- **Competitive edge:** For example in the banking sector, smaller companies competing with existing global brands need a competitive advantage in recruiting talent. Flexibility will give them the advantage that they cannot equal the advantages of their bigger rivals' employees.
- **No more 8-to-5 working days.** We are now living in a world of 24-7 powered by technology and globalisation. Customer service demand across countries and time zones, and outside of 8-to-5 has guided the development of alternative patterns of change. Offices and call centres have expanded operating hours and many companies require employees to work 'out of hours' regularly.
- **Widening the pool of talent:** Businesses can be able to expand the pool of talent by providing flexible working patterns, particularly for hard-to-fill positions.
- **Productivity from flexible workers:** There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that people who are motivated to work where, when and how they want to work more productively, and do more than they are paid to do.
- **Staff retention:** Flex-work opportunities are important for retaining employees. If you have a great versatile pattern of work, then you are less likely to give up. You may have to wait and win the right to work part-time or flexibly at a new employer.

According to a recent study conducted by the [University of Melbourne](#), they highlighted the value of autonomy, both in terms of efficiency and employee engagement, in our jobs. The research found that workers around the world were more likely to be emotionally motivated when they were given the power and flexibility to work as they saw fit, alongside a degree of control over their jobs. Technology, trust and communication are completely necessary. Being versatile and having a variety of templates to work with but with set specific guidelines. Measuring success should be focused on priorities rather than hours spent within the workplace. Making it open to all as part of your workplace culture, and promoting it. Using it to attract and promote talent while hiring to free up the pool of potential candidates.

Both employers and workers need a good work-life balance. Steering away from a conventional 8-to-5 workplace system dictating an employee's location, shifting towards a new workplace model that

increases employee satisfaction and productivity, is ideal in today's work environment. Workplace flexibility affects how the company attracts, recruits and keeps top talent. Consider introducing flexible scheduling to improve employee satisfaction and help you attract top talent for your company while you invest in building a strong work-life balance for your current and potential employees.

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