

## Flexible Work Arrangements: What Works, What Doesn't?

Author: Thandeka Madziwanyika . April 2021

### Introduction

Flexible work arrangements have always been an interesting topic. With the COVID-19 pandemic that hit globally in 2020, this issue has become more important than ever. Before venturing into the different types of work arrangements, let us understand first what it is. In a nutshell, flexible work arrangements give employees the freedom to choose what time they begin to work, where to work, and when they will stop work. Some anticipated benefits are that these arrangements can include reduced employee stress and increased overall job satisfaction (Allen and Johnson, 2012). Flexible work configurations allow employees to work when they accomplish most, feel freshest, and enjoy working.

With flexible work schedules, employees stand to experience a good number of benefits. One that many workers point to first is the [flexibility to meet family needs](#), personal obligations, and life responsibilities conveniently (Allen and Johnson, 2012). If you have a flexible schedule, you can go to a parent-teacher conference during the day or wait at home until the washing machine repair person comes.

While there are many benefits, arrangements may be a setback for employers and employees if not implemented properly.

### Different Types of Flexible Arrangements

Something to remember when considering various flexible work arrangements is that not all [types of flexible work arrangements](#) are manageable or worthwhile for all sizes and types of organisations. As result, every employer considering this arrangement should undertake an organisational assessment to determine whether and what kind of flexible scheduling will meet its needs.

There are many different types of flexible work arrangements but in this article, three will be highlighted for a better understanding.

**Flextime** - Flextime is a schedule that allows a worker greater latitude in choosing his or her particular hours of work, or freedom to change work schedules from one week to the next depending on the employee's personal needs. Under a flextime arrangement, an employee might be required to work a standard number of core hours within a specified period, allowing the employee greater flexibility in starting and ending times (SHRM, 2021).

**Compressed Work Week** - The compressed workweek is an alternative flexible method that allows employees to work a standard workweek in fewer days. An example is that some employers implement a four-day workweek of 10-hour days. At the end of the day, the employees get the same number of working hours, but employees have a three-day weekend every week. Among other demographics, employees whose family status involves child care or elder care responsibilities may find a compressed workweek to be of particular value. Employees save time and commuting expenses by reporting for duty on fewer days. SHRM (2021), argues that employers who convert their entire operation to a four-day workweek may save on the cost of utilities and other overhead.

**Job sharing** - Job-sharing is the practice of having two different employees performing the tasks of one full-time position. Each of the job-sharing partners works a part-time schedule, but together they are accountable for the duties of one full-time position. Typically, they divide the responsibilities in a manner that meets both of their needs as well as those of the employer. The practice allows for part-time schedules in positions that the employer would not otherwise offer on a part-time basis (SHRM, 2012). This types of arrangement require a high degree of compatibility, communication and cooperation between the job-sharing partners and with their supervisor.

You may be wondering why this sounds familiar. It is. Job sharing is similar to part-time jobs but the job-sharing arrangements may appeal particularly to students, parents of young children and employees nearing retirement. By entering into this agreement, the employees can better balance their careers with other needs. For employers, the practice may include retention of skilled employees, increased employee loyalty and productivity, and a measure of flexibility that can occur when two people fill one job slot.

## **What Works and What Does Not Work with Flexible Work Arrangements?**

As with everything, each new idea will come with its pros as well as some cons. Here we are discussing the positives and negatives of adapting to a flexible work arrangement in the

organisation. These points have analysed from both the employee and employer's perspective. This is because what may work for one party does not guarantee that it will work for the next. Below are some points on what works and what does not work for both the employee and the employer as outlined by Heathfield (2021).

### **Benefits**

#### **Employees**

Reduced commuting time and fuel expenses

Have more control over your schedule and working environment

Flexibility to better meet family and personal needs

#### **Employers**

Reduces employee turnover

Enhances company image as a family-friendly place to work

Boosts employee morale

### **Drawbacks**

Difficult for office-based staff to work as effectively with telecommuting staff

No clear dividing line between home and work

Working from home may mislead loved ones about your availability

Some employees may not work efficiently without supervision

Compressed workweeks may mean client availability suffers

Feelings of unfairness when only certain employees have work that can be done remotely

## **Conclusion**

While it implementing flexible work arrangements, it is important to remember that as an employee there are positive and negative effects of these types of arrangements. Anything can work if it has been planned properly. For employers, it is important to stick to the arrangement that has been made with the employee. Going back on the agreement may then demotivate the employees to perform.

***Thandeka Madziwanyika is a Business Development Consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd, a management and human resources consulting firm.***

***Phone +263 (242) 481946-48/481950***

**Cell number +263 78 318 0936**

**Email [thandeka@ipcconsultants.com](mailto:thandeka@ipcconsultants.com)**

**Visit our website at [www.ipcconsultants.com](http://www.ipcconsultants.com)**

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