

TIPS & STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS & OCCASIONAL FLEXIBILITY

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Flexible work arrangements and using occasional flexibility represent an approach to how, when and where work gets done that differs from many traditional assumptions. You should consider the following tips that have been shown to support the effective use of flexible scheduling:

- ✓ **Assess the effect of the flexible work option** on your work team, your customers/clients and your job performance. Considering the impact of a new schedule on other parties is necessary to develop an effective schedule that will be supported by your manager.
- ✓ **Understand compatibility with your job requirements** (refer to the *Flexible Work Arrangements Employee Self-Assessment Checklist* in the Appendix). Some jobs are strong candidates for flexible work arrangements, while others may not be as compatible with flexible work arrangements or may need more intensive planning to be effective.
- ✓ **Continue to meet or exceed your job objectives**; be sure your achievements are no less visible if you have a flexible work arrangement. Management must focus on and evaluate performance by results. Managers and employees need to collaborate to establish clear, measurable objectives (i.e., quality standards, project deadlines, budget objectives and customer input).
- ✓ **Communicate a change in schedule and/or location**. Because flexible work arrangements mean that all employees are not always in the office at the same time, it is critical that there be effective communication about how and when employees are accessible. Online calendars, team white boards, e-mail, voice mail and instant messenger can all be used to ensure that employees know how to reach colleagues.
- ✓ **Check in with co-workers**. It is especially important to keep co-workers informed of issues that affect them when not all members of a team are working in the same place during the same hours. Use e-mail or voice mail or a shared notebook to exchange updates with one another.
- ✓ **Partner with managers so flexibility will succeed**; reciprocity and the willingness to be flexible are critical. At times, to meet the demands of the business, employees will have to work hours they are not usually scheduled to work, and managers should simultaneously do their best to manage work demands in ways that respect employee schedules as much as possible.
- ✓ **Invite and encourage feedback from co-workers and your manager(s)** on your use of a flexible work arrangement. Be open to feedback — both positive and negative — as to how your flexible work arrangement affects your work and the work of others. Respect your co-workers — your flexibility should not result in more work for them or the need for them to be in the office longer hours. When flexibility is accessible to all employees, the likelihood of co-worker resentment should be limited. If there is tension or resentment because of an employee's flexible work schedule, then the situation needs to be evaluated and modifications may need to be made.

Strategies for Success: Flextime

The following tips support effective implementation of a flextime arrangement.

- ✓ **Be flexible.** Your flexible work arrangement will not work if you are too rigid about your flextime schedule. There will be times when business needs will necessitate coming in earlier or later, similar to what happens with employees on “traditional” schedules.
- ✓ **Set appropriate schedules.** In designing a flextime schedule, you need to take into consideration when in the workday internal and external customers/clients typically need you the most.
- ✓ **Be accessible.** You can make yourself accessible for critical needs without being in the office at all times. If, for example, you are working an early flextime schedule and there is an important late-afternoon meeting, you would do well to be accessible in person or by phone for the meeting. Also, offering a certain degree of accessibility later in the day can be valuable when customers/clients or co-workers have an urgent or pressing matter that only you can address. Typically, people don’t take this offer lightly.
- ✓ **Communicate.** It is important for employees on flexible schedules to publicize their new schedule. Voice mail is a useful tool that informs people of your availability. You can have a standard message that includes your weekly schedule or a message that changes daily and explains how to reach you. In addition, most employees on flexible hours find the need to frequently remind others of their schedule through such means as a staff schedule white board or electronic calendar.

Strategies for Success: Compressed Workweeks

The following tips support effective implementation of a compressed workweek arrangement.

- ✓ **Be flexible.** Compressed workweeks will not work if you are unable to be flexible on occasion. There may be times when reverting to a traditional five-day schedule is necessary (e.g., to participate in training or customer/client events or for coverage of shifts).
- ✓ **Communicate.** It is important for employees on compressed workweeks to publicize their new schedule. Voice mail and e-mail are useful tools that inform people of your availability. You can have a standard message that includes your weekly schedule or a message that changes daily and explains when you can be reached. In addition, most employees on compressed workweeks find the need to remind others of their schedule through such means as a staff schedule white board or electronic calendar.
- ✓ **Identify management coverage requirements.** Consideration should be given to potential supervision needs when you are on a compressed schedule. In cases in which supervision is necessary during extended hours, a backup team leader may need to be identified.
- ✓ **Be aware of overtime provisions.** Many organizations do not allow compressed workweeks that require overtime be paid due to state or federal law. It is important, therefore, that you and your manager understand the overtime requirements of both the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and the laws of your state. Often when state law requires overtime to be paid after eight hours per day or 40 hours per week, compressed workweeks will not be offered to the nonexempt population.

Strategies for Success: Telework/Remote Work

The following tips support effective implementation of a telework or remote work arrangement.

- ✓ **Establish boundaries if you are working from home** — as much as possible, make a clear delineation between work space and home space.
- ✓ **Do not request a flexible work arrangement as a substitute for dependent care.** Though flexible work arrangements may be helpful in managing work demands and personal/family demands, it is often impossible to focus on work while simultaneously caring for a dependent.
- ✓ **Be creative in your thinking** — use conference calls and Internet applications when these technologies make sense.
- ✓ **Plan ahead** — if you will be teleworking, be sure that you have access to all the necessary documents and materials you will need.
- ✓ **Assess your technological capabilities at home** and consider if you will be efficient and productive as a teleworker/remote worker.
- ✓ **Be accessible.** Openly communicate with managers and colleagues about where you are working and when.
 - Establish accessibility plans — how you will be reachable if you are working at a location other than your company office.
 - Check e-mail and voice mail on a regular basis during times you are scheduled to be working.
 - If you expect that someone may need to speak with you immediately, leave a number where you can be reached on your outgoing voice mail.
 - Investigate the possibility of forwarding your calls from your office to an alternative phone number (home phone, cell phone, etc.).

For more tips on successfully teleworking or working remotely, see *Tips for Successful Telework/Remote Work* in the Appendix.

Strategies for Success: Part Time

The following tips support effective implementation of a part-time work arrangement.

- ✓ **Match the reduced schedule to the requirements of the job.** It is important to figure out when in the workweek or workday customers/clients typically need you most. Are some days or parts of days better than others to be away from work? This information should be a factor in designing your reduced hours schedule. You will have to weigh your personal scheduling needs with those of your employer in proposing a flexible work arrangement. It also is important to be prepared to adjust schedules if they are not working.
- ✓ **Communicate.** It is important for part-time employees to publicize their new schedule when they first move to a flexible arrangement. In addition, most less-than-full-time employees find the need to remind others of their schedule through such means as a staff schedule, electronic calendar or note at their desk. It also is important to use an outgoing voice mail message and/or a signature at the bottom of e-mails to inform people of your schedule.
- ✓ **Maintain visibility.** Part-time employees should plan and act systematically to make themselves and their contributions visible. Among steps to take are consciously making connections with others when in the office and highlighting contributions to the team in meetings or via e-mail.

Strategies for Success: Job Sharing

The following tips support effective implementation of a job sharing arrangement.

- ✓ **A compatible job sharing partner is essential.** One of the best ways to think about finding the right partner is to conduct an assessment of the skills needed to do your job in the best way possible and to then look at the skills that you are able to contribute. The right partner will have many, if not all, of the remaining skills to fill in the gaps. It is extremely important to find someone whose communication style is compatible with yours.
- ✓ **Specify roles and responsibilities.** Though there is no prescribed “ideal” division of responsibilities, successful job sharers identify early on who will do what. After deciding on a division of labor between themselves and in consultation with their manager, good job sharers will then communicate this plan to everyone who will be affected by the arrangement.
- ✓ **Explain the roles of job sharers.** Job sharers need to thoroughly explain their coverage of job responsibilities to co-workers, managers and customers/clients. Depending on the division of job responsibilities, others will approach one and/or the other job sharer. One model requires job sharers to keep each other informed of all aspects of the job with the expectation that both will be equally proficient at all times in communicating with others inside and outside of the organization. Another model holds each job sharer responsible for distinct pieces of the job and communicates to everyone involved which job sharer knows what.

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