

Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements can help your business's bottom line

Flexible work arrangements are alternative scheduling of work from the traditional working schedule that can help employees better manage their work-life balance.

In 2001, the direct and indirect cost of absenteeism due to work-life conflict costs Canadians approximately \$4.5 to \$10 billion per year.

Source: Work-Life Conflict in Canada in the New Millennium Report, Oct. 2003.

More workers are seeking flexibility and work-life balance when deciding to take a new job (and staying in one). The following are some of the benefits of providing flexible work arrangements:

- Increased ability to attract, recruit and retain employees
- Increased employee engagement, job satisfaction, and morale
- Enhanced productivity and profitability
- Reduced absenteeism and sick days
- Reduced turnover costs and business costs
- Increased innovation and creativity
- Lowered health care costs
- Reduced employers' carbon footprint and reduced air pollution

It's clear that workplace flexibility is an effective business strategy for a changing workforce.

How flexible is my workplace?

- Does your organization allow employees to control their start and finish times during the work week?
- Does your organization allow employees to work from home or off-site if needed?
- Does your organization track employees' use of flexible work programs/schedules?
- Do managers receive training and tools to support staff with work-life balance?
- Do managers support a flexible workplace culture through 'leading by example'?

If you've answered 'no' to all or most of the above questions, consider flexible work arrangements as a strategic business tool to enhance your company's competitive edge.

SUCCESS STORY

Mommy Shift – Ganong Bros., Limited Canada's Chocolate Family

We have been faced with a labour shortage in our area for the past few years and as a company, we had to become extremely innovative in our recruitment and retention strategies. We took on many initiatives that supported our goal including implementing flexible shift schedules.

It became very clear that in our small community, there were skilled people that wanted to work but were not available to work traditional fulltime shifts. This led to the creation of the MOMMY Shift. This shift allows these employees to see their children off to school and be at home when they arrive back from school. With this shift, we were successful in attracting a skilled group of people whom we could offer working hours to accommodate both their job and family needs. This group had all the necessary skills that employers are seeking. It was just a matter of revolutionizing our way of thinking as a company and modifying our current practices and procedures to meet the needs of our target market.

This has been a very positive initiative for both our company and these employees. As a company we are able to attract and retain dedicated, responsible employees and it allows them the ability to financially contribute to their family income and at the same time satisfy their family obligations. A win-win situation!

*Sherri Deveau-Gibbs,
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Ganong Bros., Ltd.*

Flexible work arrangements

Consider some of the following options for flexible work arrangements to implement:

- flex time / flexible hours
- telework / telecommuting
- compressed workweeks
- job sharing
- part-time / reduced work hours
- phased retirement
- leaves and sabbaticals
- shift work

In 2009, a survey of 286 managers and HR professionals revealed that 43% of Canadian employers plan to provide flexible work arrangements in the coming year.

Source: CareerBuilder.



Tips for getting started

Beyond just developing flexible work policies and programs, progressive employers support a flexible workplace culture. Here are three tips to consider:

- **Conduct an employee survey.** Every workplace is different. Get your employees' input so you can implement flexible work arrangements that meet the interests and needs of your employees.
- **Educate management and employees.** Ensure everyone understands the benefits and value of flexible work arrangements. Hold staff meetings to discuss and respond to any questions. Set clear guidelines and policies.
- **Start with a pilot or test trial.** Testing out a flexible work arrangement is an opportunity for both employers and employees to determine its effectiveness. During this time, you can evaluate absenteeism, turnover, productivity, etc.

The ability to balance work and personal life is the most critical factor in employees' decisions to stay with their jobs according to a 2008 global survey of nearly 90,000 workers (including 5,000 from Canada).

Source: Towers Perrin.

Be informed about flexible work arrangements

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