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10 Tips for Creating a Flexible Workplace



How to give workers freedom without compromising productivity

From a work perspective, one of the biggest outcomes of the COVID-19 crisis we are facing today will be the desire for people to view flexible work schedules as the norm for business. It's likely, too, that the longer people remain away from office settings, the

more a considerably more flexible arrangement will suit them. During this time, for those who are able to work remotely, many employees likely have found a silver lining to working from home or other remote locations. Now more than ever, it's imperative for companies to create a culture that addresses the changing needs of employees.

A flexible work environment is an organizational strategy that can help you attract and retain top talent. Amid good times as well as those that are challenging, more and more full-time workers are seeking such flexibility in order to strike a healthy work-life balance, while others are taking advantage of part-time employment opportunities and the [gig economy](#) to achieve it. From giving your staff the option of working from home to contracting freelancers for certain types of projects, creating a flexible workplace increases productivity, makes workers feel happier and more engaged, and attracts the best talent. The following strategies outline how you can create and manage a flexible workforce in your organization.

1. Plan It Out

While shelter-in-place mandates have altered how we all approach work, seemingly overnight, you will still want a plan for when things return to normal. Before implementing a flexible work program, you need to do your homework and carefully plan what it will look like. Evaluate what your employees want and what your company's needs are, and consider new ways to measure performance. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, and should look at how other companies are handling flexibility. When you do this research, you'll also find data on an increase in the bottom lines of companies that supports flexible work programs. In all cases, sift through each aspect closely as you assess and re-asses a plan so that it works best for your organization.

2. Create Policies

Once you've decided on what model of flexible scheduling program you want to implement, it's time to create some concrete policies that support your employees as well as your company. For example, on the use of company technology such as company-supplied smartphones, make sure your policy outlines its usage and that it isn't being filled with personal documents or games. You can also create guidelines to manage other aspects such as email response times, the use of project management tools, and the workloads employees are expected to manage and complete at any given time.



3. Test the Program

Depending on the size of your organization, you may want to pilot test your program with a control group of employees to see how well it works. By doing this for a set period, you can get feedback and make necessary changes before rolling it out to the entire staff. This loops back to the first tip of planning well. By providing for a testing period in your plan, you can reduce elements that are not working and build in what you may have missed at the planning stage.

4. Leverage Technology

How you use technology to address workplace flexibility will make the difference between a successful program and a failed experiment. There are several technologies you can leverage to help your program succeed. One example is a document-sharing system such as OneDrive, Google Docs, Trello, or Dropbox, where everyone can share files and track the status of their work. In addition, be sure to take advantage of programs like Skype, Zoom, and other video conferencing systems to conduct team meetings or have regular one-on-one conversations with employees.

5. Train Managers

Just as employees need to be trained on how to thrive in a flexible work environment, supervisors should also be taught how to manage workers remotely—especially if a manager is not accustomed to working with freelancers and remote team members. Managers should be trained on how to motivate and provide feedback to workers who are not in the office all day. This will help them work effectively with remote team members. In case your organization is considering outsourcing work, managers need to learn how to handle the logistics of working with freelancers, such as determining the work that should be outsourced, the amount and methods of payment that will be offered, and the kinds of contracts that should be drafted.

6. If It Fits You...

The best way to know how your organization's flexible work program is functioning is to try it out for yourself. Experiment with your own schedule to determine how your productivity fared when working remotely and during different periods of time. That way, you can see for yourself what your employees need, and you can address any shortfalls in the program.

7. Manage Your Expectations

While flexibility is a great motivator for your employees, it doesn't mean that you should expect them to regularly be available at all hours of the night or on weekends. Make sure that you have a realistic expectation of your workers. The idea is to provide a program that builds in the work-life balance they want. With this taken away, your program may backfire with demoralized workers and hindered productivity. An effective counter to allay your fears is to adopt a post-hire monitoring program that proactively and efficiently manages workplace risk. A thorough background check company should offer you [continuous workforce monitoring](#) services with ongoing comprehensive risk alerts on potential employee criminal behavior.



8. Offer Flexible Options to Everyone

Although not every employee may want to have a flexible work schedule, it's best to offer that option to everyone on your staff. Cherry-picking people who can take advantage of your program will only cause problems and may cause a toxic work environment that cultivates resentment among the workers who don't have this benefit and guilt among those who do.

9. Screen Your Team

While part-time jobs and side hustles bring freedom, they also bring risk. By extending your background checks to both full-time and part-time workers, you mitigate risks while

also securing your brand's reputation. A good background screening provider such as Sterling will provide you with a solution that's customized to your company's needs and relevant to your industry. It's essential to remain well equipped to screen applicants in the [modern economy](#).

10. Invite Feedback and Modify

It's not enough to create flexible work schedules and let employees figure it out themselves. To get a clearer picture of how it's working out for them, you need to get regular input from your staff. Use the information you receive to support your team to have the tools they need to get the job done. Further, your workforce has not remained static—and your flexibility program shouldn't be either. In order to be successful, it's important to regularly monitor how it's going and make changes accordingly. Regular tweaks can protect against lags in productivity due to unaddressed problems that may arise.

Whether it's now, or in the future, a flexible workplace will be the key to running a modern business. The pandemic crisis we're currently facing only further proves that flexibility is achievable. Whichever path you decide to take to make your workplace supportive and adjustable, Sterling is here to help you through the process of business continuity and planning to help you fulfill your mission.

As an industry leader in global background screening and identity services, Sterling provides a foundation of trust and safety that its clients need to create great environments for their most essential resource: their people. Sterling provides what your organization needs to create robust background checks and monitoring programs. Hire fast with confidence, knowing that we maintain high levels of compliance and privacy. As the nature of the global workforce continues to evolve with gig and shorter-term employment becoming more prominent, companies are facing unprecedented risks. We're here to help you navigate through such uncertainties.

 and let us know how we can help you.

Sources:

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