

Classic Guide to Employer Flexibility



How Flexible is your Employer?

What with ever-progressive technology and communication tools instantly at our fingertips, the traditional 9-5 job is only one way to work here in Sussex.

With flexible working becoming a necessity for a growing number of people, Classic Consulting believes the recruitment industry needs to make it much easier for people to find part-time and flexible work... Something we excel at already.

Since 30th June 2014, all employees in the UK have the legal right to request flexible working - not just parents, carers and guardians. This is known as making a statutory application. Employees must have worked for the same employer for at least 26 weeks to be eligible. According to BIS (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills) this legislation could benefit 20 million people working in the UK.

At Classic Consulting, we understand that it's not appropriate to offer the same kinds of flexibility to every job; but when an employer can offer flexibility, they need to be more transparent in their job ads and overall recruitment process. Transparency means unlocking talent and commitment, because employee retention is more stable when the working environment makes the employee both able to work, and motivated to do so.

Often, flexible working is understood in quite limited ways and can be seen as problematic to many employers. Flexible working is an umbrella term to cover a range of work patterns established in response to a changing economy and lifestyle. In the context of new EU legislation, the internet enabling us to work from virtually anywhere in the world, an ageing demographic and a significant change in household and domestic set-ups, we need to change how and where we work. We have a workforce working longer, as pensions are reduced and the cost of living increases, and we now have a population that is growing older, living longer and who wants to work in different ways.

Whether you are:

- a parent who needs key time to care for both children and elderly dependents;
- managing a family, whether living together or apart, and facing competing demands from childcare as well as pressure to take a second (and sometimes third) job;
- studying part-time to improve your education and enhance your career opportunities;
- a grandparent who wants to work but also has grandparenting/other responsibilities;
- saving for a mortgage with house prices rocketing but salaries staying static;
- peak-hour commuting and long distances which are expensive and time-consuming;
- you're single with no dependents but on a low salary;

All of these factors add up to making basic living complex and costly. Now more than ever, a genuine need to be flexible wherever possible is required by both employee and employer.

Yet flexible working doesn't always need to imply massive changes to the workforce, be a vehicle for unfair prioritisation of some employees over others, or negatively affect the company's ethos and culture. For instance, it might just enable working from 8.30am - 4.30pm rather than leaving at 5pm. It might be that working late on one or two days means working only half a day later in the week. Of course, this appears easier to co-ordinate in a big business where the pool of workers is greater and, therefore, in theory, greater is the cover. Small to medium-sized businesses do have bigger restrictions in how they can manage their rotas so that service and availability are never compromised but sometimes, a little creativity can be invaluable and ensures talented employees stay and their skills are maintained.

Remote access to emails and phone calls, Skype, Facetime and webinars, hot desking, 'touchdown areas' and office-sharing can all aid employees to contribute fully and at times that are practical and manageable. With 85% of small to medium-sized businesses offering flexible working and 96% of large businesses, this is a huge increase compared with ten years ago.¹

So, what exactly does flexible working include and how best can we benefit from it? Here are the main definitions and examples of flexible working, as cited by the CIPD Report on Flexible Working: Provision and Uptake 2012.²

Part-Time Working

Work is usually considered part-time when employees are contracted to work for anything less than full-time hours.

Term-Time Working or Seasonal Working

A worker remains on a permanent contract but can take paid or unpaid leave during school holidays, often spreading their salary over the twelve-month period.

A worker can work seasonally, which may include working longer hours during specific months and reduced hours or no hours in other months, depending on the nature of the organisation.

Job-Sharing

This is a form of part-time working where two (or occasionally more) people share the responsibility for one job, splitting the hours between them.

Flexitime

Flexitime allows employees to choose their daily start and end time as long as set core hours are covered.

Compressed Hours

Compressed working weeks or fortnights don't necessarily involve a reduction in total hours, or any extension in individual choice over which hours are worked. The central feature is reallocation of work time into fewer and longer blocks during the week or fortnight.

¹ [http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/5790%20Flexible%20Working%20SR%20\(WEB2\).pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/5790%20Flexible%20Working%20SR%20(WEB2).pdf)

² [http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/5790%20Flexible%20Working%20SR%20\(WEB2\).pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/5790%20Flexible%20Working%20SR%20(WEB2).pdf)

Annual Hours

The hours, which employees must work, are defined over a whole year, but allow for flexibility to be agreed around working patterns and also, how they're paid.

Working from Home on a Regular Basis

Workers regularly spend time working from home.

Mobile Working/Teleworking

This permits employees to work all or part of their working week at a location remote from the employer's workplace.

Sabbaticals

A break from work – usually these are paid and can last from two months to a year.

Career Breaks

Career breaks are extended periods of leave – normally unpaid and of up to five years or more.

Employers and employees know how complicated and costly recruitment can be, not just in terms of money but in terms of having to learn and adapt to a new environment. Inside knowledge takes months and years, effective relationships aren't built overnight, and who's got the time to supervise new employees if they're struggling to manage their own workload?

This is where Classic Consulting is a clear winner. We provide specialised employees to meet the commercial sector's demands quickly and effectively. Our employees understand the need for a rapid response, but also the need to find the right people for the right jobs. We can advise on finding more experienced employees who could work more flexibly but with greater expertise, rather than only recruiting people who can fit standard hours but have less knowledge in the relevant sector. We understand the challenges of flexible working and value business success, which is why we're dedicated to high-quality delivery and excellence.

The UK Government's new extension to all employees to request the right to flexible working can continue to help the UK become the most flexible labour market in the world, to maximise employment opportunities for everyone and help to increase employee motivation, wellbeing, engagement and productivity. Longer-term, this also means reduced stress levels in both employees and employers, minimal sick leave and a better work/life balance.

For more information about the new Government legislation regarding flexible working go to: <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working>

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