



## *Want to work from home? Here's how to ask your boss*

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### **Body**

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If you're employed at an office where working from home has not been welcome after COVID lockdowns, asking for flexible working conditions may feel daunting.

People and management experts in Canberra have some suggestions that may help you ask for what you need.

Those who can complete their official duties just as well from home, it is worthwhile reminding yourself of the benefits of flexible working to build confidence. There's also evidence you can use.

A survey by tech firm CISCO in 2022 reported on Australian experiences in hybrid workplaces. Respondents belonged to industries including public service, healthcare, agriculture, IT, NGOs, finance, and food and beverage workers.

About 84 per cent of 1042 Australians who participated in the study said they saved \$US180 (now \$AU268) on average per week.

Some also reported eating healthier (65 per cent), becoming physically fitter (69.5 per cent), feeling happier (84.7 per cent) and improving their work-life balance (82.4 per cent). More than half of them also said their relationships with family and friends had improved.

Empower yourself with solutions and evidence Once you've decided to speak to your manager, review your job description and see which parts allowed for remote working.

Dr Jennifer Loh, professor in management at the University of Canberra, said it's good to be prepared with solutions for your boss, of how you plan to complete your duties. This will give them confidence you are capable of performing well even from home.

"It opens up that discussion in terms of, 'this task does not need me to be on site, can I maybe work from home half a day? I'll take care of everything, I can use the computer'," she said.

## Want to work from home? Here's how to ask your boss

"The employer will then obviously have to recognize they need to be flexible because the responsibility of that particular employees does not need them to be on site," she said.

According to demographer Dr Liz Allen, from the Australian National University, ACT's population flows and workforce suggest that employees possess significant power.

"If you are a good employee, and you have demonstrated that loyalty with your employer, you should not fear asking for flexible working arrangements," Dr Allen said.

"From a demographic point of view, they have a lot more power than they realise, particularly in Canberra. Workers who are not having success in their current workplace might have the opportunity to go and negotiate more flexible working arrangements elsewhere."

"At the end of the day, data tends not to lie and the data is very clear - Australian workers want and need flexibility," Dr Allen said. "We will be living with Covid for the future time and we need to be better at responding and dealing with the challenges that that poses."

What can employers do? Dr Loh said employers could help facilitate this conversation by being transparent with their staff. Providing a forum, not during a one-on-one chat, for open communication where employees find out about their rights, enterprise agreements and relevant processes.

"[Managers] need to disseminate information, widely and officially ... where everybody appreciates their approach towards managing and leading," she said.

On the other hand, the CISCO study also reported about 58 per cent of Australian respondents believed they faced challenges in fully engaging with their company and coworkers during hybrid working.

To address this issue, employers and employees needed to work together creatively and flexibly to maintain a good standard of productivity and job satisfaction, Dr Loh said.

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Canberra employers' attitudes towards work-from-home practices in 2024 The fear of missing out is real for these bosses Fears 'strange' APS flexible work rights could reshape Canberra Steps to ask for what you need, according to the experts Ask yourself if it's safe for you to have this conversation (if it's a very rigid workplace, consider speaking to a union representative)

Gather evidence you can use to mount your case (loyalty, productivity, job description)

Provide solutions and arrangements that serve you and your employer (WFH on designated days/ half days/ one week on, one week off)

Give examples of how other businesses in your industry are being flexible

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