



**CREATE A FLEXIBILITY  
BLUEPRINT TO  
ENSURE SUCCESS**

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# Create a Flexible Blueprint to Ensure Success

**Flexible work is quickly becoming the future of the workforce.** Modern technology has made work options such as flextime and telecommuting more accessible than ever through easy and instant communication.

A recent study from Mom Corps revealed that nearly three-fourths of working adults in the U.S. consider workplace flexibility to be an important aspect of their lives. This grew from 64 percent in 2011, to 68 percent in 2012 and, finally, a staggering 75 percent in 2013.





# Acknowledge

## Managerial Hesitations




Despite the high demand for flexible work from employees, managers may have concerns that can lead to hesitation about whether to implement these options. While **viable, proper planning will ensure a smooth transition into offering flexible work solutions.**

A 2010 Workplace Flexibility report published by the Georgetown University Law Center found that managers were concerned about:

*An inability to track productivity and overall quality of work.*

*Finding enough coverage around the office to run operations smoothly.*

*Scheduling meetings efficiently and effectively.*

A man in a grey suit and white shirt is sitting at a desk, looking down and holding a pen to his chin in a thoughtful pose. In the background, other people in business attire are blurred. On the desk, there is a glass of water and some papers.

Additionally, managers may be worried about other aspects that would impact their business, such as:

*Not being able to monitor the progress being made on a big project.*

*Being unable to ensure that employees will respond to internal and external communications in a timely manner.*

*Not having control over work culture if certain employees choose to work from home frequently.*

## Recognize the Benefits of Flexibility

Though these concerns are not unfounded, the benefits of flexible work far outweigh the risks if planned properly. **Many studies show that workplace flexibility has positive impacts on employers, employees and the company as a whole.**







## Benefits associated with flexible work options include:

***Increased job satisfaction***, according to the Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College. A survey from 2008 that collected responses from more than 2,000 U.S. employees found that flexibility can affect employee job satisfaction. On average, 54 percent of respondents stated that flexible work played a role in their happiness at their jobs.

***A heightened sense of loyalty***, according to Regus, a U.K.-based provider of flexible workspaces. Regus' study took answers from more than 2,600 business owners and senior executives in the U.K. More than three-quarters of these high-level staff members believed that flexible work is essential to staff retention, and 71 percent of respondents believed that flexibility is key in gaining the attention of new talent.

***A higher quality of work***, stated Regus' report, titled "The Flexible Road to Workforce Productivity." The study included answers from more than 20,000 people in 95 different countries in 2013. Key findings included 74 percent of respondents stating that flexible work increases creativity. Seventy-seven percent believed that flexibility fosters employees' sense of responsibility and time management.

***Saving money***, Georgetown University's report pointed out. The benefits of flexible work for employers were evident even back in 1996, when Bell Atlantic offered telecommuting. The company was able to save \$1,500 to \$5,000 for each telecommuter per year as a result of reduced real estate costs.

***Fewer instances of unscheduled absences, also found in the Georgetown University report.*** The office isn't the only place where employees can work successfully. Remote work can allow them to work from home or in another setting, which can allow business operations to run more smoothly.



Happy employees result in high-quality work, which then leads to satisfied employers. It's a chain of events that starts with flexibility. Though there are challenges that managers will have to account for, the many benefits of flexible work make this forethought worthwhile.



# Understand

## Employee Concerns

Although employees are most likely interested in flexible work, employers may find that they aren't very vocal about it. An unwillingness to speak up about wanting flexibility can be detrimental to the incorporation if employers aren't considering the practice already. However, **misconceptions and stereotypes about flexible work often lead to apprehension about approaching managers.**

These reasons can include:

*A fear that asking for flexibility will set their careers back, noted the Georgetown University report.*

*A misperception that flexible work only applies to mothers or high-level executives.*

*Confusion, according to the Georgetown University report. Companies that don't have formal policies on flexible work may find this leads to inconsistency and causes misunderstandings. If there are formal policies, they should be readily available to all staff members.*



People who want flexible work options aren't just mothers or executives, and likewise, there shouldn't be rules as to which workers can take advantage of flexibility. This allows employers to show that the satisfaction of all employees is important to the company, creating a strong sense of trust and a good work culture that individuals in every level of the business can appreciate and enjoy.



# Overcome Challenges by Creating a Blueprint

Meeting the challenges of implementing flexible work options lies in the planning process. Though there will still be periods of trial and error, creating a blueprint can allow employers to inform employees of their expectations and standards when enjoying flexible work. Additionally, it gives employers an opportunity to work with their staff members on a program that benefits both the company and individuals.





The Boston College Center for Work & Family published the national Workplace Flexibility Study, which underscored the importance of drafting a flexibility blueprint prior to implementing flexible work. **This step can be done in one of two ways:**

- 1. Drawing up the blueprint together as a team.*
- 2. Asking managers to create the blueprint and then proposing it to the team.*

Either way, both managers and employees should look over the blueprint closely and ask any questions or raise any concerns to the group as a whole. **This guarantees transparency and ensures that everyone will work together to find the best solution.**



## Discuss Hours

## Ahead of Time

There are many forms of flexible work, including flextime. Flextime means that staff members can work outside of normal hours, allowing them to tend to personal tasks during the day. However, every worker should schedule working time within office hours to ensure that operations run smoothly.



Doing so will help ensure that:

*Client and customer communications are seen and responded to in an efficient manner.*

*Managers and co-workers who have any questions can rest assured knowing that any concerns will be addressed in a timely fashion.*





Ideally, these hours would be set throughout the week. Though it doesn't have to mean working eight straight hours, establishing solid time blocks will ensure that managers can keep track of flextime employees. This may require compromise, but **doing so will help avoid confusion and establish a predictable schedule that benefits everyone.**



# Address Communication Standards

When managers work with employees to create the blueprint, communication standards should be discussed. These probably already exist in the office setting, so restructuring them for remote or flextime workers won't be difficult. **Managers have to point out that flexible work shouldn't affect productivity or efficiency and should speak to employees about communication expectations, such as:**

*The response time expected for emails, online chats and phone calls.*

*Procedures to notify co-workers and managers of meetings and availability.*



# Talk About Goals and Expectations


When drafting the blueprint, deadlines need to be firmly established. These should be realistic and must be agreed upon by all members of the team. This will set the standards for the group. **The benefits of doing this include:**

*Keeping team members on-task throughout the project.*

*Providing the information necessary for employees to create personal deadlines.*

*Creating a team-oriented plan that reminds each member of how critical his or her role is.*



A photograph of three business professionals (two men and one woman) sitting around a glass table in a modern office. They are dressed in business attire. One man is looking at a laptop, while the others are engaged in conversation. The background shows large windows with blinds and a clock on the wall.

**Additionally, managers within the company should meet together and discuss company goals.** This keeps flexible workers from feeling detached from the office and the company.

Team leaders should speak with flexible employees frequently to monitor progress and discuss any concerns that they or their staff members may have. This will prevent employees from feeling hesitant about speaking to their managers about any issues that may arise.




## Establish Rules

## About Absences

Unless flexible staff members are working part-time, the protocols for sick, personal or vacation days should stay the same. However, just like employees who work in the office, there will be moments when employees have to step away from the computer.

**Avoid any potential problems that may arise, such as responding to internal or external communications that require immediate action, by creating an away-from-computer policy.**



A photograph of a modern office workspace. In the foreground, a light-colored wooden desk holds a large black computer monitor on a black stand, a single green apple, and a green folder with papers inside. A blue pen lies on the papers. In the background, there is a green cubicle wall, a wooden cabinet with white binders, and three small vases with green bamboo plants on a shelf. A wooden office chair is partially visible in the bottom left corner.

Employees should notify their managers when they step away for more than a set amount of minutes. Depending on the nature of the project, workers may need to tell the rest of the team as well. **This lets everyone know that any problems that arise should be tended to by other members of the group. This ensures that:**

*Important client communications will not go unnoticed.*

*Even if other team members can't answer the question, they can let the client know when to expect an answer.*





## Managers Need to Recognize Their Roles in Flexibility

**Managers set the overall tone and atmosphere for the team.** Making flexibility work requires knowledge of how the team works together. This will help them determine which practices will be best for the group.




Flexibility has many benefits for workers, managers and the company. **Managers can rest easy knowing that:**

*Flexibility requires strong relationships between managers and employees,* which can lead to higher quality work because workers may hold themselves to higher standards when they work without supervision.

Employees who are happy with their flexible schedules will feel *a stronger sense of loyalty to the company.*

*Allowing flexibility can reduce the number of absences* because employees will be familiar with remote working options and standards, which ensures that operations will run smoothly.

*Flexible work is important to workers of all backgrounds and lifestyles.*

A photograph of three business women in a modern office setting. The woman in the center, with short brown hair and wearing a light beige blazer over a white top, is smiling and holding a clipboard. She is looking towards the woman on her left. The woman on the left has short dark hair and is wearing a light blue blazer over a light blue shirt. The woman on the right has blonde hair and is wearing a dark blue blazer. They are all engaged in a conversation. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office space with large windows.

Managers should schedule a team meeting every month or every quarter. This provides team members with opportunities to stay in touch and catch up. **Additionally, everyone can voice their concerns, which can result in blueprint adjustments. Changing it as needed will ensure that everybody is happy.**






## Embrace Flexible

## Work Now

Offering flexibility takes planning and preparation. It's a tried-and-true method, and employees are looking for these **opportunities**. Now is the time to join the flexible work movement. It's here to stay, and implementing it soon will propel your company into what has become the future of the workforce.



A background image showing a group of smiling professionals, including a woman with long red hair and a man, clapping their hands. The image has a warm, slightly blurred aesthetic.

**Embracing flexibility shows commitment to workers' wants and will bring many positive results. It's not just a matter of drafting a blueprint—it's a team effort that'll create stronger professional and personal relationships.**

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