



What

is workplace flexibility?



"I personally prefer the term work-life integration, where it's more of a blend of career and personal activities throughout a work day. For example, 1.5 hours at the gym at lunchtime, going to a kids' event that afternoon or picking them up from school, and then making up the time later in the evening. That's flexibility."

JASON WALKER
CHAMPION AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, HAYS



"All of my direct reports at any one time are balancing school pick-ups and drop-offs. Life happens - work is what happens around life."

BARBARA CHAPMAN
CHAMPION AND CEO, ASB

What is workplace flexibility?

Workplace flexibility allows for creative conversations to take place about the nature of work and how it is performed.

As an employer, it's about respecting the changing nature of work and allowing employees the flexibility to work in an environment where they feel most empowered to do their best work.

There's no cookie-cutter approach to flexibility, and flexibility in corporate office environments will look very different to flexibility options in an operational context. Rather, workplace flexibility is about a broader conversation where all facets of a flexible work environment are considered. For example, workplace flexibility can include:

- » flexibility of role - how a role is performed or divided
- » flexibility of place - working from alternative locations
- » flexibility of work schedule - working flexible hours
- » flexibility of leave - supporting flexible leave arrangements

It can occur in various ways:

- » ad hoc or temporary flexibility - for example, adjusted hours to meet personal needs temporarily
- » regular flexibility - for example, working from home every Wednesday
- » formal flexibility - for example, permanent part-time working

Successful workplace flexibility ensures individual employee needs, commercial needs, and customer needs continue to be met.

Why flexibility?

Workplace flexibility is an essential enabler for managing the pace of change in today's world of work.

It allows you, as an employer, to attract and retain top talent (your people), achieve increased productivity (your business), and foster an agile response to changing market needs (your customers and environment).

It's a diverse and in-depth strategy that goes beyond the traditional thinking of 'part-time work for new parents' to an integrated mindset and way of work accessible to all.

Working flexibly is flexible



Things to consider



Legislation

As an employer, you have a legal obligation under the Employment Relations Amendment Act (2014) (The Act) to provide a process for any employee to request a flexible working arrangement. This applies to any permanent full or part-time employee at any stage of their employment lifecycle and for any reason. Understanding what workplace flexibility means, isn't just a 'nice-to-have' element any more, but an important part of your role as an employer.



Education

Flexibility can mean different things to different people, and can be packaged in many different ways. As such, educating your organisation, both managers and employees, on what workplace flexibility means, is an important place to start.



Debunking the myths

There are common myths associated with flexibility: flexibility is all about part-time mums; our customers won't like it; it's impossible to manage workers who work flexibly etc.

As part of creating an inclusive, flexible work culture, these myths need to be addressed and open conversations should be encouraged to explore proactive ways of making flexibility accessible to all.

Whatever flexible working means to your organisation, it does not mean slacking off. Implementing flexible working practices does not involve reducing your expectations of work performance. In fact, you should see an increase in engagement and productivity.

Types of flexibility



Flexibility of role

- » **Adaptive skills**
Flexible approach to upskilling workers on the job, to acknowledge the [rise of robots and artificial intelligence](#) and the impact on traditional roles.
- » **Casual work**
A work arrangement with no regular or systematic hours of work, or an expectation of continuing work. A casual employee is employed on a daily basis when the need arises.
- » **Job share**
An arrangement where two or more employees share the responsibilities of a single role. Compensation and benefits are received on a pro-rata basis.
- » **Part-time**
[Statistics NZ](#) defines part-time work as anything less than 30 hours per week, where these hours tend to be on set days as part of a fixed employee agreement.
- » **Transition work plan**
Where employees gradually return to the full-time state of their role through a phased approach, for example working part time for a period before returning to full-time.



Flexibility of schedule

- » **Compressed work weeks**
Where employees work full time hours in less than the traditional 5-day workweek, by increasing the total daily hours worked.
- » **Flexible work hours**
A schedule of work hours outside of the set traditional parameters of Monday to Friday 9-5.
- » **Nine-day fortnight**
A form of compressed working which allows employees to work the equivalent of their two weeks contracted hours over 9 days, enabling them to take the 10th day off.
- » **Part-year work**
Where employees only work a certain number of months per year.
- » **Shift self-selection**
Where employees assist with the development of shift work schedules and choose their own shifts.
- » **Staggered start and finish times**
Where employees stagger start and finish times to outside of traditional hours.
- » **Time in lieu**
Also known as time banking, refers to any extra hours worked being recorded and then compensated for by paid time off.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

[Employment New Zealand Glossary of Terms](#)



Flexibility of leave

- » **Bereavement leave**
Paid leave which is available to an employee at the time of death or funeral of a member of the employee's immediate family.
- » **Cultural and community commitments**
Where employees are supported to meet cultural and community commitments.
- » **Domestic leave**
Where leave is provided when a dependent family or household member is ill and requires the employee to take care of them.
- » **Enhanced parental leave**
Where employees are supported over and above the [New Zealand Government funded parental leave entitlement](#).
- » **Enhanced sick leave**
Where employees are supported over and above the [standard sick leave entitlements](#).
- » **Jury service leave**
Supporting employees to attend [jury service leave](#), and in some cases, topping up pay during this period.
- » **Public holiday transfer leave**
Where an employer and employee agree that an entire public holiday will be observed on another day for the employee.
- » **Purchased or salary sacrifice leave**
An opportunity for employees to purchase additional leave and/or sacrifice part of their salary in return for extra annual leave.
- » **Study and examination leave**
A paid leave arrangement for employees who need to take time off to study for and/or take an examination.
- » **Unpaid leave**
A period of unpaid time away from work for holiday, illness, or another special reason, as requested by the employee.
- » **Volunteer day leave**
Where leave is granted to work as a volunteer for a charitable or community organisation. This can be paid, or unpaid leave.



Flexibility of place

- » **Activity-based work**
Where employees have a broad workspace and choice of settings for a variety of workplace activities, as opposed to a specific set or assigned work station.
- » **Hot desking**
An office organisation system that involves multiple workers using a single physical work station during different time periods.
- » **Working from alternative office or location**
Where employees work remotely from alternative office locations or satellite work centers, or other agreed destinations.
- » **Working from home**
Where employees work remotely from their own home or chosen work location, rather than in the office.

Examples of flexibility in action

Flexibility of role: transition work plan



"Flexible working made a big difference in my life. As a first-time mum looking to return to the office, the idea of returning five days a week was quite a daunting thing. So I took the opportunity to talk to my people leader about alternative options. As a result of this conversation, I started work at three days per week on a transition plan to four days per week. This has had a huge impact on my family and me."

RACHEL JORGENSEN
HR MANAGER, SPARK

Flexibility of leave: purchased leave



"Purchased leave is a great aspect of our flexible working policy that allows us to purchase up to an additional 30 days leave in a year. When I got the opportunity to attend a friend's wedding in Vietnam, being able to purchase two weeks additional leave meant that I could have a great holiday, without taking unpaid leave, and still save my holiday leave for our traditional Christmas shut-down period. And because the cost is deducted equally each month out of your salary over a year, you don't 'feel the loss' so much."

JUSTINE TODD
CITIZENSHIP MANAGER, KPMG

Flexibility of schedule: staggered start and finish times



"I used to travel up to four hours a day to get to and from work, until I made an arrangement with my manager to have flexible start and finish times. With this flexibility of schedule, I have now cut my commute to 45 minutes each way, which has had a positive impact on my personal wellbeing, as well as my family."

TRIS ALCANITES
SENIOR INSIGHTS ANALYST, BNZ

Flexibility of place: activity-based work



"I enjoy the flexibility of working in an activity based environment - to get creative in open shared spaces and connect with colleagues digitally when needed, and to then retreat to focus rooms for more sustained, quiet time as required. I also enjoy the ability to move around, I think that's important."

JOYCE CHAN
PORTFOLIO MANAGER, FONTERRA VENTURES



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