

DSC SPEED READS

MANAGEMENT

Flexible Working

Yvonne Perry



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In association with Farrer & Co LLP

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DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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Introduction

Who will this book help?

The guide will help managers in smaller and medium-sized voluntary organisations to make good flexible working choices for their organisations and staff, and to know their legal responsibilities. It will also help those who are seeking flexible working and wanting guidance on what to expect.

What will it give you?

Flexible working has grown rapidly, driven by economic and social forces. Pressures to cut costs and maximise capital, equipment and people are everywhere. Flexibility for a better balance between personal life and work is now widely accepted. This book covers the different types of flexible working, its pros and cons, the essentials of law and policies, some tips and examples for good practice, and where to find more information and advice.

Chapter 1

What is flexible working?

This chapter describes the main types of flexible working and their suitability for organisations and people.

Flexible working is flexibility of time and place, often described as a working pattern adapted to suit a person's need. Successful flexible working is a marriage of needs – of organisation and individual – to mutual benefit. Flexible working has to comply with working time law, including hours, rest breaks and the working week, as well as health and safety at the place of work. There is a variety of contractual arrangements according to the type of flexible working.

You may have informal flexible working already as a practical solution to staffing problems and individual needs, or the nature of your work may require a particular type of flexible working, such as shifts.

There are many possibilities for flexible working. It can help towards strategic development as well as more effective daily operations. Competitive pressures grip every sector of employment, and flexible working is a powerful tool in dealing with them. Driving down employment and other costs accelerates the use of non-standard working patterns and of space saving practices, such as homeworking and 'hotdesking'.

People may find that the changes open up possibilities and are motivating, provided that they are introduced cooperatively and with sensitivity.

Working hours and times that suit

Part-time work

This is working fewer than normal basic, full-time hours: it is often defined as working fewer than 30 hours a week. The voluntary sector is a major user of this best-known flexible working pattern. Of more than 600,000 workers in the sector, 39% are part-time. Two-thirds are women and nearly half work part-time.

Part-time working helps employers operate for longer hours, cover breaks and peak times, and to keep highly skilled employees who are unable to work full time. Recruiting mothers with young children or older people as part-timers can help if you need to find people with scarce skills. The administration, recruitment and training costs may be higher, as often they are the same for a part-timer as for a full-timer.

There are advantages in fitting work round family, study, leisure or another job. Part-time working is a good example of the trade-off in flexible working between time and money. Research shows that many part-timers are employed below the level of their competence, and that part-time working limits earnings and promotion potential. Also, they can suffer from being wrongly perceived as lacking in commitment, both by managers and colleagues.

Flexitime

Flexitime allows people to choose when to work their hours outside the core times set by the employer. Flexitime helps employers operate over longer periods and provide maximum staff cover in busy hours. It is said to aid staff retention, reduce absenteeism and increase productivity. Employees can feel more in control of their time and workload: they can fit hours around their responsibilities and interests, avoid peak

Top tip



Employees who can choose to work flexibly often reflect this in extra commitment to the organisation rather than less.

**Jill Thornton,
Personnel
Co-ordinator, DSC**

DSC Speed Reads

Aimed at people who are short on time and need to absorb information quickly, these indispensable guides are:

- **Accessible** – practical guidance on a wide range of subjects
- **Condensed** – distilling experience and expertise in just 32 pages
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Covering a wide range of topics and building into an invaluable library, Speed Reads are an essential addition to any bookshelf.

Flexible Working

Smaller organisations have always operated on a lot of informal give and take as regards flexible working, but doing this more formally and being aware of the legal implications needs thinking through. This book gives readers a route map to incorporating flexible working that is fair, suits individuals and benefits your organisation.

Yvonne Perry has extensive management and employment relations experience in not-for-profit and membership organisations, including the Industrial Society/Work Foundation and the CBI. She is currently a council member of the EIRIS Foundation and non-executive director of EIRIS Ltd, and a trustee of the Age and Employment Network. She has contributed to many employment-related guides and legislative consultations.



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