

HELLO INSPIRATION...FLEXIBLE WORKING



THE LOWDOWN:

From 30 June 2014 every employee has the statutory right to request flexible working after 26 weeks employment service.

Key points

- Requests should be in writing stating the date of the request and whether any previous application has been made and the date of that application
- Requests and appeals must be considered and decided upon within three months of the receipt of the request
- Employers must have a sound business reason for rejecting any request
- Employees can only make one request in any 12 month period

THE FACTUAL STUFF:

<http://www.thejobshareproject.com/how-to-Make-a-Job-Sharing-Situation-Work.html>
Useful blog post on job sharing

<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1616> - Advice leaflet on legal rights

<https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview> - Government guide

<http://www.workingmums.co.uk/advice-and-support/career-advice/197211/flexible-working-a-guide-for-employers.shtml> - This states the reasons that a request can be turned down as well as the process that should be followed including time scales

http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/wales/work_w/work_rights_at_work_e/parental_rights_at_work.htm - Generic advice on all rights at work for parents, including applying for flexible working

<http://www.yesslaw.org.uk/for-employers/flexible-working-employers-guide/>
Nice succinct summary of the main obligations of your employer around flexible working

<http://www.nct.org.uk/parenting/flexible-working>
Good guide on all things flexible working

TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK...



Start with the end in mind: what is your ultimate goal?

What would your ideal scenario look like? Write this down so you are really sure of your goal. Once you know the ideal then consider what you would be willing to compromise on and what is non negotiable? A finish time might be essential whereas could you give on other aspects like which days you are in the office? Spend time thinking through all the practicalities and options prior to applying, since you can only make one request in 12 months it is worth making it count. This includes not agreeing to something that you later can't commit to!



Think Win:Win

Even if it doesn't feel that way try to approach this as a partnership making sure it works for both sides. You are more likely to be successful if you're honest with yourself about what will work and truly empathise with your employer. A good activity prior is to pretend you are your line manager and write down everything that would be on your mind, concerns and positives then try and answer them. Or ask a friend or family member to play that role. During any meetings try to 'actively listen'. It is an emotive topic so it can be easy to fall into just defending your position but remember that the best negotiators are always listening carefully for signs of what will 'get to yes'. Ask as many questions as you can to try and establish common ground. Also remember that if emotions do flare up during any meeting you are fully entitled to ask for some time out to

HOW ABOUT MAKING IT WORK...



Set boundaries from the beginning

Start as you mean to go on, it will be much harder to try and re-establish what is acceptable later. If you don't want to take work home every night then don't fall in to the trap of doing it at first and thinking it will calm down later. It won't. If you won't get in to the office until 9.30 every day then make sure your calendar reflects this. Put a clear out of office on your email. Talk to colleagues and be open (confidently and unapologetically) about when you will be available and how you plan to work.



Remember it works both ways

If you have an employer who has been flexible and supportive that is fantastic but don't take it for granted. Notably this is different from being overly grateful, after all you are still doing a job for them. One friend I know has a great employer who allows him time off at short notice, flexibility around working from home etc. but in return there are times when he will have to do work in the evenings or at short notice for them too. He appreciates this and does what he can and as a result the arrangement works perfectly.

consider the issues raised or a follow up meeting. New ideas or solutions might then come to light.



Know your stuff

Find out what your employer's policy is and also where you stand legally. See the websites at the top which give a full run down of the processes that should be followed. A good activity is to look over the reasons that a request can be refused and check you have met all the criteria either within your application form or in preparation for the meeting. It can be useful to keep a log of all communication and conversations during the process for your own records and in case of any future issues.



Be proactive

Speak to others who have made it work, do your homework around what is currently going on in the workplace (KIT days are great for this as well as building confidence, you might pick up ideas on projects / speak to someone else wanting to job share etc), find out who will be reading your request so you can 'know your audience'. It is also useful to read up on the benefits of flexible working from a business / HR perspective so you feel really confident it can work financially – see CIPD and HR Magazine for facts and research from this angle.



Communicate, communicate, communicate

If there is one thing I learnt from working part time it was about the importance of communication. If nothing else this is something you will need to get right for it to work. Whether that be to colleagues giving updates for when you are unavailable, to seniors on project progress or your whereabouts, with a job share partner and so on. I think poor communication often gives flexible working a bad name, not the actual work itself.



Set clear targets, ways of working and review dates at the start

- Try to focus on outputs not inputs after all it is not about the number of hours worked or how you work got done but the results. Unless you work in a customer facing or service / caring environment 'being at the desk' is quite an outdated concept. You could be at a desk for hours and not achieve anything. Instead, try to agree tangible and clear objectives on what needs to be achieved and by when. Building trust can be difficult since for many managers this is not the traditional way of working but it is a much more effective and efficient one. Also ensure that these objectives are realistic within your time scales and have the conversation early on if they're not. Too often parents feel grateful for having their request accepted so end up working all hours to make it work – remember that defies the point! If you are going back to do the exact same role but on less days it is definitely worth checking this out. It needn't be that the answer is just to reduce the amount of work, explore all solutions – additional resource to support, streamlining existing processes etc.



Shout about it!!!



Widen your 'circle of influence'

There will only be so much you can do to prepare and present a flexible working request and when it doesn't work out (or even if it does but not 100% to your liking) it can be difficult not to take it personally. If you do feel your employer has broken the law then this is different - see the websites above for where you can get advice and support.

A good activity, for this and other areas of life, is to look at what Steven Covey calls your 'circle of influence'. He talks about us having 2 circles:

1. The circle of concern— everything we worry about
2. The circle of influence – where we can actually make a difference

Basically this task is about reviewing what you can and can't control and where you are then spending your time and energy.

With this scenario, consider your flexible working request / meeting and write down all your feelings about it, everything on your mind, concerns, worries, conversations e.g

- I know someone else had one turned down last month
- How will I make our new routines work
- Who will be attending the meeting

Now underline them either as 'concern' or 'influence' and review where you are spending most of your time.

The idea is to try and widen your circle of influence as much as possible (to be proactive) which will make you most effective

- Where it is working become a role model for other parents. Become a mentor (either internally or through Yellow Hello), be innovative with ideas on how it could work even better, set the standard and encourage others. In certain situations flexible working still has a bad reputation and you still hear stories about the 'walk of shame' leaving at 4pm or how other colleagues resent someone having reduced hours believing they will pick up the work. There isn't a set number of people allowed to work flexibly and then the quota is full, attitudes won't change if we hide what is actually a success, be the change you want to see!

and reduce the wasted time spend on things you cannot control

e.g

- I know someone else had one turned down (circle of concern - I know none of the specifics, there is nothing I can do about it so this deserves no more of my time)

- How will I make new routines work (circle of influence - I can think this through, make plans etc)

- Who will be attending the meeting (currently circle of concern- I have no idea. However, I can make this a circle of influence by asking the question and also suggesting I bring someone along if that would make it easier)