

## Flexible working can benefit the business and staff

Research finds 84% of employers believe flexible working practices have a positive effect on retention. These initiatives can also help organisations tackle recruitment difficulties by attracting underused groups. A new book, *Flexible Working*, published by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) highlights the issues surrounding work-life balance and offers practical guidance on how employers can make flexible working work for both the business and the staff. Latest CIPD research finds more than half of organisations feel that their efforts to fill vacancies have benefited from the implementation of flexible working practices and a further 70% believe flexible working has a positive impact on motivation which can help increase productivity.

However, there are constraints and businesses will only reap the benefits if flexible working initiatives are carefully managed. Flexible working offers challenges, risks and opportunities. John Stredwick and Steve Ellis, authors of *Flexible Working*, have written this book to help employers grasp the challenges flexible working brings, avoid the risks and maximise any opportunities. If business and employee needs are not carefully aligned, or one group of employees feel that they are getting a worse deal than another, then there is a danger that the benefits will be outweighed by the costs. John Stredwick, co-author of *Flexible Working*, says, "The traditional 'cradle to grave' employment pattern, where both sides of the employment relationship were happy to stay together from induction to retirement, is increasingly being challenged. Employers have to prepare policies and practices that will facilitate this change by enabling those who want to join, leave and rejoin the labour market to do so. "Flexible working practices can be advantageous to both organisations and employees in doing this.

They give people more control over when and where they work and this appears to mean more focused and motivated employees. The introduction of flexible working can help attract underused groups, such as parents and students, allowing organisations to compete in the war for talent." Technical developments have made flexible working so much easier with options such as working from home. However there are some drawbacks and technology alone will not make flexible working successful, it merely supports and enhances flexible working.

Employers who fail to manage flexible working initiatives will not reap the business benefits unless HR get line managers and staff to sign up for all the initiatives. Steve Ellis, co-author of *Flexible Working*, says, "Like all change in organisations it is not always an easy thing to accomplish. The closer you can tie the move toward flexible working to real business and employee needs, the more chance you will have of achieving what you want.

"Flexible working, with all the technological and behavioural changes it requires, is merely a toolkit for improving the way the organisation currently operates. How managers choose to deploy these tools will ultimately determine whether the eventual results of flexible working are good or bad."

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