



Ten2Two Research Whitepaper

Practical Business: Flexible Working

## Introduction

Adoption of flexible working by UK businesses has been on a steady increase in the past decade, accelerating when many found part-time an affordable and cautious solution to their resourcing needs during the financial crisis and recession.

Whilst adoption is higher, understanding of how to make flexible working work remains patchy with many business owners and line managers unsure of its benefits and how to put them to best use.

Our survey describes the benefits from both an employer and employee perspective and the most popular working patterns. If the needs of both parties can be met a good and productive relationship develops. The survey also describes the most important characteristics of a flexible worker – something employers can use when recruiting or assessing people for flexible work.

We would like to thank the 120+ businesses and 650+ professionals from the Ten2Two community who contributed to the project.



## Our Survey

Every day at Ten2Two we work with businesses adopting flexible working to make their organisations better. They tell us about their business, the challenges they face and the resources they need to grow and improve.

To share some of that insight, we asked over 120 businesses in May 2015 about their practical use of flexible working and the learning they've gained from their experiences.

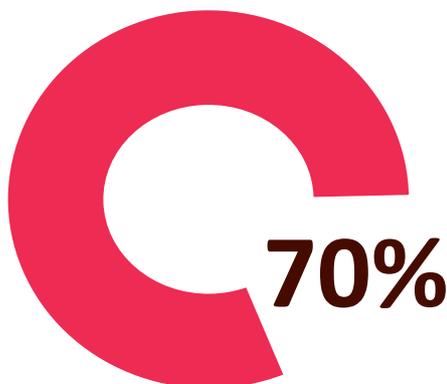
Respondents were broadly

- ...SMEs with a flavour from corporates
- ...75% Business owners/Directors
- ...75% Limited Companies
- ...75% Established more than 5 years
- ...50% with in-house or consulting HR
- .....SE England locations

## Adoption of Flexible Working

Over **70%** of businesses had granted flexible working to an existing employee or employees.

Of those, around half had added flexibility within the existing full-time hours and the other half had agreed a reduction to part-time hours. We'll see this reflected in the most popular flexible working formats later in the paper as well as reflected in employers views on the key benefits of flexible working.



Additionally, **70%** of respondents had also employed a new employee on flexible terms, 50% of those were formal flexible working contracts with the other 50% offering some informal flexibility as part of the new job.

## Flexible Working Formats

There are many variations of flexible working. The 'where, when and how' a role is carried out can be broken down into a number of patterns that suit the employer, the role and the employee. We asked businesses what formats they use most frequently.

The two formats that emerged most popular were:

### Part-time week

Several full days per week – from just one up to four – was the most popular format. It's straightforward and we know employers see the benefit of the focus working a full day offers. It's also the most familiar format to businesses and people new to flexible working.

### Homeworking

Working some or all of the time from home was the second most popular format. Frequently offered to existing employees seeking more flexibility, homeworking can work for many – but not all - roles. Reduced commuting time offers real lifestyle and wellbeing benefits to the employee and improved productivity to the employer.

Following closely behind, 'reduced daily hours, every day' and 'reduced daily hours, part-week' were also popular, reflecting the variety of options employers and employees can use to make flexible working work effectively without compromising the demands of the job.



In a parallel survey amongst over 650 professionals from the Ten2Two member community, their preferences were broadly similar to our business respondents.

'Jobshare' was by far the least popular flexible working format - particularly amongst SMEs. Whilst this format offers a number of benefits, particularly as a solution to retain valued employees seeking reduced hours, the format is seen as difficult to set up and a challenge to manage.

“ Working a full day two or three days a week allows people to focus and build momentum in their role. But if a job involves working with clients then reducing daily hours over five days a week delivers daily presence and continuity but still provides my business with the economy part-time offers. ”



## Business Benefits

A wide range of benefits were recognised by businesses but those that stood out from the crowd were:



Cost-related benefits including salary savings and the reduced risk of investing in full-time salaries ranked the lowest amongst the list of potential benefits.

## Employee Benefits

We also asked the Ten2Two member community what benefits flexible working offered them (in addition to flexible hours of course). They placed a high level of importance on the following:



Salary considerations, whilst always an important hygiene factor, were ranked lower down the scale than other benefits. However, given local part-time salaries are sometimes significantly lower than their previous full-time roles the results are understandable.

## The Flexible Worker DNA



In our experience, an employee that excels in a flexible working format demonstrates skills beyond their functional (marketing, HR etc.) abilities and experience. We asked both businesses and the Ten2Two community what they felt are the most important characteristics of a flexible worker.

They pretty much agreed. 'Effective time management' edged the vote as the most important amongst businesses with 'Organising and prioritising' work coming in a close second but scoring the highest vote amongst Ten2Two Members.

Why not include this in your job skills requirements and interview questions?



“

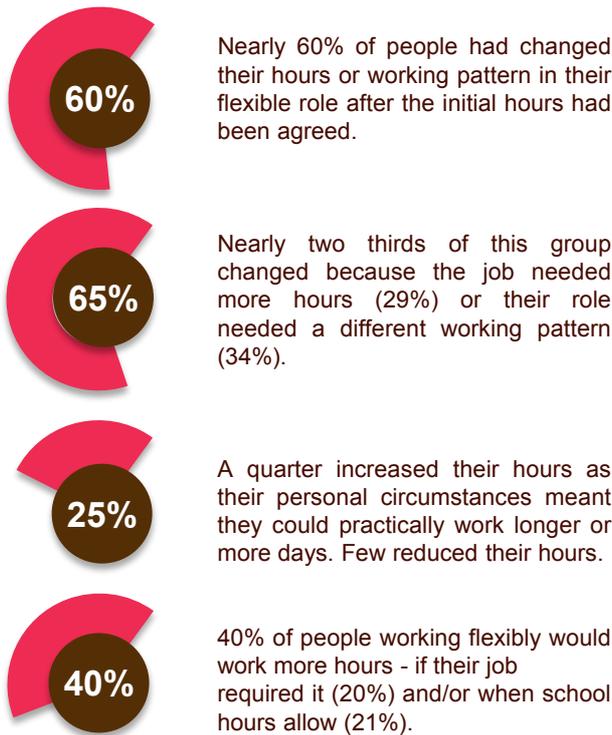
Her focus on her objectives and knack of only doing the things that matter to the job has put us in the shade and has made us think about how we're spending our time

“

## Flexible About Flexibility

Sometimes our clients are anxious about choosing the right flexible and part-time working format when they recruit for a role. They worry about whether they have scope to ask their employee to change their hours or working pattern once initially agreed. If it's a new role it's difficult to predict exactly first time.

We thought we'd ask our Members working flexibly about this situation. This is what they said:



Changes were mostly mutually agreed but over 40% Ten2Two Members stated they had been proactive and suggested the change to their employer. In Only 17% of cases did the employer suggest the change of hours or format.

## The Commute

It's worth noting that we also asked Ten2Two Members about how far they would travel for work.



70% of Members would travel up to 40 minutes to get to their place of work, but wouldn't ideally want to travel further – an important aspect when considering the catchment area for candidates as well as the retention of staff if the commute is onerous.

## What Goes Wrong

When asked about what challenges employers face, no major problems stood out in the results. Those that were mentioned focused on the need to carefully co-ordinate tasks and projects with the rest of the team.

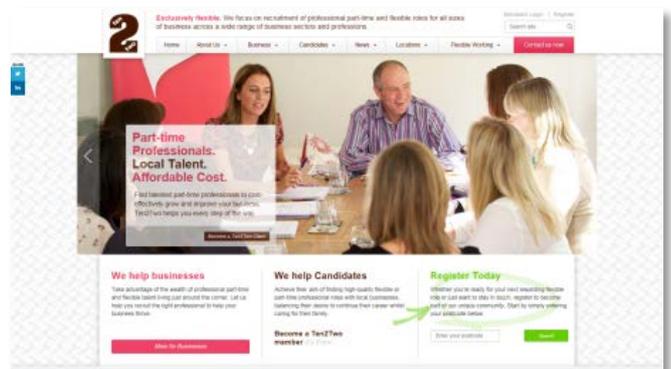
We specifically included the option to comment on the level of commitment they receive from their flexible workers. This proved to be the issue that caused least concern.

## What goes Right



## What's Next?

If you're interested in finding out more about how flexible working can improve your business or looking for support in finding an exceptional person for your next flexible role contact your local Ten2Two team.



[www.ten2two.org/locations](http://www.ten2two.org/locations)  
or search 'Ten2Two'