



Ten2Two Research Whitepaper

Practical Business: Flexible Working Works

Introduction

Flexible working has been on a steady increase in the past decade as more people, especially female professionals, sought flexibility to balance their work and family commitments and as more and more businesses 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 it to best use.

Our survey describes the practical benefits from both employee and employer perspectives and highlights the most popular working patterns. If the needs of both parties can be met a productive win-win relationship is often the result. The survey also describes the most important characteristics of a flexible worker – something employers can use when recruiting or assessing people for flexible work and something candidates can use to persuade their prospective employer of the skills and experience they offer.

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 professionals and businesses adopting flexible working, often for the first time. Professionals tell us about their desires and concerns and organisations talk to us about the challenges they face and the resources they need to grow and improve.

To share some of that insight, we asked around 650 professionals – Ten2Two members – and over 120 businesses about their practical use of flexible working and the learning they've gained from their experiences.

Here's a quick snapshot of the respondents' profile:

| Businesses | Professionals |
|-----------------------|--|
| 75% Directors | 97% Female |
| 75% Ltd Companies | 82% Managerial & professional |
| 75% Older than 5 yrs. | 87% Primary (68%) or shared (19%) childcare responsibility |
| 50% HR support | |
| SE England | |

Flexibility in Business

We wanted to know to what extent flexible working featured in the workplace and whether professionals backed up the employers' view.

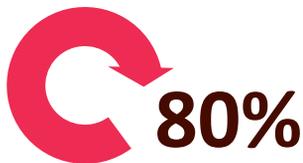
Over **70%** of businesses stated they had granted flexible working to an **existing** employee or employees.

Of those, around half had made the existing full-time hours more flexible and the other half had agreed reduced hours.



Furthermore, **70%** of respondents had also employed a new employee on flexible terms, 50% of which featured contractual flexibility with the other 50% offered informal flexibility as part of the new job.

Professionals' Views on Flexibility and Their Jobs



Felt their employers' **attitudes** towards flexible work' was an important factor in their decision to work for the company.



Felt that the flexibility on offer was a very important aspect of **taking their last role**. They wouldn't have done it full-time.



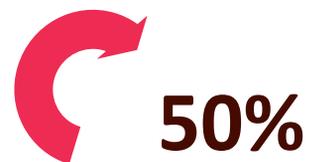
Feel that the flexibility is a very important aspect of their **current role** - a central element of their working life.



Stated they would **consider leaving their job** if flexibility was unreasonably restricted in some way by the employer.



Feel their employers are flexible - and 33% stated their employers have become more flexible in the last 12 months.



Half of respondents say flexibility will become even more important to them in the future.

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 may suit the role, the employer and the employee. We asked professionals about the formats they prefer and employers about those they use most frequently.

The formats that emerged most popular were:

Part-time week

Several full days per week – from just one day up to four – was the most popular format. It's straightforward and we know both employees and 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.

Reduced daily hours every day (5 days)

Working reduced hours every day of the week was the second favoured format amongst professionals and popular with businesses. It allows the employee to work around school hours and provides a presence every day in the office – great if the role has a client-facing element or if a regular presence is required.

Working reduced daily hours but just several days a week is also popular amongst professionals re-entering the workplace (or with highly constrained childcare) and with those that just want to maintain a presence in the workplace but it's also popular amongst employers testing a new role or tight on budget.

Homeworking

Working some or all of the time from home was the third most popular format for professionals and the second most popular format amongst businesses. 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.

Freelancing/Contract

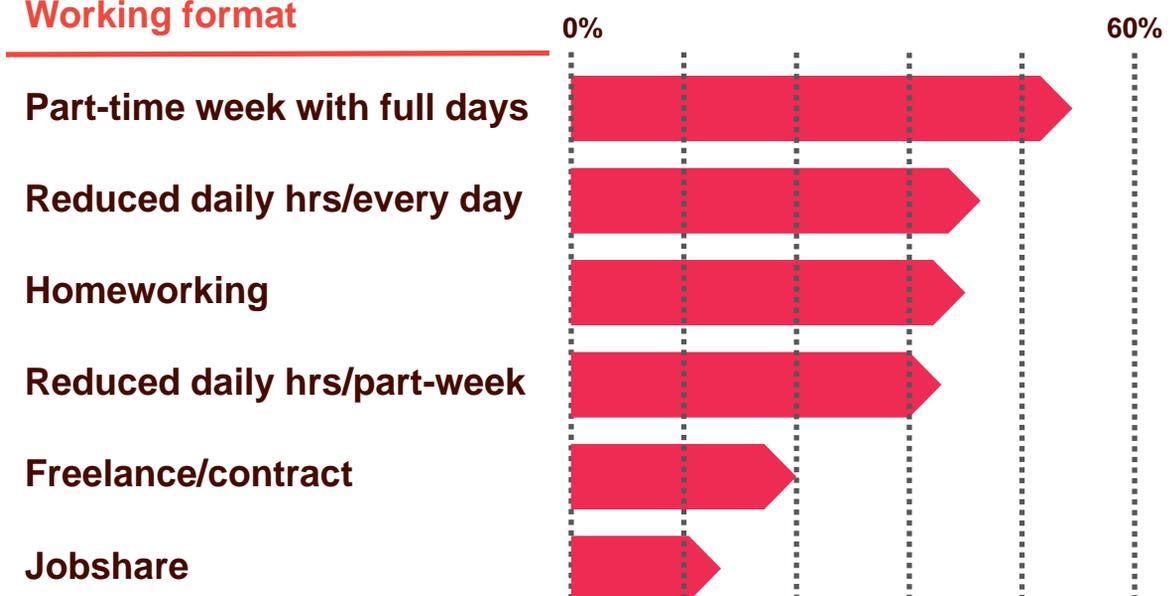
The last five or six years has seen a huge increase in the number of professionals working on a contract basis – full or part-time for a fixed period – or as a freelancer, working per hour or per project often in the creative sector. It offers professionals a different form of flexibility (but with the uncertainty that goes with non-permanent employment) and employers the opportunity to staff up a project or fill a resource gap.

Jobshare

'Jobshare' was by far the least popular flexible working format both amongst professionals and employers (particularly SMEs).

Whilst this format offers a number of benefits for example as a solution to retain valued employees seeking reduced hours or utilising the opportunity to attract a wider skillset within one role, the format is seen as difficult to set up and a challenge to manage both as a jobshare partner and as a line manager.

Working format



“

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

Professionals placed a high level of importance on the nature of the role, both content and relationships:



Salary levels, whilst always an important hygiene factor, were ranked lower down the scale than the other benefits listed above. This is partly due to the reduced salaries earned from part-time jobs.

The Flexible Worker DNA



In our experience, an employee that excels in a flexible working format demonstrates skills beyond their functional (marketing, HR etc.) experience. We asked both professionals and businesses 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 Member professionals. The need for good communications skills was recognised as one of the most important characteristics by both businesses and professionals.

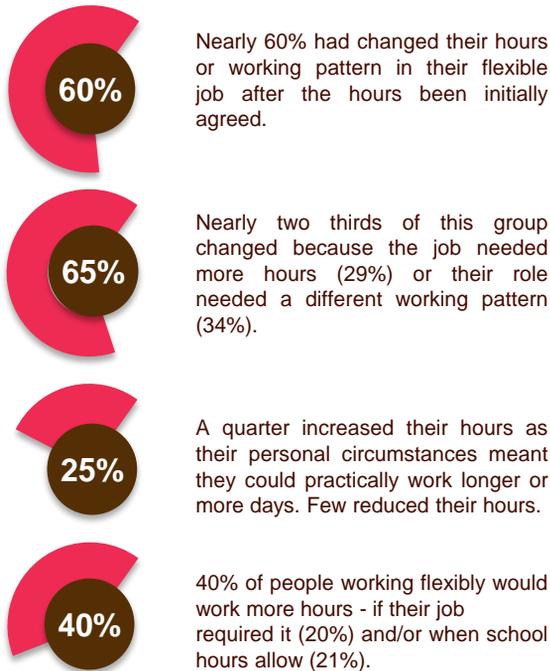


“ Her focus on her objectives and knack of only doing the things that matter to the job has put us in the shade and has made us think about how we’re spending our time ”

Flexible About Flexibility

Sometimes employers can be 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 can be difficult to predict the right format

We asked professionals currently working flexibly about this situation. This is what you said:



Changes were mostly mutually agreed but over 40% of professionals were proactive and suggested the change to their employer. In Only 17% of cases did the employer suggest the change of hours or format, showing the employee taking ownership of their roles.

The Commute

It's worth noting that we also asked professionals 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?

Our research – and other recent reports – shows flexible working is established and growing. We've entered a phase where getting it right is now the important factor and sharing learning and insights is a great way to do it. Contact our team to find out more.



www.ten2two.org/locations
or search 'Ten2Two'