

# TIPS FOR PROPOSING A FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENT

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Some organizations have a formal process in place for requesting a flexible work arrangement; often this includes a flexible work arrangement proposal that an employee completes and submits to her manager. Other organizations implement flexible work practices without a formal process and request form. The following tips provide guidance for employees when proposing a flexible work arrangement, whether a formal process is in place or not. Though employees and managers will approach the issue of flexibility separately, the ultimate success of a flexible work arrangement depends on their collaboration in reviewing the proposed schedule together, implementing the flexible work arrangement if approved and assessing the flexible work arrangement on an ongoing basis.

As you develop a proposal for your flexible work arrangement, use the *Proposing a Flexible Work Arrangement Worksheet* in the Appendix to organize your thoughts. The following tips will help you in thinking about all aspects of a proposed flexible work option. You may submit your proposal in writing to your manager or use the worksheet as a guide for discussing your proposed flexible work arrangement with your manager.

*Be as detailed and specific as possible when describing your proposed flexible work arrangement.*

### ✓ Describe your proposed flexible work arrangement.

- Be as specific as possible.
- Describe the *differences* in the schedule you are proposing from your current schedule, including your proposed work days, start and end times, hours of work, and location.
- If applicable, include what days are on-site and off-site.

### ✓ Consider your job performance objectives.

- Think about and describe how you might enhance your performance on a flexible work arrangement through new and innovative ways of working.
- How will your proposed flexible work arrangement change your ability to meet those objectives?

### ✓ Think about how you currently accomplish your job.

- Who do you communicate with and how often?
- What deadlines do you have?
- Are there tasks or responsibilities that are unpredictable or variable?
- What about internal and external customer/client needs? How will you meet their needs when on your proposed flexible work arrangement?

- ✓ **Document how you will accomplish your job responsibilities and objectives** on your proposed flexible work arrangement.

For example:

- *My compressed workweek schedule will enable me to complete work before most of my co-workers come to the office or after most of my co-workers have left in the evening, allowing me to concentrate and work with better speed and accuracy.*
- *If I am working from home, I will participate in team meetings by conference call and attend important meetings in person if necessary.*
- *When working off-site, I will let my co-workers know how to reach me and change my voice mail and e-mail accordingly.*

- ✓ **Describe any changes in how you will accomplish your job tasks, responsibilities and objectives** while on your proposed flexible work arrangement.

- ✓ **Consider potential challenges your flexible work arrangement might raise** with your co-workers, manager(s) and customers/clients. What are some potential solutions to these challenges?

- You might want to discuss this question with your manager, workgroup and colleagues. Think about how your proposed flexible work arrangement might impact how you work with these people.
- Identify possible problems, including obvious ones (not in on Mondays) as well as more subtle ones (accessibility for unplanned meetings).

For example:

- *My co-workers may resent my new schedule and have concerns that I won't "carry my weight" and they'll have the burden of taking on some of my work.*
- *Internal customers/clients who are used to meeting with me in person may think I'm not as responsive if they need to call or e-mail me rather than simply stopping by my desk.*
- When considering the impact of your flexible work arrangement on co-workers, manager(s) and customers/clients, provide concrete potential solutions for any problems or challenges listed. Ideally, provide several possible solutions for each problem. Suggest alternatives that will meet the needs of the organization as well as all the individuals involved.

For example:

- *I will inform all my internal customers/clients of my new schedule, including when and how I can be reached, and assure them I will continue to be responsive to their needs.*
- *I will provide customers/clients, co-workers and my manager with my contact information.*
- *I will develop a backup plan for coverage during times I am not working.*
- *I will inform team members of my flexible work arrangement, schedule and contact information and ensure them I will continue to fulfill job requirements. I'll confirm what they need from me so I can successfully meet business needs without negative impacts while on my flexible work arrangement.*

- ✓ **Describe how you will evaluate and measure the success** of your flexible work arrangement in meeting job requirements and expectations.
  - Think about what job elements must be accomplished to make clear to both you and your manager that your proposed flexible work arrangement is working well.
  - Keep in mind that the opposite of the criteria you list may serve as a “red flag” or early warning that will alert you and/or your manager that modifications to your proposed flexible work arrangement may be necessary.
  
- ✓ **What are some critical factors for success of your proposed flexible work arrangement?** How will you know if they are in place?
  - Do you have the management support you will need?
  - Will you have the technology you need?
  - What other factors will affect the success of your proposed flexible work arrangement?
  
- ✓ **Develop clear and measurable goals and/or milestones for success.**
  - How specifically will you and your manager measure your performance on your proposed flexible work arrangement?
  
- ✓ **Suggest a review process and timeline** that you and your manager will use to assess the effectiveness of your flexible work arrangement.
  - Determine how often you and your manager will meet to discuss progress and evaluate the effectiveness of your flexible work arrangement.
  
- ✓ **Describe the process you will use to measure achievement of your goals.**
  - Use your job description or goals as a starting point.
  
- ✓ **Describe any additional equipment/expenses** that your proposed flexible work arrangement might require.
  - List all the equipment and related expenses, such as Internet connection, extra home telephone line, etc.
  
- ✓ **Describe any short- or long-term cost savings for the organization** that might result from your new flexible work arrangement to offset any expenses (i.e., real estate savings, decreased overtime).

## Tips for Talking to Your Manager about a Flexible Work Arrangement

### ✓ When starting a conversation:

- Arrange a specific time to speak with your manager about a flexible work arrangement rather than mentioning your interest as a passing comment.
- Prepare for your discussion. Use the *Proposing a Flexible Work Arrangement Worksheet* as you consider the business implications and consequences for your internal and external customers/clients, co-workers and manager(s).
- Remember that this is flexibility — remain flexible and be willing to make changes to meet business needs.

### ✓ Focus on performance.

- Emphasize your continued attention and dedication to results and meeting or exceeding expectations.
- Consider the needs of the business and your team when suggesting alternatives to traditional work hours and/or location.
- It is not necessary to give a reason for requesting a flexible work arrangement. Reasons should not factor into your manager's decision to approve or deny your flexible work arrangement request — your ability to meet your job requirements should be the primary consideration when your manager reviews your flexible work arrangement proposal.
- Be flexible. Remember that the needs of the business may make it difficult at times to follow your proposed flexible work arrangement.

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