

ESTABLISHING TEAM-BASED FLEXIBILITY: DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

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Some of the most creative and effective uses of flexibility are being implemented at the workgroup/team level. When team members are engaged in discussions to determine flexible ways of working to meet their needs while ensuring that business requirements are met, it's a win/win. Employees are more satisfied, engaged and effective and the business may benefit by retaining key talent, expanding hours, ensuring coverage to meet customer and production needs, and reducing overtime costs.

The following discussion guide is designed to assist managers in leading meaningful discussions with their workgroups (both on-site workers and teleworkers/remote workers) about how to use flexible work practices to increase team effectiveness. Many organizations have formal flexible work option policies and guidelines in place, while others do not. In either case, not all flexible work options will be relevant given business demands in an hourly and nonexempt work environment. It's up to you as a manager, with input from the team, to determine flexible work options that are feasible in meeting business requirements.

In your team meetings and discussions, team members can explore flexible work options that are desirable and realistic given business requirements, determine critical success factors, discuss how to address challenges, and establish team operating principles or agreements to ensure success. Discussions with team members can be conducted as part of regular team/staff meetings or in three or four designated meetings convened for this specific purpose. Managers may pick and choose the most relevant segments for their team.

Prior to the first meeting:

- **Review company flexibility options, policies and guidelines, if available.**

- Which flexible work options are applicable to the business function and workgroup?

Potential formal flexible work arrangements include:

- *Flextime*: Modification in start and end times, often with required core hours for full-time employees;
- *Compressed workweek*: Compression of full-time job responsibilities into fewer than five days per week (often referred to as a 4/10) or fewer than 10 days in two weeks (often referred to as a 9/80);
- *Telework*: Full-time work conducted up to several days a week at a site other than the primary worksite;
- *Remote work*: Full-time work conducted at home or another site with limited presence at a regular company facility;
- *Part time*: Reduced hours or schedule, with a corresponding reduction in job responsibilities and pay and an adjustment of benefits; and
- *Job sharing*: Two employees on reduced schedules and workload share overlapping responsibilities of a full-time position, with a corresponding reduction in pay and an adjustment of benefits for each.

Other flexibility options might include:

- *Paid time off (PTO) and other time off:* PTO banks, use of sick and vacation time in part-day increments, and “just in time” time off;
 - *Shift swapping;* and
 - *Occasional flexibility:* Flexibility that is not regularly scheduled but is used from time to time (i.e., time off taken in small increments with the ability to make it up in the same pay period, shifting start and end times because of an appointment or event, working from home on occasion, etc.).
- **Review the team staffing schedule, identify what flexible work options are currently being used and be prepared to share this with the workgroup.**
 - What formal flexible work arrangements are in place? Are they effective in meeting employee needs and business requirements?
 - What, if any, occasional flexibility is being used?
 - If you are not sure, you may have to ask team members to describe their use of flexibility options and submit these to you prior to the meeting.
 - **Think about how flexible ways of working can be used to enhance employee performance, engagement, and ability to meet or exceed business requirements of your workgroup.** Business impacts of flexibility often include:
 - *Attracting and retaining key talent* by providing desirable flexible work options in a competitive labor market;
 - *Reducing costs of turnover* by retaining trained and skilled employees;
 - *Reducing overtime, absenteeism and “call offs”* by providing options for expanded hours, coverage and ability to take and make up occasional, unanticipated time off;
 - *Enhancing employee productivity, effectiveness and engagement* through increased employee empowerment and control over work schedules to meet personal needs and job requirements;
 - *Expanding coverage* with schedules that meet customer and production needs as well as peak and valley staffing requirements;
 - *Reducing cycle time* by letting employees work in ways that maximize their efficiency;
 - *Improving employee satisfaction, morale and teamwork* by engaging employees in determining flexible work arrangements that work for them and the business and ensuring success through collaboration, mutual support and teamwork;
 - *Improving employee health, well-being and resilience and reducing stress* of employees by having the flexibility and control over schedules to manage their work and personal responsibilities; and
 - *Increasing customer service* through satisfied, committed employees.

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