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Managing a Flexible Workforce

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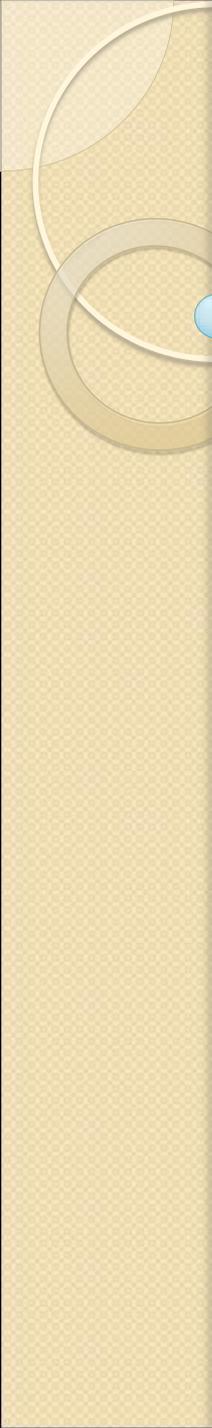


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HOSPITALITY EXPO 2008

RDS SIMMONSCOURT PAVILLION, BALLSBRIDGE, DUBLIN
Conference Presentation

MANAGING A FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE

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MANAGING A FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE

Presentation Overview



- **ORIGINS OF THE FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE.**
- **DEFINING WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY.**
- **IRELAND'S RESPONSE TO CHANGING PATTERNS OF WORK.**
- **BENEFITS AND IMPORTANCE OF FLEXIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE.**
- **INTRODUCING FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE PRACTICES.**
- **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.**
- **REFERENCES & FURTHER INFORMATION.**
- **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.**

MANAGING A FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE

Origins of the Flexible Workforce

The concept of the flexible firm was originated by **Atkinson (1984)** who claimed that there was a growing trend for establishments to seek various forms of structural and operational flexibility. The **three kinds of flexibility areas include;**

- **Functional flexibility** so that employees could be redeployed quickly and smoothly between activities and tasks. This type of flexibility would require multi-skilling – craft workers who would possess and apply a number of skills covering for example front and back of house, maintenance activities and supervisory activities.
- **Numerical flexibility** so that the number of employees could be quickly and easily increased or decreased in line with even short-term changes in the level of demand for labour.
- **Financial flexibility** to provide for pay levels to reflect the state of supply and demand in the external labour market and flexible pay systems that would facilitate either functional or numerical flexibility.

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Defining Workplace Flexibility



Workplace Flexibility is defined as;

- ✓ **The ability to have flexibility in the *scheduling* of full-time hours.**
- ✓ **The ability to have flexibility in the *number* of hours worked.**
- ✓ **The ability to have *career* flexibility with *multiple points* for entry, exit and re-entry into the workforce.**
- ✓ **The ability to *address unexpected and ongoing* personal and family needs.**

Flexibility is a way to define how and when work gets done and how careers are organized. It is a critical ingredient to overall workplace effectiveness. Companies use it as a **tool for improving recruitment and retention, for managing workload, and for responding to employee diversity.** Research indicates that flexibility can also improve employee engagement and job satisfaction and reduce stress.

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Ireland's response to changing patterns of work

The National Workplace Strategy launched by An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D in March 2005 it was the government's blueprint to transform Irish workplaces and build a *highly competitive, innovative and knowledge-based economy for the future*

The strategy's five priority themes included;

- **Promoting workplace innovation** workplace innovation fund, committing significant additional resources to the practical implementation of innovative practices in Irish companies and organisations across all sector.
- **Promoting capacity for change** funds and initiatives put into place to support the promotion and development of leadership and management skills in the public and private sectors, also new legislation on employee information and consultation was added to the momentum for change.
- **Developing future skills** by the Irish Government at the national level, the One Step Up initiative and the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework. Significant increases (€52 mil in 2006-07 from €14 mil in 2004) in the investment in In-Company Training between the Competency Development programme/One step Up run by FAS, the Training Networks Programme and ACCEL, run by Skillnets Services Ltd.
- **Access to Opportunities** launch of the Wage Subsidy Scheme to increase the employment prospects of people with disability, increasing research output by National centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP) and the Equality Authority on the business case for managing diversity and equality in the workplace.
- **Quality of Working Life collaborative projects** involving the NCPP, the Health & Safety Authority and the Equality Authority to improve working-life issues.

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Benefits and importance of flexibility in the workplace

The Benefits of Flexibility in the Workplace:

- ✓ Improving your ability to attract skilled and motivated employees:
- ✓ Recognition as an 'employer of choice' with a competitive edge in recruiting: Creating greater staff loyalty and higher return on training investment.
- ✓ Increased trust and respect.
- ✓ Reduced stress levels and improved morale and commitment.
- ✓ A better match between peaks and troughs in workloads and staffing.
- ✓ Reduced absenteeism and staff turnover.
- ✓ Increased management skills and finding creative ways to work.
- ✓ Improved productivity.
- ✓ Potential for improved occupational health and safety records.
- ✓ Assisting compliance with anti-discrimination and workplace relations laws.



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Benefits and importance of flexibility in the workplace

The importance of Flexibility in the Workplace

Attracting talent: ‘The war for talent’ which originated in the late 1990s as a means of highlighting the problems that organizations were having in attracting and retaining talented people. This need for qualified people is forcing companies to rethink their recruitment efforts, productivity incentives, benefit plans, work schedules and work processes, most of which were designed for a different generation of workers with different lifestyles and working conditions.

Retaining values employees:

- Replacement versus parental leave costs issue.
- Flexibility an effective retention tool.
- Family leave programmes – continue to increase retention of the highest employee performers.
- Extended maternity leave periods.
- Costs & Experience.

To raise morale and job satisfaction: there are clear links between job satisfaction and turnover through customer retention. When employee satisfaction improves there is a predictable improvement in customer satisfaction and revenues grow.

To improve productivity: The hidden costs of unscheduled absences are growing, instead of illness, family issues, personal demands and unable to get the support employees need for their elderly dependents are now the most often cited reason for taking time off.

Reduce stress or burnout: Research studies concluded that workers who used work-life and flexibility programs were more committed and less “burned out”, others problems include productivity, costly to business, employees leave companies.

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Introducing Workplace Flexibility



Suggested Steps to Introducing Workplace Practices

Step 1: Needs Assessment - workplace flexibility can assist employees with;

- Individual, changing and different needs of employees.
- Needs assessment can be completed by (discussion staff meetings, focus groups, staff surveys or exit interviews)
- Importance of communication.

Step 2: Understanding your Options – understanding the best kinds of flexible work practices;

- **Flex-Time** (flexible working hours – start & finish times, part-time, job share, rostering, compressed hours make-up time).
- **Flex-Career** (task & capacity – multi-skilling & job rotation, training & transfer opportunities, multiple points of entry, exit & re-entry).
- **Flex-Leaves** (leave flexibility for single days, without pay, extended & special leave),
- **Flex-Place** (working regular scheduled hours from home or remote location, opens market to mature age workers, workers in rural & regional areas),

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Introducing Workplace Flexibility

Suggested Steps to Introducing Workplace Practices (continued)

Step 3: Negotiation – decisions on flexible work practices should include;

- **Determine Key Implementation issues** (communication, staff attending meetings, working different hours, access to training).
- **Strategies to combat perceived barriers** (consult staff and supervisors to understand their views here).
- **Decide on Performance Measures** (what they are and how they will be evaluated).
- **Written individual Flexible work practices** (once negotiated and accepted write them up).

Finally employers should bear in mind that minimum entitlements under the ***Terms of Employment (which covers the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, Payment of Wages Act 1991, National Minimum Wage Act 2000, Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996, Terms of Employment Information Act 1994 and the Pensions Act 1990 and the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002)*** *cannot be undercut*. Agreements must provide fair compensation for the modification or removal of protected award conditions.

Step 4: Implementation - when implementing flexible work practices, consider;

- Using a trial period to ‘**test drive**’ how the arrangement works in practice.
- **Regularly consulting** with your employee and other co-workers so that issues can be discussed as they arise.
- **Reviewing the arrangements** to see whether it has been successful, perhaps once in the first week, then once a month for three months, then after six months.

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Introducing Workplace Flexibility

Suggested Steps to Introducing Workplace Practices (continued)

Step 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

Impossible to predict the exact impact increased flexibility will have on business outcomes and on other team members. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of flexible work arrangements means you can track progress and make amendments or adjustments as needed.

Your Plan to evaluate the flexible work practices on a regular basis, by:

- **Setting up a confidential feedback process** for your employee and co-workers to evaluate the arrangements and their supervisor's ability to manage flexibility.
- Assessing **specific flexibility training needs** for all employees.
- **Surveying stakeholders** to determine their perception of the impact flexible work practices are having.
- Checking that **individual and team performance measures** and objectives have been achieved.

Using the information you obtained through the evaluation, analyse the **overall strengths and weaknesses of the flexibility options and put in place strategies in response.** A possible strategy may be to provide additional training or resources for your employees, co-workers or supervisors to better facilitate the working arrangements.

Managing a Flexible Workforce

Summary and Conclusion



The greater majority of hospitality organisations and licensed premises have in place now a workplace strategy, whom they hire and how they manage, assess and reward employees. Patterns of work are changing but embracing flexibility for Irish businesses involves the conscious choice to **break-away** from the traditional industry approach and embark on a long term programme of increasingly **radical work reorganisation**. The real question now is **whether current workplace strategies are effective**, because only then will they lead to improved employee engagement, job retention, job satisfaction and employee well being all of which contribute positively to **the company's bottom line**. Large numbers of research studies demonstrates that a **critical element of workplace effectiveness is flexibility**. Achieving successful, equitable flexibility is a shared responsibility, a partnership. It **requires Irish businesses to develop and communicate clear organization policies and guidelines**. It **requires managers** to be knowledgeable about policies and promote flexibility to help get the work done. It also **requires employees** to consider the needs of the workplace, co-workers, their customers, and the company when proposing flexible work strategies. Only then can flexibility positively impact workplace effectiveness and the bottom line for the hospitality industry in Ireland.



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References and Further Information

Managing a Flexible Workforce – presentation and support notes are available from

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Licensing World (2008). “*Licensing World – Trade Directory 2008*”, pp.87-102, Jemma Publications Ltd, Blackrock: Dublin.

O’Reilly, C. A and Pfeffer, J. (2000). “*Hidden Value: How great companies achieve extraordinary results*”, Harvard Business School Press, Boston: MA.

Further Information and Internet Resources

<http://www.entemp.ie> Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

www.whenworkworks.org When Work Works Project – The Center for Workforce Preparation an affiliate of the U.S Chamber of Commerce and The Center for Emerging Futures.

http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/JOAC/Employers/Supporting_and_retaining_staff/Flexi Australian Government - JobAccess Flexibility in the workplace.

<http://www.law.georgetown.edu/workplaceflexibility> Workplace Flexibility 2010.

www.labour.gc.ca Canada, Building Fair and Productive Workplaces.

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Questions and Answers



Thank You

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