



Flexible Work Arrangement Tips for Employees

Be informed

Considering new ways of performing or structuring work can be intimidating. It can also be uncomfortable for an employee to request a discussion with their supervisor on the topic of workplace flexibility. The resources available here are intended to help employees be well informed about the intricacies of flexible work and how to put together a thoughtful proposal.

Consult

Individual private consultations are available to employees on all issues pertaining to flexible work through [Work/Life](#). Employees are encouraged to seek assistance when they are unsure of policies, process, and best practices. We welcome the opportunity to work with employees in a proactive and strengths-based manner, ideally before challenges occur.

Pros and cons

While initially a flexible work arrangement may seem to be a very positive relief from workplace distractions, some employees struggle with feelings of isolation when they work in solitude for extended periods of time (not all employees who work remotely experience solitude – many interact on a frequent basis with colleagues and customers using technical tools).

Build a professional network

The [Cornell Remote Employee Network](#) is a group specifically for employees who work remotely at least occasionally. It is intended to be used for sharing of resources, practices, technologies, etc. and discussion of experiences. The network supports employees who desire expanding their professional network.

Work with your supervisor

Set clearly defined, measurable benchmarks and agree on expectations so that you can demonstrate success. Clearly communicate your capacity to take on work, both your limits and your ability to expand your responsibilities. Something as simple as sending updates, even unsolicited, demonstrates you are actively working toward organizational goals and achieving results.

Be adaptable

Recognize that flexibility is a two-way street requiring both employees and supervisors to be adaptable. If your regular remote work day is a Friday, and the organization is hosting a picnic, you may still want to consider joining in.

Cooperate with coworkers

Employees may need to consistently, and politely, remind coworkers of their schedule, since coworkers don't always remember. Be clear about your inability to make a meeting if your schedule conflicts, and rather than taking it personally, accept that it may take some time for everyone to adjust to the new arrangement. Create a shared calendar so everyone can keep track of the various remote work arrangements and there is a clear understanding of how and when to contact each other.

Adapted from the [Workflex Employee Toolkit](#), created by the "When Work Works" joint project of the Families and Work Institute (FWI) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

All employees participating in a flexible work arrangement should:

- Take initiative to be present at key meetings.
- Be flexible; supervisors/colleagues won't always be able to work around your schedule. If you are on a flexible schedule, you may have to come in on some days that you ordinarily work from home or take as a day "off." These occurrences should be expected especially in the event of crucial meetings or peak times. You should discuss these with your supervisor in advance, so that you can make alternative arrangements for child care/transportation.
- Establish "office hours" approved by your supervisor, and clearly communicate them so that others in the office can contact you during those hours. Make sure anyone who might need you knows exactly when they can get you, what to do if they feel it's urgent, and how long it will be before you return their voice-mail or e-mail message.
- Reschedule your day/time off or away from your worksite, if necessary, so you do not miss office social events. Business often gets accomplished during informal settings, whether planned or not.
- Request weekly feedback from your supervisor for at least the first few weeks on how the flexible work arrangement is working.
- Modify your voicemail greeting to provide callers with information on how they may reach you, who to contact in an emergency, and when they may anticipate your returned call.

Adapted from the WFC Resources Newsbrief, July 2008