

## Spotlight on ... Flexible Working

12%

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, only 5% of workers worked 'mainly' from home, while **12%** worked '**partially**' from home.

50%

During lockdown over **50%** of employees described themselves as '**partially**' working from home.

Whilst **flexible working** has always been on Cream HR's agenda, it has often been viewed negatively and employers often sought to reject flexible working requests. Perhaps one positive we can take from the Covid-19 pandemic is that the potential value of flexible working has been in the spotlight.

In one study, **81%** of workers said they expected to work from home at least **one day** a week when the pandemic is over.

When thinking about flexible working, it is important to separate **enforced** flexible working from **voluntary** flexible working as there are many differences.

### **Enforced**

*Involuntary*

*No Planning*

*Childcare/home schooling issues*

*Heightened anxiety*

*Financial Concerns*

### **Voluntary**

*Requested*

*Carefully Planned*

*Childcare arrangements in place*

*Support from employer*

*Appropriate equipment*

Flexible working is about **when, where and how much** people work. Covid has been all about the *where* but this is only the beginning.

In fact, as with any other business practice, flexible working needs to be effectively **planned** for, and potential obstacles need to be considered and, where possible, resolved, before the transition begins.

Some of the **things to consider** include:



How many **days** a week will an employee work from home?



What **resources** will they need and are they able to work safely and effectively from home?



How will they **communicate** with their colleagues and managers?



When will employees take **breaks** and avoid burnout?

Following a 9-month trial into home-working at travel firm CTrip, **50%** of workers cited **social isolation** as the main factor in wanting to return to work (break times chats and after work socialisation).

**Concerns** your employees may have:



Will the opportunity for career **progression** be limited?



Is there **stigma** attached to flexible working?



What will be the **cost** of setting up the home office/ utility bills/ stationery etc?

**Technology** has featured heavily during the Covid-enforced lockdown but are you using it correctly? **Video calls** became the main method of communication, but this can be far from perfect. In fact, video calling is **exhausting**, but why?



People have to work harder to process non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and tone



Silence can be very awkward



People feel the need to perform



In these current times they can be a sad reminder of what we are all missing

It can also be **unsettling** to see your colleagues, friends and family all in the same space (you wouldn't see them all in a bar at one time!)

So, how can you **reduce** the **tiring effect** of video calling?



Allow people to switch their cameras off



Suggest participants position their screen at an angle/off to the side, almost like an adjoining room, and this can feel less intimidating.



Limit video calls and consider other forms of communication

What other forms of **communication and technology** can be helpful?

Real-time chat functions

Email for formal and external communication

Video conference for teams and problem solving

One drive / share point for collaborating

Getting flexible working right is crucial to ensuring your employees are happy, and happy employees will undoubtedly perform more effectively and be more loyal to the organisation. But don't just take our word for it...

**55%** of respondents in the 2021 Modern Families Index Spotlight said their **loyalty** to their employer would be dependent on **their approach** during the pandemic and their ability to recognise the challenges employees face with juggling work, childcare and care of elderly relatives.

Contact **Cream HR** for tailored support.

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