

YOUR LETTERS

Have your say — your views are important

LETTER OF THE MONTH

We will be giving away a bottle of champagne to the star letter each and every month.



Flexible working can help increase engagement

Your article on flexible working in the July issue highlights the benefits to companies of ensuring that staff are able to work remotely. However, the article does not consider a fundamental benefit of flexible working – employee engagement.

A worker is engaged if they are willing to put in discretionary effort and will “go the extra mile”. Several studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between engagement and company performance. For example, Gallop (2010) found companies with engaged employees have +18 per cent productivity and +16 per cent profitability in comparison to companies with low levels of engagement. This is supported by the Government, which

commissioned MacLeod and Clarke to review the impact of employee engagement. This study identified that “the correlation between engagement, wellbeing and performance is repeated too often for it to be a coincidence”.

For employees to be engaged they must fundamentally be trusted by their employer, and the company must value their staff. Flex working provides a key opportunity to demonstrate this.

Flex working also provides the opportunity for the company to demonstrate that they value their workers, as it can enable employees to support their work–life balance, which provides dividends in employee engagement and thus, improved company performance.

An employee recently commented to me that the flexibility of being able to work from home, allowing her to spend more time with her children, was invaluable to her and she could not put a price on it. In return, the company has reaped benefits of a staff member who is committed to her work, is engaged, and this has resulted in an increase in positive client feedback.

It is important to recognise the bigger picture, where flex working facilitates and supports the creation of employee engagement, driving through improved company performance.

*Lucy Cluley
HR Consultant
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Increase productivity in daily operations

The focus of Andrew Millard’s article on flexible working is on coping with the unexpected. However, if it is just introduced for this purpose, then it could be expensive.

Flexible working should be rolled out to increase productivity in day-to-day operations, not just to cover emergencies. What I mean by that is that every day brings unexpected highs and lows – peaks and troughs in demand and workloads. Flexible working can be an ideal way of accommodating these fluctuations.

So, rather than paying staff overtime in busy periods, and then having them repaint the warehouse at other times, contractual arrangements such as

annualised hours can make much better use of employees’ working time overall.

That said, flexible working can only help boost productivity if an organisation has a full understanding of the level of flexibility it needs, and if the flexible working scheme is monitored carefully.

We still find many organisations have not effectively analysed their true business needs and implemented the flexibilities needed to match them, and/or do not have the kind of tools needed to meet either of these requirements easily.

*Neville Henderson
Principal Consultant
Pasfield Curran; the Consultancy
Division of Crown Computing*

Healthcare costs

It’s no surprise that workforce health is becoming a higher priority, according to new research by Towers Watson (*Pay & Benefits*, June 2011). Many are recognising the strategic advantages of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

With more organisations focusing on obtaining value for their healthcare benefits through improved communication, the priority employers are placing on healthcare cost management is clear. By implementing solutions, such as EAPs, there is every chance that employers may succeed.

*David Smith
Chairman of UK Employee Assistance
Professionals Association*