

Flexible working hours: Do they work?

Ever since the advent of remote work during the pandemic, many businesses have begun experimenting with flexible work schedules.

Since employees were already working from home, flexible work arrangements became easier to implement. That meant employees could focus on their work when they felt the most productive, such as late at night or during the early morning.

Also, the largest 4-day workweek trial in the UK was a huge success, and they released the results in February of this year. [92%](#) of the companies involved in the trial made 4-day workweeks a permanent addition due to the compressed workweek's positive effects on productivity, retention, and employee mental health.

The results are proof that more working hours don't always lead to more productivity, as many employees have become burnt out on the traditional 9-to-5 workday.

Not only that but many professionals in the US are currently overworked.

According to a survey from [Harvard Business Review](#), 94% of respondents currently work more than 50 hours a week, and almost half said they work 65+ hours. That's concerning, as excessive work schedules like this cause elevated stress levels, absenteeism, and increased turnover.

So will the flexible work option bear fruit for your organization?

It will depend on the type of business you run and the type of flexible schedule you choose. Read on to discover the pros & cons of flexible working hours, as well as different ways to approach workplace flexibility.

What is a Flexible Work Schedule?

Traditionally, a flexible work schedule grants employees the autonomy to set their own working hours to create an optimal work-life balance. Flextime forgoes the traditional 9-to-5 work structure in favor of 4-day work weeks, part-time work, remote work, and other work schedule models.

It can also include letting employees choose whether they complete work hours on-site or remotely.

Flexible working hours don't always have to mean working fewer hours, either.

In some cases, remote workers that set their own hours work more than traditional employees.

According to a survey by Gartner that polled 10,000 remote workers from the US & Europe, [flexible working hours](#) are the primary reason for their improved productivity post-pandemic. It turns out that being able to choose where and when to complete work is an excellent motivator, which is certainly a perk of providing a hybrid workplace.

There's also plenty of evidence that shows flexible schedules lead to happier, more productive employees,

which in turn benefits the organization as a whole.

That's not to say there aren't any downsides to flexible working hours, but there's no denying that when implemented properly, different schedules can yield many benefits.

Flexibility Matters to Modern Employees

Since employees have had a taste of flexible arrangements since 2020, many of them are refusing to return to the old way of working.

In the same Gartner survey from above, 59% of workers said they'd only consider a new job if it allows them to work from locations of their choosing, and 64% were more likely to accept a new position if it offered a flex schedule.

As a result, organizations will have an easier time recruiting top talent if they offer a hybrid work environment and some sort of flexibility for working hours. That means providing the necessary hardware to make telework possible, as well as access to a high-quality network and cloud service.

Work flexibility & job satisfaction matter most to millennials, and they currently comprise the majority of the workforce. So if you're attempting to recruit millennials, advertising a desirable work-life balance is sure to catch their attention.

The Different Types of Flexible Schedules

Now that you know a bit more about flexible working, it's time to learn more about the different schedules you can try out at your organization.

The great thing about flexible work schedules is there's no one right way to do it, as there are plenty of options. If your business closes on weekends, then adopting a classic 4-day workweek could suffice. However, if you're open 24/7, you can opt for a different solution.

Maxiflex

First, let's look at Maxiflex, which is the most flexible type of work schedule you can use. It involves a set number of core hours (these are hours when you **MUST** be at work) that occur on no more than 10 days every biweekly pay period.

Employees are free to schedule more hours one week than others so long as they complete 80 hours of work within a biweekly pay period.

In some versions of the model, there are no core hours at all, and full-time employees have total freedom over when they choose to work.

You can implement maxiflex schedules at any type of organization, but they do require a significant amount of trust & supervision to work properly.

4-Day Workweek

There are several ways to approach a 4-day workweek model, such as working 4 10-hour shifts to still complete 80 hours of work a week.

There's also the model many companies used in the UK trial, where employees only work 27 hours a week,

which is four 8-hour shifts.

It's up to you whether employees get the traditional three-day weekend or if they're off during other days of the week. That will usually depend on the type of business that you run, such as a restaurant that's open on weekends.

4-day workweeks can lead to improved employee engagement and well-being, but they don't provide much autonomy to employees over their working hours.

Variable Week

This model provides daily and weekly flexibility for employees. The base requirement is for employees to complete 80 hours of work within a biweekly pay period. They can only work during the 10 weekdays during the pay period, but it's up to them which days they work and for how long.

As with the multiflex model, employees can schedule more work during one week than the other, so long as they wind up with 80 hours at the end of two weeks.

Variable Day

This model is similar to variable week, but it only provides daily flexibility. Instead of biweekly pay periods, variable day schedules deal with individual workweeks.

The base requirement is for employees to complete 40 hours within one week, and they're free to choose when that occurs. They can choose to work more hours on one day than another as long as they hit 40 hours by the end of the week.

While this model provides a bit less flexibility than the variable week, it's still flexible enough to yield benefits.

9/80 Workweek

Another option is the 9/80 workweek, which is almost identical to the variable week schedule, with one key difference.

Instead of completing 80 hours of work within 10 days, this model has employees complete 80 hours in **9 days**.

That means your staff will get one additional day off every two weeks, which rounds out to 26 additional days off per year. That's a considerable perk for your employees, and the tracked hours are virtually the same as the 9-to-5 model.

The one flaw in the schedule is that your organization will remain idle for two days a month and almost an entire month per year. Yet, your employees will work an additional four hours per week, which can help fill in the gap.

The Benefits of Flexible Working Hours

What will implementing flexible working hours at your organization do for you?

It turns out there are plenty of benefits of flexible schedules, both for employees and organizations, so let's take a look at what they entail.

Boosted Employee Productivity

While it may seem like employees should be more productive when working long hours, that's not actually the case. In the traditional 9-to-5 model, most employees are watching the clock instead of being productive.

The great thing about flexible work hours is they enable employees to work when they feel most productive. Some employees may do their best work at home in the middle of the night. For others, a busy coffee shop at the crack of dawn is the way to go.

A [survey](#) from Stanford University found that flexible hours & remote working led to a 13% increase in productivity from employees.

Increased Job Satisfaction

As stated before, job satisfaction matters most to millennial workers, and flexible hours are a great way to improve it.

According to Stats Canada, [79%](#) of employees with flex schedules reported they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their work. That's a clear sign that granting your employees some flexibility will improve the way they view their position and the work that they do.

Shorter Commutes

Even if your organization doesn't want to offer the ability to work remotely, a little flexibility in employee working hours will go a long way. For instance, the average one-way commute time in the United States is [27.6](#) minutes, which is the equivalent of five wasted work hours a week.

By allowing your employees to leave thirty minutes earlier than usual, they can avoid rush hour traffic and enjoy a far shorter commute. That will positively impact your people's energy level and productivity, so it's worth giving it a try.

Better Employee Retention

If your staff enjoys an optimal work-life balance, they're far more likely to stick around during hard times, which will improve your retention rates. You'll also have a far easier time recruiting top talent if you offer a degree of flexibility in your working hours & environment.

The Cons of Flexible Working Hours

There are certainly some drawbacks to adopting more flexible working schedules, and realizing that will help you make the most informed decision for your organization.

Difficulty Scheduling Meetings

One of the most noticeable downsides of flexible working hours is attempting to get your team together for a meeting. Since your employees can choose when they want to work, it'll be quite difficult to select a time when everyone can attend.

To remedy this, you could implement a work policy where all employees are required to attend meetings, regardless of their schedules, but that's likely to cause some dissent.

Less Structure

If your workers are all over the place with their schedules, there'll be far less structure than the typical 9-to-5 model.

For instance, some employees may work entire shifts without any supervision, which can cause issues. Besides that, remote workers will face distractions that they wouldn't encounter at the office, such as the temptation to watch Netflix or do laundry during working hours.

Final Takeaways: Flexible Working Hours

It's clear that flexible work schedules can provide attractive benefits for employees and organizations, and many professionals are now demanding some form of flexibility from their jobs.

As more and more companies adopt flexible arrangements, the trend will only continue to get stronger.

That's why it's a good idea to try some of these schedules out at your company to see what sticks and what doesn't.

Did I miss one of your favorite ways to schedule employees? Let me know in the comments.