5 Tips to Optimize Your Flexible Working System

Flexible working is here to stay. Successful companies must build systems that promote employee productivity while also prioritizing employee satisfaction.

July 9, 2021 5 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

In the not-so-distant past, flexible working was not very common. It was something only the very hip companies implemented while most others believed it just wouldn't be right for them. The public health disruptions of the past year have changed all that. Now, flexible working is the norm and most employees won't even consider a company if it doesn't have some type of flexible work policy.

According to a Harvard Business School study, 81% of surveyed professionals either don't want to go back to the office or would choose a hybrid schedule post-pandemic. However, putting a great hybrid working plan in place is not as easy as just saying "you can work from home two days of every week" and leaving it at that. To be sure that you are getting the best results for the company and also keeping employees happy, here are some of the steps you can take to optimize your flexible work strategy.

1. Involve your staff

The first thing you must do when setting up a flexible working policy is involve your employees in the decision-making

process. This begins with asking for their input on whether a flexible work policy is needed and extends to exactly how to implement it. For instance, although the most popular type of flexible work arrangement is allowing employees to work from home on certain days (better known as telecommuting) there are also other types – flexible work periods, compressed workweeks, job sharing and reduced hours arrangements.

Be sure to engage with your employees and gather their opinions before implementing any plan. This will help to ensure that they have a sense of ownership regarding the plan and will likely keep them more motivated than if the policy was just handed down from management.

Related: Your Employees Expect Schedule Flexibility. Here's How to Give It to Them.

2. Test and track

When you have decided on which type of flexible working arrangement to implement, it is important not to be too rigid in the implementation. Have a test period where you try out different nuances to the main plan to see which one balances productivity and employee satisfaction best. You can even do an A/B test with different employee groups to see the results of different arrangements.

It will be important to track the results of these tests religiously and continue to track performance on an ongoing basis. This helps you make accurate and fact-based decisions on how to change the plan in the future and will also make it easy to engage employees and other stakeholders to get their buy-in for those changes.

3. Train your employees

Staff must be trained on working efficiently in the new

arrangement. Depending on the kind of work your company does, the skillset needed to do the work in the office might be no different from the skills they need to work productively from home, but that does not mean there isn't a need to train your staff. The ability to work without the stricture of the workplace keeping distractions in check, for instance, is something that many employees will need help with.

Also, many managers who might excel at taking charge of teams they see on a day-to-day basis might falter when it comes to leading remote teams. Getting those managers trained on the nuances they need to implement in their leadership strategies will likely boost their – and their teams' – productivity significantly.

Related: 4 Great Things That Happened When We Went Remote

4. Provide the right tools

The number of companies allowing telecommuting has grown by 159% over the past year according to Dreamshala. Along with that rise, there has been a corresponding increase in the variety of software and hardware solutions available for companies looking to give their employees the very best tools to perform their roles excellently even in unorthodox circumstances.

Companies must ensure that they drill beyond marketing hype to find the right tools for their specific use case, in terms of the companies plans and the employees' satisfaction. This covers everything from ergonomic furniture to cybersecurity software, and although it might require the investment of sizable funds and a bit of time, the investment will certainly pay for itself by boosting the bottom line.

Related: 5 Digital Trends That Are Here to Stay. Time to Embrace Them.

5. Keep feedback channels open

As the company is keeping track of progress with its flexible work plans, employees will certainly be doing the same, too. Oftentimes, though, the metrics will be markedly different, with the company prioritizing income and the bottom line while employees are prioritizing their health (especially mental) and job satisfaction.

Companies need to facilitate consistent engagement to make sure that management and the company are aligned on how the flexible working arrangement is working and what, if anything, needs to be changed. That’s how you will be able to build a healthy company culture that’ll make the flexible work system work, promote employee satisfaction and boost productivity.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/373791