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REDESIGNING SCOTTISH WORKPLACES FOR A POST-COVID WORLD

A line manager's guide to creating
and leading flexible teams

FOREWORD

Covid-19 has ripped up the rulebook on what normal work looks like. Whole organisations and sectors, including those previously resistant to flexible working, have taken part in a global remote working experiment. And while the circumstances were highly challenging, they have created an opportunity for Scottish businesses to take a good hard look at traditional working patterns, and change them for the better permanently.

All the evidence suggests that leaders are increasingly of the view that giving employees greater control over how they work can benefit everyone involved. And employees are grasping the opportunity to prove that flexibility and productivity can be achieved together.

There is a great deal of speculation about what the world of work will look like moving forward. But one thing seems clear: it won't be the same as before. Even when social distancing measures are gone for good, people will still want to work from home and stagger working hours to reduce pressure on public transport. And employees are likely to be unwilling to accept a full-scale return to the traditional office-based 9-5.

At Timewise we believe this challenging time offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for leaders and managers to transform the way their teams work. We've created this line manager's guide to help you think through the short- and long-term implications of becoming more flexible, and put structures and processes in place to deliver future-fit workplaces.

It is designed to work with your own organisational policy on flexible working (and hybrid working policy, if you are already committed to a long term blend of office and home-working). You may want to review this before you get started, so you are clear on what flexible working you can support.

CONTENTS

Our guide includes a combination of guidance and practical support as follows:

1. The business case for flexible working

It's worth noting that flexible or hybrid working is so much more than a perk for employees. Correctly implemented, it can help solve a number of core business issues, including:

TALENT ATTRACTION

87% of people either work flexibly already, or wish they could. 92% of millennials identify flexibility as a top priority.

RETENTION AND MOTIVATION

75% of employers say that flexible working has a positive effect on retention and 73% say it improves staff motivation.

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to achieve financial returns above their industry average.

PERFORMANCE

97% of managers said the quantity of work improved or stayed the same, and 93% said the same about work quality.

BUSINESS COSTS

Reducing office space through flexibility has contributed to global savings of £15 million a year for EY.

The challenge is to make sure that the measures you take are implemented correctly, to support sustainable flexible working. That means designing your roles to fit the specific working patterns that people want or need.

Many flexible working arrangements can be agreed informally, between you and a team member. However, if an individual wants to reduce or compress their hours, in the short or long term, you will need to speak to your HR team as this will require a contract change and affect the payroll.

Need help getting started? Email
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2. Understanding flexible job design

At the heart of the job design process is one key principle: finding a working pattern that works for both the organisation and the individual.

You therefore need to explore what your employee needs, and what the business needs and identify where they can both be met.

Having worked out where both parties' needs overlap, there are three core elements you need to explore further:

- WHERE the work needs to be done
- WHEN the work needs to be done
- HOW MUCH work is involved

We will cover each of these points individually in the next few sections.

**JOB DESIGN IDENTIFIES
WHERE FLEXIBILITY WORKS**

ORGANISATION'S NEED
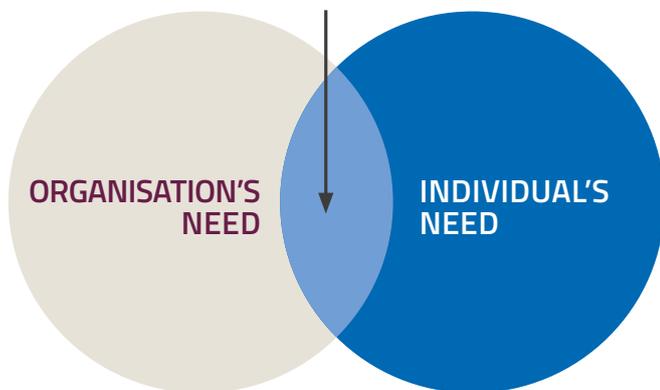
INDIVIDUAL'S NEED

To find out about our job design workshops email **info@timewise.co.uk**
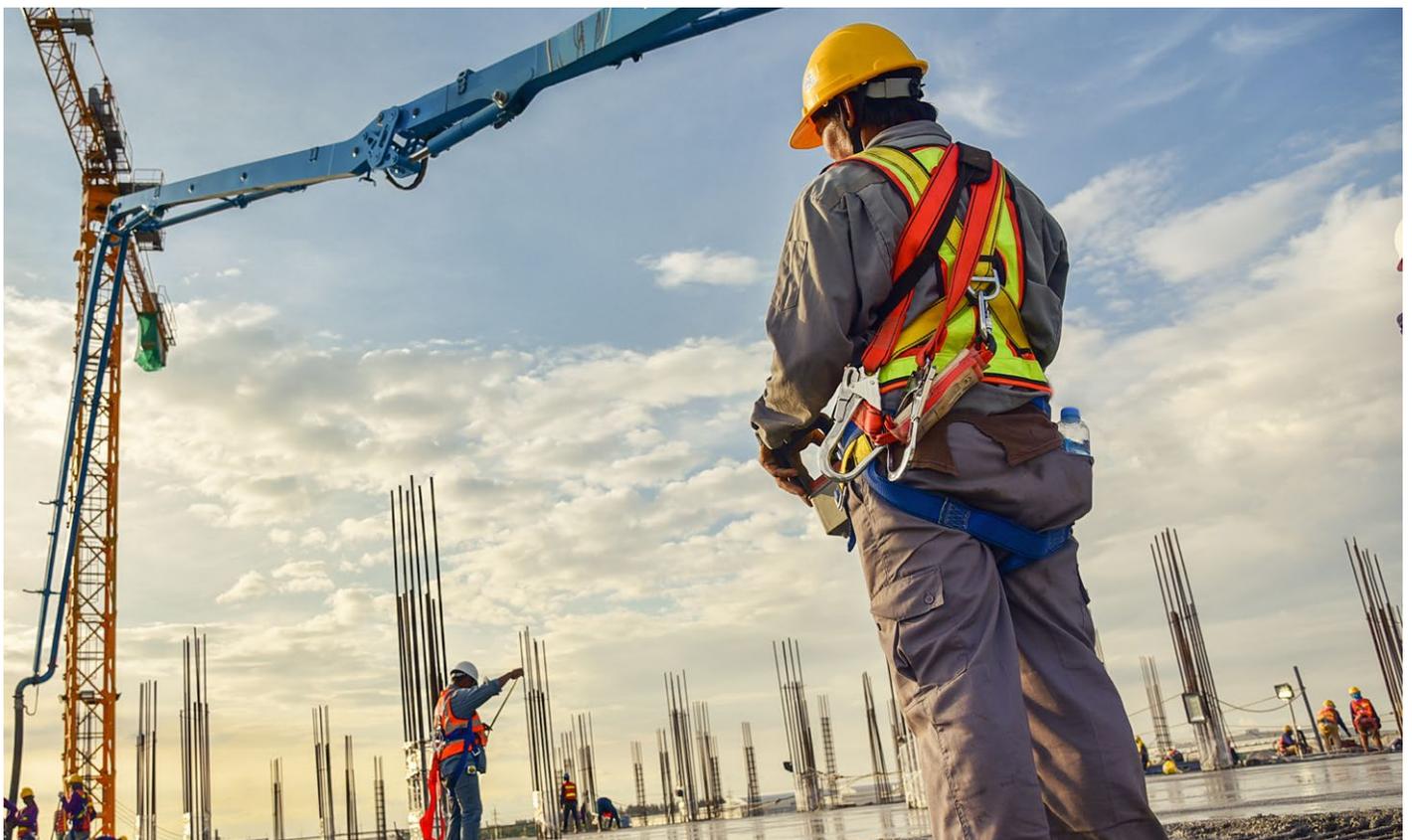
3. WHERE people work: making a success of remote working

DEFINITION

Where-based flexibility refers to any work that is done away from an individual's usual place of work - the main type is home-working, but it can also include working at other offices, sites or cafes.

Across Scotland during the pandemic, remote working – or more specifically, working from home – became the norm for many people. Employers found that a surprising number of jobs can embrace remote working, and the experience helped to hasten the introduction of remote working practices and principles.

TALKING TO YOUR TEAM

To make a success of remote working, you need to make sure you're having the right conversations, and asking the right questions, to support your team to work safely and effectively when working away from the rest of their team.

The Ways of Working Checklist in Section 4 will help guide your conversations and make sure you cover all the essential points.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Following the experience of the Covid pandemic, it is highly likely that members of your team will want to continue with some degree of remote working, even if your workplace fully reopens. Here are some questions to consider to make sure it is sustainable.

- Where will the majority of your business be conducted going forward? Are you considering down-sizing or closing down office spaces?

- Has your experience changed how you think about productivity? Can you shift your focus from hours of work to contribution, results and output?

- How will the team communicate and share knowledge?

- What practices have you adopted/could you adopt which support team cohesion, health and well-being?

- What interventions can you design to ensure ongoing collaboration and long-term shared goals?

- How can you ensure regular feedback and improvement focus, about performance and ways of working?

To find out about our hybrid working workshops email **info@timewise.co.uk**

4. Line Manager Tool: Ways of Working Checklist

It is important for all managers to regularly connect with all individuals in their team, to support effective ways of working and well-being. This checklist of questions to ask your team members will help you have the right conversations.

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Are you clear on priorities and upcoming deadlines?

Are these achievable given the current constraints?

Do we need to adjust these or do you need additional support?

Do you have any caring / child care responsibilities you need to work around?

Would it help to adjust your working hours to accommodate these?

TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY

Do you have the right equipment to perform your role effectively?

Do you have a quiet workspace, free from distractions?

Do you have reliable internet connection and phone signal?

What else, if anything, could the business provide to help you work more effectively?

Are you comfortable with the new tools we are using, or do you need additional support or training?

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Are you looking after yourself, taking regular breaks and moving around?

When are you most productive during the day?

Do we need to make any adjustments to incorporate this?

Are you comfortable with this way of working for the foreseeable future or do you have any concerns?

COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Do you feel you have enough opportunities to communicate with me and your colleagues?

Is there anything we could do to keep you better connected as a team?

CAPTURING THE LEARNING

Is there anything I, the team or the business could be doing to support you better right now?

Do you have any concerns about the current situation, either personally or about the organisation in general?

For details of our line manager training programme email **info@timewise.co.uk**

5. WHEN people work: finding the right pattern

DEFINITION

When-based flexibility refers to patterns in which the working day, week or year is adjusted. This includes patterns such as flexitime, compressed hours and annualised hours.

MAKING VARIABLE HOURS OF WORK A SUCCESS FOR YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR PEOPLE

We don't know for sure what the situation will be across Scotland post Covid-19, but it might be that people will be encouraged to travel at non-peak times, as well as to continue to make use of home-working. Some flexibility around when people work their hours is also a key enabler for them, to help them manage their commitments outside work.

You can help individuals balance their work and personal needs by clearly defining your expectations and any fixed commitments for each role. These are the points to consider:

- What are the expectations of your stakeholders / clients in terms of response times?

- What turnaround do you expect on tasks? Can you be explicit on this when setting work?

- Are there any important deadlines to be met?

- Are there core times when people need to attend key meetings or service clients?

- How often will your team come together?

- Are you using tech to make sure people can get up to speed when they start their day?

- Can anyone else provide cover if the individual is unavailable at certain times?

TALKING TO YOUR TEAM

You may also need to understand the scope and timings of each individual's non-work commitments, and keep working arrangements under review.

In particular, if your team are blending home-working with variable hours of work, make sure they build in some downtime, and that your expectations are realistic. There is a real danger that people with a lot to juggle will become overwhelmed by their responsibilities, leaving little time for anything else. This isn't sustainable in terms of people's physical and mental wellbeing.

To find out more about our flexible working workshops email info@timewise.co.uk

6. HOW MUCH people work: exploring part-time options

DEFINITION

There are many different ways to work part-time, including working fewer days, shorter days, term-time only, job sharing and job splitting. However, doing part-time well requires careful job design. The key, once again, is to find a working pattern which will work for both the organisation and the individual.

WHEN IS A PART-TIME ARRANGEMENT NEEDED?

There are several scenarios for which you may need to design or redesign a part-time role:

1. In response to requests from existing team members – for example those with caring responsibilities or health conditions (although Timewise recommends a reason-neutral approach to granting part-time requests)

2. In response to requests from new recruits or people returning from maternity or sick leave

3. As a result of a need to decrease payroll costs by asking team members to reduce their hours

REDUCE WORKLOAD

What is the workload right now?

Can any activities be stopped?

Can deadlines / deliverables be reduced / delayed?

FIND ALTERNATIVE RESOURCE

Can any work be moved – delegated to a team member, peer or manager?

Could a job share or job split be formed? Is there anyone else in scope?

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Part-time job design is an art in itself. But at its simplest level, you should start by assessing whether you can reduce the work, or identify alternative resource, or do both.

You should also consider these points:

- How flexible can you be around how much people work?

- Review the whole team's workload. Are you able to redistribute key activities, in line with capacity?

- Remember to adjust team members' objectives in line with their new working hours.

- Share everyone's preferred working patterns and discuss as a team how to make it work, using our Flexible Team Talk Template (in Section 7).

- How can you build resilience across teams and the wider organisation so staff can support and cover each other?

- Encourage part-time team members to communicate their availability and alternative contacts to key stakeholders.

- Make sure you still include time in the working day for team connection and personal development.

- It's also important to create opportunities for development projects and career progression for part-timers.

- Finally, you will need to integrate flex into people processes; recruitment, performance management, succession planning.

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7. Line Manager Tool: Flexible Working Team Talk Template

The best way to consider flexible working is across a team. This is especially true for hybrid working, which will often be implemented across whole teams, with everyone affected. You will need to get individuals involved in the best ways to deliver the team's work whilst also supporting each other's working patterns and preferences.

This tool offers a structure for discussing flexible working with your team. You could run it as one long session or two shorter ones

EXERCISE 1

AIM

- To identify the benefits of building on our flexible working best practice
- To identify any barriers to work flexibly in our team
- To build on the benefits and minimise the barriers

10 mins on benefits
What are the benefits of building on our flexible working practices?

What has gone well in recent months? What practices should we keep?

10 mins on barriers
What have been the barriers to effective flexible working? For example, what activities have we been unable to undertake effectively from home?

15 mins building on the benefits and overcoming barriers
How can we build on the benefits we have identified?

How can we overcome some of the barriers? What actions should we take?

Finish by summarising agreed actions.

EXERCISE 2

AIM

- To agree how we will work flexibly together for the future
- To capture this as a set of Flexible Working Protocols

What working patterns do we have in our team?

What are our key client / stakeholder meetings and deadlines?

How often and when do we want to meet as a team?

How can we ensure people are in the office when needed?

How will we make sure those working remotely are fully included?

What obstacles will we encounter?

What should we do next to embed these Flexible Working Protocols?

Finish by capturing your Flexible Working Protocols and agreeing how you will review them and keep them live.

To find out about our programme of line manager workshops
info@timewise.co.uk

8. Leadership in action: how to manage a flexible team

The advice in this guide will help you to discuss and design flexible jobs or hybrid working patterns, which support both individuals and your organisation. However, your role as a manager is a critical part of making flexibility work in practice.

Here are our eight core principles for successful flexible leadership:

- Lead by example. Be open about your own flexibility and how you're managing your well-being. If you work from home, book out space in your own diary for family time or breaks. Log off visibly and be clear that you don't expect replies out of hours.

- Trust people to do their jobs on a flexible basis. Don't wait for them to 'earn it'.

- Be accessible. Let your team know they should contact you if they need support. Create spaces in your diary where they can catch up with you outside of a formal meeting.

- Consciously reward and recognise people for the outcomes they are achieving – not for working additional hours or being always present. This can unconsciously reinforce certain behaviours.

- Be upfront about what priorities will shift or stop if budgets and resources shrink.

- Drive the conversation on flexible working. Bring it up with people in 1-2-1s, at end of year, during recruitment conversations. Even if the individual doesn't want to work flexibly right now, mentioning it proactively will say a lot about how your team works.

- Consider flexible working options when you are advertising vacancies. If you can, be clear about the types of flexibility that would work well in the role.

- Talk to other teams about what you're doing. Share your good practice and learn from theirs.

What's next?

We hope that this guide has inspired you to embrace greater flexible working in your team. If you need further support to progress this agenda across your organisation, we'd love to help.

If you'd like to learn more about our training, workshops and consultancy services, please email **info@timewise.co.uk**

You can also find advice, ideas and thought leadership on our website, **www.timewise.co.uk**

Further reading

- Timewise - Further case studies, info on our Flex Positive programme and more on job design at www.timewise.co.uk

- Survey looking at the impact of the current remote working experiment https://hoxby.com/blog/covid-19-remote-working-survey-results

- Survey exploring the attitudes of employees who rarely worked remotely before Covid-19: https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/remote-working-after-covid-19-coronavirus/

- Survey of HR managers covering the impact of Covid-19 on businesses and their people https://bit.ly/hrdhcvsign

- Guide for workforce considerations returning to the workplace https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/emp-law/employees/workplace-guide-returning-after-coronavirus

- Scottish government guidance on home working https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-homeworking/

- Employer support to develop more flexible workplaces https://www.flexibilityworks.org/
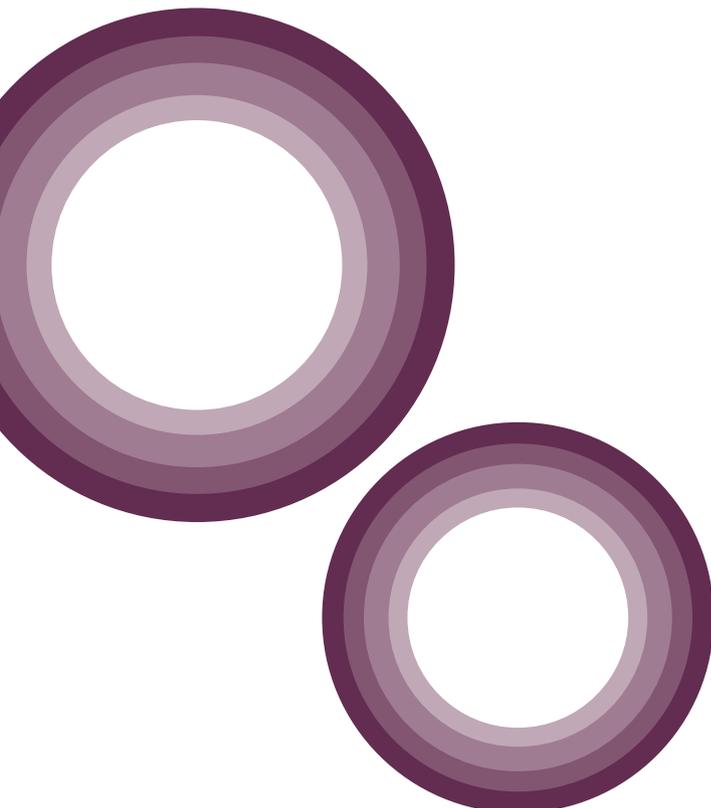
Timewise works to unlock the flexible jobs market in the UK. We share market insights on flexible working and flexible hiring, deliver training and consultancy to help businesses attract and develop the best talent, and conduct research such as our annual Flexible Jobs Index. We also run Timewise Jobs, a jobs board for roles that are part-time or open to flexibility.

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