

Beyond Boundaries

**The emerging work culture
of independence and responsibility**

An Orange Future
Enterprise coalition report



HenleyCentreHeadlightVision



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The emerging work culture of independence and responsibility

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

Flexible working is probably one of the most over-used and least understood phrases in business. It's up there with blue-sky thinking and synergy. What is meant by flexible working is rarely straight forward, the phrase can be interpreted in very different ways by employees and organisations.

Yet, it is a topic that just won't go away and one that is becoming increasingly relevant as organisations continue to change at an unprecedented rate. Government legislation is driving organisations to offer more open work arrangements to staff with the aim of ensuring parents and carers have the opportunity to

progress with careers. Our own research also shows that organisations must meet a growing internal demand for less traditional ways of working in order to retain their best talent. The results from a survey commissioned for this report showed that over 50% of workers will consider the potential for flexibility as very important for their next job move.

A great deal of recent media coverage and debate on flexible working has focussed on the employee and the supposed benefits of offering an improved work-life balance.

Flexible working could be the panacea for the woes of modern living; with reduced stress, decreased environmental impact and traditional family values. It paints a rosy picture of happy parents working at their kitchen tables while

their children happily play around their feet.

If these potential benefits are realised, the workforce will certainly be happier, but the potential benefits and pitfalls for employers seem to have been ignored by the plethora of recent studies. This report stands out as it examines the wider debate of how flexibility will change organisations both from the employer and employee perspective. It also categorises 'flexibility' into six useful typologies, brings the reality of flexible working to life in a number of case studies and offers practical recommendations for the implementation of flexible working.

In a previous report, *The way to work*, the Orange Future Enterprise coalition highlighted that increased mobility will lead to new challenges for employees and employers. As workers

become less connected with a specific work-site, traditional work routines and interactions change. There needs to be a shift in how employees are managed and appraised. Being the first or the last in the office can no longer be an effective measure of an employee's commitment and productivity, nor can we continue to expect employees to work well beyond their contracted hours if we are going to offer more flexible working time arrangements.

But flexibility does not end with providing employees with less traditional working hours and *Beyond Boundaries* seeks to identify a broad definition away from conventional working patterns. Working relationships between employees and employers increasingly being defined by both parties with employees, particularly

knowledge workers, are forcing the hands of organisations. Employers need to understand what is possible, practical and desired in terms of exploiting flexibility more strategically.

I hope this report will further fuel the debate on flexibility, looking at the opportunities for transforming business operations, not just ensuring staff satisfaction and retention. Flexibility has become an intrinsic part of organisational life; its no longer just about ensuring staff are happy but about ensuring future profitability. Charles Darwin may have been considering natural selection for species, but the following certainly has its place in business:

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

We need to consider how to become a truly flexible business; one that responds quickly, provides a progressive working environment for its staff and ultimately becomes more successful. At Orange this means an organisation where you have some choice of where and when you work, where you can collaborate and communicate freely and give great service to customers from wherever they happen to be.

To coin a phrase, its about removing boundaries to become an "open office" where work becomes what people do and what they achieve, not just where they go.

Robert Ainger

Orange Business Services

Introduction

The idea that working styles will be transformed by social, economic and technological change is well-established. It is one of those ideas about the future which, on the face of it, has logic and rationality on its side. The fact that it seems at best to have been a slow train coming for close on two decades now has been a source of frustration to technologists and futurists alike.

The research gathered for this report, however, suggests that the predicted scale of change in working patterns is now starting to appear. And perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that progress has been slow. Technology, on its own, tends not to produce radical social effects. Its role is often more as an enabler of change by creating new possibilities rather than directly driving change. Other factors are essential in preparing the ground for change; changes in social attitudes, changes in organisational structures, changes in culture. And when change does come, it often takes forms which surprise the earlier predictions.

In developing this research on the status and direction of flexible working, we have built on the foundations of the work done over the last eighteen months with both Orange, and the members of the Orange Future Enterprise coalition. This work has generated two earlier reports, *Organisational Lives*, on trends shaping working life, and *The Way to Work*, which used a scenarios-based approach to enable the Coalition to explore future uncertainties.

One of the realisations from those earlier projects was that the nature of flexible working was in practice quite subtle, and that it was not fully understood. It was, generally, a different animal from the remote working envisaged by the 1990s proponents of 'telework'.

What can be said with some degree of certainty is that the models of work which dominated the 20th century designed around the production line, are being eroded or even dismantled. The clock is increasingly an unreliable metaphor for work. In its place a range of new metaphors are emerging; metaphors about complexity, about place and distance, about social networks and social purpose.

In this emerging world knowledge can no longer be conscripted; it must be volunteered. This is at least true for the most empowered of employees. For others, in a world where there are fewer checks on corporate power, flexibility in the workplace can be something which is imposed rather than sought.

To explore these issues in more detail for *Beyond Boundaries*, we have used a number of complementary research techniques to establish the current state of flexible working in the UK, and the direction of travel over the next decade. These have included:

- Interviews with 1,440 people in full and part time employment in the UK.
- Focus groups and in-depth interviews with a range of workers in different working environments, supported by expert interviews and case studies.

- Workshops with managers and others engaged in issues around the changing nature of the workplace, including human resources specialists and information and technology managers.

From these we have developed a typology of six main kinds of working practice, based on working place and employee control over working hours. The typology includes those workers who continue to spend their workdays in traditional place-based work.

The findings of *Beyond Boundaries* are clear. The scale of flexible working in the UK economy is starting to accelerate, and fairly quickly. Managing it will soon become a significant factor in business success, and learning how to do this will involve large challenges for many organisations. Some of the learning will be turbulent. *Beyond Boundaries* is designed to help you navigate these choppy waters.



7 Reflections on the future of mobile technology from the first coalition report, *Organisational lives*

Switching on, switching off

Lonely workers

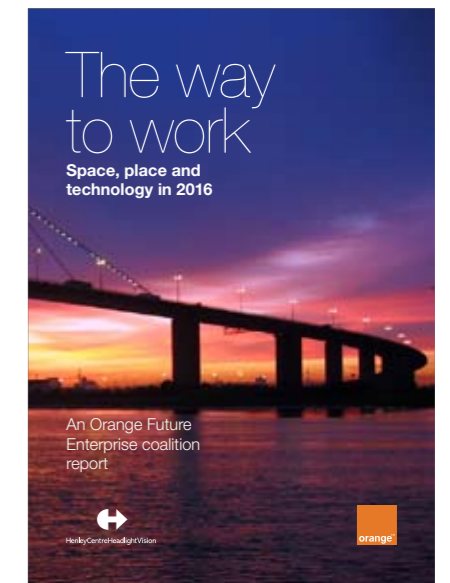
Digital selves

Digital exclusion

Flexible working, flexible organisations

Selective integration

Living in a data cloud



4 Scenarios depicting possible future worlds of work from the second report, *The way to work*

Disciples of the Cloud

Electronic Cottages

Mutual Worlds

Replicants

Provision of flexible working in the UK

The term 'flexible working' assumes a move away from standard working conventions and from a one-size-fits-all approach to work. Flexibility can also create dramatically different experiences and outcomes depending on its reasons for deployment.

- Flexibility can be deployed on behalf of the employer to meet organisational needs such as covering a wider range of hours or peaks and troughs in demand.
- Flexibility can also be deployed on behalf of the employee to allow for a more convenient and effective working routine.

The concept of 'flexible working' has attracted significant political and social attention over the past few years. Political imperatives have included creating a dynamic and responsive labour force as well as improving access to work for those with children.

- In 2003, the government introduced 'the right to request' flexible work for parents with children under the age of six. In April this year, the right was extended to the 2.8 million people who care for elderly or sick relatives and it is being suggested this right to request will be extended to all 29 million workers.

- Major figures from private and public sector organisations are pledging their commitment to smarter working practices by putting their weight behind large initiatives such as that launched by WorkWise UK.

The statistics around the availability of flexible working arrangements in British companies paint an optimistic and encouraging picture about the potential reach of flexible working.

- 90% of British employees say that at least one flexible working arrangement is available to them if they need it, whilst 77% of employees claim that two or more flexible working arrangements are available to them.[†]
- The most commonly available flexible working arrangement in the UK is part-time work. UK employers are among the leaders in offering part-time working opportunities in Europe.
- 69% of employees say that part-time work would be available to them if they needed it, followed by 54% that say reduced hours for a limited period would be available to them. This compares to 47% for job sharing, 53% for flexi-time, 37% for school term-time, 35% for a compressed working week, 24% for annualised hours and 23% for working from home regularly.[†]

- Take up of part-time work has also been high: the number of people in part-time jobs has risen by almost 50% since 1992, to 7.47 million people.[†]

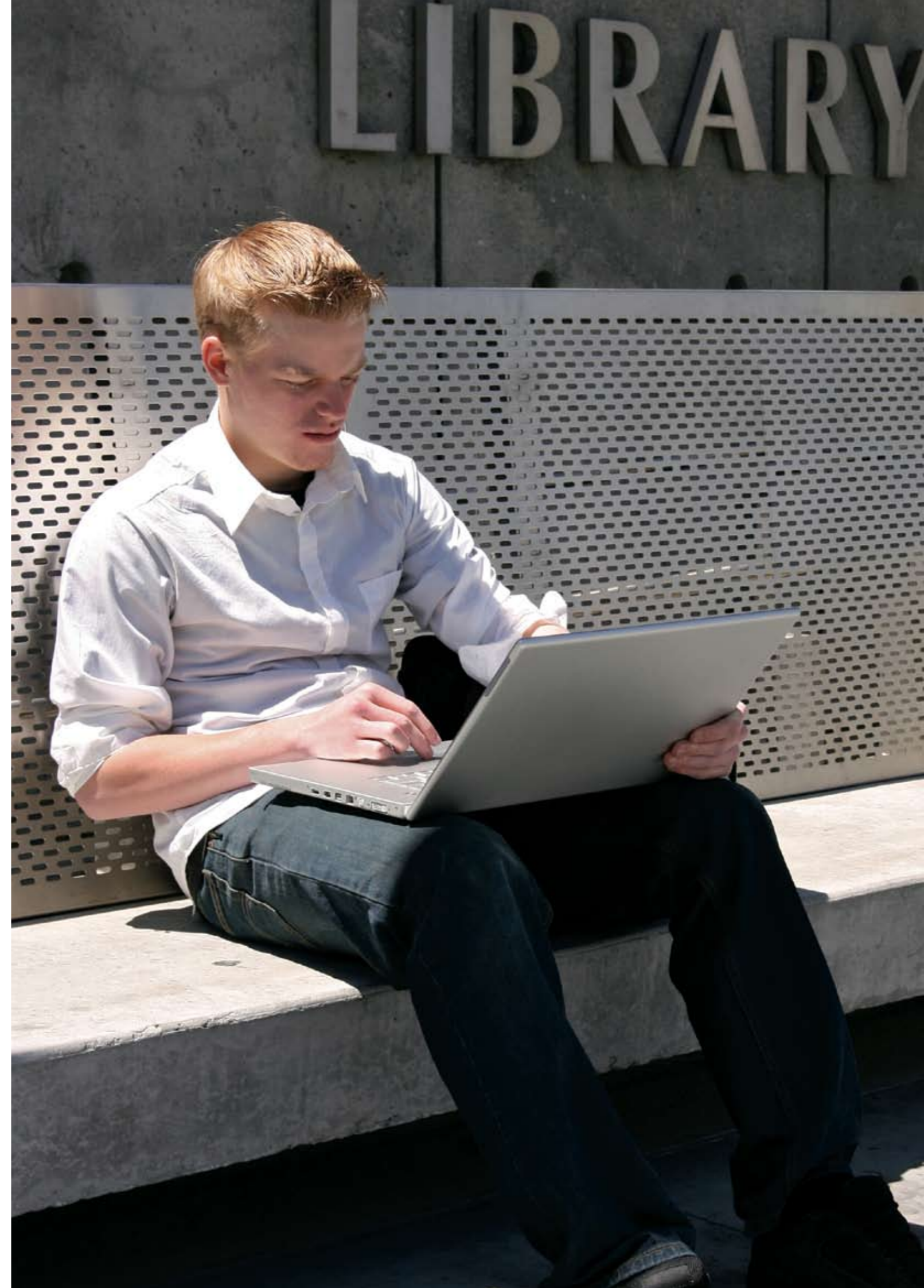
However, it is important to note the limitations of these statistics on two fronts.

- Firstly, the availability of flexible working arrangements only means that employees have the right to request this, not that flexible working is occurring or even guaranteed in these organisations.
- Secondly, though some form of flexible working appears to be widely on offer, there is generally only a small amount of choice within this. British employers are more likely to allow employees to reduce their working hours along with their pay, than to rearrange their working hours to fit their needs. Britain lags behind other countries in offering certain kinds of flexible working arrangements, with less than half of UK firms offering flexi-time to staff, compared to over 90% in Germany, Sweden and Finland.^{††}

The current picture of UK flexibility is one where employers are more likely to provide reduced hours rather than formally attempt to offer a higher degree of flexibility around working time and place. It is important to consider how these arrangements work in practice.

[†] DTI's Work-Life Balance Employee Survey (2006)

^{††} Cranfield School of Management (2005) The Cranet Survey on Comparative Human Resource Management.



What drives the deployment of flexible working?

Flexible working practices are deployed to satisfy a huge variety of needs within the workplace. Understanding how and where flexibility is deployed requires the consideration of a variety of factors.

Models of flexibility vary in order to take into account the needs of businesses and employees as well as the realities of the market place, as outlined in Fig 1.



Fig 1

Employee demand for flexibility

In contrast to those who used to have flexibility imposed on them, many employees today have the potential for a great deal of self determination in their working routines. Those working in more senior positions or in 'knowledge' jobs have the opportunity for a relatively high degree of freedom to determine the timings and logistics of how they work, as discussed by a recent Demos report:

"Changing expectations of working life have created a new tension at the heart of organisational strategy. Employees want more human organisations with greater autonomy and flexibility. They want a greater say in the future of the organisations they work for. In short, they want organisations to disorganise." †

† Demos 'Disorganisation' Why organisations of the future must 'loosen up', 2004

Our research indicates there are a relatively universal set of motivations for more flexible work styles. They relate to helping employees improve their experience of work; either by reducing stress, maximising leisure time or by mitigating negative elements of their working routine such as commuting. This is in addition to needing to change working patterns to fit in with childcare requirements and other caring responsibilities.

Improving one's work life balance:

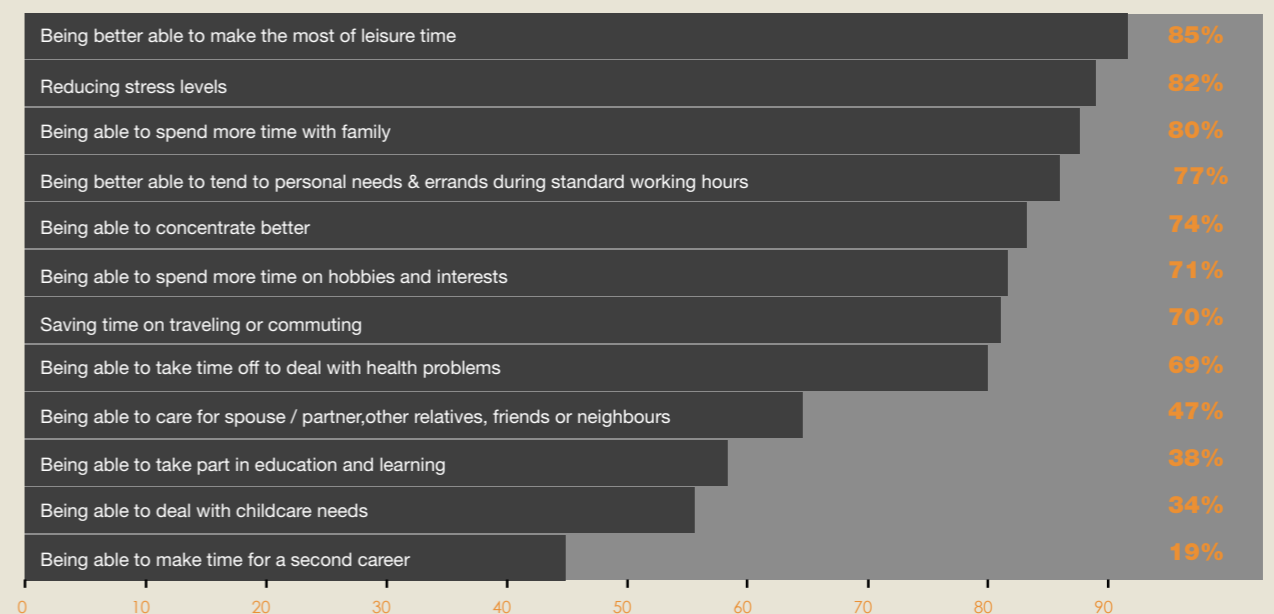
Our data (see figure 2) indicates that the most important motivations for seeking flexibility are around improvements in lifestyle. It would seem that the need to avoid workplace stress and the desire to make the most of one's leisure time/ family time go hand in hand.

Across the UK population there is an increasing need to mitigate impact of more pressurised working lives: 25% of the UK population would take a lower paid job if it mean less stress, whilst 38% feel that the pace of life is too fast for them nowadays.

Source: HCHLV, PCC 2007

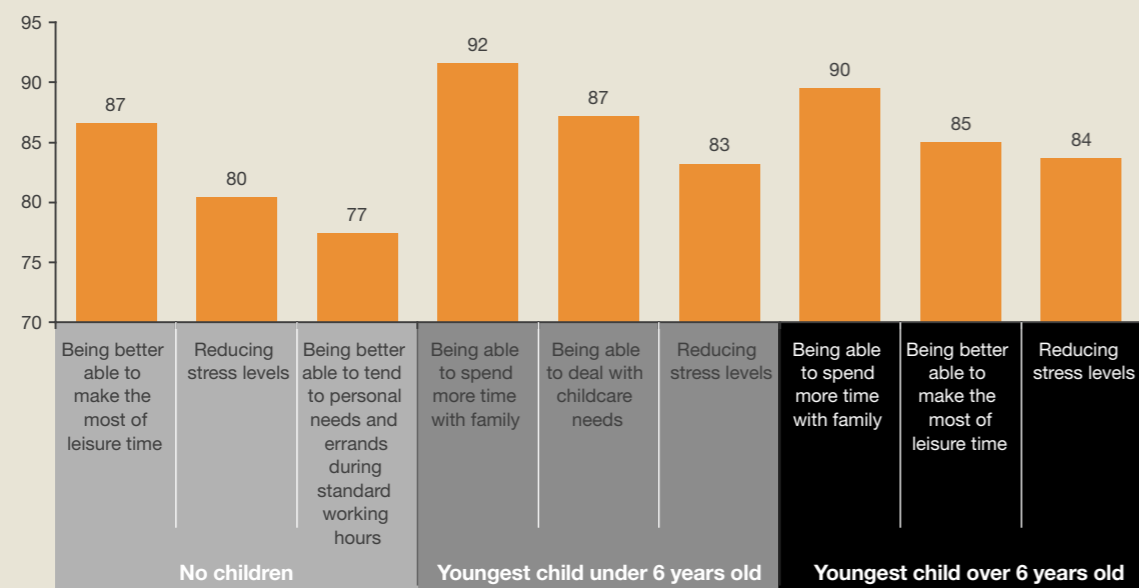


Fig 2 How important to you personally are the following benefits of a more flexible working style?



Source: HCHLV/ Orange, Flexible Working Survey, May 2007, Base: representative sample of UK working population (sample size: 1,440 people)

Fig 3 How important are the following benefits of a more flexible work style? (Top three benefits of by importance)



Source: HCHLV/ Orange, Flexible Working Survey, May 2007. Base: representative sample of UK working population (sample size: 1,440 people)

Taking care of dependents and children:

Those who need to look after young children or care for an elderly relative want to be able to balance these responsibilities with work and to do this without having to take a more peripheral or lower skilled role in their organisation.

As figure 3 shows, there are clear differences between the priorities of those who have children and those who do not. Making the most of leisure time and having the opportunity to do personal chores during working hours is important to those who are childless. Spending time with one's family is obviously important to those

with children, with childcare being a particular issue for those with younger children. It is interesting to note that reducing stress levels remains important for all workers.

Mitigating the negative aspect of ones working routine:

For other employees, there is a desire to mitigate negative aspects of work, such as avoiding a long commute, or escaping the interruptions of a busy office. 70% of the working population feel that saving travel and commuting time would be an important motivation for working more flexibly, and 74% believe that being able to concentrate better would be an important benefit.

Pursuing more directed interests:

A third group of employees seek to work in an environment that reflects their values and lifestyle, for these individuals flexible working is attractive as it allows them to have the time and energy to pursue other careers, interests and passions outside work. One in five workers indicate that pursuing a second career would be an important benefit of a more flexible work style, while just over one in three feel that having time to take part in education or learning would be important.

Employer demand for flexibility

Flexible working arrangements can also be deployed to meet employer needs, whether this is due to the way the business functions or to make strategic use of the benefits generated by flexible working.

Meeting business needs:

This motivation will often arise amongst service businesses who operate in today's '24/7' culture. For many workers in the public and private service sector, this has meant a greater proportion of work now happens outside the norms of the traditional Monday to Friday working week routine. Many roles now contain a degree of uncertainty in their scheduling; employees are required to cover a certain amount of work during the seven day week but the hours at which this is done can be highly variable.

"How much I work depends on how much I get called out. I'm home based so am at

home between calls; some days I can be out for ten hours or more and other days, there is nothing. It's really variable."

Simon, mobile engineer for EPOS systems

Using the workforce more smartly:

If workers are not required to travel into a particular place to carry out their work, it means that they can change the pattern of how they work. It becomes feasible to have staff deployed for shorter interspersed time slots or at peak times.

Moreover, flexibility over where a full range of tasks are carried out means that mobile employees need not be sat idle. An example of this is the mobile engineer who is delayed on site but can log in to evaluate upcoming tasks, order parts or to complete administration; or a sales person can send emails or do preparation work between visits to customers.

Maximising staff productivity:

Both our research and other studies have shown that letting staff choose where they work is likely to increase staff satisfaction and performance. Individuals who are able to avoid carrying out a long commute are likely to feel

more positive at the start of their working day. Moreover, once employees are able to choose where they work, they often do this on the basis of where they will be most effective, thus improving performance and productivity in certain types of tasks.

Labour market context

The realities of the labour market often dictate how flexibility is implemented.

Employees and employers are operating within the larger context shaped by macro economic pressures, legislation and regulation.

Britain is fighting to defend its 'flexible labour market'. This includes the right to opt out of the EU maximum 48-hour week and the option to rely on temporary, adjustable labour. Both are seen as a way of ensuring the UK economy is productive and competitive in the global marketplace and suggest that certain forms of flexible working arrangements will remain very relevant in the future.

How is flexible working being granted to employees?

The introduction of flexible working to allow employees more choice over where and when they work can be approached in different ways. Flexible working can be actively pursued in an effort to satisfy business or staff needs, or passively dealt with when necessary due to employee pressure or the adherence to legislation.

Levels of awareness of the right to request flexible working arrangements are high among the working population with 71% of women and 60% of men aware of their right to request at least one form of flexible working arrangement.[†]

However, even awareness of the right to request flexible working does not necessarily make it easy to do so or culturally acceptable within an organisation.

“Sometimes you hear people talking in the office about how much so and so has been working from home, it’s like they think the

person has been away on holiday rather than that they are working hard at home”

Cheryl, team leader within a government department

Evidence of employers taking an ‘active’ approach to deploying flexibility on the behalf of employees is not widespread. While British employers are legally obliged to address flexible working requests from employees, our research suggests that few actively promote flexible working internally.

Moreover, awareness of the opportunity to work flexibly often exists only because others within the organisation have adopted such practices, rather than because it has been promoted as company policy, or even brought to the attention of employees.

It is interesting to note that while 50% of UK employees say that being able to work more flexibly will be a very important factor in choosing their next job, only 24% plan to actively seek a flexible working arrangement in the next 12 months.

It is possible employees often feel more able to request flexible working by changing jobs as opposed to seeking more flexible arrangements with their current employer. This provides credence to the idea that there are often cultural barriers to achieving one’s desired level of flexibility in one’s current workplace.

Moreover, it appears requests tend to be granted to two broad sets of employees:

Those employees whose skill set and experience give them the security to make such demands.

The amount of control employees feel they have over their working hours appears to be affected by their status and role within the organisation. More than half of high earners (as defined by those earning over £45,000) feel they have more control over their hours than their employer; this is compared to just under one in three for low earners (those earning £25,000 or less).

It is interesting to note that there seems to be little difference between high earners and low earners in terms of the prevalence of flexible working arrangements. There is, however, a marked difference when one considers the nature of these arrangements: high earners are much more likely to have informal flexible working arrangements than low earners.

“The role at my new company would have meant a long commute for me. I wasn’t prepared to do that anymore so I made home working a condition of my accepting the job and they supported me.”

Henry, catering supplies sales manager

Those whose personal circumstances demand it, such as a mother with young children to take care of.

Flexible working plays an important role in the working routines of those with dependents. Part time arrangements are particularly popular: 58% of women with children under six work part time, whereas this is the case for only 18 % of women without children. However, when one considers the prevalence of other forms of flexible working arrangements, 48% of women with no children have some sort of flexible time arrangement, formal or informal, compared to 58% of those with young children. Furthermore, those with young children are almost twice as likely to have a formal time based arrangement than those who do not.

Where a more extensive degree of flexibility is required by employees, as with mothers of young children, requests are dealt with in a formalised way. Consequently, the default option for ‘flexibility’ in these circumstances is part time arrangements, ie working reduced, not variable, hours. There appears to be a gap between those with the greatest need for flexibility and the breadth of arrangements available to them.

“During my maternity leave I had discussions with my manager about what they could do to get me to return to work. I didn’t want to come back into the office full time so I proposed that I move to being home based.”

Jenny, editor of children’s books



Degrees of flexible working

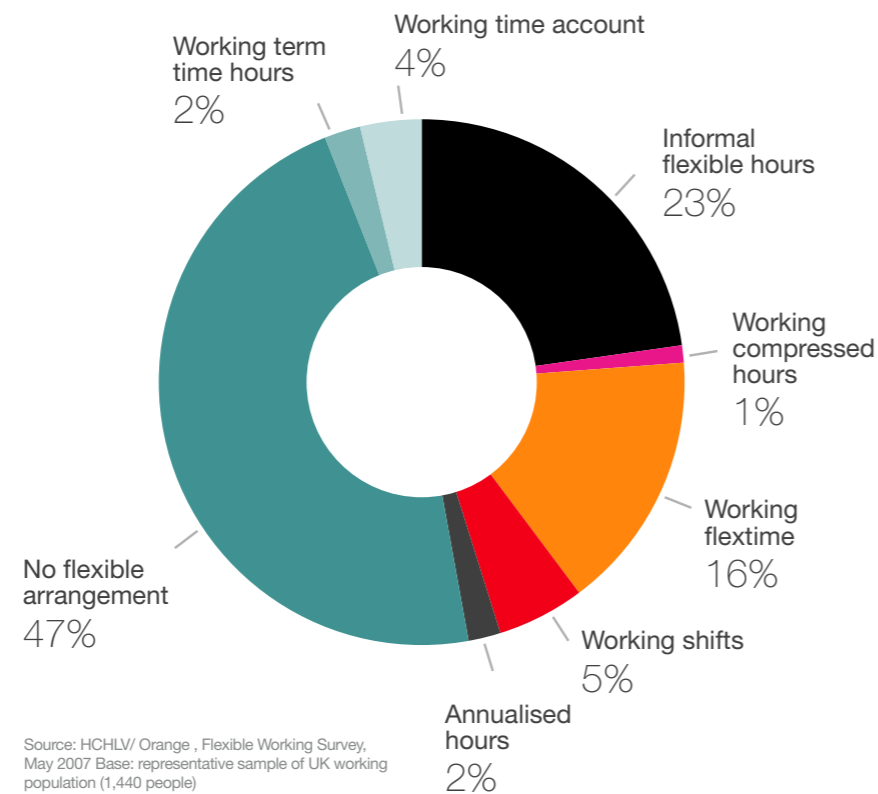
Our data shows that around one in four of the working population is in part time employment. Part time work can be considered to be a form of flexible working arrangement which offers significant benefits for employees.

As discussed previously, part time work is most prevalent among women with families. However part time arrangements do not necessarily entail any additional degrees of flexibility around the time and place of work. The below definitions of flexible working go beyond the idea of reduced hours to take into account the arrangement of those hours, and whether there is any employee choice/control within this arrangement.

It is perhaps unsurprising that those who have no flexible hours working arrangements, whether formal or informal, make up a large proportion of the workforce (47%). It is more surprising that there appears to be an equal number of those with an informal flexible hours arrangement (23%) as opposed to a more formal flexible hours arrangement (29%). (See figure 4)

Currently just under 30% of the total working population work from

Fig 4 Which of the following best describes your flexible working arrangement?



a place of their own choosing for one day or more per week.

There is a degree of polarisation to be found among this group, between those who work from a place of their own choosing to a limited degree and those who do so extensively as shown in Figure 5. It is striking how few employees divide their working hours evenly between work and home.

One might expect a more graduated picture of locational flexibility to emerge, but the absence of this may be explained by the presence of cultural barriers

to remote working that exist within organisations. It may be acceptable to practice limited flexibility but doing it extensively may be less so.

Moreover, it is important to recognise that a business will struggle to meet the needs of 'semi-flexible' workers. Those who work from home a large proportion of the time will require IT equipment and support, whilst those who work from home only a day week are probably happy to 'make do'. Workers who are based both in the office and at home will have duplicate requirements.

Employers can be hesitant about granting flexibility because of a fear of losing control of their employees and creating precedents they would struggle to manage.

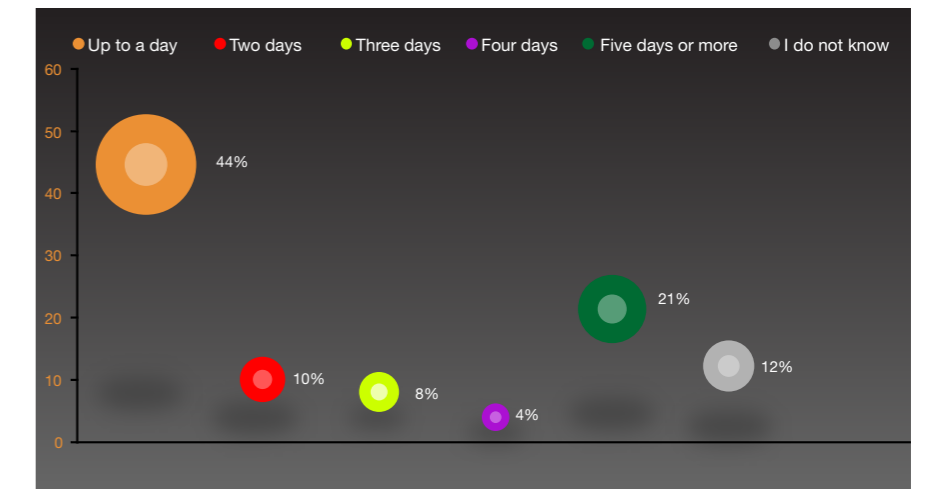
"Flexibility just wouldn't be suitable for a lot of people within the department; if you put it in people's contracts, it would become an entitlement and an expectation, even where it's not practical and that would cause conflict."

Cheryl, team leader within a government department

In spite of, or perhaps due to, this employer hesitancy, an informal culture is evolving around flexible working, occurring for the most part in the absence of a formal flexible working policy or agreement. This could account for the large number of employees practising limited degrees of flexibility in their working styles.

This sort of flexibility is agreed at lower levels within organisations, informally between an employee and a line manager or between team members and amongst workers who already have a degree of autonomy implicit in their working style.

Fig 5 In a typical week, how much time would you say you spend working from a location of your own choosing (e.g. from home)?



"It's part of an understanding I have with my manager: when I don't specifically need to be in the office, for instance I am putting together a deal, I am at liberty to work out of the office."

James, Japanese equities broker

It is also interesting to note that, when asked, employees who feel they have the most control over their working hours are likely to be informal flexible workers. This suggests that more formal arrangements, such as flexi-time or shifts, can feel like a compromise between the desires of the workforce and the needs of the business.

Within organisations with more 'active' approaches, the parameters of flexibility and to whom they are applicable is made clearer. Ground rules are established either more formally or via a shared organisational culture.

"There was a decision made that support staff couldn't be flexible in the same way as the consultants. They need to be there in the office to coordinate things and take calls. Two of the receptionists do a job share though, and it works well."

Jane, senior recruitment consultant

How does flexibility affect employee relationships with work?

The aspect of flexible working that employees most value is that of increased independence and autonomy. Giving employee's control over where, when and how they work becomes a central component to their professional happiness.

Where flexibility occurs without this self determination, the employee experience can become difficult and stressful.

Flexibility of approach: employees appreciate having the autonomy to approach tasks without what are seen as unnecessary constrictions.

This involves not only control over the time and place of work, but can also extend to being given the tools and autonomy to come up with one's own approach to the task at hand. It can be rewarding for employees to be given a degree of leeway in how they manage their work load, and rather than simply responding directly to requests, many enjoy being able to approach and tackle work in a way that makes sense to them.

"I feel like my own boss; most of the time I get to make the decisions and most of the time I don't have to refer to anyone else."

Jez, maintenance manager for sheltered accommodation

Increasing independence: where there is a great deal of flexibility devolved to employees, there is often a sense of becoming more self-sufficient and relying less on others.

Our research indicates three quarters of those who work flexibly either in terms of place or time state 'being able to concentrate better' as a benefit of flexible working. This may be simply the result of having more control over how things are done but it could also be that, because of the constraints of time and place, colleagues are simply less available.

"As a team leader, if you are there, there is tendency for people to just come up and ask you a question when they are quite capable of sorting things out for themselves."

Jayne, hostel team leader at Leeds council

As employers may have less direct oversight of how an employee is going about the job in hand, trust is also acknowledged to play an essential role in making flexible working successful.

Using time effectively: where employees feel they have control over their time, they are often better at working more intensely and effectively.

Employees who work flexi-time mention they are able to work harder for certain periods of time in order to meet deadlines. They are ready to do this as they feel they will be able to use 'spare time' later on for their own purposes.

The situation is rather different where employees have less control over their working routines and have to be flexible to meet employer needs. In these circumstances, it is important that there is give and take between the employee and their employer, with the employee being given some scope to exploit a degree of flexibility for their own ends. This can happen in a more formal way by giving some control over shifts or working time, or in an informal way by letting staff use 'down time' on personal matters.

"If you have a couple of hours or so spare, you can pop to the shops or sort something out on the internet. You just can't do that with a day to day job."

Jez, maintenance manager for sheltered accommodation

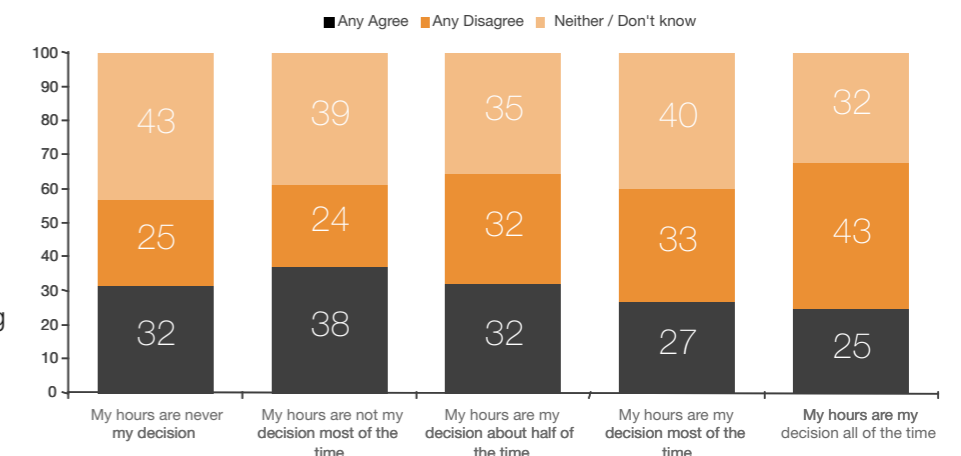
A lack of control over one's working hours can limit the potential benefits of locational flexibility. Working from home does not in its self necessarily provide employees with benefits. Locational flexibility in the absence of control over one's time can be problematic.

As shown in figure 6, home workers who have less control over their working hours are more likely to agree with the statement that working from home does not allow them to spend more time with their families.

Using place effectively: employees work where they feel they will be most productive.

Many of those working from home on an informal basis do this strategically in order to focus on carrying out certain kinds of solitary work which require attention and concentration. Employees feel that modern open plan offices can be un-conducive to these kinds of tasks, as the degree of interaction with and interruption from colleagues, can get in the way of getting things done.

Fig 6 I can now work from home but do not actually get to spend any more time with my family than before



Source: HCHLV/ Orange, Flexible Working Survey, May 2007. Base: representative sample of UK flexible working population working from a place of their choice (sample size: 427)

"If I have reports to write, I will spend a couple of days at home as I find I just get more done. Often I can get done in a day at home what one of my colleagues does in three days in the office."

Jag, case assessor for social services

It is not the case that the role of the office is being devalued; rather it is shifting. The prospect of losing the office as a resource is not appealing - even for the most flexible of office workers. Employees value the fact there is a 'spiritual home' for their company. Offices are used differently by flexible workers: they are used as a place for dialogue or more collaborative work where creativity, inspiration and ideas are critical.

Employee challenges of flexible working

Inequality of working

arrangements: flexible working arrangements can be seen to be 'inaccessible' and 'unfair'.

When flexible working is instituted, as is the case more often on an informal basis, without a clear definition of what this involves, or how this impacts not only the employees concerned but also their co-workers, resentment can occur. If individuals are able to work what appears to be 'limited hours' as part of a flexi-time arrangement, it can make other workers feel that they are working over their allotted hours or even 'picking up the slack'.

This perceived unfairness over work distribution and productivity can also occur in situations where the individual is working from home. Low visibility for home workers means office-based employees do not have the opportunity to see how well these colleagues are working. This perception can be compounded by home workers taking care of personal matters during office hours or in instances when they capitalise on improved productivity to work fewer hours.

Part time overtime trap:

part time employees who have agreed to reduced working hours for less pay can often find themselves working extensive (unpaid) overtime to complete their responsibilities

A recent study found that a third of workers on part time contracts work overtime, of which three quarters were in fact working unpaid overtime.

Though working overtime is an issue for those in part time work they are by no means alone. Amongst flexible workers it is those who work full time who are more likely to feel that working flexibly means having to work more during their free time, evenings and weekends: 48% of full time workers feel flexible working occurs during their free time as compared to 39% of those in part time work.

Lack of logistical support:

flexible home workers are increasingly reliant on remote access to information and data systems.

Where home working is not widely supported, the requisite business systems and IT equipment are often not in place to allow these individuals to work most effectively. In such cases, employees have to find creative solutions to problems and work around difficulties.

"I don't have access to my work emails or my files at home. If there is anything important I can call one of the assistants in my office and they can send through what I need to my personal email address."

Cheryl, team leader within a government department

This lack of logistical support may be a major inhibitor of employees being able to pursue more flexible approaches to work.

Working at place of one's own choosing increases an employee's sense of dependence on technology. 71% of flexible workers who work from a place of their own choosing feel more dependent on technology compared to 35% who do not.

In addition, as well as simply not being proactive about implementing the appropriate technology, organisations can have security concerns about giving remote access to information to mobile and home workers.

Difficulty with making systems usable and reliable for those outside the office environment is one of the areas companies implementing flexible working on a large scale initially have the most difficulty with. And yet, from the employee perspective, this is often a crucial element to get right.

Coordinating different

schedules: it can be hard for employees to adjust to a situation where individuals are working in different styles and to different timetables from one another.

Staff who are used to having colleagues always available have to adjust to a more limited style of accessibility in the world of flexible working. This can often require a much greater degree of time planning and foresight than people are used to.

In situations where a degree of service provision or coverage is needed, as is the case in the service sector, offering flexibility can create challenges for management who still need to ensure the right number of employees are available at the right times.

Profile: remote or highly mobile workers can feel that they and the work they do can lack visibility.

Within work cultures that value the visibility of employees and endorse 'presenteeism', those who are more absent from the office as they work in different places can feel they miss out on opportunities to raise their profile or even be considered for promotion.

Being 'out of the loop':

employees who work outside standard hours or the main office risk missing out on

information circulated within the company.

This applies particularly to information that is distributed verbally or on a more informal basis.

In addition, employees who work remotely can feel isolated, both in terms of being uninformed, and also with regard to the social support and communication they receive. Outside of the office the opportunity to share problems and frustrations with colleagues can be limited.

Appropriate environments:

many of those working from home on a more informal basis can lack the relevant space and equipment to do so.

This situation can be a concern not only in terms of compromising the ability of staff work effectively, but also with regard to compliance with health and safety standards.

Of those who work in a place of their own choosing 45% work in a home office and 40% work in their general living space. It seems that substantial number of those working from home do not have the appropriate facilities. Where home working remains an informal arrangement, this is acceptable; when home working arrangements become more formal, this may no longer be the case.

These issues are also relevant when remote and mobile employees come to work in the office. Often problems arise simply because there is a lack of appropriate desk space in the office, whilst 'hot desking zones' are created as an afterthought and their place and usability suffers as a result. Offices may also suffer from a lack of other appropriate facilities such as meeting rooms needed for only short periods of time, by workers who are quickly touching base with colleagues whilst they are in the office.

Organisational challenges of flexible working

Increasing levels of flexibility pose very real future challenges for organisations.

- **How are they to successfully manage the rising informal culture of employee flexibility?**
- **How can flexibility be harnessed to create more effective working styles across the organisation?**

There is a real need to get to grips with understanding the role flexibility can play within an organisation in order to ensure it is an enabling force rather than a disruptive one. Here we discuss a series of core challenges businesses are likely to face as they progress towards incorporating more flexible working arrangements amongst employees. These challenges cover both classic business issues such as cost efficiency, as well as softer issues such as employee wellbeing and values.

Effectiveness challenge

Getting started:

It can be challenging to deploy flexibility where there is little in the way of a precedent. Introducing flexible working arrangements requires the successful interaction of IT and business systems, culture and management practice; co-ordinating the complexity of all these elements can be hard to do in a rapid and widespread manner. Many of those who have successfully adopted widespread flexibility have done so through a gradual process of experimentation and evaluation.

Supporting technology dependence:

Flexible working styles create a much greater dependence on IT as this is critical for ensuring interaction with workers and co-ordinating the flow of work. This need is particularly acute with remote and out of hours working arrangements where the possibility of face to face or verbal interaction between colleagues is removed. To avoid flexible workers feeling they are being treated like 'second-class' staff, it will be important to ensure they have a similar user experience to 'conventional workers'.

Any technology deployed must also be robust and reliable as there may be further related

issues in terms of ensuring security of remote access to potentially sensitive client data and proprietary intellectual property. If the individual concerned is a call centre worker, it will reflect badly on the business if a call is lost due to a poor connection.

In addition to the cost of appropriate hardware and systems, the introduction of flexible working creates a greater need for IT support outside of the hours it is currently available. This is in addition to the cost of supplying such equipment.

Establishing the right culture and procedures:

Organisations vary enormously in their working styles and cultures. In order to accommodate flexible working, it is important to recognise that not all organisations will need to establish formal procedures around granting flexibility and rules for how it is practiced. Currently, the predominant form of flexible working in organisations is informal and it may be best for a business to embrace and facilitate this style of working.

However, there is still a need to assess the requirement for procedures around flexible working arrangements as adopting a laissez-faire style of flexibility can cause problems if its impact on the business as a whole is not carefully monitored and evaluated.

For certain employees, introducing flexibility into their working patterns may consist of allowing them to take advantage of 'down time', for instance, the periods between calls or visits. However, their co-workers may not be aware of when this happening and intrude on 'personal' time, or even feel such workers are 'slacking'.

Keeping track of the logistics:

Giving workers the opportunity to have more control over the way in which they work can make it difficult to ensure workers co-ordinate with one another and the organisation as a whole. It is important the whole workforce, not just those who are working flexibly, understands and accepts the implications of this shift.

The employer will also need to keep track and co-ordinate who works when and who does not. Whilst granting requests for flexible working at the level of the individual employee, they will need to check that from the perspective of the aggregate workforce, they have sufficient resource available to deal with peaks and troughs in business activity.

Maintaining clarity, consistency and fairness:

Employee perceptions and awareness of flexible working within the workplace will need to be managed. Where the ground rules for who can be

allowed to work more flexibly and who cannot are unclear or are not based on a transparent rationale, it can create confusion or perceptions of unfairness.

Keeping the right to request to refuse:

Employees in an organisation will have different levels of suitability to adopting flexible work styles. This can be in terms of both the more general and personal skills required, such as the ability to be self-directed and motivated, and also with regard to the specific skills such as the sophisticated use of IT and data systems. At its core, working flexibly often requires a greater degree of independence and trustworthiness to be displayed.

Monitoring, motivating and evaluating:

In situations where there is more independence and often less visibility for staff, conventional approaches to motivating employees and ensuring they work according to expectations may not be appropriate. Those who manage flexible workers often talk about 'managing by objectives' and evaluating via what is achieved rather than focussing on employee working procedures. For managers who are used to 'management by walking round', this can create particular difficulties.

Managing the paradox of flexibility:

Letting individuals have increased choice over when and where they work can paradoxically decrease the flexibility for others within the organisation. One employee may decide they will work at particular times, which can inhibit a colleague who is dependent on them for the completion of their own responsibilities. Flexibility for some does not mean flexibility for all.

Lifestyle and values challenge

Raising the bar:

With the rise of the knowledge economy, in many industry sectors business success and profitability is now fundamentally based on the ability to innovate. In such an environment, attracting and retaining the best talent is more important than ever and winning this battle for talent has become less about more traditional material incentives and more about reflecting employee values and lifestyle aspirations.

Using the offer of flexible working in this way can be an important element in a company's HR strategy and, as such, the business needs to ensure its offer is sufficiently pleasing and practical to both current and prospective employees.

Cracking the stress issue:

Employers are increasingly accepting and recognising the value of ensuring the wellbeing of their workforce. Though employees seem to feel that stress reduction is one of the main reasons flexible working is appealing, employers need to consider carefully whether offering flexible working would in fact be the most effective means to address staff stress. For some, it appears that the experience of adopting a flexible working routine can in fact be more stressful;

working from home reduces the need for a tiring commute, but can mean it is harder for the employee to 'switch off' from work.

Comparing competing claims:

Lifestyles today are incredibly diverse and deciding what counts as reasonable grounds for granting the right to work flexibly can become difficult to manage and may often end up being about value judgements. Is one employee's request to attend his child's sports day more important than another's desire to play for his sports team? In working environments which require close co-operation between staff, this issue only becomes more complex.

Keeping the connection with the business:

Flexible working styles often create a much greater degree of independence for the employee and there is potential for employees to become less involved in the business and its culture, and more in the specifics of their tasks, and their own personal lives. Flexible working lets individuals devote intense concentration to the job in hand, for instance, writing a report at home, or to work the hours that allow them to pursue hobbies. The benefit of improving staff satisfaction and morale by permitting flexible working needs to be balanced against the risk of possible staff alienation.

Space challenge

Ensuring there is sufficient space:

Introducing flexible working can mean even the basics of getting the office fit for purpose are a challenge. In an organisation where employees have control over their own work schedules and work from several different places, the amount of people likely to be in the office at any point is hard to predict. How can employers manage the flow of staff in the office and make sure that the facilities, whether computers or cups, are adequate to support the staff present?

Managing space strategically:

Increasing levels of remote working may create an opportunity for companies to reduce or redeploy parts of their office space. This can allow the business to generate important cost savings.

Removing 'territories':

The employment of 'hot-desking' is one way of supplying employees with office space without giving them personal ownership of that space. This arrangement is particularly effective for organisations with employees that work in different places away from the office. Employers must be sensitive to such responses and be aware of the risk that 'territorial'

employees may feel less of a connection to the organisation overall when they do not have their own personal space in the office.

Making space 'modal':

The concept of the office and the role it plays in employees' day to day lives is changing. The modern concept of the office involves a collection of spaces, each space conducive to a different way of thinking and working. How can organisations arrange their office space to help motivate and inspire employees in different ways?

These questions become even more pertinent when employee motivations for coming into the office are disparate: some will be keen to work intensely using specialist facilities; others may wish to create and collaborate with co-workers. What different types of space will the organisations need, e.g. co-operative space, creative space, dedicated work space, specialist facilities and where should these all be located?

Keeping the dialogue going:

As remote working becomes more common place, how will colleagues maintain their social rapport with one another? 'Water cooler conversation' and 'coffee machine chat' are currently not possible among remote workers. How can organisations replicate the social aspects of the office to benefit

remote workers and encourage these workers to 'gather' in this space to chat? Will virtual worlds such as Second Life or social networking sites such as Facebook become the next social meeting ground for employees? And should the organisation also concern itself with making sure that this chat is beneficial to the business?

Avoiding the duplication of equipment:

Instituting flexible working in the form of more home working may be the result of a desire to cut down on office space and office equipment. However, organisations will need to equip their workers with the tools necessary to do the job in the place they are based. An organisation with employees that work from many different places may struggle to equip their employees in the office and outside without increasing business costs. How can employers be most cost effective when supporting their place-flexible staff? Under what circumstances are employers responsible for setting up, and perhaps even maintaining, employees' home offices?

Juggling space at home:

Many people who work from home are forced to do this in 'general living space' as opposed to dedicated home offices because high property prices mean buying a more spacious home is unaffordable. This can be far from

the ideal working environment, especially when there are young children in the home. Employers must consider their responsibility around the health and safety of home working environments. Moreover, they need to consider how efficiently people work in such home spaces.

What will shape flexible working in the future?

To understand the future it is valuable to understand the present and the past. The future landscape of flexible working is influenced by a range of important factors which are already at play. Technology is significant in this, but social trends are also highly influential.

These suggest that flexible working will grow generally but two further points should not be forgotten:

- **How flexible working is experienced and by whom.**
- **Flexible working may be questioned by both individuals and organisations as they find they struggle to manage the complexity that more ‘fluid’ ways of working brings with it.**

In the below section we review the factors which are likely to push up demand from two perspectives: those factors which arise from changes and trends in the employee situation; and those which relate to the employer perspective.

Employee-centric drivers

Our research has shown that employees currently find some form of flexible working appealing and this preference is likely to grow for a range of reasons. For some it may be about aspirations for improving their lifestyle and work life balance; for others, the freedom provided by flexible working will be

more of a necessity as they have to negotiate not only professional, but also personal (in particular family) responsibilities.

The ageing population:

By 2020, the proportion of the population over the age of 65 is expected to grow to 18.4% (from 15.8% in 2000). An ageing population will have a significant impact on working arrangements: the elderly will need carers, who will often also seek to remain in employment whilst looking after these dependent relatives; an ageing population will also produce an ageing workforce.[†]

The demand for part time work is due to grow as these new kinds of workers enter the workforce often with a desire to work reduced hours. Moreover, the planned extension of the state retirement age is likely to lead to even more people wanting to work part-time. There has already been a 45% increase in the number of workers in employment over the retirement age during the last 15 years.^{††}

Women in the workforce:

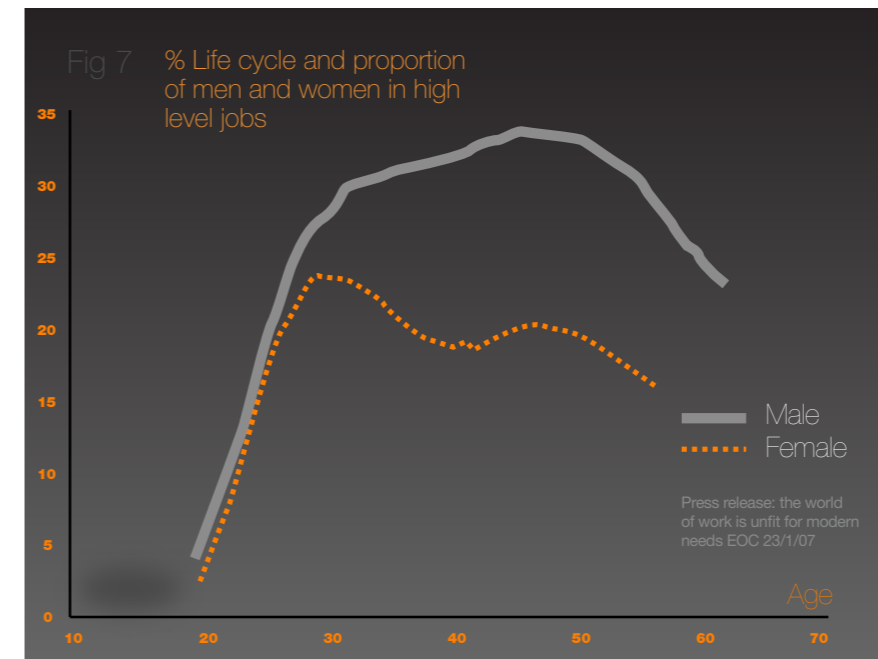
Another influential segment of society which is likely to drive up the demand for flexible working will be women, in particular those wishing to remain or return to the workplace whilst looking after children. Under current legislation and workplace policy, many women struggle to manage their career and family simultaneously and are leaving work for good.

The disparity between men and women in highly skilled jobs around the average age of childbearing (see figure 7) shows that although the current working generation has seen a huge increase in the number of professional women in the workforce, the workplace is still not accommodating to professional mothers. As stated by Madeleine Bunting in a recent Guardian article:

“This is an area where government policy has failed; the right to request flexible working, introduced in 2003, may have hugely opened up opportunities for part-time and flexible working, but it has failed to improve the quality of that part-time work. None of this, of course, is anything you notice or care about before your baby arrives. The glass ceiling is something that women bump their heads on only after emerging from the maternity ward.”

(“Baby, this just isn’t working for me”, The Guardian, 1/3/07)

This suggests that there will not only be continued demand for flexible working from working mothers, but more importantly, a strong desire for quality flexible working which does not compromise career development.



The expectation of a better work life balance:

Achieving a good balance between work and personal life has become increasingly important in a culture with concerns over long working hours, stress, and mental wellbeing. Flexible working is widely held by employees to have beneficial effects in these areas. Although our research shows that one in five flexible workers do not get to spend more time with the family as a result, and 40% say that flexible working has made no difference to their actual workload, it is possible that a more established flexible work culture of the future will come to deal with this kind of challenge better.

The emerging workforce:

Though workers currently seek the time to enjoy life outside work, the upcoming generation of workers may have a different perspective to jobs and careers. Workers of the future may not wish to compromise over the work they do and seek to be employed in roles and activities which match their passions, ideals and aspirations. Given this,

they will expect to be able to be more proactive and selective in managing how their time is spent.

Moreover, one current trend in education is a move towards student-centred learning, i.e. encouraging individuals to motivate themselves, to set their own tasks, and more relevantly, structure their own time. Having been stimulated to behave in this way at school, will individuals continue to act thus in the workplace?

The increasing ubiquity of technology:

Flexible working is about employees having the ability to carry out their allotted tasks and activities in different places and at different times. Technology is playing an ever important role in all aspects of our lives and the proportion of the population ready to use technology at work and at home continues to increase. As a result, it is fair to assume that more and more workers across a spectrum of different professions will be willing and able to work away from fixed places and in their own time.

Employer-centric drivers

As well as these employee-centric drivers of demand, flexible working is also likely to grow in appeal from the employers’ perspective in the future.

Improving staff morale:

Many gain the benefits of the improved staff performance that can occur when employees are able to work at times and/or in places of their own choice. Flexible working will be important not only to current employees, but also to prospective ones. According to our research, 50% of the UK workforce agreed it would play a very important role in making decisions on their next job. Increasingly, employers will need to consider offering appealing work arrangements in order to attract the best candidates which suggests that flexible working could be included more often as a formal arrangement in contracts.

Operations and cost:

Employers are likely to seek flexible working as a means of addressing the challenges of the broader business environment. In the face of increasing competition, organisations will continue to search for effective ways to manage their costs and their assets. Instituting flexible working in the form of more home working may be the result of a desire to reduce the amount of office space

[†] OECD Factbook 2006: Economic, Environmental and Social statistics

^{††} Labour Force Survey, ONS updated January 2007.

Understanding the dimensions of flexibility

required as land and property costs continue to increase. Likewise, using a 'just in time' strategy to enable the business to better manage the peaks and troughs in activity will also further underline the value of flexible working arrangements, for instance in the form of temporary contracts or allowing staff to use 'down time' for personal ends.

The 'always on' culture:

Certain industry sectors with strong growth prospects are also the ones where forms of flexible working arrangements are the norm for staff. These growth industries are generally service-based businesses, e.g. health, transport, retail and leisure, where, with the evolution of the 'always on' culture, staff are needed to provide service 'anytime, anywhere'. Several businesses are extending their opening hours to accommodate consumers who conduct their errands late into the night, for example a significant proportion of online shopping happens at night.

The increase in businesses with extended opening hours creates a greater need for flexible working arrangements, such as shift working and job sharing, to cover business hours. These shifts can be distributed among the staff in a way that offers employees the opportunity to work preferred hours or obliges employees to work unsociable hours.

Environmental concerns:

Businesses are increasingly under pressure to become environmentally sustainable by redesigning their supply chain and manufacturing processes. More recently, greater focus has been placed on the responsibility of businesses to redesign their offices as part of their efforts to become carbon neutral:

"The British were recently named as the biggest wasters of energy in Europe, we also work the longest hours; so it is clear that in order for the UK to become more environmentally responsible...we need to adopt a more holistic approach to the design, construction, and occupation of Britain's offices," Richard Kauntze, chief executive of the British Council of Offices

"Green credentials under scrutiny", Financial Times, 22/5/07.

Will the transition to more home working help companies reduce their CO₂ emissions, by reducing the number of hours their staff spend commuting and possibly reducing office space? The commuter gridlock is currently responsible for 15% of the UK's CO₂ emissions and offices are only used for 30 to 50% of the time; encouraging flexible working in the

form of home working may allow companies to reduce office space and become more sustainable. On the other hand, setting up employees in their individual home offices could lead to greater energy inefficiency than offices.

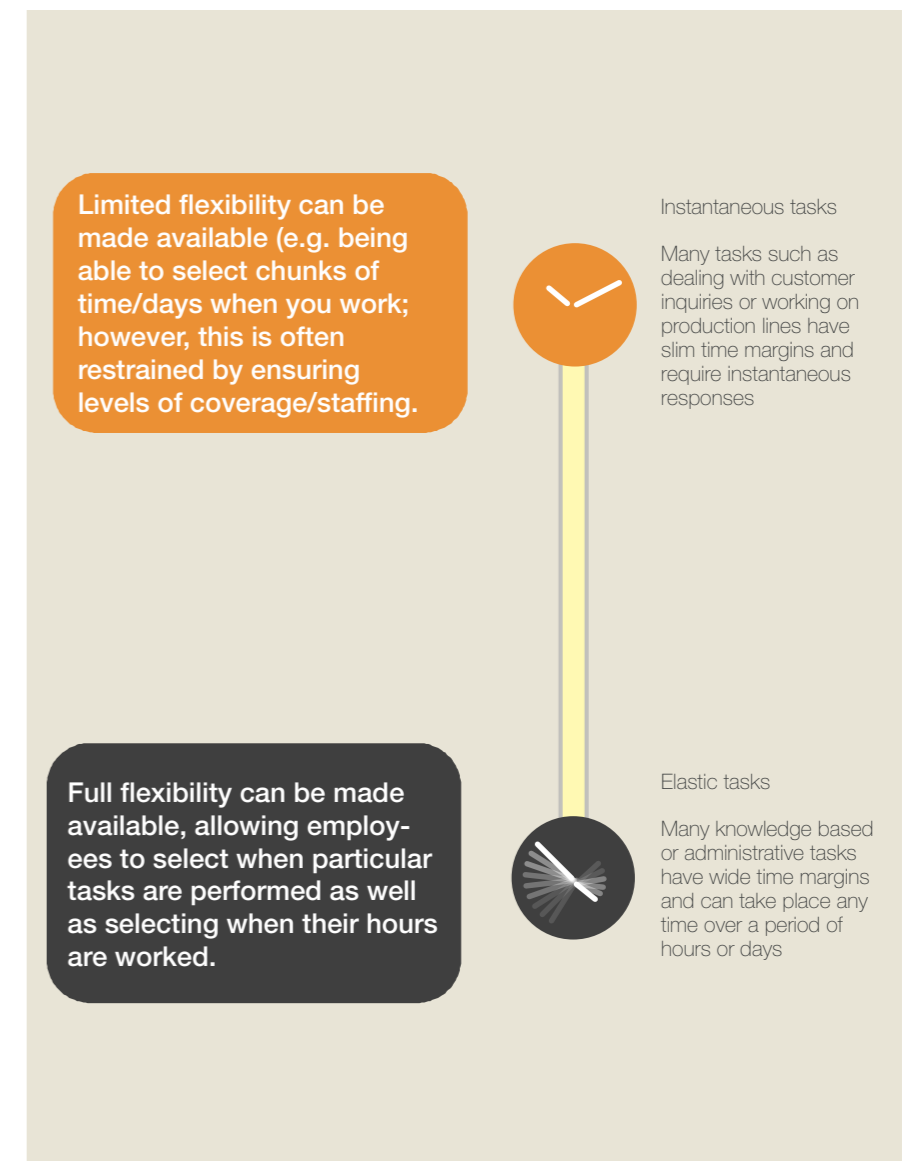
New energy saving measures are already being introduced in offices: timers on office lighting, motion-sensor lighting in low-use areas, timers to stop air conditioning at nights and weekends. Another important trend is using office space in a more creative and sustainable way. The Hub, in London, is a professional dynamic working space where people can rent a desk for an hour or a week or a month. Professionals that are not tied to a particular office but need a working space gather at The Hub. Such shared spaces are delivering innovative solutions to tackle energy inefficiency. This suggests that employers are considering how they can offer employees more choice over where they work, and will need to take into account more and more options, and have a good understanding of all costs, financial, technological, environmental and social.

How all of these factors interact will be critical. The future world of flexible working will not simply consist of more flexible workers but workers representing a whole host of different arrangements, formal and otherwise, across a variety of different professions.

As discussed earlier, the term 'flexible working' assumes a move away from standard fixed routines and boundaries. It is a broad and simple definition that belies the complex nature of flexibility in the work place.

As the topic of flexible working gains public attention, the most interesting question becomes: how can flexible working be deployed in the workplace in a way that benefits both employees and employers? Not all kinds of flexibility are relevant or possible for the different functions and roles that exist within an organisation.

Central to the question of considering how flexibility can be deployed is the nature of the work or tasks being carried out by the employee.



Flexibility around time

When considering the potential for individual employees to be flexible, it is important to consider the nature of the tasks that they perform: are they tasks with wide time margins where a delay in hours or days is irrelevant; or are

they tasks which require rapid or immediate completion?

Where tasks are elastic around time, it enables a very wide range of flexible working practices to be deployed and a great deal of control to be devolved.



Flexibility around place

When taking place into account, we need to consider whether tasks require direct interaction with people, the use of specialist facilities, are tied to a particular geography, or if they can take place wherever the employee chooses to be.

Employees who have less control over their place of work can include both those who are highly mobile, but travel from place to place as needed, as well as those who are tied to a central workplace.

Flexible working typologies

Using these two dimensions of flexibility and choice over time and place of work, we can identify clusters of employees with similar working patterns. The different employee typologies illustrated below imply different working styles and working arrangements.

Hoppers: e.g. field engineers, emergency workers, those who provide short term cover, cleaners, delivery men.

Employees whose work occurs over a limited time frame delivering a service to a specific place and responding to external requests. Highly mobile with little or no time spent at a fixed work place; instead

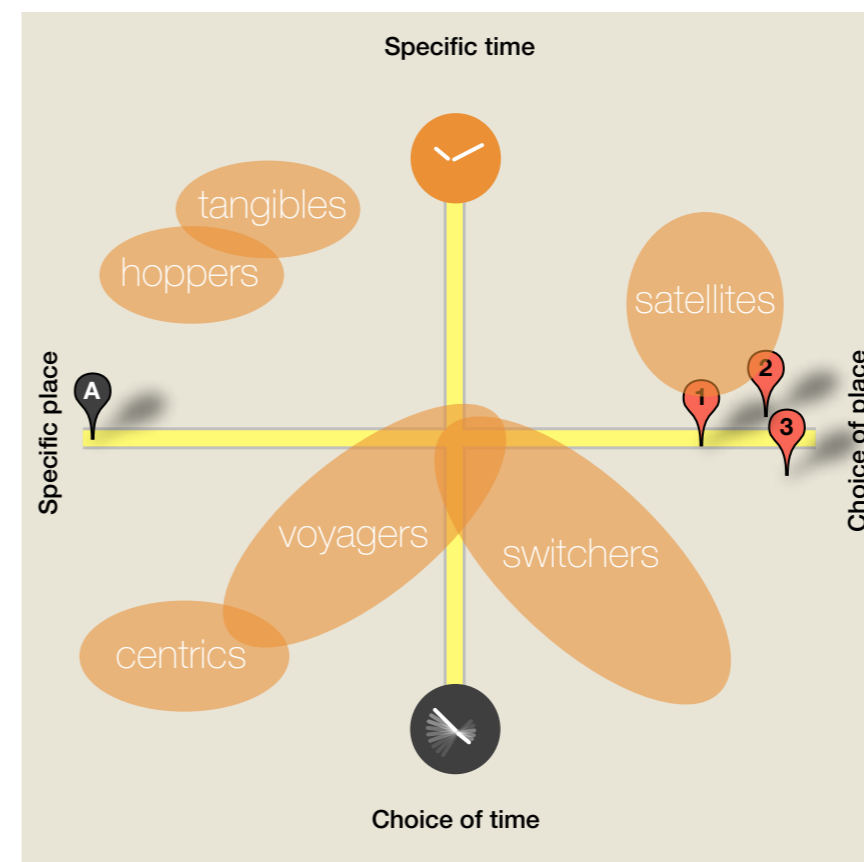
they are travelling to various on-site places depending on where they are needed.

Tangibles: e.g. Retail workers, food services, maintenance, security or manufacturing.

Employees whose work requires them to work in fixed places interacting with people or doing physical work and at a set time.

Voyagers: e.g. Salesmen, non-emergency tradesmen (e.g. builders and decorators), typical of senior managers.

Employees who work across a variety of places: the employer's office, home and client offices. However, they have a great deal of control over their schedule, for instance, a salesman can choose when they organise their sales



visits, or a manager will be able to decide when to hold a team meeting.

Centrics: e.g. Experts who will need to access specialist facilities: graphic designers, artists, research scientists

Employees whose work requires them to work in fixed places interacting with people or doing physical work but who can choose when to carry out this work. It may be that they receive clients or customers who come to the premises at agreed times or by appointment. Such types of workers may be self-employed.

Satellites: e.g. Home based administrative staff or tele-workers

Employees who are based entirely out of the office at home or the place of their choice who rarely travel to other places. However, these staff are unable to have such choice over the time at which they work as the nature of the activity they carry out requires that it is carried out at particular times, for instance during office hours, and may require immediate response, as is the case with handling calls.

Switchers: e.g. Knowledge workers and administrative staff.

Employees who switch between working at the place of their choice and the workplace. They have a great deal of control over how this is done as the nature of their work is such that it can often be carried out independently, at their convenience, or in their own time.

Key considerations

These employee typologies can help to guide organisations in making sense of the possible future flexible working paradigms they may find in their business.

- What is the landscape of employee working patterns in and outside of the office and normal working hours?
- How much choice and control do staff currently have over their working arrangements?
- Is this driven by the demands of their role, or the limitation of business facilities?
- Given the profile of workers in each function, now and in the future, how might this change?
- Does the business feel it could support any requests for a move towards more flexible working?

Moving beyond boundaries

Below we highlight ten key considerations for organisations deploying flexible working practices.

1. Can you ensure flexible working underpins the strategic aims of the organisation?

There are gains to be made from flexible working that go beyond meeting individual employee requests. It is important to consider how increased flexibility could enhance working practices across the organisation.

2. What will the costs and benefits of flexible working be?

Deploying flexible working practices often requires the investment of time and capital. Looking at potential organisational benefits or reduced costs helps an organisation understand the wider business case.

3. What issues is flexible working meant to address?

Flexible working can improve employees' sense of wellbeing and job satisfaction but it is important to be realistic and recognise it cannot solve these issues on its own. More importantly, under the wrong conditions, greater flexibility can make employees experiences of work worse.

4. What working arrangements currently exist across the workforce?

Flexibility may already play a surprisingly large role in employees working lives. The knowledge of what current flexible working habits exist is invaluable in planning the further provision of flexibility.

5. Who will be able to work flexibly and who will not?

Within organisations there are some job roles and individuals for whom flexible working arrangements are less practicable. Having clear ground rules and procedures for reviewing this avoids confusion or perceptions of unfairness.

6. What will the impact of flexible working be across the workforce?

One person's flexibility can impact a co-worker's performance. It is necessary to consider what the indirect impacts of flexible working might be. The more widespread flexible working becomes, the wider its potential impact.

7. How formal should the flexible working culture be?

Some organisational cultures and working styles will suit a relaxed approach to flexibility and others need clear guidelines, procedures and ground rules. Getting the level of control right is crucial

in facilitating effective flexible working practices.

8. Are flexible workers adequately supported?

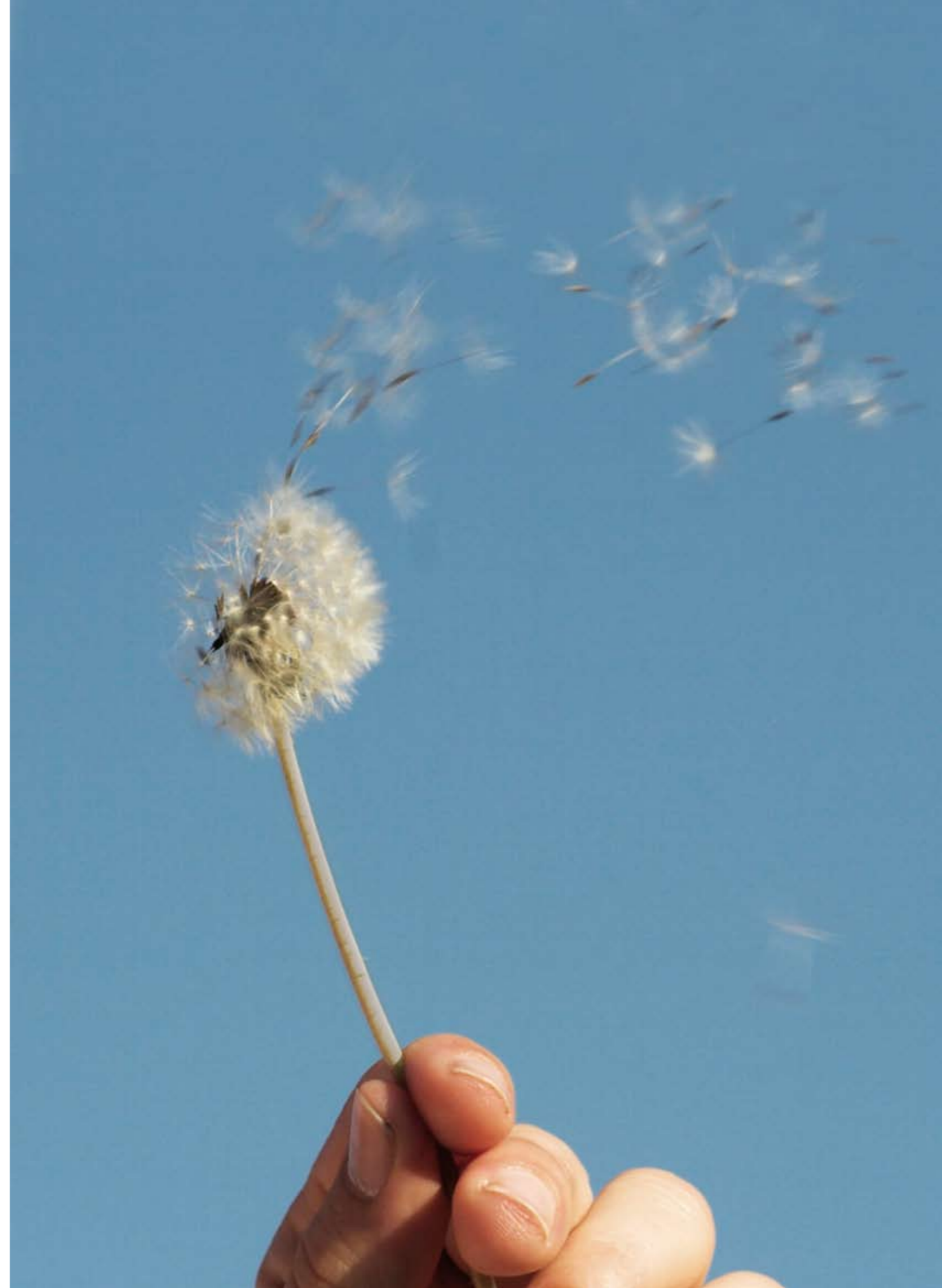
Employees who work flexibly can often feel that they are 'out of sight, out of mind'. Procedures need to be put in place to ensure those out of the office have the appropriate level of support and visibility.

9. Are suitable IT arrangements in place?

When planning the provision of communications, access to data and systems, flexible workers need to be considered. Making remote systems work is often one of the hardest elements to get right to make flexible working successful but today it is also one of the most important.

10. How will employees be managed, evaluated and rewarded?

Flexible working styles are often more independent; they require the clear setting of objectives and less micro management. Getting this right helps to make flexible working compatible with career development in the longer term.



Employee Case Studies

Andrew, Grant Thornton

Job description

Andrew is a software developer. He has been working at Grant Thornton for eight years. He worked as a web designer on the communications team for six years and has now been part of the software development team for two years. He is responsible for creating software and programming. His job requires that he often collaborates with others on his team, exchanging ideas before developing software. He also meets with people on other teams to discuss their preferences regarding software and programmes. He then builds the software on his own.

Flexible working arrangements

Andrew works from three different places throughout the week. Generally, he works from Grant Thornton's London office three to four days a week and from home in Walthamstow one or two days a week. He also visits Grant Thornton's Oxford office, the information systems data centre, once every week or two weeks. He chooses his location depending on the task that he wants to complete that day.

Andrew works from home when he needs to concentrate on 'detailed work' such as building software. Andrew uses his time in the office mainly for meetings as

well as doing work that requires a fast and reliable network. He will never launch new software from anywhere but the office because he knows that the execution will affect everyone in the company and he cannot risk losing internet connection. He also knows that if something goes wrong, he will have more support in the office in terms of help from other developers.

Andrew visits the Oxford office once every few weeks to have meetings with colleagues based there. He also goes to check on the data centre there once in a while, although he can also access it remotely.

Management and working with others

All five members of the systems development team and the manager work in several locations including from home. Flexibility is part of the team culture.

Andrew considers himself to be a completely independent worker; he is in full control of his own schedule. His manager works primarily at the Oxford office and from home, visiting the London office one day every two weeks. Andrew arranges a meeting with her once a week at one of the office locations and communicates with her throughout the week via the interoffice instant messenger, email or phone. Remote access to the company network enables

him to easily stay in contact with her and other colleagues but he is not expected to regularly report to the manager about his location or hours.

"The job is resource driven. We have projects and if we complete them, then who cares?"

The different teams within Grant Thornton create their own set of rules and understandings, agreed upon by the manager and the staff. In Andrew's department, the staff is not closely managed and employee productivity is analysed according to what the employee delivers and how he meets his project objectives and deadlines. For the two years that he has been part of his current team, the team has worked in this way.

During his first six years at Grant Thornton, Andrew worked in the communications department. After having been a part of the team for three years, he decided that it would be effective for him to work at home occasionally and his manager agreed. Working from home was not common practice among other members of the team and he often felt that his colleagues were sceptical about his desire to work at home. Andrew has noticed that the communications team has become much more 'flexible' in the past few years and working from home has become more common among these staff. The software

development team has been working from home for several years already and Andrew does not feel that there was a big flexible working transition period.

"More people work from home now and more often but there wasn't a big policy change. It's been so organic. It's tough to pinpoint when it happened.

To some extent it was already happening in my team when I started two years ago."

Effectiveness

Location flexibility makes Andrew work more efficiently as he can choose the best location for completing the task at hand. For the most part, he uses his time in the offices to conduct meetings and his time at home to concentrate on writing software.

"[The different locations] allow me to be most productive in different ways. Some things are easier to crack on in the office. Other things are easier to crack on with at home. You work from home when you need to get your head down and concentrate. I switch off the phone and get into it. It's nice to know that you won't be distracted. You can choose your own breaks when you want them."

Andrew is very disciplined when he works from home and tries to make sure that his home is as quiet as possible. Andrew and his wife have a nanny share with another couple for their son (aged 20 months) and on days that he is working from home, Andrew tries to arrange that his son is at the other couple's home. His wife rarely works from home and he spends the day in a dedicated room serving as the 'office' with the door closed. He breaks for lunch for an hour at midday and leaves the house for a brief period of time to run an errand or just get some air "to prevent myself from going mad really". He occasionally meets someone for lunch but he tries to stick to standard office working hours.

Lifestyle and values

Andrew does not struggle with separating his work and home life. He does not feel pressure to be constantly working. He is disciplined about working during standard office hours from whichever location he is in, and 'turning off' at the end of the day. When he is extremely busy, he will fit in a few extra hours of work after eight o'clock when his son goes to sleep. He also occasionally reads work emails over the weekend, but does not allow this to bother him.

"It's a natural separation for me, work and home. And it helps that my manager has a family as well."

Andrew's final word on flexible working

"Broadband is what makes all the difference. There are now fewer restrictions on what we can do where.... [working flexibly] is convenient and helpful."

Employee Case Studies

Angela, St. Lukes

Job description

Angela is the head of Human Resources at St. Lukes advertising agency. During the ten years she has been at St. Luke's, Angela has worked in account management, support roles and HR, where she has been working for the past six years. Her current role as head of HR requires that she has a great amount of contact with employees as well as writing employee reviews, employment law advice and training and development provision.

Flexible working arrangements

Angela works part-time on a three and a half day week. She works Monday, Wednesday and Thursday in the office, and Tuesday morning from home. She then has Tuesday afternoon and Friday off. She decided to transfer internally into HR partly because her function would allow her to work flexibly.

"Account management was much too demanding. A client calls and you jump, and you're here until all hours. My husband was diagnosed with an illness and then we had children and it didn't fit into the whole plan anymore. So I moved into HR so I could do part time. I have been doing HR now for about 6 years and that has given me the flexibility to achieve my work life balance."

Management and working with others

At St. Luke's, employees can propose a flexible working pattern for themselves. There is then a testing period of around three months to see if the arrangement works for the individual, his line manager and his colleagues.

"We have tried things that haven't worked particularly well. What we have learned, we learned from doing it rather than assuming that it wouldn't work. Throughout conversations are had between the employee, the line manager and myself. We are a collaborative company and we try to make things work if possible."

St. Luke's has a company-wide hot desking policy which Angela believes improves communication between staff because people decide each day where and with whom they want to sit, and get to know each other.

Effectiveness

Angela believes that working flexibly makes people work more efficiently both at home and in the office. When people are in the office less, they are less likely to walk around procrastinating and more likely to get their work done.

"When I'm in the office I work the whole time. I don't take 20 minutes making coffee

or checking my bank account, or have long conversations on the phone with friends and family. I do what I am there to do."

Angela finds the home to be the easiest place to get the most writing done.

"I wrote four reviews by two o'clock yesterday from home and when I'm in the office, I'll get one done all day. People will come up to me and say 'hey do you have five minutes?' which means 30 minutes; then I have to get back to where I left off and by the time I do that, I have another person asking me for five minutes. Advising and listening to issues and concerns is part of my role, but if documents need writing I'm more efficient at home."

Angela also believes that people are more efficient in work when they are happy with their lives outside of work.

"If you have happy people who are pursuing and achieving in their

personal lives, then you have a happy agency. If people are happy and motivated at work, then you have heightened efficiency."

Lifestyle and values

Angela thinks that working only three and a half days a week from the office is the best way to balance her work and her personal life with her husband and five year old daughter.

"On Tuesdays and Fridays I'm at home and that enables me to take my daughter to school, pick her up, it allows me to help out at the school on Friday mornings and read with her and her class. I can have that involvement in her life and stay in touch with her and what she's doing."

My husband doesn't work, he suffers from MS and we have Friday together to ourselves. This allows us to go out to lunch and spend time together. As with

most families, the weekends are taken up by swimming lessons and birthday parties and are very focussed around Isabelle. Having that one day when she's at school lets us do what grown ups do. It gives us a good balance. Five days of work a week is never an option once you have got used to three or four."

Angela also appreciates working from home because she saves herself the one hour commute each way.

"It means I don't have to get up at the crack of dawn and can take Isabelle to school. It's not work time that it saves you, it's your time. It also makes the week go by quicker."

Angela's final word on flexible working

"Flexible working enables me to balance all the elements of my life; child, husband and career. Commitment and flexibility from both sides are essential to making it work, but the rewards make life more rounded and fulfilled."

Employee Case Studies

Barry, Leeds Council

Job description

Barry works in the benefits department assessing applications for housing benefit. His role involves processing applications and ensuring they have the relevant ID and proofs, as well as assessing individuals' circumstances. This can involve directly contacting individual applicants to gain a clearer understanding of their needs and to ensure that they are looking for the right housing to suit these needs.

Flexible working arrangements

Though he is currently working in an office for a few weeks, Barry's typical working routine is very much home based, with regular visits to the office once per fortnight for a team meeting.

Barry is free to structure his work as he chooses, and has few meetings other than the fortnightly catch up. Between the hours of 7:00am and 7:00pm, when the Eclipse case system that he uses is up and running, he can schedule his work to suit his needs.

He typically works from around 7:30am to 3:30pm. To give his work routine some structure he tends to split his day up into a couple of shifts and takes a 'decent' break at lunch time.

Management and working with others

Barry works largely independently and does not need a great deal of liaising with other members of his team, other than his manager. He feels there is a certain degree of knowledge sharing that goes on about how to tackle certain cases and that speaking to others in the team can also be a useful way to keep up to date. Barry feels that this happens less often now that he works remotely.

However, he also feels that in the office there can be a tendency to ask other people for guidance "for the sake of it" when actually many of the answers are readily available on the system.

Effectiveness

Working more flexibly has given Barry a far greater degree of autonomy and confidence in his own judgement. Working more independently has given him the benefit of being more self aware and the opportunity to learn for himself.

"I feel much more like my own boss now. I can work out my own day and I work how I want to work."

Barry feels, however, that remote working is not for everyone due to this worker independence it creates and requires. A certain level of knowledge and accuracy of output are necessary and that this could make it hard to mentor and

train individuals working remotely. Home working is practical for him because of his level of experience but it might not be so suitable for people who are less experienced in the role or in work in general.

Lifestyle and values

Barry feels that working flexi-time and home working have improved his quality of life. Overall, he finds that he has more time to pursue his interests such as walking, seeing friends or going to see plays.

"I have a better routine now than before I started home working. I would leave for work at around 6:00am and get home at around 4:30pm - now I gain around an hour at each end of the day. In summer I can be finished by 3:30pm head out into the countryside. I've done my work but I still have time to go out and do something I enjoy."

Barry's final word on flexible working

"I miss the chatting and social interaction that used to exist when you worked in an office and were taking a break from work, but I guess this has to be traded off against having more free time in my personal life."

Coalition members

The Orange Future Enterprise coalition is a group of individuals from a range of backgrounds whose attendance at regular meetings generates cutting-edge thought leadership on the future of the enterprise. Members include academics, journalists, consultant, lawyers, public sector representatives, business leaders and industry commentators. The range of backgrounds and combined breadth of experience within the coalition have helped to shape the content of this paper. The coalition will continue to generate insight into the future of the organisations and the role that technology has to play within them.

Orange Future Enterprise coalition web forum

The findings of the coalition have stimulated debate and provided a platform to discuss the role and impact of mobile technologies on businesses - now and in the future.

It's time to open this debate to a larger number of stakeholders to get a real sense of the challenges and opportunities facing organisations. We would like to encourage you to visit the Orange Future Enterprise coalition online forum, a place to share research, debate and lead thinking on the future of organisations.

Please visit the forum at <http://www.orangecoalition.com/> and register to add your own thoughts.

A full list of current members is given here:

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Stuart Brough
Strathclyde University

Andrew Curry
Henley Centre HeadlightVision

Eunice Edwards
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Jonathan Etheridge
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Alan Harrison
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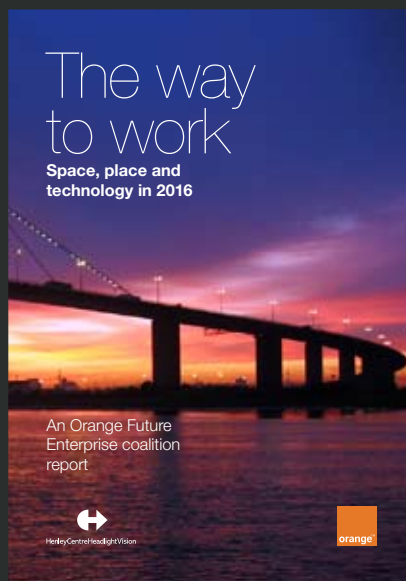
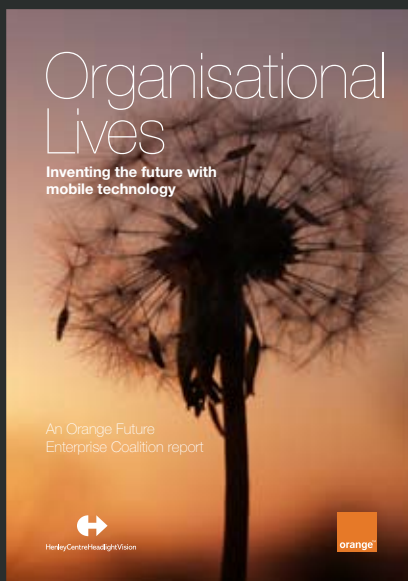
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Beyond Boundaries

The emerging work culture of independence and responsibility



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