Flextime: An Alternative Work Agreement

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Flextime: A Definition

Flextime allows an employee to select the hours he or she will work. There are usually specified limits set by the employer. Employees on a flexible schedule may work a condensed work week or may work a regular work week. Those working a condensed week may work four ten hour days, rather than five eight hour days. Those who work a five day week may work hours other than the typical "nine to five."

Who Needs Flextime?

Many people could probably benefit from a flexible work schedule. Take, for instance, the following examples. Bob's elderly mother is recovering from hip replacement surgery. She wants Bob to accompany her to physical therapy from 4:00 to 5:00 three afternoons a week. "I made it as late in the day as possible can't you leave work early?" Mom asks. If Bob doesn't do something, elder care may harm his career. Mary's son is starting kindergarten. Before that he went to a daycare center which stayed open until 6 p.m. Now he'll arrive home at 3:30 p.m., a few hours before Mary even gets off work. It's difficult for working parents to balance home and family. Although returning to school can help one's career, the time commitment can be detrimental to it. The class Samantha needs to complete her degree meets only at 10 a.m. twice a week. For financial reasons, she must work full time, which means for her 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Everyone Benefits

As you can see from these examples many people could benefit from a flexible work schedule. But for an employer to institute flextime, the company would want to benefit as well. The obvious benefit to an employer is the ability to accommodate employees who have trouble balancing their jobs and their families. In order to retain those employees it would be in the company's best interests to allow their staff to have a flexible schedule.

A less obvious benefit would be a decrease in overhead costs. Employees working flexible schedules can share expensive equipment such as computers, and even desk space, as long as their schedules don't overlap. A company, if it chooses to, can even respond to calls from customers during more hours, if some people begin work prior to 9 a.m. and others stay later than 5 p.m. This works well if the company deals with customers in different time zones.

Flextime is good for the environment too. With some workers commuting four days each week, not five, fewer cars are out on the road. Fewer cars equals less air pollution, and less congestion on the roads. Staggered schedules also help eliminate traffic problems.

Getting Your Boss Onboard

It’s not difficult to see the benefits of flextime, at least from an employee’s point of view. Now comes the hard part – convincing your boss that it makes sense. As they say “Ya gotta have a plan.” Don’t just walk into your boss’s office all fired up about how this is going to make your life easier. Your boss wants to know how it’s going to make his or her life easier.

Your first step should be talking to co-workers and coming up with a plan. Your boss’s biggest concern will probably be that the office will be a ghost town on Fridays and Mondays, since many people may want a condensed work week and a long weekend. Come up with a rotating schedule which will allow everyone to get an occasional long weekend. Your boss won’t want everyone leaving work early. Come up with a schedule that allows the office to be manned throughout the day.

Okay. Now you have a well thought out plan to present to your boss. Set up an appointment to present that plan. Show how this type of plan can benefit your employer, i.e. coverage of telephones for longer periods of time throughout the day; sharing of computer work stations. Have everything in writing (typed) and give your boss time to give your plan some thought. Be prepared to answer any questions he or she may have. Assure your employer that any scheduling conflicts will be worked out among the staff and have a component of your plan that explains step by step how this will happen.

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