

IS THE FUTURE FLEXIBLE? HOW TO STRIKE THE RIGHT BALANCE IN A HYBRID WORKING WORLD



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The last 20 months have seen a fundamental re-think in how we live and work. The shift to remote work has been a silver lining in an otherwise challenging time, offering staff a greater work-life balance, freedom to live where preferred, and spending more time with loved ones.

In pre-Covid times working from home was almost unheard of, with only 5% of staff operating outside the office. With CIPD figures suggesting that 40% of employers expect more than half their workforce to work regularly from home, and 80% of staff who worked remotely seeking that arrangement to continue, it seems the arrangement is here to stay.

While both a high number of employers and employees alike are seeking to rethink the future of work, a cautious approach must be taken to

ensure that the right balance is struck. Making sure working arrangements put in place do not have a detrimental impact on the business must be the top priority of any employer.

It is worth noting that remote working is not for everyone. Under 10% of people report they would not want to work-from-home at all, and particular jobs are simply not suitable for a remote working arrangement. Going forward, employers must not rush towards a one-size-fits-all policy that simply will not work for their business or particular employees. Are you developing a work-from-home or hybrid working arrangement?

Here are my top tips around what employers should consider when implementing new working arrangements:

- Involve your staff in the discussions, ask them what works well and what doesn't. Research suggests that staff preference is a hybrid approach, a

combination of working from home and in the workplace.

- Identify when staff are required to be in the office to fit with the needs of the business and clearly communicate these boundaries to the relevant staff.

- Consider whether you will adopt a fully work-from-home arrangement or a hybrid approach. This should be given careful consideration, taking into account the potential impact this could have on working relationships. Research suggests those working fully from home reported poorer relationships with colleagues and a more

negative impact on their health.

- Clearly set out your expectations around childcare when working from home, i.e., are employees allowed to care for their children when working remotely or must they have appropriate childcare arrangements in place.

- Prepare a clear, bespoke policy setting out who the policy applies to, what the flexible working arrangements are and your expectations from staff.

- Put a trial period in place which will allow you the flexibility to try and test these arrangements with the ability to change this if parts of this arrangement are not working, rather than being stuck with a policy that doesn't work.

Consult HR has a wealth of experience with developing policies plus all other HR related matters. If you would like any further information or advice, contact Julie on **07858 089006** or by email to **julie@consulthr.co.uk**.