

Making the case for flexible working by Rita McGee

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Do your homework

- Making a case for flexible working solely on 'soft issues' may lose you the support of senior managers. Your case has to be grounded in business facts. Study the trends, opportunities or threats facing your organisation. Do they require particular capabilities? How much a failure to provide flexible working cost the business? What impact will it have on customer satisfaction and staff engagement? Lastly, how will it affect profit?

Talk about building organisational capability

- Identify the cost of training someone to do a particular task or activity. Different skills will require different time frames. Look at the flow of work through the business, identify the peaks and troughs, and then state how your proposal will make these easier to manage.

Be clear about what's in it for both parties

- It is no good to look at this issue from a purely benevolent perspective. Make it quite clear what benefits the business stands to reap, such as retaining a specific knowledge or skill, increasing efficiency, effective use of resources, higher output, improved customer service, increased staff engagement. You must produce metrics for these benefits, some of which can be triangulated to reinforce your case.

Include the implications for the employer brand

- Flexible working is a critical element in the attraction and retention of top talent. Use both qualitative (anecdotal if necessary) and hard data to prove that flexibility is linked to strong employer brands – look at the *Sunday Times* 100 Best Companies list for examples against which you can benchmark yourself.

Expert Tip

- The need to have a 9-5 working structure has long gone. Our long-hours culture is eroding productivity needlessly, and work *can* be organised to meet the growing demands of both organisations and employees. The five-day working week is a concept from the 1930s – help your organisation to move into the 21st Century!