

Title:

Fixed Versus Flexible Working Hours in Workforce Management

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Summary:

Flexible working hours have been found to lead to a happier workforce, and to far better customer service and share valuations. However, there is a fear that implementing flexible working hours is complicated and that it could lead to a flood of impossible demands from employees.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Flexible working hours have been found to lead to a happier workforce, and to far better customer service and share valuations. However, there is a fear that implementing flexible working hours is complicated and that it could lead to a flood of impossible demands from employees.

Before we look at flexible working hours in more detail, let us take a brief look at the standard working hours.

**Working Hours for Employees**

Working hours for employees have changed dramatically over the last two centuries. Back in the nineteenth century when industrialization started in Europe, workers were compelled to work even 16 hours a day. In twenty-first century France, however, the government had fixed working hours at 35 hours a week.

Most industrialized countries have regulated the workweek by stipulating the maximum number of working hours per week, minimum daily rest periods, annual holidays and sickness pay. The standard is around 40 working hours per workweek, typically Monday through Friday. Paid vacations range from three to five weeks a year.

Long working hours can lead to stress-related health problems, less time for busy parents to attend to child-rearing, and less leisure to enjoy consumer

products and services. Henry Ford introduced low working hours so that his employees would have the leisure to buy and enjoy the cars he produced.

### <b>Flexible Working Hours and its Impact</b>

One major problem with fixed working hours is that employees find it difficult to balance the demands of their personal lives and work lives. Flexible working hours can lead to better work/life balance and result in a happier workforce.

Flexible working hours can come in different forms such as:

- <ul>
- <li>Part-time working that enables an employee to be free during business hours to attend to personal matters. For employers, it could mean engaging employees during peak workload hours, and reducing overall payroll costs</li>
- <li>Flexi-time working where employees work extra time when needed by employers and bank the extra hours/days off for arranging their personal commitments</li>
- <li>Annualized hours is an arrangement where times worked and times off are balanced across the year as a whole. Extra hours are worked during peak business seasons and less during lean seasons. Employers can retain experienced employees instead of hiring inexperienced casual or contract staff</li>
- <li>Customized flexible working hours during special events to enable employees watch, say, world cup matches and yet meet their work time requirements</li>

Studies have indicated that flexible working hours produce tangible benefits to employers in the forms of:

- <ul>
- <li>Reduced absenteeism and employee turnover</li>
- <li>Lower recruitment costs as they can retain their existing staff</li>
- <li>Higher staff morale leading to better work performance, customer service and even company stock performance</li>

A survey even revealed that employees preferred flexible working hours to substantial additional pay.

### <b>Implementing Flexible Working Hours</b>

Employers must know when they have peak workloads, needing more employees. This is not too difficult to assess with today's technologies like EPOS and computerized systems that can record transaction times.

Once the requirements are identified, flexible rostering software can generate

rosters to fit the workload. This software would then help to optimize the rosters to meet:

- <li>Work contract requirements</li>
- <li>Sociability factors, and</li>
- <li>Employee work preferences to the extent possible</li>

Where employee preferences cannot be met in full, the software would show the employees why this happened. This creates greater trust in the employees that their needs are being genuinely attended to.

### <b>Conclusion</b>

The standard practice so far has been fixed working hours arranged in different shifts. This can lead of difficulties in balancing employees' personal and work life demands. Flexible working hours help better work/life balance and lead to a happier workforce. A happier workforce results in less absenteeism, better customer service and higher stock performance.