



Questions to Review with the Staff Member Prior to Approving a Flexible Work Arrangement

The following is a list of questions to help an HR representative/supervisor determine if a flexible work arrangement will be a successful experience for a staff member and work unit. We recommend that the staff member review the list of questions prior to meeting with the HR representative/supervisor. At a meeting scheduled between the two, the questions can guide the conversation and help the HR representative/supervisor to make an informed decision.

Please note: *The staff member's past job performance and other questions specific to the staff member or unit are also addressed.*

The staff member requesting a flexible work arrangement reviews his/her current job assignments. If the HR representative/supervisor is not fully familiar with the assignments of the staff member, we recommend that together they address each question.

- What is your work unit and who is your direct supervisor?
- What are (1) your job classification and (2) job tasks (a job description may be substituted)?
- What is your current work schedule?
- Do you share any assignments or tasks with co-workers or colleagues?
- Who are your internal and external customers and what services do you provide to your customers? Include your method of contacting customers and the frequency of contact.
- Are you involved in any sporadic, periodic or weekly/monthly projects? If yes, describe your role and responsibilities.
- What office and/or work equipment do you use?

With these questions, the staff member examines the various aspects of the flexible work arrangement being requested. Together, the HR representative/supervisor and staff member address each question.

- What altered work schedule are you requesting?
- What is the duration of the altered work schedule you are requesting?
- How will your job assignments, peer relations, customer service and supervision be affected?
- How will your current job assignments be maintained?
- How will peer and customer interactions be maintained?
- How will you be able to assist your unit during any sporadic, periodic or weekly/monthly project or responsibility that you are involved in?
- What will be your availability during an unforeseen event if you are needed by your unit?
- If the arrangement is established on a trial basis, what are the expectations to continue/maintain the arrangement?

Continuing the discussion: Below are questions specific to each flexible work arrangement type. Together, the staff member and HR representative/supervisor, discuss the questions. The answers will provide additional data to make an informed decision.

Flextime:

Flextime allows the staff member to begin and end work at non-standard times within limits. The staff member still works the same number of hours per day or week.

- If the hours are changed, will understaffing occur?
- If necessary, can scheduled meetings, coordinating projects, etc. be accommodated?
- Are there safety concerns or building access issues?

Compressed Work Schedule:

The compressed work week allows the staff member to work full-time hours in less than a 5 day workweek.

- Is working the longer hours feasible? (stamina and work responsibilities?)
- If the hours are changed, will understaffing occur?
- If necessary, can scheduled meetings, coordinating projects, etc. be accommodated?
- Are there safety concerns or building access issues?
- If computer support (or any other support) is necessary, will support be available?

Job Sharing:

Job sharing is a form of regular part-time work, where 2 people share the responsibilities of one position by splitting the hours and responsibilities, either evenly (each do 2 ½ days/wk) or unevenly (one person might work 2 days/wk, the other 3 days/week).

- Is there already a partner to share job responsibilities or will a partner be needed? Please address compatibility with the partner.
- What are the job hours for each and is overlap necessary? Are both to attend team or unit meetings? Will there be additional salary costs?
- Has pay and benefits been explained?
- Have job tasks been addressed?
- Has supervision (solo and team) been addressed? How will evaluations occur: separately, as a team or in some other manner?
- How will communication between the job sharers be maintained?
- Has the reversibility of the arrangement been discussed?
- What will occur if one partner leaves?

Reduced Work Hours.

Reduced work hours decrease the current hours worked to a less than full-time position. Reduced work hours can affect pay and benefits.

- Has reduction in income and benefits been reviewed?
- How will the unassigned job tasks be handled?
- Will understaffing occur?
- Can scheduled meetings, coordinating projects, etc. be accommodated?
- Will office communication (customer/co-worker) be affected?
- Has the reversibility of the arrangement been discussed?

Telecommuting:

Telecommuting involves doing part, or sometimes all, of the work off-site connected to the office via computer, fax and/or telephone.

- Will the change in job location cause understaffing at the on-site work place?
- Can scheduled meetings, coordinating projects, etc. be accommodated?
- Will office communication (customer/co-worker) be affected?
- Is it important to have social interaction and job support from peers?
- Is regular feedback and oversight from a supervisor necessary?
- Is computer literacy and problem solving critical?
- How will files be protected and confidentiality maintained?
- Are materials and/or equipment necessary at the off-site location and if so, how will they be provided?
- Is face to face communication required?
- Is access to in-office materials necessary?
- Are needed databases accessible?
- Can appointments be independently determined and negotiated?

Source: *Negotiating Job Flexibility*, Family Resource Center Seminar, December 1, 1998. Facilitated by Kathy Simons, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Family Resource Center and Valerie Chu, Personnel Office. Family Resource Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Room 16 – 151, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA., 02139 – 4307, 617-253-1592, ksimons@mit.edu