

## Flexible Working Case Study

After the changes to Flexible Working in 2014, whereby the policy was amended to be available to all employees, we were approached by a Company who wanted to encourage their team to take up the option of flexible working.

Their reasons were two fold; firstly it was their belief that in order to attract and retain the best people, the company policies needed to be more flexible to ensure that each employee have the right balance between home and work life. Secondly; they were keen to try to change the gender differential, as currently only female employees had flexible working contracts.

In terms of the process, it was important that senior management demonstrated their support to flexible working and we set up steering committees which were made up of a cross-section of the team that met monthly.

The objective of the sessions was to monitor the progress of flexible working and the gender balance.

As an output of that committee we would report our findings back to the board. This ensured that flexible working was not just talked about but was something that was reinforced throughout the Company.

As well as this we wanted to listen to what staff has to say about flexible working and gender balance and we did this by holding focus groups for all employees. To drive home the message about senior management commitment to flexible working, these meetings were led by two female managers, one of whom has a contractual flexible working arrangement.

We then produced a flexible working handbook, which set out top tips for employees to consider when changing their working arrangements.

These included:-

- How to communicate the change within the teams;
- How best to stay in touch with colleagues while working remotely - for example, by scheduling catch-up telephone calls or using the firm's instant messaging service;
- Making sure the home or other remote working environment is comfortable;
- Trailing new arrangements to assess what suits the employee best.

Typically the Company was offering flexible working options such as, part-time working, flexi- time, job-sharing, annual hours or remote working. The Company were also open for the team to suggest their own working patterns.

The Company procedure for requesting flexible working mirrored that of the statutory procedure. In addition to requests for formal changes to individuals' working patterns, the company received many informal requests for ad hoc flexible working arrangements.

The process followed in these cases tends to be more fluid, with individuals first discussing their requests in person with their line managers. Several conversations then usually take place to agree much of what would have been set out in a formal, written agreement.

Flexible working has increased steadily at the Company since then, with a recent survey showing that 50 per cent of the people working for the firm now have flexible arrangements. This figure includes those who work flexibly only occasionally, as well as those with formal flexible working arrangements.

IT has encouraged take up of these arrangements by making it easier for people to work away from the office. The Company's IT systems allow for all employees to work remotely and all employees also have access to 24-hour IT support.

Although the Company does not currently capture data about the retention of staff who work flexibly, but with our support is planning to look into this in the coming year.

The Company admits that despite all the progress that has been made to-date, flexible working is more established in some parts of the Company than in others.