

Flexible recruitment

Resources for SMEs



In a nutshell, flexible recruitment is about bringing flexible working into the recruitment process.

Finding, hiring and keeping the right people is one of the biggest challenges you face as a manager. Getting it right benefits your business, but getting it wrong can be costly: a cycle of time and money spent advertising and interviewing with no guarantee that you'll find the right person.

This section of the toolkit will help you use flexible and hybrid working to widen your pool of suitable candidates and attract talented people who might not otherwise have considered working for you. Because so few vacancies are advertised flexibly, the impact of doing so can be immediate. In 2019, the insurance company Zurich began advertising every vacancy advertised across the UK business as a potential part-time, job-share or agile working opportunity. Applications from women for more senior roles leapt up by 45%.

Flexible recruitment will help you build a more successful team by:

- ♥ **Attracting extra candidates:** Roles advertised without flexibility cut you off from the many candidates who won't apply for traditional full-time or workplace-based jobs.
- ♥ **Progressing your best people:** Enabling talented people who work flexibly to apply for promotion, taking their flexibility with them, will improve mobility within your team.
- ♥ **Utilising skills more fully:** Flexible recruitment will ultimately help you build the best team, optimising performance and productivity.
- ♥ **Improving diversity and reducing the gender pay gap,** by providing opportunities for people who cannot undertake traditional full-time or workplace-based jobs to join your team and/or be retained.
- ♥ **Boosting your employer brand:** Flexible and hybrid working has become a key employee benefit in recent years – second only to salary. Promoting your openness to flex will help make your organisation a place where people are keen to come and work.

How to recruit flexibly

1. Identify the flexibility which is possible in the role

As soon as you identify a vacancy – whether you are replacing an existing team member or creating a new role – consider what kind of flexibility you will be able to offer. If you are not the hiring manager yourself, or if recruitment in your organisation is managed by someone else, share the checklist and this guidance with the appropriate colleague and let them know that it is essential for the success of your team that the role is available flexibly.

2. Let the candidate know

The easiest way to let candidates know about the flexibility you offer is to use the ‘Happy to Talk Flexible Working’ strapline and logo (workingfamilies.org.uk/employers/htfw/). This was developed by employers for employers to use to signal employers’ openness to discussing flexible options right from the beginning.

Do

- ♥ If you outsource your recruitment, **make sure your recruitment agency understands** your flexible requirements, and how to use the ‘Happy to Talk’ logo.
- ♥ **Prominently display the logo** and/or strapline, showing clearly that the job being advertised is available to those wanting to work flexibly.
- ♥ Make sure that you **include the types of flexibility available in the role**, and any flexible options you have as standard: for example, if the role can be home-based for part of the week, say so. This is often something that candidates find very attractive, but it isn’t always mentioned. See section 3. below for other types of flexibility.
- ♥ Be practical – it may not be practical to list all the types of flexibility in the job advert. Include the main type(s) of flexibility in the advert, and then **give full information in the job description**. You might also specify what is not possible for the role. Place the flexible working options with other benefits such as holidays, bonus, annual leave – as in the job advert (section 3. below).

Don’t

- ♥ Don’t use the strapline if you’re not open to flexible working in the job being advertised; it will lead to frustration and perceptions of unfairness.
- ♥ Do not use the strapline as a blanket organisational statement. It should be used on a job-by-job basis, to avoid candidates wasting their time and yours by applying for unsuitable roles.

3. Write your job advert

When writing a job advert for a flexible role, it needs to be clear and precise. Make sure the flexibility of the role can be easily spotted within the advert. Use our 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working' strapline in the recruitment advert. Place the type of flexibility of the role alongside the benefits of the position such as bonus, pension, holiday, and other ways you would support a staff member. Think about the different types of flexible working arrangements for each role advertised. These could include:

- ♥ **Remote working** – working from home, for part of the time, or all.
- ♥ **Job sharing** – a form of part-time work, where two individuals will share a full time position.
- ♥ **Annualised hours** – employees have set hours allocated over a year.
- ♥ **Term-time working** – often an income-smoothed, annualised hours contract, where the employee takes the majority of their paid annual leave plus unpaid leave during school holidays.
- ♥ **Customised working hours** – allowing workers to choose their own hours
- ♥ **Part-time** – employees working part-time hours

It is also useful to talk about your own company culture and how flexibility is achieved with the business.

4. Recruitment process

- ♥ Make sure that anyone with responsibility to respond to candidates' questions has been briefed on the flexibility which is available for the role. Candidates should feel confident that the flexibility which is advertised is genuinely available.
- ♥ Make sure someone on the interview panel raises the subject – don't wait for the candidate to do it.
- ♥ Include questions about candidates' preferred working patterns at the interview stage: are their expectations realistic? Are yours?
- ♥ Confirm the flexible arrangements in the offer letter.
- ♥ For job-shares in particular, but also for any flexible arrangement which is unfamiliar in your team, put support in place to get the arrangement off to a good start. Helpful guidance is contained in Working Families' *Leading flexible, hybrid and high-performing teams: Resources for managers toolkit*; see particularly 'Flexible and hybrid team protocols' and 'Ten steps to creating a successful flexible team'.

5. Useful websites

Some of the websites that we review and find useful at Working Families are listed below. Please check that they are the right resources for you and the recruitment you are undertaking.

- 📖 Find Your Flex, a flexible working job advert platform: findyourflex.co.uk
- 📖 Flexible Working People, another flexible working job platform, along with a good community presence on Facebook: flexibleworkingpeople.com

This information is intended as a guide only and you should seek legal advice where necessary. Working Families will not be liable for any losses subsequent to the use or misuse of this information and guidance.

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