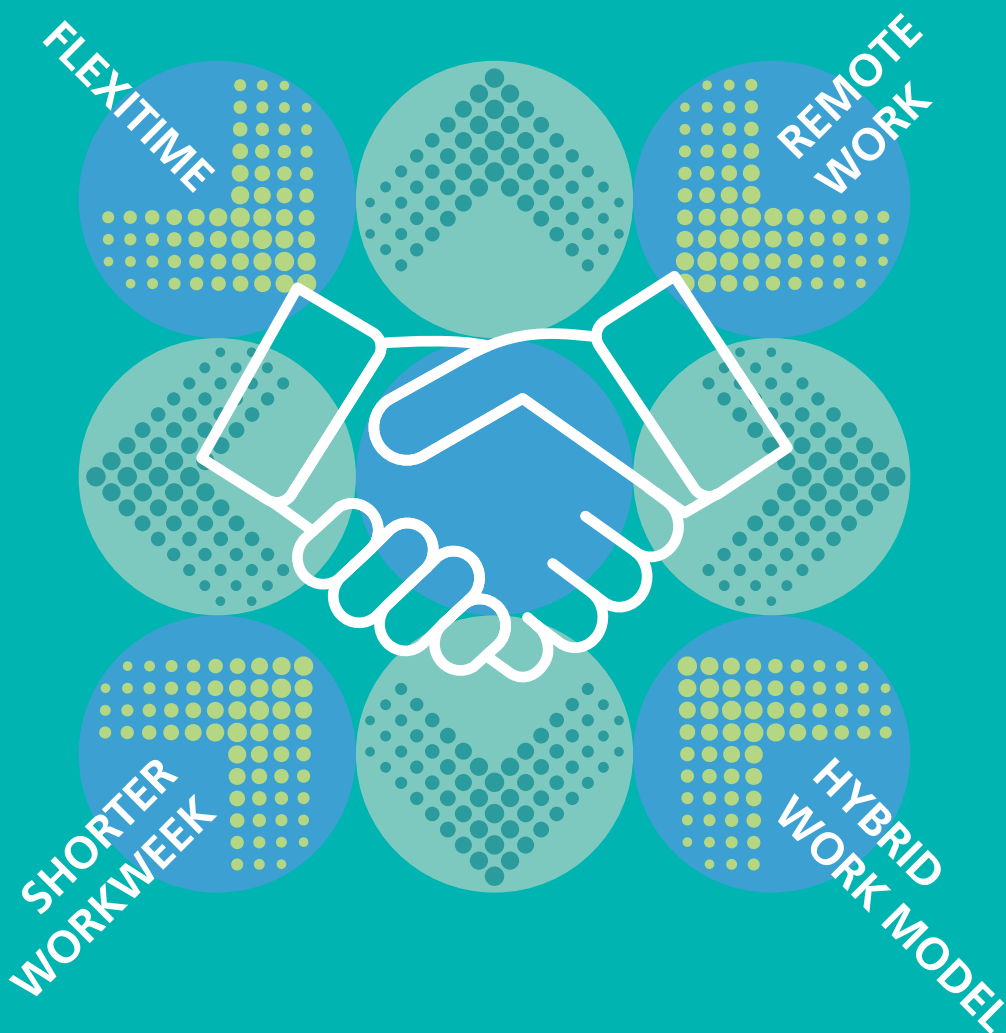


Flexible Work Arrangements

Win-win for Employers and Employees




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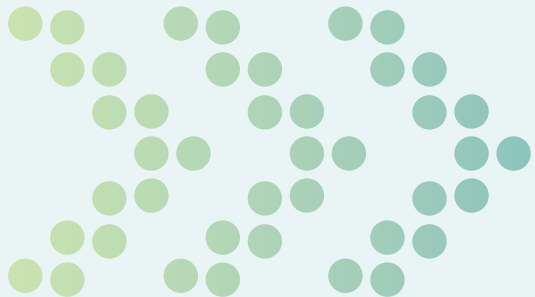



Foreword




With fast growing technology in a rapidly evolving society, diversified workplace patterns and models emerge with increasing number of employers adopting flexible work arrangements - flexitime, shorter workweek, remote work and “hybrid work model”, etc. to fulfill the needs of both enterprises and employees.

Employers adopting employee-oriented human resource management and family-friendly employment practices, including flexible work arrangements, not only help their employees achieve work life balance but also enhance their morale and efficiency, thereby strengthening productivity and competitiveness of the enterprises.




Concepts

Flexitime




Flexitime covers various flexible arrangements of starting times for work. Employers usually specify common core working hours and allow employees to freely adjust the starting times for work. To optimise working hour arrangements, some enterprises adopt staggered working hours with different starting times so that employees can choose their own working time periods to fit their needs.

Shorter workweek




Employers arrange shorter workweek for employees to work, for example, four to five days a week. With reasonable daily working hours, employees can have longer rest periods every week.

Remote work



Employees are allowed to work remotely outside office (such as from home) by telecommunications equipment like internet and telephone, etc. Not only business operations are maintained, employees are stimulated to think out of the box with creativity and new ideas.

“Hybrid work model”



Subject to the needs of individual enterprises and nature of work, employers may arrange different combinations of working days or hours for employees to work in office and remote office.

What are the benefits of implementing flexible work arrangements?



For employees



As employees can arrange working time on their own in accordance with their needs within an agreed scope with employers, they can achieve work-life balance more easily.



Time for commuting to and from workplaces during peak hours can be reduced.



Employees with family commitments can utilise the time to take care of their family members for relieving pressure from managing work and family life.



Employees can make use of the flexibility brought by flexible work arrangements for further studies or development of personal interests which are beneficial to both mental and physical health.

For employers

Employees entrusted with higher autonomy at work...

↑ Stronger sense of belonging to the enterprise



Greater work commitment when family needs of employees are addressed...

↑ Enhance efficiency of the enterprise



Employees can have more capacity for further studies ...

↑ Strengthen the competitiveness of the enterprise



Optimising working hour arrangements...

↓ Reduce employees' illnesses or accidents during work caused by insufficient rest



Arranging employees to work from home or remotely outside office...

↓ Reduce operating cost



Flexible work arrangements project good corporate image...

↑ Facilitate flexible operation of the enterprise
↑ Retain and attract talents for better competitive edge



How to implement flexible work arrangements?

1. Drawing up the policy

- ✓ Employers should formulate long-term policy on optimising working hour arrangements, and establish performance driven working culture which measures achievements but not number of hours worked only as far as feasible. Employers should review the operation modes of their enterprises, the nature of different positions and the terms of employment stipulated in employment contracts before introducing flexible work arrangements and ensure that the measures can be implemented without increasing the working hours.
- ✓ Department heads or managers should be consulted to help them understand the rationale of the policy and assist in assessing the impact of implementing relevant measures on operations, so as to formulate concrete and feasible proposals.
- ✓ As introducing flexible work arrangements may involve changes in employees' time for starting / finishing work and the number of working days, employers should fully consult their employees in advance despite there is no increase in working hours.

2. Formulating and implementing the measures

Employers should fully consult their employees in advance before formulating the relevant measures. Examples:



Working hours
arrangement and
overtime
compensation
method

Alternative
arrangements for
holidays

Work arrangements
and contingency
measures in times of
adverse weather
conditions^{Note}

Work arrangements
and compensation
methods in case of
emergencies

^{Note} For details, please refer to the “Code of Practice in Times of Adverse Weather and ‘Extreme Conditions’” published by the Labour Department



How to implement flexible work arrangements?

- After working out mutually agreed measures, the relevant agreements should be reflected in the employment contracts and staff handbooks as appropriate. If the arrangements for individual employees are different due to operational need, employers should explain clearly the applicable scope and posts.
- Employers must fulfill the statutory liabilities and requirements of the relevant ordinances, such as the Employment Ordinance, Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance, Employees' Compensation Ordinance, Minimum Wage Ordinance, Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance, Sex Discrimination Ordinance and Family Status Discrimination Ordinance, etc.





- To avoid disputes, employers should consider introducing or renewing the attendance record systems.
- To facilitate department heads or managers to manage and implement flexible work arrangements effectively, employers should arrange suitable training for them.
- Employers should conduct regular reviews and invite employees to provide feedbacks on such measures for fine-tuning.
- If full implementation of flexible work arrangements is not feasible due to operational constraints, employers may consider implementing such measures during off-peak season or by phases.



How to implement flexible work arrangements?

Below are some practical advice on formulation and implementation of measures:



i. Flexitime

In formulating flexitime measures, employers should work out such details as:

- the period of core working hours in which all employees must report for duty; and
- the specific rules governing the flexible starting and finishing times for work outside the core hours.



ii. Shorter workweek

- Employers could arrange shorter workweek (e.g. four-day workweek) best fits to their modes of operations and employees' preferences.
- Employers must arrange reasonable working hours to safeguard the occupational safety and health of employees.
- To facilitate employees to finish their work on time while having shorter workweek, employers could guide employees to identify clearer goals and objectives, set work priorities and streamline work process to enhance efficiency.

How to implement flexible work arrangements?



iii. Remote work

In formulating remote work measures, employers should take note of the following points:

- Define the circumstances under which the relevant mechanism will be activated, the actual work, break and meal times for employees when they are working at home or remotely and to avoid contacting employees in non-working hours to ensure that employees have adequate rest for their physical and mental health and to avoid disputes.
- Specify the channels for employers to communicate with employees and supervise their work during remote work arrangement (e.g. by email, telephone and communication apps, etc.).
- Provide all the necessary equipment (e.g. computer equipment with required software, etc.) and appropriate training to employees.
- Formulate guidelines and mechanisms for handling sensitive or confidential information, and provide employees with security measures for handling such information, such as anti-virus software, firewalls, computer encryption, etc.

- Examine and review the measures for implementing remote work arrangements.
- Fulfill the statutory liabilities and requirements of the relevant ordinances.



iv. “Hybrid work model”

- Employers should set out the number of days, hours, break and meal times etc. for each employee who will work in office or work remotely, and establish effective communication channels and methods to ensure close communication between employers, employees and teams.
- Employers should provide appropriate software and hardware support to facilitate communication between employees working in different modes for team discussions and large-scale meetings.

Conclusion

Mutual trust, Win-win situation, Shared returns



Mutual trust between employers and employees is the key to effective flexible work arrangements. While employers fully trust their employees, employees in return commit to their work whole-heartedly.



Employers can also introduce other employment practices having regard to the needs of the enterprises and employees to help employees fulfil their work and family responsibilities / personal pursuits, such as special leaves that are better than statutory requirements (e.g. care leave, parental leave, filial leave, compassionate leave and marriage leave, etc.), allowing employees who need to take care of their families / plan for further studies to change to work on part-time basis, arranging more than one person to share the work of the same post on need basis, etc.





In this everchanging society, new modes of flexible work arrangements may emerge in the future. Apart from mutual trust, employers and employees should be open-minded in face of changes. Employers should put themselves in employees' shoes when considering whether to adopt new measures.



Good human resource management and family-friendly employment practices are not restricted to large enterprises only. Small and medium-sized enterprises can also create heartwarming workplaces. Instilling more care, employers can always use their resources flexibly to enhance employees' work-life balance and build up good co-operative relationship between employers and employees, thus achieving win-win situation.



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