

# Flexitime

## Foreword

Family-friendly employment practices are good people management measures adopted by employers to help employees balance work and family responsibilities. These practices can generally be grouped into three categories, namely family leaves, flexible work arrangements and family support.

This leaflet introduces flexitime, a kind of flexible work arrangements. Apart from helping employers and employees better understand such practice, it also provides employers with practical reference in formulating and implementing relevant measures.

## What is flexitime ?

- Flexitime covers a number of flexible work arrangements, such as allowing employees to adjust their time of reporting and leaving work within certain limits. Some enterprises adopt a "staggered working hours" system to enhance working hour flexibility.
- Without altering the total number of working hours, employers generally define a period of core working hours within which employees must be in attendance at work. Outside the core working hours, different flexible work arrangements may be adopted. Examples of some commonly adopted patterns are as follows:

- ♦ **Employees may choose the time of reporting work within some designated period each day**

A company that adopts flexitime stipulates the core working hours to be 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. All employees are required to be in attendance during the core hours. To suit individual needs, employees who are originally scheduled to work from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm may opt to start working between 8:30 am and 10:00 am and to end their day between 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm, provided that the total number of working hours remain the same. Inter-departmental liaison and meetings are conducted within the core hours.





- ♦ **Employees may choose from a number of alternative starting/finishing times prescribed by the employer under a “staggered working hours” system**

Another enterprise allows employees to choose to follow one of the following three daily work schedules in addition to the normal office hours between 9:00 am and 5:30 pm:

- ♦ from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm;
- ♦ from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm; or
- ♦ from 9:30 am to 6:00 pm.

- Apart from the above examples, through candid dialogues with their employees, employers may adopt other employee-oriented good people management practices and flexitime arrangements that can cater for both the employees’ family needs as well as enterprises’ operational requirements.

## What are the benefits of implementing flexitime?

### Benefits for employees

- As employees may choose the time of reporting and leaving work within the agreed limits, they can devote their most productive hours to work and manage more effectively their work and family responsibilities.
- Employees with family commitments can devote more time before or after work to take care of family members and household matters. It helps relieve employees’ pressure in this regard and nurture harmonious family relationship.
- Working parents with young children can have easier access to childcare facilities and other related services.

- Working flexitime can relieve employees’ tension of travelling at rush hours.
- Employees with fewer family commitments may also benefit by having easier access to further studies, participation in social gatherings or developing personal interests.



### Benefits for employers

- Employees entrusted with higher autonomy at work will have a stronger sense of belonging to the enterprise. They will be more engaged and dedicated to work and will have better performance and productivity. These will contribute positively to the enterprise's efficiency and customer satisfaction.
- When employees can better utilize their time to handle family matters, the problem of tardiness and absenteeism can be reduced.
- Employees’ job satisfaction and loyalty will increase when they feel valued, respected and trusted. It helps reduce turnover as well as attract and retain talents.
- Flexitime enables homemakers and women joining/rejoining the labour force after giving birth. It helps release more manpower and facilitate recruitment through an enlarged talent pool.
- Such employee-caring measure will enhance the image of enterprises as good employers and give them an edge in attracting talents.

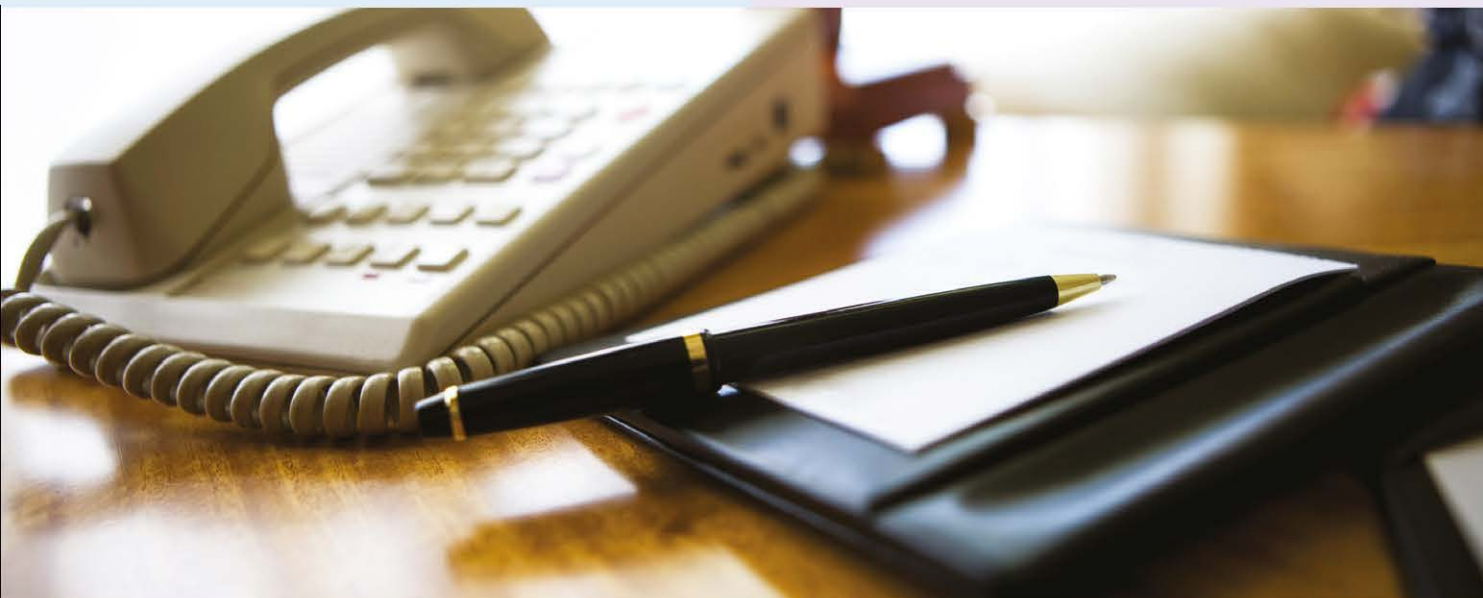
## How can flexitime be implemented?

### Drawing up the policy

- Active support of employers and the management as well as trust in employees are vital to the successful implementation of flexitime.
- Candid communication with employees to identify their needs prior to the formulation of the flexitime policy and proposal is vital to the design of appropriate measures.
- In drawing up concrete measures, employers should also consult all department heads to help them understand the rationale of such practice and request them to assess the impacts of flexitime on operations.
- If necessary, employers may consider introducing flexitime by phases so as to foster its smooth implementation.







## Formulating the measures

- In drawing up the flexitime arrangements, employers should work out such details as:
  - ◆ the period of core working hours within which employees must be in attendance at work;
  - ◆ the specific rules that govern the flexible reporting/leaving of work during non-core hours; and
  - ◆ positions that can apply flexitime if it is considered not feasible to extend such measures to all employees due to operational constraints.
- Introducing flexitime involves changes in employees' time of reporting/leaving work. Therefore, employers should fully consult their employees and obtain their consent before making such alterations. Any agreements made should be reflected in the employment contracts and staff handbooks as appropriate.

## Implementing the measures

- Upon formulation of the measures, applicable employees should be informed of the flexitime arrangements through circulars or other effective means. Employers should also explain to those employees not covered by the flexitime arrangement of the decision.
- Employers should brief all department heads of the operational details and encourage them to put forth suggestions to help solve any ensuing implementation problems.
- To avoid disputes, employers may consider renewing their attendance record system to clearly record the starting/finishing times of work and the number of hours worked each day by individual employees.
- Regular reviews should be conducted to refine and improve the relevant arrangements.

## Other arrangements

- If full implementation of flexitime is not feasible due to operational constraints, employers may consider other alternative means. For instance, some enterprises allow all employees enjoy flexitime twice a week or apply the measure to specific employees with particular needs. Enterprises can also consider implementing flexitime during off-peak season.
- To help employees handle the stress from work and take care of the family, employers may also bring in other flexible work arrangements such as five-day work week, compressed work week, allowing employees to leave early once a week, work from home as well as job sharing.

## Conclusion

Family-friendly employment practices are not restricted to large enterprises only. In fact, the investment needed for putting in place a flexitime system is limited. Spending some efforts on the working time arrangement can foster win-win for employers and their employees.



**Enquiries**

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