



THE FLEXIBLE WORKING REVOLUTION

The new ways of doing business that will radically increase productivity, cut costs and improve staff loyalty





INTRODUCTION

"Are you capitalising on the new way of working?", asks Sophie Hobson, editor



People bandy the word "revolution" around a lot these days. But what does it really mean?

A revolution is a society-wide shift. It happens suddenly

and changes the way we live forever. It is not hyperbolic to say that we are in the throes of a technology revolution. The internet, smartphones, WiFi, social media: these technologies have changed the way we interact with other human beings. They have opened up global networks that a few years ago you couldn't have dreamed of. They have enabled us to access information from the world over, in seconds, in the palm of our hands.

Now the revolution is sweeping through UK businesses. I'll bet a majority of your employees already use their phones to check emails, work from home, and log in to the business network while on holiday. Those are all examples of flexible working. The question is: are you capitalising on this new way of doing business?

Have you seen a significant uplift in productivity across your organisation? Have you managed to reduce overheads while feeling the benefit of more streamlined

IT and HR systems? Have you noticed a drop in staff churn?

If the answer to any of those questions is no, then this e-guide is for you. Because "flexible working" isn't just some buzz phrase for the marketing department to slip into internal comms. It is a new way of working that will help your business become more

productive and efficient.

The following pages will explain how, through real-life examples and in-depth insights brought to you in a digestible form. We want to help you make an informed decision about whether flexible working is right for your business, and demonstrate how to implement it.

That said, it's important that we put our cards on the table. We believe that a degree of flexibility can help every business. Flexible working for your business might mean something as simple as making sure that when employees use their smartphones for work, you have systems in place to secure confidential company data. It might mean embracing video conferencing technologies to reduce costly travel to meetings. It might even mean a more radical move towards a workforce that's freed from the desk-bound nine to five, and is assessed on output rather than presenteeism.

We understand that business managers can find it difficult to trust employees with new work devices or flexible hours. We know that not all modern technologies are right for every business. This e-guide will address those concerns too.

Whatever you decide, we hope that every last word of this e-guide helps you capitalise on the flexible working revolution.



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FOREWORD

"Employees are already working flexibly. Have you put the systems in place to ensure they do so securely?", asks Gordon Frazer, UK managing director, Microsoft



The way we work and live is changing. How often have you seen someone checking work emails on a train, or updating a PowerPoint

presentation from their laptop in a café? There's every chance you have done these things yourself. The average professional now uses four different digital devices throughout their day.

The ability for us to be connected to the business network anytime, anywhere, enables employees to become more productive than ever before. This is the ability to work flexibly: to work where you want, how you want, in the way that suits you best. Flexible working has impressive cost-cutting benefits for businesses of all sizes, as will be outlined in this e-guide. It can also boost staff loyalty and improve your carbon footprint in ways you will learn

about in the following pages.

But perhaps the most important point to make is that your workforce is almost certainly already working flexibly, whether that means using their smartphones for work or using video conferencing in place of meetings. We recently commissioned some research which found that 87% of employees had worked from home in the past month. Some 84% of organisations already have a remote workforce.

So it is now critical to put the systems and technologies in place to make sure flexible working is harnessed by your business securely, efficiently, and in the way that works best from both a management and employee perspective.

After all, the last thing you want is for an employee working remotely to accidentally leak confidential company data because there was no infrastructure in place to prevent that happening. With the right technologies in place, your business network will be safe wherever it's accessed from. We are proud to say that Microsoft Office 365 offers world-leading network security and data protection.

And when the right technology is coupled with the right practices, the flexible working revolution becomes truly powerful. Employees can collaborate on shared project documents across oceans. Expensive and timely travel to meetings is scrapped as video conferencing and online meetings via desktop sharing become the norm. HR, IT and administration become dramatically easier to manage. Productivity soars and employees' work/life balance is boosted. And to top it all, your IT costs are reduced.

Do you like the way the future looks? Then I've got some good news for you – the future is here today.



COMMENT

THE TECHNOLOGY TRENDS SHAPING THE FLEXIBLE WORKING REVOLUTION

By Andy Burton, chairman, Cloud Industry Forum



There are three growing trends in technology that will fundamentally redefine our culture and our approach to the role of technology in our lives.

The first trend is the notion of 'consumerisation': the concept whereby technology evolves first from a consumer market personal-use perspective, and then expands into use within commercial and government environments. Just look at the evolution of the mobile phone from a briefcase to a miniaturised multimedia PC in a little over 20 years – it is testimony to that trend. The richness of the mobile phone's content and capability is still often greater in our personal lives than we experience in our work lives - but that will change.

The second trend is the concept of 'contextualisation', which espouses that no matter what time of day it is, or where you are, you should be able to access services appropriate to your situation through three primary types of device: the workstation, the TV and the smartphone. We can expect an increasingly common user experience across these three devices through services delivered via the cloud.

The third trend is the global adoption rates of smart mobile devices. The UK is ranked as the 15th nation in the world for volume of mobile phones. It is humbling to think that the Philippines and Vietnam rank 14th and 16th. The scale and reach of smart devices transcend economic boundaries.

This tells two stories. The first is that in the UK we still have a dated culture that supports separate home and personal devices (we have 1.22 phones to people). The second is that third-world countries are getting rapid access to transformational technology.

The world is changing fast – it is being helped by greater dissemination of information, better collaboration through voice, data, meeting and video services, and more efficient anywhere-anytime access to services. Our children don't know any different; they take to technology as naturally as the proverbial duck to water.

London is at the heart of technical creativity innovation, a market leader. Our opportunity is to harness the power of technology to improve our lives and to innovate and drive better results for our businesses.

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THE FLEXIBLE WORKING REVOLUTION

Businesses across the UK are embracing the new trend that's helping them cut costs, attract talent and radically improve productivity.

Technology has changed the way we work forever. Gone are the days when office workers spent every working moment in a faceless cubicle, labouring in a vacuum. The rise of digital communication tools, collaboration apps and productivity suites, coupled with the benefits of the 'always on' nature of the web, has set the modern business free from its IT shackles.

Flexible working is the natural evolution of work in this brave new digital world. Today, businesses large and small can operate anywhere, anytime.

Today's way of working

So, what do we mean by flexible working? Essentially, it means freeing up you and your colleagues or employees to work in the way that suits you best. That can mean mobile working via your smartphone; working from different locations thanks to remote access to the business network; holding meetings through video conferencing; home-working; and flexi-time, which allows staff to tweak their working hours - coming in at 6am and

leaving at 2pm rather than the typical nine to five. Underpinning it all is the technology that helps your team work in the way that suits them best, from any location.

83%

Number of firms already offering flexible working to staff

Regus survey

Flexible working is not a new concept. A recent survey by workplace provider Regus shows that 83% of firms are already offering flexible working to staff. The concepts of hotdesking and video-conferencing have become common parlance in the language of business.

Smartphones and laptops are ubiquitous. Once the province of start-ups only, new enterprise tools and software have ensured that even huge, international corporations with thousands of staff can embrace flexible working practices.

In fact, more than 65% of the Fortune 100 are already deploying or piloting slate computers to help facilitate flexible working – and if it's good enough for the top listed firms in the world, it could be good enough for your business too.

Flexibility is key

The world's mobile worker population



will grow to nearly 1.2 billion by 2013, more than a third of the world's workforce. The benefits to business are manifold. By putting the technology and processes in place to facilitate flexible working, rigid and old-fashioned infrastructure can be overhauled, representing a significant cost saving – some 70% of IT budgets are currently spent on maintaining siloed and inflexible data centre equipment.

Flexible working can also be invaluable in both staff recruitment and retention, especially for those with family commitments. It is a legal obligation to consider flexible working requests from parents with young families, and the government has considered extending the law to include a wider demographic. Beyond the legal requirements, however, research by WorkingMums.co.uk shows that expectant or new parents are more likely to stay in employment if their employer offers some homeworking or flexibility. Beyond parents, flexible working can help keep work/life balance in check for all employees, as they have the right systems and technologies in place to better manage their time and workload.

1.2bn

Estimated worldwide mobile worker population by 2013

Microsoft

By slashing the time your staff spend travelling and by giving them the tools they need to work on the go when they do travel, dead time is converted back into productive enterprise.

Over time, these hours

add up. And it's not just businesses that benefit, but people too. The boost to morale and productivity generated by scrapping an employee's commute or their endless travel to and from meetings cannot be underestimated.

Are you ready to be flexible?

A cultural shift towards greater work/life balance has created a genuine need for a new way of working. And companies are crying out for ways to boost productivity while cutting costs. Add this to the growing awareness of the environmental and financial impact of endless travel for work, and all the signs point in a single direction: that flexible working is the way of the future.

Businesses can't afford to stay rigidly in the past. The businesses that will thrive today and tomorrow are those that can be truly flexible.





FLEXIBLE WORKING IN PRACTICE

“WHY AND HOW I SWITCHED TO FLEXIBLE WORKING”

Inn Public is a family-run pub business based in southeast London. Founder Michael Richards owns and manages three taverns: The Dartmouth Arms, The Dolphin, and The Duke. The business has been going since 2005. Then, last year, the small business server that was hosting all the pub’s sales data, staff information and menus began to fail.

“It was really on its last legs,” says Richards. “I needed to upgrade it but I also wanted to find a system that would help us share data across the three pubs and something that would let me manage them remotely.”

Richards was looking for a solution that would help him work flexibly, enabling him to check in on the business from anywhere, any time. He also wanted to be able to deal with any mission critical issues as and when they happened, rather than needing to be on site. “I run gastropubs and our menus are very important to us,” he explains. “If something needs updating, I don’t want to have to get up, get in my car, drive to the pub, boot up the computer and spend ages

“If something needs updating, I don’t want to have to get up, get in my car, drive to the pub, boot up the computer and spend ages making changes. I want to be able to do it from home.”



making changes and printing everything. I want to be able to do it from home."

But there was an issue with updating the technology. The pubs' 35 staff are mostly from the catering trade, and not very IT savvy. "We had to find something that was simple and intuitive to use," explains Richards. "My staff aren't particularly IT-literate, and don't need to be. I didn't want to have to waste valuable pub opening hours in training."

Luckily for Richards, he found a solution that suited both the business and his staff: Microsoft Office 365. "Most people have used Word and a few have used the Excel programme too," he says. "All they needed was a login and to know that a file that used to be here was now there. It took all of five minutes to get everyone up to speed."

For Richards, the system has brought a new level of transparency to Inn Public. He can check on sales figures in real time, and he also knows what time the pubs open and when staff have cashed up. He even knows when someone has come in to apply for a job, as all new applications are loaded into the system. "It has been brilliant for the business," he says.

Microsoft Office 365 has also improved communications at the firm. "Staff never used to check the work email before," says Richards. "But now that everything is in one window, the email is there next to the sales sheets, so staff are aware when new messages come through."

And upgrading to Microsoft Office 365 wasn't a massive capital outlay. Quite

the opposite, in fact. "All I needed was a couple of second-hand computers," laughs Richards. "It cost me all of £100. And I am on a pay-as-you-go contract with Office 365: it only costs me about a fiver per person. If I'd had to fork out for a new server and a whole load of new software, it would have been hugely expensive.

"It's just as fast as having files on a local

“All they needed was a login and to know that a file that used to be here was now there. It took all of five minutes to get everyone up to speed.”



server too," adds Richards. "But having our data stored in the cloud gives me peace of mind. When it's all held on one machine [as when you host it on your own server], you're far more likely to lose it yourself."

The new Microsoft Office 365 system has been running for nearly six months, "and it's never failed on us once," says Richards. "Wherever I am in the world I can check in on my business. A lot of the staff that work at the pub have to physically be in the pub, but I can work from anywhere."

Richards' message to other business owners considering upgrading to a flexible cloud-based solution? "Just get on with it! You'll never look back," he says.



5 REASONS TO CHOOSE FLEXIBLE WORKING

1

Always on, anywhere: ultimate productivity for your business

With flexible working, emails can be answered on the move or outside traditional office hours. According to a recent study by Microsoft, three out of four employees believe they don't need to be in the office to be productive.

By providing staff with the tools they need to work anywhere, you are maximising their productivity: say goodbye to long lead times on projects or slow responsiveness. Dead time spent travelling to and from different locations can be utilised to answer that urgent question or action that request.

And if you free up staff to work the hours that suit them best, they're most likely to work during the times they personally feel most productive. That makes their workload easier to bear and makes them more effective – not to mention the boost to their work/life balance you're facilitating.

Overall, you're putting in place the infrastructure to help create a workforce that is more engaged and motivated. They have more control over their own time, and are more productive as a result.

2

Revolutionising staff motivation and loyalty

The move to flexible working can engender a positive cultural shift in your workplace. Businesses that have embraced flexible working have reported increased staff performance and productivity as well as reduced sickness and absenteeism.

Flexible working is proven to help firms attract and retain staff. Research from Vodafone released this year shows that staff would put the opportunity to work from home, or a third place, higher than many conventional benefits such as bonuses. By freeing up your employees to work flexibly, they can ensure they get emails sent and work completed while on the move during their working day, rather than having to stay late in the office. By giving them the tools to work remotely, they can lead balanced social and family lives by choosing to complete projects from home or on the move when it suits them better.

This helps not only staff with family commitments, but those seeking opportunities for out-of-work learning, volunteering, exercising, travelling, or those with religious commitments.



3

Save money, save the planet

According to Forrester research, a company with 7,500 employees can save

some \$44m over three years just by making the switch to flexible working, reducing the annual IT spend by 20%. Reported savings of 25-50% in travel costs are the norm as employees cut the commute and work from home or choose to video conference rather than travel to and from meetings.

There are some unexpected benefits to switching to flexi-working too: did you know that by having a robust flexible-working enabled platform in place, it brings a new level of transparency to the business, bringing audit costs down by 10%?

These days, businesses can do good while maximising the bottom line. The energy saving that can be achieved by introducing flexible working means a smaller carbon footprint, a vital part of modern corporate social responsibility.

Over the course of a month of commuting, the average car emits 500.45 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. By allowing staff to work from home just one day a week, this figure is slashed by a fifth.

Saving the planet need not cost the earth: the return on investment of introducing Microsoft Office 365 stands at 3.1%, with a payback of 7.4 months.

4

A communication revolution

Whatever industry your business operates in, communication is integral

to success. Be it internal, with suppliers or with customers, it helps to keep the lines of communication open. Flexible working adds this string to your bow, because it means your employees can respond whenever they need to and when suits them best. Flexible working also helps with business continuity: projects can be picked up and passed on seamlessly when data is stored in the cloud. This helps you crush timelines on shared projects too.

In an international business, staff are far less likely to mind the early Asian and the late US conference calls when they are working at home. And if you provide them with the tools they need to work securely on the business network from the location of their choice, they can be more flexible with their personal time and weave work and social commitments together in the way that is easiest for them.

5

Capitalising on the way your employees prefer to work

95% of information workers already use a private device

for work. Many of your staff will already have adopted flexible working practices simply by using their smartphone for work purposes. This is not a trend, it is a revolution. And you can capitalise on it. By introducing systems and adopting flexible working practices that are streamlined with the way your workforce prefers to work, you are making their jobs easier.

So can your staff access the documents, resources and data that they need, wherever they are? Can they communicate effectively across multiple devices?



YOUR 10-POINT CHECKLIST

Before you can adopt a flexible working strategy at your organisation, there are a few things to consider. So we've put together a 10-point checklist to make sure you have all the right elements in place.

1.

Understand who would benefit from flexible working and which practices would be most relevant to your organisation. Do not limit flexible working to senior members of staff. Sales teams who are always on the road, for example, could really utilise that travel time. In order for flexible working to work, there must be a holistic roll-out across the organisation, with buy-in across management.

3.

Make sure that you choose a single, robust platform that can be employed across the whole organisation – ideally one that can even be accessed by third parties should the need arise. The point of flexible working is not to introduce disparate, siloed pockets of software, but to provide a solution that works for everyone. Do your homework, and pick the best overall solution for your business.

2.

Consider training to help staff understand the uses and benefits of flexible working. Workshops are a good way to share learnings. Ensure that any staff affected by the introduction of flexible working understand the changes to their working habits and how to get the most out of new systems.

4.

Ensure that flexible workers are contactable through a range of methods. Email, phone and IM should all be available. By including an instant messaging solution like Microsoft Lync, you allow users to see other users' status, be that online, busy, or in a meeting, or away. This helps set up a transparent system of flexible working, without compromising trust.



5.

Assess the needs of your employees to understand which devices they require. If their off-site duties are mainly email-related, a smartphone or laptop could suffice. If you want to harness the benefits of video conferencing, they'll need a [webcam](#) and microphone. If staff need to use Microsoft Office remotely, then a solution like Office 365 allows complete access on the move.

6.

It's crucial to feel you can trust employees to be efficient when you're freeing them up to work in a more independent way. Perhaps the best route into this trust is by measuring output rather than time spent on any given task. If you set and measure performance against clear objectives, and your staff achieve what you expect, you'll grow less concerned about exactly how many hours they spent on each task.

7.

Understand the importance of choosing a scalable solution. Flexible working is only effective if you can scale up and down as the organisation requires. Some offerings, like Microsoft Office 365, allow you to pay as you go and grant licenses per user to keep costs down.

8.

Put systems in place to make it quick and simple for an employee to request flexible working. It's all very well to offer it in theory, but if the HR process for signing off the request is lengthy, that could be a significant barrier to uptake.

9.

Monitor the effectiveness of your flexible working strategy. This includes measuring the cost savings, assessing the productivity of staff and encouraging managers to look at outputs. During the first month of a new flexibility scheme, consider using a survey to gauge workers' responses. You can then fine-tune the system to maximise productivity, and check that everyone fully understands the benefits and capabilities of their new technologies.

10.

Once you have your flexible working strategy in place, sing about it. Send newsletters, update your website and post on your internal notice board. What better way to show that you're a responsible employer to staff, customers and suppliers? You can prove that, rather than just doing the bare minimum to meet legal requirements, you are going the extra mile for your staff. It should help boost team morale too.

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WHAT YOU'VE LEARNT FROM THIS GUIDE...

- › Flexible working means freeing up your workforce to do business in ways that suit them better
- › Flexible working is revolutionising UK business: 83% of firms already offer flexible working to staff
- › It is a legal obligation to consider flexible working requests from parents with young families
- › Flexible working can help you cut costs, boost staff loyalty, streamline IT and HR systems, reduce your carbon footprint and radically improve productivity across your organisation
- › The majority of UK employees are already working flexibly to some extent on a personal basis
- › It is vital to get the right flexible working systems and technologies in place to secure your confidential business data when employees work remotely
- › Flexible working technologies include: smartphones; laptops; the cloud; video conferencing; collaboration tools; and complete systems that will unify all your business projects, communications and network
- › If you decide flexible working is right for you, ensure staff are given proper training on how to get the most out of new technologies
- › Monitor and analyse output and uptake after the move to flexible working to ensure systems are working as they should

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