

# **FLEXIBLE HIRING: A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS**



# How flexible hiring can help your business

- **Talent attraction:** Nearly 9 in 10 UK employees want to work flexibly<sup>1</sup>. Many of them will ONLY apply for a job where this is possible. Through flexible hiring you will reach out to this audience, which includes people who need to care for sick or disabled dependents, as well as parents and several other groups.
- **Diversity and the gender pay gap:** Flexible hiring will help to solve these growing business concerns, by making jobs at all levels more accessible to women.
- **Employer brand:** Flexible working has become a key employee benefit in recent years – second only to salary<sup>2</sup>. Promoting your openness to flex, at the point of hire, will help make your organisation a welcoming place where people are keen to come and work.

## Why is it important for the workforce?

- Only around 1 in 10 jobs with salaries of £20K+ FTE are advertised as being open to flexible working options<sup>3</sup>. As 9 in 10 candidates want flexibility, there just aren't enough jobs to go round.
- The mismatch of supply and demand means that 1.5 million people are trapped in flexible jobs they're over-qualified for<sup>4</sup>. They have traded salary for flexibility, and employers are missing out on their skills.
- Carers, especially women, are disproportionately disadvantaged, as large numbers have historically worked part-time.

<sup>1</sup> Flexible Working: A Talent Imperative, Timewise, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Sources include: HSBC research, 2017 <https://www.personneltoday.com/pr/2017/12/flexible-working-could-be-more-important-to-employees-than-a-pay-rise-in-2018-says-adrian-lewis-activ-absence/> and research by Total Jobs, 2016: <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/job-flexibility-more-important-salary-quarter-jobseekers-britain-1543978>

<sup>3</sup> Timewise Flexible Jobs Index, Timewise, 2017

<sup>4</sup> How Flexible Hiring Could Improve Business Performance and Living Standards, Timewise for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016



# How to become a flexible hirer

## 1. Check you're thoroughly comfortable with flexible working

Before you can begin to hire flexibly, there needs to be wide acceptance of flexible working throughout your organisation, and experience of seeing it work well in practice. You have to believe that flexible working is good for your team, and good for business. You also need to be used to designing jobs with flexibility built in.

### Ideas for action

- If your business is still in the early stages of accepting flexible working, read up on [why it matters](#).
- If success is a little patchy across the organisation, take a look at our guide to [managing flexible workers](#).

## 2. Gain leadership buy-in to flexible hiring

To drive change and begin offering flexible working at the point of recruitment, you will need to ensure your organisation is fully supportive from the top down. A shift towards flexible hiring will involve line managers as well as your talent team, and leadership engagement is key to getting buy-in from everyone.

When you present the business case to your leadership team, it's important to define clearly how it can support talent attraction and also career progression of current flexible employees; and how the failure to hire flexibly creates a sticking point in fully realising all the business benefits of flexible working.

### Ideas for action

- Run a leadership workshop - our Timewise consultancy team can help you with this.
- Secure an internal senior champion who will promote the benefits of flexible hiring internally.
- Identify employees who were hired on a flexible basis and have proved successful in their roles. Present them as case studies to your executive team.



### 3. Adapt your recruitment process to enable flexible hiring

The change is simply that, as a business, you are saying you are open to considering flexible working requests at the point of hire from candidates, as well as for existing employees. So you are not waiting for the qualifying 6 month period before listening to requests. As with existing employees, stating that you are 'open' to flexible working does not commit you to granting a specific request from a candidate.

The change may be simple, but it needs to be embedded in your recruitment processes before you can begin to offer it to candidates. Each job needs to be properly assessed to ensure managers are satisfied that it can be worked flexibly, and in what ways. Guidance needs to be in place on how to respond to flexible working requests made during the application and interview phase. Should interviewers proactively raise the possibility with all candidates they meet? If not, then at what point will the organisation formally respond to requests from candidates? At the end of the first interview? At offer negotiation? Whenever a candidate raises it?

#### Ideas for action

- Test the waters within one department, introducing flexible hiring where there's already successful use of flexible working amongst current employees.
- Alternatively, you could start with some roles that are hard to fill. If the offer of flexibility brings in extra candidates, it will help build the case for rolling out.
- Develop guidance for your recruitment team to prompt line managers to consider flexibility for each new vacancy.
- In recruitment guidance, include advice on how and when to respond to candidate requests for flexibility. Better still, encourage managers to pro-actively introduce the conversation about flexibility as part of the interview process.
- Ask Timewise for help - we can supply case studies from other employers, describing how they managed the transition.

## 4. Tell candidates that you're open to flex

Once your recruitment process is ready, the final step is to tell candidates that you'll consider hiring flexibly - in your job adverts, on your careers website and through any recruitment agencies you use. This a fairly easy step, but you need to develop messaging that is honest and helpful. There are also a few potential pitfalls to watch out for.

### Ideas for action

- Read our guide on [how to develop your flexibility message in your job adverts](#).

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