



# GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

---

Increasing workplace flexibility and  
boosting performance

# The role of managers

Managers are critical enablers of workforce flexibility, serving as the bridge between policy and practice. It is they who define the parameters and expectations for flexible work.

Even the most employee-oriented managers are likely to have concerns about managing and measuring employee performance outside of standard work hours.

Traditional performance management is grounded in compliance and process. As businesses mature, they should consider that individual effort and external factors create environments that help staff to thrive.

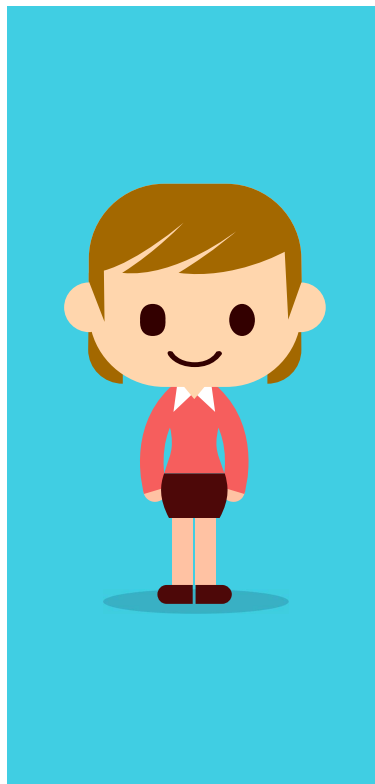
The questions below will help managers consider where they might channel their efforts to integrate flexible work into their teams, and the broader business.

## DEFINE THE PARAMETERS AROUND FLEXIBLE WORK

- ❓ Are managers keeping their staff and teams updated on the evolving context and what this means for how, when and where staff can work?
- ❓ Have managers defined the parameters and expectations for flexible work?
- ❓ Are your people clear on the way they need to work under flexible working arrangements?
- ❓ Have you defined the outcomes and outputs required to enable a clear rhythm for flexible workers?

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

- ❓ Are staff motivated to support, and engage in new ways of working?
- ❓ Are strategies in place to maintain the engagement of individuals with flexible work arrangements? For example –have you ensured that people who do work flexibly are included in team activities and continue to receive rewards, training and opportunities for promotion?
- ❓ Are the actions of managers providing staff with positive role models for flexible working arrangements?



## ENGAGE IN REGULAR AND CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION

- ❓ Are managers, teams, and individuals checking in to see if flexible working arrangements are effective for the individual, manager, and team?
- ❓ Are managers and teams sharing information about the work they are doing and how they are progressing tasks and activities?
- ❓ Have managers established regular conversations with individuals to discuss performance expectations in a constructive and ongoing manner? Not passive-aggressive emails or the annual performance review

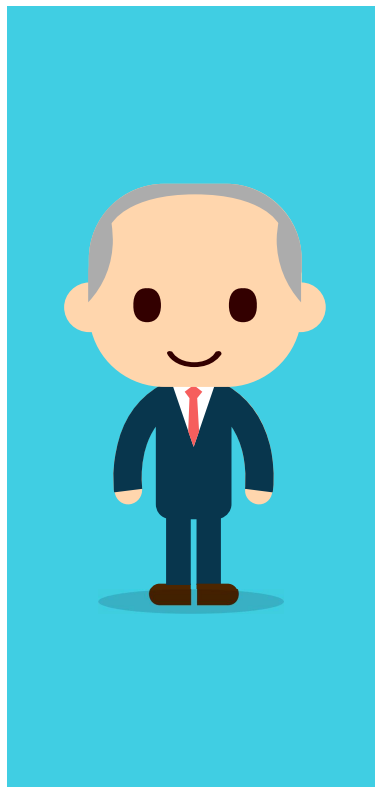
The questions below will help managers consider where they might channel their efforts to integrate flexible work into their teams, and the broader business.

## PUT THE RIGHT SYSTEMS IN PLACE

- ? Do managers, teams, and staff have access to the systems, platforms, and technology they need to support them to work flexibly? Home based internet, smart-phones, project management software, and helpful computer programs such as Microsoft Teams and Google docs allow employees to maintain contact regardless of where they are located.
- ? Are there effective channels for information sharing to enable the handover of work and communication across timeframes and locations?

### FLEXIBLE WORK BY DESIGN

- ? Is there an even distribution of workload to ensure employees are not underutilised or over-worked?
- ? Have you considered re-designing work to enable greater flexibility? When you break jobs down into component parts, it is likely you will find tasks that lend themselves to time and place flexibility.
- ? Have managers considered team-based approaches rather than responsibility for projects resting with a single individual? Team-based approaches allow work to be completed without all members being present.



### CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

- ? Do staff or individuals have the skills and capabilities to deliver outcomes via flexible arrangement? If you have an employee who you believe requires more structure and hands-on guidance, talk to them about a trial period, and consider adjusting accordingly.
- ? Do staff and managers have the skills to utilise technology to maintain connection and coordinate actions?

# Questions to ask when considering flexible working arrangements

Below are a series of questions managers should ask themselves before accepting or rejecting flexible work arrangements.

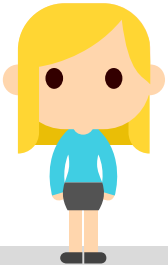


- Do I need to grant a flexible working arrangement to this employee as per the Fair Work Act, award, or agreement?
- How appropriate is the flexible work arrangement that has been proposed?
- Has the employee made it clear what they are hoping to seek from this arrangement?
- How long will the arrangement be in place?
- Can work objectives be met another way if the flexible work arrangement is put in place?
- How will the arrangement impact on the current work team and its priorities?
- Does the request require a level of resourcing that can be accommodated?
- How will workload issues be covered – does this present an opportunity to develop other team members?
- Does the employee have face-to-face client contact, and if so, how can this arrangement be considered without disruption to the service provided?
- Will the proposed flexible working arrangement adequately address the employee concerns, and reason for seeking a flexible work arrangement?
- Will the employee's arrangement impact their participation in important team events?
- Do you have suggestions for alternative arrangements that may suit the employee and the work team if you can't accommodate their original request?
- Does the arrangement require a contract variation, or can it be accommodated informally?  
How will the arrangement be documented?
- How often will we review this arrangement to ensure it is working?

# Handling difficult conversations

There may be times when you have to handle difficult conversations relating to flexible working, and that's okay. Leading discussions that enable multiple, contrasting perspectives is how problems are solved, and performance improves. Below are some examples of possible conversations around flexible work, and some suggested responses.

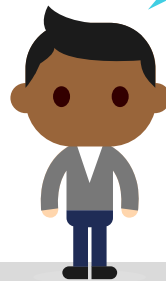
"I'm sick, but I can work from home."



### RESPONSE

Remind employees that they should use sick leave when they are sick as a general rule. However, there are times when an employee may be well enough to do some work at home, and this is when to exercise judgment.

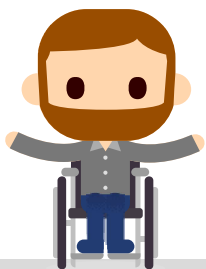
"I want to work from home on Wednesdays, like Kevin does. It's not fair he gets to and I don't."



### RESPONSE

Remind employees that context does matter. Applying a policy fairly doesn't mean everyone has the same outcome. Instead, offer to talk to them about their needs and desires and how best you and the team can accommodate them.

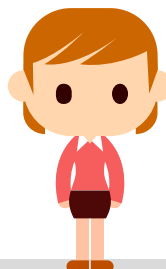
"I work from home on Wednesdays, but there is a team meeting scheduled Wednesday afternoon."



### RESPONSE

Remind the employee that flexible working is about give and take. Making inflexible arrangements around flexible work does not work. Sometimes team events on flexible working days is unavoidable. Discuss whether remotely dialling is an option and the possibility of scheduling the next team meeting on another day.

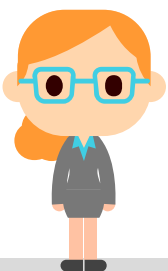
"I want to work from home but will need another computer to do this."



### RESPONSE

Response to requests for infrastructure will depend on the context of your business. Have a conversation about why they think they need another computer. When you understand the reason for the request, you will be more equipped to help them find a meaningful solution.

"I'd like to work a compressed week. I could easily fit five days work into four."



### RESPONSE

Talk to the employee about the reality of compressed work. Ask if they think they can do the job effectively in four days without impacting on their colleagues and the businesses and discuss whether they will be willing to flex and adapt as required.

"I know I received a poor performance rating, however I want to work from home 1 day a week"



### RESPONSE

Remember that poor performance should not preclude flexible working. Have a discussion about their performance and how they plan to address it. Consider trialling a flexible working arrangement with clear goals that they need to achieve.