

# Do you provide flexible working conditions as a retention strategy?

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Redundancy is a word getting a lot of publicity at present and after listening to Peter Townsend from the Canterbury Employers Chamber of Commerce it will not be a word that goes away easily in the present economic environment. Feedback from Peter after he attended the Economic Job Summit noted two main themes - working capital and job retention.

## Job Retention

The cost of redundancy can be large. It takes time and the process is generally negative and can affect the productivity levels of your whole team. Your company will lose valuable knowledge. There is a risk of an employee taking Personal Grievance action, which is also time consuming and costly. There are recruitment and training costs when things start to pick up and there can be role on effect to the community.

A lot of businesses are looking at ways to avoid or minimise redundancies here a few options to consider:

- Nine day working fortnight
- Four day week
- 30 hour week
- Weeks extra leave in lieu of a pay rise
- Encouraging unpaid leave
- Reducing salary
- Stopping overtime
- Redundancy

Talk with your employees; you may be surprised by their ideas and thoughts.

Flexible work can benefit employees, employers, the economy, communities and the environment. It is about employers and employees having the opportunity to make changes to the hours they work (over a day, a week or over the year), the times and days they work or where they work. It is also about how careers are organised, how transitions in and out of work are managed, and how flexible working operates in the workplace so that employees and businesses benefit.

Flexible working hours have become an increasingly important part of the current work environment from both the employer and employee perspectives. One challenge with various flexible arrangements is ensuring the right calculation and recording of hours for payroll.

Remember any changes to working conditions must be in consultation with your employees – make sure you follow the right processes and update your employment agreements.

The Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act 2007 came into effect on 1 July 2008. This gives employees the ability to ask for variations to their working hours. Now the tides have turned it is the employers asking their employees to consider more flexible working arrangements – don't be afraid to talk to your employees about various viable options.

The following are definitions of flexible working arrangements which have come from the Department of Labour and can be accessed on their website: <http://www.dol.govt.nz/worklife/flexible/definitions.asp>



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## Definitions of Flexible working arrangements

Types of flexibility	Potential benefits of flexibility	Examples of approaches to flexibility
<b>FLEXI TIME</b>		
<p>Flexi hours Options that allow employees to vary their work hours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improves efficiency if work schedules match employees' most productive hours</li> <li>Gives employees more control over scheduling personal responsibilities during the workday</li> <li>Allows for commuting outside of peak rush hours</li> <li>Retains employees who need time off to care for dependents or to meet other responsibilities outside of paid work</li> <li>Expands labour pool</li> <li>Brings broader range of knowledge, skills and experience</li> <li>Provides an option for employees who want to reduce their hours, but whose jobs cannot be done on a part time basis</li> </ul>	<p>Flexi time / Adjusted hours – employees work for an agreed total number of 'core hours' and choose when their working day begins and ends.</p> <p>Core hours – hours (for example, 10am to 4pm) during which employees working flexitime must be at work.</p> <p>Staggered hours – different start and finish times for employees in the same workplace.</p> <p>Time in lieu / Time banking – any extra hours worked are compensated for by paid time off.</p> <p>Flexi breaks –stopping for breaks at times that suit the employee's particular workload.</p> <p>Part time / Reduced hours / Job sharing / Job splitting – these options mean that employees work less than full time hours. To achieve this, the job is often redesigned and responsibilities split between a number of part time employees.</p> <p>As needed hours / On call / Casual – employees are on call and work hours as needed, either at home or in the workplace.</p>
<p>Flexi weeks Options that allow employees to vary their weekly work pattern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improves productivity if some work can best be accomplished during quieter times of the day/week</li> <li>Allows for more days off</li> <li>Decreases the number of days employees commute</li> <li>Allows for commuting outside of peak rush hour</li> </ul>	<p>Compressed week – weekly full time hours are worked over a shorter time period.</p> <p>Weekday/weekend swap – employees swap working on a weekday for working on a weekend day.</p> <p>Shift self-selection – employees contribute to development of shift work schedules and choose own shifts.</p> <p>Weeks on/weeks off – working one or several weeks and taking one or several weeks off.</p>
<p>Flexi year Options that allow employees to vary their yearly work pattern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides options for employees to take limited or extended time off from work to manage various family and personal responsibilities</li> </ul>	<p>Term-time working – working during the school terms and taking paid or unpaid time off during school holidays.</p> <p>Annualised hours – an agreed number of hours worked on a yearly rather than a weekly basis.</p>

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Buyable leave – employees exchange an agreed reduction in salary for extra periods of leave over a specified period.

**FLEXI PLACE**

<p>Flexi location Options that allow employees to work from locations other than their designated workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers alternative to relocation</li> <li>• Expands labour pool geographically</li> <li>• Reduces office space and associated costs</li> <li>• Accommodates employees with disabilities</li> <li>• Reduces or eliminates commuting</li> <li>• Provides an environment with fewer workplace distractions</li> <li>• Allows employees to work during their “personal best time”</li> </ul>	<p>Tele-working / Tele-commuting / Home-working / Remote-working – all these options involve working from home or another location outside of the workplace on either a full or part time basis.</p>
<p>Flexi worksite Options that allow employees to work from different locations within the workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages collaboration across work-groups and project teams</li> <li>• Reduces permanent office space and associated costs</li> </ul>	<p>Hot desking – temporary use of a workstation.</p>

**FLEXI CAREER**

<p>Flexi career Options that allow employees to move in and out of the workforce and structure their career around other interests/responsibilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expands labour pool</li> <li>• Provides options for gradual return to work after parental or other leave</li> <li>• Allows gradual entry into retirement</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for cross-training and skill enhancement</li> </ul>	<p>Career break / Sabbatical – extended periods of leave that are normally unpaid.</p> <p>Work transition – provides opportunities for employees to make changes in their work hours, location, or job responsibilities. For example, moving to a less demanding job when approaching retirement.</p> <p>Phased retirement – hours of work are progressively reduced until full retirement is reached at a specified date.</p> <p>Phased return / Gradual return – hours of work are progressively increased until a full complement of full or part time hours is reached at a specified date. Often used by parents returning from parental leave.</p> <p>Self managed work – employees work in their own way, often without direct supervision, towards an agreed goal.</p> <p>Job rotation / Role rotation – employees move between two or more jobs so they can cross-train and develop a wider variety of skills.</p>
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