

How Flexible Agreement-Making Can Benefit Your Business

Employees today are looking for more flexible and supportive workplaces.

They are more prepared to display loyalty to a business that places a high value on lifestyle balanced and family-friendly practices. This is often a decision-making factor for accepting employment and remaining with an employer.

WorkChoices offers employers the opportunity to adopt innovative and collaborative agreement-making policies incorporating best practice work, family policies and adaptable workplaces. As an employer you will be in a stronger position to appoint the best person for the job which will in turn result in higher retention rates, better morale, increased return rates from parental leave and higher productivity.

Agreement-making opportunities - some initiatives of a supportive workplace/management culture

Considerations could include:

a wider range of flexible working time, including:

teleworking (see below)

quality opportunities for part-time work

job sharing

ability for employees to control when and where they work

regularity of hours

averaging of work hours

reduction/ increase in workloads/ hours

flexible starting and finishing times and locations

flexible working days

seasonal work clauses

ability to work from home following operation or accident

more 'father-friendly' provisions

wider range of flexible leave options

ability and ease to go home on time

child and other dependant care arrangements

arrangements for emergency or temporary leave

performance bonuses and productivity payments to increase remuneration

salary increases linked to individual performance appraisals

annual bonuses based on the business' net profit

salary sacrifice options - eg. a car's fuel allowance, travel allowance, payment of education fees

paid maternity and paternity leave

employee support schemes

exemptions from overtime, shift work and weekend work for employees with particular needs and family/carer's responsibilities

reimbursement for expenditure on health and well-being e.g. personal development classes; employer funded flu vaccinations; employee assisted programs (EAP) and employer funded confidential counselling programs; commitments to preventing and managing workplace stress; ability to use sick leave for preventative medical treatment or advice; wage support for extended periods of illness or injury

commitments to increase skills through training and development

study assistance and reimbursement of the cost of study and training

Teleworking – A flexible workplace option for some businesses

Teleworking can be a sensible and flexible workplace arrangement for both staff and the business.

Teleworking is work undertaken, either on a full-time, part-time or occasional basis, by an employee or self-employed person, which is performed away from the traditional office environment, usually from home. A 'teleworker' requires access to communication and computer equipment and communicates with the workplace through e-mail and the Internet or a private network.

This working arrangement offers a number of possibilities for new, innovative and beneficial agreement-making arrangements and some real benefits for both employers and employees.

Telework offers the potential to remove the traditional constraints of location and time. It can satisfy the changing expectations of workers seeking flexible and better balanced lifestyles; and facilitates greater workforce participation especially among groups that find it difficult to participate in the traditional workforce. This includes people with disabilities, mature age workers, carers, and workers in rural and regional areas.

Benefits

For business:

enhanced business practices;
improved financial viability through increases in productivity;
reduction in certain operating costs (such as real estate, parking and travel); and
greater capacity to attract and retain quality staff (especially in tight labour markets).

For workers:

improvements in work–life balance; and
enhanced ability to balance work and family responsibilities by saving time travelling to and from work and having greater
flexibility in their working hours.

Socially and economically:

addresses issues of the ageing workforce and skill shortages in certain industries;
can encourage greater regional development and renewal; and
can reduce the environmental impact of traffic congestion and vehicle emissions.

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