

Management Forum – Flexibility in the Workplace

June 24, 2009 – 1:00pm – 4:30pm
Arbutus/Queenswood, Cadboro Commons

Interview Matrix Exercise

GENERAL: What is your experience (so far) positive and/or negative with flexibility in the workplace?

Employees

Positive

- Empowering – take responsibility and feel more committed
- Felt self-assurance
- Led to mutual trust and respect
- Allowed opportunity to work towards personal goals in work place
- Culture of flexibility creates teamwork – use it when you need it
- Better work/life balance
- Likes PEA structure as its not formalized and allows for flexibility

Negative

- Guilt trips
 - Type A personalities
 - Some feel preference given to reason (e.g. If you have children)
 - No flexibility available
 - Boundaries as to when person available.
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Managers

Positive

- Able to take classes during work day
- Some had to make up time if classes during workday
- Cut down on employee absenteeism stats.
- Higher productivity
- Improved morale
- Healthier/happier employees
- Can adjust work hours to accommodate employees and take advantage of strengths
- Challenge to be organized and have clear expectations – eliminates lots of problems
- Budget flexibility

Negative

- Not necessarily applied equally – perception of inequity
- Effected work quality and morale
- Employee quit because they were enabled to be flexible (e.g. Meet requirements) of job sharing
- Lost man hours due to denying flexibility
- Cross-departmental inequities

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- Air of entitlement, expectation, not grateful – affects tone in workplace
- Minor point – inaccessibility to staff when you need them
- Issues around compensation and union restrictions
- Group dynamics meant that managers may have to adjust how they provide flexibility.

Question #1: EXPERIENCE

What is your experience so far (positive and/or negative) with flexibility in the workplace?

Positive

Manager

- Recognition that can get the job done
- Reduces stress

Employee

- More productive and ability to focus
- Work/life balance
- Meet personal needs
- Cross training and career pathing
- Most had experienced flexibility in the workplace
- Flexibility more challenging in small departments or in specialized positions
- Change in work times can increase hours of operation and greater service for the university
- Accommodation = fixed, more formal
- Fairness to all does not mean same for everyone
- Most have experienced some flexibility at UVIC

Negative

Manager and Employee combined

- Administering flexibility hours
- Lack of support via \$ for backfill or coverage
- Measuring productivity can be challenging
- Impact on team members
- Hard to trust
- Collective agreements can get in the way (perception)
- Meeting operational requirements
- Some negative experience on campus not getting flexibility when asked
- Communication to others can be challenging with varied schedules
- There needs to be uniform usage across all union people, so it does not impact departments from doing business. Some departments are down to one person at least

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one third of the time; there needs to be full time people to meet department requirements.
What the union pays in LWOP they could stand to have a few more full time people.

Question #2 – OPTIONS to consider for UVIC

- a) What are some realistic options that might work in your workplace?
- b) Which of those options would you like to try? (as a manager and as an employee)

(Disclaimer: We believe UVIC is already doing a lot of these --- good on us! We combined a) and b) because we want to try all of them.

Ratings	Options that might work in your workplace
19	Flexible work hours
17	Compressed work week
17	Telecommuting
15	Birthdays off (paid)
15	Paid study / ProD leave
14	Work from home
12	Varied start and end time / setting own hours
9	Paid time to volunteer (internal and external)
8	Job-exchanges (internal and external)
7	Deferred salary
5	3 (?) paid discretionary days/year (no questions asked)
5	Bank vacation/CTO for prolonged time off
4	Flexibility for community service –job sharing
4	Recognized back-up coverage
3	Job-share with equal benefits for both
3	Seasonal time off
2	Gradual return to work after any leave
2	Paid job shadowing / job trials (internal/external)
2	Self-funded leave – leave without pay
2	Reduced hours/part-time
2	Cross-training scheduling availability
1	Structure work home like a “contract” (i.e. get paid for job completion rather than # of hours)
1	More hours in peaks; less hours in troughs
1	Treat pets like children for purposes of time off
1	Flex time / days
0	Seasonal work (i.e. summers off)
0	“split shifts”
0	Banking stat holidays
0	More part-time work - staggered hours/operation
0	Use vacation to fund reduced hours
0	Short notice for leave

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Question#3 – COSTS & BENEFITS – considering the UVic Culture

- a) What are some of the benefits you see in creating greater flexibility in the workplace?
(combined ratings: as a manager and as an employee)

Ratings	Some Benefits – as a manager and employee combined
17	Fairness and equity
16	Operational requirements needs to mesh with support
15	Happier, engaged employees who want to be at work
13	Feeling valued and trusted
13	Service demands of clients
11	Retention / recruitment
10	More productive
7	Some people more productive early/late in the day, or benefit from a day “away”
7	More engaged
7	Budgetary concerns to cover absences
6	Give others an ability to learn new skills (cross-training)
6	Work-life balance
4	Positive environmental – transportation and shared office space/resources
4	Healthier – less stress
4	Hiring a more diverse workforce
3	Happier – job satisfaction
3	Regulatory requirements : WCB, insurance
2	Create better communication in workplace to make sure all responsibilities are covered
2	Opportunities to stay employed
1	Best person first vs. person who fits in 9-5 structure (larger pool of potential applicants)
1	Flexibility for scheduling
1	Provides opportunities
1	Misperceptions about negative implications prevents flexibility
1	Difficulty communicating as a team in job sharing, etc. situations
0	Loyalty
0	Have more control over life – you are a person
0	Creative – innovative
0	Recognition of learning styles
0	All collective agreements (including F/A)
0	Culture in the office (bureaucracy)

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- b) What are some of the costs/cautions you see in creating greater flexibility in the workplace?
(as a manager and as an employee)

Ratings	Costs / Cautions
	As a manager and Employee combined
16	Taking advantage of it (must be based on trust)
11	Managing performance / expectations when off schedule
5	Consistency between employees who request it (precedence)
4	Respect for flexible schedule by manager and colleagues
1	Compressed schedule sometimes means less of valuable downtime
1	Admin costs go up for different configurations (booking meetings)
1	Living “flexible” agreement subject to change
0	Additional management time required (10%)
0	Tasking others with more duties – changes to recruitment and retention
0	Employee misses out on things (sight / mind)
	As a Manager
6	Right vs. privilege
5	Are they working?
3	Fairness perception
1	Financial costs – job sharing
1	Maintaining workload
1	Accountability – hours, work
1	Loss of productivity
0	Accessibility
	As a Employee
2	Job creep
1	Workload expectations
0	Accessibility
0	Reduced wages
0	Left out – alienation

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Question #4 – NEEDS

- a) What gets in the way of creating greater flexibility in your workplace? (as a manager and as an employee)

Ratings	What gets in the way?
	As a Employee
11	Operational requirements i.e. Specialists set hours for service
5	Peer perception of favoritism
1	Backfill face to face needs if at home
0	Ownership and work
0	Lack of cross-trained staff
0	Seeing the other person's needs/perception
	As a Manager
7	Union – consistent treatment of staff
3	Backfill / cross training vs. static JE
2	Operational needs = workload, skills access
0	No 24 hour support for workers
0	Consistency across campus – meeting face to face

- b) If we wanted to create more flexibility, what kind of shift in culture, policies or practices will need to be in place?

Rating	What kind of shift needs to be in place?
	As a Manager and Employee combined
15	Need clarity about job expectations
13	Increased awareness of advantages of flexibility (eg. Work at home 1 day/week reduces transportation demands)
11	Acknowledge "under the table" flex arrangements that are happening.
4	Change culture so response is MAYBE instead of NO
3	Harmonize flex between employee groups.
1	Need safe environment to come forward with suggestions (trust) (supportive)
1	Re-negotiate CA's to promote flexibility
1	Increasing awareness of flex issues at same level and more women at same level already occurring.
1	More diverse workplace.
	Manager
18	Collective agreement confines
9	Communication for acceptance of flexibility (cultural shift)
6	Trust – formalized process needed?
1	Operational requirements
	Employee
2	Possible shift variations (standard hrs. of operation)
2	Work from home (WCB agreement concerns?)
2	Trust/expectations, output measures equipment requirements to work from home.

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1	Peace work vs. time assessment
0	Fairness/consensus understanding