

University of Wales Trinite Saint David

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Topic: IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

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Introduction

Flexible working is a kind of working culture which allows employees to vary the manner in which they carry out their duties of the organization. These include the wage limits, amount of working time, and the location of executing their duties. As a result, there always exist mutual benefit between employees and the organization. COVID-19 pandemic changed the manner in which organizations carried out their activities. Restriction of movement and mandatory lockdowns forced many workers to develop a new culture of working from home. The quest for flexible forms of working caused by the pandemic has increased significantly aided by HR software and technological advancements.(Putra et al., 2018).

Flexible working plays a significant role on diversity and inclusion at work places. Change in human resource performance is the main element which contributes to the success of a business. When workers are at a position of carrying out their duties without restriction, they tend to be more productive. Equality at the work place is an important source of worker motivation. This can only be achieved when workers work under a similar condition thus heightening inclusion and diversity at the workplace. Issues of inequality between workers have become an undermining factor which basically arises from flexible working.(Putra et al., 2018).

Positive Influence of Flexible Working in Relation to Diversity and Inclusion

Flexible working helps in retaining employees. A business entity which allows its employees to work at flexible schedules will help the business to retain the staff. It is undisputable that flexible schedules are one important aspect that employees want from their employers. A survey carried out in 2018 found that more than 80% of workers would prefer jobs that give flexible schedules to those that do not, even if it calls for a slight deduction on their salary (Putra et al., 2018). When employees are at liberty to schedule their activities, they feel motivated and included in the business` activities. As a result, they will diversify in their areas of performance. Flexible working is also a pivotal aspect of attracting top talents bearing the fact that most job seekers are interested in firms that offer flexible working than those that do not.(Putra et al., 2018).

Flexible working is the main foundations of work diversity. Restricting employees to a single place of work narrows their level of thinking for innovation purposes (Putra et al., 2018). Their ability to think and invent new ideas will be limited to the locality that they are confined to. As a result your workforce becomes a less diverse community which may be a turn off to the employees. By encouraging flexible working, do not only helps your firm`s diversity but also helps in netting up best employees ever.

A flexible working also increases productivity. Most employees think that when they allow employees to execute their job duties flexibly, the employees will not be as productive as they expect since they will not be able to keep a watchful eye on them (Putra et al., 2018). This has turned out not to be the contrary. A survey carried out in 2019 on remote workers shows that remote workers averagely works 1.4 more working days as compared to office workers. In addition, the survey postulated that in-office

workers encounter 37 minutes workplace distraction against the 27 minutes experienced by remote workers. Most importantly, when workers work in a flexible environment, it will force the management to constantly evaluate their employees on how they are progressing in their activities.(Putra et al., 2018).

Flexible working boosts employment engagement. Engaging employees is a significant aspect in every high performing business as it encourages inclusivity and job diversity. With flexible schedules, employees feel respected and engaged in the company's activities. As a result the employees tend to understand their job line and how significant it is to the business` success (Putra et al., 2018). The best way to empower and show respect to your works is by allowing them to flexibly execute their duties. Engaged employees with their jobs tends to perform much better than those that are not and in the long run becomes beneficial to both the company and the employees.

Role of Human Resources in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion through Flexible Working

Diversity and inclusion is a key component for a business success. However this cannot be achieved without a proper involvement of human resources management. Human resource is more significant to a business entity which allows for flexible schedules to its employees (Pavlova, 2020). Human resources criteria implemented by the managerial and leadership of an organization which creates a diverse culture between the employees. A company which embraces diversity and inclusion culture in its operation enjoys a competitive advantage over those that do not. The managements and leadership should therefore promote an inclusive culture by enabling a flexible

working(Pavlova, 2020)

Human resource promotes diversity. Through training employees, they attain new and competitive ideas to compete in the market. A business whose management offers a flexible working creates a room for promoting diversity and inclusion in its workforce. They can do this since the workforce will be the representatives of its customers (Pavlova, 2020). By doing this, the company shall have cubed factors which demoralize its staff and in return increases productivity levels by emulating an inclusive environment. A good management and leadership will spearhead a diverse culture in an organization.

Human resource plays a key role in managing and monitoring diversity and inclusion of a business entity. It is always challenging for a company have a clear picture of the importance of a diversity and inclusivity within the organization (Pavlova, 2020). The human resource team will therefore help an organization to monitor diversity and inclusion patterns. The ability of the human resource management teams to monitor such trends in the business will only be made possible when the company offers a flexible working environment. They may conduct the monitoring through scheduling audits. It is important for such audits to be carried out for both current employees and the incumbents to enable progressive measurements.(Pavlova, 2020)

Human resource helps in widening innovation pool. Through developing and training the workforce, the workforce talent will be widened to acquire and display new technological advancements for effective production of the business. The human resource team should therefore build a diverse and inclusive workforce through recruiting talented staffs and offering development strategies to diversify their abilities

(Wadhawan, 2019). This may be achieved through developing internal and external partnerships. Innovation techniques can also be widened further through offering flexible schedules to the workforce. Flexible working will enable workers to interact with numerous ideas and bring them to the table. By doing so, the employees will feel directly included in the organizations activities. (Wadhawan, 2019)

Human resource also helps in mentoring workforce thereby saving for a future diversity. Just like recruitment and training, mentoring also plays an important role in diversity and inclusivity in an organization (Wadhawan, 2019). Some human resource teams work with learning institutions to foster good business talents early enough to ensure so many individuals are diversified on business opportunities. As a result the future business will be a diversified one with an inclusive operational environment.

Negative Effects of Flexible Working in Relation to Inequality at Work

Flexible working can result into a big tragedy to the business if not managed effectively. Workplace flexibility has contributed a lot to inequality at workplace. As a result most employees have felt they are being overworked at the expense of others, an issue that has reduced the general performance of many businesses entities (Yu, Burke & Raad, 2019). One major problem encountered by workplace flexibility is unreliability and untrustworthiness of employees. Not all employees can be trusted or relied upon to effectively carry out their duties without a close watchful eye. While other employees will see workplace flexibility as an opportunity to advance their ability, others will treat it as an opportunity to move around doing nothing. As a result, there will be a sense of inequality between workers. This kind of a problem reduces productivity level of an organization. (Yu, Burke & Raad, 2019)

Time management is another big problem encountered in workplace flexibility. The problem is rampant in scenarios when a worker is allowed to attend to work at any time he/she wishes to execute his/her duties. This problem has proved disastrous to the success of many organizations as it does not portray equality among employees (Yu, Burke, & Raad, 2019). While other worker are unreliable and takes the opportunity to flexibly carry out their tasks to be very productive, others would require certain structures to have their tasked accomplished. This will attract cost on the organization to set up the needed structures for their employees to have their tasks done, again bringing inequality between workers.

Inability for employees to separate between being at home or being at job place has proved to be a major problem faced by workers under a flexible working. It is always by nature that staying at home is for nothing other than relaxing hence it becomes a bit challenging for workers to motivate themselves to work normally just as when at job place (Yu, Burke & Raad, 2019). Handling of clients has been a problem in a flexible workplace especially when employees do not attend to work at the same time.

In several occasions, flexible working has proved to be an unsuitable means as thought before especially when workers are to work as a unit. The coordination between the team players may not be successful caused by other factors such technological connectivity which may be faulty (Wadhawan, 2019). It will also be very difficult for a team to carry out a similar task together in a scenario when each team members chooses to do the task at different times. As a result, workers will suffer inequality amongst themselves as others will fail totally to take part in the task. Employees' security is another problem often associated with flexibility working. In cases when

workers prefers working at night exposes them to insecurity threats when the workplace is situated in rough areas with security issues. (Yu, Burke & Raad, 2019)

Another shortcoming of workplace flexibility is overtime costs on employers. Flexible working enables workers to work beyond their recommended time. This means that their employers will be forced to pay for the extra working cost (Wadhawan, 2019). Paying for extra working hours by the employers is basically a liability to the entire organization. Technology cost is another big challenge experienced in organizations which offer working flexibility. Employees will need electronic gadgets such as smartphones, computers and a source of electricity and internet to operate these devices. As a result these will leads to an additional cost on the firm.(Wadhawan, 2019)

Workplace flexibility has also led to a decline in human relation interaction especially in job places. When workers are allowed to work from different locations, they will not be able to interact and share ideas (Setiyani at el., 2019). As a result innovation skills and job diversity is greatly impacted. In situations when some employees are offered flexible working hours while others do not get, a feeling of dissatisfaction may build up on those who do not get such opportunity.

The Role of Human Resources in Addressing Concerns of Inequality Rising from Flexible Working

Challenges of inequalities caused by flexible working can lead to a huge damage the business operation if not addressed in good time. Human resources play an important role of keeping an organization's activities on track (Omar, 2018). Unreliability and untrustworthiness is a major implication associated with flexible working. The

problem can be addressed by human resource team by paying regular visits especially to employees working from home. As a result employees` performance will be monitored and evaluated thus making the employees to remain focused on their duties even while working from different location.(Omar, 2018)

Other human resources managers concentrate in providing incentives and benefits to best performing employees (Botrel, 2021). Such financial benefits encourage every worker to produce the best in whichever role they play in the organization. With such grounds set, workers will always give their bests even without a close monitor by the organization. With every worker putting more efforts to obtain the financial benefits, the general performance of the organization will eventually go up. Organization managers have also addressed the issue concerning poor time management by setting up time limits for employees` arrival and departure time. By setting up such time limits, the problem of inequality have often been solved (Idowu, 2020). With time limits, employees now feel equal irrespective of the kind of role they are playing within the organization.

Human resource managers have channeled a lot of effort on training employees on the rising technological advancement. Flexible working has attracted the need for technological skills to operate, especially on digital gadgets such as computer laptops and smartphones (Ewald, Gilbert, & Huppertz, 2020). As a result workers under flexible working should be trained on how to operate these gadgets. Human resource teams have put more efforts on offering proper training to employees to enable them operate these gadgets. Interaction between employees has declined as a result of flexibility in work performance. This has hindered work diversity and inequalities among employees

as ideas are not shared as before in the traditional in-office operation (Amirul & Shaari, 2021). Human resource managers have set up occasional meeting forums which bring all employees together and discuss the various ideas they have obtained from their diversified areas of work. As a result all employees' gets a chance to be listened to hence they feel equal and respected by the organization.(Idowu, 2020)

Conclusion

Pandemics such as COVID-19 and the constant change in business environments leaves business owners with no options but to pick on flexible work schedules for their employees. Flexible working not only gives employees job satisfaction but also plays a critical role in keeping employee`s better health, increases their work-life balance and stress-free. On the other hand the organization will also enjoy a number of production and financial benefits by setting up a flexible working model to their employees. However, flexible schedules have remarkable disadvantages which should be addressed in good time. Human resource managers therefore play a pivotal role in addressing the challenges. Similarly good human resource strategies should be executed by the organization to ensure diversity, inclusivity and equality within the workforce.

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