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Assignment component 2

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LCBB5004

Introduction

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an effective shift in the approach of work. As restrictions forced organisations to move operations online, there has been widespread adoption of remote and hybrid working arrangements. For many employees, this increased flexibility has improved work-life balance and enhanced productivity. As offices reopened after post-pandemic situation, many employees no longer want to fully return to pre-pandemic ways of working. At the same time, companies have realised the cost savings and efficiency gains of remote operations in some roles. According to the case study, VialTech workers have asked for more open work options in this new setting. As the new Human Resource Manager, the goal of this report is to help VialTech in producing a plan for adopting flexible working policies that meet the needs of a diverse workforce while keeping the business running.

Benefit of implementing flexible working strategies into the organisation

One of the main advantages of adopting flexible working policies is the potential to improve employee engagement and retention. With an increasingly tight labour market post-pandemic, flexible working arrangements can give VialTech a competitive edge in attracting and retaining top talent. Offering hybrid arrangements allows the organisation to access a wider pool of potential applicants who seek flexible options for balancing personal and professional commitments. This is particularly important for retaining valuable employees such as those with caregiving duties (Austin-Egole, Iheriohanma, and Nwokorie, 2020). Greater flexibility also enables higher levels of motivation and productivity at VialTech. With options for some remote work, employees may feel higher levels of autonomy and control over how and when they complete tasks. This can boost morale and engagement. The ability to avoid unnecessary commutes further reduces stress and improves overall well-being, supporting better quality and quantity of work output. (Jooss, McDonnell, and Conroy, 2021) show flexible work leads to increased focus, efficiency, and job satisfaction. Cost savings through flexible working are also substantial. Fewer employees in the office each day means VialTech can consolidate real estate over time to reduce rental and utility overheads significantly. Fewer desks and parking spaces are needed in terms of providing sufficient space to the employees that are working from the offices, which in turn can save costs and other expenses such as electricity bill. Flexible work can also maximise productivity during core hours while allowing for portfolio careers or side businesses at other times, further enhancing resource efficiency (Dale, 2020). Remote work also supports

business continuity planning by enabling operations to function even if part of the workforce cannot access certain sites. Adopting hybrid strategies also helps VialTech meet maturing sustainability targets. According to Weideman, and Hofmeyr (2020), flexible work means fewer employee commute journeys each day, lowering the carbon footprint associated with business travel. This enhances VialTech's reputation among socially conscious patients and staff. Fewer workstations in offices further reduces long-term energy usage and will support pending government legislation around hybrid working. The availability of flexible options additionally broadens VialTech's accessible talent pool, supporting diversity and inclusion across multiple demographics.

Factors that the HR department should consider before implementing flexible working to the employee workforce

There are several key factors the HR department at VialTech must consider carefully before implementing flexible working arrangements for employees. One of the primary considerations is the nature of the work involved in each team and how flexible working may impact productivity and service delivery (Rozlan, and Subramaniam, 2020). The administration team's responsibilities can likely be carried out effectively with a flexible approach as most of their work involves computer-based tasks that do not require on-site presence. However, the lab technicians and customer-support staff at the test facilities have responsibilities that demands on-site attendance for ensuring effective operations (Spurk and Straub, 2020). Laboratory testing and sample collection require the physical presence of technicians to process tests and interact with clients. Similarly, the test facilities need frontline staff available during opening hours to handle client bookings and queries. Therefore, implementing full flexibility for these teams may not be feasible and alternate hybrid models balancing flexibility and on-site responsibilities need to be explored. Another key factor is how the needs of employees may vary according to their various locations. VialTech has sites in multiple cities as well as rural areas to cater to NHS and private customers across diverse regions. Employees based in cities have the advantage of access to reliable public transport systems that allow commuting on flexible schedules (Chatterjee, Chaudhuri, and Vrontis, 2022). In contrast, those located in rural branches heavily rely on personal vehicles for commuting purposes which limits last-minute flexibility. Furthermore, rural areas tend to have fewer childcare options for supporting flexible hours. These location-based differences must inform the development of a flexible working policy

framework that satisfies needs in a balanced manner without unequally benefiting or hindering any site.

Related to locations is the consideration of existing infrastructure and facilities across sites. While larger city offices of VialTech may have adequate meeting spaces and technology infrastructure to support hybrid work patterns, rural branches housed in smaller facilities may lack such provisions. A one-size-fits-all approach risks disrupting operations and workflows in under-resourced sites. Infrastructure and facility audits can help identify specific support requirements for implementing flexibility successfully across all locations (White, and Maniam, 2020). The policy decisions must carefully factor in the organisational life cycle stage of different branches to strengthen adaptive capabilities uniformly.

Additionally, the HR department needs to scrutinise all existing HR policies and standard operating procedures for areas like leave administration, attendance monitoring, and overtime compensation prior to introducing flexibility. Policies developed for traditional work models may prove unsuitable or contradict flexible norms. To ensure understanding and compliance, major changes need to be made (Marx, Reimann, and Diewald, 2021). For instance, if rules for regular jobs like approving yearly leave are not changed, freedom could make them harder to follow. In the same way, flexible work-life mixing might make it harder to clearly separate core working hours from extra rules that were made for rigid plans. To make rules more practice-friendly, they need to be updated and made more consistent. This means that thorough reviews are needed. Another important HR factor that affects freedom acceptance is the culture of the company (Kumar, Sarkar, and Chahar, 2023). Modern values like liberty and well-being are supported by freedom. However, cultural trends toward presenteeism and long working hours could make policies less effective. For execution to go well, middle managers and team leaders need to be trained through awareness programs that encourage positive culture shifts and put results over facetime. At the same time, HR needs to improve processes like setting fluid goals and managing performance to stop people from abusing the system because the culture is not open to change yet. Ferdous, Ali, and French (2023) have stated that for real success, a complete change in culture is needed. According to the related theory, HR methods are also based on the stage of an organization's development. VialTech is a testing business that has been around for ten years and has various sites in different regions. It is likely in the formalization stage, looking to make processes the same across all growth levels. Because of this, flexibility calls for a strategy reaction that fits the needs of this stage of creating organisational rules while also meeting the needs of localization and centralization. A single method could cause problems. Phased and customized answers that

consider complex lifecycle issues make sure that the goals of flexibility and the practical facts of an organization work together.

The way the pay structure may need to be reconfigured if this is to be implemented

If VialTech decides to introduce flexible working arrangements for employees, certain aspects of the company's existing pay structure model may need to be reconfigured to align with this change. As per the strategic contingency theory, pay policies should support organisational goals and adapt to external changes like flexible working becoming common post-pandemic. Currently, VialTech likely uses a traditional time-based pay system where employees are compensated based on the number of hours spent at work each week or month. However, with roles blending between office and remote working under flexibility, determining compensation could become challenging using only working hours as a metric. One option to consider is moving towards a hybrid model combining elements of time-based pay with output or performance-based pay (Norgate, and Cooper, 2020). For essential on-site functions that must follow set shifts, hourly wages would continue reflecting time spent at work. However, roles permitting location-flexibility could be compensated factoring both times worked as well as tasks completed, or targets achieved. These ties pay to productivity and outcomes rather than facetime. To make sure everyone is treated fairly, it is essential to set clear success markers right away. At the same time, technology has made it possible for tools to directly track work in these kinds of jobs through paperwork, contacts with clients, or test results, which supports performance-based assessment.

Reworking the rules for extra pay is another thing to think about. In the past, working extra hours at the office just meant getting paid more per hour. But when there is freedom, overtime can happen from home or during shortened work hours. One option is to base extra pay on the amount of work that needs to be done during those hours, or one can offer flexible time off as payment instead of higher pay rates (Idowu, 2020). If work-life balance is more important than money, some jobs could switch to yearly pay and no overtime at all. By doing job reviews, the right changes can be made. For roles that can be billed to clients, keeping track of extra hours spent on certain tasks may also be needed for payment reasons. Flexible work hours could make it harder for people with family responsibilities to stick to regular full-time plans (Forbes *et al.* 2020). It is flexible to let people work shorter weeks, where 40 hours are crammed into fewer days. Paying pay based on the number of shortened days worked keeps earnings from going down. By changing plans, it is also possible to have

hybrid setups where people work both on-site and from home (Chung, 2020). To balance their roles, lab techs could, for example, work longer shifts on-site followed by more casual work from home. Benefits would also need to be looked at, since changeable plans could change benefits that are tied to working hours. One option is to separate benefits from work hours and instead base them on annual pay (Chung and Van der Lippe, 2020). Health insurance, retirement plans, and other benefits could continue if workers meet their total responsibilities. Before changing pay policies to make them more flexible as organizations change, it is important to do thorough effect studies that look ahead to practical problems, legal compliance, and change management.

The strategies to promote employee engagement while implementing flexible working

Flexible working depends a lot on having involved workers who are still driven to do their jobs even though the way the work is changing. VialTech should start with clear two-way contact to get everyone involved in the change. The HR department needs to be clear about how they are getting the first feedback, address any worries that might come up, and explain the benefits (Dale, 2020). This helps staff feel involved in shaping flexible policies meeting their diverse needs. Since flexibility is new, pilot programs involving volunteer teams can function as demonstrators while informing improvements before organisation-wide rollout.

Training managers will also be essential for engagement. Supervisors requiring feedback facetime may struggle leading remote teams, so training focuses on setting outcomes-oriented goals, using technology for collaboration, and evaluating performance objectively. This equips managers to motivate teams flexibly while prioritising well-being (Shifrin and Michel, 2022). Regular check-ins and transparent feedback cultivate trust under more independent working modes as well. Surveys at different intervals further help HR and managers understand employee sentiments, solve issues in real-time and enhance the experience over time through corrective changes based on feedback.

Promoting flexible social connections and productivity also drives engagement. With less in-person interaction, virtual coffee breaks and asynchronous collaboration tools prevent isolation. Gamifying individual and team performance through reward schemes can also enhance motivation (Rozlan, and Subramaniam, 2020). Adjusting flexible schedules during school-hours or holidays balances responsibilities. Encouraging use of allotted remote workdays for training, upskilling, or pursuing hobbies may also contribute to enthusiasm and retention.

Clear communication of flexible work guidelines within performance management systems maintains standards. Focusing evaluations on outputs versus time spent working removes productivity pressure (Idowu, 2020). Recognizing extra efforts and roles suiting flexibility through additional incentives and development opportunities maintains morale as well. Celebrating professional and personal milestones of employees promotes positivity and spirit throughout change.

Conclusion

Implementing flexible working strategies at VialTech requires careful planning and a robust framework to promote successful change management. It is important to have a clear policy that can meet the diverse needs of distinct groups of employees through custom mixed models. It is just as important to make sure that all HR processes, like hiring, performance reports, pay, and rewards, are flexible and in line with the company's goals. By carefully looking at the distinct stages of an organization's life cycle across places, it is possible to make plans that collaborate well with each other. Using open communication and trial programs to take a collaborative approach can help smooth over any changeover problems that might come up. Maintaining practical standards means teaching managers the way to lead remote teams well. As habits change, ongoing involvement activities that keep people from being alone and acknowledge successes keep confidence high and output high. Since being flexible is now the norm, VialTech can improve employee happiness, diversity, and loyalty by putting in place a plan that is gradually put into action and is based on current HR theories. Flexible working has a lot of potential to help everyone eventually, if it is implemented wisely and with an eye toward the problems that might come up.

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