



TIPS FOR PRACTICES AND SUPERVISORS

As defined by the Fair Work Ombudsman, flexible working arrangements are changes to the standard hours, patterns and locations of work. This document sets out some tips for law practices and supervisors when receiving requests for flexible working arrangements and implementing successful requests

Practices

- Develop a policy that specifically supports flexible working arrangements and outlines the associated procedures within your firm. Ensure that your policy is capable of practical implementation;
- Your policy should include a template for a Flexible Work Plan, to be developed with individuals when their request for a flexible working arrangement is approved;
- Provide your partners or other managers with training on the policy, what to do when they receive requests for flexible working arrangements and how to manage a flexibly working team. There should be a focus on finding ways to make the policy work for individuals;
- Put flexibility on your firm's agenda. Open discussions about flexibility may lead to more efficient ways to organise work and time for the benefit of the firm and employees;
- Provide effective access to technology to make working offsite a practical reality;
- Arrange business development and networking opportunities during business hours and when most practitioners are working;
- Don't overestimate the resistance of clients to flexible work arrangements. Talk to them;
- Celebrate and promote successful flexible working arrangements within your firm.

Supervisors

- Be familiar with the firm's policies and guidelines on flexible working arrangements;
- Promote flexible working arrangements and work with employees to customise solutions. Use a collaborative and problem-solving approach to find the options that best meet business and individual needs;
- Bear in mind that flexibility is most effective in promoting staff engagement when it is consistently made available to all. Consciously work towards managing staff in a consistent and objective manner when considering requests for flexibility;
- Use discretion when implementing flexible working arrangements. Arrangements that suit one employee may not necessarily suit another employee. Consider each employee's needs individually and work with them within the scope of your firm's policy to find the right solution for the individual and the firm;
- Be open to a variety of requests for flexibility for a variety of reasons;
- Consider trialling a flexible working arrangement on a pilot basis for a period of time. A process for review at the end of the pilot stage should be established to discuss any required modifications;
- There are situations where you may not be able to grant a practitioner's request for flexibility, for instance because of organisational constraints or individual constraints.