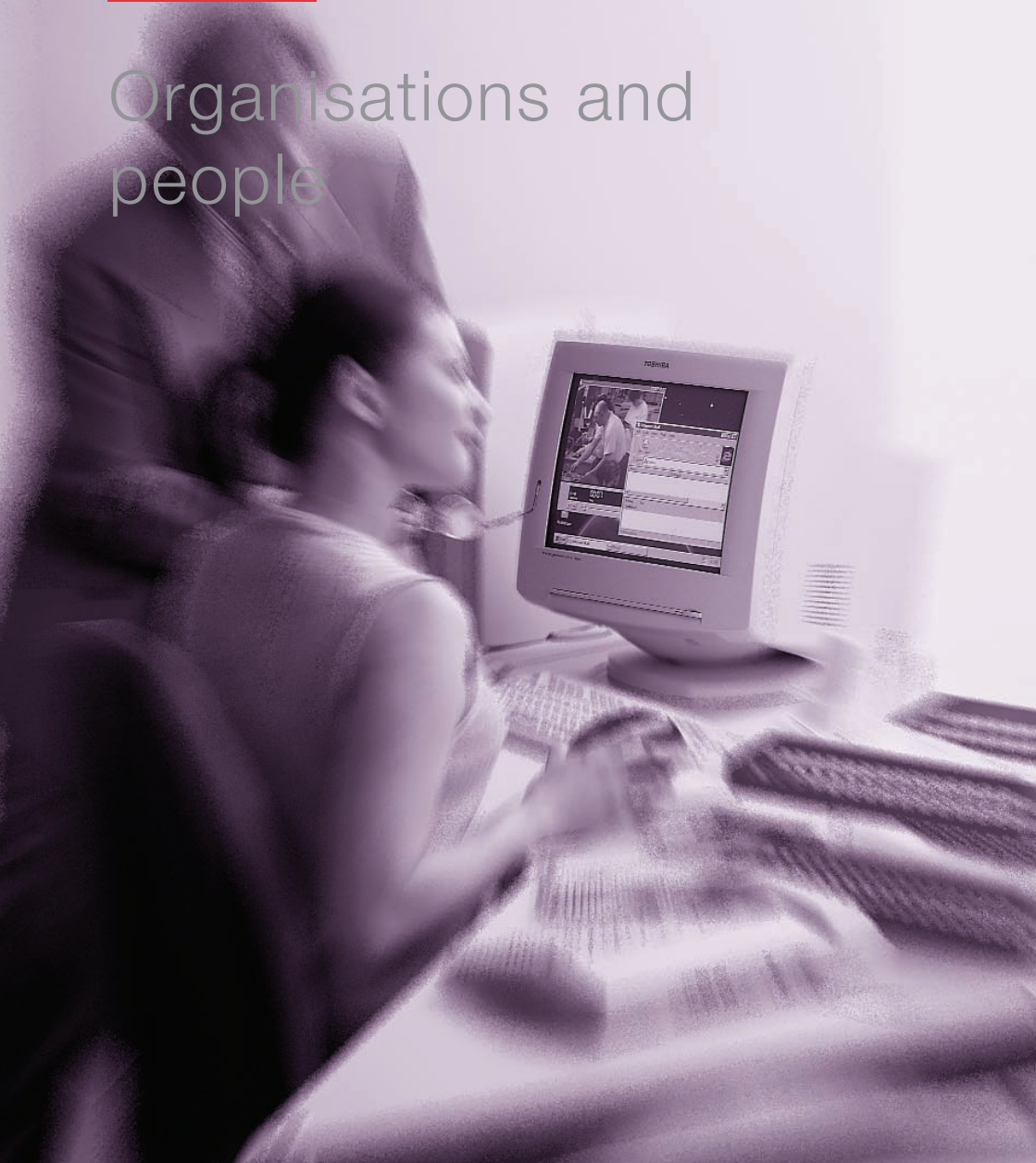


Chapter 5

# Organisations and people



This chapter is aimed at human resources managers and line managers. It is also intended for people who are responsible for organising, managing, supporting, recruiting, training and retaining, and those with an interest in introducing more flexible working methods.

Most personnel managers understand conventional flexible working practices, such as flexible working hours and non-standard contracts, and many have introduced them. However, new flexibilities made possible by technology are alien to many managers and in this chapter, we seek to provide some practical advice and guidance.

In line with the recurring theme of this Toshiba Guide, the introduction of new working methods needs to be carried out in close co-operation with facilities, technology and other managers.

## **A culture for new ways of working**

### **Lessons from history**

Good organisation and effective communication have always underpinned the great enterprises – empires, nations, civil administrations, fighting forces, public services and successful businesses. Clear objectives, command structures, leadership and roles are essential. These principles, which have been applied by many commercial enterprises, still form the

basis for much of today's accepted good management practice.

Traditionally, tasks and information are managed downwards. Issues and exceptions are escalated upwards. Staff work to tightly defined roles, often written down in job descriptions. Barriers are built between departments, including the creation of "internal markets". Allegiances are often formed to the unit or department rather than to the organisation as a whole.

### **The legacy of geography**

Structures within distributed organisations are often based on geographic location. Competing, overlapping or duplicate functions may be located at different sites for reasons that are often lost in the mists of the organisation's history.

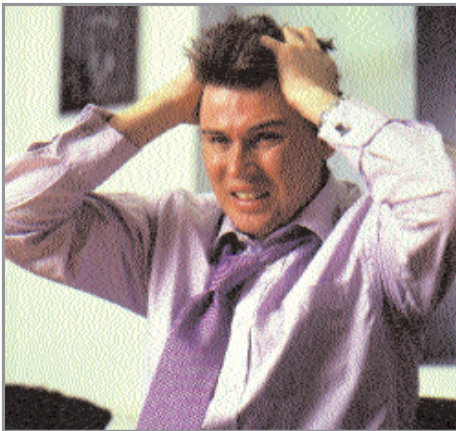
Traditionally, people based out of the main centre could only work effectively with a full office infrastructure, support staff and management. Today, in spite of radical changes in technology and business processes, regional and local offices and management structures have persisted. In many cases, the perception that physical location is still important to customers remains at the fore, but this is often not so.

### **Controlling information**

Managers and other people in organisations accumulate information for many reasons.

A positive reason is to help them do their job more effectively. Quite often, however, information is used simply to reinforce hierarchy.

One unfortunate side effect of this is that, usually unintentionally, these people become "information gatekeepers" – the flow of information is always directed through them, and they only dispense information on a "need to know" basis.



In effect, decisions get referred upwards to people who have access to information and the authority to act, but as a result, are suffering from information overload.

### **Management by presence**

Most managers, when consulted, like to believe in management by results. Yet the truth is often at the other extreme. Staff are frequently

monitored, not only by managers but also by colleagues. This includes when they arrive for work, when they leave and how long they take for lunch. In this type of environment, those that do work flexibly often have to endure criticism from colleagues, as well as being disadvantaged when it comes to career advancement opportunities.

Interestingly, the UK has the longest working hours in Europe, especially amongst managers, professional and administrative staff, yet output is no higher than in countries with shorter working hours.

### **Towards the learning organisation**

The concept of the "learning organisation" turns conventional thinking about the "command and control" culture on its head. It recognises that people perform better if they are respected, trusted and motivated. A learning culture has been defined as a working environment based around the following ten principles:

- **Vision:** all staff are aware of and identify with the vision, mission and strategy at all levels – corporate, divisional, departmental and project
- **Responsibility:** the individual has the responsibility to acquire the skills, access to information, support and tools necessary to do the job

- Support: the organisation provides the necessary infrastructure and services to support the individual
- Information: access to information is constrained only by the competence of the individual and genuine security considerations, rather than outdated concepts such as "need to know". Information is not censored, except for good reason
- Consultation: it is accepted that the best ideas do not necessarily come from the most senior people
- Openness: open debate and constructive criticism are encouraged, without fear of management reprisal
- Learning: all staff, even those at the top, are committed to acquiring new knowledge and understanding, and learning new skills.
- Recognition: skills, abilities and learning achievements are recognised through meaningful accreditation
- Caring: the organisation cares about the lives, careers, interests and well-being of its employees
- Improvement: the organisation is itself committed to continuous improvement in its structure, processes and working methods, including learning from its staff

Used constructively, these principles can form the basis of a checklist to assess an organisation's readiness for new ways of working.

**A foundation for flexible working**

The point of all this is that, in order to benefit fully from flexible working, the culture of the organisation and the style and skills of managers need to be prepared for it. Introducing new technology, new facilities and policies for more flexible working will generally achieve very little if the organisation remains wedded to the values, culture and management methods of the past.

**Working flexibly**

**A definition**

Referring to chapter 1, a useful definition of flexible working relates to when, where, how and what work is done:

Flexible contract:	Workers are employed and/or rewarded in non-standard ways.
Flexible hours:	Work is performed at times that better suit the employer and/or employee.
Flexible location:	Work is carried out wherever is most appropriate and effective for the employer and/or employee.
Flexible tasks:	Multi-skilled workers are able to undertake a variety of tasks according to need.

### Who gains?

The beneficiaries of flexible working include both employers and employees:

- Employers are able to match resources to work needs, and attract and retain staff, whilst reducing fixed costs, boosting productivity and improving customer service
- Employees can gain access to employment, explore new career opportunities, raise their incomes, reduce their living costs and balance the demands of work and home more effectively

Families, communities and the environment can also gain. These issues are addressed further in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

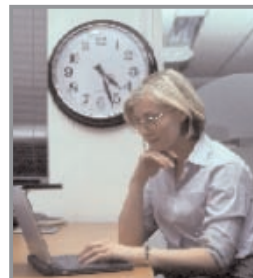
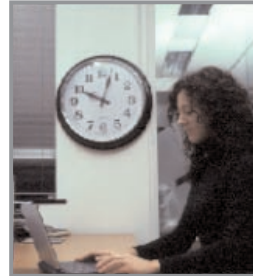
For the human resources manager, the challenge is to develop and implement new working practices that benefit both the organisation and the staff. In the long term, these interests converge – a more contented and motivated workforce will deliver improved business performance.

### Types of jobs

Several treatises have been written on the demands and characteristics of different types of job, analysing interactivity, autonomy, dependencies and other factors. Although this Toshiba Guide does not aim to go into detail, it is nevertheless important to understand how

roles differ and, as a consequence, how different types of flexibility apply.

A common segmentation, which can be applied in a variety of sectors, is by manager, professional, front-line support and back-office support.



**An illustration**

The following example, from a business-to-business sales and marketing operation, shows where people were spending their working time before and after the introduction of flexible working:

Before:

	Main office	Satellite office	Home	Away
Managers	40%		5%	55%
Professionals	33%		6%	61%
Front-line support	100%			
Back-office support	100%			

After:

	Main office	Satellite office	Home	Away
Managers	25%	5%	20%	50%
Professionals	16%		26%	58%
Front-line support		83%	17%	
Back-office support	60%	25%	15%	

This was achieved through a combination of the following measures:

- Managers and professionals were equipped and enabled to do some of their work at home
- Although time away remained broadly the same, travel was reduced substantially and more time was spent with customers and business partners
- The front-line support unit – in effect a call-centre – was relocated closer to a residential area and a flexible, staff-driven rota scheme was introduced. Some people were set up to work part-time from their homes
- The total number of back-office staff were reduced, with some relocated to the satellite office and some of the work – mainly finance – being carried out at home. In parallel, a flexitime scheme was introduced

Along with all this, the main office was reduced in size and remodelled into mainly shared space. Paper-free business processes were introduced, remote access technologies were installed to facilitate more productive home and mobile working, and the call-centre service was extended from 40 to 60 hours per week.

Although details will vary from case to case, this example is not atypical, showing how human resources managers need to work with their facilities and technology colleagues to deliver solutions that work for both the business and its people.

### Responding to demand

Managers have a duty, reinforced in part by recent European employment legislation, not to practise policies that discriminate against particular groups of workers, such as those with disabilities or degenerative illnesses, parents of young children and carers of elderly relatives.

A common situation faced by human resources managers is that individual members of staff put in a request for more flexible working arrangements, usually in response to changed personal circumstances. Other requests from staff may result from relocation because of a partner's job or a desire for a lifestyle change.

These requests often present a dilemma for two main reasons – business impact and precedent. For example, a request to work part-time may necessitate the recruitment of another part-time worker or substantial re-allocation of work to other staff members. Also, many employment-related costs are fixed, for example premises and IT, whether someone is working full or part-time. Finally, human resources managers are often fearful of raising expectations amongst staff in general, and then being unable to deliver.

The result of all this is often a fudge, with no clear policies and different arrangements depending on department or role. In these circumstances, with no clear business justification, flexible working can be perceived

as a burden on the organisation. The survey in 1998 by Mitel, *Teleworking in Britain*, found that 65% of organisations had no policy for teleworking.

The solution is to be ahead of the game, with active policies for flexible working that benefit the business and satisfy the aspirations of staff.

### Challenging the status quo

It is not only cultural factors that inhibit flexible working. Many organisations have deeply entrenched ways of organising themselves that are rarely challenged, for example:

- The numbers and roles of managers
- Work output expectations
- Support staff ratios
- Demarcation - who does what?
- Rank and role entitlements: offices, secretaries, company cars, etc.
- Working and opening hours

The greatest business performance improvements from flexible working are often delivered when it is part of a more radical overhaul of processes and working practices.

Human resources managers are often expected to fulfil purely tactical roles, such as hiring, firing, training and dealing with day-to-day issues. The promotion of the business benefits to be derived from flexible working gives them a new and more strategic role.

### Work-life balance

The reality of modern life in the Western world does not paint a rosy picture:

- Stress levels are on an ever-upward trend
- People work longer hours than ever
- In an increasing proportion of households, both partners work
- Single parents have to work all hours to make ends meet

Throughout the last century, futurists foretold a coming age of leisure, where automation and computing took the strain, liberating us to enjoy rich, rewarding and balanced lives. But it has failed to materialise. Instead, those of us in employment work harder and longer. Those of us who don't work, live in straitened circumstances, unable to enjoy the enforced leisure and domesticity.



### Does it have to be like that?

Leaving aside the question of redistributing wealth – which doesn't seem to be on any major party's agenda – the solution has to revolve around how we organise our working lives.

And the first step is recognising that the answer is, "No, it doesn't have to be like that" – if employers and employees are willing to be flexible.

The benefits can be felt in three areas:

- Employees can reduce stress, and become more productive, more motivated, and happier, as they achieve a better work-life balance
- Organisations can boost staff morale, and introduce practices that are more efficient and effective
- Socially excluded groups who, out of necessity, have to prioritise home life, perhaps because of caring responsibilities, may gain access to employment opportunities with organisations that allow a better balance

The following sections illustrate how flexible working can help take the strain and redress the balance.

### Flexible hours

Arrangements for flexible hours can be of particular benefit for parents with younger children who need taking to and from school or people with other caring commitments. There

is a wide range of models for flexible hours arrangements, allowing employees greater or lesser autonomy. Simply not having to be at the office at 9.00 in the morning can relieve much of the stress of domestic management. Similarly, being able to travel outside the rush-hour removes a significant amount of stress at the beginning and end of each day.

### **Part-time work**

For most people, there are times when working full-time causes excessive conflict with other life commitments. Part-time work should be an attainable option – without loss of benefits or becoming marginalised in the organisation. It will be of real benefit to people with substantial caring commitments or those returning to work following a period of looking after young children.

### **Jobshare**

Jobshare is a particular type of collective part-time arrangement, where an individual can be assured that someone else is carrying out the job properly when they are not working.

Organisations should look to part-time work and job sharing as a means of retaining skilled staff whose skills might otherwise be lost.

### **Term-time working**

Term-time working is a family-friendly policy that is suitable for more people than just teachers.

Many people take their holidays, or unpaid leave, and flex strategic absences around school holidays. Proper formalising of arrangements will have benefits for both employers and employees.

### **Home-based working**

Working from home has many advantages for anyone with heavy domestic responsibilities. In the majority of instances, this does not take place on a full-time basis. Instead, it allows appropriate tasks to be undertaken from home – and these are usually accompanied by productivity benefits.

It is almost impossible to work effectively and care for children at the same time but home-based working can make the organisation and management of childcare much easier and less stressful. It also enables contact with children at crucial times of their day, rather than dashing out of the house as they do, and not being there when they return. Importantly, an employee who is free of parental guilt, may be a happier, more motivated employee.

Home-based working, combined with time-based flexibility, can ensure that an employee is always equipped to get on with his/her work.

### **Telecentre working**

If employees have the opportunity to work locally, in a local office or telecentre, this can

also help them achieve a more balanced life style. Furthermore, local offices or telecentres will also serve the needs of other itinerant workers and/or bring services closer to customers in a particular location.

### **Parental leave**

Parental leave may be advantageous at times other than the birth of a new baby. In certain circumstances, it can actually be more important for the care of older siblings. By its very nature, parental leave is intended to cope with times of particular stress or change in the family.

### **Implementing work-life balance**

It goes without saying that there aren't any "magic wand" solutions when it comes to promoting the work-life balance. However, certain arrangements can be put in place to ensure:

- The continuity of work
- Adequate monitoring and supervision
- Good communications with staff working flexibly
- Equitable arrangements for all staff (i.e. not implementing flexible arrangements only for those with families)
- Protection of existing rights and benefits

Superficially, most of these working practices appear to benefit the employee, whilst potentially causing problems for the employer. The point is that, when implemented as part of a holistic approach to new ways of working, improved work-life balance for staff can be delivered alongside tangible business benefits.

## **Communicating and managing change**

### **Sharing the vision**

Many difficulties in staff relations arise simply because of poor communication. Even if there is bad news, sharing it with the workforce at an early stage helps ensure reasonable co-operation when the time comes for change.

In most successful organisations, the ambitions of all stakeholders, including managers, staff, shareholders and customers, are aligned. This is true of all sectors. Few people want to work in an organisation that is behind the times in its facilities, technologies and working practices. Staff who learn new skills and have worked in modern cultures and environments are themselves more employable.

If managers are starting to consider implementing the ideas in this Toshiba Guide, communicating the news to staff at an early stage will help avoid difficulties later. Also, stressing that the aim is to improve the performance of the business and ensure the

organisation remains the employer of choice in its sector, will help dispel any rumours that the project is all about cost-cutting.

### **Raising awareness**

In general, UK managers are less technology-aware and more technophobic than their counterparts in the USA, Germany, France and the Nordic countries. There is sometimes a fear that they will diminish their authority by exposing their ignorance to subordinates.

This situation is compounded by technology managers often being poor communicators, and lacking business awareness and skills. In effect, the worlds of technology and business management are alien to each other.

Occasionally, it is said, "technology is too important to be left to the IT manager". For this reason in particular, a good starting point is to raise awareness of Information Age issues amongst senior managers and show how other organisations, with which they can identify, are making more effective use of technology.

### **Consulting and involving staff**

Staff consultation needs to be genuine and must occur before there is a fait accompli. This way, staff feel involved in the change programme. In addition, those at the "front-line", sometimes called the

bottom of the organisation, may have the best ideas – as well as being the leaders of the future.

Techniques can include awareness workshops that build on senior management programmes, departmental "away days", face-to-face interviews and structured staff surveys.

It is vital that survey work is preceded by briefing events. This ensures that the terms and concepts to be used can be explained to staff, and provides an opportunity for questions.

If the organisation has an Intranet, this can be used as a highly effective tool for staff consultation. Those who do not have access to a PC, such as catering and security personnel, can receive paper-based questionnaires. The particular circumstances of each organisation will demand different questions, covering such areas as:

- Life style and work-home balance
- Attitudes to different forms of flexible working
- Working time
- Aspects of working life
- The working environment
- Technology and communications
- Impact of flexible working on the business

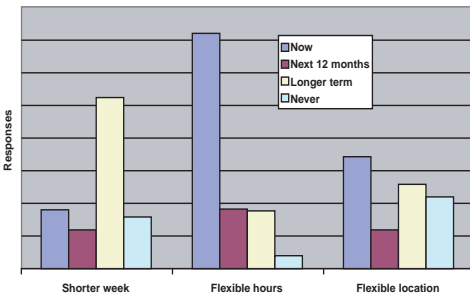
Surveys should carry the authority of a senior figure, such as the chief executive or human resources director, and assurances need to be given that the information will remain confidential.

Where possible, questions should be structured for easy analysis, using for example, multiple-choice answers. The facility for free-form comments can also be valuable – our experience is that many respondents will put considerable effort into suggesting ways in which the performance of the business can be improved.

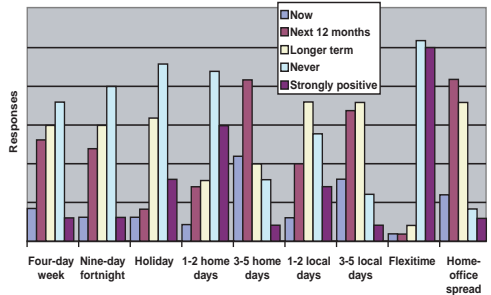
**An illustration**

The following examples are taken from a survey carried out in the London head office of a large UK organisation, within the context of a project to attract and retain good staff.

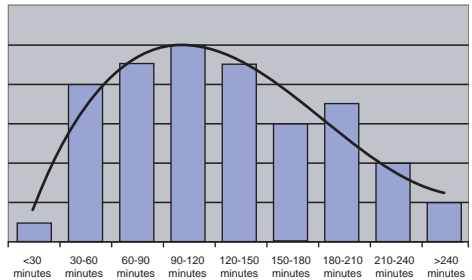
Question: From a personal perspective, when would you value the following changes to your working arrangements?



Question: What is your attitude to the following flexible working options?



Question: How long is your daily return commute journey?



The results here are not atypical for a city-based employer. Flexible working hours and the ability to spend 1 to 2 days per week working at home is an attractive option for many people. From the survey work, it becomes possible to assess what factors, such as travel-to-work distance, types of work undertaken and domestic considerations, influence attitudes to taking up flexible work.

In this organisation, an analysis of these and a wide range of other questions, coupled with extensive and valuable freeform comments, built a strong case for introducing new working practices – to the benefit of the business and its people.

### **Building a shared agenda for change**

Awareness workshops, team meetings, face-to-face and structured consultation, combined with case studies, visits to other organisations and clarification of business and personal benefits, can all build a powerful movement for change.

Translating this into a practical programme involves working with operational, facilities and technology managers to develop a strategy.

It is a good idea to maintain staff involvement throughout this process, for example co-opting team members into working groups.

### **Piloting change**

Piloting and "quick-wins" are excellent ways to validate ideas for change. Most concepts for new ways of working can be piloted without incurring high costs or making irreversible changes.

The idea of a pilot is to prove – or disprove – that a change should be adopted. It is vital, therefore, that pilots are carefully monitored. Measuring relevant parameters before, during

and after, or by comparison with a control group, can do this.

Often, the consultation process will identify quick-wins that do not require piloting. These can also lend credibility to the project amongst managers and anyone that remains sceptical.

### **Training for flexible working**

In addition to being assisted with awareness of issues relating to the new information and communications technologies, information managers and staff need to learn new skills and attitudes in order to work effectively in the new environment.

Training requirements should come out of a needs analysis, which should in turn, result from a thorough understanding of the new working locations, working practices, business and communications processes and technologies.

The following outlines some areas that, in many cases, are not addressed when it comes to training, and can, therefore, result in difficulties:

- Managing a distributed workforce
- Self-supported working
- Effective time management
- Supporting a team
- Using remote access technology

In addition, training will often be needed in the use of applications such as groupware, intranets, advanced telephony and knowledge management.

**Policies for flexible working**

Personnel departments are normally responsible for developing and issuing policies relating to working arrangements and practices. They translate these policies into practical procedures and issue guidelines to support their implementation.

In some organisations, this information is contained within the staff handbook. Nowadays, the handbook often exists on the corporate intranet, where the latest version is always available for consultation.

The following sections of the Toshiba Guide are intended to provide initial checklists for human

resources managers dealing with changing policies. They should help to develop personnel policies that are appropriate for the different forms of flexible working. Of course, given the diversity of both employers and working practices, it is impossible to create an exhaustive list, and for some organisations, there may be certain issues that are not covered.

The checklist is most relevant during the piloting and transition phase, when different forms of flexible working are being evaluated and some staff are still working conventionally. In the longer term, the idea is that the whole organisation will adopt greater flexibility and, as a consequence, policies can be simplified.

Further clarification on some of the policy issues appears in the subsequent sections, and other relevant material can be found in chapter 3 (Facilities) and chapter 4 (Technology).

<p>Contracts of employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there conditions in employment contracts which are no longer relevant? For example: specifying the place and hours of work, specifying a requirement to be able to drive, etc.</li> <li>• Do travel-related benefits need reviewing?</li> <li>• Note: Care should be taken not to attempt to change contracts of employment unilaterally.</li> <li>• Note: Other than where people are to work mainly from home, only visiting an office occasionally, the stated place of work should generally remain the office for Inland Revenue purposes.</li> </ul>
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Standard practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of normal working practice, should all staff normally be expected to work flexibly as job responsibilities demand? (This may mean occasionally working in a different location or to non-standard working hours.)</li> <li>• Does the employer endeavour to minimise any domestic impact of this requirement?</li> </ul>
Working time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there core hours when all staff are expected to be available for work unless sick, on leave or otherwise absent? (For example: 10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday.)</li> <li>• What are the hours when office services and staff access for work are available?</li> <li>• When is attendance required at the office, if at all? (For example at least during core hours 2 days per week?)</li> <li>• How are actual times at the office agreed in advance? (This is important not only for managers and colleagues, but also for desk management)</li> <li>• What are the minimum and maximum working times? (For example, minimum of full contracted hours each month, maximum of 48 hours per week)</li> <li>• What rights do line managers have to require attendance at the office on specific days and at specific times? What notice do they need to give?</li> <li>• Are timesheets required, showing location of work, days taken as annual leave, sickness and other absences? What are the submission and approval mechanisms?</li> </ul>
Working location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where are staff expected to work when they are not in the office? (For example when they are at home, at a client's site or in a telecentre, etc.)</li> <li>• Should staff working away from the office be accessible by phone and email at all times?</li> </ul>
Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are risk assessments carried out?</li> <li>• What are the respective responsibilities of the employer and employee?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are certain types of work or activities not allowed in certain locations? (For example using a phone whilst driving, using hazardous equipment at home, or having business meetings at home.)</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is eligible for flexible working? Why is this fair?</li> <li>• Are there other forms of flexibility that may be available for a wider group of staff? (For example flexitime only.)</li> </ul>
Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is authorised to vary policies and what are the processes?</li> <li>• What are the arrangements for sanctioning occasional or temporary variations to normal working practices?</li> <li>• Note: Flexible working should not be placed in a straightjacket.</li> </ul>
Termination of arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will flexible working arrangements need to be suspended by line managers where business requirements and/or performance warrant it?</li> <li>• Note: Individuals' circumstances may change, or flexible working may not suit them, in which case they should be able to return to conventional arrangements.</li> </ul>
Provision of facilities in the office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the employer provide a permanent office desk for every staff member, especially where work patterns warrant shared facilities and office space?</li> </ul>
Provision of facilities at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the employer provide, or subsidise the costs of, equipment to allow staff to work effectively and safely at their homes?</li> <li>• How will this equipment be installed and supported? Will the employer have right of access to the equipment?</li> </ul>
Insurance and care of office equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is responsible for the insurance of equipment, premises and third-party sites, etc?</li> <li>• Note: Employees should be expected to take good care of company equipment.</li> </ul>

Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there rules or guidelines regarding working in public places?</li><li>• Note: Employees should take care to protect company information.</li></ul>
Payment of expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How will the employer compensate staff for any additional costs associated with working flexibly?</li><li>• How, if at all, will the employer benefit from any cost savings enjoyed by the employee?</li></ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What training is offered in flexible working, including health and safety issues?</li><li>• Is this training compulsory?</li></ul>

## Selection/recruitment for flexible working

### Factors in selection

Selecting people who will be involved in initial flexible working pilots and programmes often generates heated discussion. The first time around, different considerations come into play, as it requires existing staff to work in a different way. However, in principle, future recruitment should be less problematic, as the new recruits have not experienced life under the previous "inflexible" culture. Nonetheless, their previous work experience and preferred methods of working may limit their adaptability.

Personal suitability is only one variable in the selection. Other variables are:

- Organisational environment and culture
- The suitability of the remote environment
- Task characteristics

All of these need to be addressed in the context of the wider change programme.

### Specifying personal characteristics

In any organisation, general recruitment, selection for new tasks and promotion often involve some kind of assessment of personality, sometimes including psychometric analysis. It is quite natural that human resources practitioners may see

some merit in applying this to establishing suitability for flexible working. In addition, there are numerous publications that outline desirable personality traits. There is even software that conducts teleworking-focused tests.

However, this is an area where it is hard to be precise. Once again, it is necessary to raise the issue about whether flexible working is for the whole of a job or only certain functions.

Unfortunately, much of the advice that is currently available is simply banal! According to the UK Department for Education and Employment, teleworkers should be:

- Mature
- Trustworthy
- Self-sufficient
- Self-disciplined
- Good time managers
- Good communicators

This is no doubt right, but to assess the value of such advice, ask yourself which of your employees do you want NOT to exhibit these characteristics!

If you are employing people whom you find immature, untrustworthy, undisciplined and poor time managers, etc, the question arises why you are employing them at all.

In almost all cases, specified attributes for flexible workers are only what you would expect from the best of your workforce as a whole.

So, unless you are content for telework to be available as a privilege, or as an option for a kind of workforce elite, then the issue is not so much about selection on a personality basis, as about how to raise standards and how to prepare people for a different work style.

### **Managing and working “remotely”**

If the management style is not already focused on results rather than processes, it will need to adapt. A high degree of trust between the manager and the employee is also needed, and where this is lacking, it is likely that working outside the office is going to be problematic on both sides.

Some aspects of management that are taken for granted in the conventional office environment need to be treated more explicitly in a remote working situation. In particular, staff need:

- Clear performance targets and short-term goals.
- Regular feedback on performance and positive reinforcement.
- Regular communication and team meetings

- Phone calls with supervisors and colleagues to include some personal or social content, and not purely business content

Electronic communication methods should be user-friendly and accessible, ranging from adequate remote access to shared folders and the intranet, to the ability to send and retrieve e-mail without undue difficulty. The new multimedia collaboration tools and unmetered Internet access considerably enhance the value of electronic communications, especially for less structured communications.

We feel it is important to note that too much use of technology can isolate people from colleagues and business partners, and steps should be taken to ensure teams continue to meet together face-to-face.

The good news is that, with transactional work carried out electronically, these face-to-face meetings can become social, enjoyable and highly productive.

