

Flexible Working: Keeping Talent And Building Business

With an ever more interconnected world, businesses and their employees can no longer function from a single location during any given traditional working day. Not only does the enterprise need to communicate with clients and colleagues on the other side of the world, but employees are also wishing to have a better integration between their work and personal lives. It is time organisations change the way they work to suit modern industry as well as today's staff if they hope to retain the best talent.

Flexible Working As A Tool

Flexible working can be an extremely powerful tool for the enterprise. The benefits of allowing staff to work on projects outside the office can be a huge advantage to a business's efficiency and reliability too, as happier more engaged workers are likely to deliver better service. Employees will notice the benefits also, as they integrate their work and personal life, allowing increased productivity and improving the overall moral in the office.

It does not stop there. The implementation of flexible working in the office is a huge draw to prospective applicants, especially in the UK where it is regarded as a more desirable perk than higher remuneration, according to LinkedIn. A recent survey by Censuswide, on behalf of Unify, also noted that 24% of those questioned would recommend their place of work to a friend if the organisation offered flexible working. Whilst flexible working is a great enabler for the enterprise, it is also a fantastic opportunity for recruiters and global HR departments.

Collaboration Remains A Must

One major aspect of flexible working is the importance of collaboration. If an organisation hopes to see the benefits that come with allowing employees to work flexibly, HR needs to ensure that staff are able to collaborate effectively on projects.

As staff may be working from all manner of locations, it is integral that they are able to produce the same quality of results as they would if they were together in the office. In order for teams to complete projects outside the office,

they need to be able to communicate effectively through the right technology. Without the right tools at hand through which to communicate, staff will soon struggle to complete tasks. This will not only create a strain on resources, but also decrease office morale as employees struggle to finish their work.

Primarily, ensuring staff are able to collaborate will also increase engagement with their work. The right technology will enable employees to access information, enable updates outside the office, and let them input their thoughts on work or projects alongside other team members. By being aware that their coworkers are only a message away, employees will be able to reap the benefits of flexible working and integrate their ideas rapidly and without delay.

Enabling Collaboration

Whilst it may seem simple to announce that staff can now collaborate outside the office, in practice it can be far more complex. Ensuring that employees are able to, at any point, communicate with their colleagues, can seem like an insurmountable challenge, but it need not be.

Today's collaboration technologies make this a simple task. This is of course, if the technology you choose is able to provide a platform that allows staff to combine all aspects of their work life into a single space, which will streamline processes and produce quality results. If so, staff will be able to locate their emails, voicemails and video chats on a single platform. But it need not stop there. Dynamic collaboration software providers can also offer document collaboration: allowing colleagues to work simultaneously on the same page or pick up where their co-worker left off.

Flexibility In Communication

Whilst staff desire the work/life balance, and in some instances work/life integration that comes with flexible working, they cannot do it without the ability to collaborate outside the office. With the rise of superfast broadband, 4G networks and personal devices, the task of ensuring efficient collaboration across the globe is far more easier than it was ten years ago.

Nevertheless, employees still strive for a solution that incorporates their personal and working lives into a single space, allowing tasks to be completed in a café, on a plane or at home. It does not need to be a challenge to ensure that staff collaborate. As long as HR departments are aware of the ways employees are able to combine their efforts to complete a project, the change to flexible working will ensure success.

Although there exists challenges in the transition from a traditional working format into a modern way of doing business, a business can reap huge benefits from successful implementation of flexible working through choosing the right technology. If done right, staff will not only find their working environment far more appealing and engaging, but also highlight the organisation to friends. This will allow any business that employs flexible working to retain and recruit those star employees.



Sally Barringer is the HR Manager at Unify, a position held for over eleven years during which time Sally has supported all functions of Unify's business including Ireland. Sally has been actively engaged in overseeing the company's transition from Siemens Enterprise Communications to its current incarnation, providing guidance and support through HR practices ensuring the workforce remain at the heart of the business throughout this period of change.

Her responsibilities range from recruitment and succession planning, employee engagement through reward, recognition and HR Policies to change management and business transformation. Sally currently splits her time between Milton Keynes and London, providing HR consultation and improving employee relations across all sectors of Unify's business.