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Embracing Flexibility At Work

A people leader's guide to understanding workplace
and role flexibility beyond remote work

Introduction

Behind catchphrases and clickbait headlines lies a simple truth: most employers want their employees to enjoy work as they deliver on role expectations.

One way organizations enable this is work flexibility, which was the second biggest trend in the [Willo 2024 Hiring Trends Report](#). The first was AI adoption, which we covered in-depth in the [Willo Hiring Humans Report](#).

For many, flexibility is about doing the right thing—but it's also an ingredient of success: employees who enjoy their work are [13% more productive](#). Specifically, they try harder, think more creatively, and typically stay with an organization longer.

In regular conversations with the talent acquisition leaders who use [Willo's video interviewing platform](#), common themes emerged around what flexibility means, what it's meant to deliver for employees and the organization, and how to empower it.

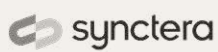
To provide tangible answers to these questions, we interviewed and surveyed dozens of HR and talent leaders, expert consultants, and industry association executives.

This ebook is broken into the following chapters:

- Defining flexibility at work and the elements that underpin it
- The benefits and challenges of flexible ways of work
- Empowering flexibility: Processes, ways of work, activities, technology, and cultural shifts
- A 3-phase guide to developing a flexible work arrangement in your organization

Meet Our Experts

We'd like to thank the experts who shared their insights with us and also thank the dozens of leaders who responded to our survey or contributed perspectives anonymously.



Zoe Schafer

Director of People at Synctera



Jodi Kovitz

CEO at Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA)



Job van der Voort

CEO at Remote



Michelle Brooks

Chief People & Culture Officer at Security Compass



Andrea Dottling

Co-Founder at IDLance



Thomas Klein

Global Head of International Talent Acquisition at HelloFresh

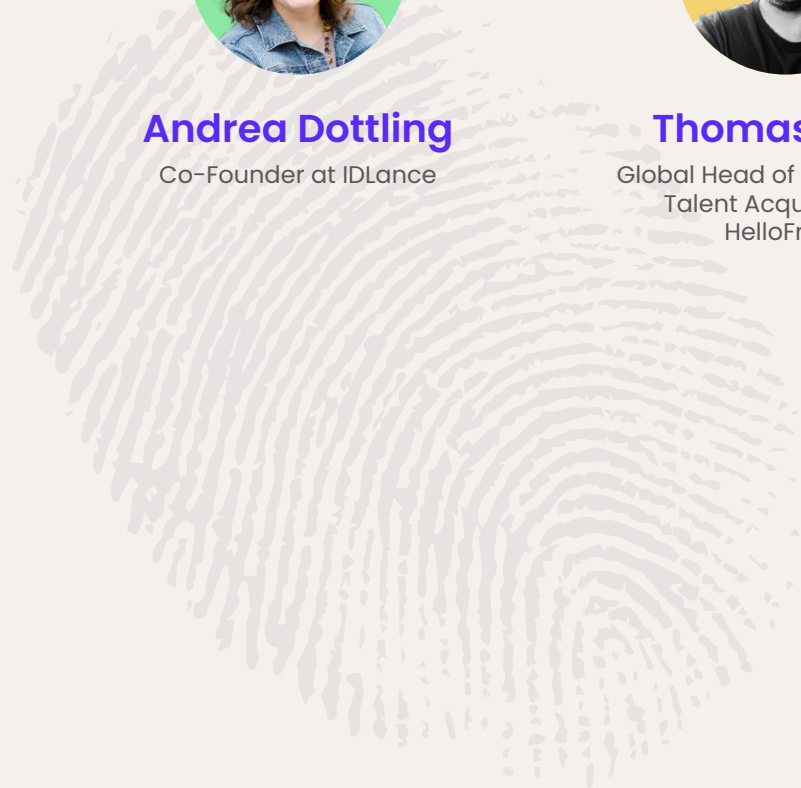


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Chapter 1

Defining Workplace Flexibility

Defining Workplace Flexibility

Key takeaway: Flexibility is a two-way street. Employees are given all possible autonomy over how and when they work; in return, they tacitly agree to show up when needed and deliver high-quality, deadline-driven work.

There are three pillars to success:

- Jobs are well defined
- Accountability is based on results
- Trust is given first

The crux of flexibility is a two-pronged agreement:

First, employees can deliver work outcomes with the maximum possible control over their time, location, and work style.

Second, employees give flexibility back to the organization, showing up when necessary to complete their work and support both colleagues and the organization as a whole.

Here's How A Few Talent Leaders Define Flexibility:

"Flexibility is finding the sweet spot between what a company wants from you when it comes to productivity and how managers empower employees to do that work in a way that works for them."



Thomas Klein

Global Head of International Talent Acquisition at HelloFresh

"Flexibility is about limiting friction, tearing down boundaries, and really focusing on getting the work done in the way that is most comfortable for our employees so that we're still being really effective, but we're not creating useless rigidity."



Zoe Schafer

Director of People at Synctera

"All of our policies around flexibility and the way people work were always about individual needs and meeting the needs of your job, your team, and the business."



Michelle Brooks

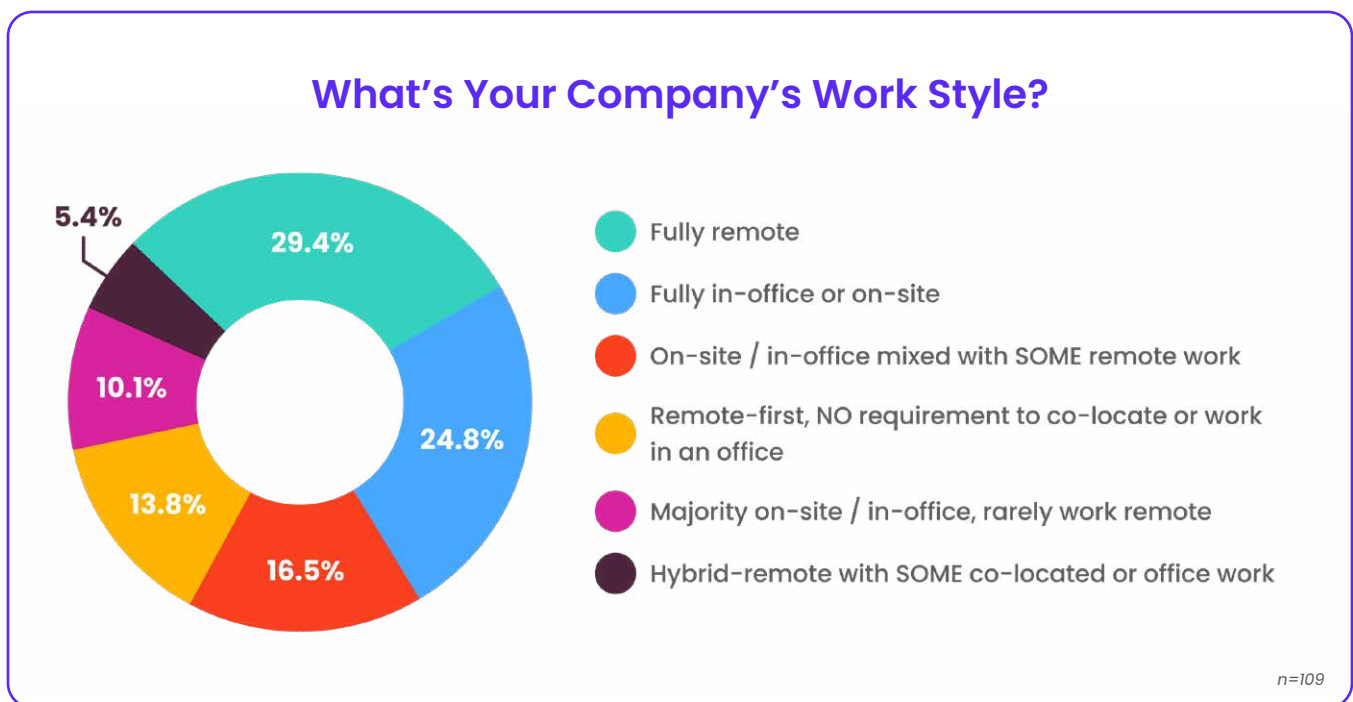
Chief People & Culture Officer at Security Compass

Flexible Work Is Not Only Remote Work

A common misconception is that “flexibility” means remote work—the reality is there’s far more to it. This is a critical distinction for two reasons:

1. Equating flexibility to remote work is a disservice to on-premise jobs such as retail, manufacturing, or transportation
2. Multiple companies opt for some in-person work even if it’s not technically required; this does not necessarily hinder overall flexibility

While nearly half of companies were fully remote or remote-first (43.2%) in our talent leader survey, the majority of companies had some in-office or on-site working requirement.



The Elements That Underpin Flexibility

The companies succeeding with flexible work arrangements tend to have the following three foundational elements in common.

1. Jobs Are Well Defined

Well-defined jobs are the critical first step to setting norms and expectations at work. A study by [McKinsey and Company](#), for instance, found that **employees who could confidently say they have established expectations and team norms were 3.4x more likely to say they were motivated at work** than those without clear norms.

“We manage on performance and on output. You do that by first establishing what is expected of somebody. We have really, really clear job descriptions and we make it clear to managers that they have to be really clear about setting expectations.”



Job van der Voort
CEO at Remote

2. Accountability Is Based On Results

The need for employees to deliver work outputs is crucial for flexible work arrangements because other metrics (like when you work) become less relevant. Another [McKinsey and Company](#) study, for example, found “**companies that focus on their people’s performance are 4.2 times more likely to outperform their peers**, realizing an average 30 percent higher revenue growth and experiencing attrition five percentage points lower.”

“If work is not getting done [in a results-based accountability system], it’s going to be very obvious and it’s going to affect other people.”



Zoe Schafer
Director of People at Synctera

3. Autonomy And Trust Are Given First

The companies that saw productivity and growth through flexible work arrangements all said they gave trust first, rather than viewing autonomy as something to be earned. Data backs this up: a study conducted by Slack, for instance, [found](#) that “employees who feel trusted are 2x more productive than employees who don’t feel trusted.”



Employees who feel trusted are...

2x more productive

Source: Slack

“Our approach has always been: you trust your employees, you make clear what they need to do in their job, and empower them to figure out a way to make that work within their lives and for their team.”



Michelle Brooks
Chief People & Culture Officer at Security Compass

Chapter 2
**The Benefits And Challenges Of
Flexible Working Structures**

The Benefits And Challenges Of Flexible Working Structures

Key takeaway: Flexible working arrangements result in a wider talent pool, employee engagement, and broader inclusion. However, there can be risks to productivity, culture, team connection, and employee fairness.

The key to reaping benefits and solving for risks lies in your accountability mechanisms, rather than something inherent to flexible work.

Flexible work leads to both benefits and challenges—here’s what to look for.

The Organizational Benefits Of Flexible Work Arrangements

Camaraderie

When people have more autonomy and flexibility, they are typically more willing to support coworkers—they know they will be supported in return.

How Flexibility Builds Camaraderie At A 100+ Person EdTech Company

While Customer Support Reps can work remotely, they must be online for their whole shift. To add flexibility, the company staggers shift times in two hour increments (e.g. starting at 6 am, 8 am, or 10 am) to enable 24/7 coverage.

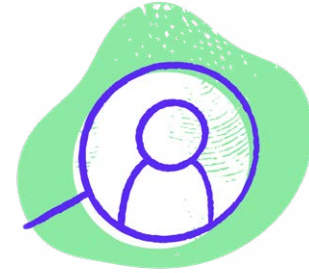
- Candidates apply to the shift they want
- Every time slot has at least two employees working
- Employees can shift switch via mutual agreement without manager approval
- Employees are allowed to arrange their own cover (e.g. asking a colleague to cover 15 minutes on a shift so they can duck out early for an obligation)
- Permanent shift switches are possible, pending team capacity

This means employees can choose the shift that works for them and there’s flexibility for life’s emergencies.

Wider Talent Pool

Whether co-located or remote, flexibility widens your talent pool. For example, not having to commute every day or being able to choose shift start times is a draw for many people.

The Willo team knows this benefit well. Recruiting globally has given us access to incredible talent. Today, our team is distributed across North America, Europe, and Asia, with everyone welcome in our Glasgow, Scotland head office.



When Inflexibility Causes Recruiting Challenges

“Manufacturing jobs need to be on-site, but we don’t offer shift flexibility. Other roles have to work from the office every day, even if the work can be done remotely. It’s one of the reasons why we don’t get more candidates—they can go make the same money in another job where they can work remotely, or at least have flexible schedules.”

— Anonymous HR manager, mid-sized manufacturing company

Employee Engagement

When an employee can work in a way that balances their natural rhythm or life obligations, they can do more deep work rather than forced time-fill. Even in on-premise settings, changes like shift switching enable people to focus on work and address urgent needs.

How Flexibility Drives Engagement

Synctera is a remote-first company that aligns to US and Canada time zones. Having that flexibility directly contributes to employees not just enjoying work, but having a great life.

“I live just outside of Toronto. I was able to hop in the car to see my parents, who live a few hours away in another city. But no one is saying ‘Hey, hold on, you’re two hours further east than where you normally are.’ It’s great—I get to have a great dinner with my folks and catch up, and the work still gets done.”



Zoe Schafer
Director of People at Synctera

Inclusion

Flexible working arrangements let employees pick the working structure that's best for them. Rather than singling individuals out with special programs, people can design their life in a way that fulfills both work and life obligations without having to disclose personal details.

“Flexibility is important for hiring, engagement, retention, and inclusion because it respects the different people who want to work—or are used to working—differently. Whether that’s a caregiving role, parents, or simply preference, it’s about giving people some autonomy to govern their day, within the context of the new work reality”



Jodi Kovitz

CEO at Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA)

Challenges And How To Solve Them

Challenges typically fell into one of three categories: Process, Cultural, and Financial.

Output And Productivity

The key to productivity is understanding flexibility inside of workplace constraints, with the goal being to minimize constraints where possible.

Teams Over Multiple Time Zones

Synctera expects that employees will be online from approximately 9 am to 5 pm in their local time zone.

With four time zones to manage across the US and Canada, the majority of the team will be online together around noon to 3 pm Eastern time (9 am to noon Pacific; 1 pm to 4 pm Atlantic).

Attending team meetings is an expectation—west coast employees don't get to ditch morning meetings in the name of flexibility.

To combat the risk of meeting creep, the company also blocks every Friday from approximately 3-6 pm eastern time. This, said Zoe, is a time for everyone to wrap up the week strong so they can enjoy the weekend.

“Flexibility is saying, ‘As long as you’re showing up to meetings and you’re getting your work done—that’s fine,’” Zoe explained. “You can log off at 4:30 pm and no one is going to say ‘You owe us 30 more minutes.’ There’s no punching a clock.”

Productivity is also informed by collective feeling. An individual employee may have the tools they need, but if they perceive unfair treatment compared to colleagues, they may not be as productive.

A key example of this is companies where employees must be on-site given the nature of their work, such as manufacturing or transportation.

Blending Fairness With Work Needs

The majority of HelloFresh’s approximately 20,000 employees work on-site in distribution centers or in transportation.

While many other colleagues can work remotely, there’s an element of fairness at play.

First, the company decided to follow regional norms for each market. These expectations are clearly communicated to candidates on job descriptions.

Second, managers apply a level of human flexibility to all on-premise jobs.

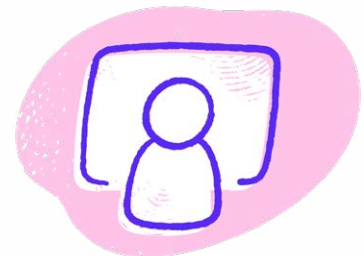
“From a management perspective, we give employees freedom [within cultural norms],” said Thomas. “In Germany, we will say a time you have to work, but you can come earlier or a bit later. If you start a bit later in the morning, then you leave a bit later. We have core working hours in Germany.”

Culture And Connection

Flexible work arrangements can improve or detract from culture; the key is in implementation.

For example, if a company operationalizes existing ad-hoc flexible arrangements, employees are likely to feel more respected and trusted—boosting culture as a result.

But there is also a risk of teams that are like ships passing in the night; you’re aware of one another but don’t build connections.



“We weren’t feeling a big productivity loss [when we switched from hybrid to remote-first]. What we were seeing was a connection loss.”



Michelle Brooks
Chief People & Culture Officer at Security Compass

Promoting a healthy culture will always be organization-dependent; there is no one-size-fits-all. However, there are common threads.

No Brilliant Jerks

Job at Remote believes the key to connection is everyone feeling like they can reach out to one another.

If you have a brilliant jerk problem in your company, people will begin to feel uncomfortable—that is what Job feels is the true breakdown of connection and culture, not being in different physical spaces.

“The most important thing we can do is create a really safe workspace,” Job said.

Intentional Connection

The Synctera team gets together 2x per week, remotely, for a full-company standup.

Tuesdays are the CEO presenting key company changes, followed by updates from each department (e.g. Marketing or Finance).

Thursdays are open Q&A. Employees can submit questions asynchronously throughout the week, giving leadership time to think and prepare a response.

Beyond all-hands, the team plans virtual events (e.g. virtual happy hours or online scavenger hunts) and supports employees getting together if they live in a similar area or are travelling.

The Quality Of Physical Space

HelloFresh’s business model requires offices and physical space. Given that necessity, the team has thought very consciously about making physical spaces that empower work.

This includes meeting rooms, silent rooms for work, prayer rooms, phone booths for calls, and open spaces for collaboration.

“The quality of the office is a big, big layer,” said Thomas.

Evolving Communication Structures

The async nature of Remote’s workplace means everyone documents their work, initially sharing in a Slack thread for everyone to see.

As the company grew, they kept their general open threads but also added an important announcements channel that execs could share on—this made it easier for key information to stay top of mind.

But even that system began to fracture around 1,500 employees, so the company's new system involves:

- AI summaries of larger threads for general updates
- Specific channels for key announcements (e.g. product, marketing, org-wide)
- Employees get job-relevant channel feeds and can follow other channels as well

Financial

Flexibility can both remove and add costs, so the key is balancing that with overall budgets.

Coworking Memberships And Flex Office Space

One of IDLance's clients maintains an office space where employees can come in to use meeting rooms or desks. They also provide a home office stipend.

Synctera provides a coworking membership to all employees who want one, a common trend among remote companies who want to save money compared to paying for a full-time office.

IRL Get Togethers

The HRPAs has regular retreats for executive planning, team building, and more. However, Jodi was clear that it's not just about physically being in the same space. If you're spending money, there has to be a better reason.

"You have to give folks a real, meaningful reason to come together—whether it's a cross-functional strategic planning, a retreat, or intentional relationship building," said Jodi.

Retreats And Team Travel

Job joked that Remote has a "nearly unlimited" budget for teams to get together for lunches, retreats, or conference travel. The caveat, he said, is that getting together in real life cannot become the default way of working. It's only to solve a pressing issue or to build a stronger bond outside of the context of day to day work.

"You have to be quite intentional as an employer to make sure that people connect with each other in non-transactional ways," said Job.

Chapter 3
**How Companies Empower
Flexibility At Work**

How Companies Empower Flexibility At Work

Key takeaway: Every organization is unique and therefore needs a nuanced approach to workplace flexibility. That said, all organizations planned across performance management, ways of work, technology, and employee working set up.

Tips For Leaders:

- Design role descriptions as performance management documents
 - Encourage team or org-wide transparency on projects and tasks; have employees 'work in public' by updating trackers everyone can access
 - Mandatory time on-site or in-office needs an intentional reason that isn't related to surveillance (since trust is given first)
-

Accruing the business benefits of flexibility—productivity, engagement, and retention—requires program design. Here's what (and how) top organizations design for success.

Performance Management

How can you ensure work is not only getting done, but productivity is maximized?

1. Comprehensive Role Descriptions

Flexibility is easiest when employees know what they are supposed to do, what their colleagues are doing, and what *future team members* will be doing.

Remote, for example, designs job descriptions based on what each role needs to accomplish for the business:

- A Sales role needs to drive revenue (in different ways depending on role type)
- A Benefits Specialist needs to design and implement benefits programs, including details like salary negotiations
- Management roles are accountable for overall team results, meaning the wrap-up of all their individual contributors' job descriptions

This approach is the foundation of Remote's [specific, comprehensive job descriptions](#) that can function as both recruiting tools and internal performance management documents.

2. Outcome-Based Accountability

Ensuring accountability is the next essential ingredient to any successful workplace, but particularly one that offers employee autonomy.

Accountability can come in multiple forms—here’s how two IDLance clients approach it:

Working in public: Andrea said one IDLance client uses a company-wide task tracker. Employees are expected to input work and change statuses as tasks progress; this makes it easy to see who is working on what at any time.

Show your work: Another client has employees submit hours and tasks via an internal ticketing system on JIRA, with document attachments to Sharepoint sites. This not only helps with accountability but also helps leaders understand how long certain tasks take, which then informs sprint planning.

Andrea explained that, in both clients’ cases, managers are not questioning individuals about every little task—it’s always about tracking outcomes.

“It’s less about every single day, day-to-day, and more deadlines-driven.”



Andrea Dottling
Co-Founder at IDLance

3. Cogent Pay Bands And Compensation Philosophies

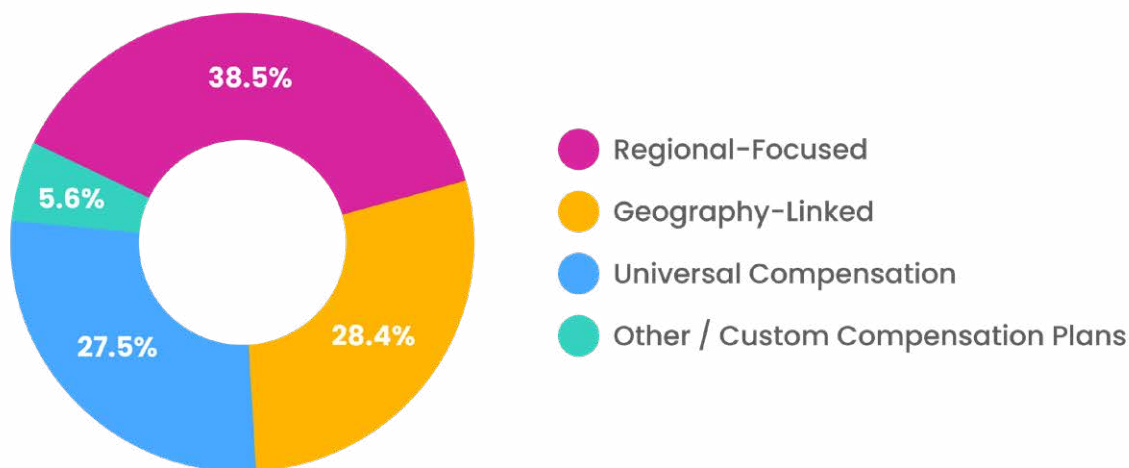
Organizations with cogent compensation philosophies can better empower flexibility (and reap the productivity benefits) because everyone can see how they are compensated.

In our research, we found companies tended to anchor towards three core compensation philosophies:

1. **Regional—38.5%:** Companies with the majority of employees in one region tended to keep pay consistent, even if some employees were remote in other areas
2. **Geography-linked—28.4%:** Compensation pegged to a specific city or country (e.g. someone in Canada is paid differently than someone in the US for the same role based on cost of living and cultural norms)
3. **Universal compensation—27.5%:** Pay rates pegged to a specific city globally and adjusted for employees everywhere (e.g. All candidates paid the same nominal amount, exchanged into local currency)

The remainder all had custom programs, typically leveraging a mix of these approaches.

What Is Your Compensation Philosophy for Employees in Different Geographic Regions?



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While we didn't research the impacts of individualized or negotiation-driven compensation, it's perhaps telling that every leader we spoke to focused on consistency, referenceability, and fairness.

Ways Of Work

If performance management is built for the employer, ways of work are built for the employee.

1. Removing Barriers To Flexibility

Some barriers to flexibility still remain, even if much of our work can be digitized or completed in different ways today.

Change infrastructure: An EdTech company wanted to become hybrid with no roles requiring on-site work, but all their server architecture was physical on-premise. By shifting to cloud architecture, IT employees could conduct the vast majority of their work remotely.

Change work times: To enable 24/7 (or 24/5) support coverage, Remote hires based on specific time zone coverage; applicants can select whatever time zone is most convenient for them, regardless of where they live.

For example, the company hires the same Customer Support role in Eastern time (e.g. New York/Toronto), Pacific time (e.g. Los Angeles/Vancouver), and Central European Time (e.g. Paris/Berlin). But someone in New York can apply to any time zone.



2. Intentional Connections

On top of designing an office space for the work it’s meant to empower, think about why people are getting together.

Punctuated moments: Jodi said the HRPAs are moving towards 2 days per week in-office hybrid arrangement. These office days will include cross-functional interaction and collaborative meetings as needed; she added they will prioritize relationship-driven team building, something the HRPAs already does, on those days.

Ensuring human connection: Andrea said one of IDLance’s clients is completely remote and largely async—except for mandatory 1:1s every week between managers and individual contributors. These may happen remotely, but it guarantees regular facetime for employees.

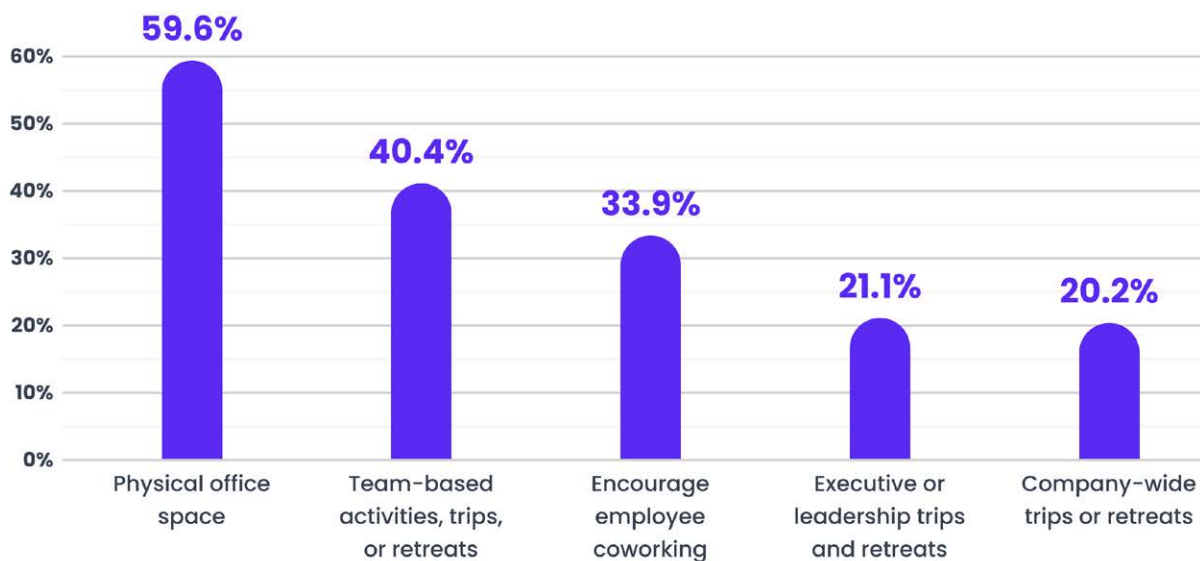
“When you have that much freedom, you just really have to check in and have that face-to-face conversation every week.”



Andrea Dottling
Co-Founder at IDLance

Leaders in our survey said the most common “IRL” activities are having a physical office space, encouraging co-working for remote employees who live near one another, and team-based group activities or retreats.

Which of the Following “In-Real-Life” Activities Does Your Organization Have on a Regular Basis?



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3. Upskilling And Training

If you're changing ways of work, additional training helps promote mutual understanding and high-quality execution.

Training Example: Security Compass

Security Compass ran two distinct trainings as the company evolved from a hybrid in-office environment to remote-first.

1. **Meeting alternatives:** Rather than jumping to a 30 minute meeting for every nuanced conversation, a middle-ground alternative was using the "Huddle" feature on Slack to talk something out over a few minutes and move on.
2. **Running effective meetings:** Content included setting good agendas, time keeping, and async pre- and post-meeting practices that improve overall meeting productivity. It also discussed recognizing when you don't need a meeting.

Technology

Most interviewees acknowledged they could do "flexible work" with a remarkably similar tech stack to co-located work.

Core tools used by most companies:

- **Communication:** Slack, Teams, etc.
- **Meetings:** Zoom, Meet, etc.
- **Tickets:** JIRA, Zendesk, etc.
- **Storage:** OneDrive, Dropbox, etc.
- **Collaboration:** Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, etc.



Additional tools:

- **Time management and productivity:** RescueTime, Toggl, etc.
- **Project tracking:** Trello, Asana, Monday.com, etc.
- **Employee engagement:** Remote, 15Five, Officevibe, etc.
- **APIs:** Zapier or custom built
- **Mental health and wellness:** Headspace, Brain.fm, Focus@Will, etc.
- **Cyber safety:** VPNs, multi-factor authentication, single-sign on, authenticator apps, etc.

Employee Set Up

Here's what leaders told us about physical spaces and flexible work.

1. Fixed Physical Spaces

Remote provides a stipend for employees to set up a home office. This includes IT equipment beyond your work laptop, for instance additional monitors or keyboards.

One IDLance client, for example, also provides a home office stipend but decided to keep their downtown offices as well. Andrea at IDLance explained that the company uses a hot-desking approach so employees can book desks or meeting rooms as needed.

2. Variable Physical Spaces

Many hybrid or remote-first companies will encourage employees to work in coworking spaces if needed or desired. Both Synctera and Remote, for example, pay for coworking memberships.

3. Regional And Global Mobility

HelloFresh Supports Global Career Growth

Thomas said HelloFresh empowers geographic mobility to offer career mobility.

For example, someone in Toronto is ready for a lateral move or a new role but no role exists locally. That person can be considered for an internal move in another country and city where the role exists—for instance, Barcelona—and HelloFresh would offer relocation support.

Remote Gives Employees Unlimited Choice

Remote lets employees move anywhere in the world. The caveat is employees accept their new local standard pay and benefits package, which Remote shares in its [Total Rewards Philosophy](#).

If the move would result in a pay increase (i.e. moving from a low cost of living region to a high cost of living region), Remote reserves the right to approve based on available budget.



Chapter 4
**A 3-Phase Guide To Succeeding
With Flexible Work Arrangements**

A 3-Phase Guide To Succeeding With Flexible Work Arrangements

Key takeaway: Start with data collection, identifying ad-hoc flexible arrangements already happening in your organization, employee lived experiences, and business goals. From there, look at interconnected data points and trends to define what flexibility needs to deliver for your company and team. Finally, design a program that fits in your organizational context.

Tip: Don't forget about input and outcome-based metrics, enforcement mechanisms, and day-one training or preparations.

Rather than following the same fixed steps, interviewees coalesced around a few common prompting questions and frameworks.

Phase 1: Data Collection

Here are three prompting questions to help you gather contextual data for your organization.

What Is Already Happening?

Whether through observation, prior knowledge, or a survey, document any instances of flexibility that are already happening and how employees got their new arrangement.

Hidden Flexibility In A “No Flex Work” Company

Despite a “no flex work” policy, one HR leader in a manufacturing company discovered there's actually quite a bit of hidden and ad-hoc flexibility in her organization.

For example, one employee's wife works a hybrid remote job, so he wanted to work from home when she was in the office so he could look after their children.

Rather than asking for a hybrid or remote work arrangement, he filed for an “accommodation” with HR. While childcare is not a legally protected accommodation or union benefit in his region, the HR team required his manager to provide the flexibility on an ad-hoc basis.

That employee's performance didn't slip due to the shift. Further, his colleagues understood him wanting to take care of his kids, so there was no perceived unfairness.

What Are Employees' Lived Experiences?

Rather than waiting for someone to ask for accommodation, you can proactively ask employees what they have to handle outside of work.

Note: As you survey, make sure responses are **anonymous** and **optional**. In many jurisdictions, this information could be protected by anti-discrimination laws, so make sure you're following all local labor laws.

Prioritizing Employee Input

At the HRPA, Jodi said her team regularly conducts pulse and deep-dive surveys, both proactively and when a new policy is implemented.

Surveys ask employees how they feel about the new (or proposed) policy, if it delivers (or will deliver) the intended benefits, and what equity looks like to those individuals.

If employees choose to disclose personal circumstances (e.g. healthcare needs, caregiving responsibilities, or other lived experiences), that becomes extra data to support the case for flexible work.

What Challenges Does The Company Face—Or What Goals Does It Want To Achieve?

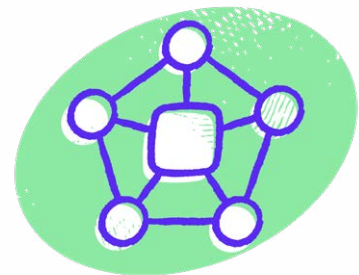
Review company goals, vision, mission, and values. Could flexible work help the company get closer to the good stuff (or fix some of the challenges that leadership is already aware of)?

Phase 2: Trends, Interconnected Problems, And Opportunities

Connecting The Dots

For example, if you're struggling with talent attraction and retention, it might be due to lack of flexibility. Or if productivity is low, could a flexible work arrangement boost team morale and work output?

Also take a look at lived experiences. If someone's productivity is low and they have already disclosed they have childcare responsibilities, could some flexibility give them the space they need to better balance work and family obligations?



Documenting Organizational Boundaries

Note what can't change—the things that are inherent to your business model that might seem antithetical to “flexibility.”

For example, the majority of HelloFresh's approximately 20,000 employees are in manufacturing or transportation roles; remote work is simply not an option.

These boundaries become obstacles to work around, rather than a justification to not have any flexibility in the role. HelloFresh accomplishes this with different shift start times and empowering employees to occasionally swap shifts, start early and leave early, or start late and leave late.

Defining Flexibility For Your Organization

Before implementing anything, define flexibility in your context:

- What is flexibility meant to provide for employees?
- What does flexibility enable for the organization?

This becomes a foundation for ideation, decision making, and communicating the ultimate outcomes or policy changes.

“When you communicate the ‘why’ clearly... you get a [better] commitment from employees.”



Thomas Klein
Global Head of International Talent Acquisition at HelloFresh

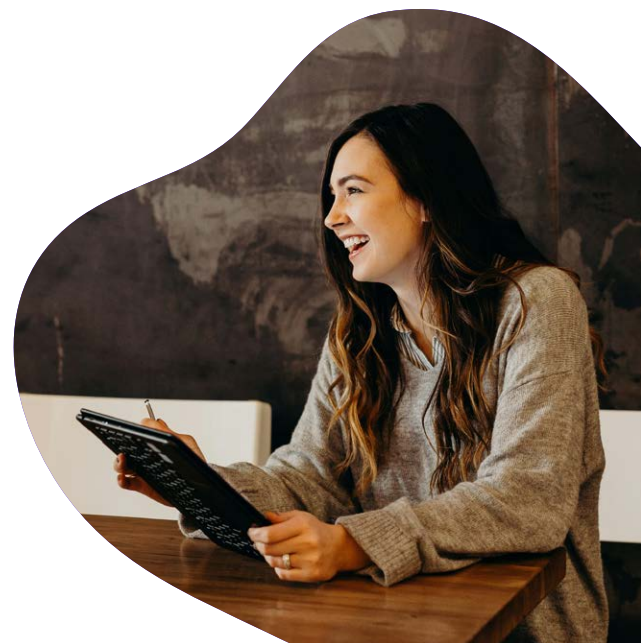
Phase 3: Design Your Custom Solution

Spotting Opportunities

As you connect the dots, are there obvious quick wins?

The HR leader in a manufacturing company, for example, is looking to operationalize the shift flexibility that's *already* happening in the organization on an ad-hoc basis.

At the HRP, Jodi takes a co-creation approach. While leadership ultimately designs and implements policies, collecting employee perspectives makes it easy to spot trends across the whole team that could become quick-win changes.



Take Inspiration From Others

You don't need to start from scratch; take inspiration from other organizations and customize the policy, initiative, or approach to your organizational context.

There are examples throughout this ebook, but here are a few specific call-outs.

A. Meetings

Security Compass has a policy that meetings should be about discussion, not status updates or going through a presentation.



With that in mind, people who book meetings are required to send:

- A meeting goal
- An agenda
- Any pre-reading

There's also a 48 hour window post-meeting to add additional async comments.

B. IRL Connection

While the majority of Synctera's employees live in either the Bay Area or Toronto, the company does not have an office mandate.



To encourage more IRL connection, the company has a "WeWork Wednesdays" culture.

- Synctera pays for WeWork memberships for employees
- Employees can go whenever they want

The company encourages people to go on Wednesdays if they can or want to—this increases the chances that you'll get to see your colleagues.

C. Documentation

Remote defaults to async work for its 1,700+ employees globally. Job empowers this with the company's "[Culture of Documentation](#)."



Key learnings are:

- Every directive and decision is written down
- How to respond to chat messages to indicate different things (e.g. acknowledgment, task complete, etc.)
- A guide on creating high-quality, context-rich documentation others can use to inform their work and decisions.

Make It Your Own

How can you apply research and examples in your organization? How can you empower good things that are already happening while designing a longer-term strategy?

Interviewees said the key to success here is around communication:

- Your definition of flexibility
- What policies are being changed, added, or removed
- Why the change is happening—what the new policy will do differently from the old

This reinforces the importance of collecting first-party data. When employees can see their suggestions reflected in the final policy, they are much more likely to support and commit to following guidelines.

“There are many different ways to approach this opportunity of building a workforce for the future.”



Jodi Kovitz

CEO at Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA)

Other Considerations

Metrics

Measuring success should be based on the initial problems to solve or goals to achieve, rather than inputs.

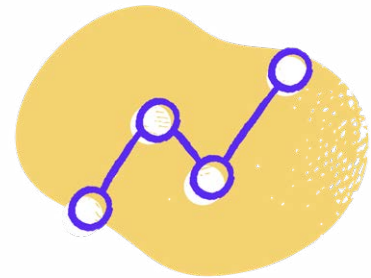
For example: You implemented a staggered-start for all shift workers, such as customer support. *You did this to improve recruiting outcomes for those teams.*

Usage metrics (e.g. how many employees changed their shift time and how many applicants applied for different start times?) should be tracked for informational purposes.

But the *goal* metrics are around hiring:

- Did you get more qualified applicants?
- Are applicants more excited about the role given its flexibility?
- Do applicants cite flexibility as a reason they applied for (or accepted) the role?

Usage metrics help you track uptake, but goal metrics help you track outcomes.



Program “Teeth”

All programs need what Jodi at HRPA calls “teeth” in order to be effective.

For example, let’s say you design a hybrid remote arrangement that requires two days in the office per week.

If some employees work remotely 100% of the time for multiple weeks, what happens?

“You have to be thoughtful around intentional, intersectional approaches to accommodation, but there also has to be some ‘teeth’ to your program. Whether it’s a carrot or a stick depends on your values as an organization.”



Jodi Kovitz

CEO at Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA)

Change Factors

What triggers or factors will trigger a re-assessment of your working style or policies?

Leaders we spoke to said a few common factors stood out:

- Productivity dropping
- Not meeting deadlines
- Significant company growth or change
- Employee feedback signalling part (or all) of a policy isn’t delivering the intended benefit



Each of these factors should be *measured* as well, to ensure you’re operating from data and not gut feeling.

Day One Preparations

Make sure you have any training, documentation, or Q&A ready for leaders expected to communicate and enforce your new (or updated) policies.

The Power Of Flexibility

Flexibility is a tool that, executed properly, delivers both employee and organizational benefit.

Every leader we spoke to shared the importance of knowing what flexibility is *for their* organization, giving trust first, and empowering with policy and ways of work. It's also an ongoing project, often requiring some iteration before getting it right initially and requiring evolution as the company (or your industry) changes.

Regardless of what drives the push for flexibility, it's crucial to involve employees in the process. Leaders should collect first-party data about their organization and its employees. From there, don't be afraid to build a program that works for *your people*—it doesn't matter how it looks from the outside if it works for your team.

Flexible work is part of the overall growth in the world of work. The key is to design it for real humans, doing real jobs, in the genuine context of your organization.



About Willo

Willo is a candidate screening platform that helps companies around the world save time and make more confident hiring decisions.

Our features include:

- One-way video interview platform.
- Ability to ask for video, audio, text, or document uploads from candidates.
- Scorecards to fairly and accurately assess candidate interview responses.
- Customizable branding so the platform looks and feels like your organization.
- Over 5,000 secure integrations from Willo to major HR and ATS platforms.
- Willo Intelligence, the AI-powered tools that give you superhuman hiring powers by instantly searching, summarizing, and surfacing the best candidates, all while keeping you in control of every decision.
- Willo is localized for the 18 most spoken languages on earth—Arabic, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Welsh—with more languages coming soon.
- Identity, DBS, and right-to-work checks globally.

Methodology

Willo conducted in-depth interviews with the thought leaders named and quoted in this article, plus additional research where cited. We also drew from original quantitative research conducted to produce Willo's 2024 Hiring Trends Report.

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