

BUSINESS ADVANTAGES OF FLEXWORK

While flexibility plays a critical role in employee satisfaction and work-life balance, a growing body of research shows that both employees and employers gain from flexwork. By understanding the business advantages, employees are better able to make a solid case in a formal flexwork proposal, and managers can evaluate proposals according to business needs. Considering the range of possible advantages may lead to innovative arrangements. Some of these advantages include the following:

- **Business continuity:** Mastering the principles and practices of flexwork—such as establishing communication norms, use of approved technology, managing to results—can help organizations prepare for disruptions to work caused by weather, construction, and other unexpected occurrences. [Harvard's Business Continuity program](#) provides tools, templates, and support to schools and departments for developing unit-specific business continuity plans.
- **Increased coverage hours:** Innovative scheduling may increase hours of coverage or service while reducing overtime costs.
- **Recruitment and retention:** [Research](#) shows that flexibility is key to attracting and retaining talent. Many employees—including those with scarce skill sets—rate job satisfaction higher than they do salary, and they favor jobs and employers that provide more flexible work environments.
- **Less unnecessary use of accrued leave:** Staff can more efficiently attend to personal appointments, (e.g., teleworking on the day of a dental appointment might mean the employee takes only two hours of sick leave rather than an entire afternoon) and more easily schedule appointments during non-work hours.
- **Increased focus on managing to results:** Productivity is measured in terms of results and contributions rather than by counting hours of work or hours of sitting in the office.
- **Improved engagement, satisfaction, and performance:** Flexibility is a key element in employee engagement and can lead to greater job satisfaction and enhanced contribution.
- **Sustainability:** More control over where, when, and how work is performed contributes to physical and psychological wellbeing, which is an important component of [Harvard's sustainability plan](#).
- **More efficient use of working space:** Employees on different schedules can use the same desk or equipment at different hours.
- **More efficient use of available time:** Employees in different locations can collaborate more effectively with planned use of available technology. Decreasing travel time to a meeting at another campus frees up time for other work. Using videoconferencing and other collaboration technologies enables employees' full participation.
- **Better commutes:** A nonstandard schedule can allow an employee to travel during off-peak hours, shortening commute times and supporting traffic management efforts for communities.
- **Diversity:** A flexible work environment supports the diverse needs of a diverse community.

