



The case study has been prepared on behalf of "MPR GROUP"
by 'School Hours', Australia's family friendly employment experts.



Flexible Working Arrangements or Family Friendly Working Arrangements as we like to refer to them as, are taking the corporate world by storm. Work is evolving. When, where and how people work is evolving and businesses all over the world are looking at the benefits this evolution brings with it and how it provides their businesses with better outcomes.



There is a positive shift towards measuring employee output or what an employee produces instead of the more traditional measurement of input or how long an employee works. This shift has proven to increase engagement, gender imbalances, productivity and loyalty with decreases in absenteeism, staff turnover and recruitment costs (attraction, induction and training).

One of our core goals as Australia's family friendly employment expert is to ensure businesses using flexible or family friendly working arrangements are showcased. What was done? How was it done? What did it achieve? The answers to these questions should be displayed for all to see. The more these practices are demonstrated to work, the greater the acceptance and implementation of them will be and that is good for everyone.

We hope you enjoy this exposé on family friendly employment practices being used effectively. If you need more information on how to become a family friendly employer, please email or call us today.

Yours sincerely
Leigh and Yasmin Grigaliunas

Directors and Co-Founders



introduction



This case study focuses on **MPR Group**, a Melbourne based accounting and advisory firm. MPR Group advises small and medium sized businesses at every stage of their business growth from start-up, to market expansion and exit. They provide tailored solutions and personalised advice to meet their client needs including outsourced accounting, tax, business advisory, grants and funding services. Their vision is to be the accounting firm of choice for small and medium business owners serious about achieving extraordinary success for their business and themselves, and to be the employer of choice for professionals committed to achieving their full potential. MPR Group achieves this, in part, by using world class flexible working arrangements and more than 5 years on from introducing their Flexible Employment Model, they are delighted with the results.





WHAT senior management says...

Q. Please tell us your name, position and provide us with a brief position description?

Shwu Lin Stepanovski, Business Manager. I assist the Directors with operational management of the business; this includes human resources management and developing the policies of the business. Introducing our Flexible Employment Model was one of my projects to implement with our Directors. I interact with the entire team and report to our 2 Directors.

Q. How long have you been providing flexible arrangements to your team?

We introduced our Flexible Employment Model in 2008 as part of our ongoing efforts to offer a great environment and work conditions for staff and as part of our attraction and retention efforts.

Q. What kind of flexible arrangements do you offer?

Our Flexible Employment Model, enables staff to work remotely up to 2 days a week or work flexible hours to start and finish their day early or late to accommodate their personal or family needs. A large percentage of our team utilise our flexible arrangements.

At the same time we implemented a paperless office and IT solutions. This allows the team to electronically access all files and software anywhere they can logon with a secure internet connection. Smartphones and cloud based software has extended this accessibility in recent years.

Clear communication about expectations and guidance to support the team who want to utilise this arrangement is important. Open sharing of

calendars to encourage transparency and enable people to locate each other quickly is also key, as is using language like “working remotely” or “from the other office” rather than home, has helped to create the right perceptions as well. These steps have helped to ensure the team and the business, get the best outcomes from these work arrangements.

We also offer part time work arrangements where it suits the business and the individual, and utilise casual work arrangements from time to time, predominantly for project work.

Q. Do you have an official policy in place covering workplace flexibility?

We have an official Flexible Employment Model policy and agreements.

Q. What do you see as the main benefits of offering flexible working arrangements?

It allows our team to save time on travel and be efficient with their personal and work time, while juggling the various demands they have in life. We think it's just one small part of the great work, opportunities, environment and culture we provide at MPR and the proof of that is in the great people we attract to our team, our average staff retention which has been increasing over the years and the growth and satisfaction of our client base.

Q. Is flexibility available to all staff members?

Our Flexible Employment Model is available to most staff once they complete their probationary period. Flexible hours is available to most staff and flexible location is available to staff that are senior enough to direct their own work activities.

Q. If not all staff are eligible, could you tell us who it is available to and the reasoning behind this?

Reception and certain other office administration tasks need to be performed in our office, which

limits the ability of the staff responsible for them being able to take advantage of the arrangements.

Q. Do you formally measure any aspect of the arrangement(s) to confirm that is in fact providing you with value as an employer?

Feedback and monitoring of staff satisfaction and the effectiveness and productivity of our team is discussed as part of our regular performance appraisal process with all staff.

Q. When hiring, do you advertise that you're an employer that is open to providing flexibility?

Yes. It's referred to in advertising and discussed during interview.

Q. Do you think your approach to flexibility assists in attracting and securing and retaining talent?

Yes we do and our retention rates have improved

over the time since we implemented our Flexible Employment Model.

However, it's only one of many factors that we believe make MPR Group an attractive employer and we continually work at all the others including quality and diversity of work, team and business culture, office environment and growth of the business to provide career and development opportunities for our team.

Q. Please rate the importance of providing flexibility within the workplace?

Quite important.





WHAT THE EMPLOYEES SAY...

Q. Please tell us your name, position and provide us with a brief position description?

Monique Roper, Senior Accountant. I am a senior accountant providing services including tax and business advisory, compliance and management accounting. I manage two junior accountants and report directly to the partners of MPR.

Q. What are your current working arrangements?

I am a full time employee that works under a flexible employment model (FEM) which allows me to work from home on a regular basis. I currently work remotely one set day a week but there is also some flexibility to change the day and the frequency depending on current circumstances and client commitments. Our office is a paperless environment therefore I have access to all systems that are used in the practice either via cloud based software or remote server access.

Q. Has the role always offered this level of flexibility?

Yes I was informed when I started at MPR that this was available for senior staff but I did not request to take up this offer until around 12 months of employment. I discussed the options as part of an annual performance review and then completed an FEM agreement.

Q. Are there any mechanisms in place to measure your productivity against the norm?

We have a 6 monthly informal review and an annual performance review to discuss performance on a whole. We have an open door policy, so if there were any issues with performance or related to my flexible working arrangement, it would be discussed during the year or more formally during

my appraisal. As we have access to all systems via our laptops from home, there is generally no decrease in efficiency or productivity. If anything productivity is increased on these days as there are less interruptions when working away from the office. If there were any issues with productivity (monitored monthly based on % of billable hours submitted through daily timesheets) this would be raised as part of our review process.

Q. Do you think you are treated differently by your colleagues because of your working arrangement?

Not at all. All senior staff are offered flexible work location and the rest of the team have the opportunity to work flexible hours. I have never received any negative feedback from colleagues about staff working remotely.

Q. What does being afforded this flexibility mean to you?

I am happy with my current working arrangement. Working from home breaks up the week and also allows me to concentrate on certain tasks with less interruptions. I originally lived about an hour from the office and so I appreciated not having to travel into the office every day.

Q. How do you feel about flexibility in the workplace in general?

I think it should be more widely adopted by employers. It assists in retaining employees, staff morale is higher and staff burn-out is lower. It also provides more opportunity for that all important work life balance, particularly for those staff with children. I believe MPR is at an advantage from a recruitment perspective by offering this model.





conclusion:

Clearly these responses are evidence the Flexible Employment Model introduced by **MPR Group** in 2008 is working well for them. Offering flexible or family friendly work arrangements is a leap of faith for some businesses, particularly smaller ones, and so it's always great to see data from SMEs, proving these arrangements are as good for a big business as they are for small.

Contact us today for assistance to transform your business into a 'family friendly employer'. Aside from bringing your business in line with some of the world's leading businesses, it may help launch your business to the next level. We're certain you and your staff will be grateful for joining the family friendly employment revolution.



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