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Agile Working

A Guide for Employers

Incorporating:

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Forum *on* Age

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Forum *on*
Belief

Employers 4 Fathers

Contents

1. What is agile working?

Agile working is a way of working in which an organisation empowers its people to work where, when and how they choose – with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints – to optimise their performance and deliver "best in class" value and customer service. It uses communications and information technology to enable people to work in ways, which best suit their needs without the traditional limitations of where and when tasks must be performed.[1]

It is based on the concept that work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go. With the technology available to modern business, there are numerous tools to help us work in new and different ways, to meet customer needs, reduce costs, increase productivity and improve sustainability.

Agile working is a transformational tool to allow organisations to work smarter by eliminating all barriers to working efficiently.

2. What is the aim of agile working?

The aim of agile working is simply to create a more responsive, efficient and effective organisation, which ultimately improves business performance and increases customer satisfaction.

3. Is it the same as flexible working?

Agile working may incorporate flexible working practices but the aims, drivers and scope are significantly different.

Flexible working is a work pattern, which has been designed for an individual, usually to help that person balance work and home life. Flexible working has traditionally been viewed as a benefit for the employee at a cost to the employer. Whilst this is a narrow view that is not supported by research, flexible working does tend to be driven by the employee and usually only involves changes to working time, patterns and location.

Agile working is based on the complete flexibility of work to drive long-term organisational success. Whilst it can unlock value for both the employer and the employee, it will be driven by business needs.

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[1] The Agile Organisation 2013

4. Benefits of agile working

Benefits are gained from changing work practices, utilising new technologies and creating new working environments.

Benefits for the business include:

- Increased productivity and efficiency
- Space savings
- Reduced property costs
- Reduced cost of fuel and parking
- Extended business hours
- Meeting customer's expectations
- Ability to match workforce to fluctuating demands
- Better utilisation of skills
- Increased innovation
- Reduction in organisational and personal carbon footprint
- Improved business continuity – less disruption due to weather, office security issues, travel problems etc.
- Improved staff performance
- Ability to attract and retaining high quality talent
- Reduced absenteeism and related costs
- Reduced staff turnover with associated costs and reduction in lost knowledge, skills and experience
- Increased motivation and engagement of staff

Benefits for employees include:

- Reduced travel time and related cost
- Personal productivity – fewer distractions, improved focus, concentration, creativity, better use of skills and less frustration linked to fewer barriers
- Improved work life balance
- Increase in wellbeing, health and happiness – reduced stress, better sense of control, ability to integrate healthy eating and exercise into the day
- Increased engagement as a result of the autonomy and trust at work

5. Value in agile working

There is no one size fits all approach to agile working so the benefits will be different for every organisation. However, there are reports indicating the level of value that could be gained by adopting agility.

The Flex Factor report[2] is based on a national survey of 2,828 employees and employers and their attitudes to flexible working. Whilst it only covers the value that could be achieved by adopting better flexible working, many of the themes apply to agile working.

The report finds that employees estimate they could gain on average five productive hours per week (e.g. from commuting) through better ways of working, which equates to around £4,200 per employee per year.

The report also found a direct and statistically significant relationship between flexible working adoption and overall organisational performance. Flexible working was found to account for 5 percent of the variance in overall organisational performance. This is a small but not insignificant contributor to organisational success, which would be greater if the full scope of agile working is adopted.

The Agile Organisation also report on significant efficiency and cost benefits of agile working in the following three **Case Studies**[3]:

BT

In their rollout of flexible working practices, under the Workstyle 2000 programme, BT found that absenteeism reduced by 63% when employees worked flexibly. They also found that *flexible employees were on average 20% more productive* than their office-based counterparts, where productivity was measured using internal business metrics such as absenteeism, sick leave and maternity return rates. BT found that CO_2 emissions reduced significantly providing a lower carbon footprint. BT reported that staff travelled 178 miles per week less, totaling 150,000,000 miles per annum. Thus they avoided the purchase of approximately 12 million litres of fuel per year, resulting in 54,000 tonnes less CO_2 being generated in the UK. Teleconferencing has eliminated the annual need for over 300,000 face-to-face meetings, leading to savings of over £38.6 million a year. This has also removed the need for over 1.5 million return journeys saving BT staff the equivalent of 1,800 years commuting – with further environmental benefits. Property costs also reduced by 30% (£104m per annum.) through the programme, which was designed to reduce the legacy estate through provision of new, modern networked buildings, aligned to the required employee empowered "culture" of the future organisation.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC)

PwC implemented flexible working in their Birmingham office. Desk sharing was

[2] Flex Factor Report, RSA and Vodafone July 2013
[3] The Agile Organisation Flexible Working Benefits: Collated Evidence and Case Studies 12/09/12

introduced at 1.8:1 staff to desks overall (with highly mobile workers sharing at 5:1). This enabled 1,900 staff in four offices to be consolidated into one regional office resulting in a property saving of approx £30m over the next 10 years. Costs per person have fallen by 41% from £5,780 to £3,400. The capital investment costs of £7.5m were paid back within three years PwC believe their flexible working strategy and the co- location of different teams has *resulted in an increase in profit of 15% due to cross-selling of services between teams*. This has aided recruitment and retention such that only 12% of staff asked to leave in one year, the lowest figure on record, and PwC was voted "UK No 1 graduate employer of choice". Also 95% of staff say they are happy with the new building and services – with 87% agreeing that it is a great place to work. The strategy has been rolled- out on a larger scale at their new London offices.

EC Harris

When moving to their new Headquarters office (ECHQ) and implementing flexible working, the building was demonstrated to have had a *positive impact on how staff and clients view EC Harris*, and they believe that the building helps the business to win work. The *new working practices also increased integration, flexibility and transfer of knowledge between teams*. EC Harris report that their *net profit margin increased by 13%* from pre-move levels and the fee turnover per head increased by 7.5%. They also found that overhead costs as percentage of staff costs reduced by 14%. The success at ECHQ had a business-wide impact on transforming EC Harris. After moving to their new Headquarters, they found that *staff attrition dropped by 10%, whereas staff attraction improved from 1:1 before the move to 2.5:1 after*. They also found the space utilisation increased from 62% to 85% and the total occupancy cost per employee went decreased by 36%.

6. Drivers for agile working

There are several key drivers:

Customer need[4]
- Globalisation, greater competition and demand for customised, individualised products;
- More emphasis on services, knowledge and relationships

Changing demographics and workforce
- Women in the workforce has risen from 59 per cent in 1980 to 70 per cent today – and ageing workforce, coupled with changing career patterns[5]

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[4] From Transforming Work, EOC working paper 60, Autumn 2007
[5] From Transforming Work, EOC working paper 60, Autumn 2007

- The shape of the UK workforce continues to change. The share of total employment taken by white-collar occupations is projected to rise from 42% to 46% between 2010 and 2020. A rather faster pace of change, with accelerated growth in professional roles and bigger declines in trade and blue-collar occupations, is now expected than was the case over the previous decade. The professions will account for approximately 83% of all new jobs in Britain in the next decade.

Increasing demand for work life balance
- The Academic and Business Research Institute's 2008 study of Generation X's materialistic attributes, Factoring for X, found that "Gen X is concerned about a balance between work and personal time. They want challenging work but also want the flexibility to perform it on their own terms.
- The London Business School's 2009 research on young professionals' perspectives on work, career and gender, The Reflexive Generation, found that " in respect to work-life balance one thing was clear: the single most important element in relation to work-life balance is that they want autonomy over when and how to work".

Cost and efficiency
- The traditional office environment is expensive and often results in under occupancy
- Wasted time in commuting - UK workers spend seven hours a week commuting, which is longer than anywhere else in Europe and is equivalent to working 47 extra days a year[6].
- Cost of business travel

Technology[7]
- New ways to connect with colleagues/customers and share knowledge and ideas quickly and effectively wherever they are, and whatever time of the day.
- Around half of employees (51 percent) currently rely on an employer-provided desktop PC. However, a similar proportion (46 percent) now has access to a laptop through work. One in four employers provide a smartphone and one in ten are now providing tablet computers, reflecting the diversification of devices that employees can use to work when and how they want.
- N.B. Employees are clearly taking up what slack remains with their own devices, as over a quarter use either their own laptop or PC to enable them to work flexibly.

Sustainability[8]

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[6] Labour Force Survey Autumn 2005
[7] Flex Factor Report, RSA and Vodafone July 2013
[8] The Agile Organisation 2012

- Some 25 million commuters go to a fixed place of work every day and of these 18 million go by car, compressed into a few hours in the morning and evening rush hours.
- Annual UK Office commuting alone produces 19.7 million tonnes of CO_2 emission, while in the US a study showed 20,000 federal workers telecommuting just one day a week would save 2 million commuting miles and 81,600 lbs of CO_2 emissions every week.
- While car travel is one of the big carbon emitters, buildings (and particularly offices) are by far the biggest source accounting for over 40% of the total UK emission of 153 million tonnes of CO_2.

7. Where can agility be achieved?

The Agile Future Forum recommends that agile working practices should be considered along four dimensions:

- **Time:** when do people work?
- **Location:** where do people work?
- **Role:** what do people do?
- **Source:** who is employed?

Each of these dimensions contains a number of resourcing options for the employer to consider:

7.1   Time

- Regular part time working (i.e. fixed, part time contracts with prorated benefits to full time, not job sharing)
- Job share (i.e. where two or multiple employees cover one role)
- Flexitime (i.e. where the weekly number of hours are fixed but there is choice over when they are worked)
- Self-rostering (i.e. employees select their own hours, possibly within a fixed shift pattern)
- Varied working hours (i.e. where there can be irregular start and finish time)
- Working time accounts (i.e. the total number of hours are contracted over a long period and the actual working pattern varies over the period)
- Annualised hours (i.e. hours are agreed over the year but the working pattern varies)
- Staged retirement (i.e. where there is a gradual reduction in working time prior to complete retirement)
- Shift swapping (i.e. allowing staff to rearrange hours with colleagues)

- Compressed hours (i.e. where contracted hours are worked in fewer than the normal number of working days)
- Paid overtime (i.e. ad hoc increase in hours for overtime pay)
- Voluntary reduced time (i.e. offering extra unpaid leave to reduce staffing costs)
- Commission outcomes (i.e. contract no based on number of fixed hours, reward based on output target only)
- Seasonal blocks (i.e. working hours follow seasonal changes in demand)
- Shift work (i.e. groups of employees do the same jobs in rotation)

N.B. Some of these options can be combined to provide even greater flexibility.

7.2   Location

- Owned desk or office (i.e. a workspace with PC and fixed telephone for someone usually based in the same place)
- Hot desks (i.e. a shared desk, staff work from within a fixed office but with mobility throughout the space)
- Quiet area/zone (i.e. hot desks to support concentration, laptop connections but no telephones)
- Touchdown workbenches (i.e. drop in areas with PCs or connections for laptops for fast short stay access)
- Team table (i.e. adaptable table to support team working, shared hot seating for team members)
- Renting work-hub desks (i.e. renting office space from an external provider to provide working space for mobile staff)
- Mobile (i.e. staff have no base and work remotely)
- Home working (i.e. staff based at home for a proportion of their time, although travel may still be necessary)
- Multi-site (i.e., staff based at multiple locations – fixed or flexible)
- Mixed seating (i.e. where different roles are located together to gain efficiencies)

7.3   Role

- Secondments (i.e. temporary roles)
- Self-selection (i.e. employees select own tasks)
- Multi-skilling (i.e. where staff are trained to fulfil multiple roles depending on demand)
- Flexi-teams (i.e. where there are no fixed teams, instead teams are formed to meet specific needs)
- Job rotation (i.e. staff move through roles to gain wider experience to meet changing demands)

- Skills based tasking (i.e. staff are assessed and assigned tasks and projects by competencies not role)

7.4 Source

- Outsourcing (i.e. contracting third-party companies)
- Sharing/partnering (i.e. having a joint labour pool with peers)
- Utilising former employees at periods of high demand
- Crowd-sourcing (i.e. using volunteers and other non–employees)
- Fixed–term contracts (i.e. where staff are employed to temporarily fill a role)
- Freelance (i.e. directly sourced individuals)
- Bidding on tasks (i.e. free market bidding on tasks by non-employees and organisations)

8. Who can be agile at work?

Clearly, there is more scope for flexible working in some jobs than others, but most jobs will have some scope for agility. Staff in a care home or supermarket cannot be flexible in their location of work, but flexibility can be achieved in the other areas, such as time, roles and source.
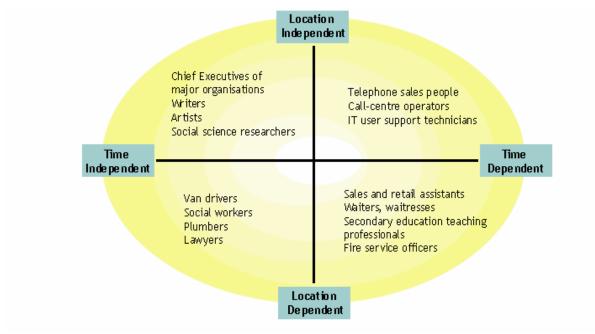
The Equal Opportunities Commission completed an investigation into the transformation of work[9], where it suggested that an organisation should map jobs against opposing axes of time dependency and location dependency. The study mapped all 353 occupations in the standard classification of jobs (SOC 2000) on to a diagram, positioning them where most of the jobs within the occupation could be, given their nature. These occupations were allocated to each quadrant on the basis of how time and location dependent most of the jobs within the occupation could be, given their intrinsic nature. They found that:

- About 60% of workers are in the occupations in the bottom right of the map, where time and location flexibility are traditionally less available. This broad group of occupations contains slightly more women (around 55%) than men (around 45%). But despite the business realities of these occupations, models are possible that increase the degree of flexibility. It is particularly important to think creatively about what is in the interests of business and employees in these occupations given the high numbers of people involved and the fact that about 45% of these occupations are in the bottom quartile of jobs

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[9] Enter the timelords (2007): Transforming work to meet the future. Final report of the EOC's investigation into the Transformation of Work

(typically the lowest paid) and those working here often have the least control over their working lives.

- At the other extreme, in the top left of the map are occupations that account for about 1 in 7 employees. Here, where there is potentially the least constraint on time and location flexibility given the nature of the jobs, men currently account for 6 out of 10 employees in these occupations. Women are less represented. People tend to have more control over when and where they work and around three-fifths of the occupations in this quadrant are in the top quartile of jobs (typically the highest paid).

Location Independent

Chief Executives of major organisations
Writers
Artists
Social science researchers

Telephone sales people
Call-centre operators
IT user support technicians

Time Independent

Time Dependent

Van drivers
Social workers
Plumbers
Lawyers

Sales and retail assistants
Waiters, waitresses
Secondary education teaching professionals
Fire service officers

Location Dependent

An improvement in agile working will be possible in most areas of most businesses, but the ideal model will be different in each area as it depends on the individual business requirements and people involved. Therefore when considering an agile business model, it should be considered at the right level; usually a single department or operation at a time.

9. Agile working enablers and possible inhibitors

9.1 Technology

Technology enables us to easily and inexpensively connect with locations all over the world. New technology is launched on a daily basis and connection speeds have increased so that there is no visible delay in collecting data. This allows us to build an infrastructure where information can be shared easily and savings can be made, by adopting a smarter way of working.

The current technological solutions to work dilemmas include:
- Mobile phones
- Smart phones (i.e. mobiles with the capability to access internet based information)
- Laptops, tablets and portable computers
- Mobile access to the internet (i.e. using mobile devices to access information accessed through the internet using a wireless network or a mobile data card)
- Virtual Private Networks – VPN (i.e. where an employees uses a secure connection to the company information system so that employee does not have to back up data or carry confidential information around with them)
- Telephone-conferencing (i.e. people in different locations participating in a joint telephone conversation, which can include internet based calls which are often free to use)
- Video-conferencing (i.e. people in different locations participating in a joint conversation with a live video feed.)
- Instant-messaging (i.e. chat sessions using internet-based chat rooms, such as Yahoo and MSN to avoid unnecessary telephone calls)
- Synthetic environments (i.e. computer generated virtual worlds to help people communicate)
- Apps for specific business applications (i.e. mobile applications for management information and systems, designed for use with a smart phone or tablet)
- Social networks (i.e. blogging and using other social networks for business use.)
- Cloud based data storage

Whilst this technology can provide useful solutions for employers, it is important to make sure that you are using the correct technology for you, at the right price.

9.2   Culture

Agile working can only be achieved with high levels of trust and a performance driven culture.

To achieve the benefits presented by this new way of working employers need high levels of trust in workplace relationships and to develop new management skills, so that teams can work effectively, communicate well and maintain high levels of engagement and performance[10].

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[10] Opportunity Now Out of Office Phase One Agile Flexible Teams The Survey 10th February 2011

Where employees are given the autonomy and empowerment to choose where and when they work, as long as their job can be done, a culture is created that removes the artificial measures of success, such as time and attendance, and focuses on results and performance.

For many organisations agile working requires a complete change in corporate culture, from one where staff are expected to work with frameworks and guidelines designed to control the workforce and minimise risk, to one where people are seen as genuinely valuable assets, for the individuals that they are and the difference they can bring.

When an agile working programme is considered, it is important to think about what needs to be done to change the culture to support business needs. Where trust is not achieved agile working could have a negative effect on staff and their working relationships, leading to poor motivation and decreased performance.

9.3   Line Management

Line managers should be role models for agile working and team members should be treated with respect and trusted to make responsible decisions. Encouraging team involvement and participation in decision making can minimise potential conflict and ensure the best possible solution for everyone.

Managing employees in a flexible environment can be a challenge, as their contribution may be less obvious to a line manager who is not present to witness the impact. However, employees should be valued for their performance rather than the number of hours they work. Managers should focus on what the employee achieves and how they achieve it.

Employees need to understand:
- What they are expected to do
- The method of agreeing/monitoring workload
- How success will be measured
- How this feeds into the performance management process/system
- What communication is required from them; and
- How the line manager will communicate with them

It can be a challenge to keep employees informed and updated on work developments if they are not in the office very often. Managers and employees should work together to agree a plan to ensure that communications take place at appropriate times. Employees may also find that networking opportunities can be limited, which may place them at a disadvantage when applying for promotion. Opportunities should be sought when the employee is in the office to

maximise networking opportunities, for example, arranging a team meeting on the same day that an employee network is holding an event.

In Future Work[11], Maitland and Thomson set out five principles that will assist organisations to successfully transition to agile working. These principles, captured by the mnemonic "TRUST", will imply a new approach to management for many organisations, and the development of new skills, as described below:

	Principles	Skills required
T	Trust your people	• Openness to change • Delegation • Relationship-building • Prioritising • Challenging the status quo
R	Reward output, not input	• Planning ahead • Clear objective setting • Inspiring and motivating • Sensitivity to changing needs • Decisiveness and consistency
U	Understand the business case	• Awareness of big trends • Stakeholder orientation • Technological competence • Influencing • Resilience
S	Start at the top	• Willingness to change • Ability to "let go" • Leadership by example • Time management • Tenacity
T	Treat people as individuals	• Appreciation of difference • Responsiveness • Adaptability • Reliability • Team-building

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[11] www.futureworkbook.com

10.   Other considerations

10.1   Reward

Traditionally pay is given to employees based on the number of hours worked. However, agile working is likely to result in an increase in performance based reward systems. Where this is implemented, it is important to be clear and consistent about the targets and payments agreed. Employment law implications of changing contractual terms must also be considered for existing staff.

10.2   Contracts

Contracts should detail the employee's place of work and the basis for which they will be paid. Contracts should also reflect people's working practices and some agile practices will require a formal change to the contract of employment i.e. where pay is linked to targeted output rather than hours worked. However, there are many opportunities for informal agile working practices, which would not require a change in contract. Each case should be considered carefully to understand the full contractual implications.

10.3   Expenses

Most employers pay travel expenses to and from the employee's permanent workplace when, for example, they need the employee to travel to another place for a meeting. The approach to expenses must be considered when the employee is as home worker, remote worker or has multiple workplaces, to understand the tax implications- more detail is available at www.hmrc.gov.uk.

If an employee is privately renting an office, the organisation should check that it does not need to be registered as a location from which that business operates. This does not generally apply to a room used as an office in a domestic home.

10.4   Health, safety and ergonomics

Employees and organisations should check that any furniture and workstations used by their staff are designed with health and safety and ergonomics in mind. Electronic equipment should also be checked regularly. If necessary, fireproof cabinets or safes should be used. Where employees work from home employers may wish to carry out risk assessments at the home to check that employees are not putting themselves at risk of an injury or accident.

10.5 Insurance

Where employees work from home, they should ensure that their premises are insured appropriately for this purpose.

10.6 Confidentiality and security

Where employees work from home or other remote locations, it may be necessary to consider space and security of data. Some data may need to be locked away to ensure it remains confidential and the need for this facility in the home or even the car must be considered.

Extending access to the network requires careful consideration of a large number of physical and data security issues. Organisations will want to ensure that data privacy policies and guidelines are developed and adhered to where data is taken outside of the usual office environment, accessed on mobile devices and/or communicated using external systems (e.g. instant messaging.)

11. How to achieve agile working?

Starting an agile working programme requires planning and commitment and the following minimum steps are likely to be necessary.

11.1 Establish objectives

Identify why you are considering starting an agile working programme. Use the benefits in the business case to identify exactly what you want to achieve, aligning agile working with your corporate priorities and strategy. There needs to be a clear understanding of how workforce agility contributes to business objectives, economic drivers and value, both now and in the future.

- Is agile working driven by the business?
- What efficiencies need to be made?
- Are savings or improvements (or both) driving the agenda?
- What needs to be done to make the organisation future-proof?
- What do your existing customers want from the organisation?
- What might new customers want?
- What are the common customer complaints?
- Is there a business unit within your company, which could serve customers better by having a more agile workforce? Or an asset that could be better utilised?
- How do your staff feel about working for the organisation?
- Are staff engaged in the organisation's strategy?

- Are your staff motivated to do the best job they can?
- Can you recruit staff easily?
- What is your staff turnover? Can you retain key talent?
- Are there areas in your company where resource constraints are holding back performance?
- What does your ideal workforce look like?
- What can be improved for customers and staff?
- What are your accommodation costs? Can these be reduced?
- Do you know how your office space is used? Consider completing a space audit to find out exactly how well your space is utilised over a representative period of time.
- How good is your technology platform? Can this be improved to generate improvements across the business?
- What agile working practices are already taking place and how successful they are?
- What infrastructure is already available to support the programme? (It is likely that you already have some systems and policies in place to support agile working e.g. flexible working, hot desks, laptops, mobile phones, media conferencing facilities etc)

This is also the time to agree how success will be measured. This could be linked to profitability, customer feedback, staff feedback, costs, CSR or sustainability targets or many other KPIs.

11.2   Develop a business case

The business case is likely to be clear and compelling as agile working is driven by the business benefits. However it is important to be clear about the gains from the beginning in order to be consistent with communication.

The business case will be based on the benefits and value described in sections 4 and 5.

11.3   Consider how much flexibility is available in each role and develop an agile working model

- Map the jobs in the organisation looking at how much flexibility can realistically be achieved for each role.
- Use the options in section 6 to consider the flexibility in working hours, role, source and location.
- Develop a detailed model.

11.4   Build an action plan to achieve the desired model

Consider:
- Barriers for each role and the enablers that might allow these to be overcome e.g. changes to working practices and IT support.
- Culture, performance management and training requirements
- Policies required to support the new ways of working
- Costs, benefits and how long it might take to earn back any capital costs
- Communication plans
- Implementation timetable

11.5   Gain senior management commitment

Success is unlikely unless clear commitment from senior management is obtained and made evident to all concerned. This commitment must be to the overall programme and the method in which it will be achieved.

Cultural changes are likely to be necessary to achieve agile working and some people will have concerns about the changes required. Managing an agile workforce can be more difficult and can take more time, particularly in the early stages. More agile workforces often require more management time to drive the benefit; planning for and resourcing this is critical to ensure the success of the programme.

Use the business case to prepare answers to frequently asked questions and ensure everyone is clear about what the benefits will be. Senior management support is needed to sign off on the programme but also to provide a leading example and role model the new ways of working.

11.6   Get employee support

A successful agile working programme needs the support of the whole organisation. Communicating the work of the programme is key to encouraging staff to buy in to the benefits, both to themselves and the organisation. Where possible, include staff in the development of proposals to engage them in the final programme.

Opportunities include publicising projects and success stories in the staff newsletter and on the intranet, promoting the programme during the recruitment and induction processes and through learning and development courses.

12.   Measuring success and impact

In order to ensure the programme is a success it is important to consider how this will be measured and communicated.

When setting the objectives for the programme, you should have identified how success would be measured. This could be linked to profitability, expenditure, return on investment, customer feedback, staff feedback, CSR or sustainability targets or many other KPIs.

Ideally impact should be measured across all audiences: employees, line managers, the organisation and the wider community.

Measuring progress against defined annual goals linked to the business strategy could be published in an Annual Report or a similar document to celebrate and communicate success to the business. This would go towards ensuring ongoing engagement, future funding and resources.

13.   Case study – Metropolitan Police

Metropolitan Police Service – Flexible/Agile Working

<u>Introduction</u>

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) employ c.52,000 officers and staff who provide a policing service in Greater London. It is the largest Police Service in the country and the largest employer in London.

MPS is changing to improve the delivery of high quality policing services in a more effective and cost efficient way. A central focus on data accuracy and quality and a local focus on victim care and the quality of crime investigation led to a the creation of a new operational unit - a central single site called Crime Recording and Investigation Bureau (CRIB) with an Operational Command Unit (OCU) within Territorial Policing (TP).

The creation of the new operational unit presented some challenges: Closing 31 Borough Operational Command Unit Telephone Investigation Bureaus, reducing the workforce in 32 Crime Management Units and creating a single site. This affected 751 staff. The centralisation process together with the change in working conditions left the staff disaffected and morale low.

The roles within the Bureaus were identified as posts most suitable to accommodate flexible working patterns, restricted or recuperative staff. Anecdotal evidence from CRIB staff indicated a perception they were not valued and their performance never recognised. This was coupled with a significant proportion of flexible working

patterns which were easily accommodated on small BOCU teams but now needed to be integrated into large teams covering the business core hours.

The equalities impact assessment indicated there would be a disproportionate impact on women working within the OCU.

The Initiative

Consultation with the Staff Associations and Trade Unions ensured a fair and cohesive approach to the granting or refusal of flexible working applications.

An agreement with HR provided for all flexible-working applications to be viewed in totality to ensure the needs of the Service were met while still meeting an appropriate work life balance for staff. Occupational Health advisors ensured appropriate workplace adjustments were in place at the launch of the OCU. The process was overseen by a member of the Senior Management Team to ensure equality of approach.

Outcomes and Benefits

- Unique approach agreed by CRIB and HR to deal with applications ensuring a rapid response and flexible approach to negotiation.
- 131 flexible working patterns were successfully placed with only 3 SMT decisions appealed.
- Applications were Female 89 and Male 42.
- SMT at CRIB recognised need to accept high levels of restricted staff and those on recuperative duties.
- Immediate assessment of work-based reasonable adjustments.
- Transparent negotiation to agree the above patterns within the necessary rotas to achieve MPS and Home Office targets of 95% timeliness for recording/investigation and decision-making.
- Staff in CRIB have adopted an inclusive approach to all their colleagues and the differing working practices.

Impact on the Organisation

- Staff now formed into an established team structure with full management and support.
- Despite relatively high proportion of flex working/ restricted staff, the OCU has ensured it contributes staff to organisational commitments such as Big Wing and ANPR operations.
- Truly representative workforce, accommodating 48.5% on flexible working patterns and 27% with restrictions on duty.

- Service performance targets of 95% for investigation/assessment achieved and regularly surpassed.
- Significant improvement in standard of initial investigation and service to the victim.
- Build a Better Met Survey - indicating one of the highest scores for the statement 'I am treated with fairness and respect within my (B)OCU' within the Territorial Policing business group.

- The User Satisfaction Survey, conducted on behalf of the MPS, for crime entirely reported by telephone showed an increase in satisfaction from 66% to 74%. This increase was solely due to CRIB and a good reflection on its performance under the new structure.

14. Recommended reading

Working without walls (2004): an insight into the transforming government workplace

http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Working-without-Walls.pdf

Working beyond walls (2008): the government workplace as an agent of change

http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Working-beyond-Walls.pdf

Transforming work (2007): reviewing the case for change and new ways of working

http://www.theworkfoundation.com/downloadpublication/report/179_179_transforming_work_reviewing_the_case_for_change_and_new_ways_of_working.pdf

Enter the timelords (2007): Transforming work to meet the future. Final report of the EOC's investigation into the Transformation of Work

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/publications/eoc_transformation-work_time_lords.pdf

Workshift: the future of the office – BT paper

http://www.btireland.ie/pdfs/byod-whitepaper-the-future-of-the-office.pdf

Opportunity Now Out of Office Phase One Agile Flexible Teams Survey 10th February 2011

http://opportunitynow.bitc.org.uk/research-insight/research-articles/out-office-phase-1-agileflexible-teams-survey

The Agile Organisation Flexible Working Benefits: Collated Evidence and Case Studies 12th September 2012
http://www.workplaceconsulting.org/resources/0000/0682/WPU-OP-01_Flexible_Working_Benefits.pdf

The Flex Factor Report, RSA and Vodafone UK July 2013

http://www.thersa.org/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1526708/RSA_Flex_report_15072013.pdf

NHS Case study -www.theinformationdaily.com/2013/08/15/transforming-NHS-care-with-agile-working-and-mobile-technology

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