



Flexible working arrangements in leadership

A practical guide for real-world applications

flexship

Flexible working arrangements
for employees in leadership positions

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Diversity in Leadership



Hochschule für
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**CHECKLIST
for managers
who are interested
in flexible working
arrangements**



The equality of women and men is a fundamental value of our society. It is laid down in Article 3 of the Basic Law, which reads: “Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist.” The share of working and well qualified women is on the rise, but nevertheless women are still under-represented at upper management levels in companies, institutions and the administration.

Demographic change, the resulting shortage of skilled labour, particularly in technical occupations, and the advance of digitalisation in everyday life are presenting us with additional challenges. Women have good employment prospects: The number of well qualified women in Germany has reached an unprecedented level and many businesses have a high interest in recruiting more women with a talent for the technical and natural sciences. In order to fully tap into this potential, we should consider also providing more flexible working arrangements for employees in leadership positions. This would allow a better reconciliation of work and family life, enable the practical realisation of a good work-life balance and, at the same time, take into account the demands of leadership positions. This will benefit

both women and men and will be of advantage to employers, whose success thrives on the loyalty, identification and motivation of their staff. In their collaborative project entitled “Flexship: Flexible working arrangements for employees in leadership positions”, the European Academy for Women in Politics and Business Berlin and the Berlin School of Economics and Law together with their practice partners have looked into the reasons for the low representation of women in leadership positions and have issued these best-practice guidelines. This guide provides valuable impetus for private and public-sector employers and their staff. I would like to urge both sides to have the courage to support highly qualified women in particular in planning their careers and to give them leadership responsibility.

Professor Dr. Johanna Wanka
Federal Minister of Education and Research



More flexibility in leadership positions is one of the core issues for managers at their workplaces throughout Europe. A new generation of male and female managers want to enjoy a work life balance and thus give a meaning to their professional and family life. CEC-European Managers supports all initiatives that make room for these new sensibilities, like the changes that current trends of demography and digitalization will bring about. Flexibility of the organisation of work is a fundamental asset especially for managers. This report and guideline, developed by the Berlin-based European Academy of Women in Business and Politics (EAF), one of the member organisations of ULA, represents a valuable contribution to the debate on this issue. As the President of CEC European Managers, I am grateful to our German colleagues for making their work available to all European managers, as we know how fundamental the input of managers is to prepare our work (and our societies) for the challenges of tomorrow. The project was supported by the German Ministry of Science and Education.

Ludger Ramme
President of CEC European Managers



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Overview of the project

Introduction and industry partners



Part time, job sharing, home office – flexible working models are very attractive for many managers in Germany. More and more companies and organisations would also like to promote flexibility and personal responsibility with their management because flexible models support employees' loyalty and keep them motivated. These models encourage the reconciliation of work and family life and gender equality, also at managerial levels. Furthermore, organisations benefit from such models because flexibility and a focus on performance as key competencies are becoming increasingly important. However, flexible working models regarding location and hours have been limited for managers. A culture of face time is the norm in Germany. The road to a leadership position is paved with full-time work, overtime and the expectation to clock face time. As a career progresses, this demand remains par for the course.

Take the German example: In 2013, female managers worked an average of 41 hours a week, but would have preferred to only work 34. Male managers, on the other hand, worked an average of 46 hours a week, but indicated a preference for 38 hours (Holst et al. 2015: 34). The desire to work fewer hours – as well as for other flexible working models – is very high for both men and women.

This desire for change can be understood against the background of wide-reaching changes in technological and social processes. Digitalisation, globalisation and networking enable a new standard for flexibility in people's work. The priorities of Generation Y and modified gender roles require new working arrangements, which operational structures are increasingly responding to (cf. BMAS 2015a).

Compared to international research, flexible arrangements for executives in Germany are inadequately recorded and analysed. If nothing else, the significant demand results in a strong need for research and implementation.

Project goals and partners

This is the starting point for the research-practice project Flexship. What factors influence the success of innovative working arrangements in industry and science? What obstacles need to be overcome? These are the questions the EAF Berlin and the Berlin School of Economics and Law researched in the project "Flexship: Flexible working arrangements for employees in leadership positions". The project was supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research [BMBF].

We collected good examples from companies and scientific organisations, analysed them and created a current database on the topic of flexible working arrangements in leadership together with our industry partners Deutsche Bahn, Deutsche Post DHL Group, Deutsche Telekom, the Leibniz Association, the Max Planck Society and the management association United Leaders Association (ULA).

This practical guide reveals the progress that is made in Germany in implementing flexible models and provides practical suggestions for how organisations can successfully implement flexible working models for managers and shows how these organisations can support these models in a sustainable way.

The research focuses on the German case, but we hope the results and recommendations can be of interest for managers and companies in other European countries as well.



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MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

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Deutsche Post DHL
Group

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ERLEBEN, WAS VERBINDET.

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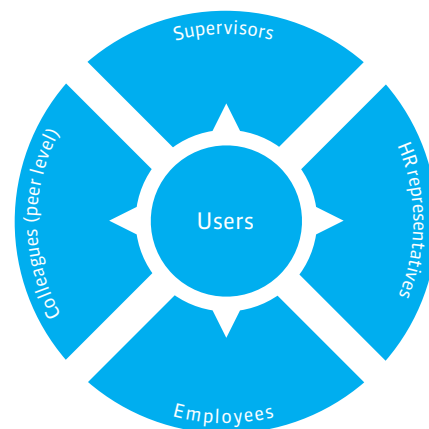
Qualitative and quantitative surveys

Our findings are based on qualitative and quantitative studies that were carried out as part of the Flexship project. The core of this research/industry project comprises interview workshops in the five participating organisations. Here, the obstacles to and factors for the success of flexible working models for those in leadership positions were investigated. The format of the workshops combined the standard format in social and economic research, the focus group, with 360-degree feedback, common in human resources development, which provides reflection from the perspective of various players.

Our research project constitutes the innovative approach of incorporating various viewpoints as well as comparing companies and research organisations. In the workshops, managers who work in a flexible working model (e.g. reduced full time, home office or job sharing) were brought together and interviewed with their supervisors, colleagues and employees as well as HR representatives as a 360-degree feedback group. The findings from the focus group interviews were edited for this practical guide; selected quotations can be found in the text with the respective players indicated.

In addition, a quantitative survey of 793 participants was conducted together with the management association ULA in early 2016 as part of a Manager Monitor entitled “Work 4.0, Management 4.0”. This practical guide also provides the main findings concerning initiating flexible working models and experiences with them.

The project findings were discussed as part of the symposium “Flexible working arrangements in management” in Berlin on 17th March 2016, and important feedback from participants was incorporated into this guide.



Structure of this practical guide

This guide starts with a summary of the main findings and recommendations from the project in chapter 1. Chapter 2 shows how widespread different flexible models already are, based on the quantitative survey. Chapter 3 states eight good reasons why flexible working models pay off. Why should organisations offer flexible models and what are the benefits for managers? The fourth chapter introduces strategies for successful implementation: What are the factors for the success of innovative working models in industry and science? What obstacles need to be overcome? The practical guide ends with a checklist for managers who are considering transitioning to a flexible working model.

Funding

The joint project “Flexible working arrangements for employees in leadership positions – co-operation in research and networking activities in dialogue between science and industry”, which forms the basis of this brochure, is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research under the grant numbers 01FP1446 and 01FP1448.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our industry partners for their support and their willingness to share their experiences as part of a 360-degree workshop and to make the project findings accessible to the public. We would like to extend a special thanks to the participants of the 360-degree workshop for their participation and candour in sharing their personal experiences. The collaboration with the ULA allowed us to collect relevant quantitative data. Kathrin Mahler-Walther and Dr. Philine Erfurt Sandhu played an essential role in developing the project design, Christoph Zarft was part of the initial months of the project and Thea Garten supported the statistical evaluation. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone involved.

Summary of the findings

Flexible working models are attractive for many managers. Employers are increasingly contemplating strategies to offer such models. Nevertheless, the research regarding how models can be implemented and how they will operate within the context of an organisation is still insufficient in Germany. The Flexship project therefore examined the attitudes of managers regarding these models as well as specific experiences from users and their workplace. In the following section, you will find a short overview of the most important findings. These results are then described in greater detail in the upcoming chapters.

Offers and use – there's still room for improvement!

Flexible working models for employees in leadership positions are already offered in many organisations where they are used to varying degrees, as the findings of our quantitative manager survey shows: Trust-based working time is the front-runner (offered in companies: 78.7 per cent/used amongst the surveyed managers: 65.5 per cent), while the discrepancy between offering and use of home office (69.2 per cent/37.5 per cent), part time (82.1 per cent/14.9 per cent) and job sharing (26.9 per cent/1.3 per cent) illustrates that there is still room for improvement when it comes to managers taking advantage of these opportunities. The positive assessment by managers of the suitability and effects of flexible working models in the quantitative study (see chapter 2 for more) points to the existing potential: There is an (unmet) demand among managers.

The numbers also reveal that it is clearly still difficult at this time to reduce the individual working hours for managers in many cases. In general, women are more strongly represented among those who use flexible models, and their use is evenly divided across individual models. Part time is an arrangement primarily selected by women. It also becomes apparent that larger companies usually offer more options. What is surprising, however, is how smaller companies can keep up with this pace, and how many options they have as well. The good news is that we don't need to re-invent the wheel. We just have to observe, select and, if necessary, improve things.

Overcoming obstacles

The most significant impediments to using flexible working models from the perspective of surveyed managers are a lack of role models, a lack of support from top management and a lack of support from direct supervisors. Other obstacles include a failure to adapt the workload to reduced working hours, unclear rules (such as occupational safety in a home office) and a lack of systematic programmes. Managers are also afraid of the repercussions to their career. 31 per cent of the surveyed managers expect or have experienced damage to their career prospects. This shows that it is time for a cultural change because if such models become more common, the expectations placed on managers will also be adjusted. Good leadership is frequently equated with presence at the office or permanent availability. However, the quality of leadership depends much more on good, appropriate and transparent communication. This is also completely possible when on-site availability is reduced or becomes flexible, from a home office or as part of a job sharing arrangement – a solution that is often particularly successful. In order to introduce this solution, organisations must gather information, take a closer look at how it could work and have the courage to try it.



Good reasons for flexible models

There are many good reasons for a stronger implementation of flexible arrangements. Due to digitalisation and globalisation, the workplace is increasingly changing. It is necessary and makes economic sense to have personnel and management concepts that react to the increasing interconnectedness and speed. Employer attractiveness as well as recruitment and loyalty advantages are particularly relevant for strategic HR management. Employees and managers increasingly want these models because they provide relief in favour of private and family obligations in particular. Taking the leap pays off for the employer. The executives surveyed in our quantitative study indicated that increased motivation (63 per cent of those surveyed), productivity (58 per cent), creativity (57 per cent) and work-life balance/quality of life (68 per cent) can be expected. As a result, flexible models also contribute to an improved quality of work. They are necessary to improve equal opportunities between women and men and thus increase diversity in management. And they are sustainable, as job satisfaction and less stress positively affect managers' physical and emotional health. Chapter 3 states eight good reasons why flexible working models pay off.

Initiative and (self) management are in demand

When managers are interested in using flexible working models, the person bearing the most responsibility is that manager him/herself. The successful implementation of flexible working models has several requirements for those using them. The manager must convince their own community of these new ideas by being proactive and using a high degree of initiative and self-management skills. First, the user should consider which model is best suited to his/her professional role and lifestyle. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for flexible models. Good, well-founded preparation is also a factor in negotiating successfully with direct supervisors regarding the working model. After that, it's time to test out the new model. This usually includes changes to work organisation, leadership style and communication. On the one hand, managers working in flexible arrangements will communicate clearly what they would like and need. On the other hand, they must take into account the needs of their supervisors, teams, customers and the organisation. Give-and-take is particularly important, for example, when considering the redistribution of workloads. Delegating tasks and allowing colleagues and employees to assume more responsibility can in turn be beneficial to the careers of those team members if the manager working in a flexible arrangement supports them

accordingly. In this case, successful managers take care to balance the interests of the various players. See the checklist "Things to consider for managers interested in flexible working arrangements" at the end of this practical guide for more recommendations and suggestions.

Teamwork and systematic solutions instead of fighting alone

Managers using a flexible working model are not solely responsible for its success – it takes teamwork. Otherwise your organisation runs the risk of users getting worn out when fighting against prejudices and habits and even models failing. The new situation creates more autonomy and personal responsibility for employees and colleagues. This requires a learning process for the entire workplace and more communication, at least in the beginning. Managers' supervisors describe taking a leap of faith in their employees so that these models can even be possible. The supervisors' task is to balance out the needs and requirements of the various sides as successfully as possible and show a certain amount of grace for errors and a tolerance for employees' learning curve. It is also important that the supervisors (in upper management) try out or use flexible models themselves in the interests of "leading by example" so that these models become a visible, viable solution that is a legitimate extension of the way people in the company work. Innovative processes provide an extra challenge to HR departments to initiate and guide processes, to ascertain the needs of users and to communicate good practice examples. When all players work together, organisations will succeed in changing the processes to successfully make flexible working arrangements possible.

Offers and use – there is still room for improvement!

Good reasons for flexible models

Overcome obstacles

Teamwork and systematic solutions instead of fighting alone

Initiative and (self) management are in demand

Specifics from science organisations

Dare to start pilot projects – the building blocks for cultural change



Specifics from the sciences

Although science provides informal opportunities to work very flexibly, up until now there have been few formal offerings in scientific organisations for flexible working arrangements for those in leadership positions compared to those in industry. Research facilities have similar needs and challenges as other organisations. Nevertheless, it is important to understand some defining characteristics. For example, the “pull of availability” is prominent, as science is a particularly competitive field and is shaped by a high degree of intrinsic motivation. Part-time contracts very often go hand in hand with the expectation to do more work, also for (further) academic qualifications. Overtime and time constraints on projects and contracts that have tight deadlines are widespread. Highly specialised research fields make arrangements like job sharing seem impossible for many scientists. At the same time, the high pressure to publish and the limited number of resources blur the lines between private and professional life. The most important time for scientific qualification tends to be between the ages of 30 and 40, which coincides with the typical age people start a family. This leads to classic gender constellations and interrupted careers. However, funding bodies are placing more pressure on organisations to have more women in leadership. This makes models that reconcile a career in the sciences with caring for a family increasingly important.

Dare to start pilot projects – the building blocks of a cultural change

Ultimately, the introduction and dissemination of flexible models for managers should be approached as a change project in form of a structured pilot project. This way, models can be tested systematically and their impact in the respective environment can be analysed and adapted.

Flexible models help organisations, as well as their leadership and work culture to adjust to the requirements of working in a high-tech, globalised world. They don’t just help to improve employer attractiveness to benefit successful recruitment. These models also offer the opportunity to optimise processes and thus have an effect on socially and economically sustainable operational development. In doing so, the introduction of new models frequently challenges the traditional hegemony of work cultures. Flexible working models depend on the development of a flexible trust-based leadership culture. New models require the cooperation of the parties involved and an open leadership culture, meaning that the introduction of flexible working models for managers contributes to a true change in the company culture.



2

What are flexible models and how are they used?

Flexibilisation for managers means that they have flexibility in arranging a part of their working hours and/or can accomplish a part of their work while on-the-go or at home.

Flexibilisation for managers means that they have flexibility in arranging a part of their working hours and/or can accomplish a part of their work while on-the-go or at home.

The flexibilisation of the workplace can be implemented via the following measures: mobile work (i.e. on business trips), desk sharing within a company and telecommuting. The latter can be implemented as a home office or as a permanent work from home solution or – as with most managers – alternating between working from home and at the office.

The flexibilisation of working hours is divided into chronometric measures which, like part time (or part-time parental leave), reduce the regular weekly working hours and chronological measures, which vary the distribution of working hours: Flexitime, trust-based working time and working time accounts.

Job sharing is a unique form of part-time employment that is set up chronometrically (and shortens working time), but in practice is also aligned chronologically.

Another important difference is whether the working hours are regularly shorter or occur in longer periods of absence (sabbaticals/several months' leave of absence, parental leave, caregiver leave).

In our qualitative survey we concentrated on home office, reduced part time and job sharing.

Focus on: Home office

Home office, also known as **telecommuting**, generally means working from home without coming to an office. This can occur solely as telecommuting or alternating with a regular office presence. A model frequently used, including for managers, is to combine one set day of home office with reduced full time work at the office.

As with other working models, the German Working Hours Act (ArbZG) regulates things such as maximum working hours, breaks and leave. In addition, the 2002 EU-wide framework agreement on telecommuting contains a common definition of the models and is intended to guarantee social standards and standards of protection.



Challenges

Face time culture and loss of status:

There is a growing trend to measure performance more based on results than on time spent at work. The fear of losing status and having fewer career prospects should not keep people from using a home office solution. The more colleagues use this arrangement, the quicker this preconception will disappear.

Control vs. trust: Above all, managers should review results and trust that work processes in their team will also function smoothly without their presence. The same holds true for the team, who should be able to depend upon a good flow of communication with their managers.

If someone is officially working at home and breaks his/her leg – is it my turn?

Supervisors' focus group

What will my neighbour think if I'm home for three days in a row?

Users' focus group

Blurring the lines between professional and private life: Home office should not mean no start or end to the working day or being available around the clock.

Home office on day off: Be careful in combining reduced working hours with home office. Some managers, for example, still use home office on their days off (when working reduced hours). This should be the exception and not the rule!

Less spontaneity: Those who work from home can generally not participate in spontaneous meetings and the like. This should be considered in the planning for the week.

Unclear legal framework: Employers and employees should establish clarity regarding insurance coverage at their home office (→ Infobox employment law).

Opportunities

Clear rules and predictability:

Managers should make a plan for the use of home office (duration, which days, flexible use). This should be tailored to their individual needs and to their own area of operations. Availability and communication in the home office should be made transparent for the team. Furthermore, company-wide or department-wide guidelines can be compiled for working with home office solutions.

Shorter or productive commutes:

Home office can contribute to reducing trips to and from work. Longer drive times can also be used as an opportunity to get work done – but not to build up overtime!

Some work real miracles when working at home that they otherwise wouldn't have been able to achieve at the office.

Supervisors' focus group

Suitability of specific tasks: The calm environment of a home office can be used for tasks that require concentration or virtual work, e.g. communicating with international partners. Regular home office can also reduce the burden on space requirements, for example in offices with open floor plans.

Technical prerequisites:

Companies must ensure that the equipment works, that work is performed at a safe and healthy location and that access can be gained to all necessary data. Employers should consider measures such as creating access to databases and making laptops available instead of computer stations.

Focus on: Reduced full time

Reduced full time, also known as **near full time work**, is one of many part-time models. Reduced full time generally comprises over 30 working hours in a week.

The 2001 Act on Part-time Work and Fixed-term Employment Relationships (TzBfG) provides decent access to reduced work while protecting against discrimination at the same time.



Challenges

Of course, you have less of a chance to represent yourself within the organisation. This means fewer opportunities and career prospects.

Supervisors' focus group

The same work in less time:

One consequence of reduced working hours can be congestion of work. This can be prevented by systematically dividing responsibilities and working areas among the rest of the team.

Working full time despite a part-time contract:

If an employee decides on a reduced full-time contract, this should also be implemented. This means, among other things, no excessive overtime can pile up and home office should not be used during days off on a regular basis.

Fear of losing status:

Cutting back from full time must not be construed as reducing commitment or having less ambition. HR should ensure that employees who do not work full time are protected against discrimination (e.g. with respect to distributing pay grade levels).

Balancing out the remaining areas:

The distribution of the remaining 10 to 20 per cent of working hours (and workload) is a challenge for HR departments following reduced hours contracts. Well thought-out restructuring of working areas can be helpful and should be made systematically together with the departments.

Non-transparent reductions: To ensure that teams can interact with each other appropriately, managers should be open about their model. Colleagues and employees are more open to reduced working times if they understand the model.

No one in management takes into account whether someone has reduced their working hours by five or eight hours. And then, work is redistributed in the department, which, of course, causes discontent. This means some people become service providers for models which don't benefit them and which only others benefit from.

Supervisors' focus group

Less personal communication:

Frequently, little time remains for interpersonal communication such as detailed conversations between employees and management. Regular personnel meetings or a joint business lunch could help to prevent this.

Higher costs: Reduced working hours generate higher per-person HR costs for items such as social security and social contributions. However, there are financial advantages. For instance, company cars can be partly financed and shared offices can be set up.

Opportunities

Transparent communication: A transparent weekly plan and regular team meetings are the key to smooth work processes when working reduced hours. The reduced number of hours per week in particular requires that the entire team is always informed of the manager's availability.

Stay flexible: Even when managers in reduced full time have a fixed day off or the like, they should be prepared to have a certain flexibility when planning their schedule.

A colleague said:
"Oh, you're working part time?
I didn't even notice".

Users' focus group

I have had good experiences with part time.
One manager was simply fantastic:
She organised everything, streamlined
everything according to the reduction in
her hours and implemented a goal-oriented
meeting culture. A culture of gossip was
transformed into a culture of efficiency.

Supervisors' focus group

HR development tools: For employees, assuming tasks can mean opportunities for continuing education and career prospects.

Downsizing in a company: For employers, reducing the working hours of employees can be an alternative to termination.

More efficient work: Many executives report that they work more efficiently when they are working fewer hours. This is facilitated by methodical organisation of work.

Option for return: Contractual provisions that make it possible to return to full-time employment after a particular amount of time may alleviate the concerns of managers in reducing their hours.

Focus on: Job sharing

A positive coverage of this topic is missing.

HR/Diversity focus group

Challenges

Job sharing typically means dividing a full-time position between two people who work together closely. Dividing working hours and tasks can generally be determined by the users themselves.

Like all other part-time models, job sharing is legally established in the Act on Part-time Work and Fixed-term Employment Relationships (TzBfG).



No one wants to share their advantageous information.

Supervisors' focus group

Giving up power: The competition for power and knowledge prevents goal-oriented potential solutions in a team. If the understanding of leadership changes in favour of participation, job sharing has a better chance of also establishing itself with managers.

Giving up responsibility: Many supervisors have difficulties handing over responsibility to others. A trust-based work culture is particularly important within a job sharing partnership, but also in the entire team.

Changes to communication: Having two contact persons can be unfamiliar at first for employees. To avoid insecurities, managers should make the responsibilities and communication strategies of the partnership transparent for their team.

Lack of rules: The reservations towards job sharing are frequently caused by a lack of standardisation within the company. To successfully introduce job sharing, clear rules and role models are required.

Company culture: In many places, the success of job sharing is met with a great deal of scepticism. Positive coverage of this topic through role models and the support of the executive board can make an important difference.

Budget question: Not every company can afford two managers, each with a 60 per cent position plus lump sum payments. However, these additional costs can be made up in other places, as, for example, job sharing reduces losses from illness or holiday.

Opportunities

Trust is fundamental: People who share a job must trust each other, cultivate a good personal relationship and be able to work well with each other. Short communication channels and regular consultations are helpful.

Higher employer attractiveness: Working in a job sharing arrangement benefits employees particularly with respect to an improved work-life balance: Motivation, efficiency, job satisfaction and missed days change. The attractiveness of an organisation as an employer grows.

Added value: In a job sharing arrangement, the various abilities and perspectives complement each other. This increases the quality and dependability of the work. Two heads are better than one.

Job sharing is a delicate flower that is worth cultivating. It simply needs examples.

HR/Diversity focus group

More leadership contact: Job sharing increases the presence of managers. It takes pressure off supervisors and provides employees with more contact to management.

The transitional period of job sharing: Job sharing allows improved transfer of knowledge within an organisation and is particularly well-suited for transitional periods as well as for assuming responsibility for a division or area.

Political framework: There is a legal framework for job sharing. In this case, an organisation's in-house regulations need to be developed further.

The political framework is more developed than the regulations within our own organisation.

Supervisors' focus group

How widespread are these and other flexible models among managers? In cooperation with the management association ULA, we interviewed 793 managers in an online survey in early 2016 to find out more. In a Manager Monitor on the topic “Work 4.0 – Management 4.0”, managers were asked questions regarding the prevalence, their experiences and their assessment of flexible working models. In addition to the key models from the qualitative survey (nearly full-time part time, home office and job sharing), the quantitative survey also included models that are particularly relevant with respect to legal guidelines for managers: flexible working hours/trust-based working time, sabbaticals/several months leave, reduced working hours from the age of 60, working beyond the standard retirement age, parental leave and caregiver leave.

Industry partner: ULA

The management association ULA – United Leaders Association, founded in 1951 under its former name “The Union of Executives [Union der Leitenden Angestellten]”, is today the largest political umbrella organisation for expert and management associations in Germany.

The ULA understands managers and highly-qualified employees as a special group of individuals with specific interests and needs. The independent representation of executives in co-determination at operational level (Executives’ Committee Act [Sprecherausschuss-gesetz]) and at a corporate level (guaranteed representation of an executive among the employee representatives on supervisory boards according to the Co-determination Act from 1976 [Mitbestimmungsgesetz]) is largely due to the political involvement of the ULA.

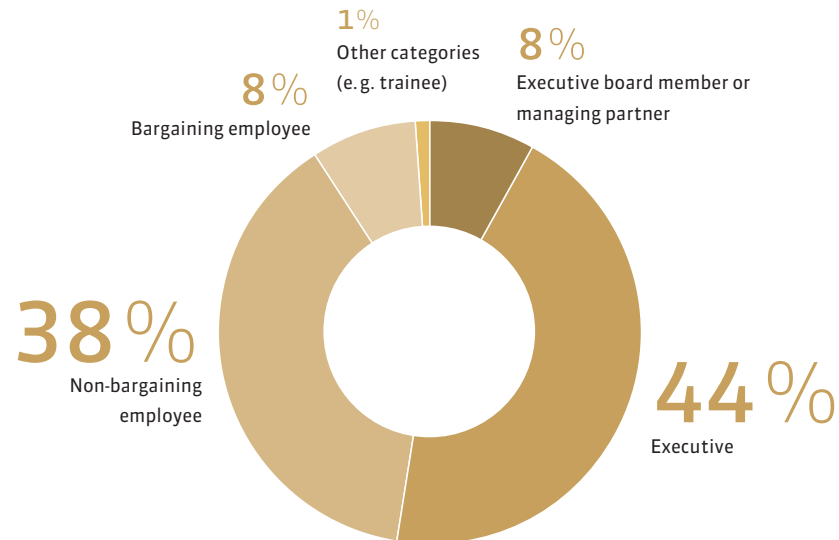
This focus on concerns of minority groups and the conviction that diversity strengthens and revitalises society and the economy opens the door for the ULA to engage in equal opportunities in other areas as well. As such, the ULA was an early supporter for establishing a quota of women on supervisory boards.

Surveyed according to professional position

(n=649)

The survey participants

A total of 793 people took part in the survey on flexible working models. As no question was mandatory, the number of those responding differs for each question. Approx. 90 per cent of those who answered this question worked as non-bargaining employees, executives, members of an executive board or as managing directors. 34 per cent of the participants were women and 66 per cent were men. Up to approx. 67 per cent of those surveyed worked in industry (including energy), 29 per cent in the service industry and 4 per cent in public administration. As such, the statements only apply to a limited extent for public administration. Up to approx. 64 per cent of those surveyed worked in companies with over 2,000 employees, up to approx. 13 per cent in companies with between 500 and 2,000 employees and up to approx. 22 per cent in companies with fewer than 500 employees. Taking the age group of those surveyed into consideration, 50–59 constitutes the largest age group with 38 per cent, 40–49 comprises 29 per cent and those under 40 represent less than a quarter of those surveyed with 22 per cent. The composition of age groups is not surprising given that managers were the target audience of this survey and those surveyed had therefore already worked their way up the corporate ladder. The group of those over 60 comprised 11 per cent.





The prevalence of flexible models for those in leadership positions in Germany

The offerings of flexible models in a company vary significantly depending on the model. While part time was offered in over 80 per cent of the companies, trust-based working time was available in 79 per cent of the companies, home office 69 per cent and sabbaticals 44 per cent. Parental leave and caregiver leave occupy a special position here, as nearly all companies are legally required to offer these forms of leave. In this case, the more pertinent question is how well-known the offers are among those surveyed. Working beyond the standard retirement age (17 per cent) and job sharing (27 per cent) were offered with much less frequency.

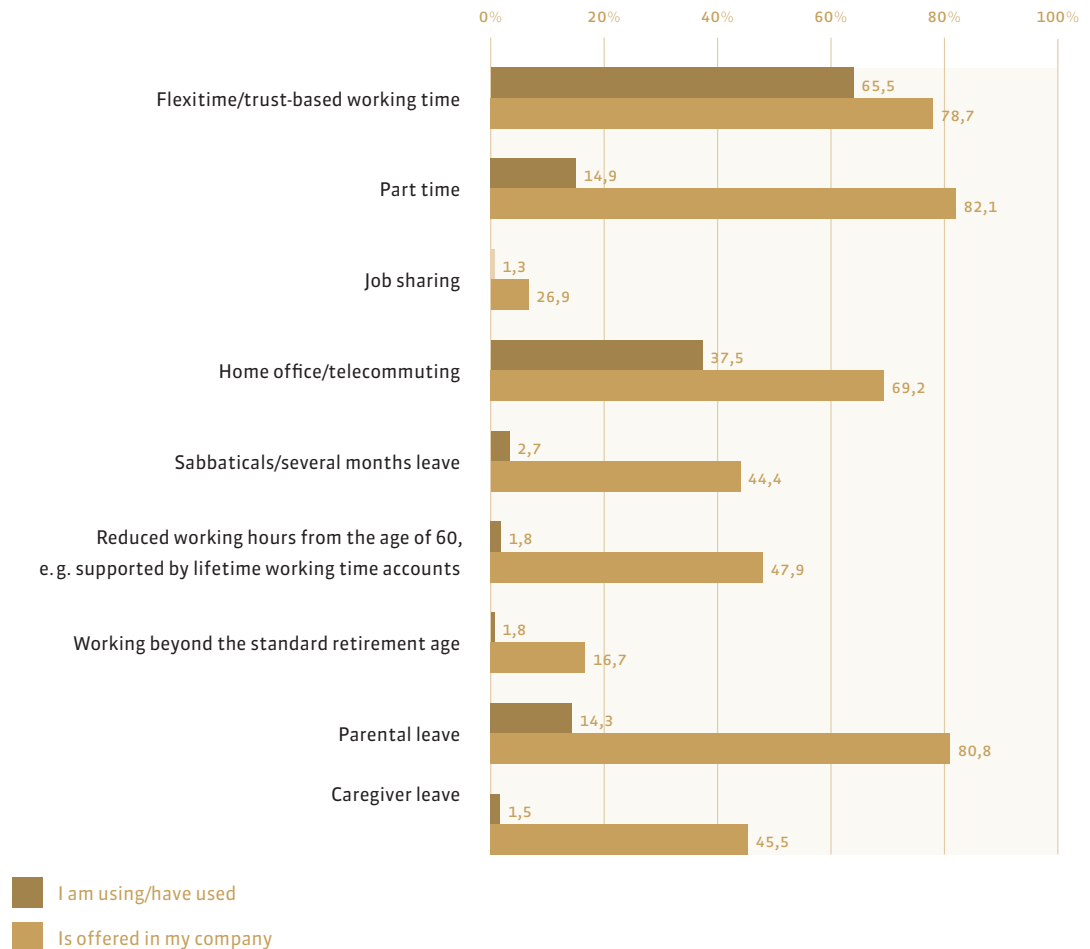
Over 78 per cent of all those surveyed indicated that they themselves had either used or are using one or more models. What is interesting here is that the offers from the company widely surpassed their use. Although 82 per cent of those surveyed indicated that their company offered a part-time solution, only 15 per cent indicated that they also were using or have

used this offer. This discrepancy between the offer and its use is nearly the same across all industries. Only when taking the size of the company into account was it revealed that, while the large companies (over 2,000 employees) had the most extensive offers as was expected, the small companies (fewer than 500 employees) managed to keep up with a surprisingly wide range of offers as well. Thus part time, for example, was offered by 94 per cent of the large companies, 85 per cent of the mid-sized companies and 75 per cent of the small companies. The use of flexible models varied depending on the age group. While 81 per cent of the under-40 group used or had previously used flexible models, the same holds true for only 70 per cent of those over 60.

When asked how frequently they think managers as a whole take the opportunity to have flexibility in the time and place of their work, those surveyed mentioned trust-based working time above all others as a model that is used very frequently (54 per cent). The use of trust-based working time increases with the size of the company. For companies with up to 500 employees the use was approx. 42 per cent. For companies with 500–2,000 employees it was 52 per cent and for large companies it was over 53 per cent.

Flexible working models offered by the company and their personal use (in % of all those surveyed)

When asked about the frequency of use, 38 per cent of those surveyed indicated that home office was very commonly/rather commonly used, while 51 per cent estimated that its use was actually rather rare. The use of part time, on the other hand, was estimated by 70 per cent of those surveyed to be rather rare. Most striking is that only 4 per cent of those surveyed estimated that trust-based working time is not used at all. Part time, however, was estimated by 16 per cent to be a model unused by management, home office by 10 per cent.



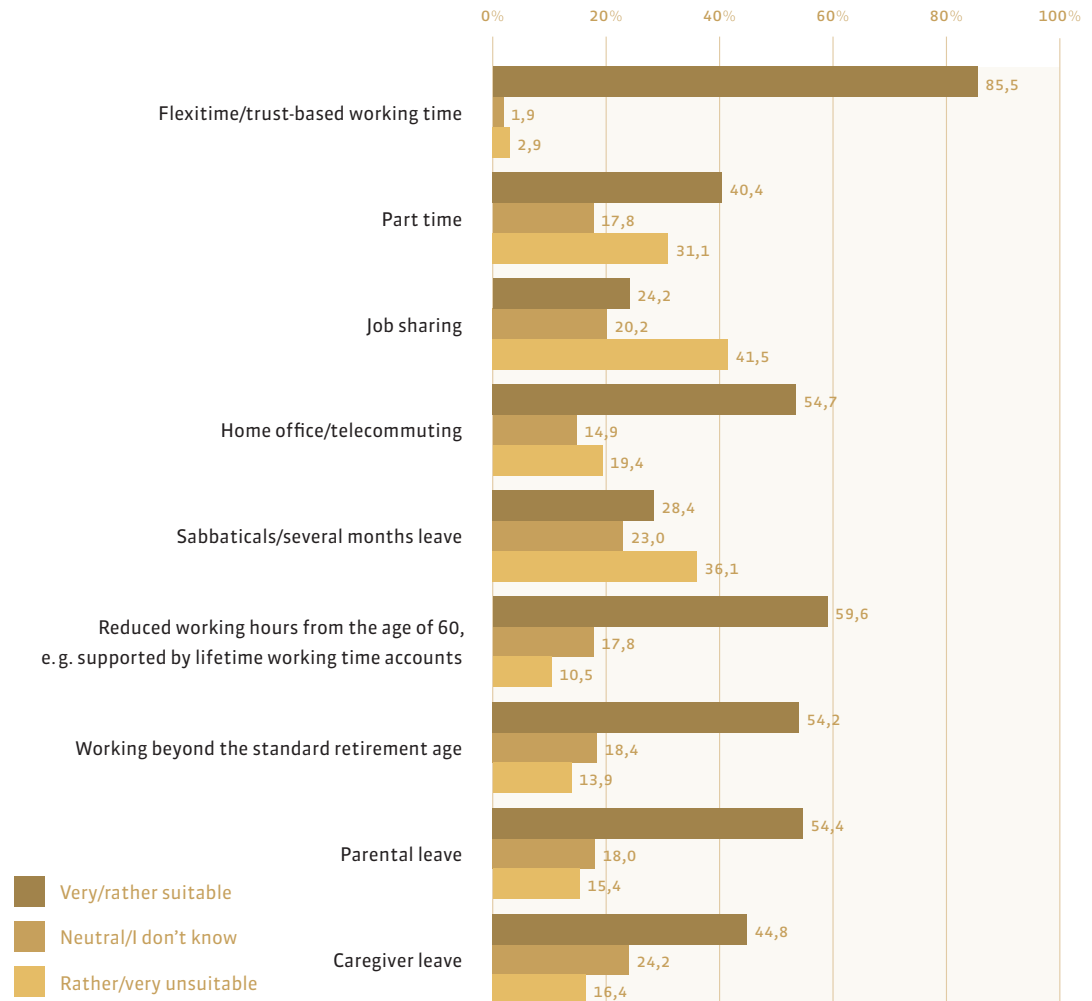
In principle, are flexible working models suitable for those in leadership positions?

(in % of all those surveyed)

Which models are suitable for managers?

Estimations from those surveyed

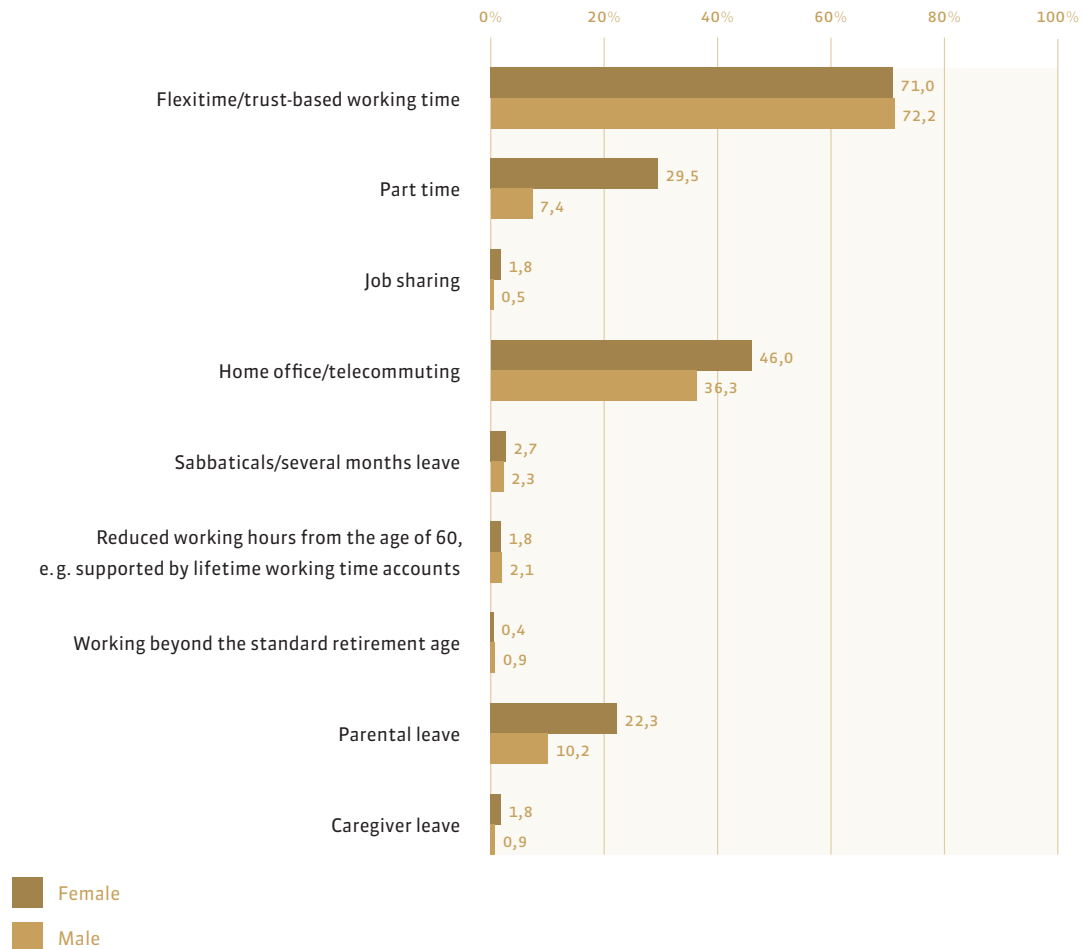
Next, those surveyed were asked to assess the suitability of the various models for those in leadership positions. The findings of the surveys generally show a positive attitude towards these models. 86 per cent of all those surveyed (n=793) assess trust-based working time and 55 per cent assess home office as very/rather well suited. Even the most critically rated model, job sharing, is still assessed as very/rather well suited by 24 per cent, despite the 42 per cent who find this model rather/very unsuitable. Sabbaticals follow with 36 per cent assessing this model as rather/very unsuitable.



Which flexible models are you using or have you already used?

Those surveyed who themselves use flexible models (or who have used at least one model) assessed the suitability of models for those in leadership positions predominantly the same as those surveyed who have not used any models themselves. Only the assessment of trust-based working time as very suitable climbs to 96 per cent among users, while 90 per cent of non-users indicate that it is suitable or very suitable. For the home office model, a significant difference also became apparent between those surveyed who used and did not use the models. While 30.2% of home office users assessed this model as very/rather suitable, only 19.6 per cent of users saw it as very/rather suitable.

What stands out with respect to the use of flexible working models according to gender is that women fall back on part time, job sharing, parental leave, sabbaticals, caregiver leave and home office more than men. The most striking difference arises with the part time model: 29.5 per cent of all women work part time, while only 7.4 per cent of all men use this model. Trust-based working time is used by men and women equally (71 per cent). Working beyond the standard age of retirement and reduced working hours after the age of 60 are the only models used slightly more by men.

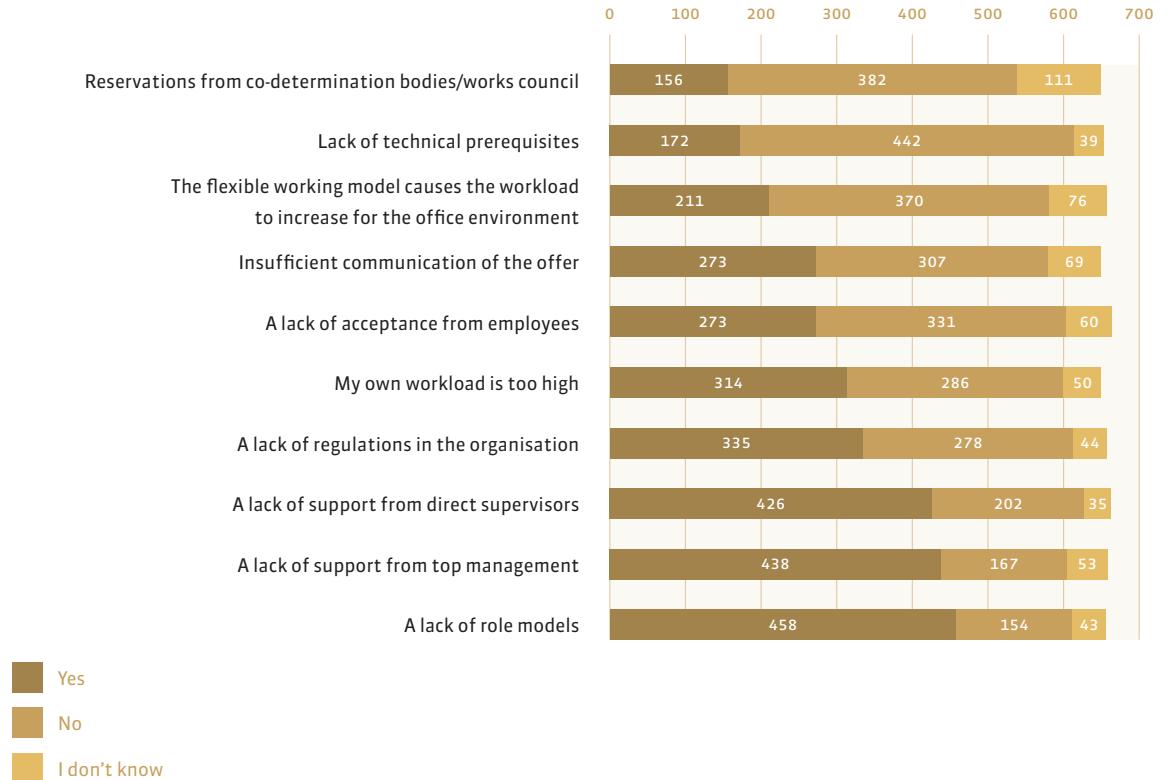


In your opinion, what makes it difficult for those in leadership positions to use flexible working models?

(n=Sum of those who answered each question)

Obstacles for using flexible working models

Key problems for using flexible working models include a lack of role models (indicated by 70 per cent), a lack of support from top management (67 per cent) and a lack of support from direct supervisors (64 per cent). A lack of technical prerequisites (68 per cent answered no), reservations from the co-determination bodies (59 per cent) and an increase in workload for the workplace (56 per cent) were found to be rather unproblematic.



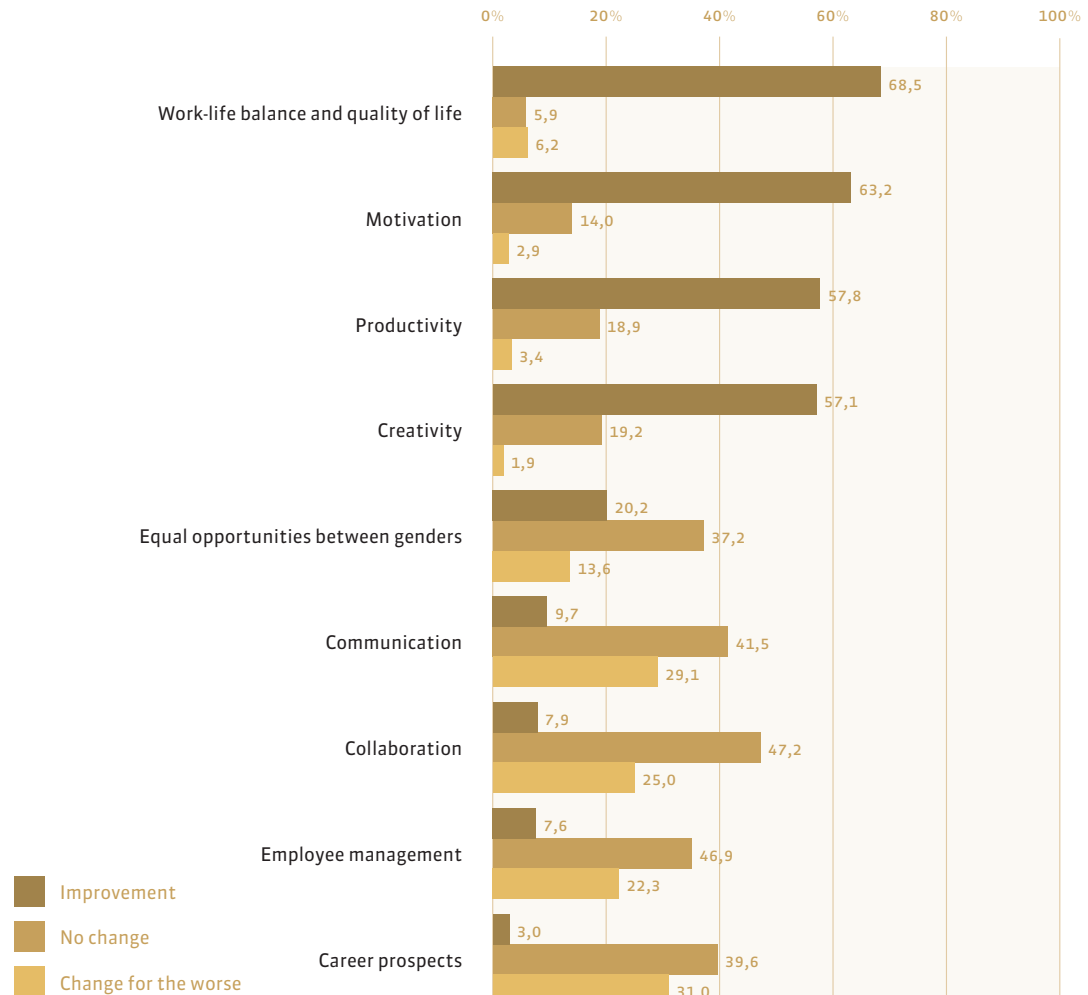
Effects of flexible working models in per cent (n=793)

Effects of using flexible models

Participants were also asked about the effect of flexible working models on workload and work density with respect to three working models. The effects of trust-based working time on workload and work density were evaluated by over 50 per cent of those surveyed as positive, while fewer than 18 per cent saw negative effects in the foreground. It is another matter altogether when it comes to home office: 43 per cent saw positive effects, while approx. 14 per cent rather negative ones. For part time, however, 29 per cent were more likely to expect a change for the worse, 19 per cent thought that no change was likely to occur and only 27 per cent expected an improvement in workload and work density.

In addition to the effects on workload and work density, participants were also asked about the effect on a range of other factors. These questions were directed at the users of flexible models.

While considerable improvement was seen in work-life balance and quality of life (over 68 per cent of those surveyed), motivation (63 per cent), productivity (58 per cent) and creativity (57 per cent), considerable damage with respect to career prospects (31 per cent), communication (29 per cent), collaboration (25 per cent) and employee management (22 per cent) is assumed.



What is surprising is how ambivalent participants estimated the effect on equal opportunities for women and men. 37 per cent were of the opinion that flexible models wouldn't lead to any changes, only 20 per cent thought it would lead to an improvement and 14 per cent even believed it would make the situation worse.

The assessment of the effects on the aforementioned factors barely differ in the estimations among people who use the flexible models (or have used them) and those who have not used them. Greater differences are only apparent in the factors of collaboration and career prospects. Non-users assessed the effects on collaboration more negatively than users, who primarily (60 per cent of those surveyed) considered that flexible models do not change these factors. Only approx. 4 per cent of those surveyed expected flexible models to lead to improved career prospects. Users primarily saw no change (51 per cent), non-users to a smaller extent (37 per cent). Only 35 per cent of the users saw a change for the worse in career prospects, compared with 47 per cent of non-users.

By and large, the effects on these factors were estimated to be the same by people both with and without HR responsibilities. Even if personal experiences with flexible models allow the effects to be estimated more positively, they are still primarily assessed negatively.

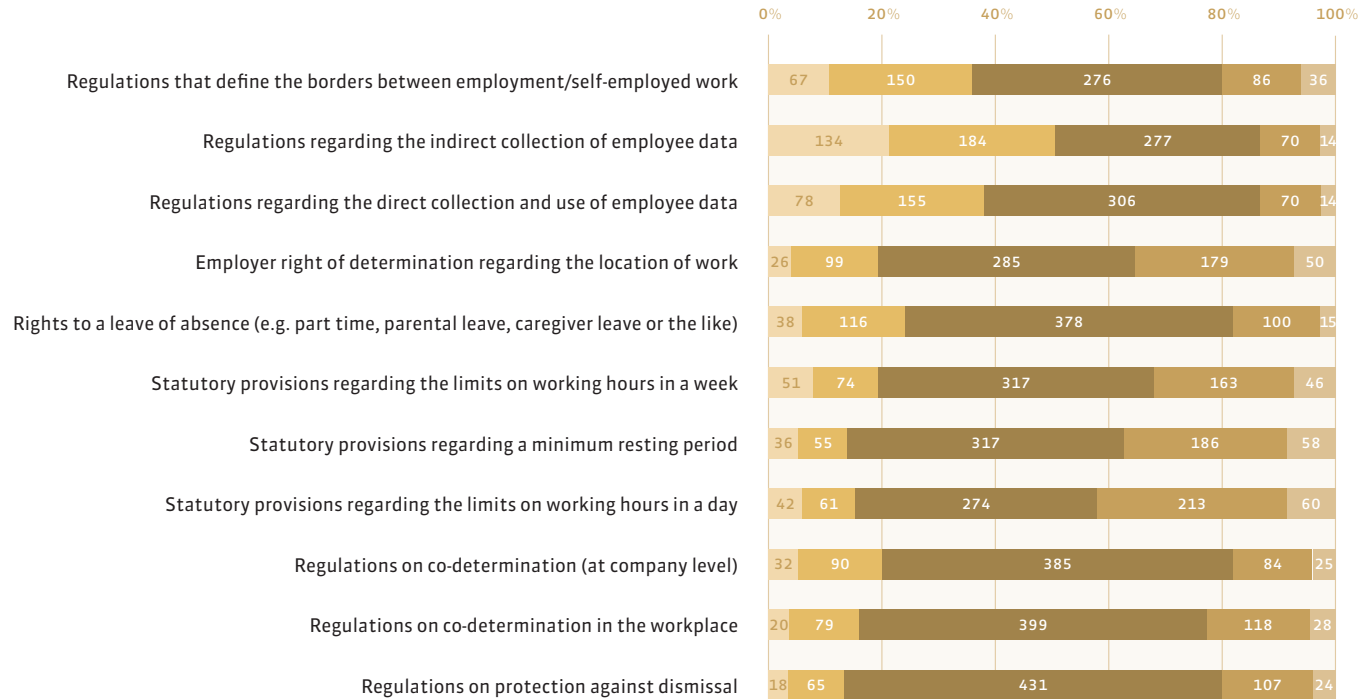
Hopes for the future configuration of the legal framework

A large percentage of those surveyed did not think any steps are necessary to adapt legal regulations, as shown by the answer “should, at its core, stay as is”, which was selected most frequently (between 28 per cent and 54 per cent). Nevertheless, trends can be identified in people's hopes for the future configuration of legal regulations.

While the desire to tighten up the legal guidelines particularly concerns regulations regarding data protection, the desire to loosen legal regulations is particularly aimed at the topic of working hours.

Which hopes do you personally have for the future configuration of the following labour regulations?

(In % of those who answered, absolute values in the bars)



- Should be strengthened significantly
- Should be strengthened slightly
- Should, at its core, stay as it is
- Should be loosened slightly
- Should be loosened significantly



Summary of the quantitative findings

Flexible working models are widespread in both smaller and large companies. Companies frequently offer a diverse, wide range of options, but the use of these models by managers varies dramatically, however, and is often not very pronounced. While trust-based working time, home office and part time are still used more frequently, the same cannot be said for job sharing, reduced working hours from the age of 60 and sabbaticals.

The effects of flexible work models on work-life balance, motivation, productivity and creativity are evaluated as very positive, while at the same time these models are considered to have negative effects on career prospects, communication, collaboration and employee leadership. Obstacles for using flexible models are, above all, a lack of role models and support, whether it be from direct supervisors or top management. Less problematic is the lack of technical prerequisites, reservations from the co-determination bodies and increasing workloads for the office.



3

Why use flexible models? 8 good reasons

“It is clear that there is a need for flexible models beyond home office. This desire already existed prior to the pilot project – we frequently received anonymous requests. Now we need to change our corporate culture so that people can express it frankly.” **HR/Diversity focus group**

Why should your organisation introduce flexible working models? Why should it offer them specifically for those in leadership positions? In the following chapter, you will find answers to these questions based on the experiences of those in leadership positions in companies and research organisations whom we interviewed for this practical guide. They tell us why their organisations went down this road and what experiences they have had with it. Here are eight good reasons for flexible working arrangements in management:

1.
**A societal change:
the desire for a work-life balance**

2.
**Job satisfaction and
health**

3.
Employer attractiveness

4.
Equal opportunities

5.
**Technical development and
global collaboration**

6.
**Increasing efficiency and
adjusting capacities**

7.
**Improved communication and
clear processes**

8.
**Changing leadership and
work culture**

1. A societal change: the desire for a work-life balance

Generally, the most important incentives for introducing flexible working models are a change in lifestyle models in society and the resulting desire to have new working models in an organisation.

If you observe skilled labour and managers in various phases of their lives, new or evolving needs emerge in each phase.

For young skilled labour professionals and managers in Generation Y, current studies show that the reconciliation of work and private life is valued more highly than in older generations and is an important criterion in selecting an employer (A.T. Kearney 2015; Xing/Forsa 2015)

This development was confirmed by the organisations surveyed in this study. The organisations are increasingly hiring people for whom personal development outside of work is just as important as at work. These are people who want to take on leadership responsibilities, are highly qualified and combine their ambition with a sustainable focus on psychological and physical health. As people reach middle age, the reconciliation of work and family frequently has priority. As such, in Germany, many couples with children now desire a division of labour between the partners, and the number is rising. Fathers and

“If we want to have personnel, then we have to think about this. Especially when we are competing with the rest of the economy in Southern Germany, which can frequently pay better.” **HR/Diversity focus group**

mothers want to combine careers and active family responsibilities more than ever (Hurrelmann/Albrecht 2014), making flexible working models a key tool.

In later career phases, pressures such as own illness or illness and care needs within the family or group of friends are frequent motivations for needing innovative working models.

Curating networks, volunteering and continuing education are also generation-spanning motives for desiring flexible models.

To become an attractive employer, it is reasonable to not just focus on the work-life balance of one target group but make flexible working arrangements available to all employees instead.

2. Job satisfaction and health

Flexible working methods play an important role in job satisfaction and health. (Berufundfamilie 2015) Those in leadership positions surveyed in our quantitative study thus indicated that flexible models increase their creativity and productivity, job satisfaction climbs and health risks can be reduced (see also the findings from the quantitative study on page 25). Many of those surveyed also report, for example, that prior to using flexible working models they had a very hard time combining their professional and personal life. Thus, those who reported travel times of one to two hours one way were able to save up to four hours on home office days. At the same time, developing a new work culture with a stronger focus on results and independent work can be attractive, especially for goal-oriented, career-driven employees.

3. Employer attractiveness

The demographic development is increasingly causing employers to have to fight over talent. (BMFSFJ 2013; German Federal Labour Office 2016) At the Max Planck Society, people are discussing the targeted use of flexible models to appeal to young scientists.

In external communication, the organisation is showing that it is reacting to the expected shortage of skilled workers with flexible, forward-looking strategies and is thus communicating modernity and innovation. At the same time, this means assuming corporate responsibility for social developments, such as a shift in demographics and a greater commitment to equal opportunities.

“Four of our 28 branch managers live close to work. Everyone else has to commute for an hour to an hour and a half due to restructuring measures. It’s generally hard to know how sustainable that is – or how long you would like to do that yourself.” **Users’ focus group**

“I act, although I’m not specifically addressed, because I notice things casually. This is a time killer.” **Users’ focus group**

4. Equal opportunities

Flexible models are also an important tool in promoting equal career prospects for men and women, as innovative working organisations can prevent interruptions in a career due to active parental duties. (Accenture 2016) Introducing a legal quota and equal opportunity policies are therefore also important drivers for flexible working models in organisations. New working arrangements therefore are valued more highly and sometimes even become a “management issue”. Those in leadership positions whom we surveyed were rather restrained in evaluating the positive effects of flexible models on equal opportunities. However, it has become clear that this is related to problems accepting flexible models and a failure to incorporate them into the general management strategy and the goals of the organisation. Organisations must be proactive so that flexible working arrangements do not become a career-killing “mommy track”!

5. Technical development and global collaboration

Mobile terminal devices make it possible to coordinate work and organisational tasks between organisations and employees located in different places. More and more, collaborative platforms, software, clouds and video conferences can supplement or replace the need for colleagues to come together in the same place. Increasingly, work can be performed digitally and brought together online. Digital calendars facilitate communication. When skilled workers and managers communicate around the world, they have to be flexible with their schedules anyway. Calling the USA or Asia cannot always occur during standard business hours; information is available at any time of the day. Technology and global work are thus making our work patterns more flexible in a mutual, nearly automatic way. (Fraunhofer IAO 2016; Accenture 2016)

6. Increasing efficiency and adjusting capacities

In our interviews, many reported that flexible working models helped the organisation to use their resources more efficiently. Various other studies have also verified this (e.g. Robert Half 2014). When asked about working in the office, the managers who were surveyed in our quantitative study frequently complained of interruptions that made it difficult to concentrate on their work. The desire to reduce the stress and inefficiency connected to the current workplace is a key impetus for introducing flexible models.

Managers who are responsible for several locations or who have long commutes for other reasons were able to spare themselves significant travel times thanks to home office and mobile work. In one case, cutting working hours across the board presented an alternative to downsizing. One of the companies surveyed combined home office with desk sharing and in this way was able to reduce the costs of office space and journeys. Reduced working hours, home office and desk sharing are parts of a whole strategy for streamlining and increasing efficiency. Result-oriented management can also facilitate the flattening of hierarchies, increase self-management – even for HR development and management and reduce the costs for tasks such as shift-planning.

Cost and benefit of part time models

Benefit

One study on the economic effects of part time models (Mazal 2011) determined the following benefits:

The benefit can be very high when operational requirements exist and flexibilisation can facilitate cost savings, such as with seasonal fluctuations in the range of services or with new space concepts like desk sharing. Flexible working hours based on market demands can save costs. More part-time positions give every organisation greater potential for problem-solving and creativity, as the workload is completed by more heads with varying perspectives. Forcing employees to work full time or even much more than full time, although they would actually like to work less, leads to poorer performance as non work-related tasks are incorporated (surfing the internet, scheduling private appointments, chatting in the hall etc.). What's more, motivation sinks, which affects ability to concentrate, thus compromising the workflow. On the other hand, employees whose needs are taken into

consideration have higher motivation and productivity at work because their lives are more balanced and they are more satisfied. This, in turn, leads to higher employer attractiveness and decreases illnesses and staff turnover.

A 2014 Robert Half survey of 200 German HR managers revealed a majority anticipated that greater employee autonomy in the organisation of work would have positive effects (flexible working hours, telecommuting, fewer direct managers). "Productivity" (58 per cent of those surveyed answered positive) and "creativity" (57 per cent positive) are the factors most anticipated to have a positive effect, while "collaboration" and "efficient employee management" (each 35 per cent positive) evoked the fewest positive expectations. With respect to "communication", fewer HR managers in mid-sized enterprises expected positive effects (34 per cent) while small and large companies took a more positive view (40 per cent and 44 per cent respectively).

In our quantitative survey (see page 25), the managers surveyed observed significant improvement in work-life balance and quality of life (over 68 per cent of those surveyed), motivation (63 per cent), productivity (58 per cent) and creativity (57 per cent).



Increasing efficiency in a home office

Researchers at Stanford University followed 255 call centre employees from a travel agency located in Shanghai over the course of nine months. Half of the employees worked from a home office four days a week, while the others stayed at the office. The only prerequisites were that the employee had already been working for the company for six months and that their home had a broadband internet connection and an office.

After nine months, the researchers concluded that

- the employees working from a home office were able to increase their performance over those in the office by 13 per cent. They worked more hours because they took shorter breaks and were sick less often. They were also able to achieve more in a shorter amount of time.

- Employees from the home office group left the company 50 per cent less than those working in the office.
- Job satisfaction was higher among the home office employees than before.

In the wake of the study, the company offered the possibility for all qualified employees to work from home. The researchers followed the transition over several months and continued their surveys. In doing so, they determined that both employees who were viewed as top performers and average employees were more productive in the home office model. (Source: Bloom et al. 2015)



7. Improved communication and clear processes

Flexible working arrangements often mean that the team is not complete in one location at different times. As such meetings cannot be called spontaneously at these times. Many view this as an encumbrance to communication. In many teams, this situation is actually quite normal, however, as business trips and meetings also lead to absences, which can be absorbed by the organisation as a matter of course. Why is improved communication the result? Because the new challenge of coordinating home office hours, reduced working hours and free afternoons provides an occasion to reorganise communication processes, to streamline things, to implement new instruments like an online calendar and set core working hours, which establishes transparency for everyone. It should be noted, however, that this effect does not happen on its own and it requires a certain amount of effort. There are plenty of good examples, however, that can be used to provide inspiration.



MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

8. Changing the leadership and work culture

The introduction of flexible working models is often connected to new styles in leadership and new work cultures. For example, home office and tracking goals require trust. Unlike in a classic face time culture, the executives cannot have direct control over the performance of work (which, however, is a more laborious and often unproductive management style anyway).

Managers who reduced their working hours reported that they delegate more tasks. This led to career development opportunities for the employees who took on these tasks. On the whole, the introduction of flexible working arrangements led to more personal responsibility, self-organisation, cooperation and a greater focus on results. This often constituted a relief for the managers in organising and controlling work, which goes hand in hand with a better work-life balance. Home office days opened the door to strategic thought. Highly qualified employees and executives frequently feel more recognised professionally thanks to increased autonomy.

These effects do not occur spontaneously. It is necessary to accompany the introduction of flexible working arrangements with suitable reorganisation and team development measures. Transparency and involvement can keep colleagues, employees and supervisors from feeling like *“... service providers for models which do not benefit them.”* (Supervisors' focus group)

Industry partner: Max Planck Society

Located in Munich, the Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Science (MPG) is one of the leading German organisations for basic research. The MPG comprises 83 research institutes and facilities, which focusses on research in the natural sciences, life sciences, social sciences and the humanities that is particularly innovative and forward-looking or that is especially demanding in terms of funding or time requirements. The MPG currently employs around 22,000 people in its facilities. Just under 30 per cent of the scientists are women. The MPG is financed predominantly by public funds from the federal and state governments of Germany as well as third-party projects.

Equal opportunities and the reconciliation of career and family is particularly important to the Max Planck Society. It supports women particularly through mentoring and networking programmes such as the Minerva-FemmeNet female scientist network, the Elisabeth Schie-mann Kolleg for female scientists after their post-doctoral phase and the career-building programme “Sign Up!” for post-doc candidates, which has been implemented together with the EAF Berlin since 2009. The Christiane Nüsslein Volhard Foundation supports talented female graduate students and post-doctoral fellows with children in the fields of experimental natural sciences and medicine. It aims to enable them to create the freedom and mobility required to further their scientific careers to help prevent science from losing excellent talent.

The MPG was the first German scientific organisation (including all institutes) to undergo the family-friendliness audit “berufund-familie” (job and family) and has successfully obtained certification four times since 2006. The organisation supports women with a range of offers such as childcare options, dual career and welcome services as well as the possibility for telecommuting and flexitime.

Industry partner: The Leibniz Association

The Leibniz Association connects 88 independent research institutions that range in focus from the natural, engineering and environmental sciences, economics, spatial and social sciences to the humanities. They advise and inform politics, science, economics and the public. The various Leibniz Association institutions currently employ some 18,500 people, 50.4 per cent of whom are researchers. Approx. 43 per cent of the scientific staff are women. In 2015, the research projects from the Leibniz Association were funded by the federal and state governments of Germany and supplemented by private third parties to the sum of 1.09 billion euros.

Equal opportunities for women and men in research is one of the Leibniz Association's core objectives and has been anchored in its statutes since 2008. The Leibniz Association was also the first non-university science organisation to adopt the German Research Foundation's Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality in 2008. Progress is tracked by an overarching project group and regular reports. Special attention is given to increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions. The Leibniz Association supports the attainment of this goal with special funding for research groups led by female scientists and by appointing female academics to professorships at an earlier stage. In 2011, Leibniz institutions initiated a mentoring programme for female scientists that promotes women researchers in the post-doctoral phase and supports them on the path to leadership positions and professorships. The reconciliation of career and family is another core objective for the Leibniz Association. 31 Leibniz institutions are already certified by the "berufundfamilie" (career and family) audit and 68 institutions with the "TOTAL E-QUALITY award" and thus prove their family-friendly personnel policy and their commitment to flexible working models.



3 questions for ...
Dr. Roland Leroux
ULA – United Leaders Association

Position: President of the ULA

Why is the topic "Flexible working models for those in leadership positions" gaining importance?

The most important factors for success in a company are not only capital or work, but also a successful leadership culture. In order to lead successfully, those in leadership positions must be able to adapt to the change in the business world caused by globalisation, innovation, digitalisation and changes in the workplace, e.g. the reconciliation of family and career. To do this, those in leadership positions also need enough flexibility so that they can fulfil tasks for the business. We often cannot take the next step with our "rigid" models.

Have expectations changed towards those in leadership positions?

A change in requirements leads to a change in corporate culture in the medium term and with it a change in the expectations of leadership style. Those in leadership positions must be able to clearly indicate goals as before but also specify trends, state clear tasks but also define their visions for employees and challenge employees on the one hand, but also support them. In the future, leadership styles should therefore be visionary, participatory, cooperative, appreciative, delegating and, above all, firm. You could call it "leadership 4.0".

Given what you know, how do members of the ULA experience the topic "flexible working models"?

They have very different experiences. The lines between opportunities (e.g. better social compatibility) and risks (e.g. overwhelming those in leadership positions) are blurring. They are finding out that leadership is more than setting goals and optimising processes and that not everyone is called to be a leader in the future.



3 questions for ...

Michael Richartz

Deutsche Telekom AG

Position: Department manager of the corporate legal department

Flexible model: Part time work in a 4-day week

Why did you decide on the model which you are currently using to work flexibly?

I decided on the 4-day part time solution because I promised myself to significantly improve my – warning, cliché! – work-life situation. I simply wanted to have more (free) time for certain activities. And an additional day off prevents too large of a separation between the “work week” and “weekend free time”, during which I would previously have to cram in all of my plans.

What has changed since then?

I will give you the corny answer first: My work-life balance has greatly improved. In this regard, my wish has been fulfilled. I also notice that, because I have an extra day off, I am more concentrated in doing my work overall. I make sure I don't leave any loose ends before my day off and I catch up quickly afterwards so that I don't put stress on my substitute. It works wonderfully. My boss and my in-house clients accepted my one-day absence surprisingly quickly. Everything was also positively received by my employees, as many of them also work a reduced schedule themselves.

What do you think is still particularly important with respect to implementing flexible models?

Those in leadership positions are the key to the successful introduction of such flexible models! I think it makes sense to record the essential parameters of such models in a corporate policy. This shouldn't be a long-winded process description, mind you, rather it should only contain the true principles. This allows those in leadership positions to speak about the introduction of models with THEIR managers. This simplifies implementation, especially in fields in which management tends to be hostile towards new models. In doing so, a key component for me would be the establishment of an inverse standard/exception relationship, whereby those in leadership positions are required to justify in exceptional cases why such models are NOT applicable to individual people or groups in their area of responsibility. We had also already formulated one such policy in our project.

4

Strategies for the successful implementation of flexible models



This section will tell you how you can successfully introduce and implement flexible working models for leadership positions.

Verbal candour vs. rigidity in behaviour?

Today, hardly any organisation still openly states their opposition to flexible working models for their employees. But if you look for specific examples of a regular home office, job sharing or part time in leadership positions, you will often find only a small number of managers – usually at lower levels of the hierarchy – who use them on a regular basis. This is because the introduction of flexible models for those in leadership positions challenge the fundamental paradigms of the prevailing leadership practices and culture. Nevertheless, there are also organisations in Germany where people in leadership positions manage to actually live out this flexibility. In most cases, the organisation provides a regulatory framework which does not expressly forbid flexible models for managers, but which also does not specifically promote them. The leadership culture and numerous process regulations also continue to be determined by the cultural norm of the omnipresent leadership. Therefore, in many cases, the initiative is put on the shoulders of individual managers to implement these models for themselves or to promote them

for their own employees. The good news is that the prospects for success have never been better than they are today. The quantitative survey introduced earlier is not least in demonstrating this fact. The reason for growing openness is that organisations are increasingly dependent on the flexibility of managers with respect to location and hours. Therefore, those who can manage themselves well and are well-trusted in a professional environment can also make clever use of this flexibility for themselves.

In this chapter, the first step will introduce you to the factors for success for this micro-strategy. The second step will broaden the perspective to the entire organisation, as a sustainable change is not possible without an organisational strategy. The innovative character of the qualitative study conducted as part of Flexship stems from the fact that we interviewed the various players in the field of labour organisation regarding their perspective on the topic. As such, the factors for success will be presented from the perspective of the various players in the following chapter. Each of these perspectives is important so that flexible models can be implemented successfully.

When designing flexible working models for managers, the following players are particularly relevant:

- Managers who would like to reduce their working hours or those who already do this
- The employees and colleagues of managers who reduce their working hours
- The supervisors of these managers

From an organisational perspective, the circle of important players expands to:

- The organisational developers who are charged with introducing and promoting new working models. In this case, the players are generally the HR department or diversity officers.
- The controlling and finance divisions in the organisation
- Top management

Factors for success

Factors for success for managers who (want to) reduce their working hours

From the individual perspective of the user, the first step tends to be convincing his/her supervisor of the new model. Users should be well-prepared for the initial meetings with their supervisor(s) and see things from his/her/their perspective. When meeting with your supervisor(s), we do not recommend only highlighting the positive aspects of your preferred model. You're more likely to be successful if you also openly account for the challenges and disadvantages that each model presents and suggest possible solutions and approaches. During this meeting, the benefits for the supervisor should be clearly presented in detail. For particularly sceptical supervisors, it's a good idea to suggest a trial run of half a year, for example. After this period, the user and the supervisor can evaluate the experiences and decide if the model can be implemented successfully.

Prior to meeting with supervisors, users should consider above all what they would like and how these desires fit with the requirements of their positions. The following test criteria should be observed in the process:

- How high is the workload in this position? How many hours would have to otherwise be covered should working hours be reduced?
- How much of a presence on site, with clients, at conferences etc. is actually necessary to be successful?
- How many (spontaneous) ad-hoc tasks (requests from the executive board, emergencies with clients) exist that can't be planned for and thus require an unplanned, regular presence?
- How much conceptual, written individual work is part of the position? Can this work be well planned out and also partially completed while travelling or at home?
- Which work packages can be handed over to colleagues or employees? What can a substitute deal with in an emergency or on days off?

Industry partner: Deutsche Post DHL Group

The Deutsche Post DHL Group is the world's leading mail and logistics group. The group combines two powerful brands: Deutsche Post is Europe's leading postal service, while in the global growth market, DHL represents a comprehensive service portfolio in the divisions of international express shipments, global forwarding and freight, e-commerce and supply chain management.

Deutsche Post DHL Group employees around 500,000 employees in over 220 countries and territories worldwide. In 2015, the group generated turnover of over 59 billion euros.

The "Flexible working arrangements" pilot project was implemented in the German PeP (Post-eCommerce-Parcel) division. Managers in this division were invited to test various flexible working models such as part time, home office and job sharing. The experiences formed the basis for the introduction of flexible models in the German PeP (Post-eCommerce-Parcel) division.

Deutsche Post DHL Group has already been awarded the "TOTAL E-QUALITY AWARD" six times for equal opportunities for women and men within their personnel policies. For their work toward Diversity Management, Deutsche Post DHL was also awarded a "Diversity add-on" in 2015.



Industry partner: Deutsche Bahn AG

One particular challenge shown by the interviews we held is the additional work that results from a reduction in working hours. Managers generally reduce their hours to nearly full time, i.e. by 10 to 30 per cent. However, it is very rare that structural regulations are in place to determine who picks up the rest of the work that piles up. For this reason, managers generally continue to perform a portion of the work themselves, while one portion is distributed among colleagues, employees and sometimes even supervisors. In this case, it is very important that the users take care to establish a give-and-take between them and their environment, e.g. that employees also profit from more autonomy and a broadening of their area of responsibilities (and upgrading their position if necessary) and that the extra work is not always completed by the same person without payment. Ultimately the manager should take steps to ensure that his/her own reduction is compensated by increasing another position or reorganisation, at least in part by adding jobs, otherwise the model runs the risk of being rejected and increasing stress for those in the surrounding positions.

Deutsche Bahn AG is one of the world's leading transportation and logistics companies, with headquarters in Berlin. As one of the largest employers in Germany, Deutsche Bahn AG employs over 195,000 people, 22.8 per cent of whom are women. They also employ 111,000 people world-wide. Deutsche Bahn AG is primarily engaged in long distance, regional and rail freight transport, train station and track infrastructure, vehicle maintenance and logistics. In the 2015 business year, the global turnover of the DB Group was over 40.5 billion euros.

For Deutsche Bahn AG, attractive employment conditions are part of the over-arching corporate strategy to retain employees. One of their most important tools is the demography collective agreement: Among other things, this agreement offers part time, flexitime and flexible working hours for employees, including those in leadership positions, a reduction in working hours after reaching a specific age, the possibility for home office as well as leave acquired through accumulating hours in a long-term account and sabbatical, job sharing and interim management. The demography collective agreement is complemented with mentoring programmes such as the "Career with Kids" programme, which was created in collaboration with the EAF Berlin. It aims to support executives during and after parental leave. The Railway Staff Social Services Foundation [Bahn Sozialwerk] and the AWO provide a wide range of child care options such as the DB-operated child care centre in Frankfurt am Main, parent-child rooms, a summer holidays programme and temporary child care options (e.g. au pairs and childminders). Deutsche Bahn AG focuses in particular on equal opportunities within the company. By 2020, 25 per cent of the employees and 20 per cent of the executives in the DB Group should be women.

A contentious point of discussion in the focus groups was how the users should explain the model they use. No small number of users kept changes to themselves within the organisation, especially when it comes to a reduction in working hours – sometimes even withholding this information from their own employees and colleagues. We recommend transparent communication with the goal of changing the culture and to use the term “reduced full time” as a micro-political strategy.

When implementing the respective models, take particular care to respect the following seven points:

1. Communicate absences transparently: To facilitate acceptance by employees and those in the surrounding environment, it is important to communicate working hours and absences transparently (e.g. by entering these into a joint calendar). It is advantageous to establish as regular a schedule as possible (set days and times).

Industry partner: Deutsche Telekom AG

Headquartered in Bonn, Deutsche Telekom AG is one of Europe's largest telecommunication companies. The group and its subsidiaries employ approx. 110,000 people in Germany, 35.3 per cent of whom are women, and 225,000 people worldwide. With Telekom Deutschland GmbH, Deutsche Telekom AG offers products and services for fixed-network and mobile communications, broadband internet and TV. In the 2014 financial year, it generated turnover of 69.2 billion euros worldwide.

Deutsche Telekom has laid the groundwork for a successful digital transformation in Germany with its pioneering offers and infrastructure. This transformation offers enormous prospects for making the working world a more humane place. For a conscientious employer like Deutsche Telekom, digitalisation of the workplace is particularly important in reconciling work and private life.

The “work-life@telekom” programme is one of the group's answers to these challenges. This programme offers employees various flexible working models: flexitime, part time with a guaranteed return option, leave for family members in need of care, lifetime working time accounts, parental leave, educational leave, part-time tandem models and mobile work. The programme is also explicitly open to managers.

Since 2012, Deutsche Telekom has supported managers on parental leave with the EAF Berlin project “Career with Kids”. In addition, a network of fathers was established, which provides advice and support for male employees with children, for example with questions regarding parental leave. The advancement of women, specifically the deliberate increase in the number of women in leadership positions, is an important part of the corporate strategy. In doing so, Deutsche Telekom AG takes a notable stand for fair, equal remuneration policies. In 2014, Deutsche Telekom AG successfully participated in the pay check initiative from the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency and consulted with the “Pay equality in companies – Germany” (Logib-D) project, which is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.



2. Flexibility: Managers should be flexible with these standard agreed-upon times and days and guarantee they can also be reached when needed and in emergencies. One focus group participant who is working a reduced full time schedule had this to say: *“It’s a mistake to think that you will have a normal job when working a flexible model. Even if you are a manager working only at 80 per cent of the standard working hours, you still bear 100 per cent of the responsibility for your team. When things go pear shaped, I’m there, regardless of what my schedule says.”*

3. Self-management and self guidance: Managers who work using flexible models must be particularly skilled at self management and self guidance. For example, those who work in a home office model or even late at night must ensure that the working hours and the intensity of work satisfy the requirements of the tasks and respect the limits of their own capabilities. The reduction of working hours must also be prioritised more. The more complex the selected model is, the more planning you need to do.

4. Promotion of a new work and team culture: When managers reduce their working hours or increase their mobile work, this also changes the requirements at the office. For this reason, managers should purposefully promote personal responsibility and autonomous teamwork in their employees. That being said, we are not talking about a “laissez-faire” attitude. Clearly delineated assignments that the team can work on independently and the monitoring of results with transparent criteria are factors that contribute to success.

5. Open feedback culture: In periods of change like this, it is important, especially at the beginning, to promote an open feedback culture that aims to optimise the workplace and include everyone in the adjustment processes. These models are most successful when the managers using them create rules for their substitute. The demands on communication increase qualitatively and quantitatively. Regular team meetings and one-on-one conversations as well as availability in emergencies should be guaranteed for all employees. Flexible leadership requires more and not less communication, coordination and planning.

6. Presence in leadership: A manager’s presence is still required in order to lead, which is why a reduction in working hours is only possible to a lesser degree, compared to employees without management responsibilities (near full-time part time) – unless job sharing models are implemented. In this case 50/50 or 60/60 models are very feasible.

7. Marketing for yourself and for the model: Resistance and doubt at the office are very common with respect to reduced full time in leadership positions. For this reason, managers using these models report more than anything else on the importance of explaining their models at the office again and again, to be open to criticism and, above all, to be confident when standing up for new, innovative solutions and explaining their advantages.

Ultimately managers who lead in flexible systems continue to decide on their goals, strategies, framework and also limits in completing their work and still bear the responsibility in reaching these goals. However, unlike classic leadership approaches, the autonomy, personal responsibility and self determination increases among their team members. Managers therefore become “empowerers” and “promoters”: Managers micromanage less and promote their employees’ growth and self-empowerment more. Flexible workplaces thus promote participative leadership. It is therefore easier to implement these models when this style of leadership is welcomed in principle in the organisation.

Checklist: Factors for success for managers who (want to) reduce their working hours

- Put yourself in your supervisor’s shoes and prepare solution-oriented suggestions for potential misgivings
- Clarify the benefits for supervisors
- Show flexibility and commitment by always being ready to deviate from the agreed-upon model in an emergency (e.g. coming in to the office on Fridays when necessary, even though it’s your day off)
- Establish and embrace the principle of give-and-take on your own initiative: Demand flexibility, but also be flexible yourself
- Suggest a trial run of the model for a short, limited period to allow reservations to slowly dissipate
- Maintain transparency with absences and reduced working hours, establish regularity (e.g. by entering information into a joint calendar so that employees, supervisors and colleagues can plan collaborative work)
- Display excellent self-management skills: e.g. keep to working hours in your home office or set priorities when faced with a large workload
- Promote independence and self-management skills in individual employees
- Promote an open feedback culture to learn and to optimise the organisation of work, especially at the beginning
- Promote autonomous coordination on a case-by-case basis in the team
- Appoint a substitute for emergencies, regular team meetings and one-on-one conversations
- Guarantee availability to all employees in emergencies
- Communication, coordination and planning must be given high priority
- A manager’s presence is still required in order to manage employees, which is why a reduction in working hours is only possible to a lesser degree than for employees without management responsibilities (near full time part time) – unless job sharing models are implemented

Factors for success for the supervisors of users

The focus group discussions clearly revealed that the possibilities for implementing reduced full time for those in leadership positions depend primarily on the direct supervisor.

Supervisors who also promote flexible models for their management staff report essentially occupying three roles in this process. First, they are asked as a manager to optimise work processes by checking work results on a regular basis, demanding clear competencies, communicating the model well and providing transparency when planning the work. Second, they act as a coach and sparring partner for the affected managers, take the leap of faith with them, especially at the beginning, advise them when conflicts arise and also provide support when resistance or disruptions come up at work. Third, they advocate for the model and assume responsibility for the consequences associated with the model to management and the environment. They therefore generally act as change agents, in that they are catalysts for change.

Checklist: Factors for success for the supervisors of users

- Take a leap of faith and provide consultation for managers who work flexibly
- Stipulate and review work results instead of attendance time on a regular basis
- Accept substitute regulations
- Show tolerance towards mistakes and give the team feedback and time to develop when flexible systems are introduced for the first time
- Promote clear agreements and reliable organisation of work
- Guarantee transparency and predictability of absence times
- Establish certainty in action by designating clear responsibilities, communication and organising the work in the team
- Demand and promote a culture of give and take within the team
- Provide support and loyalty in cases of subjective teasing and jealousy from colleagues and employees

Factors for success for employees and colleagues

Employees are called upon to think for themselves more in flexible systems and to incorporate their own capabilities. This can lead to friction or feeling overwhelmed, especially in periods of transition from classic ways of working to new models. However, this is generally a learning process from which both sides – managers and employees – benefit. It may also be that some employees feel more secure in one context because they receive more direct instruction and control. This aspect in particular must be taken into account when selecting, supporting and training employees.

- Be open and willing to try flexible models
- Be clear about your own benefits
- Have an understanding for a give and take in the team
- Be highly motivated
- Exhibit a high level of self management and self discipline
- Be willing and able to work independently
- Be willing and able to take on responsibility
- Be able to come to an agreement in a team autonomously
- Be ready to give and receive open feedback

Checklist: Factors for success for employees and colleagues

Factors for success for organisation developers and HR personnel

The reduction in working hours for those in leadership positions is a big challenge for the culture in most organisations, as of all forms of flexibilisation, it most strongly challenges the prevailing model of the omnipresent manager who is always available. Though the current practice in German organisations is not to forbid the possibility of reducing hours in general, everything else is left to the micro-politics of the affected teams, which ultimately leads to low levels of participation. For this reason, organisations that want to markedly increase the use of these models understand the introduction process as an organisational development process that must be consciously guided, a process that does not just take the affected managers into account, but rather considers the interaction of the various players in the organisation.

Therefore this perspective should be included more extensively in the following process.

Those in the organisation who are charged with driving the change should be the first to get an overview of which groups of stakeholders are pursuing which goals with respect to this topic and how the atmosphere is within the organisation.



The current situation in the organisation can be improved using various strategies (written employee surveys, focus groups with managers at various levels etc.). Following this, sensible steps can be planned and implemented, and their success reviewed.

If there aren't any, or only very few, examples of good practice for these models in the organisation, it is a good idea to get those on board who stand to benefit from the change and to make these people strong allies for it. Above all, two things are needed at the beginning for change to take place in an organisation: the support of at least one high-ranking manager from the affected division and a sufficiently large group of managers in the organisation who want more flexible working hours.

Managers who are enthusiastic about the new possibilities opening up in the digital working world can also be supporters. HR professionals are particularly interested in innovative models that increase employees' job satisfaction. Not least because they also expect greater success in recruiting high potentials.

Other factors for success from an organisational development perspective

The pilot project as a tool for organisational change:

It is promising to approach the introduction and dissemination of flexible models for executives as an opportunity for change as part of a pilot project. A pilot project can be commissioned by the management of an organisation, a department or a division. To this end, a limited number of managers should be allowed to try out the flexibilisation of their working hours, mobile work, reduced full time or job sharing with the permission of their supervisors for a limited time frame – usually one year.

Realistic examples of good practice and role models:

In order to attain widespread use of flexible models for those in leadership positions in an organisation, it is important that the next step includes publicising examples of good practice and role models in the organisation using various communication channels. In doing so, the findings from our research project show that the more realistic the presentation is, the more credible and convincing it will be. The findings also show that the higher the role models are located in the hierarchy, the more visible and effective they are.

The power of an open dialogue: When certain departments in an organisation decide, with the permission and support of top management (or at least part of it), that flexible models should also be implemented for those in leadership positions, there is another very sensible strategy for the change. Places to meet and network should intentionally be created for people who want to talk about the challenges associated with the change. Resources should be made available so that managers who work flexibly can meet regularly and compare notes. Experience shows that in addition to financial means, HR resources are also necessary, i.e. a person who coordinates the network and organises the events.

Consulting, training and mediation:

Nearly all participants in the focus groups wanted more training and consulting available from HR. For sustainably successful models, it is not enough to just leave these topics to individual managers. Moreover independent clearing houses have proved their worth as a party that people can turn to in conflict situations.

The business case: At the beginning, setting up a new model takes at least one high-ranking sponsor and someone in top management with courage and an interest in change. From a top management perspective, a clear link with the organisation's strategic business goals is a must. Here are some examples from the rounds of discussions we led:

- Potential savings, e.g. from new work and space concepts. Home office can be used to lower the amount of space the company needs via the targeted use of digital technology.
- Digitalisation as part of a modernisation strategy for corporate positioning is only credible if the company's own employees work digitally.
- Flexible models are necessary to successfully compete for high-potential generation Y candidates, as this generation greatly values the reconciliation of career and private life.

Factors for success from the perspective of controllers and process managers

The goal of a roll out is to create processes and structures that allow us to implement flexible models for managers across the entire organisation. Above all, this general means identifying and abolishing obstacles. Examples of these obstacles include:

- When creating leadership positions, it is impossible to enter part time positions in the system
- Managers who reduce their hours lose their right to a full time position
- Two people cannot perform the same job because the system does not allow for a way to enter this
- There are no regular processes that guarantee, when it is desired, that the reduction of one position can be compensated by adding another position in the team
- There are different regulations within the division and in the team regarding criteria for providing portable devices for work, which can lead to resentment and jealousy between employees

- After 8 pm, managers who have flexible hours (in order to be able to pick up their children in the afternoon) are not able to send e-mails because the main server is switched off

The bottom line

In general, it is currently still left up to the courage and initiative of individual managers and their supervisors to introduce flexible models. The good news is that it is more possible than ever to implement these models across organisations. There is now more leeway for these models in individual companies. But organisations that do not address the obstacles in the structures and processes will have a difficult time effecting change in the entire organisation's culture. As long as managers receive the signal through the system that flexible models are not part of process DNA, it is understandable that only a few people will have the courage to strike out in a new direction.

As part of the research project, the focus groups debated vigorously how much an organisation should prescribe rules, processes and structures. It turns out that on the one hand, it is important to set down clear, transparent rules and to stipulate a binding, organisation-wide framework that also defines limits. On the other hand, however, there should be enough room for growth so that, depending on the context, the specific requirements of the position and the management who are affected can be taken into account.



3 questions for ... Dr. Cornelius Richter

DIW – The German Institute for Economic Research

Position: Managing Director and Head of
Legal department and Human Resources

Flexible model: 80 per cent part time = two
(alternating) "free" afternoons/week

Why did you decide on the model that you currently use to work flexibly?

My partner and I would both like to spend more time with our daughter than a full-time job would allow. By working part time, we make it possible for both of us to work, while having a child at the same time.

What has changed since then?

My work and my private life are much more separate than before. Dealing with my work requirements, which have stayed the same by and large, has led to developments in both the organisation and efficiency of work as well as the ability and willingness to delegate.

What do you think is still particularly important regarding the implementation of flexible models?

Acceptance and a culture that also values the decision for managers to take time to have a private life. In a large majority of cases, adapting responsibilities, work processes and personnel placement to flexible models is not a question of feasibility, but a question of goodwill from the people responsible. The best way to gain acceptance for these models is for management to set a convincing example.



3 questions for ...

Dr. Julia K. Kuark

JKK Consulting, Switzerland

Position: Owner of JKK Consulting,
Developer of the TopSharing model

Why is the topic “Flexible working models for those in leadership positions” gaining importance?

For one thing, it's because managers are desiring flexible working models more and more. By the same token, companies increasingly need to court good managers and organisations can distinguish themselves in the job market with attractive working conditions.

Have expectations changed towards those in leadership positions?

There are great societal changes and new attitudes regarding how the reconciliation of paid work and family life or other tasks should be arranged. Of course, these changes also affect the workplace and people in leadership positions. Areas of tension emerge in private life as in business that also open the door to increased creativity because new solutions must be developed.

What are the prerequisites for flexible work?

There are technical infrastructure requirements. These include a data line and network access in particular, but also organisational factors such as seasonal employment and project-related hours. Personal and social competencies are also necessary, e.g. reliability, initiative and the ability to work in a team. Furthermore, flexible working models require good communication at work and a trusting leadership culture.

Overcoming obstacles

Regardless of the strategy used to introduce it, misgivings and resistance towards the introduction of flexible working models for those in leadership positions exist in many organisations. This resistance is not superfluous or avoidable, but is generally an important part of the change process. When members of your organisation express misgivings, these should be taken seriously. By analysing these doubts thoroughly and implementing strategies, many of these misgivings can be resolved. In this chapter, four typical points of contention will be outlined along with a starting point for their solutions:

Fear of change and a lack of experience:

Every organisation has various types of people with various attitudes towards innovation and change. Sometimes the familiar is emotionally more positive than the new and unknown. In this case, low-threshold offers such as personal portraits of good practice in the intranet or discussion rounds with managers who have already used new models successfully can help. Be sure to add positive emotional appeal to the topic and use role models to show that it can work, and how. Making information available across various channels helps to absorb feelings of insecurity and a lack of information.

“The longer we do it, the more it becomes a reality. Practitioners must ensure that it works. In this way, the resistance decreases and in two to three years, the models are then standardised.”

HR/Diversity focus group

Fear of losing power, influence and control: Flexible models limit the direct, immediate control a manager has over employees. Managers who prefer a direct, dominant leadership style and do not like to delegate, are therefore right in fearing a change that is not to their benefit. Moreover, the number of managers would rise as reduced full time and job sharing becomes more prevalent, and these people would also increase competition for other positions. There are some groups of employees that are hard to win for cultural change. For this reason, it makes sense to introduce compensation-related incentives and institutions such as a clearing house that employees can turn to in conflict situations.

Negative experiences: New models can also have negative repercussions, for a number of reasons, particularly in the introduction phase. The introduction of flexible models is a learning process for the organisation and its members. Keep this in mind with respect to all measures and instruments. Open a dialogue (workshops) in which these negative repercussions, mistakes and failings can be discussed freely, but with an eye to finding solutions. Communication is another area that should focus less on painting the perfect picture; instead the procedure of learning new models, structures and processes should be in the foreground.

Objections to the implementation strategy:

Organisations are complex entities, therefore there is always going to be justifiable criticism when it comes to the specific implementation of flexible models. This criticism should be accepted and used to develop solutions. These kinds of objections to specific implementation strategies are very fruitful for the successful implementation of flexible models.

The findings from our studies show:

- Managers view a lack of role models, support from direct supervisors and support from top management as the main challenges in using flexible working models. Much less problematic are the technical prerequisites, reservations from co-determination bodies and increasing work loads at the office.
- The resistance towards flexible working models decreases as these models become more prevalent and more normal. *“The longer we do it, the more it becomes a reality. Practitioners must ensure that it works. In this way, the resistance decreases and in two to three years, the models are then standardised.”* (HR/Diversity focus group)
- Flexibilisation of location is also accepted more easily than a reduction in hours. *“Flexibilisation of location is accepted more than pure flexibilisation, as many expect their career track to stall; everything that deviates from 100 per cent employment is a problem.”* (Users’ focus group)
- The acceptance of flexible working arrangements depends on how much they deviate from the organisation’s culture and from the prevailing image of management. Obstacles therefore result primarily from patterns of perception and expectation.

Employment law in Germany

How to react?

Common reservations and possible answers

Here are some typical reservations concerning flexible working arrangements and strategies to invalidate them:

Flexible work makes communication more difficult

Flexible working arrangements are frequently rejected with the argument that they make communication in a department more difficult. There is no question that it is a problem when absences cause communication needs to go unmet. However, it is possible to find solutions in individual cases – just as an organisation can do this in situations unrelated to the introduction of flexible models, i.e. business trips, off-the-premises meetings etc. In this way, such blanket statements can generally be refuted quickly. We have plenty of good examples that show how the various communication needs can be met by using digital communication supported with a mobile terminal device (BMAS 2015b).

Flexible work is expensive and inefficient

Flexible working arrangements are frequently perceived to be more expensive and inefficient. This is generally as difficult to prove as it is to refute. Often, tasks are not redistributed when working hours are reduced by 5 or 15 per cent. Dealing with a reduction in working hours in this way shows that a company's efficiency depends upon its specific

Flexible working models create the possibility to arrange working hours as needed and to allow for more independence with schedules. The legal framework must be observed when including the number of various possibilities for flexible work hours in a company's business model. General provisions regarding the legal basis relating to the flexibilisation of work are primarily laid down in the German Working Hours Act (ArbZG) and the Works Constitution Act (BetrVG).

The Act on Part-time Work and Fixed-term Employment Relationships (TzBfG) provides the legal regulations specifically related to part time work. In the brochure "Part time – What is legal [Teilzeit – Alles was Recht ist]", the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) provides information on part time work and the legal framework for employees and employers.

Job sharing is a particular form of flexible working hours in which employees share work within the legal guidelines. With this model, it is important to pay particular attention to the Act on Part-time Work and Fixed-term Employment Relationships (TzBfG).

The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) provides information on the legal regulations for job sharing with the publication "Keeping your specialists – models for flexible working hours [Fachkräfte sichern – Flexible Arbeitszeitmodelle]".

The home office model is legally classified as telecommuting. The German VDU work directive (BildscharbV) and the Homeworking Act (HAG) are particularly applicable. Information on the legal regulations for telecommuting are also available in the aforementioned publication from the BMWi.

For all flexible models, bear in mind that the legal framework for flexible working models is constantly changing. Therefore, we strongly advise a regular exchange of information and continually adapting the regulations within an organisation!

“You shoot yourself in the foot if you miss a lot or cut back.”

Supervisors’ focus group

regulations. Numbers in the company can be collected to contest the inefficiency argument and can be used to scrutinise it. In doing so, the individual costs that arise must be offset against the positive effects on recruiting, employee satisfaction and staff retention. Because supervisors are not able to monitor working in a home office, this method is frequently perceived to be more inefficient. In several interviews with supervisors, many even expressed the hypothesis that people were working less, or even not at all. The users and their direct supervisors report the opposite, however. According to our interviews, tasks that require a lot of concentration can tackled much more efficiently as there are no distractions or interruptions from colleagues. *“Either I trust my team or I don’t. Home office is therefore no problem as long as I see results. Sometimes I take advantage of it too, to work through things or to do something conceptual.”* (Supervisors’ focus group)

“Home office is therefore no problem as long as I see results.”

Supervisors’ focus group

Part time workers do not want to have a career Part time means a career setback

Occasionally, the use of flexible models is interpreted as a lack of commitment to the company.

“You have a career because you are motivated. Everyone knows that you shoot yourself in the foot if you miss a lot or cut back. You want to take on the exciting projects and know what is going on, not say, ‘I can’t do that, I’m part time now’. Then you are not motivated yourself. I want to be in the meetings too, and not just say, ‘That does not concern me, let someone else take care of it’, but rather exactly the opposite. Therefore people don’t select a model that will exclude them from everything.” (Supervisors’ focus group).

Many managers interested in flexible working models are afraid that they could damage their careers by using them. They fear giving the impression of having less motivation or being left behind due to their reduced presence in the organisation, which may adversely affect them when competing for leadership positions. This fear appears to be valid in many instances. In this case, a change to the culture of the organisation is necessary, as the statements of those surveyed in our quantitative study instead indicate increased productivity, creativity and motivation for managers who work flexibly.

Flexible work is just for women

In traditional work cultures management is associated with masculinity. This stereotype contributes to women taking leadership positions much less often. If they still decide to take one on, flexible working arrangements are more available to them than to their male colleagues because caregiving is still considered to be primarily a female matter.

“As long as children are in the background, most bosses don’t dare to open their mouths. That is the one recognised reason, and that has been the case for decades. [...] The task is now to extend these arrangements for other reasons.” (Supervisors’ focus group)

This circumstance leads to the danger of flexible working arrangements being viewed and denigrated as a “women’s issue”. This must be avoided.

“Flexibility should not only be offered to a specific group, such as mothers. The feasibility within the team, and not the personal situation, should be the deciding factor in approving a request for a flexible working model. People should give me a plan. Otherwise the supervisors face emotional pressure.” (Supervisors’ focus group)

“The man is often still the breadwinner and his wife goes down to part time. There are structural reasons for this.”

Users’ focus group

At the same time, there are reasons that make it difficult for men to take advantage of flexible working arrangements.

“Management is masculine; the family provider can’t cut back his hours. The man is often still the main earner and his wife goes down to part time. There are structural reasons for this.” (Users’ focus group)

In addition to structural reasons like splitting taxation for married couples in Germany (Ehegattensplitting), childcare offers or the gender pay gap, society’s perception also plays a role.

Organisations cannot change gender norms in society. However, by designing the programmes appropriately, proposals for flexible models can be made attractive for both women and men.

Flexible work means additional management costs

Flexible working arrangements often initially present a challenge to the organisation. Managers are charged with organising the work such that it can be completed efficiently using flexible working arrangements. To do so, managers must have the appropriate support and management tools. Many managers also reject solutions in which their employees have the right to flexible solutions. The main reason was the concern that the work could no longer be organised.

“I developed a higher tolerance for the fact that there are also times with absences and that not everyone is available all the time. And I try to offset this fact by appealing to the professionalism and personal responsibility of my colleagues, that they simply organise their schedules as best as possible with their clients.” (Supervisors’ focus group)

Even if the introduction of flexible models can be difficult at the beginning, the employees’ willingness to cooperate should not be underestimated.

Challenges in the sciences

The scientific organisations we looked at face specific challenges. All in all, when compared to the rest of the economy, there have been fewer formal offers for flexible work for those in leadership positions to date. As in other branches, science follows the logic that questions related to work-life reconciliation come second to job requirements, and not the other way around. The difference is, however, that science is a career field that is particularly well-suited to availability.

The sciences are defined by “a high amount of personal freedom, a set institutional framework, a regular daily structure and a nearly complete merging of work and private life. [...] The scientist is depicted as a person whose typical day is free of everything that is not related to the science and contains everything beneficial to his/her work.” (Beaufäys 2004)

In the sciences, a particularly competitive mindset prevails as the only long-term career options that are possible after the qualification phase are a professorship or, alternatively, leaving the sciences to switch to other fields related to science. In this respect scientists work precariously, frequently in formal part time positions, during the qualification phase with the expectation of overtime under a high amount of pressure to publish and perform. Those who become leaders in the sciences are those who

have withstood this pressure and given far more than 100 per cent.

All in all, we can determine: Scientists at all levels, but particularly those in leadership positions, work flexibly and frequently also without boundaries – mobile while on work trips, evenings and at home on weekends – but also with great flexibility during the work week. In the research organisations we studied, those in leadership positions hardly ever worked flexibly in formal models other than flexitime/trust-based working time. Solutions for reduced working hours and home office are often finalised – if at all – as individual “gentlemen’s agreements”. “Top sharing” offers are not available. Some who work flexibly do not communicate this to their employees or colleagues.

Formalised offers are more common in administrative fields – a distinction must be made between the conditions for scientific and non-scientific personnel.

There are also obstacles in the sciences in the organisation/leadership culture and within the organisational structure.



“There isn’t direct opposition to flexible models, but there are reservations.”

HR/Diversity focus group

The organisational culture:

- Face time culture (administration) and unlimited availability culture (science)
- In part, lack of acceptance for flexible models from supervisors and colleagues
- High work/availability pressure: also at night and on weekends
- Meetings sometimes at family-unfriendly times
- Myth: Science barely allows people to cut back hours: *“Anything less than 100 per cent employment doesn’t work”* (Management focus group)
- Highly specialised research fields and necessity of distinction: *“Scientists don’t do job sharing because otherwise they won’t be scientists for very long.”* (HR/Diversity focus group)
- Little experience and reservations up to now: *“There isn’t direct opposition to flexible models, but there are reservations.”* (HR/Diversity focus group)

Organisation structure:

- A lack of compensating positions creates congestion at work: Problems with budgeting and planning for the positions when introducing part time/reducing hours. The lack of office space leads to difficulties.
- The technical prerequisites for a systematic home office are missing.

Recommendations and questions for scientific organisations to reflect on

- Develop systematic, transparent pilot programmes within your organisation.
- Initiate the conversation with the executive board and division leaders on the topic and include the various players – network with other scientific organisations on this topic.
- *“Anything less than 100 per cent employment doesn’t work”* – ideology or reality? Open the discussion at your organisation.
- Discuss with the various players: How can technical and organisational prerequisites be adjusted (plans for positions, home office work spaces)? Address the problems of constant availability as well as evening and weekend work.

- Compile formal, central regulations and guidelines for dealing with flexible models for both science and administration that still allow for individual/division-specific agreements.
- Establish flexible models in works agreements to support the acceptance of these models.
- Offer consulting for interested managers, supervisors and entire teams (team-building process). Setting up a clearing house has proven helpful in resolving conflicts constructively and at an early stage.
- Encourage people who work flexibly to communicate openly in the organisation and in their team to serve as role models.
- Standardise information management: Compile recommendations for organisations and communication to facilitate flexible work.
- Provide equipment for home offices: Promote the introduction of laptops instead of PCs, facilitate access to internal databases, advance the digitalisation of records and clarify questions regarding data protection.

Checklist for managers interested in flexible work

Appendix

1	2	3
How should your flexible working model specifically look like?	To what extent are the prerequisites met for a flexible working model?	How much conceptual work is part of your position?
✓ What would you like to change about your current working model and why? Do you want flexible working times or working locations? ✓ Would you like regular or irregular flexible solutions? Do you want spontaneous flexibilisation options or longer-term agreements regarding working hours and working location? ✓ When would you like to start working flexibly? Should this be a temporary or longer-term change?	✓ What is the scope of your current working hours? How high is the workload for your position? ✓ How much is your presence on site necessary to the success of your organisation? Can this presence be delegated to someone else? ✓ How many ad-hoc tasks exist that can't be planned for? Can this be changed or not?	✓ What percentage of your time at work do you spend with tasks that could also be completed in a home office? What percentage of your time at work do you spend with tasks that could also be completed with flexible hours? Which tasks are they? ✓ How much can necessary attendance at the office be planned? How many employees are you directly responsible for? What are the regular appointments and times when you would need to be at the office? How much of your work comprises answering spontaneous calls or e-mails from outside clients? How often are there unforeseen emergencies that can not be solved with substitute regulations and that require your immediate presence?

4

What are the experiences with and attitudes towards flexible work like in your workplace?

- ✓ Which work packages can be handed over to colleagues or employees? How can this be rewarded?
- ✓ What can a substitute deal with in an emergency or on days off?

- ✓ Do you already have experience with flexible working hours and/or working outside of the office? How often do you have out-of-office appointments/business trips with/without overnight stays? How do you and your workplace (supervisors, colleagues, employees etc.) handle periods of absence?
- ✓ How do you expect your workplace would react to your desire to to embrace a flexible working model? In your opinion, what are the reasons for their respective attitudes? How could you address any concerns that may arise?
- ✓ Do you feel that your supervisor trusts you? If not, how could you create more trust?

5

How does the framework for your flexible working model need to be set up?

- ✓ Would something have to change with you and/or in your field of work so that flexible working models could be implemented?
- ✓ Is your technical equipment suitable for a home office or mobile work? If not, what would you need and/or how could this be organised?
- ✓ How do you guarantee the ability to plan and remain reliable for your office? Which agreements relating to the organisation of work would have to be made to facilitate your flexible working model?

- ✓ How do you estimate your personal competencies in implementing a flexible working model that is in tune with the interests of your office environment and the requirements for you as a manager? Which competencies do you need to work on more?
- ✓ How do you want to include responses from your office environment during the trial phase of the working model?
- ✓ How would you realise that your working model is successful once the trial phase is over? How would your workplace determine this?

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