

## What's this about?

Traditionally, work – especially office work – has been about working 9 to 5, 5 days a week, 48 weeks a year, at the same desk. Nowadays we have the tools to break out of this straitjacket. Work can be done where we want, when we want and how we want. This briefing introduces flexible working.

### Advantages

#### For the organisation

- Reduced premises costs by using space more efficiently – or even doing away with the office
- A more productive workforce – getting away from distractions, working the hours they want and in the way they want all make people more effective
- Reduced absenteeism – flexible working = happier staff = less illness and absence
- Staff recruitment and retention – flexibility is an incentive to join an organisation and to stay with it..

#### For the individual

- Working from home or travelling outside rush hours removes a major source of stress from the day
- Reducing commuting makes time available for family, friends and the local community
- Flexibility allows work to be organised around childcare and other commitments
- Home can be the base for working 'on the road' rather than the office.

See [www.sustel.org](http://www.sustel.org) for some great examples of all these.

**Disclaimer:** This leaflet is intended to provide only a brief introduction to aspects of flexible working for small businesses and should not be regarded as fully comprehensive advice.

# Flexible Working

## BRIEFING NOTES

### What is it?

Working flexibly is about providing options for employees. These can be any of:

- Flexible hours
- Flexible location
- Flexible tasks
- Flexible contracts.

Here we are concentrating on flexible location (working from home and so on) and hours.

### Who is suitable?

Flexible working isn't the answer to everything. Some jobs are better-suited than others and here are some examples.

Jobs that require concentration and can be done at any time:

- Research
- Writing reports
- Computer programming
- Telephone-based jobs
- Sales calls
- Customer service calls.

Reps and others who are 'on the road' most days.

And it's not just the job. Not everybody adapts well to working flexibly. Certain skills and qualities are needed:

- Time management and discipline
- The motivation to work alone
- Communication, especially on the phone
- Technology.



### Issues

**Introducing and succeeding with flexible working is not free of problems.**

**Managing flexible working** can be a big issue. Management styles have to change and 'managing by results' is usually a good approach.

**Using the technology** may be a problem when new equipment and software are part of the change. Training and support (and patience!) go a long way to resolving this.

**Losing touch** with the organisation and fellow workers is often a problem when people start working at home. Good communications around the organisation and regular get-togethers improve this.

**Health and safety** issues – particularly with working from home – need not be a barrier, but must be worked through.

