

Employers need more support to successfully implement flexible working

Submitted by: Working Mums

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Only 36% of employers have an official flexible working policy despite over half thinking it improves retention, particularly of women, and over a third saying it makes workers more efficient, according to a Workingmums.co.uk poll.

The survey of over 400 employers, sponsored by WM Recruit, shows that employers understand the benefits of flexible working, although only half grant it on a case by case basis and 30% say managers find it hard to manage multiple requests.

The results show the need for organisations which are established leaders in flexible working to share what they do to help others. Workingmums.co.uk today launches its third Best Practice Report (http://www.workingmums.co.uk/campaigns/employers/business_information/7375337/x.html) which aims to help employers to do just that. The Report is based on the winners of its annual Top Employer Awards (<http://www.workingmums.co.uk/topemployerawards/>) which celebrate best practice in flexible working, family friendly policies and women's career progression.

It shows the strong business case for such policies. McMillan Williams Solicitors, which was named the first SME Overall Top Employer, shows how flexible working policies have helped boost the number of women in senior positions in a sector long known for its long hours culture. Ten of its 22 partners are women. It also shows how such policies have helped it to retain staff expertise, increase company loyalty and productivity and enabled it to be more agile and to undertake a large expansion programme.

The report shows how BAE Systems Naval Ships, winner of the award for Innovation in Flexible Working, has turned around its work culture in one of the bastions of traditional working. The company has moved away from the clocking in mentality and now has core hours from 10am to 2.30pm, with additional flexibility within these. HR manager Chris Westcott tells how this has made family life so much easier for him and others and increased his commitment to the company. He says: "You can almost not put a price on it. I cannot overestimate how important it is. For people with families it is the most important thing an employer can offer."

SMEs such as IT firm Hireserve and Reality HR talk in detail about how a flexible work culture is in the very DNA of their organisations and how they make that work. That includes in-depth strategic planning and carefully thought through initiatives to ensure there is always cover even if every member of staff is working different patterns.

Management consultants A T Kearney, winner of the Top Employer Award for Career Progression, outlines how its Success with Flex initiative enables flexible workers to progress up the career ladder or adopt alternative career paths, for instance, consultants can move to non-consultant roles or work on internal projects for a period without affecting their career trajectory. Adeline Ginn of Women in Rail, winner of the Working Mums Champion Award, describes her attempts to transform an entire industry and make it easier for women to climb the career ladder.

The London School of Economics, winner of the Best for Dads Award, speaks about its innovative research term leave policy which allows any academic who has been absent for more than 18 weeks a teaching-free term on full pay to catch up on research. Most returning parents can opt for a phased return to work using their accrued annual leave. Fathers can also take up to 16 weeks of Additional Paternity Leave on full pay. Combined, the policies mean women academics can share their leave with their partners and do not feel that their research career is penalised by taking maternity leave.

The Best Practice Report is released for International Women's Day and marks the launch of the 2015 Top Employer Awards. This year's ceremony will be held in London on 3rd November. Employers are invited to submit an application for the following awards:

Innovation in Flexible Working
Career Progression
Family Support
Talent Attraction
SMEs [1-25 and 26-250 employees]
Best for Dads
Working Mums Champion

The process is simple and free. The deadline for applications is 17th July. This year's judges are: Gillian Nissim, Founder of Workingmums.co.uk; Jennifer Liston-Smith, Director of Coaching & Consultancy at My Family Care; David Dunbar, Head of BT Flexible Working Services; and Dr Clare Kelliher, Professor of Work and Organisation, Cranfield University.

Gillian Nissim, founder of Workingmums.co.uk, said: "We are proud to launch our annual Best Practice Report based on our Top Employer Awards. One of the key aims of the Awards is to spread good practice and to illustrate the strong business case for flexible working. Our poll results show many employers understand that there are business benefits to flexible working, although they may still struggle to implement flexible working across the board. We hope that our Awards and our Best Practice Report will help them to see what others in their sector are doing and inspire them to fully embrace a flexible work culture."

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Notes to editors:

Of the 408 employers surveyed for the poll, the majority were organisations with over 1,000 staff. The next highest category was employers with between six and 50 employees. They covered sectors ranging from education, banking, engineering, IT and recruitment.

Workingmums.co.uk is the UK's number one jobs and community site for professional women with over 320,000 registered users.

WM Recruit is a socially responsible, specialist recruitment agency with a focus on female talent, flexible working and gender diversity. They work with a variety of employers, from large to small,

placing high quality candidates that match organisation's culture and roles.

For more information on the Workingmums.co.uk Top Employer Awards visit
<http://www.workingmums.co.uk/topemployerawards>

