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# The Power of Workforce Flexibility



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Whitepaper



# The Power of Workforce Flexibility

Over the past few years, there has been a significant shift in mindset toward the idea of work life balance. This has led to the recent increase in many job seekers exploring part-time, rather than full-time, work. This also extends beyond entry level as we see more and more executives working part time for a variety of reasons.

While there are undoubtedly benefits for job seekers when it comes to working either part-time or flexible hours, what are the benefits for employers, and what needs to be considered internally? Essentially, what do HR professionals need to think about before implementing greater flexibility in their work hours?

## Benefiting From Workforce Flexibility

Staffing a company with part-timers can have a number of benefits, especially for smaller businesses such as start-ups and SMEs who lack the resources to hire experienced professionals on a full-time salary. What many companies are only just starting to realise is that there is a vast untapped pool of resources in the form of part-time employees. These are people who could have taken an extended voluntary career break due to maternity leave or caring for a family member, or who are part of a growing group of people who have chosen to ease back on their working life to spend more time with their families, yet do not want to give up doing the work they enjoy.

Either way, these individuals all represent the same thing – a group of highly skilled and experienced people that can help bring a business to the level it needs to be at, without putting too much of a strain on budget.

By actively targeting part-timers, or by offering flexible hour arrangements, companies are able to attract a more diverse workforce, one that is more capable of shifting and adapting to different circumstances.

## Specialised Skills Without The Specialised Cost

There is often a need for specialised skills within an organisation, however, the cost attached to those skills is often high. One of the main proponents in the argument for hiring part-timers is the lowered costs involved and the ability to attract the attention of previously unattainable candidates. Part-time employees only work as many hours as required, thus lowering overheads whilst gaining the much needed skills and experience.





*“Whenever you’re hiring someone for any role, it’s about more than just their education or skills. You have to consider their personality, their fit with the team and if they will be committed to the ideals of the company. You have to look beyond the exterior and the paper qualifications.”*

Cyril Stahlman,  
Human Resources  
Director, Razer Inc

## Flexibility Means Greater Productivity

While it may seem counterintuitive, a study by the Michigan State University Family Resource Centre<sup>1</sup> has shown that increased productivity and better quality of work are core benefits of a flexible work schedule. Employees who are able to schedule their work day around other obligations have a better ability to put full mental and emotional attention on work. This improves an employee’s ability to concentrate on work and commit to job objectives.

## Handling The Extra Load

Being able to set the work hours of part-time employees means that they can be available to handle extra workloads during critical times in the business. Not being constrained to the normal 9-6 working routine also means that they can work odd-hours if necessary, thus removing the need to pay overtime wages. On a similar note, part-timers can also come in to substitute a member of staff who has gone on leave.

“It’s a common practice to hire part-timers or contract staff to fill a temporary role,” says Cyril Stahlman, Human Resource Director for Razer Inc, a global gaming lifestyle company. “Because of the nature of our business, we need to ensure that certain roles are always filled so when someone goes on maternity leave, for example, we bring in a part-timer to fill their role until they return.”

## Less Absenteeism and Turnover

Missed days at work can very easily set a company back and the turnover of employees comes with a significant financial burden – as it can take up to a full year’s salary of the person who left in order to replace them. However, when employees are not forced to choose between work and personal or family commitments, they have fewer reasons to miss work and will not get burned out by the demands of their jobs, thus reducing turnover immensely.

## Diversity and Agility

Agility is the cornerstone of any business that seeks to succeed in today’s corporate environment. If a company has clients that function outside the normal 9-6 hours, recruiting part timers can be a great way to facilitate a business to become more agile. Furthermore, as well as being a successful method of re-introducing highly skilled and valuable professionals, hiring part-time staff can help to improve diversity initiatives, and in turn enhance workforces. This has the additional benefit of showing clients and potential customers that you value having a diverse workforce.

## How to Hire Quality Part Timers for Your Company

Hiring part time staff, whether to fill a role temporarily or to ramp up quality service, is always a good way to help a company meet its goals. It is important to keep in mind that there are more things to consider, as compared to hiring a full timer.

Not factoring in these considerations can lead to unhappiness within the team, an unrealistic expectation of commitment from both management and staff and possibly beginning the hiring process all over again.

## Commitment Transparency

For the most part, those who choose to work part-time do so mostly to find a balance between work and life. And while they have chosen to work less hours in a week, they are usually just as committed to a company as full-time colleagues. Finding the right candidate to fill a part time role involves understanding what their level of time commitment is and whether that is something that also works for the company. Essentially, there should be a solid and transparent understanding of the level of commitment needed from the employee.



<sup>1</sup> Michigan State University – A toolkit for Flexible Work Arrangements – October 2016

### Knowledge and Familiarity

Part of the level of commitment that should be made clear to any potential part-timer is the need to upscale their knowledge and familiarity of the company, its processes and practices. It is only natural that part-timers would tend to have less knowledge and familiarity with the company but it is something that can affect employee performance in both tasks and service, especially if it is a customer-driven organization. One way to offset this issue is to engage in training to bring new hires quickly up to speed.

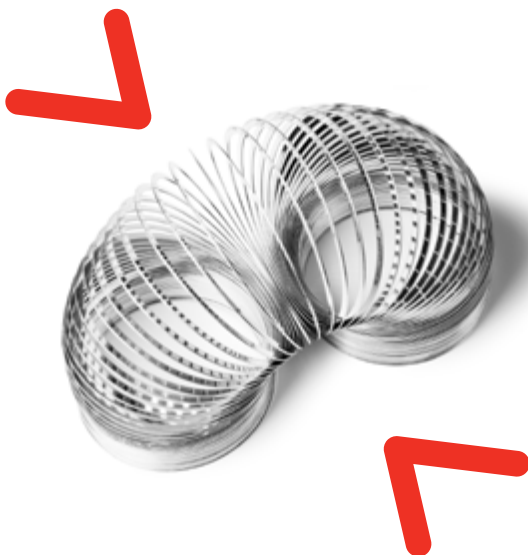
### Working Around Teamwork

Whether an employee is part-time or working on flexible hours, there will always be a situation where they will not be in the office while others are. This can have an effect on scheduling of meetings, collaborations, and the general pace of work within a team. This is where a strong team leader is essential to come in and manage the team to ensure that everyone's time-based needs are met.

There needs to be a strong understanding between the part-timer and the team leader on how they can ensure the best method of time-management to ensure optimal output from the team.

A good practice would be to have the team leader involved in the hiring process to better assess how the potential candidate would fit in the team and to explain the commitment level needed from them.

At the end of the day, while hiring part-time workers can have a strong benefit for the company, it is up to the hiring managers to ensure that they are getting the right kind of candidates for the roles they need. In his book, *Work Rules!*, Laszlo Bock, Senior VP of People Operations at Google, Inc states, "Hiring is the single most important people activity in any organisation." This is true whether hiring full-time or part-time staff. If managed carefully, a manager could end up with a dedicated, experienced and fully committed individual who will bring great value to the company.



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