

# How Flexible Talent Strategies Can Help Grow Your Business

HR Executive | Mark Frein | July 24, 2024

Among all the future of work predictions we've heard over the last few years, none have come to fruition faster than the rise of the flexible workforce. The way organizations identify, recruit and hire talent is evolving in real time as remote work, globalization and changing employee demands have created the need for a fluid, dynamic workforce.

As far back as 2018, McKinsey reported that companies with agile workforce strategies were 1.5 times more likely to outperform their peers. In the U.S. today, about 10% of all jobs are completed entirely away from the office.

Traditional talent acquisition often relies on long-term, full-time employment with fixed roles and rigid structures. While this model provides a sense of stability and predictability, today's businesses focus on efficiency and adaptability to stay competitive and build a path to sustainable growth. A flexible talent strategy for companies with global aspirations is critical to navigating uncertainties and moving parts in the global marketplace.

## Types of flexible work

As the name suggests, there is no one "right" flexible work strategy that is ideal for every company. Finding the best option—or a mix of options—depends on your organization's mission, size, goals and workforce.

**Remote work:** Remote work became somewhat ubiquitous during the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is no putting the genie back in the bottle. At its peak in April 2022, more than 20% of jobs posted on LinkedIn were fully remote.

**Hybrid work:** While fully remote work has declined, hybrid work has become one of the more common examples of flexible work arrangements. The exact parameters of where and how often hybrid employees work in person versus remotely can be set up as company-wide guidelines or based on a person's role or individual preferences.

**Job sharing:** When employers implement job sharing, an employee partners with at least one other employee to split the job responsibilities of a single full-time position.

**Compressed workweek:** Many companies allow their employees to complete their 40-hour workweek in less than the standard five days. Working four 10-hour days is an example.

**Flextime:** Similar to a compressed workweek, flextime allows employees more freedom over when they work. In a flextime arrangement, employees can choose when they work, and success is measured based on results or outputs rather than time spent working.

In addition to working in flexible ways, companies are also adopting more flexible talent strategies. Finding the right mix of full-time employees, contractors, freelancers and fractional employees is critical for success in a rapidly shifting business landscape.

However, keep in mind that you need to classify workers correctly for compliance and tax purposes. This can be challenging, especially if you have a global workforce operating in multiple jurisdictions. Technology can help, as today's HR and global employment platforms can provide up-to-date local knowledge, helping you quickly assess misclassification risks and other costly compliance mistakes.

### **Tips for making flexible work arrangements work for you**

Developing and implementing flexible work arrangements requires careful consideration, planning and execution. Employers should consider the following steps to ensure smooth integration and maximum benefit:

**Implement a pilot program:** Begin with a small-scale pilot program to identify and address any issues before expanding the arrangement across the entire workforce.

**Conduct regular evaluations:** Continuously monitor and assess the flexible work arrangements to ensure they meet the intended goals and make improvements as necessary.

**Provide tools and training:** Give managers and leaders the training and tools they need to guide employees through the transition to flexible work.

**Set clear expectations:** Employees must understand what is expected of them under the new flexible work arrangements. Clearly define their roles, responsibilities and success criteria to ensure everyone is on the same page.

**Prioritize communication:** Establish and maintain open lines of communication between employees and leadership. This ensures that any adjustments needed to meet individual and organizational goals can be made seamlessly.

## **Benefits of a flexible talent strategy**

Implementing a flexible work arrangement—such as turning to freelancers and contractors—can mark a significant change in more traditional workplaces. Making this shift requires the employer to invest time and money to ensure that the new arrangement works, and they are right to want to fully understand the benefits of such a commitment.

### **Promoting inclusivity**

One of the most valuable benefits of flexible work is the elasticity it provides employees who may otherwise be unable to pursue job opportunities with your organization. Limited transportation options often create barriers that keep people from applying to jobs they're well qualified for. Along this same vein, consider caregivers—whether parents with limited childcare options or individuals taking care of their own aging parents; providing these individuals with opportunities to work remotely sets them up for success both personally and professionally. Not to mention, these flexible options open your business up to a wider talent pool in the process.

### **Addressing uncertainty**

Challenging economics, a shifting competitive landscape, and even natural disasters and climate challenges can put a market or a company on uncertain footing. During these times of flux, many organizations choose to engage contractors and freelancers rather than invest resources into full-time employees who require benefits, employment tax, workers' compensation and training.

### **Enabling scalability**

Every business has ebbs and flows, and companies need the ability to scale their workforce quickly and efficiently. During periods of growth, organizations must staff quickly; during slowdowns, contraction is easier with a flexible workforce. Many industries have predictable seasonal ups and downs (such as retail, agriculture and manufacturing), and a flexible work strategy allows them to optimize staffing to meet business needs at various points during the year.

### **Accessing specialized skills**

In a recent survey, more than three-quarters (77%) of HR professionals reported difficulty recruiting for full-time positions. Industries like healthcare and skilled trades show the largest skills gaps, but technological advancements like AI only increase the need for workers across all industries to develop new skills. Flexible staffing strategies

allow organizations to bridge the talent gap and quickly fill roles that may take months to recruit and onboard via traditional channels.

### **Supporting key projects**

Not all skills required for a project are available within the existing workforce. Geography used to dictate hiring in many industries. Engineering firms pop up near engineering colleges, technology companies thrive near innovation hubs and financial services companies grow near metropolitan banking centers. Today's global and remote workforce allows organizations to source workers with unique and specific skill sets from anywhere in the world to work on projects that may not be easily staffed within a local workforce. This enables companies to quickly and efficiently bring new products to market, staff up a new geo or implement new technology.

### **Securing top talent**

For organizations looking to grow, nothing beats experienced leadership. But top talent isn't always willing or available to take on full-time roles. Many prefer consulting or fractional arrangements. These flexible options allow smaller companies and start-ups with limited resources to leverage experienced and expert talent that may otherwise be unobtainable.

### **Embracing the future of flexible talent**

A flexible talent acquisition strategy is essential for businesses aiming to thrive in a dynamic business environment. While embracing flexibility enhances agility, reduces costs and broadens the talent pool, it also requires thoughtful planning, a robust tech stack and a commitment to an inclusive and adaptive workplace culture. Companies that successfully implement these strategies will be well-positioned to lead and innovate as they build upon the talent, experience and unique skill sets of a flexible, global and diverse workforce.