

Greater flexible working could be positive legacy of recession

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Businesses have found they can reduce absenteeism, improve staff morale and productivity and are better able to attract and retain top talent if they adopt more flexible working arrangements. The report from the REC's Flexible Work Commission, outlines the competitive advantage gained by businesses that adopt less traditional structures for their workforce such as the use of compressed hours, home workers and temporary and part-time contracts.

The Commission interviewed 29 businesses and employer bodies both from the UK and abroad about their experience of using a range of flexible work practices and contains several key recommendations for business and government including:

- Businesses must engage workers in designing flexible roles and reinforce to the whole workforce that flexibility is not just for certain groups but for everyone.
- Businesses must do more to train leaders and managers, giving them the confidence and skills to lead flexible teams effectively.
- The government must move the debate beyond the current focus on family friendly working practices by encouraging far greater uptake of all forms of flexibility throughout the public sector.
- Trade associations and professional institutes should work cooperatively with unions and employee organisations to advocate the benefits of flexibility for both businesses and workers and move the debate beyond talk of 'casualisation' and 'employer-imposed flexibility'.
- Recruitment agencies must advise employers on job design and flexible work options, challenge assumptions about flexibility, help their clients improve job descriptions and advertisements to reflect flexible options available and devise creative and bespoke solutions in line with business need.