



FLEX TIME POLICY

IMEG CORP

CATEGORY: WORK OPTIONS

RELATED BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS: FOSTER A CULTURE OF SUPPORT AND RESPECT FOR A VARIETY OF WORK SCHEDULES

ABSTRACT

Which Best Practice Recommendation did your firm implement?

- What is your firm's policy? 8 hours should be worked between the hours of 6.30am and 6.30pm each day. 4 hours of time can be occasionally shifted during one week without taking PTO. Employees can set their own work hours understanding that business hours are from 8-5pm M-F.
- Does your policy have any innovative characteristics/aspects? The fact that it is a policy is innovative. Many firms informally allow people to shift hours, but not many actually write it down. In other companies, something like this may be granted to certain employees where it makes business sense, is good for the company, or is good for the employee. IMEG CORP has extended this policy to all employees in an effort to provide a similar and consistent benefit to everyone.

SUMMARY OF KEY OBJECTIVES AND LESSON LEARNED

- Who are the significant individuals, teams, and institutions? The policy came about because of a committee of employees, (2) from each team. This committee made the recommendation this policy be made, and the principals adopted it. The team leaders (Client Executives) do have the authority to interpret the way they want for their team.
- What are the significant lessons derived from the case? In some cases the word "occasional" has been interpreted to read every week, and that did change the committee's original intent of the policy. The policy has resulted in fewer hours recorded, which has increased employee satisfaction. Employees have the flexibility during the day to take care of a personal or family need as required. Many firms have this type of culture in place, but IMEG CORP designed a policy to apply flexible time globally within the organization.

PERSPECTIVES

BACKGROUND OF WORKPLACE:

- What was your policy or circumstances prior to implementing the BPR? Work 8 hours per day in the office or on company business from 6.30am - 6.30pm. Employees were required to take PTO for any out of office time.
- What was the reason for implementing the change? The president of the company wanted to implement summer hours one year, we tried it, and people really liked it. There were many requests to make this a permanent policy, so they put together a committee to discuss this issue and other policies. The 4 hours occasional flex was a recommendation by the committee. Employee requests for flex time started in fall of 2011 after summer hours. Policy was implemented in January 2013.
- What is your firm make-up? How would you describe your firm culture? What is your firm history? Multi-discipline engineering firm, started in 1961. The company is 500 employees across 14 offices. 8 Managing Principles finalize policy decisions with heavy input from Client Executive team leaders. Each team is approximately 25-50 employees.

VIEWPOINTS AND CHALLENGES OF EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE

- Who initiated the process of change? Was it an employee or employer driven decision process? Was it a management decision or grass roots initiative? The change in process was initially requested from employees, the committee that made the recommendation was a compilation of operations managers and team members. This group was thoughtful about both employee satisfaction and actual project execution (operations).
- Employer Perspective: What were considered to be financial challenges with implementing a new policy? What were considered to be scheduling and resource management challenges with implementing the new policy? Financial questions were centered on concerns with the loss of production capabilities. Scheduling and resource management included concerns about responsiveness to clients on Friday afternoons, for example. Historically, hours have equaled production, and when hours drop down, production has dropped down. However, the company has no data to back up if production has declined or increased as a result of the policy change. There is also no data to show if the change in policy has had an effect on the bottom line. Profitability is based on so many different factors it would be difficult to study the effects due to this one item.
- Employee Perspective: What are the employee retention benefits considered when implementing the new policy? This policy has had a positive effect on general employee retention, but not really on key employee retention.

PROCESS

DECISION MAKING

- What legal considerations impacted your development of this policy? The committee would have liked to be able to flex hours from one week to the next, but FLSA would not allow this for hourly employees. So in an effort to keep all employees on the same policy, flex hours could only be shifted within a week, not over multiple weeks.

IMPLEMENTATION

- How was this policy implemented? After committee recommendations and approvals by the principals group. Company VP sent a memo to the company describing the change at the end of 2012, and that it would begin in 2013. Accounting needed to change some of the time sheet software requirements to allow timesheet submittals without 8 hours in one day.
- What procedures are in place for determining eligibility? Everyone is eligible, with the exception of individuals that are having issues with attendance and time management. Each individual supervisor can restrict the policy for employees that are struggling getting work completed.

GROWING PAINS

- How did your company adapt to the new policy? Employees definitely make use of this policy, and thus they like it. A few Operations Managers and Client Executives have commented it does make it more difficult to get work done, but these comments have not come from the majority.

OUTCOME LESSONS LEARNED

- What are the lessons learned from the case? Employees do make use of the policy. A good lesson learned may have been to more consciously focus on gathering data to prove effect on employee engagement or effect on the bottom line. Collecting this data would have made it easier to present the business case for even more flexible time, or less, in the future depending on what the data showed from this policy change. Another lesson learned would have been avoid the use of a vague word like “occasional” for future written policy changes.
- What advice would give to other firms wanting to implement a similar policy? Employees will continue to request more flexible time. This policy is an example of a baby step firms can take to test the waters with employees and business process. Technology allows people to work and be effective from many places. Business changes will be needed to make employees mobile. In addition, a culture shift is needed to get individuals comfortable with working a team member that does not sit right next to them at the same time during the day. In the AEC industry hours=productivity=profitability has had a strong historical correlation in the past. Gathering the data to counter this past historical business assumption will be critical to being able to continue to allow a business to evolve with a workforce that will continue to expect more and more flexibility.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- How are you determining if implementing this policy has been successful for the firm, for the office culture, and for the employee? The firm only has anecdotal data based on feedback from individuals. Feedback has been generally positive, with occasional concerns noted about team members not being available during the day. The policy is definitely utilized by many.
- How has your policy change affected the office culture or how did the office culture influence the policy change? There seems to be a higher tolerance level for a mobile policy or working from home among Client Executives who have taken a more liberal approach to the “occasional” usage of the 4 hours of flex time. The general company culture is still one of hours=productivity, but the intensity of this culture does vary team to team. One team in the company has made it a goal to work fewer hours in 2016, while generating increased revenue. The team has strategized ways to become more efficient and effective to avoid high hours for team members. Ultimately the request for more flex time came from the employees and the culture desired by many that work for the firm. The policy was leadership’s reaction to that request.
- What are the non-tangible achievements (improved moral, office culture, employee retention) the company has seen since implementing this policy? There were several policy changes that came from the committee, the four hours of flex time in addition to several other policy modifications seem to have had a positive effect on employees.

FIRMS NEXT STEPS

- What are your firms next steps regarding this policy? This policy was a small step forward in increased flexibility for employees. The next small step will likely be a work from home policy. Several systems upgrades have been completed to get the company network and software in the cloud and accessible from any location. Many staff have laptops, and the number of laptops increases each year. A significant financial investment to the infrastructure has been made toward allowing all employees to be more mobile and flexible on where and when they work. At the beginning of 2017, IMEG CORP implemented a work from home policy.