

Management Brief

Essential Tips for Personal Growth



Are you
Flexible
at workplace?

Flexibility is about an employee and an employer making changes to when, where and how a person will work better to meet individual and business needs. Flexibility enables both individual and business needs to be met through making changes to the time in which an employee works. Flexibility should be mutually beneficial to both the employer and employee and result in superior outcomes.



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Embracing change can expand your opportunities

Today's work environment is fluid. This means those employees who are able to adapt to shifting priorities are considered a valuable asset – above and beyond their skills and experience. Being able to adjust to shifts in organizational dynamics is necessary today.

Being flexible can help you strike work/life balance

Tele-commuting, the connected workplace and other technologies mean that the lines between work – time and personal – time have blurred. Rather than resist this change, embrace it. While you may need to be flexible and respond to emails during your evening hours, you can also use this flexibility to your advantage. Personal needs – once relegated to weekends alone – can be addressed more easily since we are always connected, in and outside of office.

Being flexible will make you more responsive to change

The shifting dynamics of the workplace means that you need to adapt and respond to change, quickly. Resisting this can lead to undue stress. Recognizing and embracing flexibility will help you adapt to difficult situations more easily.

Being flexible signals that you value diversity in the workplace

Diversification of the workplace is the new norm. Differing cultures, religions, and employee needs mean that today's employer must accommodate diversity when it comes to working, thinking and interacting with others. Being flexible will enable you to accommodate the needs of your diverse workforce more readily.

Flexibility is a good management decision

Managers need to adapt to day-to-day shifts in workplace schedules – employee personal issues, an unexpected influx of work and more. Being flexible creates an environment where employers and employees can look at work and personal needs in a balanced approach, which is mutually beneficial.

Being flexible is a win-win

Being flexible with your employees is good for business. It builds employee trust and commitment, helps attract and keep key talent, as well as drives everyone to find solutions that work for all those involved.

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Stretch!

That word best summarizes my advice to people who want to become more flexible and respond to change more positively. What I mean is that the more we stretch ourselves and take on new challenges that require new skills, the more flexible we'll become. Certainly there are other habits and attitudes that we can develop to assist us in our efforts to become more flexible. I also recommend learning how to overcome irrational fears of change, boosting self-confidence, becoming proactive and involved during change processes, setting new goals, and anticipating change. But stretching is crucial.

Why we Don't Like Change

Being flexible in the face of change can be very difficult; we get committed to our plans, we want to be perceived as consistent and uncertainty bothers us. So, sometimes we're too rigid during times of transition.

We like our current plans

One of the reasons we aren't always as flexible as we could be is that we like the plans we've already made and don't want to change them. We get committed to our goals and plans, and can become very focused on them. Sometimes we visualize ourselves realizing those goals, and imagine how satisfying that will be. In many ways, this commitment to goals is beneficial. It helps us stay productive in the midst of distractions. However, when changes occur that hurt our chances of realizing our goals, we're predisposed to disliking them. Change may mean that we'll have to do more work than what we had planned, get retrained, lose status, or get fewer or less attractive rewards. Losing something is a rational reason to dislike change. But, what's interesting is that we often dislike change even when it isn't causing us to lose more than we'll gain.

We distrust flighty people

Irrespective of whether a change will result in a net gain or loss for us, we dislike change partly because we like people who are consistent. I want to be known as someone who sticks to his commitments. When I tell you that I'm going to do something, I want you to believe that I'll follow through and do it. You'll trust and respect more if you stick to my commitments, right? So, it's not just that I like my current plans for their own sake-I also resist change because you want everyone to see you as consistent. This kind of commitment can cause me to continue a course of action despite objective evidence that change is justified.

We're risk averse, and we fear the unknown

Have you ever known kids who have to sleep with the lights on in their bedroom at night because they're afraid of monsters under the bed? There aren't any monsters in their bedrooms, but with the lights off the kids can't verify that. They fear the unknown. Adults are also bothered by uncertainty and risk. Uncertainty often accompanies change. We can't always know whether a change will result in a gain or loss for us. Sometimes trying to convince adults that a particular change will benefit them looks a lot like a parent trying to convince a child that there's no monster under the bed-it's very difficult to persuade them. Yet most of us realize that an unwillingness to flexibly respond to change would be very costly for us in our careers.

Expect Less Stability and More Change in Your Career

Although personal flexibility can be difficult, it will probably be a major determinant of how much we'll achieve in our careers. By most indications, the rate of change that we face in the various facets of our careers is continually increasing. Jobs, organizational structures and industries were much more stable decades ago than they are now. The environment in which businesses now operate is much more turbulent than it used to be. Factors such as increasing international competition and advances in technology are forcing organizations to change in order to adapt and survive. Consequently, members of those organizations are regularly being asked to learn new work methods and being assigned new duties to perform. It's becoming more difficult to settle into a "comfort zone" in one's work situation.

Being an effective manager in the new millennium, or more broadly having a successful career, will require the ability to accept change. I don't mean to imply that all change is inherently good. But the habit of resisting any change simply because it gets us out of our comfort zones is a habit that will impede career success. Developing the personal flexibility to cope with change can promote personal success and one's effectiveness as a leader.

Laugh it off!

