

## Managing part-time work

Part-time work can be a good way to match business needs with the needs of employees.

### Setting it up

Think laterally about how part-time jobs might be structured including:

- hours per day
- days per week
- hours per month
- set core hours, with the flexibility to increase these when work demands increase
- combinations of part-time work and full-time work e.g. to cover school holidays or to fit in training for a competitive athlete.

Don't assume that it is only women with young children who will want to work part-time. Increasingly a wide range of people are choosing to work part-time to enable them to combine paid work with other activities or responsibilities, to cope with ill health or as a transition to retirement.

### Reduced hours

You may have employees who want to move from working full-time to working part-time. This may be for a period of time such as returning from parental leave or coping with a family crisis or illness, or on an ongoing basis. If so, you may want to consider the following:

- Could you make this work for your business?
- What arrangements might work for you and for the employee? Consider work flows and peak periods on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.
- How will you scale down the job?
  - Reduce the number of tasks?
  - Reduce the size of the tasks?
  - Select the particular tasks which are best suited to their skills and the hours that you agree they should work?
- Will this leave work that needs to be managed in another way? Do you need to:
  - Redistribute the work to others, taking care that you are not overloading them?
  - Increase, by agreement, the hours of another worker who is interested in working longer hours?
  - Bring in additional support?
  - Use technology or develop processes to do the work more efficiently?

Be careful that you are not setting up a situation where the part-time employee is expected to do a full-time job in part-time hours.

### **Making it work**

The following suggestions and advice may make the process simpler and smoother.

- Establish mutually acceptable times for working, and include the details of what has been agreed in the letter of appointment and/or employment agreement.
- Make sure you give your part-time employees what all your employees deserve – clear instructions and expectations, regular feedback, training opportunities and consideration for promotion.
- Use wall charts so everyone knows what days and times people work.
- Depending on the nature of your business, establish a core time when all staff, including those working part-time are present. Schedule any staff meetings for during that time.
- If your employees don't work at the same time, alternate the days and/or times of staff meetings, so that everyone can attend at least some of the time. Write up decisions or important information from these meetings and keep it in a place where it is easily accessible to those who were not there. Expect all employees to check what happened if they were not able to attend, or set up a buddy system where someone who did attend takes responsibility for updating a person who didn't.
- Try to hold at least some of your social events at times when your part-time staff can also attend.
- Make sure part-time workers are recognised and accepted as a legitimate and valued member of the team.
- Use e-mail and text messaging to keep all employees up to date.

If relevant, think through how you want them to handle ongoing contact with clients.

- Do they need to let clients know what hours they will be available?
- Do they need to let clients know who they can contact outside of those times?
- Are systems needed so that another staff member is kept informed of their work and any particular issues that may arise while they are not there?

Establish 'crisis' arrangements in advance.

- Find out if your part-time employees have any flexibility to work additional hours on major projects or to attend meetings outside their scheduled hours?
- Is there any scope in your budget to pay them for additional work if it is required?
- Is it appropriate to contact them by phone outside of their normal working hours?