

Is 4 the new 5 days?

Over the last year there has been a marked increase in independent consultants agreeing contracts for 3-4 days per week as compared to the traditional 5 day working week. There are obvious reasons for this. After a hard grind of conforming to many years of an executive career, without realising, the creep of corporate fatigue takes its toll. As ambitious career professionals, it is drummed into us at an early stage to work hard over long hours, socialise and network to get ahead, all at the same time managing family and personal commitments. Taking a fresh and independent approach by consulting in the area of expertise is not only rewarding but doesn't come with the additional expectations to prepare for future prospects.

There is a lot of press coverage about how to reap the benefits of a flexible workforce, often focused on mid-level employees to encourage people to continue their careers whilst managing a family. This concept is no different for senior executives, in fact I would propose heightened. We are living longer resulting in the pressure to work longer to fund our retirement. A 'soft retirement' makes sense. Working with a business on a 3-4 day per week allows you freedom for spending time doing the things you never had time to do!

The benefit to a business is they receive an experienced, refreshed, eye-on-the-ball, focused professional for a period of time without the cost of an extra 1-2 days. Often senior work needs to 'work through the system' so a break between working days allows that process to occur, again without the cost.

Of course, layered with this trend is the regulatory aspect. We are seeing more and more changes from HMRC with regards to IR35 and increased scrutiny over a consultant's work patterns. It is recommended an independent consultant has multiple sources of income, rather than having one engagement with regular payments from one source. In addition, with multiple engagements, it allows for an independent perspective rather than the tendency to return to old ways of permanent work practices.

As a business looking to grow or navigate change, the desire to engage with experienced expertise for a finite period is ever growing. The benefit of using this under-utilised talent is not only a cost advantage but a chance to import skills, knowledge and wisdom that you might not have had the chance to. Flexible working is certainly not a fad, but something that will continue to evolve with the benefit equally distributed by both the retiring executive turned consultant as well as business leaders.



Key Points:

Businesses

More expertise for less cost

Access to senior talent on an as needs basis

Consultants

Enables soft retirement after corporate fatigue

Conforms to greater scrutiny of HMRC regulation

To discuss further please contact Elizabeth Roberts at eroberts@sheffieldhaworth.com or 0207236 2400