

Organisational flexibility: definition and benefits



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How can we define organizational flexibility? There are many definitions for flexibility. In the sense of managing human resources, flexibility can be defined as the organisation adapting to size, composition, responsiveness and the people . their inputs and costs required to achieved organisational objectives and goals. Organisational flexibility can also be defined when work gets done, where it gets done and how work gets done.

Organisational Flexibility includes:

- Having flex time, so the employee chooses the start of their day and the end of their day,
- Being able to take off time through the day to take care of family issues, for example an employee being able to go everyday to fetch their children from school and take them home then returning to work,
- Taking a few days off in order to take care of family matters and not losing any leave days or pay. So an example would be taking days off in order to go look after a sick family member or to go to a funeral or something,
- An employee working some of their daily work hours at home, so an employee either coming into work late due working at home in the morning, or leaving work early and working at home a few hours,
- Working shifts, this means employees working different times. Maybe working day shift one week and night shift the other week. Some people might prefer this as it would be more predictable. Therefore they can plan lives,
- When people choose when they want to work, the hours they want to work, knowing when they can take time off each day. Employees will generally have control over their work day or schedule,

- Employees can sometimes work longer hours during some days of the week in order to get some days off; they have compressed their work week. Which allows them to have more time for themselves,
- In some cases employees can advance, go up in their jobs even if they choose their work hours or compress their weeks

The need for flexibility in the workplace

The need for organisational flexibility is very important. When looking at why there is a need for flexibility there are factors that are creating the need for flexibility in the workplace. Things are changing all the time, which means an organisation, must be able to take on these changes. Aspects such as social, technological, economical, legal, political and other global factors in which a business operates within are changing all the time, so organisations should be able to adapt when these changes happen. So in other words they need to be flexible. As it says there is a need for flexibility in the workplace, but there is also a need for flexibility in the workforce, meaning the staff. As change happens, how work gets done too changes therefore the workforce should also be flexible.

Those aspects I mentioned above, I find is not the factor of change that requires the workplace to be flexible. Another factor I find to be important is the employees. People are changing. Their needs and wants are changing, their ways are changing, how they live is changing and how they work is changing too. Therefore some people are not wanting to work normally, having a Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 job. People are wanting to be more flexible with their time, therefore wanting to work less hours, certain days of the week, have time off or whatever it may be. Therefore some of the

workplaces might benefit if they make themselves flexible in the sense of offering these things to employees. So the workplace should be flexible with that factor too.

There are some aspects that have allowed flexibility to be put in place in the workplace:

- * The biggest asset to an organisation is the people who work there, therefore this can create competitive advantage through people. It's best if the organisation is flexible in the number of people and the skills in the workplace
- * Organisation are becoming more flexible in specialization production, so making specialized goods. And shifting from mass productions. Making goods of the same in bulk
- * There are changes in life-style, private and work life balance and social changes
- * There are constant technological changes. Therefore HR services are becoming wider; organisations are doing things differently in the sense of technology. E working and so on

I suppose in the past organisations were very structured, rigid. And today there still has to be structure in the workplace, as an organisation won't work if there wasn't some form of structure. In today's workplace, heavily structured organisations, with rigid job specifications, with strict management styles won't work. The workplace is changing due the ever changing and not predictable environments. Therefore that is why there is a need for organisational flexibility.

Types of Organisational Flexibility

There are a number of different types of organisational flexibility. They are:

- **Functional Flexibility-** Functional flexibility basically states that employees will do jobs that go beyond what they are actually there to do. So they will perform jobs that they weren't originally specified to do. So employees should be able to do different jobs but still do their own. So the organisation will require multi-skilled employees. So for example would be in an organisation, a debtors clerk doing their own job, which is debtors, but also being able to do creditors when required.
- **Numerical Flexibility-** This basically involves an organisation bring labour in or taking labour out in accordance service or product demand. The state of the economy can also be a factor for the organisation to bring in or go without labour. They can control this by the number of employees they need at the time. Therefore they will hire as they need. They can do this by hiring casuals or part time workers.
- **Financial Flexibility-**
- **Procedural Flexibility-**
- **Skills Flexibility-**
- **Attitudinal Flexibility-**
- **Structural Flexibility-**