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LET'S GET 'SMARTER' WITH TECHNOLOGY

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SMART Working workstream has formulated industry recommendations on how organisations can use technology to help overcome both the cultural and practical barriers to SMART working in order to attract and retain the best and most diverse talent.

Technology obstacles

Technology Reliability and Inconsistencies

The availability of robust and appropriate technology and its consistent use across an organisation plays a vital role for flexible working - both for the employees working in the office and those working remotely.

- The lack of robust and appropriate technology can adversely impact an employee's ability to work flexibly in addition to potentially excluding them from certain business activities.

- Organisations need to provide sufficient technology investment, which may be hindered in an environment of cost cutting and budget control.
- There are inconsistencies between the infrastructure (e.g., desk, screens, etc.) available to an employee when working in the office versus working remotely. Employees are increasingly being required to provide their equipment in "Bring Your Own Device" practices rather than being covered by a company's budget for mobile phones and/or computers.
- Technology needs to support both informal and formal flexible working arrangements.

Organisations need to provide sufficient technology investment, which may be hindered in an environment of cost cutting and budget control.

- Even if an organisation has robust and appropriate technology, it may not be used consistently.

- A lack of global policies and/or holistic end-to-end strategies may hinder the consistent and/or appropriate use of technology.
- Employees may not embrace and/or adopt technology, which might be the result of an aversion to change and/or cultural differences across teams / jurisdictions.
- Meetings held via conference call may not be effective as there is a lack of protocol and/or etiquette across participants.
- Collaboration tools (e.g., Slack, Symphony, etc.) only properly work if everyone is using them.
- Having multiple technology options rather than one "golden resource" may cause confusion as employees may not know which tool to use and in which circumstance.

- Organisations may need to deploy different technology for investment and non-investment employees to meet regulatory requirements.

- Perceived barriers may exist and/or inconsistent with understanding of regulatory requirements and technology's ability to address need to be addressed (e.g., "myth busting").
- At a minimum, technology needs to support recorded phone lines and trade order management systems in order for investment professionals to work flexibly.



Lack of Human / Face-to-Face Interaction

Employees and managers need to be cognisant of the potential adverse implications that can result from a lack of regular in-person interaction that generally transpires in the day-to-day office working environment.

- Training is a fundamental aspect of an employee's career progression, both as part of their initial induction as well as their ongoing development. However, training can be impacted if not properly managed while employees work flexibly.

- Employees working flexibly may be limited in the amount of "on the desk" training they receive from colleagues - both formally and informally via "osmosis".
- Employees working flexibly miss out on informal chats and the impromptu sharing of information amongst colleagues.
- Training plans may need to be adapted for employees who work flexibly to ensure their training and development needs are met.

- Managers of teams that are comprised of flexible and non-flexible employees may struggle to create a sense of cohesion and/or teamwork.

- Working flexibly may deter the development of professional relationships and the lack of "face time" could hinder an employee's career progression.

- Working flexibly may hinder an employee's involvement in team and/or organisational communication forums (e.g., Town Halls).

Trust and Tracking

When working and/or managing a flexible working arrangement there needs to be a collective level of trust by all parties involved.

- Technology needs to facilitate - rather than hinder - employees to be productive working flexibly.

- Management oversight needs to be task- and output-focused rather than time-focused, which may require a change in mind-set.

- Management need to have a mindset that supports flexible working and the benefits that it can provide.

- The root cause for poor performance needs to be identified and managed - a flexible working arrangement may incorrectly be associated with poor performance.

Management oversight needs to be task- and output-focused rather than time-focused, which may require a change in mind-set.

Technology best practices to support SMART working

Integrated Technology Solutions

- Ensure robust and appropriate technology is available to support flexible working, is consistently used across an organisation, and regularly assessed as "fit for purpose".
- Technology needs and prioritisations should be established collectively between the business, control functions (e.g., compliance, risk, etc.) and technology functions, to gain a full understanding of the needs and requirements of each function.
- Two-way communication mechanisms should be in place to (i) disseminate information about technology changes and enhancements as well as (ii) provide an opportunity to escalate feedback and/or areas of concern.

- In-office SMART Working Spaces or hot desks should be made available to accommodate employees who work flexibly but are in the office for a short or extended period of time.

Education, Communication and Transparency

- Identify and leverage Flexible Working Champions / Ambassadors across the business for use in promotional testimonies that support flexible working and help communicate the technology tools available, and promote their adoption. Testimonials could be in the form of written case studies, videos, etc.

- Management is responsible for establishing a culture that supports flexible working and its associated technology.
- Management should be encouraged to set the "tone from the top" by embracing flexible working and "lead by example" by using the supporting technology.

- Formal and informal training opportunities should be made available to all employees that define employee and manager expectations, promote the different technology solutions, and explain how best to use technology.

- Resource materials (e.g., Guides, FAQ, Helpful Hints, etc.) should be developed and made readily available to all employees.
- Establish employee communication forums (e.g., blogs, chat rooms, etc.) for the sharing of best practices.

- Manager training focusing on how best to manage teams that include employees working flexibly should be developed and offered.
 - Flexible Working Champions / Ambassadors should be leveraged to share experiences and lessons learned.

- Meeting etiquette and/or protocols should be defined and communicated amongst employees within a team and ideally shared across teams and/or the organisation.

- Meeting invites should always include dial in details (phone, video, web) to accommodate for employees working flexibly.

- Employees working flexibly should be transparent about their informal and/or formal working arrangement. Furthermore, when working flexibly they may need to increase communications with colleagues and/or their manager.

- Update calendar to reflect days working away from the office (e.g., Outlook "working elsewhere").
- Update calendar to block out time when not available during "normal" working hours.
- Manage communication and/or update Email signature to reflect that you work flexibly (e.g., "I support flexible working and I'm sending this message now because it suits my work hours. Please do not feel obliged to reply immediately as I understand you will respond during the hours that you work.")
- As pre-agreed with colleagues and/or manager, keep them up to date with short, concise emails. However, be sure to not communicate un-necessarily.

- Management needs to be cognisant of employees working flexibly and therefore may not be able attend team and/or organisational communication forums in person. To promote an inclusive environment, alternative communication channels should be offered (e.g., conference call, video call, webinar, etc.).

- Develop and produce regular management reporting, which may require the identification and tracking of relevant data points.

- Who are the employees working flexibly - both formally and informally - and how often (Human Resources).
- How are employees working flexibly and what technology are they using (Technology).
- Employee surveys to gauge if flexible working arrangements, including technology, are meeting employee needs and aligning with best practices, etc. (Business).