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## 10 STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING FLEXIBLE WORKING CONDITIONS

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**W**hen asked why having a cabinet with an equal number of men and women was important to him, Prime Minister Trudeau responded, “Because it’s 2015!” Well, not only is it now 2016, it is also no longer 1960. Yet, many organizations still require their employees to battle morning and evening rush hour traffic so they can sit at their desk in the office from 9 to 5, Monday through Friday like they needed to 50 years ago.

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Perhaps this is demanded by organizations so they can physically see their staff working rather than evaluating their actual results – we call this “presenteeism.” Employers continue to take this approach even though more than half of Canadian employees are most productive outside of traditional work hours – more than 20% before they go to the office and more than 33% after they leave.<sup>1</sup>

That said, in the past several years we have been seeing a trend where some employers, in both the public and private sectors, have been realizing the benefits of workplace transformation and flexible work programs. They report that these benefits include increased talent attraction and retention rates, improved employee engagement and collaboration, as well as savings on real estate and technology. In fact, 82% of highly engaged employees work remotely whenever possible and 88% of engaged employees have tools and resources for maximum productivity.<sup>2</sup>

Thanks to technology, people no longer need to be tethered to a place of work. They can communicate, collaborate, and connect from wherever they are – whether that is on an airplane, in a hotel, in a coffee shop, or at home. No longer being obligated to physically be in the office at all times when they don’t necessarily need to be is becoming increasingly important for employees. 97% of all Canadian employees would like the opportunity to continue working remotely or do more of it, and 81% say that flexibility to deal seamlessly with personal and professional obligations is important to them.

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## I. WHAT IS WORKSHIFTING?

WORKshift operates on the principle that work isn’t a place you go, it’s a thing you do. That doesn’t mean that all work should be done remotely – though that certainly may be the most effective arrangement in some cases. Rather, it means employees are empowered to work where and when they are most productive, at least some of the time. Whether this means promoting off-peak commuting, working from home (or closer to home) 1-2 days a week, allowing employees to be flexible in their work hours, or a combination of all three, WORKshifting looks different for each organization and employee.

Refreshingly, the new Federal Government is starting to look at how it can better embrace this concept and make it a reality in more and more workplaces across Canada. In its election campaign platform, the Government committed to making it easier for federally regulated workers to formally request flexible working conditions from their employers in order to better balance work responsibilities and busy personal lives. They plan to accomplish this by amending the Canada Labour Code and by consulting with provinces and territories on the implementation of similar changes in provincially-regulated sectors. This is great news for the more than 1 million employees that could benefit from this in the not-too-distant future.

This campaign commitment was indeed reaffirmed in the Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

Earlier this year, during a discussion at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the Honourable Scott Brison, President of the Treasury Board of Canada, clearly indicated that the Federal Government would need to make some workplace reforms in order to attract millennials to careers in the public service.

The City of Ottawa [adopted WORKshift](#), giving employees the opportunity to work where and when they are most effective while reducing congestion and pressure on public infrastructure.

Fortunately for Minister Brison and the bureaucracy at the Treasury Board, the Federal Public Service already has in place many conditions, including Workplace 2.0 and the Telework Policy, which will facilitate the changes that need to be made to attract millennials who will comprise almost 50% of the workforce in just 5 years. An important note for the Federal Government is that more than 40% of millennials

feel they would be more productive if they had the flexibility to work different places. There is clearly still work to be done as the Federal Government contemplates how to modernize itself as an employer.

Of course, implementing flexible working conditions in the Federal Public Services will require a top-down approach. Ministers, Deputies, ADMs and DGs will no longer be able to summon staff to in-person meetings on extremely short notice. That doesn't mean that group meetings and team collaboration should not happen. They of course can and should, and even on very short notice when the situation dictates it, but in some cases executives and senior managers will have to embrace the use of technology to bring people together virtually rather than mandating physical attendance around the boardroom table.

## II. IMPLEMENT A SUCCESSFUL WORKSHIFT PROGRAM

Whether public or private sector, the Federal Government or a municipality, there are 10 steps WORKshift recommends any organization should take when implementing a flexible work program.

### **Business Case**

A business case supports the case for change and defines the benefits that will be achieved by the project and consequently its entire scope and direction. A compelling business case will motivate and unite decision makers and participants, and create the momentum that carries the project to successful completion.

### **Management Buy-in**

Management buy-in is the support that is given by influential managers and leaders when they believe in the business case and believe that pursuing it will be in the best interests of the organization. Management buy-in is necessary to unlock resources so that time and money can be invested in furthering the flexible work program.

### **Feasibility Analysis**

A Feasibility Analysis is an independent confirmation that the benefits proposed in the business case can be achieved at a cost that is acceptable to the organization, and that the organization has the capacity and resources to support a flexible work program.

<b>BENEFITS OF WORKSHIFT ARRANGEMENTS FOR EMPLOYEES</b>	
<b>Improved Health</b>	
Employees who WORKshift one or more days per week report marked decreases in commuting related stress. Eliminating even one day of commuting each week can add up to six days of time to your year.	Reduced commuters translates into fewer vehicular accidents.
<b>Increased Wealth</b>	
By WORKshifting just two days a week, the average employee will drive 5,000 fewer kilometres and save about \$430 in gas each year.	Employees who WORKshift save money on fuel, parking, car insurance, food, clothing, and dry cleaning.
<b>BENEFITS OF WORKSHIFT ARRANGEMENTS FOR EMPLOYERS</b>	
<b>Reduced Expenses, Increased Employee Engagement and a Green Tomorrow</b>	
Cut overhead costs by reducing the size of your dedicated workspace. According to a Herman Miller study, individual offices can sit empty up to 80% of the time.	Employees who are able to work from a flexible location are 21% more engaged, translating into positive results for the organization.
<b>Decreased Environmental Footprint</b>	
By WORKshifting just two days a week, the average employee will eliminate 1,000 fewer kilograms in CO2 emissions.	The Government of BC reports removing the equivalent of 1,088 vehicles from the roads by embracing flexible work.
<b>Talent Attraction and Retention</b>	
73% of employed Canadians say it's important to have flexibility to deal with work and personal obligations.	Employees who WORKshift report a better work life balance, in turn making them more excited about their jobs.

Source: WORKshift Canada

### **Project Charter**

The project charter records the key aspects of the project for the benefit of all future project team members and organizational leadership. The process of compiling a charter creates consensus among key stakeholders about what objective is to be achieved, how it will be achieved and who will be responsible for achieving it. It also creates a formal delegation of authority and allocation of resources to the team members who will be accountable for the success of the project.

### **Program Model**

The program model is a detailed description of the flexible work program as it relates to the people who will be impacted. It considers the methods that will be approved for flexible work, who will be eligible, and how management will implement and control the flexible work program.

### **Strategy, including Real Estate, Technology, Human Resources**

The flexible work strategy defines the physical change (including real estate, technology and human resources) that must take place in the organization in order to support the behavioural change that is targeted by the program. The Strategy describes the path and the actions that will be taken to create the infrastructural change.

### **Communications**

The communications and change management plan documents how the organization will communicate and manage change in the various groups of stakeholders that are impacted by the implementation of the flexible work program. The communications and change management plan is also an opportunity to showcase the organization's achievements and may be an effective tool for promoting the program internally, and positioning the organization externally.

### **Training**

The training plan ensures that the behavioural changes necessitated by the flexible work program are made by all the stakeholders impacted by the program. It also ensures that managers are equipped to support the affected employees and ensure they are able to continue to collaborate with other employees in the organization.

### **Governance**

A governance structure consists of the policies and procedures that give effect to the flexible work program, incorporated into the existing policy and procedure framework of the organization. A sound governance structure ensures that the flexible work program is entrenched as a part of the fabric of the organization.

### **Measurement**

The flexible work program was implemented for a specific purpose and/or to achieve a specific benefit(s). Measuring the benefits achieved by the program ensures that the intended benefits continue to be targeted, and that shortfalls in the program can be rectified. It allows for identification of additional benefits, and supports any intended expansion of the program to additional parts of the organization.

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<sup>1</sup> Connecting Canadian Talent to the Workplace with technology and flexible work (2015), Stone-Olafson, WORKshift.

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