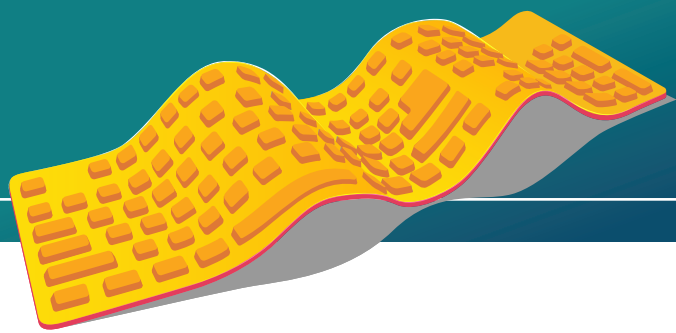




Generation **FL-X**

Managing and meeting expectations of
a modern workforce

An employer's guide
to getting the best out of emerging
millennial talent amidst growing demand
for flexible working



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Executive Summary

Amidst the media dissection of the snap general election in June 2017 and the Brexit vote that precluded it in 2016, one key theme has come to frame UK debate above all others: that of a **nation divided along generational lines**. However, as research carried out by PageGroup in August 2017 underlines, it's not just within politics where a generation gap is widening.

Attitudes towards the modern workplace are also shifting in terms of what employees of differing age demographics expect from their employer, particularly around working patterns, locations and flexibility.

This guide explores the gap between “Generation FL-X” (defined here as 18-27 year olds), Baby Boomers (55+ year olds), and the generations in between². As Generation FL-X grows up their experiences of political and economic change, education, and technology – and their expectations around flexibility in the workplace – continue to grow apart from their predecessors.

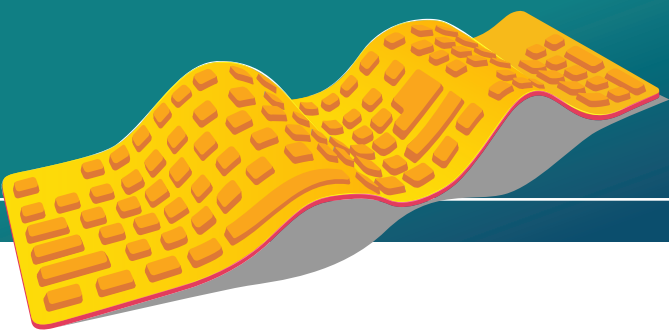
Generation FL-X is representative of the 18-27 year old professionals who don't believe in the traditional 9-5 working day structure, **are more likely to change jobs** (and more ‘frequently’), and feel **increasing pressure** to succeed in their professional and personal lives.

As a result, employers need to know how to attract and retain a new pool of talent that represents **the future** of the workforce; how to introduce or improve the flexible working options offered to employees; and how to navigate this generational divide.

Whether you have a seemingly robust flexible working initiative already, or are looking to introduce one into your organisation for the first time, this guide will reveal how to give employees the tools, technology, and skills needed to ensure they (and your business) succeed.

¹ ‘Generation FL-X’ (18-27 year olds) – otherwise referred to as a combination of ‘Generation Z’ (18-21yos) and ‘younger millennials/ Generation Y’ (22-27yos)

² ‘Older Generation Y’ (28-37yos) and ‘Younger Generation X’ (38-54 year olds)



Managing millennial expectations in the workplace

The typical perception of millennials as social media-obsessed young people who prefer to freelance from coffee shops (whilst on Facebook) than work the classic 9-5 is for the most part misplaced. In fact, this is a group of people who, just like generations before them, bring new life experiences, and therefore new expectations, into the workplace.

Deloitte recently discovered, for instance, that this generation is equally anxious about the future – from world events to the threat of automation – as they are eager to make an impact and contribute to “good causes” through the work that they do. When it comes to working flexibly, is what might be perceived as a lack of commitment actually a logical need for flexibility so they can perform the best job possible?

Generation FL-X expect employers to offer flexible working options as a given. Some would even prefer flexible working options to an **increase in salary**. PageGroup research recently revealed that flexible working was something that the younger generation wanted, but felt they didn't have access to. Despite the Government stipulation in 2014 that **all employees** have a legal right to request flexible working from their employer, at least a quarter (25%) of Gen FL-X has had requests for flexible working rejected by employers.

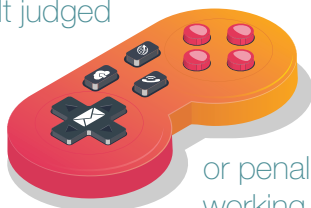
Employees think their employers would rate their flexible working options at **8/10...**



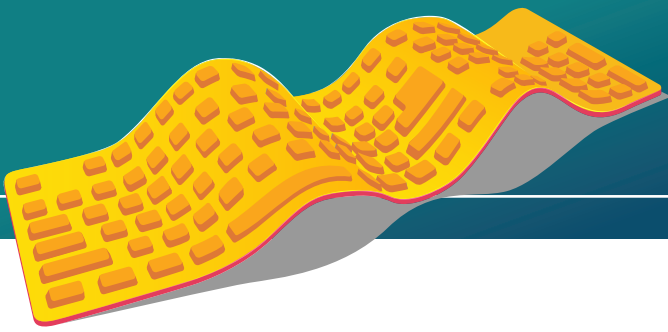
But employees think it's actually closer to **6.5/10...**

65%

of Generation FL-X felt judged



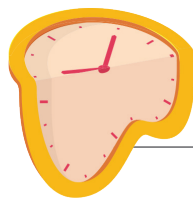
or penalised for working flexibly.



How to meet millennial expectations

1. Implement new talent strategies

Organisations need talent strategies that account for a shifting employee demographic with differing expectations. From a professional development perspective, succession planning will help ensure millennial talent is retained and nurtured so future leadership positions are filled internally. For benefits/packages specifically and the issue of flexible working, you need to start by ironing out the specifics of your strategy, e.g. when do you need employees to be in the office or online?



'Flexitime'

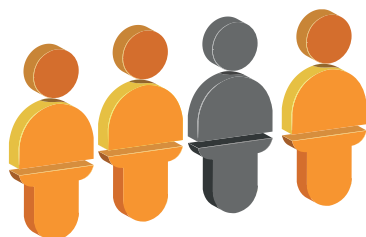
– the option to work outside of the 'normal' 9-5 –

is the benefit **over two-thirds (67%)** of UK office workers rate as their most wanted, according to PageGroup research.

2. Get to grips with the 'new normal'

As flexibility continues to become a standard part of working life, do we need to accept that flexible working is no longer a separate initiative or exclusive perk but instead part of the 'new normal' in which we live, work and operate? Indeed, certain industries and roles may not be able to change the time or location from which they work, but if it is possible, let employees work earlier or later. The important point to remember is that this new normal needs to work side by side with context: within both organisational and employee parameters.

ONE IN FOUR



of Gen **FL-X**

has had their requests for flexible working **rejected** by employers

3. Make easy-win operational changes

To attract the right talent your business environment and company culture need to be new-normal friendly. Here's how:

- **Tools**

Consider an open-plan office space or creating a hot-desking environment to encourage collaboration and creativity. Crucially, as a business, you could also reduce overhead costs. As the number of employees working from home or remotely increases, the amount of office space or number of desks you need typically decreases.

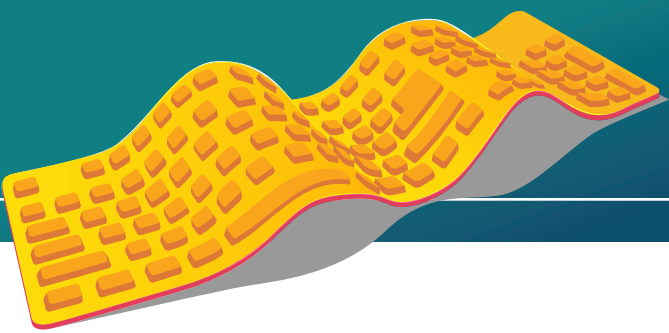
Digital tools like shared calendars, instant messaging or online project management tools also contribute to a collaborative environment – and appeal to digital-native generations who want to see employers embracing new technology.

- **Technology**

Your organisation's IT offering has to be up to scratch if employees are going to be able to cash in on flexible working options. Are laptops and work phones available and able to be taken off-site? Can IT management ensure secure private networks access works remotely? You may even want or need to subsidise/cover the cost of work phones or Wi-Fi utility bills for those working from home.

- **Skills**

Employees need serious time management skills if they are to work from home successfully. Determining priorities, juggling workload and collaborating with people in different locations encourages employees to sharpen their organisational and interpersonal skills.



What the UK workforce **really** wants

According to our research, the ability to work flexibly will be an 'important' or 'very important consideration' come 2020 for UK office workers. Combined with recent reports from the likes of **PwC** predicting that millennials will make up 50% of the workforce by 2020, the need for businesses to listen – and most importantly respond – is crucial.

Why do we need flexible working?

In a world that is 'always on' and with technology that offers open channels of communication 24/7, it can be difficult to switch off. Achieving a work-life balance is the end goal for some, but for others, it's hard to imagine work emails and notifications not coming straight through to their smartphone.

Flexible working may sound like an opportunity to increasingly blur the lines between home and work, but having flexibility can actually help employees to maximise their time, schedules and workload around their outside-of-work commitments. This applies to both working parents who need to do the school run, and Generation FL-X who may want to get to a gym class or catch up with friends in the evening. Simply put: just because you are single or do not have children doesn't mean your flexible working requests should be deprioritised or overlooked.

How can you adapt your organisation's flexibility?

We now know that at least 62% of millennials expect flexible working to come as standard, and many believe that they work better in a flexible environment. So how can they reach their potential if employers aren't willing to experiment with flexible working options?

Future FL-Xibility

By 2020, Millennial workers want the following flexible working options:

Flexi-time (67%) demand up 21% on today's usage figures

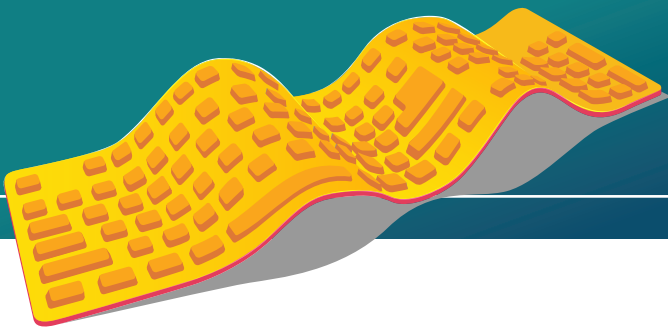
Flexi-place/remote working (57%) up 31%

Compressed work weeks (54%) up 49%

Time in lieu (49%) – up 21%

Career breaks (41%) – up 38%

91% expect to be working flexibly by this time



A 2013 **PwC study** found millennials working at the company expect more support and appreciation from organisations than their non-millennial counterparts. PageGroup research also supports this employee-employer disconnect, revealing almost half (45%) of Gen FL-X acknowledge a difference between the flexible working options they expect and those their employer is offering.

Listen to your employees and **anticipate** what is likely to happen and how it will affect the people who work at your organisation. Whether you are implementing a new flexible working policy, or updating an existing one, employees will appreciate transparency (where appropriate) and be inspired by an employer who embraces change.

A flexible working policy could increase productivity as much as it inspires and motivates employees. By allowing people to work at times (within reason) when they feel most alert and efficient, you increase the likelihood of them improving their performance – and your profits.

59% of employees say senior employees are encouraged to work flexibly more than junior or single staff.

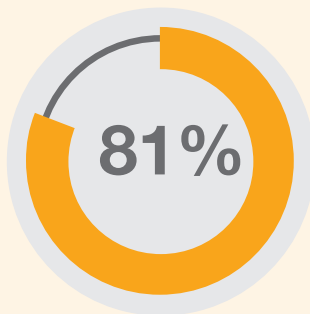


65%

of employees believe those with families are encouraged to work flexibly more than their single colleagues.

The state of play

Here's what we know:



of UK office workers **don't work from home** in an average working week.

WHY? > **42%** are not able to
> **34%** are not allowed

What happens when they **ask to work flexibly**?



25%

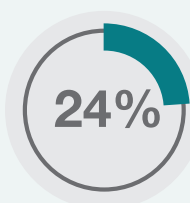
of Generation Y and Z **asked and were refused** flexible working



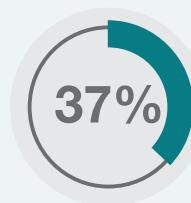
65%

of Generation Y and Z **felt judged or penalised** for working flexibly

The **harsh reality**



of employers **don't currently offer** any flexible working options.



say **flexible working is overhyped** and under delivers.

Three simple ways to offer flexible working

You may not know how or when to introduce or upgrade the flexible working options you offer to employees. Key considerations should include: seasonality; timing in relation to the financial year; and any other significant changes that are set to happen in the business such as recruitment drives. That's the when, and here's the how to be more flexible:

1. Dynamic working

The principle of **dynamic working** is to focus on the output and key deliverables of an individual rather than the number of hours they spend at work. In theory, if output levels are high and all responsibilities are taken care of, it shouldn't matter where and when results are achieved.

2. Consistent communication

The more a management or leadership team communicates any new or changing policies, the less staff will feel excluded or discriminated against. Look at your current system and see if an early finish once a month, or the chance to work from home one day a week (for example) could empower staff – even if they don't take it, availability is king.

3. Company-wide policies

If you introduce a flexible working policy, introduce it to employees at all levels (excluding those who are on probation, for example). Create a sense of community and an environment that promotes equality, and help your staff feel supported, accepted and acknowledged – regardless of their familial situation.



For flexible working to really move forward in the UK, employers should focus on productivity. Businesses can prioritise accommodating the expectations of all employees, and continue to challenge any stigma or stereotypes. By empowering employees to take charge of their productivity, businesses will be rewarded with increased employee loyalty, a more efficient workforce and a high trust, high performance culture.



Oliver Watson,
Executive Board Director for UK and North America at PageGroup

Conclusion

A report published in August 2017 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (**EHRC**) called for a “serious shake up” of the working culture in Britain. In order to reduce the **gender pay gap** and decrease the risk of discrimination against minorities, the EHRC argues all jobs should be advertised as ‘flexible’ (and a ‘use it or lose it’ paternity leave (with generous pay) should be introduced).

Since the Government extended the right for flexible working to all employees in 2014, little more has been done from a legal perspective in terms of enforcing this right or empowering employees to ask for it, if they want or need it.

As millennials become a growing proportion of the workforce, and Generation Z (those born in the mid-1990s) begin to enter the workplace, it's time for employers to recognise that as key life milestones (buying a house, marriage) move later and later, flexible working needs to reflect the realities of today's employee.

So, what have we learnt?

- Getting the best out of millennial talent comes from listening to their expectations and responding with a new or improved bespoke environment which includes flexible working options. Just remember, if you do seek to make changes, make the right ones for both your current and future workforce, not just the changes you think you should make.
- Be mindful of your employees' commitments both in and out of work, and strive to build individual working patterns accordingly. Allowing employees to work around other life commitments (within reason) and at times when they are most productive – e.g. outside of ‘core’ office hours (the traditional 9-5) – will likely result in improved productivity for you. If it works then consider how you can build on that flexible working policy – or tweak it, if not.
- Ask recruitment consultants for advice about finding the right flexible working options for your business and its future leaders. Working with experts to create a competitive offering will help attract and retain talented individuals and create a flexible culture that meets the needs of this ‘new normal’.

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