

# GRANTING EMPLOYEES FLEXIBILITY WITHIN THEIR POSITIONS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

When organizations think about flexibility, they often think about flexible work arrangements, like different schedules or remote work. But there's more to flexibility than when and where employees work but also how they work. Here are four ways employers can grant employees flexibility within their positions and work environment:

## 1. EXPLORE HOW FLEXIBILITY WORKS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION.

Research on “employee empowerment” as a tool for engagement dates back to the 1990s, when the term became a buzzword for organizations across the United States. Empowerment through flexibility is more important than ever for employees and people managers. Consider how flexibility can work for your organization, and you might experience a decrease in burnout and chronic stress.

## 2. PROMOTE EMPLOYEE AUTONOMY, BUT ALSO PROVIDE GUIDANCE.

Different management styles influence the degree to which employees play a decision-making role, how information is exchanged between management and employees, and how employees receive support from management. Management styles impact how employees perceive themselves and their workplaces, and these perceptions impact their behaviors. Micromanaging employees (spending excessive time controlling details and processes) makes employees feel less engaged. Not managing employees at all can make them feel aimless and checked out. Managers should strive for a middle ground, setting goals and offering resources to help employees accomplish goals without prescribing exact ways.

## 3. ALLOW EMPLOYEES TO HAVE INPUT ON DECISIONS.

Employees who participate in decision-making are more engaged, motivated, and productive. Employees feel a sense of inclusion and self-efficacy when they have some influence on their workplace outputs, policies, and practices (high-involvement practices). Employers should consider implementing a shared decision-making process annually, in which supervisors and their direct reports clearly define and negotiate their roles, responsibilities, and support needs in writing. Employees should be able to provide feedback on their managers and how they have supported them in the past year. It varies from traditional performance assessment tools – where managers only provide feedback to direct reports – and allows for more employee flexibility and engagement.

## 4. OFFER FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS.

Based on MHA's Mind the Workplace 2018 Report, flexible work arrangements were associated with the healthiest workplaces across all industries.<sup>1</sup> Flexible work arrangements may include earlier or later start/end times, schedules with availability on certain days (e.g., 10 hours a day Monday to Thursday instead of eight hours a day Monday to Friday), or the ability to work remotely for some or all of the employee's work week. Remote work is any work that is done off the main site. Flexible work allows employees to determine a work schedule that works best for them, and workplaces retain a productive, engaged, and confident workforce.

1. Hellebuyck, Michelle, et al. “Mind the Workplace 2018 Report.” Mental Health America, <https://www.mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Mind%20the%20Workplace%20-%20MHA%20Workplace%20Health%20Survey%202017%20FINAL.pdf>.