



# Strategies for Proposing Alternative Work Options

Perhaps you want more time at home with your kids or need a flexible work schedule to care for an elderly relative. Maybe you want to avoid congested commute hours or return to school part-time. Whatever your reasons for proposing an alternative work schedule, be prepared with a solid plan and a willingness to negotiate with your employer.

First, examine your company's existing personnel policies regarding flexible scheduling. What options are currently offered? What has been tried in the past?

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## Common schedule alternatives include:

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- **flextime**—working a schedule other than the traditional 9-to-5 work day
- **telecommuting**—working at home and communicating with the office via phone, fax or e-mail
- **regular part-time work**
- **sharing a full-time job with another employee**



*Prepare before meeting with your boss.*

When it's time to talk to your supervisor, stress the benefits of your plan to the company. Remind your employer that, in most cases, the benefits of alternative work arrangements outweigh the disadvantages.

- ✓ If you're proposing job sharing, explain how your job partner's skills will add to the position.
- ✓ If you're taking time off for studies, explain how you'll return to the job with skills that will be of value to the company.
- ✓ If you plan to switch from full-time to part-time work, offer to train a new employee and devote your attention to special projects or regular reports. Be sure to ask how administrative issues, such as accounting procedures or benefits, will need to be changed to accommodate your altered responsibilities.
- ✓ Suggest a schedule and contingency plans for vacations, illnesses and other likely occurrences.
- ✓ Ask if insurance benefits can be prorated for part-time hours.
- ✓ If the work option is new to your company, seek examples of other companies who use it. Libraries and on-line data bases have magazine articles about what other organizations have done successfully.
- ✓ If your company lacks policies for alternative work options, take an active role in developing such policies.

Once you've come to an agreement, write up a proposal outlining duties and schedules. Make sure to outline the different responsibilities and accountabilities in your plan. List backup systems. Address any inconveniences the new schedule might create, but be sure to emphasize the benefits to the company.