



Flexibility & Balance - Wesfarmers Energy

Tips from Wesfarmers Energy:

- Senior roles can be effective on a part time basis
- Plan your workload effectively and allow for emergencies
- Use the available technology to maximise efficiency
- Be flexible with your flexible arrangements!
- Use your skills to encourage your company to change its culture

Erica says:

“be confident in what you have to offer your business ... negotiate on the strength of your skills and abilities”

Think smart when structuring positions

Wesfarmers Energy comprises four gas businesses, a regional power business and support services. A division of one of Australia's leading companies, Wesfarmers, Energy has approximately 1,000 permanent and contract employees. With a focus on key talent, they also pride themselves on their customer relationships and working towards operating sustainable businesses.

When the Energy Division embarked on the process of separating out the newly formed Resources Division it needed to engage the best people to ensure a smooth and efficient process. Flexible work practices for senior roles was not an integral part of the company culture and in attempting to retain key talent they were compelled to re-evaluate how these positions could be structured. In an environment where the experience and ability required for senior roles is at a premium it became clear that flexibility and innovation were now central in attracting the right people to the most important positions.

Use your experience to define your role

After returning to full time work following several years of part time and maternity leave, Erica worked in various management positions responsible for up to 70 employees. Upon returning to Western Australia, after holding a senior role at the Curragh Coal Mine in Queensland, Erica sought the same challenges and responsibilities but with the flexibility to dedicate enough time to her children. With the realisation that the company needed her skills and experience Erica was able to negotiate a role that allowed her to retain control of her working life.

By arranging meetings and planning trips in advance Erica is able to fulfil her work obligations and consistently receive positive feedback from the rest of the management team. Using remote access technology to the company computer systems, coupled with a portable hand held device she is kept abreast of urgent matters and can schedule contingency plans for any emergencies that arise.

Work towards a true work life balance

Erica has found that family life is now easier and much more balanced. Erica's children feel the benefit of having a relationship with both parents and Erica now has the opportunity to pursue broader interests ensuring a true work life balance. She now sees herself as working part time indefinitely and allowing the balance between work, community activities and leisure to evolve further.

In an environment where highly developed skill sets are at a premium Erica has used this to negotiate a work environment more suited to her current and future needs. By having confidence in her own ability she has proven that senior people in organisations can work successfully in a non-traditional manner. Indeed, the arrangement works so well that many of Erica's colleagues are oblivious to the fact that she works part time!