



Flexibility & Balance - Cooper Partners

Tips from Cooper Partners:

- Look at how you can modify roles to attract and retain staff
- Talk to your staff – find out what they want
- Make your flexibility a selling point when recruiting
- Invest in your employees and reap the rewards
- Consider flexible work practices for all levels of employees
- Make flexible work practices part of your firm's culture

Robin says:

"I'm refreshed and I actually really enjoy my job, I like coming here ... it has sharpened my focus in terms of work"

Flexibility keeps staff and clients happy!

Cooper Partners in Perth are a small boutique tax practice with two partners and 13 staff offering a broad range of taxation and business advice services. In common with many small businesses in Western Australia the firm encountered problems in recruiting and retaining new and experienced staff members. Director Marissa Bechta noticed that employees were looking for flexible work arrangements and that a more innovative approach in structuring work hours meant attracting the right people and retaining her more experienced staff became far less daunting.

As well as offering part-time work rosters and a flexible return program from maternity leave, Cooper Partners incorporated work from home schemes when work permitted. Positive encouragement of university students and ongoing development of all employees has seen a flow on benefit for the firm as their clients are better served and they have happier employees.

Even senior roles can be modified to be flexible

Robin is one of the firm's most valued employees and as manager of the practice one of its most important. Having been previously employed by a large law firm, Robin had become disillusioned with the industry standard long hours and heavy workloads and had reached the stage where she was prepared to leave the workplace and take her valuable skills with her. Cooper Partners offered her the option to work on a part time basis and Robin now works three days a week with some of that being from home.

The difference has been enormous. Robin has rediscovered her old enthusiasm and believes it to be one of the best things she's ever done. She approaches the job with fresh vigour after her time off and once again really enjoys her job. As an added bonus for Cooper Partners, Robin now finds herself more productive on the days she works and finds the new hours have sharpened her focus in terms of the work she undertakes.

Change the culture and reap the rewards

Cooper Partners have proved that by being innovative with working patterns a benefit is felt by the business, employees and their families and also the firm's clients. By showing a willingness to listen and then displaying clear leadership, the management team at Cooper Partners have tapped into a rich source of experienced and motivated employees whilst many of their competitors struggle with the reality of the current job market. Employees at Cooper Partners are able to enjoy a genuine work life balance and as such have found life in and out of work to be more rewarding and enjoyable.

Increased productivity, better staff retention, the ability to attract experienced new employees and a happier workforce are the tangible rewards that have resulted from the fresh and innovative approach taken by Cooper Partners.