

How to Start an Alternative Work Hours Program

The West Germans first realized that an employee's workday need not begin at nine and end at five. They called it *geitende arbeitszeit* or "gliding time." When we imported the idea, we called it flex-time. Now the concept has expanded to include the compressed work week and staggered work hours.

Alternative work hours is a strategy that can shift commuter trips out of peak traffic hours to times when travel is steadier and faster. This helps reduce the emission of damaging air pollutants and relieves traffic congestion.

The full impact of flexible work scheduling isn't known, but alternative work hours can be strong incentives to increase ridesharing when offered to current ridesharers and when used to reward employees who break the drive-alone habit.

● What Is an Alternative Work Hours Program?

It's an alternative to the standard eight-hour, five-day work week. Employers either change the length of the work day or the way work hours are allocated and then let employees choose among various options. With an alternatives work hours program, the cost is small, the risk low and the potential return high.

● How Are Alternative Work Hour Schedules Set Up?

There are three basic options to choose from: 1) **flex-time**, 2) **compressed work week**, 3) **staggered work hours**.

Flextime:

Flex-time give employees input as to when their workdays begin and end. Fixed company-wide arrival and departure times are replaced with varying schedules within designated zones of arrival and departure times. For example, you designate a core work day as 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. You allow leniency only in those hours before 9:00 am and after 3:00 pm.

Flex-time has two requirements: All employees must be present during the core day, and although employees may choose their own arrival and departure times, they must work the required hours (traditionally 8) each day.

Flex-time can be an incentive to increase ridesharing if employees can use it to meet carpool, vanpool, or transit schedules. However, because fewer employees will work the same hours, it could make ridematching of employees more difficult.

Compressed Work Week:

Compressed work weeks reduce the total number of commute trips. As with flex-time, employees must work their usual number of hours. However, during a compressed work week, employees schedule those hours on fewer work days per week or pay period.

Compressed work weeks are generally best suited to manufacturing or services where customer contact is minimal or scheduled in advance. For example, attorneys or engineering consultants might welcome a four-day work week, but it could disrupt a retail store.

There are two typical compressed work week schedules:

1. *4/40 Schedule* -- Employees work 40 hours in 4 days, allowing 3-day weekends for employees.
2. *9/80 Schedule* -- Employees work the usual number of hours in a two-week pay period in 9 rather than 10 days.




NOTE: To eliminate possible understaffing with compressed scheduling, days off could be rotated among a department's employees.

Staggered Work Hours:

With staggered hours, individuals -- over entire departments -- regularly arrive and leave at times which can vary from as little as 15 minutes to as much as two hours. Even a 15-30 minute shift in schedules alleviates local and on-site congestion. Employees are more enthusiastic about work if given a choice in their own schedules.

● What Are the Benefits of Alternative Work Scheduling?

Employer Benefits:

-  reduces tardiness
-  reduces absenteeism
-  reduces start/end of-the-day socializing

- ✔ reduces staff turn over
- ✔ improves employee morale
- ✔ improves benefits package
- ✔ recruiting advantage

Employee Benefits:

- ✔ increases job satisfaction
- ✔ eases transition between home and work
- ✔ child-care needs can be better managed
- ✔ reduces need to use annual/personal leave to meet medical appointments
- ✔ reduces personal sick time
- ✔ reduces tardiness
- ✔ reduces stress of daily work trips
- ✔ reduces commuting costs

Community Benefits:

- ✔ reduces peak-hour traffic flow
- ✔ reduces fuel consumption needs
- ✔ improves air quality

● How Can My Company Implement an Alternative Work Hours Program?

It's easy. Begin a pilot program following these basic steps:

1. **Involve managers and supervisors in planning.** Their knowledge will be the key to determining core time, flexible time, and the best options to choose.
2. **Determine which departments are eligible** for your alternative work hours program. Examine your current departmental workloads.
3. **Schedule** core time, flexible hours, and days off **in anticipation of peaks and valleys**. Usually, heavy or light loads occur at specific times during

- the day.
4. If unions will be involved, **discuss and solve any potential problem before starting your program.**
 5. **Set a target implementation date.** Let qualifying employees and department know exactly what your program offers. Be certain that supervisory personnel are knowledgeable and can answer questions.
 6. **Follow up with a survey** of participating employees and managers. Use their suggestions to improve the program.

● Where Can I Get More Information?

Let us help you! Baton Rouge Area Commuter Services (BRACS) is dedicated to providing the commuter the transportation assistance you may need. For details, call us at (225) 344-RIDE (7433) or FAX (225) 383-3804.

*BRACS is a service of the
Capital Region Planning Commission
P.O. Box 3355
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Phone: (225) 383-5203
Fax: (225) 383-3804*

CRPC@ci.baton-rouge.la.us

