

# ASCENTIAL

## Flexible and Remote Working Policy

Applicable for all colleagues around the world

# Flexible and Remote Working Policy

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## Version Control

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## Introduction

We aim to support employees to achieve a better balance between their job and life outside of work. Ascential has a commitment to all flexible working practices which can be mutually beneficial for both the organisation and the employee. This policy offers support and guidance regarding flexible working arrangements. Examples of flexible working arrangement include:

- Moving from full-time to part-time working (or vice versa) by increasing or reducing your hours of work
- Changing the days on which you work;
- Working remotely (some or all of the time)
- Working flexi-time

- Unpaid sabbaticals or career breaks

Flexible working encourages a better work-life balance, improving motivation, performance, and reducing stress. Being able to organise your time to manage your other priorities outside of work makes for happier individuals and, as a consequence, happier more productive employees.

We believe the office will continue to play an important part in our working lives. Whilst this will vary between teams and job types, it will continue to represent an essential enabler of collaboration amongst colleagues and with customers, of creativity, of the building and maintenance of relationships, of the development of our people, of celebration and it will foster a sense of belonging and well-being.

Flexible arrangements are always considered in the broader context of what best serves the employee, the team, our customers and the wider business. We will fairly consider all flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the company and the employee can be met. Every case is treated on an individual basis, and a decision in one case does not mean the same decision will be made in another.

Please note that any flexibility regarding working remotely is always at Ascential's discretion. There is no automatic right to a flexible working arrangement. If Ascential does not deem that remote working is suitable for you, the business or our customers, then it may choose to turn down the request or withdraw approval at any time, where it's been previously granted.

## Remote Working Arrangements

Remote working is the term used for employees who work away from their main office base either on:

- *an occasional basis* – where you'll be expected to work out of one of our main offices with some remote working either at home or non Ascential location. By its nature, occasional remote working can only be agreed on an informal basis.
- *a regular basis* – where there is an agreement to work at home for a specified number of days and the remainder number of working days at the main office base.
- *a contractual basis* – where the employee's home is their main place of work.

At Ascential, we have different teams, different brands, different individuals, different countries and different cultures that need and want different things. In practice, some teams will require more office-based days, and others may find only a few days here and there, or maybe none at all, works just as well.

The following working arrangements might work best for your team:

**4-5 days a week in office** - your role requires you to be based from the office for work requirements, we would like you to be in the office at least 4/5 days a week. OR, you're at the beginning of your journey with us, you will need more time in the office to get to know their colleagues and our practices. Ideally, we would like you to be in the office 4/5 days a week.

**Hybrid - Majority Office** - 3-4 days a week in office - your role requires you to be based from the office to connect with customers and colleagues on a regular basis. Therefore, we would like you to be in the office at least 3 days a week, with some flexibility to work remotely.

**Hybrid - Flexible** - 1-2 days a week in office - your role allows you to schedule work-from-home days due to work variation, we are happy to support you to work remotely.

**Remote - Mostly Home** - your role allows you to work remotely by default, and we are happy to support you to work remotely, but will require you to attend the office when required, given reasonable notice.

## Making it work

Whilst we adopt more flexibility in our working environments, we do permit this on the understanding that:

- the business needs and requirements of the role are met
- you are a consistently good performer and can work without direct supervision and complete work to deadline. There is a flexible approach in terms of days at home and office days if required to meet the needs of the business and to carry out your duties effectively
- you and your manager have defined the working arrangements and regular check-in meetings to discuss how the flexible arrangements are working – for you, your manager, team and the business.

If you are interested in exploring flexible working options, outside of the standard remote working arrangements detailed above, your first step should always be to have an informal conversation with your manager. We are highly supportive of flexible working and only ask that our managers and employees be sensible in the application of this principle:

- **Managers** should be supportive and accommodating, unless there is clear evidence that a request for flexible working arrangements cannot be accommodated.
- **Employees** should make sure that any new arrangement works for the team and wider business, and that your manager is consulted, kept informed and ultimately approves the arrangements.

The first rule of flexible working is that it needs to be flexible both ways: a flexible and understanding employer, and employees who are flexible and responsive to the demands

of a growing global business. We ask both employees and managers to reflect on the following questions when making flexible working arrangements:

- Are the employee's objectives for the week/month/year clear enough to allow for more autonomous self-driven working – being coached and managed by their manager throughout – and based on outcomes and results?
- How can we ensure that collaboration between team members remains seamless despite occasional and ad hoc variations from standard hours being worked in the office or remotely?
- Do employees have the necessary equipment or software installed at home and what are the conditions of employees' home or alternative place of work (noise, internet connection etc.)?
- Are there any cybersecurity and data privacy concerns that need to be covered in advance of the agreement?

### Informal Flexible Working Arrangements:

By *informal* flexible working, we mean ad hoc flexibility with your working hours (start and finish times) and your place of work (remote/out of office) – based on the understanding that you can manage your time yourself to balance work with other priorities in your life as long as your objectives and contracted/standard required hours are met. Where small and temporary adjustments can be accommodated, a manager may choose to agree to a flexible working request informally. When this happens, it is good practice to confirm, in writing, what has been agreed (e.g. by email). Where there is a requirement for a contractual change and/or change in pay then the application will need to be made formally.

As long as the business needs and requirements of the role are met then informal flexible working is supported and encouraged.

General rules of informal flexible working:

- **Let your manager know** where you work from and when, this could be that you are just working normal office hours from a non-office location or shifting your hours slightly in the day to accommodate a personal commitment.
- **Be considerate** – add dial-in details for any meetings that don't require in-person attendance, and schedule them at sensible hours for those attending
- **Be easily contactable** – your chat function should be on during normal work hours, and you should be checking email regularly if you are not on holiday
- **Be respectful** – arriving late and leaving early without explanation when your colleagues are working hard just annoys people
- **Lead by example** - if you were planning on working from home but then something comes up that's best done in the office, you may need to shift your personal commitments and get into the office
- **Be understanding** - some functions are set up deliberately to be office based, while others may be home based for different reasons (telesales teams together in the office vs. field-based teams on the road)

### Formal Flexible Working Arrangements:

There are also times when you might wish to make a permanent change to your working arrangements, for example moving to part time hours or asking to work from home on a more formal basis, that is not already covered by Ascential's standard remote working arrangements detailed above. This section offers guidance relating to more *permanent, formal* flexible working requests which may require change in terms and conditions to employment to reflect new working arrangements. Requests will be evaluated according to business needs and the relevant country's employment law.

Like any flexible working arrangement these requests need to meet the balance of what is required to make sure your job is done effectively and are fair to other colleagues within the team.

## Eligibility and Requests:

In order to make a formal request for flexible working you must:

- Be an employee of the company (*i.e. on a permanent or fixed term contract*).
- Have worked with the company continuously for 26 weeks at the date the application is made.
- Must not have made another application to work flexibly under this policy during the last 12 months.

An employee who makes a request for flexible working, will not be subjected to any detriment or lose any career development opportunities as a result.

### **I am a manager dealing with a flexible working request, what do I do?**

If you are a manager dealing with a flexible working request, there is a guide in Looop on 'Being a Manager at Ascential' which will tell you 'How to Deal with a Flexible Working Request' or speak with your HR team.

### **What happens if I wish to make a flexible working request?**

If you are considering flexible working, in the first instance you should discuss the flexible working request with your manager who may be happy to agree to an informal trial. If they feel the flexible working request requires more detailed consideration, you will be required to make a formal flexible working request. Details about how to do this are outlined below.

### **What kind of changes can I request?**

Flexible working may include; reducing hours, having a start and finish time that is different from the standard hours, working from home (if not covered by Ascential's standard home working arrangements) or job sharing.

### **What happens if I am required to make a formal flexible working request?**

In some cases where it requires more detailed consideration, your flexible working request may have to be dealt with more formally.

In this case you should follow the steps below to make the application:

### **1. Procedure**

If your application needs to be treated formally, you must put your application in writing which should be dated. You can do this by using either the 'Flexible Working Request Form' (*available on the intranet*) or if you prefer any applicable government forms. Your request must be sent to your manager and your HR contact. If you do not get an acknowledgement of your application within a couple of days please contact HR directly.

*(NB: The timeframes within this process can be extended but only if both you and the company agree).*

Within either form you should:

- (i) state the reason for your request;
- (ii) provide as much information as you can about your current and desired working pattern, including working days, hours and start and finish times, and give the date from which you want your desired working pattern to start;
- (iii) address the effect the changes to your working pattern will have on the work that you do, that of your colleagues and on service delivery. If you have any suggestions about dealing with any potentially negative effects, please include these in your written application;
- (iv) provide information to confirm that you meet the eligibility criteria set out above;
- (v) state whether you have made a previous formal request for flexible working and, if so, when; and
- (vi) Ideally ensure the request is submitted at least two months before you wish the changes you are requesting to take effect so that there is plenty of time to consider it fully.

### **2. Preparation**

As far as possible you should consider how your request is going to affect the business and what can be done to make sure it doesn't have a negative impact. Think of it as making a business case, rather than a personal case, for the change. Make sure you also consider the financial impact the change may have on you e.g. your salary, pension contributions, annual leave entitlement, bonuses etc., as if you reduce your hours these will also reduce pro-rata. If your request is agreed any change will be permanent.

### **3. Meeting**

Within 28 days of receiving your application your manager will arrange a meeting with you and HR to discuss your request. You can bring a work colleague with you to this meeting. This companion may speak during the meeting and confer privately with you, but may not answer questions on your behalf as this is your application.

The meeting will be used to consider the working arrangements you have requested. You will also be able to discuss what impact your proposed working arrangements will have on your work and that of your colleagues. If the arrangements you have requested cannot be accommodated, discussion at the meeting also provides an opportunity to explore possible alternative working arrangements.

Your line manager may suggest starting new working arrangements under an initial trial period to ensure that they meet your needs and those of the company.

#### **4. Trial**

With any flexible working request, it is appropriate to trial the new working pattern before agreeing to it on a permanent basis. This gives you, your manager and your team the opportunity to see how it works in practice. The length of the trial should be short but long enough to really see if it works, typically no more than three months. A review date will be set for the end of the trial. If it has worked both parties can agree to a permanent change to your terms and conditions. If it has not worked then you will be required to return to your previous contracted working pattern.

#### **5. Decision**

Within 14 days of your meeting with your manager and HR you will be informed in writing whether your request has been agreed or not and/or whether any suggestion will be trialled in accordance with the above.

If your request is accepted, or where we propose an alternative to the arrangements you requested, your line manager will write to you with details of the new working arrangements, details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to your contract of employment and the date on which they will commence. You will be asked to sign and return a copy of the letter. This will be placed on your file to confirm the variation to your terms of employment. There may also be some additional practical matters, such as arrangements for handing over work that your line manager will discuss with you.

You should be aware that changes to your terms of employment will be permanent and that you will not be able to make another formal request until 12 months after the date of your original application.

There is a statutory requirement to complete the review and approval process within three months of receiving a valid flexible working request. However, if it looks like Ascential may not be able to conclude the process within this timeframe, we can agree between us to extend it.

A request for an extension is likely to benefit you. For example, your line manager may need more time to investigate how your request can be accommodated or to consult several members of staff.

There will be circumstances where, due to business and operational requirements, we are unable to agree to a request. In these circumstances, your line manager will write to you:

- (i) giving the business reason(s) for turning down your application;
- (ii) explaining why the business reasons apply in your case; and
- (iii) setting out the appeal procedure.

*\*The application will only be declined based on the reasons allowed within your applicable Country of employment\**



## **6. Appeal**

If you don't agree with the decision made by your manager you can appeal. You must set out your appeal in writing, you must date the letter, set out your grounds of appeal and send it to the HR Department within 14 days of receiving the decision letter.

Once you've appealed in writing, a meeting will be arranged within 14 days of receipt of your appeal with you, a different manager, HR and (if you wish) your work colleague or trade union representative, to consider your appeal.

You will be informed of the appeal decision in writing within 14 days following the appeal meeting. The appeal decision is final. If your appeal is upheld, you will be advised of your new working arrangements, details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to your contract of employment and the date on which they will commence.

If your appeal is rejected, the written decision will give the business reason(s) for the decision and explain why the reason(s) apply in your case. You will not be able to make another formal request until 12 months after the date of your original application.

## **7. Withdrawal**

If you withdraw a formal request for flexible working, you will not be eligible to make another formal request for 12 months from the date of your original request. In certain circumstances, a request made under the formal procedure will be treated as withdrawn.

This will occur if:

- (i) you fail to attend two meetings under the formal procedure without reasonable cause; or
- (ii) you unreasonably refuse to provide information we require to consider your request.

In such circumstances, your line manager will write to you confirming that the request has been treated as withdrawn.

## **Where to find out more**

Related Ascential Policies and Procedures:

- Workstation Safety Policy
- Home Working Safety & Security Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Travel Safety Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- New and Expectant Mothers Policy
- Workplace Safety & Emergency Procedures
- Workplace Adjustment Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Data Security Policy
- Password Security Policy
- Social Media Policy