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Basic information
about flexible working time

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Introduction

The dynamic development of economics and society demands a high flexibility from employees and companies in dealing with the challenge to balance work and private life successfully. Flexible working time became an important key factor in this context. Flexible working time boosts the competitive capacity of companies, eases the recruitment of experts and can support the health of the employees. To reach these aims, some basic parameters need to be observed. Companies and employees should be participating equally in the development and implementation of a new working time model to tailor it for this one company. Furthermore, this new model needs to be based on the legal foundation.

The idea of this brochure is to give an overview of the variety of flexible working time models to make it easier for general managers, human resource managers and work councils to realise a new time model. Therefore we abstracted the most important facts one needs to get an optimised working time model.

We would be pleased if this brochure meets your interest and helps to support an employee- and competition-orientated organisation of working time.

Prof. Dr. Ulrike Hellert
science director iap

Ten reasons to set up flexible working times

Why do companies set up flexible working times? There are many reasons to make changes in working times. We created an overview of the main reasons mentioned by the companies we have been talking to.

I. Improve competitiveness

Flexible working time and flexible operation time both support company goals and respect the wishes of the employees. So companies can receive for example longer opening times and better service for the customer or more flexibility to cope with seasonal or economic variations. In the same time companies can improve the working motivation of their employees, since they have the option to work in flexible working time arrangements that fit their private life.

II. Stabilise jobs

Different studies and practical experience prove that innovative work models stabilise jobs and can also, under certain circumstances, create new jobs.

III. Positive employee motivation

Employees who are able to organise their working time on their own in accordance to their preferences and needs are much more motivated. They have a wider time window scope of time to act and a concrete

influence in the processes of their type of work.

IV. Reduce costs

The improvement of economic factors reduces costs of companies in different places. Throughout the company it's possible to optimise manpower and the costs of products through longer machine times using flexible working times.

V. Improve in-time-delivery

Flexibility improves the opportunity to deliver in-time and keep deadlines. That is a very important factor if it comes to customer satisfaction.

VI. Recruitment and company attractiveness

High qualified employees are more and more interested in freedom of action and personal responsibility at work. Flexible working times with the right commitments create autonomy and are highly respected by high qualified employees. Companies offering these have better recruitment results and stay with their employees much longer.

VII. Training and qualification

Flexible working time models support trainings and qualification at companies. Especially small and middle sized enterprises are able to

organise the trainings much easier by using working time accounts. So it's possible to mark out times for the trainings out at the time account to ensure that employees keep their knowledge up to date.

VIII. Combine family and work

Target oriented flexible working time gives a scope of time to arrange family needs and work much better. Instead of the idea that presence equals people are working, it makes more sense to agree on targets employees have to reach – wherever and whenever they work. Like that the “morning stress” will be much more reduced, if employees can start their work flexible and not on time.

IX. Improve communication

A central factor making flexible working time function without problems is a good communication. The necessary communication between the employees improves their competence of communication.

X. Better quality of life

Including individual interests of employees in the distribution of their working time supports a positive impact in the overall quality of life. For example the individual biological rhythm can be considered to cope with „morning- and evening-types“. Modern working time styles prevent overwork situations and reduce time pressure.

Working time and the demographic change in German companies

By Christina Krins

Challenges of the demographic change

The big discussion about the demographic change started a long time ago. Now it has reached the companies and proves to be a big challenge for them. The decrease of the labour force potential and the increasing average age of the employable people in Germany imply that it will be more and more difficult to recruit qualified employees. Now companies compete against each other to get young, qualified people work for them. Having or not this kind of employee in the company is a mission critical resource in our knowledge-based society. Suitable candidates for the apprenticeship trainings are progressively missing and it's getting more difficult for the companies to enhance their own young people. The average age of employees is rising in many companies; so a high proportion of older employees is often facing a low proportion of younger employees. Thus unbalanced age structures can lead to a massive know-how-loss, if bigger groups of the same age cohort retire at the same time without transferring their knowledge to the younger people. Considering this setting, companies need to create labour conditions which are able to keep and support the work capacity of the employees.

Design projection

Flexible working time is not a perfect solution for all aspects of this challenge, but it's an important component for a demographic orientated personnel policy. If less and less experts cope with a consistent or growing workload it might look like a potential solution – short-term. Long-term though, it's fundamental to support the physical and psychical health of the employees to save the productive efficiency of the company. That means to create ideas to ensure existing and to open up new competences of the employees as well. A proofed tool to achieve these goals is the organisation of working time.

Positive factor for the recruiting

Studies concerning employer attractiveness show that candidates set value on their work-life-balance. In the era of demographic change persons with a good expertise and interpersonal skills can afford to be more choosy looking for an employer. They make their decision dependent on the frame conditions that cope best with their idea of work-life-balance. One of the main factors is sovereignty regarding flexible working time models. That means – employers will have an advantage for

the recruiting if they offer flexible working time at their company.

Diversity and working time

It's important to realise that potentials not necessarily need to be in accordance with the ideal „young, dynamic, well travelled“. Also high potentials have different phases of life. The staff of tomorrow will be more heterogenic – no matter which age. This process can be accompanied with a diversity of working time. Employees that return to the job after a family break need different kinds of working time models than employees who study or are on rehabilitation or will be retired soon.

Preservation and promotion of competence

Organisation of working time has a close conjunction with qualification, promotion of competence, knowledge management and knowledge transfer. Against the background of the “war for talents” there needs to be room for trainings, capacity building and knowledge transfer during the working process. It's important to install time buffers to promote and use potentials of employees. During the conception of human resources development concepts and knowledge

management strategies, working time models should be considered as well. Promotion of competence makes high demands on leadership and organisation of work. The feedback of supervisors, the work environment and the internal structures need to be arranged in a way that employees have a lock on their working time and working amount as well as on their time to relax.

Working time organisation as a key factor

The organisation of working time is one of the main starting points to face the challenge of the demographic change. At this juncture reasonable synergies should be build with other arrangements of a demographic orientated staffing policy, e.g. with the employer branding, the knowledge-, competence- and health management. Taken as a whole, the organisation of working time is the base to make up, keep and profit from essential potentials and competences. Therefore working time organisation is a main key factor for companies to keep competitiveness during the demographic change.

Work and health

The legislator describes at § 1 Working Time Act (Arbeitszeitgesetz) the importance of health and safety. Working times should be arranged in a way not to damage the physical and psychical healthiness of the workers. Referred to §1 “it is the purpose of this law to guarantee safety and health of the employees by the organisation of working time...”

Time pressure – time competence

In 2010, full-time-workers spent an average of 1.668 hours of their time working. That means employees have had five to six hours for individual use on a work day, taking off the time necessary to travel to and from work, sleep, eat and personal hygiene. In labour intensive times even the hours for sleeping and eating are getting short – social time is not available at all. Economic necessities cause this higher work- and time pressure. About 40 % of the interviewees named work under time pressure or pressure to perform as the main reason of personal workload (Robert Koch Institut, 2011).

A working culture of permanent probation and availability needs to be critically assessed, because this reduces the time of relaxing and boost the work- and time pressure

even further. Sovereignty in managing the own working time and work amount is very helpful to reduce the pressure for the employees. Also leaders and supervisors need to act as role models for a healthy working time agreement. Recovery time and a limited volume of work should be a visible and reachable part of the company culture.

Working time, health and accident risk

Long working times are associated with sleep disorders, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and psychological problems as well as an impairment of performance. Next to off time caused by the health effects, the higher accident rate is an important economic factor that explains the absence of employees at work. The risk of having an accident rises with the length of the working time. Beyond the 8th respectively the 9th working hour, the accident risk rises dramatically. With this rising accident risk the probability of a significant increase of microeconomic and macroeconomic costs is almost certainly. According to this, it makes sense to avoid long working hours, if a new working time model is going to be developed.

Working time models

The idea of models is to make an abstract system visible. With working time models it's possible to show the different options of service time /production time of a company and the working time of the workers in a simple way. With these models it is easier to demonstrate the several options and combinations of working and service times. Very often companies don't notice these options, because they don't want to change things or because they prefer a working time model of a different company which they just like to copy. Flexible working time constructions can only work efficiently, if they match with company interests and the wishes of the employees. Meaning, every company needs to create its very one working time model.

Each company has its own objectives, routines and interests, that's why there is no „patent remedy“ to organise working time. Therefore it is necessary to analyse the internal situation of each company itself to find out the custom made solution. So working time models can give ideas and support the developing process, but they can't replace this process. Based on the legal basis conditions it's possible to create a competition- and employment orientated working time with different main working time models and tools. We like to show some of these main models and tools in this chapter.

The start and finish of working time is a definition of each company. Basically it's important to make a difference in between operating time and working time.

Operating time is the time when goods and services are provided. The working time of the employees results from this specific time frame. The working time of the employees refers to the contracted working hours. Working hours are defined in general from the start until the end without breaks. Duration, position and spreading play a decisive part for the working time arrangement.

Duration of working time

The duration of working time is fixed in the working contract. It's only possible to extent or reduce this time in the cope with legal policy. The duration of working time can be the same for all employees or can be different. Flexible management of the duration will lead to the following working time variations:

Part-time

If the regular weekly working time contains less hours than the regular working time of a full time worker it's a question of part-time-work. The spreading of the work time can be very flexible (for example: 4-day-week). In some countries the claim on part-time-work is fixed in a special law. In Germany it's the „Teilzeit- und Befristungsgesetz“.

Job-Sharing

In this special part-time type two or more employees share one position. The part-time workers decide position and spread of their individual working time mainly by themselves. They have to agree on that with their job-sharing-colleagues.

Short-time-work

If the order situation is bad due to economic reasons and a full working time scene is not possible, the employer can reduce working times. In some countries it's necessary to agree with the work council. In Germany the Employment Agency needs to be informed as well and will, under certain conditions, pay a compensatory salary to the employees.

Extra-work

The exceeding of the legal regular working time is called extra-time. In Germany this regular time are eight hours per working day or 48 hours per working week.

Positioning and spreading of working time

The positioning of working time refers on the particular start and finish of the working day. This working time can be arranged per day, week, month or year. From the position and duration results finally the spreading of the work time.

The spreading can be administered evenly or unevenly throughout the

days, months or years. But on an average the contracted weekly working time has to be reached.

An example for an evenly spread and position is the stiff working time and also the core time. For instance an employee of a switchboard has a daily working time from Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 16:30 hours and a break from 12:30 to 13:00 hours. During this time the employees is on duty in the switchboard. She cannot change her working time self-determined or choose any different break time.

An unevenly spread and position of working time is possible with flexible working time or „functioning time“. An example: an HR-employee can disperse his time to appearance of work. If the calculation of salaries comes up at the end of the month there will be more work and he will need more working time to cope with that. This extra-work can be equalized if there is less work. So this person can decide, depending on the actual work, how he likes to disperse his working time.

More flexible working time models:

Gliding time

Gliding time is a very common kind of flexible working time. It's made up of a fixed working time zone. During this core time the employees have the duty to be at work. This fixed time is supplemented with the additional option of starting a few hours earlier

and also to finish a bit later than the fixed time.

Functioning time

To enhance the flexibility of gliding time you delete the fixed working time zone. Instead of this each department defines its own functioning time. During this functioning time the employees have the option to decide when they like to start and finish work. They have to think of the work that needs to be done and to coordinate with the colleagues. The work is goal-orientated and not present-orientated. Important is that the goal, for example to produce a paper for a presentation, is done in time.

Annual working time

Based on the analysis of working hours during a whole year the contracted working time needs to be reached approximately. The wage is regularly paid monthly although the employee might have worked one month more or less than the contracted monthly working time.

Trusted-based working time

The employees are their own managers of the contracted working time and correct differences (more or less working hours) by themselves. A main basis is the goal-orientated working time. This will strengthen the culture of trust within a company and a structural and structured way

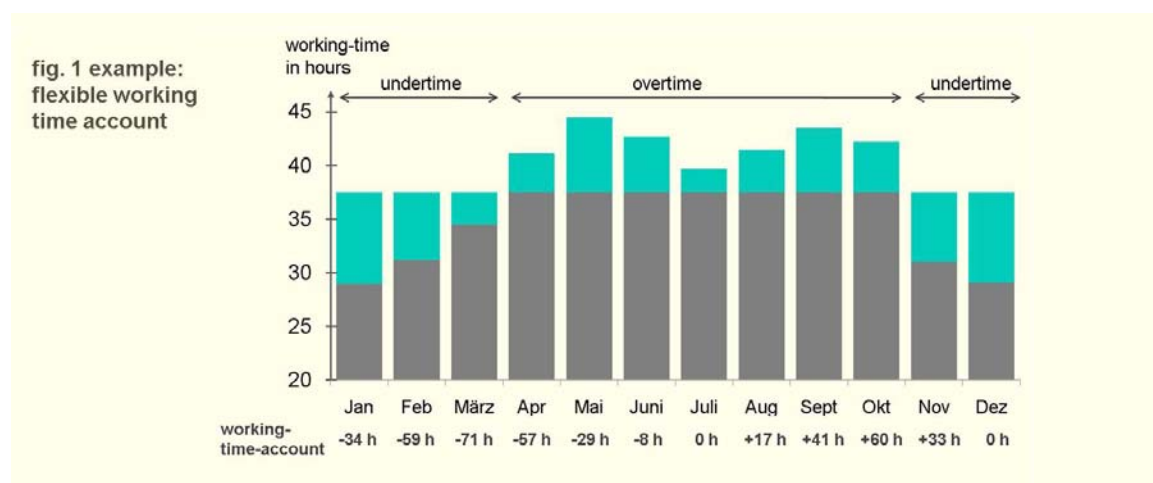
thinking of the employees. Also for this working time model the local (or the European) law of working time is in charge. In Germany (§ 16 Abs. 2 “Arbeitszeitgesetz”) it is necessary to note every hour beyond the 8 hours normal working time (§ 3 Abs. 1 “Arbeitszeitgesetz”).

Home-Office

The main characteristic of home-office-work is the „decoupling” of the working place from the company building. This areal distance can be complete or alternate – meaning the employees spend some working time in their home-office and also have presence days at the company. Very important precondition of working at home is a well equipped office. This includes the right IT-hardware and software and also a guaranteed uninterrupted working atmosphere at home.

Staggered working hours

To expand the production or opening time of a company, shift work is not the only way. Up to a 2-shift-system level, staggered working hours can be installed without a big costs and organisational efforts. Different working time blocks are offered with a fixed start and clock-out. These blocks cover the whole daily opening or production time. The employees can decide in which of these different blocks they like to work in the following weeks or months.



Working-time-accounts: instruments of modern working time designs

All of the models shown above are oftentimes combined with a working-time-account. A working time account is an easy recording instrument of working time and shows an all-time overview. The balance can be equalised, negative or positive (fig. 1).

Certain rules should be followed to avoid problems with the account-keeping, e. g. the “traffic-light-account” (fig. 2). Depending on the amount of positive or negative hours on the account special procedure will take place. There will be a limit of

positive and negative hours. This limit depends on each company and its requirement. Companies with a high fluctuation of demand will have a big time-account to compensate the fluctuation.

At “phase green” a limit of x positive and negative hours are defined – up to this limit the employees will organise the equalisation of the account by themselves. At the shown example above the equalisation needs to be done once a year.

Models with a long-term-equalisation-point are called long-term-working-time-accounts. The idea of these long-term-accounts is to get high deposits by collecting

fig. 2
example:
traffic-light account



phase red: range +/- 51 to +/- 75 hours

employees and executives analyse reasons leading to the high working-time-account and agree on individual solutions to equalize it

phase yellow: range +/- 26 to +/- 50 hours

employees arrange measures within the team accompanied by their direct manager to equalize the working-time-account

phase green: range 0 to +/- 25 hours

employees will organise the equalisation of the account by themselves. Transfers are done in accordance with colleagues and operational needs.

extra-working-time. These can be used later on for longer timeouts e. g. as a sabbatical or study time. Some companies offer their employees life-time-working-accounts. Here it is possible to collect hours during the

whole working-life in the company so they can, if they want, retire earlier. At least in Germany all long-time-accounts need a special insurance against insolvency.

Legal issues of the working time organisation in Germany

The Working Time Act (ArbZG) 31st October 2006 – important regulations:

§ 1 aim of the working time act

The aim of the working time act is to improve the basic parameters of flexible working time and in the same time to guarantee the health protection of the employees as well as to protect the Sunday and work holiday rest.

§ 2 working time – definition

Working time in general is defined as the time from the beginning until the end of the work without breaks.

§ 3 working time of employees

The working time of work days is not allowed to be more than eight hours. But it can be extended up to ten hours, if during six month or 24 calendar weeks the average of eight hours a day or 48 hours a week will be reached. That means if the compensation is guaranteed a weekly working time maximum of 60 hours is legal.

§ 4 breaks

Persons who work more than six hours without destructions have to pause for 30 minutes. With a daily

working time of more than nine hours a day, a break of 45 minutes is necessary. Breaks can be taken in blocks of a minimum of 15 minutes.

§ 5 rest period

After finishing work a rest period of eleven hours needs to be stuck to before work can be resumed.

§ 6 night- und shift work

The organisation of night- and shift work needs to be committed to the firmed knowledge of man power ergonomics. For example to have night shifts as short as possible or to provide a sufficient rest period in between two shifts.

§ 9 Sunday and bank holiday rest

On principle work on Sundays and at bank holidays is illegal for employees. Exceptions can be made under certain circumstances (§§ 3, 9, 10, 13 ArbZG).

§16 (2) time sheet

The employer is in debt to register the working time of the employees that exceed the normal daily working time (§ 3 ArbZG). The method of registration is optional. These registrations need to be stored at least for two years.

Night and shift work

Economic and technological reasons as well as public utility infrastructure necessitate night and shift work. In Germany the way of designing shift work is marked out in the Working Time Act (Arbeitszeitgesetz § 6). The night and shift work needs to be designed with the results of the manpower studies regarding the human way of working. (see next chapter)

A work system is called shift work, if several employees do the same work in regulated chronology and displace each other in a fixed schedule. The different models of shift work differ from the amount of shifts and the position of working time. The main models in Europe are rotating shift systems. That can be a 2-shift-system (early shift/ late shift) or a 3-shift-system (early shift/ late shift/ night shift).

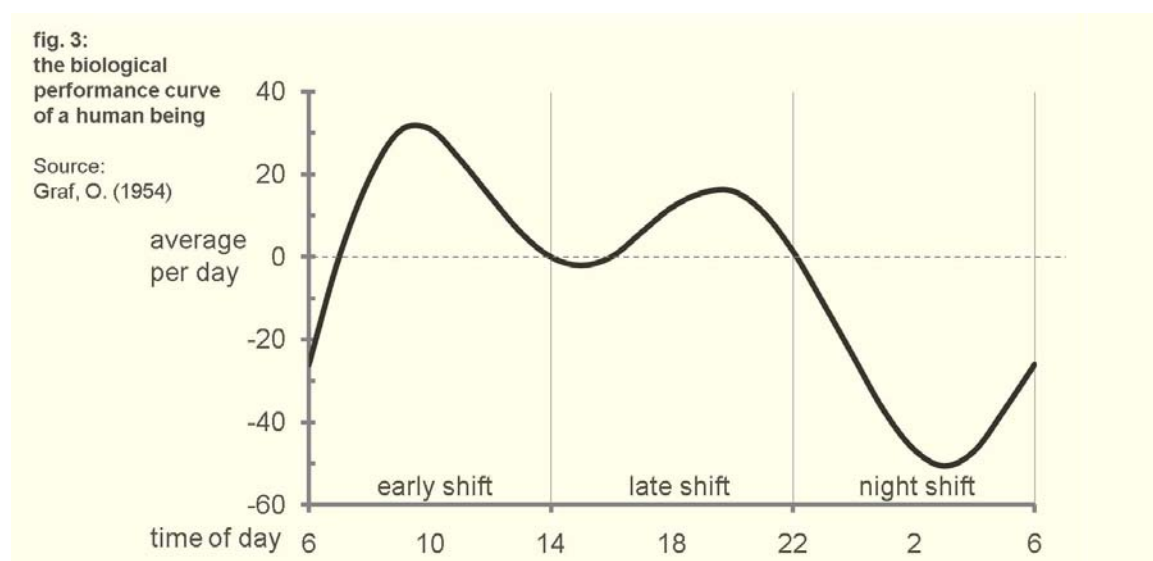
Shift schedules or rosters mostly have fixed starting and finishing times. Short overlapping times are

possible. The staffing is planned in advance and orientated on the operationally needs. The contracted working hours of the employees and the shift system determine how many shift groups are needed to cover the weekly operation time. In opposite to the discontinuous shift work, continuous shift work is necessary if a company needs to use the fully available weekly operation time (168 hours) – that means including the weekends (fully continuous).

To reach the approximate contracted weekly working time the working hours are registered by a time account.

The biological performance curve of a human being

The human being is a diurnal creature, that is to say the human body has a programming to be active at day and relax at night (fig. 3).



The circadian clock synchronises the biological performance in an approximate 24-hour-day by light and darkness (“zeitgeber”). In the daytime the individual is able to perform. In between 9 and 10 o’clock the performance is at its peak, at about 2 pm there is a short drop of performance. In the afternoon the performance is rising again before the body is starting to prepare the relaxing time from 8 pm on. The worst performance time is at 3 am. At night the very important body functions like body temperature, heartfrequency, breathing or digestion are reduced to a minimum. Employees who work at night work and sleep against their biological rhythm.

The duration and quality of the sleep during the day is much less restorative compared to night sleep.

Duration

During the day the night-shift-workers sleep less – usually less than six hours. That’s why every night-shift produces a lack of sleep. The more night-shifts in a row the bigger the lack of sleep which can cause chronicle sleep disorder. A

constant fatigue is very often the result, which holds dangerous risks. The employees can’t concentrate well during work, and when they drive home in a car the risk of micro sleep is increasing. Most accidents happen in between 2 am and 3 am and very often the reason is fatigue, caused by work.

Quality

During day sleep the quality of the sleep is reduced; especially during the deep sleep phases. So the important deep sleep necessary for the recuperation of the human being is missing. This extra burden of night work, especially after several night shifts in a row, can damage the health of the employees. Many shift workers report on sleep disorder, gastric disease and nerviness.

Night and shift work is indispensable in the modern society. But it should be designed in a way that on the one hand the health of the employees is protected and the disadvantages in their social life are reduced and on the other hand the required production time can be realised.

Successful procedure to launch a new working time model

As different as the interests of the employees are and as different the business of companies - as different is the implementation process of a new working time model. It is helpful to involve an external consultant to arbitrate between the two parties and as well to contribute his or her expert knowledge. To include as many needs and ideas as possible a methodical procedure has been proofed to be helpful.

Employees, executives and the work council should be involved right from the beginning. This cooperation will not only lead to a constructive solution, but also support the acceptance of the new working time agreement.

The central theme of the implementation process will be illustrated by the systematic procedure of the launch pyramid (fig. 4). The basic function of the pyramid is to agree on each step and define the aims of the process within the

task group. The precise number of necessary steps will be depending on each company and their situation.

1. Discussion with the management

In most cases the process starts with a discussion in between the management, HR-officer, work council and a consultant. The first steps and aims will be defined, the current situation will be described and the options of the approach of the process will be discussed. A task group will be build. This task group will be the significantly involved in the development of the new working time model. The consultant (working time expert) will be the moderator of the task group.

2. First meeting of the task group

At this meeting a clear analysis of the current situation and the new aims needs to be done. The new working



time model and the new operation time will be worked out or at least planned. The very first steps of the implementation need to be defined precisely and to be agreed to by each member of the task group. If the company is big enough, it is sensible to choose a „test department“ to develop a new working time model. Also it should be agreed on the degree of employee involvement. Possibly an attitude survey makes sense to find out about the employees' wishes and concerns and to get better data for the analytic process.

3. Development of models

At this step of development mostly several meetings are necessary. In consideration of the legal conditions, the operative aims and the interests of the employees' new options of flexible working time agreements will be worked out.

4. Refinement of the models

Even though the task group has developed a suggestion for a new working time model, very often they have to deal with „bits and bobs“. At times there is an argument about the time record system or about the handle of working time accounts. There could be agreements about how to guarantee the time autonomy of the employees without missing out the operational aims. Rules about the handling of the time accounts and

about when an employee is entitled (or not) to command the account are very helpful. During this development process management- and employee-workshops are advisable to enable everybody to deal with the new working time model.

5. Employee meeting

The new working time model, developed by the task group, will be presented to and discussed by all affected employees. In this occasion, questions can be answered; suggestions and representations can be received. The aim is to establish acceptance for the new model and to win the employees over to achieve a fair compromise.

6. Test stage

It has shown that the test stage is one of the most important steps within the implementation process. The willingness for trying something new is much higher, if things are not ultimate and when there is still an option of change and adaption. The test stage is very helpful for the employees, the work council and the management to sample the new models in practical application – and if necessary to improve them continuously. For this purpose, a good internal communication is essential. The test stage should last about six to twelve months.

Zeitbüro FOM

The „Zeitbüro FOM“ is a transfer project of the FOM University of Applied Sciences. Founded in 2002 by the Ministry of Labour of North Rhine-Westphalia, it was originally funded by the Ministry and the European Union. Since 2011 it has been mainly funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the German Government within their campaign „INQA“. From 2013 on it will be a part of the iap – Institut für Arbeit & Personal (Institute of Labour & Human Resources). The Zeitbüro FOM has the function to support the development of modern work time arrangements and to cover the demand of information about this theme in Germany. It especially focuses on the health of the employees.

The Zeitbüro FOM is the contact for all questions regarding modern working time. It is the partner for companies, work councils and employees, if they need information or help with the organisation their working time.

Business activities of the Zeitbüro FOM:

- Information and exchange forum
- Lectures
- Workshops „Know-how-Transfer“ with specific issues
- Cooperation with other organisations regarding workshops
- Company workshops
- Coaching and training
- Expert hints for working time questions
- Newsletter: „tempora-Online“ – Journal for modern working time with results of up-to-date surveys, organisation hints and bibliography.

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Addresses, Links, Literature

For everybody interested in knowing more about "modern working hours", we have compiled addresses, websites and literature.

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Institut für angewandte Arbeitswissenschaft e.V. (Metall- und Elektroindustrie), Marienburger Str. 7, 50968 Köln, www.arbeitswissenschaft.net

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Universität Duisburg Essen, Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation (IAQ), Abteilung Arbeitszeit und Arbeitsorganisation, Gebäude LE, 47048 Duisburg, www.iaq.uni-due.de/abteilung/azao.php

Links

www.arbeitsschutz.nrw.de, Arbeitsschutzportal NRW

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Das iap – Institut für Arbeit und Personal bündelt unter der wissenschaftlichen Leitung von Prof. Dr. Ulrike Hellert die Forschungs- und Transferaktivitäten der FOM im Bereich der Arbeitszeitforschung, des demografieorientierten Personalmanagements sowie der Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie.

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