

Employees

24/7 is NOT equal to working 24 hours a day 7 days a week. A '24/7' or 'round-the-clock' economy does NOT and will NEVER mean employees having to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Instead, it means that it is the country's economic activities which are ongoing and operational on a 24-hour basis. As an employee, you will definitely maintain your standard 35-hour or 40-hour working week. How can the economy remain operational 24 hours if the employees are not required to work more? A 24/7 economy is intrinsically linked with the adoption of what is known as Alternative Work Practices. As employees, you will not work more, but differently! Indeed, the days where employees needed to be at work from 9am-to-4pm under the watchful eyes of their managers are truly over. The widespread usage of state-of-the-art and innovative information technology (IT) and communication devices (e.g. information systems, emails, mobile phones, PDAs etc.) has made the traditional concept of the "stationary office workplace" obsolete for many jobs across various industries. With a 24/7 work culture, employees will increasingly be given the flexibility to work away from the office. Some of you will telecommute, meet clients and close sales on the go, while others can work from home or on flexible schedules. As an employee and an individual with your very own personal commitments, you will be able to better manage your time between work and family/social obligations. For example, with flexible schedules and flexi time, you may run your own errands in-between working hours, and as young parents, you can work from home while still taking care of your children. Various Alternative Work Practices exist…

- Shift work: an arrangement whereby the 24-hour working day is divided into a number of shifts and a separate group of employees works for each period of 7 or 8 hours. This employment practice is quite common in textile factories, hospitals, hotels etc. and has been designed to make use of the 24 hours of the clock.

- Flexi time and Flexible Schedule: work practices that allow employees to vary their working hours according to their needs as long as they perform their standard 35-hour or 40-hour work week.

- Job sharing: a flexible work arrangement where responsibilities and benefits of one full time position are shared between two employees.

- Compressed work weeks: a work practice where employees are offered a day off in exchange of longer periods of work, i.e. working four 10-hour days instead of five days a week.

- Reduced Hours/Part time: working hours which are less than the weekly standard 35 or 40 hours of work. It is usually adopted by people with health problems or disabilities, or who wish to devote their time to the family and/or other occupations.

- Banking of Hours & Annualised hours: these practices are closely linked to flexible work schedules. If the workload is high, and employees need to work additional hours, these hours can be stored in a "bank" until it is convenient to take time off. Annualised hours involve rearranging the hours staff work during the year to meet fluctuating and seasonal workloads.

- Gradual/Phased Retirement: this practice allows employees to reduce their workload or their working hours over a period of time instead of retiring abruptly.

- Flexible Leave Options and Sabbaticals: paid or unpaid authorised periods of time away from work without loss of employment rights granted for family, health care, education or leisure reasons. Sabbatical leave can also be self-funded by the employee, that is, a portion of the salary is withheld.

- Telecommuting, Teleworking/remote working and Virtual Office: work practices allowing employees to work away from the employer's premises, such as at home, from a cafe while remaining in touch with the employer through the use of remote access technology.

Benefits Adopting the 24/7 work culture and the above-mentioned alternative work practices can lead to a wide range of advantages including:

- Greater flexibility, convenience and ability to synchronise and balance your work and family life

- Increased personal empowerment, morale and autonomy at work

- Possible additional income due to the ability to take up a second part-time job

- Reduced stress to reach the work place at 9 am

- Improved productivity

- More choices and employment opportunities (for instance, disabled people can take up jobs as per their convenience)

- It encourages work together with studies which is in line with lifelong learning

- Increased leisure, entertainment and late night shopping facilities available after office hours

- Access to goods and services on a 24-hour basis including public transport

- Appropriate legal framework and an enabling work environment for employees working in a 24/7 work environment

Ensuring that as employees, you are well protected by laws and have the most appropriate working conditions are core objectives of this sensitisation campaign. Home working in the Public Service of Mauritius The government of Mauritius is already encouraging people to work from home, in line with the Pay Research Bureau Report, 2008. The concept of home-based working has already been introduced and can have a positive impact on productivity as it involves a shift from a "controlling" to a "facilitating" management style and more employee self-management. Chief Executives of Ministries/Departments/Organisations are being empowered, for assignments that are project-based with verifiable performance indicators, to allow categories of officers to work from home on certain assignments where demand exists and resource permit.