

DON'T BE IN THE DARK THIS WINTER, COMMUTE SMART – GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES

The challenge

Commuting for long periods of time has become a part of the UK's working culture. British workers spend the most time travelling in Europe, as much as 47 working days per year (Samsung research 2004). In the case of London and the South East commuters travel on average 8 hours per week or an extra working day!

The excessive time spent commuting is one of the main factors involved in the work-life balance issue. Reducing commuting time will allow more time for people to spend with their family, caring for others as well as just enjoying life.

Not only is the amount of time commuting an issue. The 9 to 5 culture with its peak travel times generates congestion on the rail, underground and road networks and, as a consequence increases stress for commuters.

Smarter Working for Smarter Commuting

One solution is to reduce the amount of time commuting through smarter working practices such as allowing flexible working hours, including staggered working, and home working.

Against this background, Work Wise UK has set up a practical guide for employees on how to encourage your employer to introduce smarter working for smarter commuting.

Flexible Working Hours

Flexible working hours is an effective route to smarter commuting, allowing journeys either to be made outside peak periods or reducing the number of journeys all together. There are several ways your employer can carry this out which are simple to implement, while maintaining the required work levels. These will need to be discussed and agreed with your employer.

- Flexitime - Flexibility can be introduced on how you work your hours, whether the required time is measured weekly or monthly.
- Flexihours - By leaving early or later in the day, you can stagger your journey outside peak periods, avoiding the stress of congestion, as well as shortening your journey time if driving.
- Condensed Working – The number of journeys can be reduced by working condensed hours; for example where you work your allocated hours in just four days, taking the fifth day off and avoiding one day per week commuting. Alternatively, you could take a half hour lunch break each day and then be allowed to leave at 3.00pm on Friday, before peak travel time.

Home Working

Technological advances, particularly broadband have allowed the option of home working. However, some employers are understandably reluctant to implement it fearing a reduction in productivity. This can be tackled by discussing with the employer the benefits of working from home in your particular role as well as how practically this can be carried out. For example, sometimes complex reports requiring long periods of concentration can be better achieved at home. To write the report may require special technical and security measures to access files from home.

Planning

Careful planning and agreement beforehand will ensure success of a smart working scheme for smart commuting. It is essential that your employer consults with you on smart working practices. Before they are proposed, smart commuting ideas are more likely to be accepted by your employer if practical consequences such as customer service are thought through and solutions suggested. For example, consider if a colleague can cover for you if you work condensed hours, but take Friday off.

Other important ways to promote flexible working in your workplace include:

- Talk to managers – find out if your job is open to flexible working practices.
- For home working decide how much work could be done at home and what you require in terms of technical support to do it
- How do your colleagues feel about it? – to help employers consult with your colleagues, who may be affected by the introduction of smart working, suggest to your employer to conduct a survey. This will help enlist support for smart working practices.

Smart working for smart commuting gives you a better quality of life, but by highlighting the benefits to your employer and assisting to resolve issues will help ensure it is put into action to everyone's advantage.

For further information

Contact Work Wise UK

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