



International
Labour
Organization



Guide to developing **BALANCED**

WORKING TIME

ARRANGEMENTS



Guide to developing balanced working time arrangements

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First published 2019

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Guide to developing balanced working time arrangements

International Labour Office—Geneva, ILO, 2019

ISBN 978-92-2-133239-8 (print)

ISBN 978-92-2-133240-4 (web pdf)

ISBN 978-92-2-133241-1 (epub)

ISBN 978-92-2-133242-8 (mobi)

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This publication was produced by the Document and Publications Production,
Printing and Distribution Branch (PRODOC) of the ILO.

*Graphic and typographic design, layout and composition,
printing, electronic publishing and distribution.*

PRODOC endeavours to use paper sourced from forests managed
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Code: CMD-JMB-REP

Acknowledgments

The *Guide to developing balanced working time arrangements* is the culmination of nearly two decades of ILO research and technical assistance regarding how to develop and implement working time arrangements in a manner that is beneficial to both workers and employers. It was developed primarily by Jon Messenger, the team leader of the Working Conditions Group and the ILO's technical expert on working time, with substantial technical support from Paul Wallot, technical officer. Shervin Tadi, an external communications expert, provided invaluable assistance with restructuring the presentation of the Guide to make it more visually appealing and more user-friendly for a business audience. Section 3 was prepared by the ILO on the basis of previous ILO publications, including those prepared by Akima Hamandia-GüldenberG. Last, but certainly not least, Anne Drougard provided essential administrative support with editing, formatting, and quality control in the preparation and production of the final version of the Guide. The authors would also like to acknowledge the continuous support and guidance of Philippe Marcadent, Chief of the Inclusive Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch, in the development of this Guide.

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1

Introduction

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has developed a concept of “decent work” that involves promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, in order to decrease the differences which exist between people’s aspirations regarding their work and current work situations. An important step in the ILO’s quest for decent work is the enhancement of working time.

Working time was the subject of the very first international labour standard, the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1), and continues to be central to the work of the ILO. Over the years, the ILO has adopted international standards on a variety of working time-related subjects, including standards on working time limits, daily and weekly rest periods, paid annual leave, protections for night workers, and the principle of equal treatment for part-time workers.

The regulation of working time is one of the oldest concerns of labour legislation. Already in the 19th century it was recognized that working excessive hours posed a danger to workers’ health and to their families.

New economic trends during recent decades have resulted in working hours that are increasingly diverse, decentralized and individualized. They have also led to greater tensions between workers’ needs and preferences and enterprises’ business requirements. These developments include an increased use of results-based employment relationships, the division of working time into smaller segments, and the expansion of operating and shop opening hours towards a “24-7” economy. Working time is also a key issue in global supply chains. Competitive pressures and purchasing practices often lead to excessive working hours with extensive overtime.¹

The very first ILO Convention, adopted in 1919, limited hours of work and provided for adequate rest periods for workers. Today, ILO standards on working time provide the framework for regulated hours of work, daily and weekly rest periods, and annual holidays.

These new realities have raised concerns regarding time-related social inequalities, particularly in relation to gender, workers’ ability to balance their paid work with their personal lives

and family responsibilities, and the relationship between working hours, rest periods, and social times. In order to improve working conditions around the globe, working time issues need to be tackled on multiple levels in order to close the “gaps” between workers’ actual and preferred hours of work, as well as to advance the sustainability of enterprises. These situations include workers who: work “excessively” long hours on a regular basis, work part-time and would prefer to work more hours to raise their earnings, or workers more concerned with the arrangement of working hours than the number of hours worked (those working at night, on weekends, and on irregular, unpredictable, or rotating work schedules).

Balanced working time arrangements (WTAs) can benefit firms in many ways including:

- increased productivity;
- reduced rates of absenteeism and staff turnover;
- improved employee attitudes and morale; and
- more sustainable enterprises.

This Guide is designed to provide workers, employers, and governments with practical information that can be used to develop “balanced” WTAs that are mutually beneficial for workers and enterprises. It aims to explain the concept of WTAs, its most commonly used forms, and includes a practical step-by-step guidance on when and how they can be implemented.

How to use this Guide

The *Guide to developing balanced working time arrangements* is intended to serve as a tool for any enterprise, in particular, medium to large-sized enterprises to use when considering a new, or a change to, existing WTAs.

Section 2 of this Guide outlines guiding principles for developing balanced WTAs and examines five key dimensions needed to incorporate decent working time within an enterprise. Section 3 provides a practical approach for implementing decent working time and reviews modern WTAs. Finally, section 4 of the Guide offers concrete, practical suggestions on how to structure and implement various types of WTAs (work schedules) in line with the principles of “decent working time”.

It is important to note that the variety of work schedules that exist can be beneficial to both workers and employers. The right WTA for an enterprise and its workers will depend on each enterprise's circumstances and can vary greatly among firms. A comprehensive review of the enterprise's and worker's needs is of utmost importance when introducing a new one or changing an existing WTA.

2

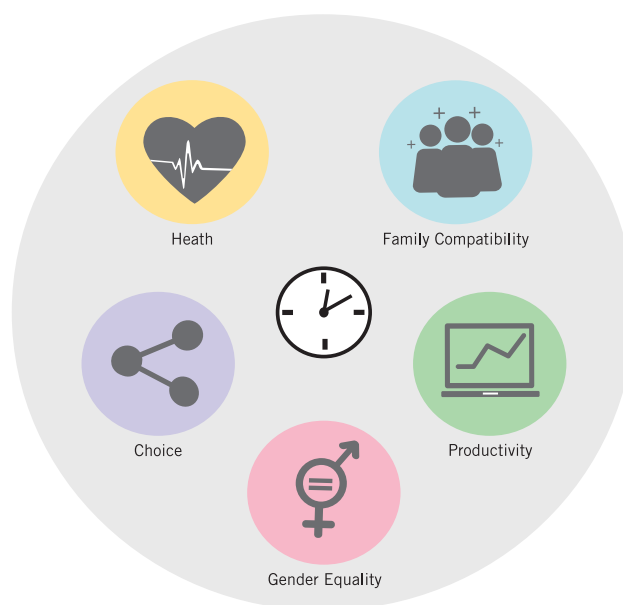
Guiding principles for developing “balanced” WTAs: The five dimensions of decent working time

Based upon both international labour standards related to working time (e.g., hours of work, weekly rest, paid annual leave, night work, part-time work, workers with family responsibilities) and recent research findings on working time and its effects, the ILO has identified five significant dimensions of decent work in the area of working time, or “decent working time”.

The five dimensions focus on:

- promoting health and safety;
- advancing the productivity and sustainability of enterprises;
- being “family-friendly” and improving work-life balance;
- promoting gender equality; and
- offering workers a degree of choice and influence over their hours of work.

Figure 1: The five dimensions of decent working time



These five dimensions of “decent working time” provide a basis for developing WTAs (also referred to as work schedules) that can balance workers’ needs with the enterprise’s requirements.



2.1 Healthy working time

Regular long working hours and non-standard working hours such as night work are often neither preferred by workers nor healthy for them and pose risks to workplace safety.² The effects of long and/or non-standard working hours are not limited to individual workers, but also affect their families and society at large.³ Regular long working hours also cost enterprises a substantial amount of money – for example, due to higher rates of accidents in the workplace.⁴

The protection of workers’ health through limitations on working hours underlies the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1), and the Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1930 (No. 30), both of which stress the limits to normal hours (with certain exceptions). The main principle underlying this dimension of “decent working time” is that unhealthy working hours should not be a means of improving an enterprise’s profitability. This is also a principle that underlies the European Union’s (EU’s) Directive on Working Time.

An increasing body of evidence highlights the adverse effects of regular long working hours on human health and workplace safety. The research indicates that regular long working hours produce both short-term and long-term negative effects. Acute reactions involve physiological responses such as increased levels of stress, fatigue and sleeping disorders, as well as unhealthy lifestyle habits such as smoking, alcohol abuse, irregular diet, and lack of exercise. Long-term effects include an increased incidence of cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal and reproductive disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, chronic infections, and mental illnesses.^{5,6,7} In addition to these health implications, it is clear that work schedules which regularly involve extended hours decrease workplace safety, as the risk of

Benefits of healthy WTAs for workers and enterprises

- Reduced stress levels
- Better sleep and lifestyle habits
- Decrease risk of cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal and reproductive disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, chronic infections and mental illness
- Fewer workplace accidents and injuries
- Increased productivity
- Higher job satisfaction and motivation
- Lower rates of absenteeism and staff turnover

occupational accidents and injuries rises with increasing length of the work schedule – a situation which is costly to enterprises and can be easily avoided.⁸

Regular long working hours (i.e. regularly working more than 48 hours per week) adversely affect the health of the workforce, the safety of the workplace and the productivity of individual workers, as well as the performance of the enterprise as a whole.⁹ Workers working excessively long hours on a regular basis have shown reduced hourly productivity due to greater fatigue, and those with long hours and/or heavy workloads report decreasing job satisfaction and motivation and higher rates of absenteeism and staff turnover. These factors eventually result in additional recruitment and training costs for employers.

Working time should be structured in ways that promote health and safety. Policies needed include: limits on daily and weekly hours of work in line with ILO Convention Nos 1 and 30; minimum rest periods in line with ILO Weekly Rest Convention Nos 14 and 106; protections for night workers in line with ILO Night Work Conventions (most recently No. 171); and also adequate wages, especially a wage that is sufficient to meet basic living expenses.



2.2 Productive working time

“Decent working time” is also productive working time. As more and more enterprises are recognizing that promoting a healthy work-life balance for their employees isn't just the “right thing” to do, it can also serve as an effective strategy for improving individual and organizational performance. There is longstanding evidence that links reductions in long working hours to increased productivity (output per hour worked). Such productivity gains result not only from physiological factors such as reduced fatigue but also from an improvement in employee attitudes and morale.¹⁰

Improving WTAs can have productivity-enhancing effects, which are similar to the effects of efficiency wages (wages that are higher than the market equilibrium). With such changes, workers have more time for rest and recovery from work; thus, their physical and mental health improves and they are more alert during working hours, thereby improving their productivity and overall performance. There is substantial empirical evidence that reductions in “excessively” long hours of work – typically linked with changes in work organization, methods of production and similar factors – have resulted in productivity gains over the years.¹¹ As long hours of work are linked to absenteeism, reducing long hours can also provide firms with the benefit of reduced absenteeism.^{12,13}

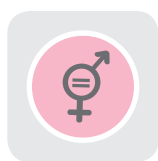


2.3 Family-friendly working time

The third dimension of “decent working time” is providing workers with the time and flexibility they need for their personal lives, including taking care of family responsibilities, in line with the principle established in the ILO's Workers with Family Responsibilities

Convention, 1981 (No. 156). In particular, working time measures need to be designed to facilitate work-life balance, in order to enable all workers – both women and men – to have sufficient time for their personal lives on a daily basis. By allowing individuals to flexibly adjust their work schedules to meet personal obligations, “family-friendly” working time will benefit workers and their families, as well as the society as a whole.

The number of hours a person works is one of the most important factors in determining whether their employment is compatible with their family responsibilities and personal lives. For example, recent research has concluded that two key working conditions that reduce the work-life compatibility of jobs are long weekly hours and “non-standard” working hours in the evenings, at nights and on weekends.¹⁴ Both “inflexible” working hours and limited childcare tend to reinforce the traditional “male breadwinner-female homemaker” division of labour within households and create difficulties in combining paid work and domestic duties. Furthermore, non-standard working hours in the evenings, at nights and on weekends, as well as unpredictable variations in working hours, increase the likelihood that women and men will report work-family conflicts.¹⁵ It is important for WTAs to allow for some adjustment of working hours according to workers’ individual needs, without negatively impacting firm performance – and perhaps even improving it.



2.4 Gender equality through working time

The fourth dimension of “decent working time” involves using working time as a tool for promoting gender equality. Equal opportunity and treatment between women and men in the world of work is a principle established in several international labour standards, most notably the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). Both ILO conventions set the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation, including on the basis of sex, as a fundamental principle – one that remains at the core of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda today. The overall objective of advancing gender equality needs to be applied in the area of working time and integrated into the full range of working time policies and practices, in order to ensure that policies and practices designed to advance other objectives do not inadvertently have a negative impact on gender equality.

Despite the growing presence of women in the workforce, gender segregation in the labour market as well as a gendered division of labour in society is a persistent feature of nearly all countries.^{16,17} In industrialized as well as in developing countries women still do most of the domestic and care work, while few men significantly reduce their paid working hours to take on these responsibilities.¹⁸ This situation often presses women into WTAs/work schedules, such as part-time work or even weekend and evening schedules, which fit with their domestic commitments.

Particular working time factors, such as long hours or unpredictable schedules, are likely to further fuel gender segregation in employment by creating barriers to labour market entry

and career advancement for those with care responsibilities.¹⁹ To promote gender equality, working time policies must therefore do their part to enable women to be on an equal footing with men in employment (e.g., position levels, career advancement, etc.), and allow both partners to combine paid work, family responsibilities, and lifelong learning.²⁰



2.5 Choice and influence regarding working time

The fifth and final dimension of “decent working time” is to offer workers’ a degree of choice or influence regarding their working hours by considering their needs and preferences. Increasing work demands during all hours of day and night, and all days of the week, are an emerging reality of the move towards a “24/7” economy. Such requirements for extensive availability (e.g., seven days a week), highly variable or “on call” work schedules, and availability at very short notice are among the most unfavourable of modern working conditions because of the substantial disruptions they can create in individuals’ personal lives.^{21, 22} While these are perhaps extreme examples, they nonetheless serve to highlight the importance of workers’ having the ability to choose—or at least to influence—their working hours, in order to achieve “decent working time”.

Expanding workers’ choice and/or influence regarding their working time means expanding the range of opportunities for workers to structure their work and personal activities. This objective can be advanced in two ways:

1. The number of working time options available to employees can be increased, such that workers can choose from a “menu” of alternatives.
2. Workers can be permitted to exercise direct influence over the length and arrangement of their working hours.

Better WTAs can have motivational effects by obtaining the willingness of workers to use their energy in more efficient ways. These effects, however, can only occur if there is a positive relationship between managers and workers, which increases synergies between better WTAs and higher labour productivity.

Flexible WTAs such as “flexi-time” and compressed work weeks can have positive effects on employee attitudes and morale if certain parameters are considered (see sections 3.5 and 3.7 of this Guide for more details).²³ These improvements in employee attitudes can translate into a better “bottom line” for enterprises. For example, a review of the literature on the effects of flexible WTAs found benefits to firms due to decreased tardiness and absenteeism, as well as improved recruitment and retention of employees.²⁴

Furthermore, some studies indicate that the most important factor is not the WTA itself, but the workers’ ability to choose their arrangement, that shows the strongest impact on employees’ job performance, and ultimately on firms’ performance as well.²⁵ In this connection, the value of social dialogue and collective bargaining cannot be overstated to provide a collective framework within which individual workers’ preferences can be aligned with the firm’s interests.

Creating a “win-win” situation

If properly structured, “flexible” WTAs can be advantageous for both workers and employers. Workers often appreciate having some degree of flexibility in their daily and weekly working hours and consider it as an important means to improve their work-life balance and overall job satisfaction. For employers, more flexible work schedules can be a measure to cope with workload fluctuations, improve motivation and performance, reduce absenteeism and staff turnover as well as to minimize costs. As expectations on both sides do not always coincide, however, in practice such working time flexibility depends largely on the actual implementation of specific WTAs at the enterprise level.²⁶

It is important to emphasize that providing workers with greater choice and influence over their hours of work does not mean a complete individualization of decisions regarding working hours, or that such choice can be realized entirely at the individual level. A strong degree of collective support is essential in increasing workers’ “working time capability” – that is, the range of realistic working time options from which they can effectively choose.²⁷ Such social support can be provided by workers’ organizations and negotiated collective agreements and through methods including laws that strengthen trade unions, such as those on independence, recognition and the right to strike.

WTAs that take into account both workers’ and employers’ needs and preferences regarding working hours, as suggested in the ILO Reduction of Hours of Work Recommendation, 1962, (No. 116), can be adopted at the national, sectoral and enterprise levels. For example, national laws have been established in a number of European countries that allow collective agreements to implement or modify working time standards. Laws have also been enacted in a few countries, such as the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom, which provide individual workers with a “right to request” changes in their working hours. At the enterprise level, flexi-time schemes and time-saving accounts (“time banking”) that allow workers to build up time “credits” for later use are tools that have the potential to offer workers a substantial amount of choice and influence over their working hours.

Realizing these benefits requires firms to develop innovative WTAs that actively seek to combine business efficiency with increased worker influence over their working hours. Flexible WTAs that balance workers’ needs with business’ requirements have been particularly successful.²⁸ In order to achieve this balance, enterprises need to make a conscious attempt to align their business objectives and strategies with employees’ needs and preferences in ways that are mutually reinforcing.

Key Points

This section laid out the five dimensions of decent working time in order to provide the groundwork for balanced working time arrangements (for both the worker and enterprise).

Healthy working time: Enterprises should avoid unhealthy working times and regular long working hours to prevent negative short-and long-term health effects, increased safety risks, higher rates of absenteeism, and reduced productivity.

Productive working time: Decent working time arrangements, in particular reductions in long working hours, lead to increased productivity. By having more time for rest and recovery from work, employees are more alert, motivated and productive.

Family-friendly working time: Long weekly hours and “non-standard” working hours in the evenings, at nights and on weekends reduce work-life compatibility. Flexibility in working hours allows workers to attend to their personal lives. This can lead to better individual and organizational performance as well.

Gender equality through working time: Working time policies need to both promote gender equality in employment through gender-neutral measures, as well as ensure that policies advancing other dimensions of decent working time do not negatively impact gender equality.

Choice and influence regarding working time: Offering workers a degree of choice regarding their working hours creates a win-win situation for both workers and enterprises. Flexible working time arrangements such as “flexi-time” and compressed workweeks can have positive effects on employee attitudes and workplace morale.

3

How to structure different types of WTAs

As discussed in section 2, innovative WTAs that balance workers' needs with business' requirements do not happen by chance – a conscious effort to develop and implement such arrangements is needed. This section of the Guide provides practical suggestions on how to structure different types of WTAs (work schedules) in line with the principles of “decent working time”.

3.1 Overtime work

Overtime is a method for extending daily or weekly hours of work. It should be noted that overtime work is not in itself a WTA; it is merely an extension of working hours. In practice, there are different definitions of overtime. Nonetheless, the use of overtime work can impact nearly all types of WTAs discussed in this Guide.

First, whether or not work is considered “overtime” varies on the institutional setting. It can be based on:

- statutory daily and/or weekly working hours defined in national (or subnational) labour laws;
- contractual or collectively agreed working hours;
- the usual hours of work.

Second, in practice, overtime is not always linked with compensation, or at least not with additional compensation, which is why studies regarding overtime often distinguish between paid and unpaid overtime work.

Regulations on overtime work commonly set two thresholds. First is the maximum normal working time, often called “normal hours”, which is defined as the point above which working time is considered overtime. Second is the maximum total working time, including overtime. The limitations on working time and overtime can often be temporarily extended within the framework of various types of WTAs.

The ILO Hours of Work (Industry) Convention (No. 1), 1919 introduced a maximum normal working time of 48 hours per week and eight hours per day as the international norm. In exceptional cases, working time is allowed to exceed these limits, as long as daily and weekly maximums are respected.

Maximum weekly working hours around the world (including overtime)

- In Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the vast majority of countries have set the maximum weekly working hours to 48 hours per week.
- In the Americas and Caribbean and Africa, most countries which have stipulated maximum hours set their maximum weekly hours in the 49-59 hours range.
- In the Middle East and Asia and the Pacific, 60 hours or more is the legislative norm for overtime limits.²⁹

At a national level, overtime is regulated by a combination of legal restrictions and collective agreements. The scope of both modes of governance varies considerably across countries, and the procedures, which employers must adopt before making use of overtime work, also vary considerably among different countries.

Limiting the frequency of long working hours is essential if overtime work is to be properly “balanced” within any specific WTA. The frequency of long working hours is often regulated through legal instruments, but even where legal restrictions on overtime work do not exist, it is nonetheless crucial for enterprises to limit overtime work because of the negative effects on both workers’ well-being and enterprise performance. Long daily hours of work are associated with the acute effects of fatigue, which can increase safety risks. Long weekly hours are associated with acute and chronic fatigue plus health problems such as cardiovascular diseases and mental health problems (e.g., depression). Finally, from an enterprise perspective, shorter hours are often associated with higher hourly productivity and better performance.

In addition to limiting overtime work, there is also the issue of overtime payments. While this Guide is focused on WTAs, there are important overlaps between working time and wage issues – particularly since overtime work and the resulting payments are often a “substantial element” of total worker compensation and overtime premium rates can act as a disincentive for enterprises to resort to excessive overtime work. According to the ILO Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1), the rate of pay for overtime work should not be less than one-and-one-quarter times the regular rate. Overtime premiums of 50 per cent or more above the regular wage are standard in many countries and may rise progressively with the number of extra hours worked. In countries with no universal increase, the majority have sector/industry-based legislation that may increase overtime remuneration, e.g. India, whereas others have national collective bargaining which sets these levels, e.g. Denmark and Sweden.³⁰

Overtime hours are not always compensated with monetary payments. For example, in the EU, 35 per cent of establishments compensate overtime with payments, but 23 per cent provide compensatory time off and a further 37 per cent use both forms of compensation to some extent.³¹ In 4 per cent of EU establishments, overtime is not compensated at all.

This is particularly the case for establishments that have a high proportion of workers in “highly skilled positions”, due to the fact that unpaid overtime work is most common among managers and senior professionals, whose salaries often assume a certain amount of overtime work.



Practical tips for overtime work

“Balanced” overtime work should be:

- *Limited* on both a daily and weekly basis, and *not routine*;
- Properly compensated, whether it be in the form of monetary payments, compensatory time off, or some combination of these two forms of compensation, as appropriate; and
- Fairly distributed among a broad range of workers, in order to limit the negative effects of excessively long hours on any particular worker.

3.2 Shift work, including night work and weekend work



Shift work is “a method of organization of working time in which workers succeed one another at the workplace so that the establishment can operate longer than the hours of work of individual workers” at different daytime and night hours.³² Shift work allows companies to extend their operating hours beyond the working time of individual workers, as well as to better accommodate peak periods of demand (e.g., the “stacking” of multiple part-time work shifts in the retail trade).

Shift systems can take a nearly infinite variety of forms, but fall into two basic categories: (1) fixed shift systems, in which a particular group of workers always works the same shift, and (2) rotating shift systems, in which workers are assigned to work shifts that vary regularly over time – “rotating” around the clock (e.g., from morning shift to afternoon/evening shift to night shift).

The most common shift systems are the two-shift fixed system (morning/afternoon and afternoon/evening) and three-shift fixed system (morning, afternoon/evening, and night). If a firm is operating non-stop during the entire week, then shift operations are considered to be “continuous operations” – 24 hours of operations, seven days a week (i.e., 168 hours of firm operating time). These are often based on three-shift fixed or rotating systems of 8 hours per shift, but also in two-shift operations of 12 hours per shift, which are increasingly deployed in enterprises and other organizations, including health care institutions. By their nature, such continuous shift operations require night work and weekend work for some groups of workers. The specific incidence of shift work is closely linked to the sectoral composition of national economies and is prevalent in industries such as health and social work, hotels and restaurants, manufacturing, and transport, storage and communications.³³

Shift work systems are shaped by the overall legal and regulatory framework on working time in a country. For example, limitations on the length of daily and weekly working time; and regulations on overtime, night work and weekend. There is virtually an unlimited number of potential shift work systems and shift patterns, and thus it is impossible to describe how to structure all of them in this Guide. Nonetheless, there are some fundamental practices of proper shift work design that should be followed with any type of shift work system. These practices can be summarized as follows:

Figure 2. The DOs and DON'Ts for a balanced shift work system

 DOs	 DONT's
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a short cycle period with regular shift rotas (schedules)• Limit shift length to a maximum of 12 hours, including overtime• Limit consecutive working days to a maximum of 6 days; fewer days if shifts are long (>8 hours per shift)• When switching from daytime shift work to the night shift, ensure that workers can have at least two full nights of sleep.• Offer workers a choice among the available shifts based on their individual needs and preferences, and also provide them with some discretion regarding the timing of their rest breaks, if possible.• Build regular free weekends into the shift work schedule; individual workers should have some free weekends within a minimum of two full days off.• Assess the needs of individual workers, e.g. their health status, domestic situation (e.g. family responsibilities) and individual differences (e.g. “morningness” vs. “eveningness”), and attempt to adapt shift work assignments accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid short intervals between shifts (called “quick returns”); ensure a minimum rest period between shifts (i.e. 11 consecutive hours).• Very early start times (e.g. 6 a.m.) are not optimal, consider later (7-8 a.m.) starts.• Avoid early morning shift changeovers.• Minimize the use of night work to reduce the health and safety hazards associated with night working.• Individual workers should work as few nights in succession as possible.• Especially avoid permanent night shifts except for safety critical conditions, in which case complete circadian (body clock) adjustment is necessary.

Shift patterns involving night work and weekend work require workers to work outside of the boundaries of the standard workweek; in addition, night shifts have potentially serious negative implications for occupational safety and health (OSH) because they require workers to work in opposition to their biological clocks. According to the ILO Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171), which prescribes a range of protections for night workers, night work is defined as “all work which is performed during a period of not less than seven consecutive hours, including the interval from midnight to 5 a.m.” (art. 1a).

Weekend work is any work occurring on normal days of rest. In many Western countries, the weekend commonly refers to rest days as being Sunday and/or Saturday, and in most Arab countries, the traditional weekly rest day is Friday. As far as weekend work is allowed, it is generally compensated with extra or “premium” payments in addition to the normal wage. This is the case in many industrialized countries, where shop-opening hours and operating time of equipment have been extended into the weekend. ILO Weekly Rest Conventions No. 14 (1921) and No. 106 (1957) require that each worker have at least 24 hours of uninterrupted rest every seven days. Whenever possible, the rest day(s) should be simultaneous for all employees of an enterprise and correspond with the traditions and customs of the country.



Practical tips for night work and rotating shifts

Where **night work** is used:

- Provide proper facilities for night workers (e.g., canteens, medical first aid).
- Modify the working environment to simulate daytime and promote alertness (e.g., proper lighting, appropriate temperature).
- Ensure that adequate and safe transportation to and from work is available.
- Provide night workers with regular health check-ups (assessments); switch them to day work if any health problems begin to develop from night work.
- Refrain from applying night work for pregnant and nursing women.

Where **rotating shifts** are used:

- Rotate shifts forward (clockwise), not backward (counter-clockwise).
- Favour quick shift rotation.
- Avoid irregular shift schedules (maximize the regularity of schedules).
- Provide minimum notice periods, frequent rest breaks and rest periods of at least 11 hours in-between shifts.

3.3 Part-time work arrangements, including job sharing

The ILO Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175), defines a part-time worker as an “employed person whose normal hours of work are less than those of comparable full-time workers”. This is a common legal definition of part-time work and is reflected, for example, in the EU’s Part-Time Work Directive. For statistical purposes, part-time work is commonly defined as a specified number of hours. The threshold that determines whether a workers is full-time or part-time varies by country, but is usually either 30 or 35 hours a week.

The ILO Part-Time Work Convention promotes access to productive and freely chosen part-time work and also promotes the *principle* of equal treatment of part-time workers with comparable full-time workers, particularly regarding:

- the right to organize, to bargain collectively and to act as a workers’ representative;
- occupational safety and health;
- discrimination in employment and occupation;
- hourly basic wage rates; statutory social security schemes; and
- maternity protection, termination of employment, paid annual leave and paid public holidays, and sick leave.

In 1997, the EU adopted the Part-Time Work Directive, which has similar content to the ILO Convention and also embodies the principle of equal treatment for part-time workers. In addition, the EU’s Part-Time Work Directive specifies that employers should consider workers’ requests to shift between full-time and part-time work.

The forms that part-time work takes vary to a great extent, not only in regard to the number of hours worked but also their distribution across the working day, week, month and year. Part-time work can be organized in a variety of different ways, but the most common “model” is one that establishes some fixed hours of work for each working day. In the EU, for example, 78 per cent of all establishments organize part-time work in this manner.³⁴

Other methods of organizing part-time work also exist. These methods include fixed working days with full-time hours on some days and entire days off; variable working hours on demand (“on call work”), with working hours fixed with limited advance notice based on establishments’ needs; and other forms adapted to specific situations. In addition, there are some special forms of part-time work, which include the following:

- Job sharing* – one full-time job is split into two part-time jobs for different workers.
- Progressive retirement – reductions in working hours for older workers who are close to retirement age.
- Parental leave – specifically the ability to take parental leave on a part-time basis (reduced working hours for parents).

* Job sharing should not be confused with work sharing. Work sharing is described in section 3.8.

Given this situation, developing “balanced” part-time work arrangements means adopting policies and practices designed to promote good quality part-time employment that can benefit both workers and enterprises. The ILO working paper *In search of good quality part-time employment*³⁵ makes the following four key recommendations to advance this objective.

Figure 3. Key policy areas for promoting quality part-time work



a. Extend equal treatment

The first step to improve the quality of part-time work is to extend part-time workers equal treatment with full-time workers in comparable situations in both labour laws and collective agreements. This requires labour laws and collective agreements that provide effective protection for part-time workers in both the formal and informal economy. Efforts are needed to ensure that all workers have the right to organize, bargain collectively and act as a workers’ representative, as well as access to maternity protection and protections regarding occupational safety and health, discrimination in employment and occupation, and termination of employment. Equivalent treatment with comparable full-time positions through pro-rata arrangements for hourly pay, statutory social security schemes, paid annual leave and paid public holidays, and paid sick leave is also essential.

b. Modernize social protection

The second step to improve the quality of part-time work is to modernize social protection systems, including pensions, to extend coverage to part-time workers (in-

cluding eliminating or lowering thresholds on minimum hours, earnings or duration of employment) and to ensure a fair adjustment of contribution-based benefits for periods of part-time work. The latter includes allowing more flexibility with regard to the contributions required to qualify for benefits and interruptions in contribution periods. Enhanced portability of entitlements between different social security schemes and employment statuses as well as simplifying administrative procedures for registration and contribution payments are also important measures.³⁶

c. Right to request part-time schedules

A third type of reform to improve the quality of part-time work is to provide the opportunity to work part-time hours in a wider range of jobs by introducing the right to request a switch to part-time schedules. Some countries such as Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK have adopted a statutory “right to request” flexible working arrangements. It provides a legal right for employees to request changes in working hours, work schedules or a change of work location. Most legislation provides a legal process for employees to request such changes, but not an entitlement to flexible working arrangements. “Right to request” laws often include some common key elements, such as a qualification period of employment, an employer response period, grounds for refusal, an appeals mechanism, and employment protections.

d. Remove barriers for transitions

It is important to remove any barriers that limit transitions between part-time and full-time employment, including in the tax and benefit system and in the provision of child and elder care services, so that a wider set of working time options are open to part-time workers who have family responsibilities. Measures that ease the transition to full-time employment will enhance individual welfare and prevent part-time employment from becoming a trap over the long-run.

Finally, there are also a number of workplace-level barriers that need to be addressed as well. Tackling these barriers involves the difficult task of understanding and changing organizational cultures, which are still often based on the assumption that full-time workers are more productive and committed than part-time workers. Yet, this is simply not true as there are many benefits to part-time work for enterprises, including more flexible work planning, potential preferred tax treatment for the firm, a better balance between work and personal life and increased potential for job creation.

In addition to regular part-time employment, in recent years there has been a growing interest in and concern regarding WTAs involving very short part-time hours or no established minimum hours at all, such as “on-call” work and “zero hours” contracts. This “marginal”

part-time employment is characterized by very short hours of work (e.g., <15 hours or <20 hours a week depending on the definition). In addition, “marginal” part-time workers often have a high level of variability in their work schedules, which can make it extremely difficult to schedule personal affairs or to plan for the future. These WTAs are not balanced and need basic protections to improve them.

Thus, in addition to the above recommendations regarding how to structure part-time work, further suggestions regarding “marginal” part-time work include:



Practical tips for improving “marginal” part-time work

- The introduction of some basic norms regarding a guaranteed *minimum number* of working hours (similar in principle to current international standards and national laws regarding maximum hours), as well as stipulating appropriate penalties in the event of non-compliance.
- Regulation that mitigates the vulnerabilities of “marginal” part-time workers. This might include: premium hours pay (as in Australia) to compensate for their lack of employment-related benefits, a fixed minimum compensation rate for “on-call” times not worked, and/or favourable unemployment/social benefits.
- Allowances for paid annual leave on a pro-rata basis. This approach seems more feasible than making paid leave gradually available after a minimum period of employment, as in the latter case incentives to rotate employees are high.
- Promotion of workers’ awareness regarding their labour rights under these arrangements to prevent discrimination – particularly against women and youth, who are overrepresented in “marginal” part-time employment.
- Elimination of contractual provisions under which “marginal” part-time workers are required to work exclusively for one employer, combined with some minimum advance notice period regarding their work schedules.

3.4 Staggered hours

Under staggered hours arrangements, different starting and finishing times are established for different groups of workers in the same establishment; however, once these starting and finishing times have been chosen (or fixed by the employer), they remain unchanged.

Staggered hours are often used as a strategy for easing problems of traffic congestion and over-burdened public transport at certain peak hours, as well as assisting workers with family responsibilities (e.g., with school pick-up times). Instead of having all workers start and finish work at the same time, different enterprises (or even industries) can adopt different starting and finishing times. In this way, traffic can flow more smoothly, public transporta-

tion is less crowded, and the physical and psychological strain of commuting is lessened for everyone in the community.

Within the same enterprise, staggered hours arrangements involve establishing different starting and finishing times for different groups of workers. To some degree, this resembles shift work, except these “mini-shifts” overlap. Under most staggered hours arrangements, starting and finishing hours can be staggered every 15 to 30 minutes between, for instance, 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. and between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Lunch breaks are often staggered as well, for example, one group going to lunch at 12 p.m., another group going at 12.30 p.m., and another at 1 p.m. Rest breaks can be similarly staggered if there is a need to have continuous coverage at the worksite.

An example of staggered hours would be to have one “mini-shift” from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and a second one from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Aside from meal breaks, this WTA would provide a “core” period of seven hours per day between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. when all workers are present. This is particularly important if there are peaks in demand. In the service sector, services would also be provided to customers for an extended period between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. These overlapping periods can also facilitate training.

Structuring staggered hours arrangements in a way that balances the needs of workers and enterprises is relatively simple compared with normal shift work systems or some of the other, more complex types of flexible WTAs discussed later in this section. The most important element is that the assignment of workers to particular work schedules (“mini-shifts”) should consider their individual needs and preferences. In addition, the successful introduction of staggered hours arrangements requires proper consideration of the schedules of local public transportation, school and childcare facilities, as well as any other factors that influence the arrival and departure times of workers. Key points of consideration include:



Practical tips for staggered working hours

- Staggered hours schemes require proper consideration of the schedules of public transport, school and childcare facilities, as well as any other factors that influence the arrival and departure times of workers.
- It is important that the assignment of workers to particular schedules considers their individual needs and preferences regarding their starting and ending times.
- In many developing countries faced with the problems of urban sprawl, traffic jams and inadequate transport, the coordinated staggering of working hours may well offer a measure of relief.

3.5 Compressed working weeks

Compressed working weeks (CWWs) are WTAs that involve the same number of working hours scheduled over fewer days than is typical in a standard workweek; this results in longer working days. CWWs typically extend the workday beyond eight hours, but reduce the number of consecutive days worked to fewer than five days a week. For example, with a CWW a 40-hour work week that is normally worked as five 8-hour days is instead worked as four 10-hour days – this is called a “4 x 3” CWW arrangement (four consecutive working days followed by three consecutive days of rest). It must be emphasized that CWWs should only be considered under certain circumstances and in selected industries (see recommendations on the following pages).

Figure 4. Examples of compressed working week

Example	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
A	10 hrs	10 hrs	10 hrs	10 hrs	Off
B Week 1	9 hrs	9 hrs	9 hrs	9 hrs	9 hrs
B Week 2	9 hrs	9 hrs	9 hrs	8 hrs	Off

The logic underlying CWW arrangements varies by organization but they are often used in office environments to reduce the costs of starting up operations, as well as energy and other variable operating costs. More extreme forms of CWWs can be found in jobs which involve commuting long distances between the workers’ home and the workplace, such as in the offshore oil industry and mining in remote areas. In such cases, periods of continuous work can extend from a minimum of seven days to a maximum of 35 consecutive days, immediately followed by the same number (or more) of off-duty days at home.

When evaluating the impact of CWWs, it is important to consider the role of other shift schedules and work-related parameters, including the shift length and the inter-shift interval (i.e., the period between shifts). The evidence is reviewed in an ILO working paper³⁷, in which Tucker suggests that the design of CWW work routines should pay particular attention to possible increases in fatigue and decreases in alertness. Such problems are likely to be especially prevalent at night and towards the end of the shift. It is recommended that if a job is already considered dangerous when worked as eight-hour shifts, then the shift length should not be extended to 12 hours.

“Extended workdays (9-12 hours) should only be contemplated when the nature of the work and the workload are suitable (adequate breaks, no overtime) and the shift system is designed to minimise (i) the accumulation of fatigue and (ii) toxic exposure, by minimizing the number of successive work days before a span of rest days.”³⁸

It remains unclear, however, whether particular job characteristics make some occupations or types of work better suited to CWWs than others. The overall workload that is experienced by an individual is determined by the complex interaction of a range of environmental factors. Nonetheless, If the decision is made to implement CWW schedules, the following practices³⁹ are likely to be crucial to the successful implementation of CWWs:



Practical tips for compressed working weeks

- Avoid overtime (CWWs already have longer daily hours), “moonlighting” or other forms of additional employment and long commutes where it impacts on recovery.
- Employ fatigue counter-measures in order to minimize the impact of extended shifts (e.g. liberal rest breaks, job rotation) and to avoid boredom.
- Allow shorter, more frequent breaks within shifts, rather than fewer long ones.
- Ensure adequate recovery between shifts; for example, extended sequences of long shifts require three successive rest days for recovery. Moreover, long periods of night work can cause circadian disruption, which requires extended recovery periods, i.e. three to four days.
- Take account of changes in risk outside the workplace. These may include increased risk of fatigue while commuting after a long shift. Other non-work activities may also be affected by, or may influence the impact of, changes in the work schedule (e.g. domestic and care duties).
- Readjust margins of error that are built into the work design (e.g. rules governing overtime), so as to take into account the effects of extended shift length.
- Redistribute workloads to be low at times of high fatigue – e.g. during the last few hours of the shift, especially at night.
- A change in shift systems may mean a substantial change in alertness among the workforce at other times of the day (e.g. mid-afternoon). Thus workloads should be adjusted accordingly.

3.6 Hours averaging schemes, including annualized hours

Annualized hours arrangements and other types of hours averaging schemes allow for variations in daily and weekly working hours over periods longer than a week. These arrangements permit variations in hours of work within specified legal limits, such as maximum daily and weekly hours, while requiring that working hours either:

- (1) Achieve a specified weekly average over the period within which the hours are averaged,
- OR
- (2) Remain within a fixed total over the specified period.

As long as the above limits are respected, as well as the weekly average or annual total, no overtime premium is payable for those hours worked beyond the statutory “normal hours”.

Annualized hours arrangements and other types of hours averaging are particularly useful for enterprises in industries which have predictable seasonal variations in demand (e.g., ski resorts), as they allow for longer hours of work in the peak season and shorter hours at other times of the year. It must, however, be emphasized that annualized hours arrangements are one of the most complex WTAs systems and careful planning and implementation is essential.

There are a number of important provisions that should be specified in annualized hours or other hours averaging arrangements. These include:

- **Reference period** – the period of time over which hours of work will be averaged. Examples include the following: one month, 17 weeks (e.g., the European Working Time Directive), six months, and one year.
- **Weekly average hours of work/Total hours of work** – the number of hours that must be worked, on average, for each week during the reference period (e.g., 35 hours, 40 hours, 48 hours, etc.). Alternatively, the total number of hours to be worked may be established for the entire reference period (e.g., 1,500 hours, 1,800 hours, etc.).
- **Maximum hours of work** – this is the maximum number of hours per week (and/or per day) that may be worked during each week of the reference period. It is not permitted to exceed these limits.
- **Wage/salary level** – the weekly or monthly wage/salary during the reference period. It is important to note that as overtime will be reduced the basic wage needs to be increased to compensate. Typically, the weekly or monthly wage/salary does not change based on the number of hours actually worked in any given week/month. Rather, wages are kept constant and paid on an average basis (weekly or monthly) throughout the year.
- **Periodic adjustment** – the overtime compensation that will be paid at the end of the reference period if the average weekly hours or the total number of hours actually worked exceeds the number of hours established in the hours averaging agreement. In some cases, this total includes some “reserve hours” which are worked only if needed.⁴⁰

- **Advance notice period** – the minimum period required for notifying workers of changes in their work schedules due to hours averaging. This is essential to allow workers to plan their personal lives and help facilitate work-life balance. A minimum advance notice period of 24 to 48 hours is essential for such scheduling changes.

Example: Calculation of effective hours of work during the reference period

In order to calculate the total effective (planned) hours of work during the reference period under annualized hours or another type of hours averaging arrangement, the following information is necessary:

- The projected average weekly hours of work over the reference period;
- The length of the reference period;
- The amount of paid annual leave during the period; and
- The number of public holidays during the period.

An example of a calculation of the total effective (planned) hours of work under an annualized hours arrangement is provided below:

The projected average weekly hours of work: 40 hours/week multiplied by the number of weeks in the reference period: 52 weeks

= 2,080 total paid hours of work

- Number of days of paid annual leave: 20 days (160 hours)

- Number of public holidays: 10 days (80 hours)

Thus, the calculation of the total effective (planned) hours that will be worked is as follows:

2,080 hours – (160 hours + 80 hours) = 1,840 hours

The successful introduction of annualized hours arrangements and other types of hours averaging schemes requires that the conditions for setting annualized hours have been negotiated with workers' representatives. This includes:

- the compensation for the averaging of working hours and the increase in the basic wage (since overtime will be substantially reduced or eliminated, the basic wage should increase);
- the distribution of working time over the reference period; and
- the amount of advance notice required for announcing modified hours of work.

Failing to negotiate these conditions in advance can have serious consequences, as workers' acceptance of these schemes is crucial to their success.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the introduction of annualized hours can be risky and that adjustments are necessary depending on the demand for the firm's product or service. Thus, it is crucial that details of annualized hours arrangements are laid down in collective or similar agreements at the company or workplace level. A good example of annualized hours schemes in practice are the arrangements in ski resorts in Finland, which are stipulated via collective agreement. The system is beneficial to workers, as it provides them with a permanent job which provides a stable annual income and long and uninterrupted vacations in the low season between June and October. Employers benefit from the absence of short and fixed-term contracts, as they can rely on the skills and experience of their workers.⁴¹

3.7 Flexi-time arrangements and time-saving accounts ("time banking")

This category of working time flexibility consists of two similar working-time arrangements: "flexi-time" arrangements and time-saving account arrangements – more commonly known as "time banking".

Flexi-time arrangements

Flexible time or "flexi-time" arrangements allow for working hours to be scheduled flexibly on a daily and weekly basis. The number of hours that employees actually work may vary from day to day and from week to week. Basic flexi-time arrangements allow workers to choose their daily times for starting and finishing work based on their individual needs (within specified limits), and in some cases, even the number of hours that they work in a particular week. Employers who do not have formal flexi-time programmes may offer "flexible hours" on an informal basis. Some of the more complex forms of flexi-time arrangements blur into time-saving account ("time banking") arrangements since they allow workers to accumulate credit hours and, in some cases, use their "banked" hours to take full days off.

In general, formal flexi-time arrangements or programmes involve establishing a period of "core hours" when all employees are required to be at work (e.g., 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.), although some flexi-time programmes have no core hours at all. These "core hours" are bracketed on either side by periods of "flexible hours" (e.g., 6 a.m. – 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. – 8 p.m.) when employees can choose which hours they prefer to work, as long as the contractually required hours are worked during a specified work period. Flexi-time arrangements are typically introduced in enterprises and other organizations with the objective of providing a tool to facilitate employees' work-life balance, rather than for specific business reasons. They can, however, also serve business objectives, especially by improving motivation and performance.



Practical tips for flexi-time arrangements

- The extent of flexibility in working hours – specifically, the maximum and minimum daily and weekly hours of work must be clarified. It is essential to specify whether workers will be required to be present for certain hours each working day (called “core” hours), and if so, what those core hours will be (e.g., 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.).
- The maximum amount of time that can be accumulated, if any (credit and debit hours), and over what period of time must be specified.
- The decision procedures and specific criteria for fixing hours of work and granting paid time off.

Time-saving accounts (“time banking”)

Time-saving account or “time banking” arrangements (sometimes referred to as working time accounts) permit workers to build up “credits” or to owe “debits” in hours worked, up to a maximum amount. The periods over which the “credits” or “debits” are calculated are much longer than with flexi-time arrangements, ranging from several months to a year or even longer. The rules of the specific time-saving account arrangement determine how and when the “banked” hours accumulated in the account can be “spent”. This is in line with the dual logic of such arrangements: they are designed both as a tool to facilitate employees’ work-life balance (similar to flexi-time), but also as a tool to help enterprises to better adapt working hours to fluctuations in the establishment’s workload. Which objective takes precedence – or whether there is a balance between them – depends on the structure of the particular time-saving account arrangement.

In general, in the case of shorter-term time-saving accounts, hours worked which are above contractually-agreed hours can be taken as paid time off. In the case of long-term working time accounts – which are much rarer – time-saving accounts begin to take on the characteristics of annualized hours arrangements. In these long-term accounts, accumulated credit hours can be used for longer paid holidays, sabbaticals, or even early retirement. In some cases, however, there are significant restrictions on the use of these accounts based on firms’ operational needs (e.g., the amount of advance notice required to take time off). Thus, with long-term time-saving accounts, in practice, it is often difficult for workers to take extended periods of time off.

Flexi-time arrangements and time-saving accounts (“time banking”), like most of the WTAs described in this Guide, have the potential to be mutually beneficial to both workers and enterprises if they are properly structured. In order to develop “balanced” flexi-time arrangements and time-saving accounts, the following key elements should be considered:



Practical tips for time-saving accounts

- The framework of working time provisions (existing provisions in law and collective agreements) and wage rates – especially premium pay for overtime or non-standard hours such as night work and work on a weekly rest day or public holiday should be respected.
- The maximum amount of time that can be accumulated (credit and debit hours) and over what period of time must be specified. The extent and pattern of compensation periods and the amount of paid time off available during those periods is a related issue.
- The decision procedures and specific criteria for fixing hours of work and granting paid time off as well as a new definition of overtime – specifically, under what conditions will overtime now be payable?
- The procedures for handling situations in which the credit or debit hours limits are reached or exceeded (e.g. if the credit hour limit is exceeded, this might result in the payment of overtime rates for those hours in excess of the limit).
- How hours of work will be calculated in the case of absences, participation in training courses, or work-related travel.
- Workers' rights regarding the use of accumulated time off and regarding the distribution of longer working hours, when necessary. This is especially important for long-term time-saving accounts, since the economic value of the accumulated time off may be substantial.

3.8 Work sharing

Working time adjustments offer an important strategy for avoiding/limiting job losses and supporting companies in retaining their workforces during economic downturns. One important tool for adjusting working hours to changes in economic demand is work sharing. Work sharing is a reduction of working time intended to spread a reduced volume of work over the same or a similar number of workers in order to avoid lay-offs. Alternatively, it can also be a measure intended to create new employment.⁴²

Reduced working time may take a variety of forms, most typically shorter working weeks (for example, three- or four-day workweeks, instead of the more usual five-day workweek), but also reduced daily hours or temporary enterprise shutdowns for periods of several weeks or even months. The concept of work sharing originated during the Great Depression, and is reflected in the spirit of the ILO Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47), adopted at the height of the Depression, which established the principle of the 40-hour week and advocated that, due to the widespread unemployment prevailing at that time, "...a continuous effort should be made to reduce hours of work in all forms of employment to such extent as is possible" (Preamble).

In the context of the recent Great Recession and the global jobs crisis that it spawned, there has been tremendous interest in work sharing as a labour market policy tool aimed at preserving existing jobs – called “crisis work sharing” (or sometimes “short-time work”). Work sharing has been recognised as a decent work response to the global economic crisis by the Global Jobs Pact adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2009.

In the framework of national work sharing programmes during economic downturns, enterprises receive benefits when they refrain from layoffs, and instead “share” the lower amount of available work by reducing the working hours of all employees or all members of a work unit. The reduction in working hours under crisis work sharing measures is often coupled with reductions in wages that are typically, but not always, proportional to the reduction in workers’ working hours. This important constraint can be alleviated by government wage supplements. They are often provided through partial unemployment compensation, but can also be funded from general government revenues or other revenue sources. If crisis work sharing measures are properly designed and implemented, the result is a “win-win-win” solution by:

- enabling workers to keep their jobs and prepare for the future;
- assisting companies not only to survive the crisis but to be well-positioned to prosper when economic growth returns (because enterprises retain their existing workforce with their firm-specific skills); and
- minimizing the costs of social transfer payments and, ultimately, social exclusion for governments and society as a whole.

There are five key elements that may be included in work sharing programmes and measures designed to avoid layoffs, not all of which are present in every crisis work sharing measure.⁴³ Proper consideration must be taken of all these elements - the more elements that are present, the more effective the measure is likely to be in achieving the desired results. These five elements are as follows:

Key elements of crisis work sharing measures

1. The reduction of working hours for all workers in a company or a specific work unit within a company in lieu of layoffs. For example, instead of laying off 20 per cent of the workforce, a company would reduce the working hours of all employees by 20 per cent.
2. The reduction in working hours is accompanied by a corresponding (pro-rata) reduction in wages/salaries. In the above example, the salaries of all employees whose hours are reduced by 20 per cent would also be reduced by 20 per cent.
3. The provision of wage supplements to affected workers is a crucial element of an effective work sharing measure – it helps to “cushion” the effects of temporary reductions in earnings on workers. These wage supplements are normally public subsidies – typically

around half of the amount by which their salaries have been reduced. Unemployment insurance is often the reference point for calculating the wage-related compensation, e.g. in France this was 75 per cent of normal wages.

4. The establishment of specific time limits on the period of crisis work sharing. For example, during the Great Recession of 2008-09, Germany had work-sharing programme (called *Kurzarbeit*) which was limited to 24 months at the peak of the programme. Such time limits are essential to ensure that crisis work sharing is indeed a *temporary* measure to limit the time of reduction in hours and pay, as well as to avoid potential displacement effects – i.e. a “crowding out” of some emerging businesses and industries by existing, inefficient ones as a result of public subsidies.
5. The creation of links between crisis work sharing measures and training/retraining activities. Encouraging work-sharing employees to participate in training and retraining activities upgrades their skills, so that they can be more productive when demand rebounds or would be better prepared to move into new jobs during an economic recovery.

In addition to these five elements, it is important to engage both workers' and employers' organizations in the design and implementation of government-sponsored crisis work-sharing measures, in order to increase their likelihood of success. Crisis work sharing measures should be targeted at firms experiencing problems due to the business cycle – rather than on those facing structural economic adjustments – recognizing that this can be a difficult distinction to make in practice. Valuable indicators for decision-making regarding eligibility could include various business performance indicators and their trends during crisis and non-crisis periods.

Key points

Overtime work is an extension of working time beyond normal hours and impacts all types of working time arrangements. Whether or not work is considered to be overtime varies based on the institutional setting, and its implications should be carefully understood by the enterprise before implementing it. Resorting to overtime should be an exception for an enterprise; it should not be routine, but rather be used sparingly.

Shift work can take many forms but falls into two main categories: fixed shift systems, and rotating shift systems. Shift systems are often regulated by collective agreements which must influence the design of shift systems. It is important for the enterprise to understand the legal and regulatory framework on working time before implementation, and to observe the practical “do’s” and “don’ts” outlined in this chapter.

Part-time workers should be treated equally with comparable full-time workers – in particular regarding: the right to organize, to bargain collectively and to act as a workers' representative; occupational safety and health; discrimination in employment and occupation; hourly basic wage rates; statutory social security schemes; and maternity protection, termination of employment, paid annual leave and paid public holidays, and sick leave. There are four key policy areas which enterprises should incorporate to promote quality part-time work which are: extend equal treatment (as described above), modernize social protection, provide the right to request part-time schedules, and remove barriers for transitions between part-time and full-time employment.

Staggered hours allow for groups of workers to start and finish work at various times. This can have a positive impact on workers' commute and their ability to tend to family responsibilities. When properly structured, staggered hours allow firms to have extended operating hours at no extra labour cost (within certain limits).

Compressed working weeks involve scheduling the same number of working hours over fewer than the normal number of working days in a week, resulting in fewer but longer working days. This requires that particular attention is paid to fatigue and alertness. For a satisfactory implementation of compressed workweeks, employers should ensure workers have agreed to the conditions of their implementation: specifically, the number of working days and the distribution of hours of work over the workweek.

Hours averaging schemes, including annualized hours, allow variations in daily and weekly hours of work over periods longer than a week. Variations in weekly hours must respect established minimum and maximum limits on daily and weekly hours. The successful introduction of hours averaging schemes requires that the conditions for varying hours of work (e.g. the compensation, the distribution of working time and the notice period required before modifications) be negotiated with workers' representatives. Hours averaging schemes are one of the most complex working time arrangements and proper design and implementation is essential for their success.

Flexi-time arrangements allow workers and employers to vary working hours on a daily and weekly basis based on workers' individual needs. **Time-saving accounts ("time banking")** build on and expand the concept of flexitime to allow even greater flexibility in hours worked via working time "credits" and "debits". Flexi-time and time-saving accounts can only be introduced to the extent that daily or weekly working hours are allowed to vary over time.

Work sharing – not to be confused with job sharing – is a reduction of working time in order to spread the same amount of work over a larger number of workers to avoid layoffs, or alternatively to create new employment. **"Crisis" work sharing** (also called "short-time work") is a strategy to avoid layoffs during economic downturns. Executing this working time arrangement successfully requires changes in the work environment, including modifications to the organization of work and adequate training measures.

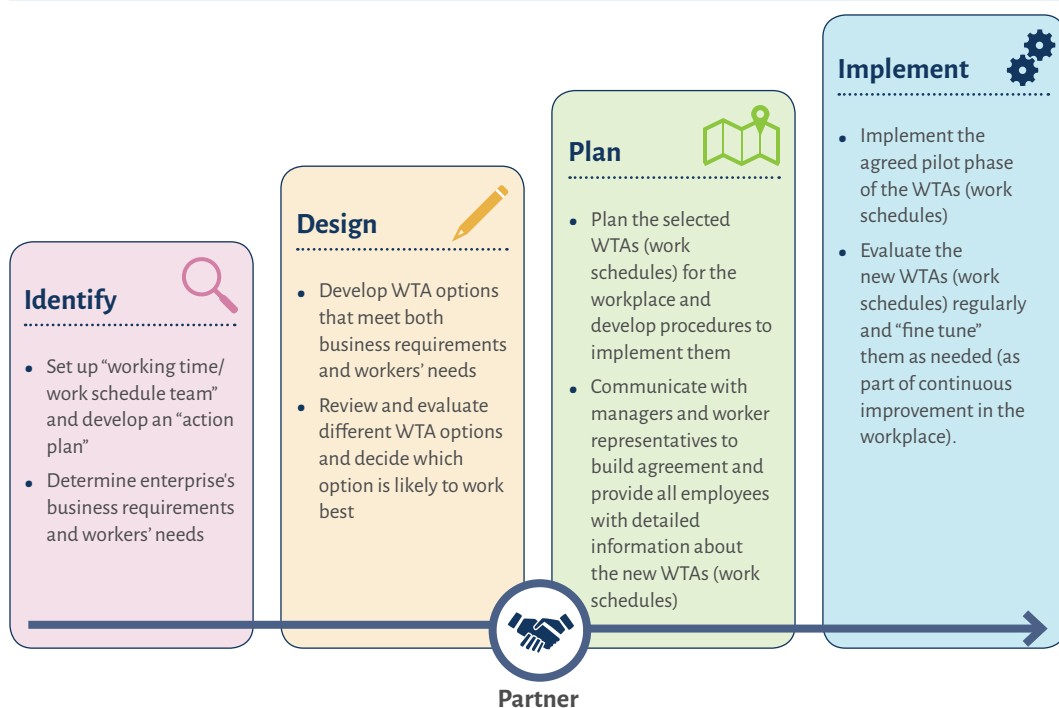
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How to design and implement WTAs collaboratively

In order to design and implement new WTAs (work schedules) that balance the needs of workers and enterprises, it is important to think about both the enterprise's business requirements and the needs and preferences of its employees regarding their own working time. This should be a collaborative process for employers and workers. The framework for this process can also be established via collective bargaining.

The first step is to create a joint worker-management team that will develop options for new WTAs (work schedules). Once different WTA (work schedule) options have been designed, it is important to review and evaluate them before making a final decision. Following that decision, the new WTA should be planned in detail, communicated with all employees, and then implemented in the enterprise. The new arrangement should be reviewed and evaluated regularly, as the enterprise's requirements and the workers' needs may change over time.

Figure 5. The “process” of realizing new WTAs



In order to develop “balanced WTAs, it is important to build a collaborative process that takes everyone's needs and views into account

These practical steps will be explained in more detail in the remainder of this section.

Step 1: Identify

Set up a working time/work schedule team and develop an action plan

The available research regarding WTAs (work schedules) and their effects highlight the importance of involving workers in their design and implementation. A collaborative approach will help ensure that the workers' needs and preferences regarding their working time are taken into account, and also help to prepare both managers and employees for a new work schedule. This is why establishing a worker-management team, called a Working Time Team or Work Schedule Team, is the first step.

Workers' representatives must be members of this team if the enterprise/organization is unionized. However, even if it is not unionized, it is still recommended that workers participate on this team. Existing employer-worker cooperation bodies in the firm may also be equally viable to perform the functions of a Working Time/Schedule Team.

The employer (or their representative) should begin by communicating with employees that the enterprise is reviewing its existing WTAs (work schedules) and is considering a new model. The employer should explain that all views will be considered as part of the process of examining current WTAs and developing new ones. The employer should be clear in telling employees the aims of the team (i.e. to improve WTAs, working conditions and productivity), the process they will use to make its decisions, the meeting plan for the team, the schedule of the team, and when changes in WTA(s) might take effect.

Different needs and views of workers and managers regarding current WTAs should also be taken into account. In order to do this effectively, it is useful to include worker representatives from different parts of the enterprise, managers, and the employer/owner* (as appropriate) on the Working Time Team. To represent all views of the enterprise's workers, employees in each section of the enterprise (e.g. shop floor workers, administrative staff, etc.) should each have the opportunity to nominate a representative. In this setting, it is beneficial for the owner/employer or another high-level management representative to encourage all opinions to be stated without fear of any penalty.

An action plan with specific time frames for the Working Time/Work Schedule Team should be developed and communicated to everyone who works in the enterprise. This is important for two reasons:

- The team will need to meet during working hours, so it is essential for members of the team to know how meeting times will be scheduled.
- Everyone must understand how long the team will meet and when they should have a decision that will be presented to the workforce in the enterprise.

As changing WTAs can have a major impact on firm performance, it is imperative that the team focuses on debating new arrangements and that the workforce can anticipate when any changes may take place.

* For example, direct participation in the team by the employer/owner would be possible in the case of SMEs

Practicalities should be considered at this stage. First, a meeting area that can comfortably fit all the people on the team should be reserved in or near the enterprise for discussions. In addition, there should be basic materials and information available (e.g. photocopies of working time schedules, blackboard/whiteboard, writing tools) to the team so that everyone can communicate easily and reduce the time needed to discuss important working time matters.

Next, the team should examine all of the WTAs currently used in the enterprise, including breaks (e.g. rest breaks and lunch breaks) and leave (e.g. sick leave, annual leave, paid holidays). A mapping exercise of the enterprise's existing WTAs should take place in a way that allows all team members to see and understand how working time is currently arranged (e.g., diagrammed on a whiteboard). Possible WTAs should be considered and all points relating to schedules, rest breaks, and leave periods should be open for discussion.

Analyse the enterprise's business requirements and the workers' needs/preferences

It is important for the working time/work schedule team to analyse what the enterprise's overall business requirements are and also the workers' needs and preferences. As some of these factors may not be commonly understood by everyone, defining the key terms for the owner/managers and workers will be beneficial. These key definitions are as follows:

Key definitions

Business strategy – A set of guiding ideas that determines how people within an enterprise should make decisions and allocate resources in order to accomplish key objectives. A good strategy provides a clear roadmap, made up of a set of guiding principles or rules that define the actions people in the business should take (and not take) and the things they should prioritize (and not prioritize) to achieve desired objectives.⁴⁴

Business objectives – Stated, measurable targets of how to achieve business goals. Six of the most common areas to focus business goals are in the areas of market share, financial resources, physical resources, productivity, innovation and action planning.⁴⁵ WTAs can have effects on all six dimensions.

Constant or variable workload (timing) – Many organizations do not have a constant volume of work – this is referred to as “variable”. There are three different types of variable workloads: annually (usually increased demands during holiday seasons), daily (some days are busier than others, such as hotels and bars being busy on weekends), and hourly (more customers at certain times of the day, e.g. restaurants are busy at lunch or dinner times).⁴⁶ WTAs are the key to addressing both constant and variable workloads, which is why they need to be evaluated at regular intervals.

Core vs. discretionary workload (product or service) – Workload in an enterprise can take two forms: core and discretionary workload. Core workload is the work required to make the core product or deliver the core service of the enterprise. The core workload includes obtaining parts and materials to make the product or deliver the service and making/providing the core product or service itself. A discretionary workload is work that may not be part of the main product or service, but can still be used in developing new product lines or services.

Human resource (HR) management – The process of managing people and the existing inter-personal relationships in an enterprise. The HR (or Personnel) manager helps to manage the relationships between the employer/managers of the enterprise and the workers. As an enterprise grows, HR managers can play a bigger role in determining what policies and practices help. In the case of working time, they can be essential to the process of determining and recording what WTAs exist in the enterprise; what changes can (or cannot) be made to existing WTAs; and how to implement and monitor new WTAs.

As part of this exercise, it will also be important to examine how work systems in the enterprise (i.e., its business processes) are organized. This will require an examination of production systems in manufacturing (e.g. assembly lines) or how services are delivered in the service industry. It is also useful to determine if there is coordination between production (or service) system operations and how maintenance is performed. For example, in manufacturing, this would mean considering how production lines are cleaned and maintained or retooled. In service industries, this might mean considering when systems maintenance (e.g. cleaning equipment, IT software upgrades) is done and its impact on customer service.

In addition to the business requirements of the enterprise, the task of collecting the views of workers about their needs and preferences regarding working time, as well as how these can contribute to improved enterprise performance, should be completed. By doing so, workers are more likely to feel a sense of ownership over WTAs that are agreed with the owner/employer and managers and are more likely to provide insights from the “shop floor” as to what can be done to regularly improve them.

Workers need to consider a number of different factors when discussing WTAs with the employer/managers. First, they should think about how daily and weekly hours can be organized in a way that allows them to address both their personal needs and those of the business. In this situation, workers should reflect on all factors that might influence their ability to start or leave work at a particular time or what time of day they can or would prefer to work (e.g. daytime, afternoon/evening shift, or night shift). This includes consideration of daily rest breaks, meal breaks, weekly rest, and annual leave. Workers should also discuss pay-related consequences of implementing a particular WTA, as they may not be “pay neutral”. Furthermore, it is worthwhile for employees to think about their personal situations, like the needs of their families and local transportation issues that may impact their ability to get to work at certain time periods. These issues need to be part of discussions about

WTAs, including changes that take place in the event that an enterprise grows or needs to adjust to fluctuations in customer demand for its products or services.

Summary

- Balance the working time/work schedule team with representatives of workers and managers as well as women and younger workers as they are often the most vulnerable.
- Develop an action plan with clear and structured goals.
- Ensure that opinions can be raised without any fear of penalty.
- Communicate transparently about the progress of the team within the firm.
- Include rest breaks and leave arrangements in discussions.
- Consider the firm's business requirements and the workers' needs.

Step 2: Design

Develop WTA options that meet the enterprise's business requirements and workers' needs and preferences

When taking into account the principles and factors that should guide the development of new WTAs/work schedules, one must consider how the new arrangements can be designed in the enterprise. Ideally, the Working Time/Work Schedule Team should develop and consider different models or options for WTAs based on the analysis of the enterprise's business requirements and the workers' needs and preferences (see step one: Identify).

As discussed in Section 3 of the Guide, there are many different possibilities that can be considered as alternative WTAs/work schedules. Because of the range of potential options and the time frames needed to make decisions about the WTAs/work schedules, it is helpful if one or a few members of the team (i.e., individually or in a mini-group) examine a specific option(s) to present to the full team. This will allow a number of alternatives to be considered, taking into account the enterprise's business requirements (from the business analysis) and workers' needs and preferences.

WTAs must be realistic and practical in the context of the enterprise's production or service delivery processes and need to fit together to make a properly designed work schedule. This means that the schedule should be based on full-time work for the normal working hours established in the country (e.g. eight hours a day, five to six days a week). At a minimum, the schedule should set starting and finishing times for work, rest breaks, and meal breaks. It should also place all workers – or alternatively, specific groups of workers (e.g., with shift work) – on the same schedule (with the exception of flexi-time arrangements).

When considering alternative options for WTAs/work schedules, it is useful to begin by considering the arrangements/schedules that currently exist in the enterprise (or other organization). It is also necessary to examine the enterprise policies and practices associated with them. Policies are the rules that enterprises deliberately set so that all workers know what the enterprise expects. Practices are patterns of behaviour that evolve over time and may become established – and these practices may or may not be in conformity with the enterprise policies.

Several key questions are worth considering when examining existing enterprise WTAs/work schedules and their associated policies and practices:

Figure 6. Key questions for designing new WTAs

- A** **BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS & WORKERS' NEEDS**
Does the existing working time arrangement meet the enterprise's business requirements and its workers' needs? Why or why not?
 - B** **WORKLOAD AND HOURS VARIATION**
Is the workload constant or variable? Should working hours be the same on each day or do they vary by day or even over longer periods of time? Why?
 - C** **OVERTIME AND PAY**
How is overtime used? How many overtime hours are performed by workers? How regularly? What are the pay implications?
 - D** **COMMUNICATION**
How are work schedules or changes in work schedules communicated to employees?
-

The answers to these questions will provide important clues regarding what the new WTA/work schedule should look like. For example, chronic use of overtime indicates that the enterprise is routinely unable to complete its work during normal hours and that a change in WTAs work schedules (e.g., adding a new shift) is needed. Additionally, foresight scenarios regarding feasible WTAs such as work sharing in periods of crisis (e.g. due to a sudden economic shock or a reduction in demand of the enterprise's products or services) might be worth considering at this stage.

Any monitoring of WTAs is not meant to be an assessment of an individual worker, but rather to determine if adjustments to the existing WTA/work schedule are necessary. In other words, it is one part of a larger assessment of the WTAs used by the enterprise.

Review and evaluate alternative WTA options

Once the working time/work schedule team has completed the above steps, it can begin to review and evaluate different WTA/work schedule options that have been developed. The evaluation criteria should be based on the enterprise's business requirements and the worker needs and preferences which were identified in previous steps. The review and evaluation process can be broken down into three practical steps.

Small group discussions and reports

Once evaluation criteria have been agreed upon, small working groups should be formed with members from different departments in the enterprise and workers' representatives to examine one or more possible WTA options. By forming groups from different parts of the enterprise, the WTA under consideration will benefit from the viewpoints of workers who might be most affected by a particular WTA. These workers are in an excellent position to provide reasons why an option might or might not be useful for the enterprise. Forming different working groups and discussing options can reinforce the idea that individual views are being heard and have been taken into account. This will help both managers and workers feel ownership of the evaluation and, eventually, of the chosen WTA.

These working groups will need to consider different WTAs. For example, one group might examine starting and ending times, whereas another group might consider how working hours are allocated for different business needs and the impact on workers. The small working groups should gather existing working time practices in the enterprise as well as relevant examples from similar firms and share their findings in a report.

Presentation and discussion with the working time/work schedule team

The small group reports should be discussed by the Working Time/Work Schedule Team, as part of a team meeting(s) set aside to review the different options and determine which of the WTA/work schedule options might be the most suitable for the needs of the enterprise and its workforce.

The team should evaluate the pros and cons of each WTA/work schedule option. Consideration should be given to existing WTAs (it is possible that some existing arrangements may be useful, but need to be matched with other options).

Preparation of a final proposal

Once all of the possible options have been evaluated, the team should make a proposal regarding which WTA(s)/work schedule(s) to use in the enterprise. The proposal should include: which WTA(s) will remain the same; which new WTA(s) should be adopted; and how this WTA(s) is then implemented in the enterprise.

The final decision regarding the team's proposal will depend on the specific decision-making structure in the particular enterprise. For example, in an enterprise with trade union representation, the final decision on which WTA to adopt will need to be made in the context of the collective bargaining process. In small enterprises with no trade union representation, on the other hand, this decision will likely be made by the employer (the business owner).

At this stage of reviewing and evaluating alternative WTA options, it is crucial to keep time frames for decision-making firmly in mind. Enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, may find that this collaborative process poses challenges for time management and staff management. To overcome this obstacle it is recommended that all three steps have established time frames. Otherwise, this process may drag on and on with no final resolution.

Summary

- Design working time arrangements that are realistic and practical in the context of the enterprise's production or service delivery processes.
- Consider the enterprise's working time policies and practices.
- Answer key questions e.g. regarding variations in hours and overtime (see Figure 6).
- Review and evaluate different working time arrangement options according to criteria.

Step 3: Plan

Determine the specifics of the chosen WTA and implementation policies

Once a final decision regarding the WTA/work schedule has been made, the working time/work schedule team must flesh out details of the chosen option, as well as the accompanying enterprise policies. This should be done in close collaboration with the firm's HR department (if a dedicated HR person is not available, then one should be appointed during the planning stage). Following this, a plan with specific time frames for the development implementation of the new WTA(s) needs to be developed.

Examining existing enterprise policies – and revising them as necessary to accommodate the new WTA(s) – is an important part of preparing to implement the new arrangement(s).^{*} Enterprise policies, in this case, refer to other related personnel or HR policies such as pay and benefits, for example, overtime pay rates and compensation for shift work, night work, etc. This is essential because WTAs determine such things as when employees work and how much they are paid for the work they perform.

^{*} If there are no formal enterprise policies in place, this would be a good time to start developing and then implementing them.

The organization of work within an enterprise (i.e. the business processes) is another critical factor in this step. As discussed earlier in this section, the business process is a key element in the enterprise: what is produced, how much is produced, and in what time frame. Looked at in this way, the business process considerations for manufacturing or service enterprises are similar. In manufacturing the key considerations include the location of equipment, how it is operated, how many and which workers are needed, how a worker operates the equipment (to achieve optimum output in a safe manner), what is the normal level of production, and what is maximum capacity production. In service industries there are some similarities as there is still a need for workers that are capable of using equipment productively and safely, and for workers and equipment that can consistently satisfy customer needs and produce products or provide services at a maximum capacity during peak business hours. Finally, how the production or service delivery process is organized is crucial for obtaining optimal results.

Once these factors have been analysed and considered, the Working Time/Work Schedule Team, in close collaboration with the firm's HR department/unit, will determine how to adjust the enterprise's operations and policies in line with the new WTA(s). In order to bring together all of the information regarding new WTAs and how they fit with related enterprise policies, it will be useful to assemble this information into an implementation manual. There is no specific format or length for such a manual, but it should address the concerns of both the enterprise and of the workers. The manual needs to be complex enough to adequately organize the new WTA(s) and simple enough to be understandable to users, i.e. the managers and workers.

This implementation manual should be viewed as “firm, but not fixed”. “Firm” means that the manual should describe the enterprise's new WTA(s) in detail. “Not fixed” means that these arrangements might need to be adjusted (or a future) to address issues affecting the enterprise (e.g. if the enterprise grows in size) and its workers (e.g. changes in the composition and needs of the workforce).

Communicating with managers and worker reps to facilitate acceptance of the new WTA and informing employees about it

Facilitating acceptance of the new WTA with managers, workers representatives, and all of the enterprise's employees is a crucial step for successful implementation of the WTA. At this stage, confidence-building measures, which should be present during all the steps up to this point, become even more critical to success.

Confidence-building measures should include the core requirement that respect for all viewpoints will be the basis for all forms of communication to present the new WTA(s) to employees. Additional measures might include discussions by the team with key managers and supervisors, who can prepare the workers before the enterprise's working time plan is formally announced. In this way, the managers and supervisors can be prepared to present the views of the groups that they manage, and the workers can feel that they are part of

the process. The involvement of workers' representatives to build broad acceptance in the company is of particular importance.

Building consensus among the entire workforce will require an investment of time and energy by the employer and top managers, but it is a worthwhile effort to ensure successful implementation of the new WTA(s). The following provides a few practical tips to help with this process:



Practical tips to facilitate acceptance of the new WTA(s) among all employees of the enterprise:

- Hold a general (“all hands”) meeting with all members of the enterprise, and allow them to communicate their views openly and without fear of reprisals.
- Supervisors should meet with individuals or groups of employees to explain what the new working time arrangement(s) will mean for them. This is also the time to inform them about the implementation manual, which should help with adapting to the new WTA(s).
- It is important to meet with all employees and present the manual so that all workers clearly understand the new WTA(s) and how it is actually going to work (including individuals who may have literacy problems).
- Develop short and simple follow-up training sessions on key aspects related to the new WTA(s).

Training sessions provided to employees should help them to adapt to the challenges that changes in WTAs can create. While no schedule should be so demanding that workers are a health and safety risk to themselves, co-workers, or the general public, there are some behavioural adjustments that can help them to effectively manage the situation. Some examples include how to build stamina (perhaps through changing a work process); how to manage fatigue (to work more efficiently so that fatigue is minimized); and how to cope with sleep-related issues that may face shift workers, especially night workers. These efforts help communicate to workers that they are an integral part of the process, as well as contributing to building confidence in the workplace and facilitating acceptance of the new WTA(s).

Summary

- Align enterprise policies e.g. pay and benefits as well as business processes with the new working time arrangement.
- Consolidate a firm yet not fixed implementation manual.
- Build consensus among the entire workforce (e.g. through the presentation of the manual, training sessions etc.).

Step 4: Implement

Implement the pilot phase of the new WTAs

Once the previous steps have been completed, the next practical step is to set a date when the new WTA(s) will be implemented and communicate it to all employees.

When the new WTAs are implemented will depend on the needs of the enterprise and the ability of the workers to adapt. It is important to implement the new system with the least amount of disruption in production or the services provided to customers. A few factors enterprises should take into account include:

- production peaks or slowdowns that take place during the course of a year (e.g. before or during a holiday period);
- whether the production equipment or service area is being changed (e.g. upgrades to equipment or changes in workspace configuration in a manufacturing or service industry); and
- the season of the year—implementation may be problematic when weather is more difficult (e.g. the rainy season, severe cold, or other types of inclement weather).

These factors can be critical in the successful implementation of the new WTA(s). For example, new WTAs may pose greater difficulties for managers and workers if they are implemented when demands on the enterprise's output or service provision are high (e.g. before a major holiday). Furthermore, new WTAs have a better chance of success if introduced during a slow point in production.

Once the timing of the implementation has been determined, it must be communicated to the workforce. Two factors are important to consider here. The first is the types of communication that will be used to inform the workforce regarding the implementation of the new WTA(s). In this case, workplace communications should be more formal: they should be in writing and presented in an easy-to-access location. For example, the working time implementation manual should be widely disseminated, with copies distributed from the owner/employer down to the “shop floor”, so that workers and managers can check the manual if there is any uncertainty about a specific point. A flow chart summary (or summaries) could be located around the workplace as a visual reference for all employees. In some workplaces, communications might also be made electronically (e.g. via office e-mail). The emphasis should not be on one type of communication, but rather on using the right grouping of communication types to make sure the workforce understands that new WTA(s) will be introduced on a certain date, and how it will work.

The second factor to consider is the audience receiving the message (i.e. managers and workers). The employer/top managers should keep the audience in mind throughout the process, especially at the implementation stage. The objective is to successfully establish the new WTA in the workplace with a minimum of disruption to the production or service delivery process. By using different types of communication to avoid any potential misunderstandings by managers and workers, employers/top managers can contribute to the successful implementation of the new WTA(s) in the enterprise.

Once these factors have been addressed, it is time to implement the new WTA(s).

Evaluate and “fine-tune” the new WTA at regular intervals

Both workers and managers should regularly evaluate how the new WTA(s) are working in the enterprise. To do so, a new Working Time/Work Schedule Team should be formed (or the previous team re-established), with the employer/owner, managers and workers from different parts of the enterprise all giving their views regarding the new WTA(s). They do not have to be the same members as the original team but should be able to provide informed comments about how effective the new WTA(s) are in practice.

The new WTA(s) should be evaluated over a period of time before major changes are made, but small adjustments to “fine-tune” the new arrangement(s) can be made at any time. There is no fixed time frame that is best for this review (it depends on the enterprise, the workers, and the goods produced or services provided), but the following might be considered as approximate time frames for action:

- ✓ Short term review: 3-4 months
- ✓ Medium term review: 6-8 months
- ✓ Long term review: 12-14 months

Alternatively, an evaluation of the new WTA(s) can take the form of an annual review, in order to see if the new WTAs are working properly, or if they need to be altered or changed. Some indicators in the review process could include rates of absenteeism, accidents at work, business productivity, and workers’ job satisfaction.

Any new WTA/work schedule that is introduced in an enterprise or other organization is not the end of the story, but rather part of an on-going process of continuous improvement. As with anything in life, circumstances can change (e.g. the business grows, more workers are added, etc.), which may require adjustments in the WTAs. Sometimes these changes will be minimal (e.g. starting times that are a few minutes earlier or later) and sometimes they will be much larger (e.g. the addition of a new shift to address a production need). Overall, the purpose of adjusting WTAs should always be to address the business requirements of the enterprise and the needs of its workers as well.

Summary

- Consider the needs of the enterprise and the ability of the workers to adapt to the new working time arrangement(s)/work schedule.
- Choose the types of communication that will be used to inform the workforce about the modalities of the new WTA.
- Conduct short, medium and long-term reviews to adjust the working time arrangement to changing circumstances and in order to continuously improve.

5

Conclusion

In order to put decent working time into action, enterprises need to seek possibilities to arrange WTAs/work schedules in ways that can accommodate the needs of individual workers, including their family responsibilities, while simultaneously meeting enterprises' business requirements. This “win-win” approach takes into account both workers' and employers' preferences, as suggested in the ILO Reduction of Hours of Work Recommendation, 1962, (No. 116).

If properly structured, WTAs can be mutually advantageous for both workers and employers, as they can improve working conditions while allowing employers to cope better with workload fluctuations and reducing overtime costs. Such “balanced” WTAs can also provide additional business benefits, such as decreased absenteeism, increased retention of existing employees, and improved recruitment of new employees. They are also known to improve employee morale and attitudes, which can improve productivity, quality, and ultimately firm performance.

Balanced WTAs hold the promise of helping workers to achieve a better work-life balance and can advance enterprise performance. However, a proactive approach is required: employers and workers must seek an appropriate mix of policies and practices, aided by a supportive national framework. Only then will the promise of decent working time be realized.

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APPENDIX:

Glossary of key terms and concepts

Annualized hours: a system in which someone is employed to work a particular number of hours over the period of a year, rather than a week or a day.

Compressed Working Weeks (CWWs): WTAs that involve the same number of working hours scheduled over fewer days than is typical in a standard workweek – this results in longer working days.

Decent work: involves promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, in order to decrease the differences which exist between people's aspirations regarding their work and their current work situations.

Fixed shift systems: refers to a group of workers who always works the same shift.

Flexible time: also referred to as “flexi-time”, allow for working hours to be scheduled flexibly on a daily and weekly basis. The number of hours that employees actually work may vary from day to day and from week to week.

Job-sharing: a special form of part-time work in which one full-time job is split into two part-time jobs for different workers.

Marginal part-time employment: refers to WTAs involving very short part-time hours or no established minimum hours at all, such as “on-call” work and “zero hours” contracts.

Night work: work which is performed during a period of not less than seven consecutive hours, including the interval from midnight to 5 a.m.

Overtime: refers to all hours worked in excess of the normal hours, unless they are taken into account in fixing remuneration in accordance with custom.

Rotating shift systems: refers to workers who are assigned to work shifts that vary regularly – “rotating” around the clock.

Shift work: an organization of working time in which workers succeed one another at the workplace so that the establishment can operate longer than the hours of work of individual workers.

Staggered hours arrangements: when different starting and finishing times are established for different groups of workers in the same establishment.

Standard workweek: most common work schedule. Refers to fixed working hours each day for a fixed number of days, usually Monday to Friday (40h week) or Monday to Saturday (48h week).

Time-saving account: also known as “time banking” or working time accounts, permit workers to build up “credits” or to owe “debits” in hours worked, up to a maximum amount.

Working time: the time associated with the productive activities of jobs and the arrangement of this time during a specified reference period.

Working time arrangements (WTAs): describe the organization and scheduling of working time during a specified reference day, week, month or longer period.

Work sharing: refers to a reduction of working time intended to spread a reduced volume of work over the same or similar number of workers in order to avoid lay-offs.

GUIDE TO DEVELOPING BALANCED WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS

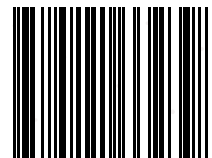
The *Guide to Developing Balanced Working Time Arrangements* is a practical guide or “how to” manual on working time arrangements (also known as “work schedules”) for the ILO’s constituents – employers, workers, and governments. This guide or manual is designed to assist organizations, both private and public, to make informed decisions regarding how to structure working time arrangements in a “balanced” manner for the mutual benefit of both workers and enterprises. It provides a set of guiding principles for developing balanced working time arrangements; some practical tips regarding how to structure various types of working time arrangements; and a step-by-step process that can be used for designing and implementing new and improved working time arrangements.

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ISBN 978-92-2-133239-8



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