

Flexible working patterns at the Audit Commission

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Introduction

The Audit Commission is a body in the public sector. This consists of public bodies funded by government and through tax. Its job is to check such bodies are using public money properly. Each public body has to spend its money wisely. An audit is a check. In this case, it is a check on either money or efficiency. It involves the checking of accounts to make sure that they are true and fair. It also checks quality and efficiency. The Audit Commission knows that ways of working have changed over the years. New technology may allow people to work from home and can help to bring in more flexible working.

Job families

The Audit Commission has a mission. It is to be 'a driving force in the improvement of public services'. To do this, it employs people at three levels. These 'families' are:

- * the audit family. This carries out financial audits. Most of these are accountants who work in teams. They visit public bodies and check their books
- * the performance audit family. This helps the public sector to function more efficiently
- * the functional family. This makes sure that the core functions of the Commission are running smoothly.

Patterns of employment

The Audit Commission needs a flexible workforce to meet its changing needs. Different workers need more flexible ways of working. A number of working patterns have therefore been developed. These include both full-time and part-time workers, contract workers, job sharing, temporary and permanent staff. Having all of these different contracts helps to provide flexibility that is:

- * numerical - the number of staff can be changed
- * functional - the skills to cope with a variety of work can be built
- * place of work - employees gain better work-life balance, including working from home. This involves one-off set up costs to provide facilities such as broadband at to assess health and safety.

Benefits

Employees can apply to work from home. The Audit Commission will allow them to if it meets its needs. Both sides can gain from this. For workers, travel to work in London is reduced. Also, childminding can be more flexible and working from home is more family-friendly. In terms of the organisation, it allows them to recruit from a greater range of workers. It also leads to a more diverse workforce.

Working from home is based on trust but brings gains to both sides.

Problems

The main problems of homeworking are:

- * not mixing with other staff and therefore losing the culture of the organisation. Training days, conferences and networking are used to counter this. There is also an intranet to help workers to stay in touch
- * new technologies can fail too function

- * health and safety risks. These are covered by making sure risks are reduced and through good insurance
- * the keeping of confidential files at home. These risks are reduced through clear guidelines.

Conclusion

Work practices change over time. The needs of businesses also change. The Audit Commission has shown how it can adapt to this changing scene by adopting more flexible working practices.