

What is WiseWork?

How to create an
engaged and
productive workforce
in the Digital Age

WISEWORK[®]

A new 'normal' for work

There have been many different approaches to work design over the last 20 years. We've seen flexible working adopted by many employers and supported by legislation. We've heard about agile working and various forms of self management. The CIPD is promoting 'Good Work' as an ideal whilst others focus on making work 'Family Friendly'.

Technology has freed up many jobs from being tied to one location. Simultaneously, the blurring of boundaries between work and home has created a stressful 'always on' work culture. Where technology has been used well we have seen 'Smart' working patterns emerging, providing people with more control over when and where they choose to work.

All these changing patterns of work start from the premise that 'normal' is the full-time, single location, fixed hours job with a permanent contract of employment. This was the predominant system in the 20th Century when the best way to organise work was to employ people in hierarchical organisations, being paid a regular salary based on their job level. Now in the Digital Age we have to rethink what is 'normal'.

Instead of assuming that work has to be performed at a fixed time and place, we can now start from the assumption that much work can be done anywhere, at any time. Yes, many jobs need to have a person physically present if they are working 'hands on' and there are times people need to be available to fit in with others, but this doesn't mean work has to be rigid.

Time for a fresh approach

This is where WiseWork comes in. It's an approach to work design that challenges the old assumptions about work and takes a fresh, 21st Century view. Firstly, we help clarify the business aspirations, and establish what the current operating model is. WiseWork asks questions such as whether all employed roles are necessary to get the desired result.

What output could be achieved by contracting individuals or other suppliers to do the work? Can the output be achieved by contracting with an individual or other supplier to do the work? In the emerging 'Gig Economy' we are seeing many examples of self-employment or small businesses providing specialist services. This route can offer enhanced flexibility and reduce fixed overheads where there's a good fit.

If an employed role is necessary, does this involve a permanent set of tasks? How is that role described? What is the level of flexibility needed? Is it a full-time requirement? Can the work be measured by output and not by the hours put in?

WiseWork is all about getting work done in a way that meets the needs of the employee and employer. It's about

- defining outcomes and agreeing results,
- giving people the flexibility to choose how to get the work done
- trusting people to get the work done
 - designing adaptable real and virtual workspaces
 - creating a highly engaged and productive culture

Talent is distributed throughout organisations

WiseWork taps into the talents of the workforce by encouraging people to use their initiative. It assumes that NOT all wisdom emanates from the top of the organisation. It's the reverse. It assumes that the person doing the job is most likely to come up with better ways of doing it, if they are encouraged to do so. This means giving the maximum freedom to individuals to decide how to get their work done and measuring them on their results.

In practice this results in working patterns that vary by individual. Some people may choose to come into the corporate workspace five days a week, others may choose to come in as little as possible. Some people may prefer to work for a few hours in the morning and take a long break in the middle of the day. Others may choose to work a couple of long days and then take a break. Some will have fixed patterns from week-to-week, others may like to fit their work around the rest of their life on a day-to-day basis.

In a WiseWorking organisation people are trusted to manage their own work, within guidelines agreed with their manager. They agree what they need to achieve and then get on with it. Managers are available to help and support people to achieve their goals. Decisions are delegated to the lowest possible level in the organisation giving as much discretion as feasible to everyone. Given freedom of choice the vast majority of people will act responsibly and not abuse it. Starting from this assumption managers only step in if someone is clearly unable to meet their commitments.

We make decisions all the time in the rest of our lives. We choose where to live, what hobbies we enjoy and how to spend our money. We decide on our friends, plan our holidays and make our own choice of entertainment. Yet at work we are often faced with very limited freedom. WiseWork makes roles as broad as possible, where people are empowered to make a variety of decisions. This goes against the trend of specialisation, where responsibilities are divided up in to narrower and narrower jobs.

Trust is more
than a word
on the
corporate
values poster

No longer are managers just needed to define the tasks to be performed. They now need to be skilled at defining the outcomes expected from their people. They need to let go of traits such as control, perfectionism and micro-management. Rather managers are required to understand the capabilities and limitations of each individual and adapt their management style accordingly. Some employees will be able to work for long periods remotely without needing to contact their manager. Others will need more close attention and support. Some will be capable of taking on a variety of tasks and others will be more limited in their abilities.

For many years, management research has shown that the best way to engage people is to trust them, empower them and treat them like adults. WiseWork does that, starting from the design of jobs through to the management and leadership needed to make the organisation function. It involves a conscious effort to manage the team culture and not just let it drift. It's more than an exercise in identifying the values of the organisation and putting them on the notice boards. It involves implementing systems and procedures that match the intended culture at a local level. It provides a framework for understanding the business benefits, making the changes and measuring the results.

A challenge for managers

WiseWork is not just another form of flexible working. It's a whole, new, systemic approach to work design that assumes people will rise to a challenge and will respond positively to taking on new tasks. It's about job enrichment, encouraging people to find new ways of getting their work done instead of asking them to follow rigid procedures.

WiseWork combines the best ideas about high performing organisations with the latest thinking about employee engagement to produce increases in productivity and job satisfaction at the same time.

It challenges some conventional management thinking along the way and requires leaders to take a critical look at the way they run their operations. It's easy for senior managers to say they trust their employees, but WiseWork ensures that they do.

Find out more

email us at
info@WiseWork.co.uk

call us on
078807 10026

follow us on Twitter
[@WiseWork](https://twitter.com/WiseWork)

get in touch via our
website
www.WiseWork.co.uk

WISEWORK®