

## HOW TO FIND EMPLOYERS WITH ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES AND FLEX TIME



**Summary:** Looking for employers that offer alternative work schedules and flex time? Here's how you can find them.

According to Woody Allen, 80 percent of success is showing up.

Alternative work schedules are for those who succeed by showing up on their own terms. The reasons that alternative work schedules "work" vary from childcare requirements to quality of life issues. If you can swing it with management, alternative work schedules are ideal for people who don't need Fred Flintstone's five o'clock whistle.

In the '80s it was called flex time. A law firm or bank would bend the rules for employees with infants. It was one of the only times when life was allowed to interfere with regular working hours. Back then, flex time wasn't frowned upon, but it wasn't welcomed, and it generally came with a pay cut.

That was then and this is now. The luxury of having an alternative work schedule is the chief reason workers cite for leaving the bonds of corporate America. But within the bounds of corporate space, anyone with skills that are in great demand, programmers for example, can usually establish an alternative work schedule. If you know C++ or Linux like nobody's business, your alternative work schedule could consist of working mornings from the lanai during the dry season in The Tropics and taking the rest of the year off. (If you happen to be one of those people and you're reading this, get back to work.)

For the rest of us, alternative work schedules are the chance to commute during non-peak hours and to work from home. It's not less work; it's more intensified more organized work. If you have the discipline to be as productive on your own as you are in the office, you can pull off an alternative work schedule.

Helen Dorchester is executive vice president at an advertising firm with approximately 800 employees. She says her firm is surprisingly supportive of alternative work schedules.

"It's kind of unusual in ad agencies," says the forty-something mother of a six year-old. "I am on a four-day week and I have three people in my group, all on four-day weeks."

For people looking for similar situations in new jobs, Donovan recommends finding out whether the firm or immediate supervisor is open to the concept. "There are still schools of thought in management which hearken back to the idea that you have to earn the right to flexible time. That is completely out of step with today's lifestyles," she says. "With the equipment we have now, there is no reason more people can't be working when they want."

Employees with alternative work schedules are often armed by the their employers with arsenals of digital devices to stay in the office loop. The advent of cell phones, laptops, and of course the Web, has turned meetings into conference calls and water-cooler consultations into e-mails. Companies now make huge investments that give workers the same access to internal databases and software they would have back in the office. Cisco Systems, IBM and Proctor & Gamble are all companies that make company-wide intranets available to employees working at home to better suit today's employee requirements.

### Where to find a job offering alternative work schedules?

- **Major corporations offering intranets and equipment for telecommuting.**
- **High-tech startups with forward-thinking founders.**
- **Firms with a female-centric corporate culture.** Because women best understand the demands of family life, they tend to be more supportive of workers who are willing to sacrifice their evenings for mornings at home with their children. Look for firms with female CEOs or those who cater to all-female clientele.

### A couple of final points to remember:

If you find yourself negotiating the terms of a new position, take a minute beforehand to decide whether an alternative work schedule is central to your needs. The phenomenon is still somewhat new and can be considered a perk.

If you find yourself negotiating alternative work schedules with a high-tech startup, be prepared to be flexible. Not only are startups technology-centric, they're poised for fast-growth. That means being on-call for projects which require weekend work and late nights--in addition to the time you're scheduled to work!