

Make Innovation HAPPEN

**MIH Knowledge Article:
Lithe Labour: How Food & Drink Companies
Can Become Future Fit**

Scotland
A LAND OF
food and drink

SCOTLAND
IT'S TIME TO INSPIRE

The logo consists of the word 'CAN DO' in a stylized font. 'CAN' is written vertically in white on a dark teal background, and 'DO' is written vertically in white on a yellow background.

Are you familiar with mobile working or are you one of the few who are still working from 9-5 at a fixed desk in the office?

In line with our fast-moving society and progressing technology, people's priorities are shifting and so is the workplace. The mobile workforce is evolving quicker than ever as employees carry out the same tasks remotely which they previously would have performed at a permanent site.

Research shows that flexibility at work has the potential to not only improve life quality, health and satisfaction, but also increase productivity and efficiency within all types of business.

How flexible working could help boost productivity

Working more flexibly applies to both when, and where, we work. Arrangements vary from part-time, compressed working hours, variable start and finish time, working freelance to mobile working, including working from home or other public locations which makes it easier to manage paid work alongside other aspects of life.

Mobile working has proved to increase productivity by arranging your own work environment and peak time of productivity. It helps focus and organisation of workload depending on individuals' needs and helps reduce occupational stress, such as commuting resulting in spending more time on leisure and with families.

Flexible working schemes could help boost employees' motivation and work commitment, which in turn will have a positive impact on companies' reputations and staff morale.

However, the increase in the number of flexible employees in workplaces leads to challenges for individuals, teams and organisations. Being available 24/7 increases the risk of working over-time. Also, working flexibly could result in difficulty communicating with the team, resulting in a lack of information flow, social support and line management.

Finding the right balance is a necessity to make flexible working succeed between the employees, managers and the organisation as a whole. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), in 2017, 27% of UK employees had specific flexible working arrangements. Mobile working is expected to reach 70% by 2020, allowing employees to balance work and life more efficiently.

Learning from the Danes and the Dutch

According to the OECD Better Life Index report (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), Denmark has been ranked number one for having the best work-life-balance for many years. They are known for being the happiest and most efficient country in the world. The Index ranks countries on how successfully households mix work, family commitments and personal life, among other factors.

But, for the first time in 2018, the Netherlands has overtaken the Danes for having the best work-life balance. Of the 35 OECD countries, the Dutch scored 9.3 out of 10, the Danes were second with 9.0, whereas the UK scored 6.4.

What do they do differently?

According to Danes themselves, the key is to prioritise life over work. A high degree of flexibility is important to them as much as the designated lunch times that they spent apart from their desk to socialise and eat together. As families are highly valued in Denmark, balancing work with life is respected by employers.

Furthermore, Danes rarely work over-time. Only 2% of Danish employees regularly work long hours (Dutch employees 0.5%), whereas in the UK, 12% of employees are working very long hours slightly below the average of 13%. Studies have shown that working fewer hours doesn't mean employees do less. The OECD found that working overly long hours actually reduces productivity.

Also, Danish work environments are rarely based on hierarchies, and managers are seen more as team leaders than key decision makers. As Danish employees experience a high degree of autonomy and responsibility at work, their job role is highly valued and results in high job contentment and life satisfaction.

Scotland's Fair Work Nation by 2025

In 2016 the Scottish Government set out a Fair Work Framework, aiming to become a world-leading Fair Work Nation by 2025 in order to drive success, wellbeing and prosperity for individuals, businesses, organisations and society. The Fair Work Scheme aims to improve organisational reputation and recruitment, to bring more engaged and committed workers into businesses to boost productivity as well as to increase workers' financial security, physical and mental health.

Finding Balance

Traditional business models are changing and employees' demand for more flexibility at the workplace is rising. Mental health and work-life-balance are becoming important factors for businesses to retain and attract new people which ultimately leads to greater productivity and contentment in the long-term.

Innovation support for Scottish food and drink companies

Want to understand more about how flexible working schemes could be applied to your food or drink business?

Looking for support to become more innovative?

Whether it involves product development, your processes or employees, the Make Innovation Happen Service can help you explore your ideas and develop them all the way through to market. Want to know more about the support before connecting? You'll find more about the service [here](#).

Initial advice and support from expert Connectors is free, confidential and simple.

You can make a quick enquiry by clicking [here](#) or ring on 0300 013 3385

Looking for some inspiration? Dive into our free-to-access insights [articles](#) to see how companies round the world are turning incredible ideas into profitable business.

To find out more about the support available, please get in touch with the Make Innovation Happen team:

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