

Organisations with 50 or fewer employees

Farrelly Facilities & Engineering Ltd

The company

Farrelly Facilities & Engineering designs, installs and maintains heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, and supplies power wiring and controls throughout the UK.

Sector: Construction
Location West Midlands

Workforce

Number of employees 50

Percentage women 12%

Ethnic minorities 2%

Turnover 5%

Percentage of women who return after maternity leave 90%

The challenge

To increase sales and profits through reducing staff hours. Creating the TGI Monday feeling.

Response

Farrelly decided to improve staff satisfaction and effectiveness by reducing hours to a standard 35-hour week. (Organisations in the construction industry are well known for working hours of up to 50-60 hours week). The reduction in hours was implemented through careful planning and preparation, staff training and, above-all, team-work. As they put it "When 4pm is upon us it is common to ask around the office to find out who needs help to tie up loose ends for the day. Our motto is to 'do first things first'."

They also introduced several work-life balance policies:

Policies for all employees

- Individuals' specific needs are assessed every 14 days in a personal development review
- The Director's door is always open and all employees may request time-off and flexible working
- Home working when necessary is encouraged.

Policies for parents

- Parental leave
- Leave for children's medical treatment and school holidays
- Parents' working hours are flexible to fit around child care and school arrangements
- Football and entertainment evenings for Farrelly staff are encouraged

Take-up and outcomes

- Parents with school/ nursery runs start work around 9.15 – 9.30am and finish around 3pm
- 100% of administrative and managerial staff have taken up jobsharing. This means that any employee requiring extended leave can do so without having to run through their work.

- 80% of staff take extended annual leave for school holidays and other family matters.
- Up to 85% of employees take advantage of Farrelly's flexible working hours scheme.

Business benefits

Since 1999, when Farrelly implemented its work life balance policies:

- Sales increased fivefold from £2m to £10m in 2003 and profits increased significantly
- Increased staff retention with 5% turnover rates (very low for the sector).
- Significant reduction in customer complaints.
- More innovation by employees.

Because staff are more satisfied with their working conditions, they more readily take ownership of their work and provide a better service for customers. Cost-savings are impressive, boosting profits as wasted project and management time is almost a thing of the past.

In practice

Padma started working in the accounts department at Farrelly eight years ago. She started as a part time employee working two to three days a week, due to her having young children. Since then Padma has increased the number of days she works to five days a week, starting at 9am and leaving at 3.15pm. This means she is able to take her children to school and pick them up at the end of the day. As Padma said in an interview: "As they're flexible with me, I will be flexible with them - it works both ways".

The future

Gerry, Managing Director of Farrelly, says: "The future looks much brighter for the employee, client and the company. Our aim is to provide the client with world-class service - good enough is not sufficient in a world where competition is reaching boiling point. To succeed you have to be different and the competitive edge at Farrelly Facilities & Engineering Ltd comes from competing with our people. The pay cheque is no longer the trophy, today the real job is the trophy and employers need to create a great workplace. Competing on price alone you will not win. Competing with the best men and women – you will always win."