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FLEXIBLE WORKING EQUALS A MORE PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE

Forty per cent of Australian small business owners believe their workers are less productive if they are not offered the opportunity to switch up their working locations, yet only 53% offer this flexibility.

The national research¹, conducted by Officeworks, has investigated the working habits of employees and preferences of small business owners across Australia to see how much emphasis is put on flexible working environments.

From the 1,000 employees surveyed, 34% would like to work away from their usual workplace at least once a week, but only 49% are offered this freedom.

Those who do receive this flexibility see great benefits, including less stress (44%), higher levels of productivity (42%) and feeling happier (40%).

Officeworks spokesperson, Psychologist Dr Suzy Green of the Positivity Institute, says with the professional environment evolving, employers must be more in-tune with the changing needs of their workforce.

"The Officeworks research results and associated supporting scientific studies demonstrate that working flexibly is a win/win situation for both employees and employers – delivering a more productive, focused and happier workforce."

Despite only 53% of small business owners offering their team the opportunity to work from home, in a café or simply hot desking, a large number are well aware of the positive benefits.

Although the need to meet with clients (30%) and engaging with colleagues (29%) were identified as barriers for employees, workplaces can overcome these obstacles by providing staff with access to the technology which enables virtual communication.

"Offering employees the opportunity to shape how they work provides significant psychological benefits and autonomy. As well as overall wellbeing, other aspects like job satisfaction, staff retention and cost savings can also be attributed to this way of working, all of which should be hugely important to small business owners," Dr Green concluded.

Officeworks aims to rid barriers such as not having sufficient technology, devices or equipment to work on the go or in another location by offering employees and employers cost-effective solutions.

For tips on how to work flexibly, visit Officeworks [Work Wise](#) and [Work Style](#) content hubs or try the [Your Work Your Way Quiz](#) designed to help Australians discover the best working style for them, with personalised advice on productivity techniques.

¹ Research conducted among 1,921 Australians (small business owners and employees). Fieldwork took place in September, 2016.

ENDS

Notes to editors

Overview of research findings:

Employees

- Just 49% of Australian workers are offered flexible working arrangements
- Men (59%) are more likely to work outside of their workplace than women (41%)
- 30-39 year olds are more likely to have this freedom (59%) than 50-59 year olds (42%)
- 34% of people would like to work outside of their normal environment once a week, with 23% stating they would like the option every day
- IT (77%) and professional services (74%) are most likely to offer flexible working environments
- Benefits to working flexibly include less stress (44%), higher levels of productivity (42%) and feeling happier (40%)
- Against company policy (36%) and need to meet with clients face-to-face (33%) were listed as the main barriers for workers who do not receive flexible working

Small business owners

- Only 53% of small business owners offer their employees the freedom to work outside of their normal working environment
- 85% of small business owners themselves would like to work away from their workplace at some point during the month
- Working from home is the preferred location for small business owners offering flexible working to their staff members (37%)
- Small business owners who offer flexibility say staff members can work away from their desk every day (40%)
- 40% of small businesses believe workers are less productive if they are not offered the opportunity to switch up their working locations
- Small business owners highlighted less stress (37%), reduced travelling time (36%) and happiness (36%) as the top perks
- The need to meet with clients face-to-face (32%) was listed as a key barrier to offering flexible working by small business owners

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About Officeworks:

Established in Richmond in 1994, Officeworks is Australia's leading retailer and supplier of office supplies, tech and furniture solutions for home, business and education needs. With three easy ways to shop - in store, online or by phone, you'll be sure to find exactly what you need with our widest range, when you need, and all at the lowest prices. Plus, you'll enjoy friendly expert advice and helpful services. Officeworks offers customers more than 20,000 products on its [website](#), operates a national customer service centre and has a growing team of expert business specialists to cater for micro, small and medium business customers. As part of the Wesfarmers' group, Officeworks has an extensive national footprint operating 159 + retail stores and employing more than 6,500 team members. Join Officeworks' online communities on [Facebook](#), [Linked In](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) as well as at its hubs [Work Wise](#) and [Work Style](#) for inspiration to help you make bigger things happen.