



HR TEAM ONLINE TRAINING SEMINAR

HOW TO ACHIEVE A HIGH PERFORMING WORKPLACE

AUGUST 5, 2021

HR Team's Online Training provides all of the HR and employment law expertise, advice and training that employers and managers need – remotely, conveniently and cost-effectively.

These 90 minute seminars are practical, detailed and commercially-focused training seminars delivered by employment law and HR experts. You will benefit from a user-friendly toolkit including invaluable

templates related to the specific topic featured in the training seminar. All templates provided are in line with the up-to-date, relevant employment legislation.

The next training seminar will take place

on August 5, from 10am until 11:30am. HR Team clients will receive a discounted rate of €80 per session ex VAT.

[BOOK NOW](#)

HELPING EMPLOYERS OVERCOME THE KEY CHALLENGES OF REDUCED WORKING HOURS

HR Team director, Breda Cullen, says HR Team's consultants are making a number of recommendations on how to mitigate risk when seeking to reduce hours for employees as a result of Covid-19.



Employers have a number of options available to deal with these challenges, as businesses face operational reductions.

LAY-OFFS AND SHORT-TIME WORKING

Temporary lay-off is an option when an employer is temporarily unable to provide an employee with the work for which they were employed.

Short-time working is also an option when operations have been reduced. Short-time working means an employee's hours of work or pay are reduced to less than 50% of normal weekly working hours or normal weekly pay.

The legislation does not specify notice periods as to when employees should be notified regarding temporary lay-offs or short-time working. However, we would recommend giving as much notice as possible.

There must be an explicit and agreed contract clause with an employee to exercise the above.

REDUCED HOURS OF WORK

Many Employers are reducing hours of work via short-time working on a temporary basis. Some employers are also seeking to reduce hours on a permanent basis through consultation with employees. It is important to remember if an employer is seeking to permanently reduce an employee's hours that this can only be done through consultation and with the employee's agreement. It is very important to follow a process when implementing short-time working:

- Speak to employees first.
- Explain the changes you need to make.
- Explain the reasons for the change.
- Follow up in writing to the employee.
- Consider other alternatives, such as redeployment.



REDUNDANCIES

In the first instance, unless you are sure that the role is permanently not needed, you can continue with a temporary lay-off or short-time working. This situation can be reviewed periodically in line with government announcements and the public health authorities.

There are two key requirements when considering redundancy. There must be a genuine redundancy rationale and a meaningful consultation process carried out prior to making the final decision.

The redundancy process for employers:

- Put employees role 'at risk' of redundancy.
- Consult with all employees who are affected.
- If there are more individuals than jobs, and you plan on keeping some staff, conduct a selection process using objective-based criteria such as experience, qualifications and length of service.
- Consider if you need to apply collective consultation.
- Seek volunteers if appropriate.
- Issue redundancy.
- Provide opportunity to appeal.



DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL INVESTIGATES FOUR DAY WORK WEEKS

Dublin City Council has passed a motion calling for a pilot four-day working week for its staff, as councillors supported looking at a trial scheme for a shorter working week. The motion stated: "This council calls on the Chief Executive to engage with the relevant trade unions for City Council staff with a view to piloting, and introducing, a four day working week." Councillor Kevin Donoghue, who proposed the motion, said: "I think, in light of the things that we know about a four-day week, we are in a position where I think it's important for us and Dublin City Council to explore the possibilities of how a four-day week might work for our staff."

HR Team, director, Martina McAuley, said: "Reducing work weeks to four days could increase productivity in terms of how physical and mental wellbeing is looked

after, job satisfaction and improved engagement.

"However, this could bring some complication for employers - implementing a four-day work-week can be difficult as it requires the right support, technology and workplace culture. This could also have negative impacts on customer satisfaction with reduced service days and measures must be taken to ensure this is cost effective for the organisation."

A four-day working week is expected to have positive environmental impacts in reducing carbon emissions, due to less days of commuting per year.

The government launched a six-month trial programme of a four-day working week, allocating €150,000 to researching the idea so as that organisations participating in the scheme do not experience loss of income.



HR TEAM SURVEYS WORKPLACE STRESS FROM WORKING REMOTELY

The Government's roadmap for reopening society and businesses recommends that remote working continues for all workers or businesses that are able to do so.

Since the large-scale move to remote working in March 2020 – HR Team looked at some of the key factors for employers to consider in terms of managing their employees productivity, workplace stress and wellbeing while they are working from home.

The research, commissioned by HR Team, found that all employees surveyed in Ireland want to continue with some form of remote employment once the coronavirus pandemic ends.

In relation to worker productivity, 28.6% of team managers surveyed believe that remote working positively improved the productivity of their team, while 42.9% believe that remote working made no difference to the team's productivity. Respondents were divided on the subject of productivity, with employee responses suggesting a higher level of productivity while working from home. The majority (78.9%) of workers said they feel a lot more productive – with

60% rating working from home as being very satisfied. Only 28.6% of employers felt that their workers productivity had increased.

More time was consumed (71.4%) in meetings for employers, while only 21.1% of employees felt that their time in meetings had increased since working from home.

Some respondents stated that they felt stressed as a result of working from home. The factors reported as reasons for increased stress from employers included:

- Not being able to reach other members of the team immediately.
- Increased workload and the ability to switch off.
- Structuring meetings.
- Productivity and responding to email and calls.
- Lack of social interaction.

In contrast, employees stated the following disadvantages as:

- Ergonomic issues.
- Lacking the social aspect for mental health.
- Blurred lines between working extra hours and not switching off.
- Less collaboration with the work team.
- Distractions from home.

When asked about the best aspects of working from home, the majority of the survey's participants said that not having a daily commute, less time wasted talking to colleagues about work related issues and less distractions were the key benefits.

Only 10.5% of respondents felt that their mental health had been negatively impacted by having to work from home. With 73.3% saying their mental health was not impacted whatsoever.

The survey revealed that the biggest challenges facing people working remotely is lacking social interaction, exercise, creating a suitable workspace, maintaining structure and a separation

space when both working and living at home. Meanwhile, the merging of home and work environments resulted in almost one-quarter of respondents struggling to switch off at the end of the day.

From the survey findings, enabling some sort of home-working arrangement would appear sensible, both from an employee satisfaction for improved morale and productivity perspective. Time and money savings for employees make economic sense and employers will also reckon in the need for less office space and infrastructure for remote workers too.

Besides from the life seismic shift spurred by the sudden work from home recommendations in March 2020 to

reduce the spread of Covid-19, this will now be legally enforced under Irish law. The 'Working from Home Bill' entitles employees to legally request remote working under new legislation the government plans to introduce this year. The government will also promote blended working - providing employees with more flexibility to choose when and where they work.

The 'Right To Disconnect' bill - a legally admissible code of practice on the right to disconnect from work - covering phone calls, emails and switch-off time has also been introduced. This means employees will have the right to:

1. Not routinely perform work outside their normal working hours.

2. Not to be penalised for refusing to tend to work matters outside of their normal working hours.

3. Employers have a duty to respect an employee's right not to be routinely contacted outside of working hours.

Employees in the State will also have the option to permanently work from home.

Employers' responses to this were interesting; certain respondents were not aware of the legislation changes while others are in favour of the legal changes as employees are not expected to respond outside of working hours. Certain respondents agreed that this will improve workplace structure and is only the beginning of a natural progression to a remote working model of employment.

HRQ&A

Can I mandate the vaccine for employees?

We would recommend that you encourage employees to take the vaccine but do not make this mandatory. There are a number of risks associated with a mandatory policy such as:

- Unfair dismissal
- Constructive dismissal
- Discrimination claims
- Victimisation claims



While employers can encourage employees to receive the vaccine, it is important to highlight that employers cannot mandate their employees to receive it. Rights such as bodily integrity, autonomy and privacy are protected by the Irish Constitution.

Should I Implement Antigen Testing in The Workplace?

Employers have been considering antigen testing as one measure to help re-open their organisations. Communication and consultation are fundamental to rolling this out. Antigen testing should only be carried out with the employee's consent.

It is advised that employers have a clear policy in place on this and consider in what situations antigen tests can be carried out. Measures should be put in place in case of positive tests, and all data should be held securely in line with GDPR.

It's advised that staff involved must be trained and tests should only be carried out if necessary and incorporated into a risk assessment.



FORTHCOMING HR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW WEBINARS IN 2021

Whether you have a specific HR question related to Covid-19 or you want to keep up with the ever-evolving developments, we invite you to join our experts as they discuss the key areas that are affecting employers right now.

Registration is free, and the list of upcoming webinars are below.

Thursday, September 23

Recruitment and Selection

Join the webinar [here](#).

Wednesday, October 13

Health and Safety Obligations for Employers

Join the webinar [here](#).

Thursday, October 28

Managing Social Media in the Workplace

Join the webinar [here](#).

Wednesday, November 17

Health and Safety Obligations for Employers with Home Workers

Join the webinar [here](#).

Thursday, November 25

Managing the Probationary Period

Join the webinar [here](#).

Thursday, December 16

Setting Employee Targets for the Year Ahead

Join the webinar [here](#).

Cost of Webinars: Complimentary

Who should participate?

Line managers, supervisors/team leaders, middle/senior managers, HR personnel and business owners.

Do you have an employment law question?

We help business start-ups, SMEs and large multinational organisations. Call to speak to us today on any aspect of employment law or strategic human resource services.

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