



HR Business Consultants

NEWSLETTER

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The Work Day Edition



Welcome from Jane



The working day has changed dramatically in recent years. From flexible working arrangements and remote work policies to managing attendance, annual leave and employee expectations, employers are navigating a workplace that looks very different from just a few years ago.

In this edition of our newsletter, we explore some of the most common challenges employers face in managing the modern workplace and provide practical guidance to help you approach them with confidence.

Inside this edition:

- Reversing remote working arrangements
- Dealing with lateness
- Holiday entitlements
- Managing Summer holiday requests
- Flexible working options for small businesses

These articles provide practical guidance for the day-to-day realities of running a business. Our aim is to help you create a working day that is productive, well-organised and beneficial for both your business and your employees.



Can I reverse remote working without risking resignations or claims?

Thinking about reversing remote working for your employees? It's something many business owners are considering right now. But rushing the process or missing out crucial steps could end up costing you more in the long run. Before making any changes, you need to understand the risks and how to do things properly.

Risk 1: You could lose good people

If you bring people back to the office on a whim, you could lose people you can't easily replace. Good employees who've been working well from home won't all accept the change quietly. Some will leave; others will start looking. In a small team, losing even one or two key people is disruptive and expensive.

Risk 2: Productivity may go down

Whilst culture and productivity may be better in the office, some roles genuinely work well remotely. Reversing remote working for everyone without considering alternatives may not actually enhance productivity in the way you expect.

Risk 3: Legal and formal risks

Employees with caring responsibilities or disabilities may argue that removing remote working puts them at a disadvantage. That opens the door to discrimination claims. Since April 2024, employees can request flexible working from their first day of employment. If someone submits a request, you have to follow a statutory process. You can't simply say no because you've decided everyone needs to be in the office.

Employees are also more willing to use formal channels than they were a few years ago. If you handle this poorly, you could face grievances that cost money, take up time and damage the working relationship.

What to check before making changes

Start with your contracts. If remote working was agreed as a permanent change, written into the contract or confirmed in

a letter, it may now be a contractual term. Removing it isn't as simple as issuing a new instruction.

If it was described as temporary or discretionary, you have more room to move. But even then, what you've allowed in practice over a sustained period can create an implied term. Think about whether every role genuinely needs the same arrangement. A blanket approach is easier to communicate but harder to justify if challenged.

How to reduce the risk

If you decide the commercial case is strong enough, there are practical steps that reduce your exposure.

- Be honest and specific about your reasons. "We want people back in the office" won't hold up. Explain the business rationale clearly, whether that's collaboration, development, client service or operational need.
- Consult before you confirm. Talk to your team before making a final decision so they feel heard. Skipping consultation is one of the quickest ways to trigger grievances.
- Consider a phased approach. A trial period of 2 or 3 days in the office gives you data and gives employees time to adjust. It also shows a tribunal, if it ever came to that, that you acted reasonably.
- Document everything. Keep a record of your rationale, the consultation you carried out and the decisions you made. If someone challenges the change later, this is what protects you.
- Apply changes consistently. If you bring some people back but let others stay remote without a clear, role-based reason, you open yourself up to claims of unfair treatment.
- If you're not sure whether the commercial upside is worth the retention and legal risk, get advice before you act. A middle ground that gives you more structure without a full reversal may be the smarter move.

Where an HR consultant can support you

An experienced HR consultant can review your contracts and policies, assess your legal exposure and help you to design a consultation plan that reduces risk.

We can also support you in handling flexible working requests correctly and help your managers to deliver consistent, defensible decisions.

If you're considering changing your remote or hybrid setup, speak to us before making any announcements. A short conversation now could prevent resignations or claims later.



LATEST NEWS

What to do when people are late

Most lateness issues do not start as a big problem. It usually begins with one person arriving late once or twice, then it slowly turns into a pattern that disrupts the team and creates frustration that you did not plan for.

Here are the patterns we see most often:

Sometimes people are not clear on what “on time” actually means

Hybrid working, flexible starts and informal arrangements can create mixed expectations without anyone realising.

Many owners put off the first conversation

Not intentionally, but because they do not want to overreact, create tension or say the wrong thing.

Most issues settle quickly when you address them early

A simple, honest check in often clears things up before it affects the rest of the team.

Clear expectations make the biggest difference

When start times, availability and communication are consistent, lateness usually improves naturally and does not become a bigger pattern.

If lateness is becoming a theme in your business and you want a calm, fair way to deal with it, we can talk you through the right approach for your situation.

What have you found helps the most when someone keeps arriving late?

A fifth of workers are not taking their full holiday entitlement

Research from Timetastic found that around 1 in 5 UK employees fail to use their full annual leave because of work pressures. Over a quarter finished last year with more than 15 unused days.

Mid-level managers and supervisors were most likely to skip holidays, with around a quarter saying that they felt unable to step away. Nearly 1 in 10 said that they felt guilty simply for taking their earned leave.

For small business owners, this is worth paying attention to. People who do not take proper breaks are more likely to burn out, make mistakes or eventually leave. If your team is hoarding leave or quietly working through it, that is a sign worth exploring. A quick check on where your team's leave balances stand could flag issues before they become problems.

Remote job adverts have dropped to their lowest level since 2020

Data from Adzuna shows that remote job adverts in the UK fell by 42% over the past year, reaching their lowest point since March 2020. Overall vacancies also declined for a sixth consecutive month, with competition for roles rising to an estimated 2.3 jobseekers per vacancy.

For small business owners, this shift creates both a challenge and an opportunity. If you are recruiting, you may find more candidates available than in recent years. But if you are relying on office-based roles to attract talent, keep in mind that flexibility still ranks as one of the top priorities for jobseekers.

Getting the balance right between what your business needs and what candidates expect could make the difference in who you attract.



How to handle summer holiday requests fairly

Does the thought of all those overlapping summer leave requests give you a feeling of dread? You're not alone.

I hear it all the time from business owners. Most don't have a process in place for deciding who gets approved and who doesn't, which causes anxiety and confusion.

The last thing you want to do is make a decision that's hard to defend later but causes resentment because some team members feel that they've been treated unfairly. Let's look at what you can do when multiple holiday requests come in at the same time.

Know the law

You're allowed to refuse a holiday request as long as you give the employee notice. The notice you give has to be at least as long as the leave they requested. So, if someone asks for 5 days off, you need to give them 5 days' notice that it's been refused.

You can also set rules in your policy about when leave can and can't be taken and you can require a minimum notice period for requests.

What you can't do is refuse requests in a way that discriminates, for example by always prioritising parents during school holidays and refusing everyone else.

Set clear policy rules

Define notice periods for holiday requests, set out how clashes will be resolved and communicate this to the whole team before summer hits.

Use a proper booking system

Emails and verbal requests get lost. A simple HR software system lets you see who is off, who has requested what, where clashes exist and what each person's remaining balance looks like, all in one place.

Make decisions quickly

Sitting on a request for 2 weeks while you figure it out frustrates everyone and makes planning harder for the employee.

Plan ahead for busy periods

Encourage the team to submit summer requests early. The earlier requests come in, the easier clashes are to manage.

Spread leave across the team

If one person has banked 3 weeks for August and everyone else has taken theirs steadily throughout the year, that

creates pressure you could have managed sooner. Also, plan properly so the people still working during someone else's holiday aren't left to pick up the slack with no plan in place.

Know when to say no

Business needs come first but explain the reason clearly. A short explanation goes a long way.

Pick a system and stick to it

You might decide on:

- First come, first served is the simplest and easiest to defend. Whoever requests first gets priority.
- Rotation works well when the same people always miss out. If someone lost out on their preferred week last summer, they get priority this year.

Whatever you choose, you need a legitimate reason for refusing a request that's applied consistently, not used selectively.

Always document the decision and the reason behind it. HR software makes this all easier

Managing holiday requests manually works until it doesn't. And for most small businesses, it stops working around June.

HR software will:

- Give you visibility over who is off, who has requested leave and where clashes sit, all in real time
- Create a digital trail that shows decisions were made consistently. Employees can check their own balance, submit requests and see team availability without chasing you for answers
- Flag patterns you might not spot yourself, like one team being short-staffed every August

We can review your annual leave policy, help you to set up or optimise HR software to handle requests properly and advise on specific clashes or disputes before they escalate.

If summer leave planning already feels chaotic, HR software can take the pain away. Get in touch and we'll show you how.

6 flexible working options that work for small businesses



**Not sure how to implement the right setup for your business?
Contact us and we can help.**

Want to make your team more productive?

You need to encourage your people to take more time off.

Whether that means simply reminding your employees to use their annual leave, increasing their holiday entitlement, or jumping onboard with the unlimited holiday trend, one thing's for sure, well-rested employees are happier, more engaged, and more productive.

Today, we're living in an 'always-on' culture. And while there are some positives to this – it helps businesses to offer their people more flexibility, for example – it also means that burnout is rife.

Time off, even if it's only at home, gives our minds something else to focus on and allows us to recharge our batteries, even allowing us to sleep better.

And that means that when we come back to work, we're refreshed, more creative, and our attention spans are better.

There are health benefits too. Time off can lower blood pressure, improve mental health, and even reduce the risk of heart disease.

Of course, you're not expected to allow everyone to just take leave when they feel like it. Your annual leave needs to be managed correctly. But make sure everybody knows what leave they're entitled to, and how to arrange time off.

Need a confidential chat?

If you have a problem brewing in your business, you're worried about something or you simply need some expert HR support then please get in touch with us for a confidential chat.

A quick conversation could save you from a very costly mistake and we could give you the clarity you need to decide your next steps with confidence.

Whether you're a new or existing client, we offer a free 30 min chat (without any obligation to buy from us in the future).

Get in touch to arrange.

