

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

# The Impact of Flexible Working

Assessing the adoption of flexible working in the supply chain industry

- ◆ Hiring Challenges
- ◆ Productivity vs Company Culture
- ◆ How to Attract Top Talent





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Introduction – Is the Future Flexible?



Productivity vs Company Culture



How Companies Plan to Attract Top Talent



Summary - A Balancing Act





## Introduction- **Is the Future Flexible?**

There is a fundamental change to the nature of work, and the advent of continual digitalization has resulted in employees wanting more control over their schedules and where they work.

Flexible working has gained traction on a global scale and is shaping how top talent evaluates offers and companies. For many, some degree of flexibility is essential to achieving a healthy work-life balance. This can in turn, result in a happier and more productive workforce, which benefits businesses. However, moving processes away from the office can also have a negative impact on company culture, as teams interact less, decreasing productivity.

The ambiguity of the situation made us wonder: What is the real impact of flexible

working? How do supply chain leaders view flexible work? Do flexible arrangements increase or decrease productivity in their view, and how do they see the relationship between culture and flexibility?

To answer these questions and to explore the state of flexible working across supply chain, here at DSJ Global we engaged with top businesses to understand their flexible working strategy.

Featuring responses from companies across the US and Europe\*, we take a look at what flexibility will remain and what may change over the course of time, understanding what they feel the benefits and the challenges this way of working brings to the modern workplace.



## The Hiring Challenges in Supply Chain

Organizations face a number of challenges when it comes to hiring skilled supply chain professionals.

As industries with supply chains face adapting to advances in digitalization, as well as reducing costs becoming more pertinent than ever before due to macroeconomic events, finding top talent is key to long-term business success.

Yet top talent in the supply chain industry is hard to come by, and it's an ever-tightening talent pool. Repercussions are also still felt from some reducing workforces during the pandemic.

**37% of survey respondents cite the shortage of qualified candidates now as their biggest challenge in hiring, followed by an increasing competition for top talent (20%).**



There is a shortage of qualified candidates in the market, as economic risks are causing professionals to be less likely to move roles. A lot of the candidates are also in two or three other processes, meaning companies have to be competitive with the speed of their interview process, as well as the salaries being offered. In addition, we are also seeing more counter offers to retain talent, featuring more flexible hours and increased responsibilities, as well as increased salaries. Due to the competition, salaries seem to be rising, and this could be a reason as to why more companies are struggling to retain talent, as candidates are being offered something they can't compete with. ”

**Emily Cook, Senior Vice President -**

Head of Procurement Search, DSJ Global

We see time and time again companies of all sizes counteroffering in the hiring process, therefore it makes sense that 10% have difficulty in retaining talent. More companies are vying for the attention of a tight talent pool, and we are seeing the supply chain industry adapt their employee benefits to ensure they are attracting the right talent to achieve their business goals.

Whilst competitive compensation and benefits are a great way to attract talent, and where appropriate retain existing, external factors can cause challenges when it comes to hiring.

For 10% of supply chain leaders surveyed, current economic uncertainty presents the biggest challenge, as potential new hires have become cautious about moving companies with the common myth of 'last in, first out' theory causing them to stay put. The least recognized challenges in hiring are creating and effectively marketing their employer brand and their current ED&I strategy, all of which can have a knock-on effect when deciding the pros and cons for flexible working.



Counter offers have increased in an effort to retain existing talent. However, companies need to dive deeper into why the talent was interviewing in the first place. It is no longer enough to just increase someone's base salary in hopes of them staying – being more flexible with hours, listening to feedback, and increasing scope/responsibility are just some of the things talent are more interested in fixing with their current employers - not just compensation. ”

Emily Prendergast  
Executive Director, DSJ Global





If candidates are offered a working from home role, it is a lot easier for them to accept, as the impact to their lifestyle may be less.

Often the very best talent is not actively looking for a new opportunity. If say, an individual is working in the office five days a week and logistically working from home a few days may be more convenient to family life, flexible working can therefore make an offer more compelling when attracting top supply chain professionals.

Pre-pandemic employers would use compensation as the main strategy to hire or retain talent. **Today, employers don't always need to increase someone's salary or shares, but can offer them flexible working to entice them.**”

Ross Williams,  
Senior Vice President, DSJ Global





#### Survey respondents current work model

- 20% offer fully remote roles
- 63% have hybrid work models
- 17% require full-time presence in the office

## The Current State of Flexible Working in Supply Chain

While some Supply Chain positions require a full onsite presence, many companies offer flexibility where possible.

Of the business leaders we surveyed, 20% offer fully remote roles, and 17% require full-time presence in the office. The majority at 63%, perhaps since the pandemic, have hybrid work models providing flexibility to their employees.

**Interestingly, out of the 17% who don't currently offer flexible working options, 38% plan to introduce them, while the remaining 62% will maintain their current policies for the foreseeable future.**

Either these roles do not lend themselves to remote working, or companies prefer an in-office presence. This may be because they have seen more productivity, or they want to support the creation of an office culture.

However, the fact that a third will be planning to introduce new flexible options demonstrates that these companies are figuring out a way to keep their workforce happy, and/or how to attract new talent to their business. Potentially with new tools in supply chain it could also be more cost effective on their business' bottom line to reduce office space.

## How Flexible is Flexible?

It is important to note that before we look at what our clients highlighted as the positives and/or negatives of flexible working, we firstly need to take stock of what flexibility is. This is because what is flexible to one company may be vastly different to another.

**The standard that we see, and our clients also voiced, is 2-3 days a week in the office. The second most popular practice is 3-4 days in the office.**

The nature of flexible work is dynamic, and companies that try a model may find that it does not fit their needs or affects their processes in unexpected ways, and may have to revert back to ways that best suit them. Of the companies that have a flexible working policy, 71% are not planning to change any time soon, unlike the 21% who will plan to increase their office presence and the last remaining 8% will be in the office less than before.



## Productivity vs Company Culture

### PRODUCTIVITY

**While 40% have seen no change in team productivity, and 16% state that they have seen a decrease in productivity, 44% of supply chain executives say flexible work has increased overall productivity, which could be a reason why some may be changing their policies.**

Other research is optimistic too: A Stanford study of 16,000 workers over a 9-month period found that working from home increased productivity by 13%. Of course, whether flexible working actually increases productivity depends on the role and situation of the professional, as it also comes with an element of trust and having clear expectations on delivery standards. It is hard for leaders to roll out a working model that works and appeals to all, knowing that some people excel working from home, and others prefer the focused environment of the office.

As the survey shows, flexible arrangements are not set in stone. If companies find that their flexible models are hurting productivity, they may want to engage with their employees about increasing the presence requirement or vice versa. However, chopping and changing can cause further headaches down the line, for people who have joined a business that offers those flexible working models, and for the HR and internal comms teams who would have to change contracts and policies.

“Clients I work with who offer a hybrid work schedule, such as three days in office and two days remote, find it easier to drive company values and maintain company culture than those with 100% remote working, which in some cases has taken a significant investment of time and money to build.”

Ross Williams,  
Senior Vice President, DSJ Global







## COMPANY CULTURE

Creating relationships and being around your team and wider colleagues is an easy way to get a sense of company culture. In the new world, or not so new, we are seeing our clients increasingly tell us that the way they build that virtually is a challenge. In small moments on desk/in the office, work can be discussed and ideas can be born in a way that perhaps is not as natural on a digital or virtual platform. It was interesting to discover the impact remote working has had on company culture for those that already have it in place.

**In an almost tie, 37% say it has negatively impacted company culture, and the other 37% state it has positively impacted. The remaining said it made no difference.**

This is quite telling and may suggest there are some companies that are investing in working from home more than others, in terms of mental health support, clear expectations from those at home, engagement and communication tools, and allowing days in

the office to collaborate and get that one-to-one time.

“

Having a positive working environment is always important to the candidate. Having a team and company culture that is supportive, collaborative, and approachable is what people are often looking for when changing roles. I think it is important to keep flexibility for employees, and companies need to adapt and learn new ways of ensuring they can keep a positive company culture.”

Emily Cook, Senior Vice President - Head of Procurement Search, DSJ Global

We know a lack of in-person contact can hinder the formation of trust, connection, and common purpose, which are three key ingredients of any effective working relationship. When companies are considering more flexible working they must ensure they focus on delivering this remotely.

## Impact on company culture

37% positive

26% no impact

37% negative





## The Future of Hiring in Supply Chain

With quite a high percentage saying flexible working impacts company culture, the truth is that the ability to adopt a hybrid or remote framework can make employers more competitive when hiring. The ability to work from home has become a staple of expectations in conversations between our expert consultants at DSJ Global and professionals considering future career opportunities, and our survey results corroborate this - 67% of respondents say their flexible working policy has helped attract top talent. That is a high percentage, and for those companies that are not offering any flexibility, they could be dramatically missing out on talent that could move their business forward.



Even for engineering and manufacturing roles which traditionally required 100% onsite work, companies have been slowly incorporating at least 1 WFH day to improve work-life balance and burnout. ”

Emily Prendergast,  
Executive Director, DSJ Global

To scale their business, companies need skilled professionals to help them. We are seeing our clients hire more than ever, as

**37% of respondents stated that business growth is the driving force behind their corporate hiring plans for the next year, followed by 25% with potential attrition. While 11% need skilled talent to execute new projects, 10% are looking to fill a skill or knowledge gap to further support their business.**

Only a small proportion, 13%, have no plans to hire in the next twelve months.



## How Companies Plan to Attract Top Talent

With a growing shortage of qualified candidates, competition for talent in the supply chain industry is at an all-time high. As our survey respondents demonstrate, companies need to have clear strategies in mind to attract and retain the professionals they need to achieve their business goals and set themselves up for long-term success.

**Responding to candidates' growing demand for flexible working, 29% of companies plan to offer more flexibility and improve work-life balance to attract professionals. In line with this focus on employee wellbeing, 21% of companies will offer more competitive benefits packages and 22% aim to also improve ED&I efforts.**

Compensation will always be a key motivator, but supply chain leaders are interestingly placing more emphasis on expanding a roles' responsibilities, prioritizing development through programs and initiatives, than on reviewing compensation packages.



It's important to note compensation is markedly different dependent on the state. So if you are interested in a candidate from New York or Los Angeles, and your organization is based in Texas, the cost of living will differ and therefore you will have to pay more, even with flexibility. ”

Ross Williams,  
Senior Vice President, DSJ Global

Finding the perfect strategy to meet hiring goals is complex, with ideal measures depending on multiple factors. Still, offering flexibility in terms of remote working seems to be a powerful lever to turn for companies who are struggling to meet their talent needs.



Candidates are asking about flexibility as much as they ask about compensation, so it is an increasing priority for them. Companies are losing out on top talent, and losing their own talent as well, due to not giving flexibility or hybrid working. We are therefore seeing companies embracing flexibility more. ”

Emily Cook, Senior Vice President -  
Head of Procurement Search, DSJ Global





## Summary - A Balancing Act

**With 82% of supply chain leaders in our global network offering some form of flexible work arrangement, either fully remote or hybrid, flexibility is clearly here to stay... and the key word is being flexible.**

Given the balance of the pros and cons, it may seem as though there is no one size fits all for companies wondering whether decreasing office attendance will negatively impact productivity and culture.

Instead, it demonstrates a nuanced approach is required in attracting and retaining talent into an organization. At DSJ Global, we have seen many companies excel with our help by tailoring flexible policies to meet their needs, while still maintaining an attractive corporate culture. Their increased willingness to offer candidates hybrid or remote work has proven beneficial in attracting the skilled professionals that they may have never been able to secure before, enabling them to accelerate their business forward.

Offering clients talent mapping, we help businesses make the right choice depending on the professionals they are trying to attract, the sector they are in, their region, and lastly what the competition is doing. Through talent discovery and research we can better understand, together with you, what is best for you and your business.

The degree of remote or hybrid desirability varies from candidate to candidate. At DSJ Global we have a deep connection to our network of qualified professionals, enabling us to identify candidates who align with a company's values. As partners to both businesses and individuals, our consultants guide both parties through the negotiation process to create a compelling offer that meets everyone's needs - whether this includes a degree of flexibility depends on the role, the company, and of course, the candidate. Fortunately, companies have several options for attracting qualified professionals, from compensation to benefits and development opportunities.



## Key Takeaways

Through assessing the adoption of flexible working in the supply chain industry, we have uncovered the following key takeaways:

### 1

#### **Flexibility is integral to a competitive offer**

In a tight talent pool, being able to offer flexible working models can help you stand out amongst the rest, and may also positively impact not just attracting talent, but also retaining your workforce.

### 2

#### **But flexibility must be done right**

The equally split survey results on whether flexibility has been positive or negative for company culture reveals that companies must strive to keep company culture alive if they want hybrid working to work long term.

### 3

#### **A nuanced approach may be best**

A one-size-fits-all approach to offering flexibility may be equal, but it is not equitable. Hiring managers and supply chain leaders may need to adopt different working models to individuals, albeit this may impact the workload of HR and policymakers. Ironically, to fully embrace flexible working, one must be flexible with flexibility.





## Key Considerations

When considering implementing a form of flexible working, there are also some key points to consider:

### 1

#### **Your product or service, and the customer service for the end-user**

How may the quality of what you do be potentially affected or impacted by altering your working model?

### 2

#### **Your employees**

Could flexibility affect and impact the motivation or loyalty of employees to your business?

### 3

#### **Your company's mission & values**

Some companies put huge amounts of thought, care, time, and money, into strategy and principles built on values that employees live and breathe. Will you invest in ensuring this can be maintained through working from home?



## About DSJ Global

As the supply chain industry rapidly evolves to become more digital, localized, and sustainable, organizations are facing the challenge of sourcing in-demand, business-critical professionals to manage these ever-increasing, complex structures.

From increasing transparency to encourage greener practices, to implementing secure technology to protect supply chains from cyber threats, organizations are enacting transformational change and need high-caliber talent to be able to future-proof their operations and remain resilient.

We support businesses with the very best talent that will shape the supply chain industry of tomorrow, ensuring the world's goods keep moving efficiently along the way.

## OUR SPECIALISMS

- Engineering
- Logistics
- Planning
- Procurement
- Supply Chain Leadership
- Technical Operations



## \*Data analysis

Out of the clients that took part:

80% were based in the United States

20% were based in Europe

Almost half of respondents, 48%, hold C Suite or group director level positions



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