

# Flexible working The small business way

Build strong and productive teams with  
a flexible approach to work

Empower your team members to  
work at their best and enjoy the  
benefits that flexible working brings



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# 1.

How flexibility  
can become  
your superpower

# How flexibility can become your superpower



Flexible working doesn't come naturally to every business — especially if you're used to a more traditional approach to work. When you swap the standard 9-5 and a leased office for a new alternative, it can take some time to get used to.

This is an experience we went through at Charlie. We've been working flexibly since 2020, and have spent the last 5+ years working to create our own version of "flexible" that works for our team.

Switching to flexible working can take some adjustment, but after a few short months we discovered plenty of benefits, including:

- **Lower costs** — we need a much smaller office space
- **More meaningful connections** — people meet up less frequently, but with more intention
- **Higher productivity** — teams work according to their own energy peaks, and complete tasks more efficiently
- **Better employee retention** — our people feel trusted to work at their best, and supported by our flexible working policies
- **Returning talent** — employees come back to Charlie as they appreciate our approach to work

These days, the most talented candidates are looking for at least some flexibility in the workplace — whether it's hybrid or remote working, 9-day fortnights, or flexible working hours. Sticking to a rigid, traditional approach to work can mean you miss out on the best talent.

We're here to show you that flexible working is possible with a small business, and that it can completely transform your culture and productivity for the better.

In this guide, we'll walk you through how we introduced and continue to support flexible working here at Charlie. Hopefully it'll inspire you to make the same change, and enjoy a similar uplift in connection, retention, and employee happiness.

"Flexible working isn't a perk, it's a fundamental shift in how we build happier, more productive teams. Trust people to work in a way that suits them, and they'll do their best work."



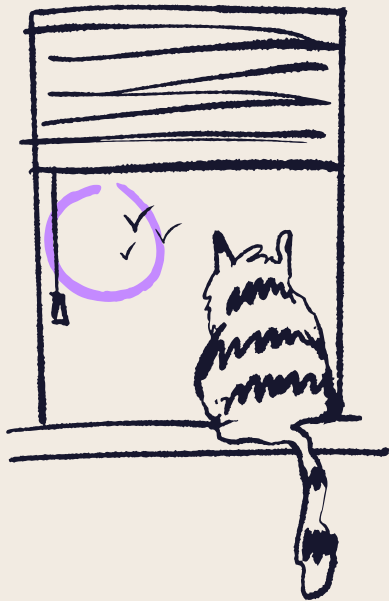
**Ben Gateley**  
CEO & co-founder  
@ CharlieHR



# 2.

The first rule of flexibility: be inflexible

# The first rule of flexibility: be inflexible



Being flexible doesn't mean you have to say goodbye to rules. The best companies have a set of simple rules that guide and support employees, so they feel confident in how to embrace flexible working.

At Charlie, we want our team members to feel as free as possible in their lives and strive to make moments easier, not harder. People can manage their work days to be present for school runs, medical appointments, self care breaks, and more.

Flexible working should empower individuals to take advantage of the benefit in a way that suits their life, responsibilities, and schedule — but there should be some ground rules.

Some simple rules that guide us at Charlie include:

- **Attendance at online company-wide meetings** — these happen 1-2 times per week
- **Being present at our in-person events** — typically 4 events per year
- **Clear communication if working different hours** — so team members know what to expect
- **Filling out nomad working requests for work outside the UK** — allowing us to support them effectively and demonstrate transparency to the rest of the team

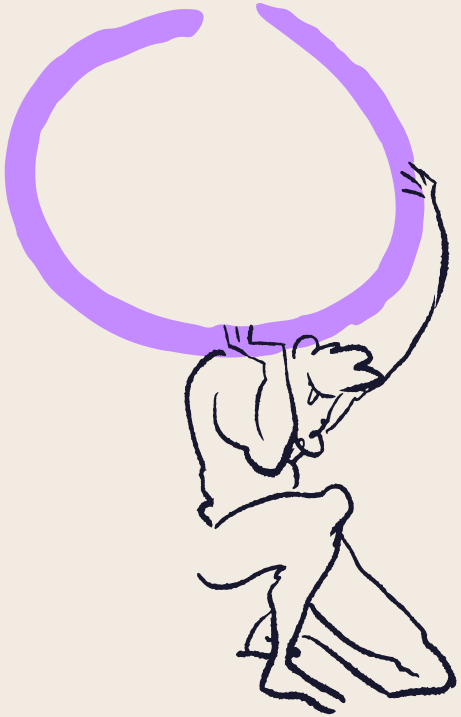
We don't have many rules, but the few that we do have promote transparency, communication, and togetherness in alignment with our core values.

During and after our transition to flexible working, we've successfully hired 40+ individuals that remain highly motivated to succeed — because they know that they're trusted to work in the way that suits them best, with no micromanagement and no unnecessary restrictions.

**"Flexibility works best when it's not a free-for-all. Clear guidelines give people the freedom to work in a way that suits them, without causing chaos for the team."**



**Yasmin Lord-Pottinger**  
People & Talent Partner  
@ CharlieHR



# 3.

## Add backup to your flexible working rules

# Add backup to your flexible working rules



Flexible working rules allow you to set the tone for how it works within your small business. But rules alone aren't enough to sustain the right approach — you also need processes.

The best way to document your processes is within your HR policies. Your policies should explain an employee's rights, responsibilities, and how things are done at your organisation.

Common policies in this space include:

- [Flexible working policy](#)
- [Hybrid working policy](#)
- [Nomad working policy](#)
- [Mental health policy](#)
- [Menopause policy](#)

Another way to support your flexible working approach is through communication. Your focus should be on clarity and transparency, so team members know the best way (and time) to reach someone.

Practical ways to increase transparency in a flexible work environment include:

- Custom Slack statuses or messages
- Up-to-date team calendar
- Emails to team members
- Updated working location across online tools

With the right communication tools and HR processes, flexible working can thrive.

## Need support with your HR policies

Our HR experts at [Charlie Advice](#) can help with that

[Book a call](#)





# 4.

What does being  
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# What does being flexible look like in reality?

It's easy to imagine how these processes make flexible working easier, but what does it look like in practice?

Here are two examples of flexible working in action.

## Example 1 – Caregiving

Lauren's child is unwell, and she needs to collect him from nursery then drop him over to grandma. To do this, she needs to skip a meeting or move it to another day. She's able to work later today or tomorrow to catch up on any work missed.

Here, we'd simply let Lauren move the meeting and update her team. No need to get manager approval — her manager can choose to check in next week to ask if they can support in any way.

In urgent situations, it's best to make it easy for the employee to act quickly and without worry.

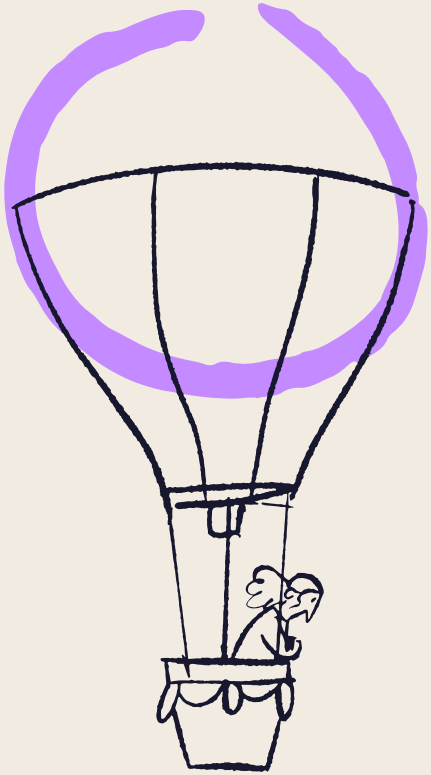


## Example 2 – Working abroad

Harry has decided he wants to move abroad at the end of the year. He's asking if there's room to make an exception for him, as the policy only allows working abroad for up to 90 days per year.

In this situation, we can't agree to make an exception for Harry's case or change the nomad working policy, as it wouldn't serve the whole business. He's able to use the existing policy to its fullest and use the 90 days, but after that he'd need to give his notice.





# 5.

## The importance of the right HR tech stack

# The importance of the right HR tech stack




If your goal is to embrace flexible working, you need the right tools in place to support it.

HR platforms, communication tools, and digital workspaces allow you to work seamlessly across different work patterns — but the trick is to find the best combination for your small business.

Instead of spending hours researching, skip ahead with our recommended tools:

- **Slack** for team communication  **slack**
- **Trello or Notion** for project management   **Trello**
- **Google Meet** for video calls 
- **Miro** for digital collaboration  **miro**
- **Hofy** for providing work equipment  **Hofy**
- **CultureBot** for remote team engagement  **CultureBot**
- **PayCaptain** for payroll (Charlie customers get a 10% discount)  **PayCaptain**
- **Charlie** for all things HR, including: onboarding, time off management, performance management 

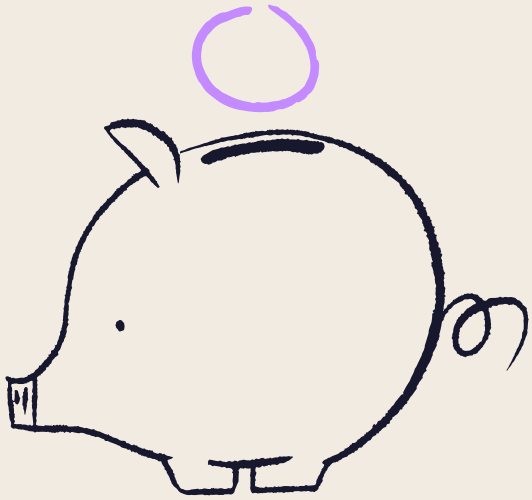
Charlie's [integrations library](#) opens up access to even more tools designed to make remote, hybrid, and flexible work easier — including apps that display working location, help you organise shared workspaces, and manage remote access to software.



## See Charlie in action

[Book a demo](#)

**charlie.e.**



# 6.

Is flexible  
working more  
cost efficient?

# Is flexible working more cost efficient?



Switching from a traditional work model to a more flexible one can seem intimidating. You're giving up an amount of control, and placing more trust in your employees.

You might have concerns at first, but there are an overwhelming number of advantages to embracing flexible working — including it being a more cost efficient way to run a small business.

Some of the best benefits for small businesses include:

- **Increased retention and less turnover** — spend less on recruitment, and more investing in your existing talent
- **Lower office overheads** — move to a smaller office space or go fully remote
- **Enhanced productivity** — save time and innovate faster, with fewer barriers in the way
- **Wider talent pool** — access the best candidates, no matter where they live
- **Increased diversity and inclusion** — attract and retain a more diverse team, with a wider range of experience and ideas
- **No need for an HR person** — manage flexible working with the right HR software, instead of making your first HR hire

Flexible working is ideal for work-life balance and employee happiness, but our experience shows that it also presents some very real cost savings and productivity benefits for businesses.

**“We’d never roll back flexible working because it’s not just about where or when people work, it’s about trust, autonomy, and building a company that actually works for the people in it.”**



**Amy Cowpe**  
COO @ CharlieHR

# Ready to embrace flexible working?



## CharlieHR

- ✓ Automated time off
- ✓ Company calendar
- ✓ Team database
- ✓ Self-service system
- ✓ Slack integration



### Book a free call today

[Book a demo](#)

Chat with Josh, our HR software expert

- ✓ 30 minutes tops
- ✓ Full platform tour

