

#WORKSCHOOLHOURS

Case Study Interview with Lucy Sattler. CEO & Founder of Study Work Grow

My mission is to reduce the work schedule to align with the school schedule: #workschoolhours. Not only do I believe this will be good for people (including non-parents), but I am also convinced it can be commercially smart. This requires a focus on staff outputs instead of staff inputs, and greater flexible workplaces. I am collecting case studies of organisations who are already operating in line with some of these #workschoolhours principles.

Study Work Grow is one of many organisations already offering great flexibility and I spoke with their **CEO & Founder, Lucy Sattler**, about: (a) their principles around structuring work (b) the benefits of their approach and (c) how to practically achieve this.

Principles around structuring work

Study Work Grow staff work from home during the school holidays, and Lucy encourages them to attend activities with their children (collecting the kids from school, watching school cross-country, going to school assemblies etc). This is also the case for non-child related activities, which is applicable for everyone (caring for a new puppy, getting a car serviced, sorting out a plumbing issue at home, doing groceries for an elderly relative, going for a hike etc). Lucy focuses on treating staff like adults and allowing them to meet their life commitments alongside their work commitments. Lucy focuses on staff outputs, and experiences great benefits within her organisation.



This doesn't mean it's a 'free for all', where staff just do whatever they want. Lucy acknowledges that it is not always possible to accommodate every single situation, every single time. But she prioritises supporting staff to meet their personal commitments as much as possible, and Lucy models this herself; being with her children when they come home from school, and attending their school carnivals, sports days etc. Lucy says it is about communication and ensuring that staff have a clear set of outcomes. She cares far more about whether or not her staff have completed their tasks, on time, to a good standard, as opposed to when and where they did that work. Lucy believes that most people want to do well at work. So even if a small portion of staff take advantage of this flexibility, the overwhelming majority do not, and so there is still a significant net benefit to the organisation overall.



Benefits of this approach

Lucy believes that when staff are able to tend to their personal commitments, such as childcare, car servicing, specialist appointments etc (which often, by necessity, fall within the traditional '9-5' workday), they are far more engaged when they are at work. "I would hate it if my staff put off a medical appointment because they couldn't get one outside of normal work hours." Lucy notes, "they are adults. I want to relieve them of this burden, so they can focus when they are at work."

1. **Retention.** Lucy's staff rarely leave, and this saves the huge cost associated with staff attrition.
2. **Productivity.** The team at Study Work Grow are highly focused when they are working. They have been empowered to take care of their 'life' tasks, so are not distracted by these at work.
3. **Innovation.** The lack of distraction means her staff are engaged and bring better ideas to the team and projects.
4. **Staff wellbeing.** Lucy believes that caring for staff is important. Full stop. But she also knows there are commercial benefits to doing so. Happier staff perform better at work.



How to practically achieve this

1. Adopt a **coaching mindset**. This helps staff to be the best versions of themselves, and means the work they actually do is productive, and of good quality.
 - a. Lucy recommends that without this coaching approach, organisations may not achieve the full benefits of offering flexible work practices.
 - b. Organisations may need to invest in training for their managers to achieve this.
2. Provide **clear outcomes** for staff. It is important for staff to be able to take ownership.
 - a. Lucy reminds managers to trust staff and know that they are the experts in their role. Get their input when determining realistic outcomes for each week / month.
 - b. Make sure these **outcomes are measurable**. Don't measure hours at the desk, measure the outcomes that need to be delivered.
3. **Let go of control**. Managers don't need to control how staff spend every minute of their day, nor can they control that staff will complete tasks in the same way they would do so.
 - a. As for 1 and 2, staff are experts in their role, so coach them to achieve their outputs.
4. Help staff to understand how their role **fits in to the bigger picture**. This helps them to take ownership, and care about what they deliver.

Lucy's final word on flexible work practices. "It just makes sense. If you can do this thing to make life better for your organisation and your employees, why wouldn't you do it?... Flexible working is the way of the future and without it, we would not be achieving what we are."

