

Breaking Down Barriers: Finding and Negotiating Flexibility

On Wednesday, 11/13/19, FlexProfessionals moderated a Raytheon and Society of Women Engineers panel event sponsored by the Raytheon Women's Group, Yesnet, and Women in Defense at Raytheon's Woburn campus. The topic, Finding and Negotiating Flexibility, explored the importance of flexibility in the workplace, what companies should think about in operationalizing flexibility, and best practices for hiring managers, employees and job seekers in negotiating flexibility in current and new roles. If you missed the event, here are a few of the key take-aways:

- Flexibility means different things to different people. For yourself, get clear on what flexibility means by asking "What do I need in order to do my job well?" The clearer you are on what you want, the greater the likelihood you'll be successful in your new role.
- Talk about flexibility. The more we bring part-time work schedules, remote-work location, and other aspects of flexibility into the work conversation, the less career-limiting or stigma-related it will seem. Work is work and results are results whether done flexibly or not.
- Very few organizations have comprehensive, consistent flexibility policies though many have a base infrastructure or past experiences with arranging flexibility for employees. Don't be discouraged about asking for flexibility even if it's not a company-wide initiative. Many organizations leave decisions around flexibility to their managers.
- Make the business case for flexibility. Spend some time assembling information for your manager (new or future) and convey the benefits for the business or team. What will the gains for your own productivity be in your proposal? Are there cost-savings or advantages for your employer?
- If your manager has concerns (or even if they don't), make flexibility an iterative "pilot" process. Schedule time to check in early (i.e. 30 days) to see how things are going and adjust. Keep the lines of communication open and revisit arrangements to make adjustments.
- While there's no hard rule about when to bring up flexibility in a job interview, consider the level of flexibility you're seeking. Significant "asks" (i.e. less than 32 hr/wk, primarily remote) should be discussed earlier, while minor flexibility needs (i.e. leaving at 3:00 one day/wk, one remote day/wk) may be worth waiting until the offer stage.

Many thanks to Raytheon and Society of Women Engineers for their work in organizing and hosting this event, and to our panelists for sharing their time, wisdom and information: Karen Kelly, Project Manager, Office of Work/Life at Harvard University; Jennifer Esty, Principal Technical Training Specialist, Raytheon Company IDS; Tamara Maniscalco, Technical Account Manager, X2O Media; and Purvi Booth, Deputy Director, Systems Architecture Design and Integration Directorate, Raytheon Company IDS.