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work flexible hours, have compressed work weeks or follow seasonal scheduling.

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A major benefit for CPAs working in public accounting is the ability to work flextime.

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## **1. Check Your Firm's Policies**

To begin, take a look at your firm's policies regarding flextime. Consider, as well, the firm's official (or unofficial) stance on the expected number of work hours. The firm's idea of flextime may differ radically from yours. A quick "Google" of flextime reveals numerous sarcastic comments about "flexibly" being able to choose between working 16 hours at the client's office, in the firm office or at home, or working half-days "noon to midnight." If you are pioneering the firm's first "real" flextime schedule, expect it to take longer to put in place successfully, as you will likely encounter unawareness of what is required and pushback in terms of work performance expectations.

## **2. Adjust Your Scheduling**

After your flextime schedule has been determined, meet with the work schedulers to ensure that they are aware of your planned work hours and will schedule you accordingly. Approval of a flextime schedule from the "top" doesn't necessarily make it through to those planning the work. Continued effort may be needed to keep work schedulers aware of your flex arrangement and to ensure that your flex hours are maintained. Advance checking is key here – you don't want to advise the engagement partner the day before the job is due to start that you are somehow unavailable.

## **3. Your Workload & Clients**

Keep an eye on your workload and clients. Some clients may not be suitable for a flex schedule and will need to be pared from your client list. Workload creep is an ongoing threat for several reasons, such as you feel guilty for leaving early, or you want to finish something before you leave and it ends up taking several hours. Think carefully about your flex schedule and how it can best work –in terms of team

solidarity and client service. Perhaps a four-day workweek is more manageable than

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is the best measure of work performance.

## 5. Don't Lose Sight Of Your Career

Determine what impact, if any, the schedule will have on your career. In the past, both men and women have complained that flextime threw their careers off track. They were promoted more slowly and often felt their professional careers were hindered. However, as flex schedules become more common, detrimental career effects can be reduced if not eliminated through careful planning and management.

**A success story** – “Mary” (who asked us not to use her actual name for this article), now a tax manager in a national firm, first raised the issue of flextime hours as a two-year senior accountant. At that time, she was working both in tax and audit. She estimates that it took five years to successfully reach her current flex schedule – full-time (and overtime) during the busy season (January to April) and a four-day work week the rest of the year. As a flextime “pioneer” in her firm, it took a while for Mary and the firm to reach mutual agreement on the hours to be worked and then a little longer for the schedulers to understand and schedule her accordingly. Today, Mary credits having a schedule that fits her needs with keeping her enthusiastic about staying in public accounting and engaged in her work.

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