

Flexibility and Adaptability

Synopsis

Flexibility in the workplace means being able to quickly adapt to new circumstances as they arise. An employee who is flexible can change their plans to navigate or overcome unanticipated obstacles. This is especially important in fast-moving and dynamic industries, where the ability to respond to unpredictable events and changing expectations is a valuable asset for employers and employees alike.

➤ **Adaptability**

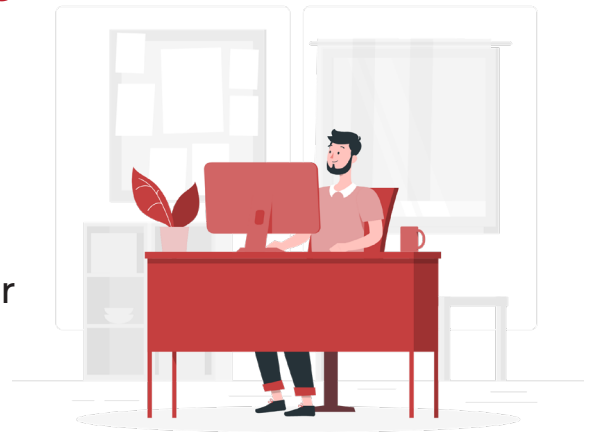
The ability to change (or be changed) to fit changed circumstances.

➤ **Flexibility**

Capacity to be bent, usually without breaking

What is flexibility and what do we mean by adaptability?

Adaptability refers to a change in behaviour or acclimation to a new type of situation and can involve comprehensive changes. Flexibility usually refers to a person giving more or less in the same situation without changing the components or altering their overall approach or behaviour.



➤ **How do we show adaptability and flexibility?**

Here are 5 ways by which you can demonstrate these qualities:

- Staying calm and responding quickly to unexpected situations
- Knowing when to push and when to let go of your ideas
- Taking different roles and responsibilities when needed
- Upskilling and reskilling yourself
- Altering the communication style keeping in mind who you are talking to

ADAPTABILITY IS THE NEW NORM!

➤ What do recruiters want?

Recruiters want applicants to be able to demonstrate that they can adapt to changing circumstances and environments and take on board new ideas and concepts. They want people with the personal confidence to respond positively to change and new ways of working; people who are prepared to rise to the challenge of dealing with the unfamiliar and show they can cope with the new or unexpected.

- “a positive ‘can do’ attitude and a willingness to grasp opportunities”
- “We want you to demonstrate a dynamic approach”
- “We’re after ambitious graduates who can respond with pace and energy to every issue they face...”
- “We are looking for graduates who have the right attitude to change..”
- “...respond positively to change and the challenges and opportunities it brings”

These quotes are all taken from recent graduate job adverts. As you can see, they don't use the words '**adaptable**' or '**flexible**', but these recruiters are looking for candidates who have these qualities. They want candidates who can thrive in a culture of change and continuous improvement, and can be flexible in the way they work and think.

➤ How do you prove to a recruiter you have these skills?

You won't be shortlisted for that job by stating “I can adapt to situations” or “I am flexible in the way I work”, you have to prove it by giving appropriate examples. You can draw on situations like these to help you demonstrate your adaptability:

- Living abroad as part of an exchange programme
- Moving to this country to study
- Balancing your study commitments with part-time work
- Working or living with people of different ages and cultures
- Work experience, particularly placements and internships
- Voluntary work experience



Think of an example of when you have had to adapt to change or had to be flexible in a situation. Then use the STAR technique to describe it:

- S** - Define the Situation
- T** - Identify the Task
- A** - Describe your Action
- R** - Explain the Result



- You are the STAR of the story, so focus on your own actions, even if they were only a small part of a larger whole.
- Tell a story and capture the interest of the reader. Include relevant details but don't waffle.
- Move seamlessly from the situation, through the task, to your actions, and finally to the result.

What is the importance of Workplace Adaptability and flexibility?

Adaptability is when an individual can adapt to changing roles and align with changes in the workplace — devising a solution when faced with unexpected challenges. It is also thinking out of the box. This skill is essential because it widens the horizon of an employee and opens to career achievement.

What is Workplace Flexibility?

It is the ability to evaluate occurrences and adjust to the roles and tasks or the job being offered.

What's the difference between adaptability and flexibility?

“Adaptability is a willingness to confront or change your own ideas and preconceptions. Flexibility is more a willingness to “meet others halfway” procedurally”.



What's also important about these two qualities is that they are among the eight skills leaders will need in the future workplace:

The others are:

- Transparency
- Empathy
- Humility
- Competent and Confident Communication
- Emotional Intelligence
- Commitment to a Vision

“Today’s workplace is, on average, quite a different place than the ones our grandparents and parents knew. We can thank technology for some of this, and shifting social priorities for the rest.”

