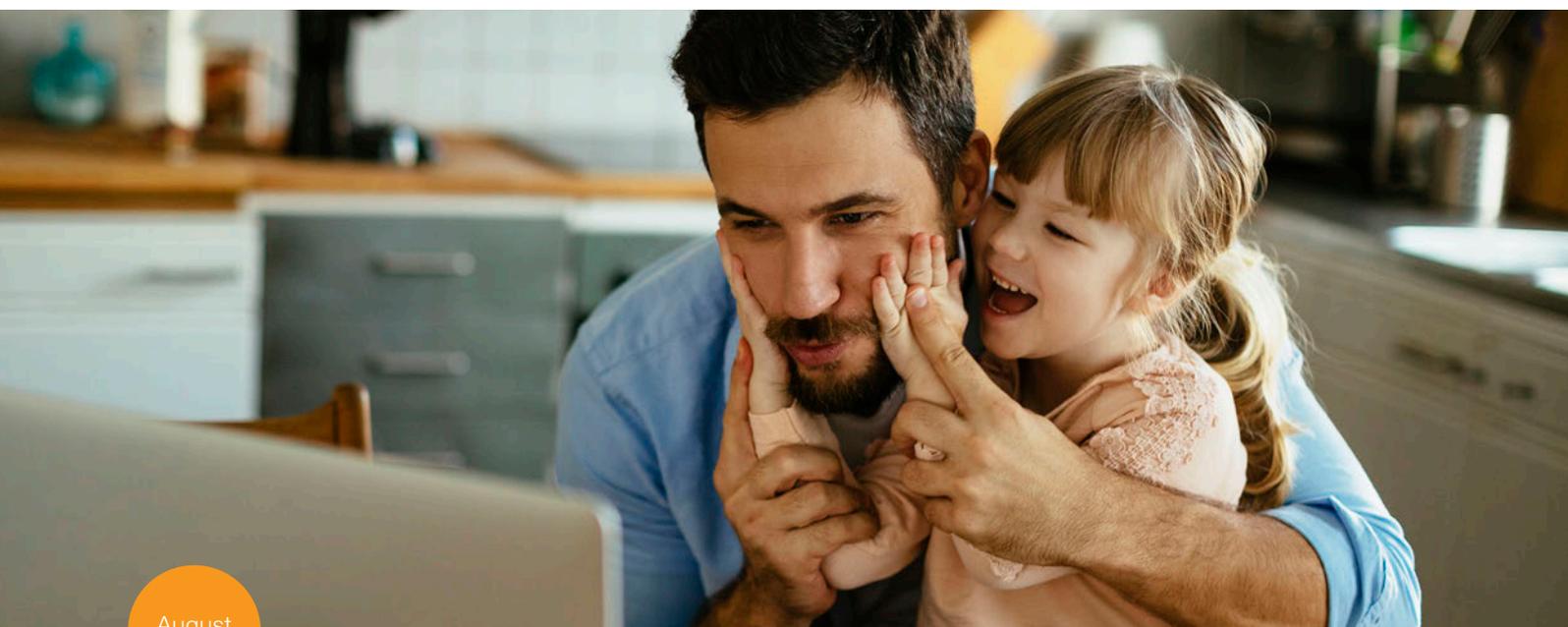


ReThink *Flexibility*

# A Flexible Work Story

How Autopia made flexibility work, and how the business benefited.



August  
2016

## Re-Think: The Way We Work

- Hire the right people
- Create the right environment
- Motivate effectively
- Encourage innovation
- Lead by example



Autopia began in a spare bedroom in 2004, so you could almost say ‘working from home’ is in our DNA. In reality though, flexibility didn’t arrive until 2009, and it was born out of the realities of childcare, school drop offs and sick children with no grandparents around.

It wasn’t a conscious decision to ‘create a better working environment’ – although that’s what happened in the end. It just kind of happened. It made sense, and the thing that really made it work, was the fact that senior management lead by example.

Now it’s a system where almost everyone can benefit. Employees can work from home if the role allows it, and hours can be moved to avoid the rush hour.

What started as a necessity evolved into a better way to work, and over 50% of all Autopia employees now operate under some form of flexible work arrangement.

#### **What are flexible working arrangements?**

A variety of work practices can be gathered together under the umbrella term ‘flexibility’. From job sharing to compressing a working week, flexible start & finish times, to working from home. It’s these last two that are employed to the greatest effect at Autopia.

##### Flexible start & finish times

- Job sharing
- Rostered days off

##### Working from home

- Compressed working week
- Purchased leave

# How did we make it work?

Ad hoc and informal arrangements were negotiated between employees and their managers to begin with. Employees are trusted and treated like adults, so individual flexibility agreements (IFAs) were not required.

[An IFA is a written agreement used by an employer and employee to change the effect of certain clauses in their award or registered agreement.]

## Technology

Much of the equipment and technology required was already in place.

### Laptops

Flexible workers were given laptops, instead of desktops.

### Online collaborative platforms

Autopia's AutoDrive system is central to the operation of the business, and helps smooth collaboration between employees in different locations.

### Remote access to all company systems

Security was of prime importance, and after investigating a number of options, we chose an RSA Authentication Virtual Private Network Key, in conjunction with a high performance firewall, to ensure absolute security.

### Video conferencing facilities

A tool that was already in place for external 'client' meetings, was now used for 'internal' meetings.

### VOIP

Again, a system that was already in place ensured operating from home didn't have any complications with phone lines. All that was required, was an internet connection.

Once it became apparent that working from home was going to be an ongoing, viable option for certain roles at Autopia, there were a number of IT necessities to resolve.

## 3 month trial period

Now, whenever an Autopia employee makes a request to work flexibly it's trialled for three months, reviewed, and then given the green light. So far everyone who has been given a trial arrangement, has achieved the green light to make it permanent.



Watch: 'A Flexible Work Story.'



## So what's the result of all of this?

*Has the business benefited?  
Or has it just become more 'complicated' to organise?*

Well as obvious as it may sound, we discovered the one, resounding benefit of flexibility.

All the other benefits listed here, pale beside this one universal truth of flexibility.

*"When you treat your employees with trust and respect, they treat you in the same way."*



# The benefits of flexible working practices

The business is no longer confined to servicing customers between 8.30am and 5.30pm

This means that people who wish to discuss their vehicle requirements after hours, can do so. This also allows us to cater more easily for clients in different time zones, all over the country.

## Recruitment is easier

The demand for flexibility in the workforce currently outstrips supply, so by setting our stake in the ground in this regard, Autopia has become an extremely desirable place to work.

## Greater productivity, thanks to increased motivation, satisfaction & morale

A recent Australian Work Relations Study<sup>2</sup> showed that for women and men, the ability to balance work and non-work commitments, was by far the most important factor when determining overall job satisfaction.

*“The other factors lined up in order, are – the work itself, job security, total pay, freedom to decide how to do your own work, the hours worked, and finally, your say about what happens in your job.”*

Our experience supports these findings, with employees' motivation reflecting a greater sense of control over their lives. Peak hour commutes can be avoided, child and elderly care managed more effectively. And the flow on effects of all of this include better physical and mental health, reduced stress and fatigue.

All of this has combined to create a more engaged, motivated and productive workforce.

## Improved work-life balance

Employees don't feel like they have to sacrifice their families in order to be successful at work.

## Innovation & focus are enhanced

Flexible hours, and working from home, allow lengthier periods of uninterrupted activity and unsurprisingly, we discovered that successful outputs are much easier to attain under these conditions. Greater focus has been achieved, and 'thinking time' has increased.

What business wouldn't value that kind of benefit?

## Retention levels increased

Increased engagement, combined with the fact that life becomes easier from a logistical stand point, makes a flexible workplace very difficult to leave, and our turnover rate shows this to be true.

## Reduced costs

In addition to a reduction in the significant financial cost of recruitment, associated turnover costs such as loss of momentum & organisational intellect, have been greatly reduced too. Absenteeism, sick leave and tardiness are also costs that have reduced, thanks to flexibility.

Although it hasn't been the case at Autopia, further savings can often be achieved because less real estate is required, and in the case of job sharing, less equipment.

# Flexibility enables Gender Diversity

Autopia has been a supporter of UN Women and its work around gender diversity for a number of years. As our involvement in this area deepens, we realise more and more that flexibility is one of the keys to enabling a gender equal workplace in the future.

Although it can help men and women, women are generally responsible for more primary care giving than men, and therefore more in need of flexible working arrangements to help return to the work force.

Australia wide, more women have made a request for flexibility than men

**58% vs 43%** <sup>4</sup>



Watch: 'A Gender Diversity Story.'

Although the statistics don't show if those requests were accepted, chances are the majority will have to have been, thanks to the Fair Work legislation.

[The Fair Work Act 2009 (FW Act) provides employees with a legal right to request flexible working arrangements if they have been employed for 12 months, and the request can only be refused on reasonable grounds.1]

At Autopia however, more men than women have flexible working arrangements, but that's because we're only at 40% female representation on our gender diversity journey at the moment.

Flexibility at Autopia is role dependent, and gender blind.

## Autopia & UN Women Partnership

Autopia started working with UN Women Australia in 2014 to raise awareness of gender inequality, and help drive gender diversity in the workplace. Together we've hosted intimate lunches & robust panel discussions, published videos and whitepapers – all addressing the issue of inequity that exists in corporate Australia today.

 [Access UN Women Whitepapers & Videos here](#)

<sup>1</sup> Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) clauses 65-66 <sup>2</sup> Australian Work Relations Study 2014, Employee Relations Survey. Base = 3,057 enterprises <sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Gender Indicators, Australia' (Cat No 4125.0, August 2015) <sup>4</sup> Australian Work Relations Study 2014, Employee Relations Survey. Base = 7,505 respondents. <sup>5</sup> AHRI, 'Turnover and Retention' October 2015



## Summary

*People come to work at Autopia, and stay. Flexibility is a major part of that. **27% of all Autopia employees have been with the business more than five years.** It just seems like common sense really, treat your employees with respect, and they'll do the same to you. It's as simple as that.*

27% of all Autopia employees have been with the business more than five years.

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Life is difficult enough. Why not make it a little easier.

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### Autopia

Autopia is a financial services firm specialising in novated leasing for the Australian corporate sector, and is part of ASX-listed Smartgroup Corporation. Through specialisation, consultation and technological innovation, Autopia delivers “Intelligent Car Ownership” to hundreds of organisations and thousands of drivers all over the country.

### ‘Re-Think’: The Way We Work

The Re-Think concept is based on challenging convention. It started with our partnership with UN Women, focusing on the issue of Gender Equality, and has evolved into a range documents that help us re-examine the workplace.

*“If you have always done it that way, it is probably wrong.”*

Charles Kettering, Head of Research, General Motors, 1920 - 1947

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