

Flex it Up

In March 2019, Sonae MC (a Sonae Group branch) launched *Flex it Up*, a flexible work program to enhance employees' wellbeing and personal and professional fulfilment by improving their work-life integration.

Acknowledging employees as a determining factor for the company's growth and strength and that attracting and retaining talent is a constant challenge for business, Sonae MC has started reinventing its ways of working to become more agile, humanized, and digital and to keep employees happy, engaged and productive. Following the motto 'Flex work, full life', Sonae MC's *Flex it Up* program is based on a philosophy of trust, in which the company gives its employees the autonomy to choose among different options to better manage their periods of presence and absence in their workplaces.

Understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all formula and that each reality and type of job role requires targeted solutions, *Flex it Up* consists of five different initiatives:



1. **Remote Work:** Work from home once a week, maximum 4 days/month;
2. **Flexiwork:** Adjustable schedule which allows employees to start and finish their workday when they want (considering 'core' times);
3. **Extra days off:** Access up to 5 unpaid extra days off;
4. **Part-time schedule:** Reduced work schedule (min. 24h/week) with commensurate pay reduction;
5. **Unpaid leave:** Work activity interruption for a certain period (min. 30 days, max. 1 year).

Sonae MC operates primarily in food retail, where the nature of job roles is not typically associated with flexible work possibilities. Additionally, the company has heterogenous profiles, job roles and businesses, making the implementation of a flexible work program very challenging.

Despite these challenges and initial obstacles, the results within the first year of the project were very positive with 43% of the eligible population accessing at least one initiative. Remote work (almost 60% of all requests) and Flexiwork were the most popular options. Most employees requesting access to *Flex it Up* initiatives are women, Gen X and non-managers.

Much of the **program's success is due to some core ideas** stipulated from the very beginning of the project:

- Program design based on people's real needs;
- A philosophy of trust and autonomy;
- Top-level buy-in, leadership involvement and sponsorship;
- Strong, disruptive and catchy communication campaigns;
- Development of a dedicated, centralized platform conferring structure, transparency and equity.



Video with testimonials from Sonae MC's employees benefitting from the *Flex it Up* program.