

The GradTouch approach to flexible working

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Introduction

In 2016, we began the process of transforming our company culture at GradTouch. A really big part of that was introducing a completely flexible working approach. We told employees they could work whenever they wanted, from wherever they wanted, and take as many paid holidays as they wanted. As long as they achieved their goals.

Trusting people by giving them complete autonomy and complete responsibility for their work and results is a big deal. And making flexible working actually **work** for you is a process of trial and (lots of) error.

Luckily, we've been there, done that, and have our flexible working policy all ironed out. **This ebook outlines the policy we give to employees.**

Please note: this is not a contract and should be treated simply as a guide to how we work.

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Tools we use

CharlieHR - every employee is very familiar with CharlieHR from the onboarding process onwards. It's used regularly for submitting holiday requests, and monitoring holidays, sickness absence and remote working.

A shared Outlook calendar - Outlook is absolutely necessary. We use it for arranging team meetings, planning regular company-wide get-togethers (such as our free Friday lunches), and to always ensure everyone knows where everyone is.

Slack - pretty much every employee has Slack on both their computer and their phone - it's great for easy communication between employees. We link CharlieHR to it, which notifies people daily of who will be in and out of the office that day. Slack also integrates with our CRM, Pipedrive, which updates the whole team via Slack whenever a deal comes in.



Working hours



No more clock-watching

You are not contracted to work any set working hours.

Your contract says: *"Your hours of work are those necessary for the proper performance of your duties."*

Because we don't mind what hours you work, we're just looking at what you achieve in the hours that you spend working.

If you do your best writing in the middle of the night, go for it. If you want to have a lie-in and start work for the day at 11am, no worries. If you want to smash it and get loads done Monday-Wednesday and take a three-day week, that's chill with us.

Your hours are likely to vary from week to week, and your pay won't be affected by this. You've just gotta work the number of hours needed to get all your tasks done.

The system is designed this way to allow you lots of flexibility, and to ensure you are able to be flexible according to the company's needs when necessary.

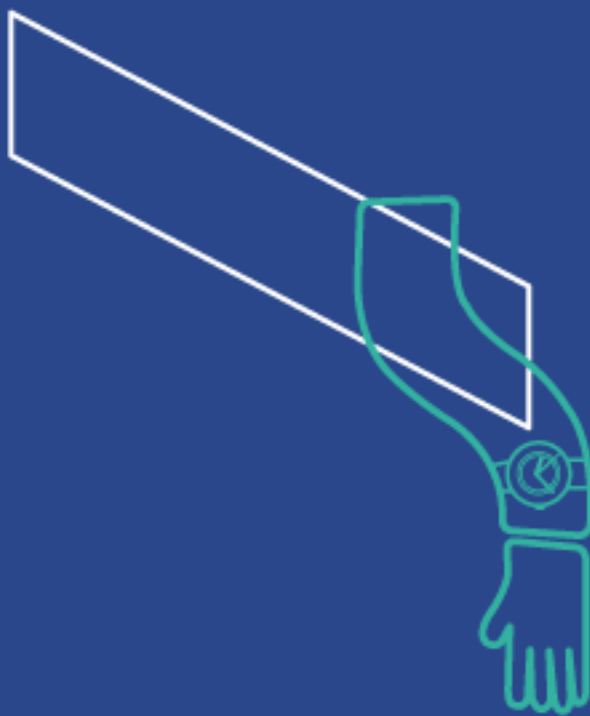
It is designed to encourage productivity, trust and a results-based workforce.

Fuck clock-watching. It's pointless.

What's really important is results. These will be measured by the regular goals and targets you set with your line manager.

If you need any guidance with this at any point, the wider management team will be happy to help you.

Lunch breaks



Eat whenever you want...

...Because why would we tell you when you can and can't eat your lunch? That's a bit weird.

We've included this, because, legally, everyone is entitled to a paid one-hour lunch break - this is reflected in your employment contract. This section is here to ensure you know, if you're going to be working traditional office hours (perhaps at the beginning of your contract with us, while you're getting to know everyone), you can come and go as you please. Do what you want to do.

We have no strict working hours policy, so you can take a lunch break whenever you want for as long as you want.

We will not be monitoring your breaks - we trust you to manage your time.



Working remotely



Work wherever

Everyone is based in either our Manchester or London office, but you don't have to do all your work from there.

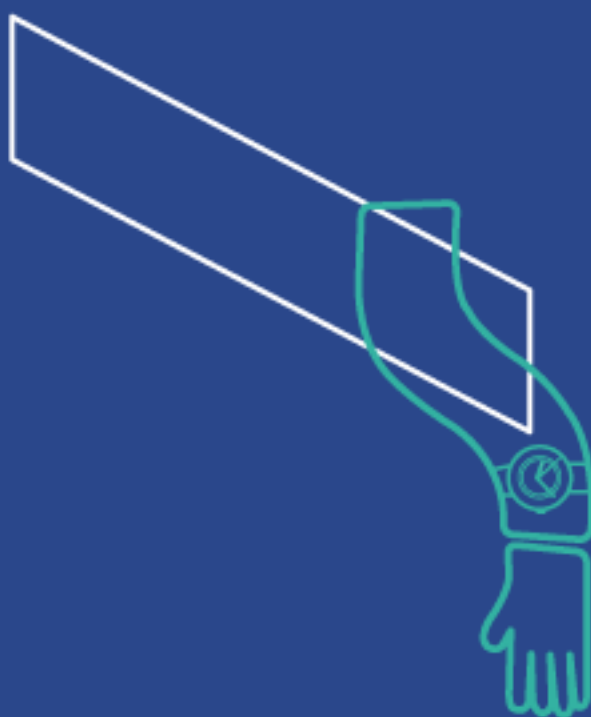
If you wake up and the weather's terrible, you've got a delivery coming, or you just think you'll get more done in your local coffee shop than in the office that day - feel free.

As long as it doesn't impact your ability to get the job done or to collaborate with your team, you can work remotely whenever you like.

It's all about communication, collaboration and planning around the people you work with. Don't just set your Slack status to 'working from home' - communicate with your team and let them know.

It's your responsibility to make sure you discuss your working plans with your line manager and team. And always ensure CharlieHR and your Outlook calendar reflect what you're doing.

Diary management



Don't go MIA

Flexible working makes diary management and communication super important.

The wider team and the people you work directly with need to know where you are in case of meetings.

And, importantly, we need to know where you are so we're compliant with Health and Safety regulations.

Work however you want, just make sure you put meetings, remote working, and any time off in your Outlook calendar and on CharlieHR.



Sick pay and absence reporting



I don't want your cough. Go away.

If you're ill, don't work. Simple.

We'd much rather you take the time off you need to recover.

Our approach to working is about results, and you're not going to be best placed to get results if you're unwell and have low energy levels. You'll most likely just make yourself even more rundown and make other people on the team ill. And they will not like that.

We don't like presenteeism any more than we like clock-watching. Both suck.

So, we encourage you to take the time off you need if you're sick. Don't worry, short periods of sick leave are fully paid.

If you're going to be off sick, make sure you log it on CharlieHR as early as possible on the first day of your absence and let Operations/your line manager know via text or email.

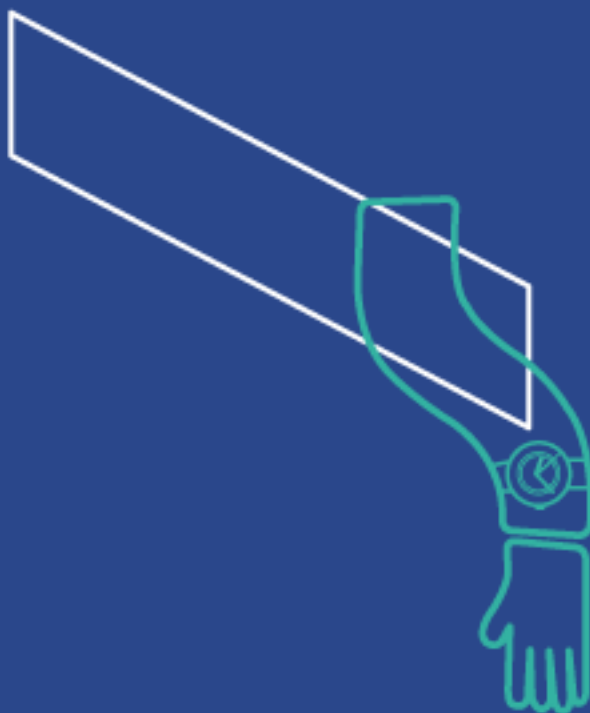
We don't do sickies. If, for whatever reason, you can't come into the office today - maybe you got a terrible night's sleep and aren't at your best - take a holiday day or work from home.

If you're really ill and need to take a longer period of time off, you need to make sure you discuss this with your line manager and get a doctor's note.

There's more info on prolonged or repeated periods of sickness, and absence pay, in your employment contract and the Employee Handbook.



Uncapped holiday scheme



Unlimited. Paid. Holidays.

Have you ever experienced burn out? We don't want you to. It is GRIM.

So, we operate a more flexible approach to holidays. You can take as many fully paid days off as you want, as long as you are achieving the goals you've agreed with your line manager.

We often get asked: "what do you do if everyone wants to take time off at the same time?" The answer is simple: we act as adults. We collaborate, communicate and plan around each other's diaries accordingly.

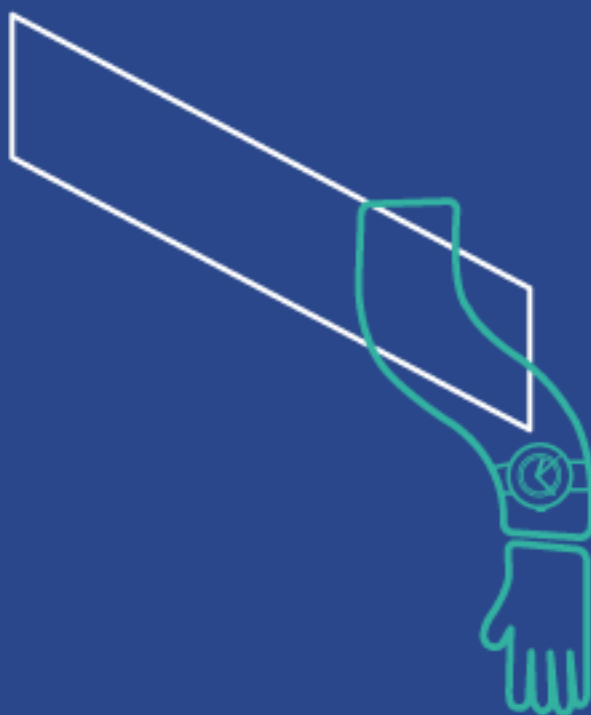
You should be sure to coordinate with other members of your team, so there's someone to cover your leave. Operations will monitor all absences and holiday requests to ensure time off is reviewed against performance, and that there are no conflicts in annual leave between team members.

Your holiday year runs from 1st September - 31st August. We'll check in with you as part of your appraisals every 3 months to ensure you're taking as many holidays as you need.

You are, of course, entitled to your statutory holiday allowance each year of 28 days. On average, our staff take off ~40 days per year. If, for some reason, you come under the statutory holiday entitlement threshold at the end of the holiday year, any days not taken do not roll over. But don't worry, our uncapped holiday policy means you can still request as many days off as you like at any time of year.

Our 'Christmas shutdown' period over Christmas and New Year won't be counted towards the number of holidays you've taken. We'll let you know as early as possible each year about the number of days it'll be and timing of this office closure period.

**The serious stuff:
how unlimited
holidays work**



Procedure for requesting holidays

All periods of annual holiday must be authorised in advance by your line manager. All holiday requests will be authorised/declined by your line manager. In the event that your line manager is unable to authorise your holiday, Operations will take on this responsibility. You must not make firm holiday arrangements before receiving confirmation from your line manager that your request has been authorised.

Don't book your holiday before asking us if your dates are ok. 99% of the time it's going to be totally fine and we'll say yes, but we don't want to be the dicks who turn around and tell you you've wasted £100s on flights. Any holiday requests need to be submitted to your line manager via CharlieHR, giving a minimum notice of two weeks generally.

Requests for annual holiday will normally be granted on a 'first come, first served' basis. It's not the end of the world if people in the same department want to be off at the same time, but we try to avoid it. Owing to the needs of the business, GradTouch reserves the right to limit the number of employees who are permitted to take holiday at the same time. The granting of all holiday requests will be subject to adequate cover being available and the overall needs of the company.

The above refers to longer periods of leave - if you're taking the odd holiday day off here and there, you don't need to give us two week's notice, just make sure you let us know.

If, on Thursday, you decide you want to have Friday off, that's your call - book it in and enjoy your Friday off. It's your responsibility to ensure anyone affected by you being off is aware, and that you've got any work you needed to get done on Friday sorted.

Required holiday

The company may require you to reserve a specified amount of annual holiday entitlement to be taken at a time set by the company, depending on the needs of the business. The company reserves the right not to provide you with advance notice of this requirement.

Unauthorised holidays

This is for edge cases, but if you are absent from work on a date on which a holiday request has been refused, GradTouch will investigate the reason for your absence. If GradTouch considers that you do not have a reasonable explanation for your non-attendance, you may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal without notice.

Sickness and holidays

If you're ill or sustain an injury during a period of authorised holiday, ensure you follow normal absence reporting and medical certification procedures. You can then rearrange the holiday for a later date by editing the details of your holiday request on CharlieHR.

If you are absent from work due to sickness immediately prior to a period of authorised holiday and your incapacity extends into the authorised holiday period, you can delay the period of holiday until a later time. You should submit a request to postpone the planned holiday, and then follow normal procedures for sickness absence.

Holiday during long-term absences

You will continue to accrue your full statutory holiday entitlement during sickness absence.

You are permitted to take annual holiday during periods of sickness and this must be requested via your line manager.

Holidays during maternity, adoption and shared parental leave

You will continue to accrue your full contractual holiday entitlement during maternity, adoption and shared parental leave.

If you are unable to take annual holiday due to maternity, adoption or shared parental leave, you will be permitted to carry over your unused statutory annual holiday from one holiday year to the next.

You should discuss holiday arrangements around your leave with your manager.

Termination of employment

The company may require you to take all or part of any outstanding statutory holiday entitlement during a period of notice to terminate employment or garden leave. GradTouch reserves the right not to provide you with advance notice of this requirement.

Upon the termination of your employment, for whatever reason, you will be entitled to be paid for statutory holiday accrued but not taken in the current holiday year, at the date of termination of employment.

If you are dismissed for gross misconduct or if you fail to give the required notice on resignation, you are not entitled to be recompensed for unused holidays in excess of the minimum statutory entitlement.

Any questions?

That's the end of our flexible working policy guide. Employees are able to find more in-depth info on this in the employment contract and Employee Handbook.

I'm always keen to speak with people about company culture and employer branding.

If you want to have a chat or hear more about our flexible working policy, just drop me an email.

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