

Unlimited Potential

Flexible working on the shop floor

A case study of Waitrose

Background



- LEAD Network aims to produce an annual publication for retailers and wholesalers. There have been three so far: *Success in Store*; *Engaging Men in Gender Diversity*; *Life Lessons*
- In 2020, the original plan was to do a report on flexible working. But data was lacking, partly because retailers and wholesalers are struggling with the issue
- Our writer, Jill Hopper, proposed looking at the flexible working practices of one retailer in depth
- Mick Broekhof suggested Waitrose: it is a pioneer in flexibility and we have a good connection with the company through Ian Mumby

Methodology

- We made contact with Susan Sampson at Waitrose who recommended interviewees
- In January and February 2020, Jill Hopper conducted four in-depth interviews with:



Marc Valace
London Store Manager



Mark Gifford
Former Director
Shop and Trade



Lucy Brown
Head of Selling and Service



Carole Donaldson
Manager, Resourcing Strategy,
Planning, Development
and Redeployment

- Aim was to draw out practical insights on how to make a success of flexible working for store managers

Key findings - 1

- Waitrose has gone well beyond the UK legal requirements, and makes **flexible working an automatic** part of every recruitment discussion and interview
- **Wide range of flexible arrangements** on offer, from condensed hours to job sharing and partial retirement
- Company has moved to a **task model**. Instead of being tied to one section, staff are trained in multiple sections, allowing managers to allocate them to whatever task needs doing
- Store managers' roles have also become task-oriented, making flexible working possible



Key findings - 2

- Technology such as **Google Meet** and online workforce management is a key enabler
- **30%** of Waitrose regional and branch managers now work part time. **40%** of Waitrose regional and branch managers are women
- **Career progression** is better; productivity has risen; manager headcount has fallen
- Senior Managers are **role models** for flexible working, e.g. by ‘leaving loudly’, and talking about family responsibilities

