



# DuluxGroup: Flexible and family-friendly shifts in operations



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## INTRODUCTION

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Over the past five years DuluxGroup has made substantial efforts and advancement in diversity across its supply chain sites. Applying their group wide approach to flexibility, operational leaders at Lincoln Sentry, proudly part of DuluxGroup, have been able to challenge their preconceptions about operational constraints limiting flexible working arrangements.

**“Remaining flexible about flexibility allows us to balance business and individual needs. As a starting point, we always try and say yes, then we work through what that actually looks like.”**

● DAPHNIE CHRISTODOULOU, WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS MANAGER AT LINCOLN SENTRY



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## ATTRACTING NEW STAFF WHEN TRADITIONAL RECRUITMENT METHODS WERE FAILING

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DuluxGroup experienced the same talent shortages many companies did post-COVID-19. Daphnie Christodoulou, Warehouse Operations Manager at Lincoln Sentry in Bayswater, Victoria found job advertisements for full-time positions weren't attracting the talent needed, with some positions being left unfilled for months. This prompted Daphnie and her team to question the conventional wisdom that only full-time employees can work at their operations-based sites.

Daphnie considered the current recruitment climate and looked closer into the success of the few part-time working arrangements already being offered on site. This allowed her and her team to reconsider part-time and flexible work, as well as family-friendly shifts.

Taking on the role of 'Myth Busters', the team set out to challenge the assumptions below and prove them to be myths:

- Flexibility will cost more money
- Part-time work is less productive
- Flexible work is too complex to manage
- Flexible work is only for women, and we currently don't employ enough women
- Part-time work is mainly for mums returning from maternity leave or with young kids

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## INITIATIVES TO INCREASE FLEXIBILITY

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Now that Daphnie and her team had considered how flexibility could be offered at her site, she began looking at how they could make this work for everyone.

Daphnie realised that not only were there examples of flexibility already working at the Bayswater warehouse, but there were precise business needs that could be met with flexible shift patterns.

**“Lots of orders come throughout the morning and then bank up in the early morning to middle afternoon. Seeing that there was a peak time for picking orders, I started thinking, well, we can potentially look at getting someone in between 10 am and 2 pm.”**

● DAPHNIE CHRISTODOULOU

At this point, Daphnie ran a recruitment campaign that specifically highlighted part-time and flexible shift patterns. The response was overwhelming.

The team was pleasantly surprised at how many applications started coming in after the difficulties of hiring for full-time roles. The recruitment campaign saw them hire six people part-time when initially they were looking for three full-timers.

Implementing shift patterns to accommodate differing employee needs is the main lever for increasing flexibility and diversifying these workforces. Casual shift patterns or diversity of shift patterns (e.g., one week of day shifts followed by a week of afternoon/evening shifts) have also helped to diversify operations-based workforces. Success has also been shown to increase when flexible policies become manager or leader-driven, over policy or HR-driven.

The Bayswater warehouse team have become champions of flexible work within operations at DuluxGroup and continue to look for ways to demonstrate its success. In a 'Myth-Busting' session run by Daphnie at the Supply Chain Leadership Conference, she highlighted to others within DuluxGroup the myths that silently existed around flexibility within operations and shared the reality of their experiences around flexibility and how it can work.

Other supply chain site leaders were intrigued to hear more about how flexibility was working and to see the job ads that were so successful.

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## INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT

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DuluxGroup has numerous stories of individuals who have increased their work/life balance with flexible work options and experience greater well-being as a result. For example, the warehouse team accommodated an employee who was a new dad and who wanted to take advantage of flexible work to support his wife while she returned to work. He wanted to be present on a particular weekday to support his partner's part-time work commitments.

**“The flexibility I was provided was so important as it enabled my wife to go back to work. She felt like she wasn't contributing and now she is able to work she is more connected and much happier. It also gives her time off from the household duties and I get to spend more time with my son – I have learnt heaps.”**

● DULUXGROUP EMPLOYEE

Across the board at DuluxGroup, flexible and family-friendly shifts have led to:

- **INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY** Part-time employees who are in for a short shift, work incredibly efficiently. They've added a whole different level to the team's productivity.
- **IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT** When employees experiencing greater work/life balance, they can be more present and engaged when they're on the job. Allowing them the time they need outside of work also allows them to be their best selves.
- **INCREASED RETENTION** With flexibility offered to new recruits, Lincoln Sentry then had existing team members at the Bayswater warehouse express interest in working fewer hours to allow them to balance their needs outside of work. Reviewing each request through the lens of saying yes initially set up a culture of accommodation. Take the example of older male workers who have been with the company for a long time and want to reduce their hours as they transition to retirement. Reducing their hours created retention; instead of losing 10+ years of experience, Lincoln Sentry now has that knowledge and experience retained in the company to benefit younger workers.
- **REDUCED ABSENTEEISM** Previously, workers who needed a rest might have taken an unplanned day off here and there. In contrast, a willingness to have open conversations about what they need and accommodate those needs means that they're more likely to be rejuvenated and rested, and absenteeism is reduced.

Being able to bring new people looking for flexibility into the team while also offering the same versatility to existing staff has had many positive effects. Providing flexibility to existing staff has allowed Lincoln Sentry, and the wider DuluxGroup, to retain deep experience in the business without impacting productivity and engagement or increasing costs. If anything, the company has seen improvement in varying areas and continued growth.

**“We actually saw an increase in productivity and demand through Covid, and that's continued across various projects. We've also done a number of acquisitions across our business; we're growing. A lot of that's coming off the back of increased productivity, and that's happened with working flexibly.”**

● DAPHNIE CHRISTODOULOU

Alongside its success, the team acknowledges that there will be requests for flexibility that they can't accommodate. Whilst they always start from a position of 'yes', consideration does need to be given to whether the request “is going to ensure [they] can still deliver on their customer service promise”. Through challenging their misconceptions and exposing flexibility myths in operations, Lincoln Sentry and the wider DuluxGroup has found that for the most part, they can.



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## KEEPING UP MOMENTUM

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While pockets of the industry have been exposed to flexibility, the DuluxGroup team still sees an opportunity for greater flexibility, and they're committed to sharing their experiences. They're motivated to encourage men to consider flexible work arrangements to enable more females to enter operational spaces and take on more responsibility.

**“We've made significant progress since 2013, where we have doubled the number of women in senior leadership roles. While we are not taking our foot off that, and it will continue, our focus is now on attracting more women in historically predominantly male areas, such as Supply Chain.”**

● BROOKE WESTPHALEN – TALENT MANAGER, DULUXGROUP

DuluxGroup has many different diversity priorities, three of the main ones are:

- 1 **MOVING TOWARDS GENDER BALANCE** DuluxGroup is continuing on the path of bringing about greater gender balance in areas such as trade and supply chain where women represent a small percentage of the talent pool.
- 2 **CONTINUING TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE** Focusing on all of their sites, teams and businesses across every part of the company, to foster an inclusive culture where differences are embraced and celebrated.
- 3 **DULUXGROUP HAS FOUND THAT FLEXIBILITY CREATES A SENSE OF BELONGING** It supports people in every part of their lives, from how they operate at work and home to whatever their personal needs are. Flexibility is the recognition that we're much more than what we bring to work.

**“We're one big family, and just like within a family, you've got people at different stages, and everyone needs different things. So, it's the same concept. You apply that to your team, and if you can look at flexibility from that lens, everyone can understand where each other is at, and that creates support, inclusion, and belonging.”**

● DAPHNIE CHRISTODOULOU



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*We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations people of Australia and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn, work and connect.*

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