

# Flexibility at Novartis: Janneke van der Kamp

Van der Kamp explains how leading by example has encouraged others to adopt flexible working models.

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The “Flexibility at Novartis” series spotlights associates who have one thing in common: They work flexibly. As a result, they are able to manage the demands of their work and private lives. Flexible working can boost employee engagement while increasing efficiency and productivity. This series provides a glimpse into flexible working at Novartis.

Janneke van der Kamp serves as Global Head Pharma, Region Europe, in Basel, Switzerland. She shares her story below.

## Leading by example

My flexibility story is really many stories, and they are not only about me.

When I became Country Head Belgium in 2012, I was the first woman to do so. My predecessors had all put in long hours at the office. I realized if I followed in their footsteps, I would hardly see my kids, who were 2 and 4 at the time.

No two flexible work arrangements are alike because no two people, roles or teams are alike.  
Flexibility means finding creative ways to fit all the pieces together.

My solution was to leave the office at 5:30 p.m. every day, spend a couple of hours with my kids and resume working after their bedtime. This solution worked because I communicated it clearly and followed through consistently. When I won a diversity and inclusion award for chief executives in Belgium, the media headlines said “CEO leaves at 5:30 p.m.” – which goes to show the business world is still getting used to the idea of flexibility.

Within Novartis, my example encouraged others to adopt flexible working models of their own. For instance, nearly 1 in 5 of our people took advantage of our flexible work model, where they have a 90% contract but work full time most of the year and take an extra month off with their children in the summer.

In 2014, I was asked to lead the Neuroscience business – a fantastic opportunity. I accepted on the condition that I could work four days a week in Basel and one day in the Netherlands, where my husband had to be based at the time. My boss readily agreed, and for two-and-a-half years, I strictly followed this schedule. I got so much done in Basel that, the day I was at home, I could pick up my kids at 2:30 p.m. and be with them the rest of the day.

Some people asked how I could be away from my kids four days a week, and I know this setup is not for everyone, but it was the right model for me at that time.

## What does flexibility at work mean to you?

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finding creative ways to fit all the pieces together.

Learn how a Novartis leader has inspired others to adopt #flexibleworking models.

## **Learn more about careers at Novartis**

While our diverse workforce brings different people and perspectives together, inclusion is making the mix work. It is about creating an atmosphere and an environment where each of us feels valued, respected and heard.

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