

# Flexibility at Novartis: Peter Canavan

Canavan describes how flexible working positively impacts his team.

Jan 07, 2019

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.

Peter Canavan serves as Head Novartis Country Quality, Region Americas, in the US. He shares his story below.

## It's the outcome that counts

My team is responsible for quality assurance for our US business, including hosting inspections by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), who come to ensure we are in compliance with US regulations.

Flexibility is a stronger motivator than money, in my opinion.

Flexibility describes how I like to work and lead. If the business requires it or our patients need us, we are there, even if it means working on a weekend. Thankfully, this is a rare occurrence. On the other hand, I also take a guilt-free approach to personal time, which to me means that we all need to be there for our loved ones and to recharge our batteries.

As a father and husband, I've always tried to prioritize taking part in family events such as school plays and graduations. It's important to me and of course to the family. For me personally, work is demanding, and I try to make a point of scheduling downtime by taking time off work and ensuring that I take all my vacation time. I also try not to work at home in the evenings or over weekends. This takes careful planning and discipline. I give the same message to my team at work and therefore also have an obligation to walk the talk.

Flexibility is a stronger motivator than money, in my opinion. I've seen firsthand how having the option to work from home or leave early because your child is sick fosters productivity, integrity and trust. I even discourage people from asking for permission. I know they are applying themselves as best they can, so a heads-up is enough. It's the outcome that counts.



Our flexible culture really paid off two years ago, when three FDA inspectors turned up unannounced. I was about to embark on a six-hour journey and drive my son to college in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at the time, so I had to swap places with my wife and head to work.

When I entered the planning and operational room, I saw people from my team who were supposed to be on vacation or work from home that day. I didn't ask anyone to come in; they all rose to the occasion, knowing this was a critical time and they were needed. Although I am a strong supporter of not working during vacation times, I was relieved to see each of them in the office. We, as a team, came through the inspection with a "clean bill" – and, thanks to my wife, my son got to Pittsburgh just fine.

## What does flexibility at work mean to you?

Flexibility at work is where the needs of associates and the company are jointly met. When you empower and trust people, everybody wins.

A Quality Head at Novartis describes how #flexibleworking has paid off.

### 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.

[Learn more](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://prod1.novartis.com/stories/flexibility-novartis-peter-canavan>

### List of links present in page

1. <https://prod1.novartis.com/stories/flexibility-novartis-peter-canavan>
2. <https://prod1.novartis.com/tags/category/people-and-culture>
3. <https://prod1.novartis.com/careers>