Whether you "live to work" or "work to live," it is not unusual to be asked, *what do you do?* For many, our jobs make us who we are—what we do is inextricably tied to our identities. However, *how* and *where* we work is rarely given the same significance.

As the typical office workplace has changed drastically thanks to technology, employees have been forced to change with it. We have accepted our handheld devices and laptops blurring the physical boundaries of place and time. When we were "out of the office," we were not working, but today that is not necessarily the case.

Organizations and individuals benefit from focusing on productivity and results, and relying on flexibility to engage talent helps them do that. Flexibility is not just about being flexible with time. It is also about being strategic, which requires employers and employees to be open and creative in questioning the process of how work should be done, and why. "Work is rapidly becoming something we do, not something we go to,"[1] and organizations can't realize this fast enough.

Work-life effectiveness (WLE) is an important tool to help organizations create more inclusive work environments for women and business as well as to promote cultural transformations that change workplaces and change lives.[2] WLE helps organizations and individuals to challenge old assumptions about work and who constitutes the "ideal employee," expanding the range of work behaviors and styles among both women and men. In addition to child and adult care-giving responsibilities, many employees simply want more control over their schedules.[3] Employers who view workplace flexibility, regardless of the reason for it, as a holistic strategy for improving work-life fit instead of an exception for mothers or caregivers, will be ahead of the game when it comes to recruiting and retaining talented employees.

Based on over 50 years of research and consulting experience, Catalyst has identified a number of **Core Concepts** related to workplace flexibility, including frequent concerns, barriers to progress, and myths that perpetuate misconceptions about flexibility, which are described in this document. Personal accounts from around the world **What We Hear** provide insight into the new global workforce and the flexibility needs of all (all names have been changed). Using research **What We Know** from experts in the field, we bust myths and set the record straight. Where applicable, we present recommendations and examples from leading organizations **Flexibility In Action** to help readers implement flexibility within their own organizations.

CATALYST

Changing workplaces. Changing lives.

Words Matter

AGILE WORKING
A combination of people, processes, connectivity, and technology that enables the completion of a task more effectively within guidelines, but without boundaries.[4]

ELDER CARE
Care-giving associated with an elderly relative or other dependent adult. Responsibilities can range from emotional and financial support to occasional tasks such as transportation to and from doctors' appointments.[5]

FACE TIME
Spending time at work—often more than is required—to communicate one's organizational commitment and productivity; also known as *presenteeism*.[6]

FLEXIBILITY
The ability to define how, where, and when work gets done as well as how careers are organized.[7]

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENT (FWA)
An individually negotiated condition of employment involving adjustments in timing, scope, and/or place of work. [8]

JOB SHARING
A form of part-time work where two or more employees share one full-time job with pro-rated salary and benefits.[9]

SANDWICH GENERATION
A generation of people who care for aging parents while also supporting their own children.[10]

STRATEGIC FLEXIBILITY
The use of flexibility to manage talent, resources, and costs. It involves a well-defined business case, transparency, and communication, and is considered "win-win" for both employee and employer.[11]

TELEWORK
A way of working flexibly whereby employees work from home or another location outside the office that is typically linked to the central office via technology.[12]

VIRTUAL WORK
Also referred to by some as *remote work*. The term *virtual* conveys the status of being outside of the physical workspace while remaining a contributing employee, rather than the insular and non-inclusive connotation of the term *remote*.[13]

WORK-LIFE BALANCE (WLB)
Arguably the most popular and widely used term globally, WLB has been used since the late 1980's,[14] referring to the juggling between work and life responsibilities. However, *balance* can imply that individuals should strive for constant equilibrium between work and life, when in reality the extent to which one is a priority over the other shifts over the course of an employee's day, week, month, year, and lifetime. This concept may also be known as *work-life fit* and *work-life harmony*.

WORK-LIFE EFFECTIVENESS (WLE)
A management tool that challenges the status quo and focuses organizations and their people on the right work at the right time with the right talent. Through WLE, businesses actively manage people, scrutinize current processes, enhance agility, fulfill priorities, and drive mutually beneficial solutions.[15]

*Note: Terms may vary by culture and community.

Workplace Flexibility: Structural Considerations

WHAT WE HEAR

In China, Liping, like the rest of her office co-workers, works traditional hours, getting in at 8:30 a.m. and leaving at 6:00 p.m. However, Liping also supports a global team, which requires daily calls at 10:00 p.m. local time (7:00 a.m. U.S. head-quarters time and 10:00 a.m. U.S. largest office time). During the calls, Liping is often tasked with new work that's due by the end of the day in the United States. Liping explains, "I am in a time zone limbo where my daily work assignments are only given to me post-work day. And I am always left feeling behind."

CORE CONCEPT

Smart companies prioritize flexibility even when it seems counterintuitive, such as during challenging economic times.

In a difficult economic climate where jobs are in short supply, employees often feel that they are fortunate to simply have a job and cannot risk expecting or asking for flexibility in any form. Employers in this financial environment focused on "doing more with less" downsize staff and benefits, thinking that work-life benefits are a "nice, not a need" and will cut resources accordingly.

What We Know

The most important lesson from Liping's story is that her need for flexibility is not due to a desire for better work-life effectiveness, but rather to the difficulties that face employees of an increasingly globalized economy. Although the economy was extremely volatile between 2005 and 2012, the *2012 National Study of Employers* found a greater investment in offerings for employees' flexibility in where and when they work.[16]

For Your Consideration

What other ways could this work be assigned?

Flexibility In Action: Unilever

Unilever's Agile Working program, which started in 2009, has evolved from a simple flexibility program into a pioneering career work model. While flexibility is certainly a large part of it, Agile Working goes beyond most flexible work programs to create job structures connected to sustainability efforts and promote overall culture change. Agile Working helps to promote gender balance, but it also benefits employees in other ways by allowing them to work anytime, anywhere, as long as they get the job done. The focus is on the outcome, rather than where/when/how the work gets done. Agile Working promotes job-sharing, helps attract and retain talent, and drives overall performance.[17]

CORE CONCEPT

Implementing flexibility programs can be expensive, but the benefits usually outweigh the costs.

What We Know

When designed and implemented well, workplace flexibility can actually result in cost savings. By increasing employee productivity, reducing facility costs, lowering absenteeism, and reducing turnover, organizations can save on multiple fronts—a particularly attractive prospect. According to an analysis of over 250 case studies, companies can reduce operating costs by more than $10,000 per year for every person who telecommutes half-time.[18]

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

There are a number of low-to-no cost options organizations can implement to assist employees dealing with work-life issues. For example, employees facing eldercare and other work-life challenges can often be helped with basic resources and referrals to identify and locate services. Employers may also consider offering a conference room for lunchtime support groups designed specifically for employees to meet and discuss these issues.[19] For supervisors who may be wary of employees requesting compressed work schedules or part-time virtual schedules, a pilot program or trial run can be a good way to test free versions of screen sharing and video conferencing software applications.

Flexibility In Action: Axiom

Axiom envisioned a business model that would focus on outside counsel replacement by providing clients with a true alternative to the traditional law firm model. It set out to achieve this by focusing on affordable legal services delivered using a leaner, more cost-effective model. But as with any start-up business, the firm wasn't sure at first if anyone would "take a risk" on this new model, leaving behind the comfortable, tried and true model of practicing law.

However, the model has clearly paid off. At the beginning of Axiom's evolution, it worked to gain clients' trust. Over time, its product offerings have increased significantly, and the firm now engages in much larger-scale matters with a larger number of attorneys. A full 50 percent of the original attorneys from 2001 remain with the firm, and their ranks have grown considerably over the past few years. This demonstrates that, particularly with the turn of the economy, the industry has been hungry for change and is much more receptive to the idea of a more flexible law firm model.[20]

CORE CONCEPT

Ensuring that all employees—parents and singles, women and men—have access to workplace flexibility enhances its associated business impact.

Historically, workplace flexibility has been viewed as a women's issue because women tend to be the primary caregivers and to perform the majority of household tasks in many countries. Despite the fact that this is changing rapidly in many places as the number of stay-at-home fathers and primary breadwinner women increases, the perception of flexibility as a women's issue persists today.

What We Know

Research suggests that the percentage of men who experience of work-family conflict has increased significantly over the past several decades,[21] and that work conflicts can—and do—interfere with aspects of employees' lives other than those related to family responsibilities.[22] For example, nearly 60% of family caregivers of adults age 50 and older are currently employed, most of them full-time, and two thirds have gone to work late, left early, or taken time off during the day to deal with care-giving issues.[23] Many other employees in the "sandwich generation" are responsible for both child and elder care duties—up to 50%, according to one study.[24] When it comes to attracting top talent, it is critical for organizations to know what employees want. In Catalyst's *The Great Debate: Flexibility vs. Face Time—Busting the Myths Behind Flexible Work Arrangements*, not only did the high-potential survey respondents say that FWA's were very or extremely important to them, there was no difference in the perceived importance by those with and without children.[25]

Flexibility In Action: Capital One

From 2001 to 2002, Capital One conducted focus groups to assess employee satisfaction within its Women's Network to find out how it could be more supportive of its women employees. Capital One also conducted focus groups with men to determine where women's and men's preferences aligned. For both women and men, the most common request was a call for greater flexibility. In response, Capital One developed a pilot program for flexibility now called the Flexible Work Solutions (FWS) program. Rolled out as a pilot in 2003 and expanded across the organization in 2004, the program provides a structured menu of options—including flextime, part-time, compressed workweeks, and telecommuting arrangements—that employees can choose from to create the best fit for their individual schedules.

Flexible Work Solutions provides Capital One associates with greater flexibility in how and where they work, which in turn improves collaboration, creativity, productivity, and associate satisfaction. Employees can begin working at home during the time they would normally be commuting, and they are able to work when they are most productive, whether from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. or at other hours of the day. One executive, for example, was able to coach his son's youth football league during the day. Associates have reported through surveys that they were able to get feedback from peers more quickly and that they were more satisfied overall after the implementation of the new solutions.[26]

CORE CONCEPT

Industries and professions with roles that cannot be performed virtually can still include flexibility options for workers

Jobs filled by hourly workers who are required to be physically present in order to do their work usually pay far less than salaried positions—making it doubly challenging for these employees to effectively manage work and life demands. Examples include jobs in the manufacturing and warehousing, restaurant, retail, and child care industries.

What We Know

Research shows that schedule flexibility for hourly wage employees can immensely improve outcomes for both employees and employers. The combination of rigid and unpredictable schedules expected of hourly and non-exempt employees adds to work-life stress. In fact, eliminating mandatory short-notice overtime has been shown to reduce turnover and absenteeism and enhance productivity and commitment.[27]

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

Think creatively about flexibility in your workplace. Can your organization make small scheduling changes—such as shift trading, relief pools, flexible start/end times to shifts, half-day vacation increments, employee-designed schedules, shifting assignments based on availability and skill rather than seniority, and unpaid time off—that could result in big workplace improvements?

Flexibility In Action: TURCK Inc.

Work-life effectiveness programs, and flexible work arrangements in particular, are much less common for workers in hourly wage and nonexempt roles. Employees holding these types of positions, which may include factory, manufacturing, and production-line jobs, comprise more than two-thirds of TURCK's workforce. Despite the high proportion of these roles, TURCK demonstrates its commitment to well-being and flexibility for all

employees through its holistic well-being program, Life Works @TURCK, and, more specifically, its Work/Life Pursuit flexibility benefit.

Because the majority of TURCK employees work in a production setting, telework arrangements are not feasible for everyone at all times—the nature of many of these positions requires that employees perform their jobs at the physical manufacturing plant. However, supervisors make every attempt to provide employees with the flexibility they need to meet both life and work demands. Aside from the formal sabbatical program, workplace flexibility at TURCK is not heavily programmatic or structured because that tends to be inconsistent with flexibility. Instead, employees and supervisors mutually agree to arrangements through frank conversations about both parties' needs and preferences.

Work/Life Pursuit is available to *all* TURCK employees, regardless of location or job function. Offerings include: a flexible paid time off structure, sabbaticals and part-time schedules, and an overtime policy in which supervisors aim to give at least a week's notice before scheduled overtime shifts. Staff can also volunteer to work overtime, allowing employees to choose whether they want the additional income or prefer not to work overtime shifts.[28]

Workplace Flexibility: Managerial & Team Considerations

WHAT WE HEAR

Charles is a VP in marketing at one of the top companies in Canada and has always received good feedback about his management skills. Now, however, he is concerned about his own advancement opportunities after rejecting an employee's request to work from a different office with a shorter commute. He takes pride in being a good manager, but doesn't know how he could be as effective at managing someone he doesn't see on a regular basis. "If I can't look my direct report in the eye and see what he's doing, how do I get to know him? All these years I've spent learning how to read people's expressions and body language to build relationships and get the most out of them. How am I supposed to do that over instant message?"

CORE CONCEPT

Managers and supervisors can be the best advocates for flexibility.

When trained, supervisors can effectively manage flexible and virtual staff and reap the rewards of more engaged and productive team.

What We Know

Effective management is a skill that takes a great deal of time and training to develop. Managing flexible employees requires different skills, as well as tools such as alternative forms of communication, accountability, and productivity.[29] Flexible work arrangements typically start with a negotiation where an employee proposes the plan on a short-term or trial basis and the manager must determine if the employee can and will be as productive, if not more.[30]

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

There are many effective technology offerings for business communications. For example, GoToMeeting, Skype, and Google Hangout all provide visual communication as well as productivity and team collaboration for employees and managers.

Flexibility In Action: Campbell Soup Company

To ensure diversity and inclusion is part of all areas of the business, Campbell Soup Company's initiative is closely integrated into Campbell's business strategies and Campbell's Leadership Model. Created by the senior leadership in 2002, the model emphasizes the importance of not only "what" work is accomplished, but also "how" it is accomplished.[31]

For Your Consideration

In what other ways can Charles get to know his employees and build relationships with them? How else might he be able to read expressions and body language?

CORE CONCEPT

Collaboration and innovation can be achieved virtually and across different time zones.

As organizations continue to diversify and globalize, having employees stationed across locations and time zones is increasingly an asset for, not a barrier to, innovation and success.

What We Know

Technology has completely restructured the way that work gets done, and smart organizations use it to their advantage. Whether a team member is 30 minutes away or 14 hours ahead, diversity of people often leads to more creativity and innovation.[32] Although face-to-face communication can be necessary in some situations, many meetings can easily be made virtual, saving time and money. The Third Wave of Virtual Work describes how "urban hubs"—well-appointed, shared spaces for mobile workers—are a solution for many virtual workers because they provide a convenient alternative workspace also utilized by other working professionals—encouraging organic connections as opposed to forced face time at the office.[33]

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

Re-evaluating the necessity of in-person meetings is an important first step—just because a meeting has always been in-person does not mean it must continue to be so. Additionally, it's important to be sensitive to time-zone considerations. Do calls have to occur as often as they do? Could assignments be given just as efficiently over email, rather than during meetings in the middle of the night? If regular meetings are required, the time of the meeting should rotate between time zones so that it is not always one person or group who is inconvenienced.

Flexibility In Action: Dow Corning

Dow Corning discovered that its colleagues in Asia, particularly China and Japan, had little interest in compressed workweeks but were instead far more interested in minimizing frequent late-night conference calls. In response, Dow Corning rolled out teleconference guidelines so that employees working in Asia, Australia/New Zealand, South America, Europe, and the United States regularly rotate time zones for conference calls.[34]

CORE CONCEPT

Home workers can be more productive and can deliver a higher quality of work than their in-office peers.

Different employees work…differently. This is true because of individual factors and because employees often have a variety of work responsibilities. Smart companies are sensitive to individual needs.

What We Know

Open plan offices may sound like a perfect collaboration tool, but very few employees work exclusively in teams. When individuals need quiet for focus and concentration, they may have better luck at home. Also, home-based workers are interrupted less and not distracted by the birthday celebrations, coffee breaks, and office gossip typically encountered in an office environment.[35]

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

The business case for employees working from home and other flexibility offerings like job-sharing all point to a savings on real estate for organizations. Offices will need less dedicated space such as offices and cubicles, but should include space for employees to escape the sounds of phone calls and office chatter.

Flexibility In Action: Communispace Corporation

In order to best serve clients with global online communities and support employees looking for flexibility, Communispace offers employees the ability, within reason, to create schedules that work for them. Some of the company's top employees work four days each week and some work alternate hours to support clients in other time zones. In some cases, employees begin work later in the day or earlier in the morning, or they work from home at "off-hours" to accommodate their personal lives and clients.[36]

Workplace Flexibility: Cultural & Regional Considerations

WHAT WE HEAR

Astrid is a working mother in Germany and is one of only a handful of women at her organization. Many of her female colleagues work part-time so that they can care for their children. Because Germany lacks a strong daycare network and her employer does not offer many childcare solutions, Astrid is in a difficult position.[37] When she explained her problem to her supervisor, Astrid was encouraged to move to a part-time schedule like her colleagues. Because Astrid has high career aspirations and would like to become a top executive someday, she is reluctant to accept part-time employment for fear of it impeding her advancement opportunities.

CORE CONCEPT

It is important to consider societal factors and cultural norms when creating flexibility programs and policies.

For flexibility to work across the entire organization, employers must be sensitive to cultural differences.

What We Know

There is no "one size fits all" solution to any work-life issue that applies across countries, industries, or organizations—solutions must be adapted to meet specific needs. Particularly for multinational organizations, making assumptions about what makes sense for a given region, and even about what flexibility means, can do more harm than good. Work-life issues across different countries in Asia, for example, vary greatly, and smart organizations tailor their solutions accordingly.[38]

> ### *For Your Consideration*
>
> What are some of the ways that Astrid's employer can provide quick support for her childcare needs?

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

Employees shifting their hours to start an hour earlier or an hour later can mean all the difference for getting their children to day care or picked up from school. Working from home automatically cuts commuting time, which flexible workers tend to use to work.

Flexibility In Action: Pepsico Mexico

In Mexico, the prevailing cultural norm is that a woman's role is to marry and care for her children and family. This societal expectation often has the effect of making family and career mutually exclusive concepts, as domestic responsibilities take precedent over professional lives and lead many women in Mexico to leave the workforce. Recognizing this challenge, and the impact it has both on individual women and on the available

talent pool, PepsiCo Mexico began to promote the inclusion of women in all areas of its business. The company has implemented a series of robust and diverse strategies, ranging from work-life to succession planning, to address this problem and reverse the trend.

PepsiCo Mexico's Female Executive Council spearheaded an effort to establish a formal structure for providing flexible and part-time work options.

Designed with women returning from maternity leave and other working mothers in mind, the program now benefits all employees, women and men alike. Part-time job opportunities, for example, can help women returning from maternity leave transition back into the workplace, but are made available to all employees. Other policies such as a condensed workweek, allowing for half-day Fridays, were also initiated by the Council and now benefit all employees, regardless of gender.[39]

CORE CONCEPT

Organizations seeking success in growing economies must be as committed to implementing work-life and flexibility programs in these regions as they are in more developed countries.

For maximum impact, flexibility offerings should exist across the entire organization.

What We Know

Catalyst's research on high-potential talent in India found that despite having similar interests and career ambitions as men, women reported more challenges in attaining work-life effectiveness.[40] Employers have found that it is easier logistically and legally to manage flexible work arrangements if they apply to everyone; this approach also prevents resentment from staff.[41]

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

To compete in a global economy where work is "dispersed more widely and managed across borders and time zones,"[42] managers in all regions need training on how to manage work-life effectiveness programs.

Flexibility In Action: Infosys

In 2003, Infosys launched a global council of six internal, senior women of varying nationalities who were tasked with conceptualizing and implementing an initiative that would create a gender-sensitive environment to attract, hire, and retain top talent, including women. Global counselors—female project managers and above who are trained to sensitize and educate other employees on gender-related matters, including topics such as managing work and personal situations, childcare concerns, managing conflicts at home, harassment in the workplace, and personal safety and security—ensure that women and men are effectively supported in their careers and personal lives.[43]

CORE CONCEPT

Public policy can have a positive impact on flexibility and work-life programs.

Organizations, understandably, are often fearful of government interference in their workplace practices. Far from mandating work-life programs, however, public policy efforts can help normalize work-life concerns and make it easier for organizations to address them.

What We Know

The European Union's legislation granting employees the "right to ask" does not guarantee a flexible schedule, but it does require managers to carefully consider the request and reflect on their own flexibility and gender biases before they can deny a request.[44]

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

As long as organizations continue to rely on a voluntary approval process for FWAs by managers and supervisors, employers must justify their decisions to deny requests to work flexibly. Reflecting on these reasons can help identify unintentional gender biases and logistical concerns that can then be addressed.

Workplace Flexibility: Interpersonal Considerations

Roger is a senior-level executive at a U.S. company with work-life benefits such as paid time off, telecommuting options, and parental leave policies. He and his husband, who also works full-time, are thinking about adopting a child soon. Roger's company offers 90 days of paid, job-protected maternity leave but only three days of paternity leave. Because of this, Roger and his husband are anxious about taking the next step toward making parenthood a reality.

CORE CONCEPT

Flexibility policies can demonstrate an organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion by including modern definitions of family.

Times are changing—"family" no longer means a mother, a father, and children. Smart organizations adapt their policies to follow suit.

What We Know

Research demonstrates that all employees—men and women, parents and the childfree, straight and LGBT individuals, blue- and white-collar workers—are interested in and can benefit from workplace flexibility.[45]

For Your Consideration

At many organizations, assumptions and gender biases such as viewing caretakers exclusively as women, wives, and mothers, continue to exist. How can workplaces move beyond the assumption that fathers (straight or gay) and/or gay parents don't need the same amount of time off as mothers who give birth?

Flexibility In Action:
Telstra Corporation Limited

Telstra offers 12 weeks of parental leave that can be taken full-time paid or half-pay for 24 weeks. Australian federal law does not mandate paid leave, but allows women to take up to 52 weeks unpaid. However, Telstra's leave policy is gender-neutral; the company conducted an extensive review of its policies, especially same-sex benefits, to ensure neutrality in its application. Thus, the parental leave policy includes language considering an "individual" as the primary caregiver to benefit from this policy.[46]

CORE CONCEPT

Successful flexible work arrangements are built upon a strong foundation of trust and respect.

Effectiveness at work quickly erodes when employers and employees don't trust one another. This is especially true when it comes to implementing FWA.

What We Know

For flexibility to be effective—for it to benefit both organizations and individuals—trust is vitally important. Trust breaks down when employers make assumptions about what it means to work flexibly and, conversely, when employees take advantage of the ability to work flexibly.[47] For example, managers may prohibit FWA because they assume that direct reports will perform child care duties while working from home. Employees who abuse their organizations' flexibility policies—while certainly not the norm—set a bad example and erode trust. Research shows that working from home can significantly enhance productivity,[48] and trust is a vital ingredient for flexibility's success.

Flexibility In Action: PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) LLP's Catalyst Award-winning initiative, *Unique People Experience* (UPE), addresses the costly issues of turnover and retention of top talent. UPE is a series of initiatives intended to decrease turnover, enhance clients' experiences, and optimize staff productivity by recognizing, respecting, and managing differences among people.

Survey data at PwC indicated that dissatisfaction with work-life quality was a major reason people left the firm. To address this, PwC focused on creating a culture that values time off for vacation and weekends, and enables people to take advantage of both formal and informal flexibility options without stigma. PwC offers several formal policies or programs for flexibility: reduced hours, flextime, PwC@home, PwC offsite, jobsharing, compressed workweek, and seasonal employment. These arrangements can be used without stigma; many staff members have advanced to the partner level while using a FWA. In a survey of staff using reduced hours, 95 percent said that the arrangement contributed to their decision to stay with the firm.[49]

CORE CONCEPT

Proposing a flexible work arrangement is no longer a last resort for employees faced with a life altering situation.

Work-life effectiveness is now more of a priority at all stages of employee careers.

What We Know

Although employees with flexibility are more engaged and less likely to leave an organization,[50] sometimes they must leave because of a spouse's relocation or a desire to take on new challenges. These employees will seek out new employers who will also provide FWAs. Research has also found that a majority of millennials in the early stages of their careers were unwilling to prioritize their work lives at the expense of their personal lives, even if it meant a substantial increase in compensation down the line.[51]

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

The *2012 National Study of Employers* found that the organizations most likely to offer flexibility were nonprofits and companies with more "women and racial and ethnic minorities in top/senior positions." Size of the organization was also a factor: larger companies usually offered benefits that cost more to implement and continue over a long period of time.[52] *Working Mother*'s Best Places to Work list allows individuals to find organizations with flexibility programs already in place. Websites such as flexjobs.com allow employees to search for jobs that "offer some kind of flexibility."[53]

CORE CONCEPT

Working virtually can further blur the boundary between work and personal life if employees and employers do not set expectations from the start.

Flexibility options can and should significantly enhance employee outcomes, but if employers expect that employees always "be on," burnout is inevitable.

What We Know

Some studies indicate telecommuting has not been effective in reducing the amount of time worked, but rather simply "relocates it."[54] Employees who work virtually have not been shown to work fewer hours and FWAs can generate expectations that evenings and weekends are acceptable work times. That being said, it is the autonomy and sense of control that makes employees with flexibility more engaged and productive. Employees must also be trained on reasonable expectations for their work, their managers, and themselves.

Flexibility In Action: Recommendations

Towers Watson's 2012 *Global Workforce Study* found that 47% of respondents "work in some kind of flexible arrangement and tend to have more positive perceptions of their jobs and organizations than their office-bound peers."[55]

CORE CONCEPT

Formal flexibility policies should be communicated and celebrated by leadership to demonstrate support.

Some employees are reluctant to request flexible work arrangements for fear that doing so may be perceived as an "off-ramp."

What We Know

Taking a proactive approach to career development is required by all employees in any work situation. Catalyst's most recent report on high-potential women and their opportunities for "hot jobs" demonstrates that the "put your head down and do what you are told" work ethic does not always translate to career success.[56] For virtual and in-office employees, contributions and commitment must be communicated and demonstrated for career success.

Flexibility In Action: Deloitte & Touche LLP

In 2004, when the leaders of Deloitte's Women's Initiative revamped its vision and agenda, they realized that both women and men were struggling to meet their work and life priorities. Deloitte had tried to address this issue in the mid-1990s when it instituted formal flexible work arrangements (FWAs), but FWAs were not meeting employee needs. In a series of internal focus groups, Deloitte found that approximately one-half of employees on FWAs reported them working well, while the other half reported difficulties. However, virtually all the participants agreed that there was a lack of clarity about the impact of their FWAs on their career paths. The focus groups exposed the limitations of FWAs as short-term solutions negotiated on a one-off basis and identified the need for a systemic, structural solution.

To address all of these issues, Deloitte created Mass Career Customization (MCC). A fundamental and profound difference between MCC and FWAs is that, while FWAs have been positioned as workplace exceptions or accommodations, MCC applies to all employees. MCC is mainstream and foundational, and it is embedded in the talent management systems and processes of the organization.[57]

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