Expert Group Meeting
Work Life Policies, Practice and Potential
9-11 November 2010

Definitions of Flexibility

+ "How and when work gets done and how careers are organized"

+ "Allows each person to work fully"

Expert Group Meeting on *Work-Life Policy, Practice and Potential*

United Nations, 9-11 November 2010

Participants

+ Corporations totalling approximately 400 billion dollars of asset value and totalling approximately 1 million employees

+ Harvard and Wharton Business Schools

+ Cranfield University, U.K

+ University of Navarra, Spain

+ Non Profit Organizations dedicated only to Work-Life

+ Civil Society representatives from four continents

Flexibility Implies:

Organizational Culture

+ A culture of trust that allows employees to add flexibility to their lives

Flexible Work Arrangements - Work Methods that are:

+ Beneficial to both men and women

+ Reason neutral and without stigma

+ Increasingly expected as routine work process by younger work force

Career Flexibility

+ Career paths that incorporate differences in pace, workload, location, schedule and role over a lifetime

Case for Flexibility

Flexibility should not be positioned as a benefit or accommodation to employees

Rather, as a tremendous benefit to the organization and the individual alike - win: win

In our age of decreasing resources and increasing demands, must find ways to do more with less

Flexibility yields the "more" with relatively less cost infusion

Flexibility Business Case – Needed?

+ Whether measured by productivity, retention, employee engagement, job satisfaction, reduced stress or client orientation, the evidence is heavily weighted towards its positive impact.

+ The question no is longer is whether there is a business case for flexibility.

+ Rather, only why an organization would not act with intensity to capitalize on its powerful workplace potential.

Flexibility Yields

+ Flexibility – even small measures – in when and where work gets done yields powerfully significant influence on:

+ a) job satisfaction - Some studies show a linear relationship between degree of flexibility and level of job satisfaction and that flexibility's most powerful effect is an increase in employee engagement and commitment

+ b) employee commitment and level of engagement – Some studies show a linear relationship between degree of flexibility and level of job satisfaction and that flexibility's most powerful effect is an increase in employee engagement and commitment

+ c) lower levels of stress -Stress is the leading cause across industries of unscheduled absences, and it is a major source of productivity loss due to presenteeism (i.e., when an employee comes to work too stressed to be effective)

+ Studies repeatedly demonstrate that FWAs reduce employee stress, yielding the product in the same or less time

+

OSAGI Survey Results 2009

+ Between 64% and 69% of FWA users reported higher levels of organizational loyalty and increased productivity, job satisfaction and motivation

+ Nearly 75% of respondents indicated a strong interest in using the existing FWAs options

+ 67% indicated that FWAs are a modern tool allowing better work-life fit for employees

+ 73% of managers reported telecommuting arrangements were working well. (DM survey)

Challenges Identified in 2009 Survey

+ **Organizational Culture: Management Support Deficit -** 20% and 27% of respondents perceived senior and middle management respectively as not supportive of the use of flexibility work arrangements

+ **Organizational Culture: Trust and Implementation Deficit** – Approximately half of respondents reported not exercising their right to request use of FWA primarily due to fear and certainty of refusal

+ **Flexible Work Arrangements: Knowledge Deficit** -A large percent of respondents reported poor or very poor knowledge of the flexibility policies – ranging from 50% for extended learning activity to 38% for staggered work hours

Areas of Focus
Expert Group Recommendations

+ Organizational culture - Trust and respect constitute the foundational elements: You trust and respect my work-life needs and I will trust and respect your organizational needs; *UN could do more in this area*

+ Flexible work arrangements – organizational means to manifest culture of flexibility: *UN has the basic policy package – needs only to broaden and strengthen implementation*

+ Career path flexibility – flexibility to synchronize and meet larger life needs over a career path e.g. burdens of care : *UN has partially achieved but more needs to be done, especially given demographic and generational attitudinal shifts*

Organizational Culture
What more to do

+ Good flexibility practices can currently be found throughout the United Nations system, but must be more embedded and woven into workplace culture

+ Objective: Transform the UN into an "employer of choice" – not notionally but measurably using standard metrics (available on-line free).

+ Unisolate the UN –partnering with external processes e.g. Work Family Institute; Obama Initiative for Work Life Dialogue in all federal offices in all states (created a work life office in the white house), Sloan Institute, Brain Drain Task Force and public reporting on developments in them

Organizational Culture ..cont'd

+ Communication and awareness-raising strategy
  + Continue consistent and frequent highest-level support (SG and DSG)
  + Reframe the discussion to position flexibility not as a "perk," staff accommodation; rather as a powerful organizational tool and necessary component of optimal and modern management, productivity and outcomes
  + Designate "champions" within each large department and/or large unit for FWA
  + Use new and validated instruments to generate important metrics to measure for example employee engagement and commitment
  + Make the organization aware of the results of the metrics pre and post flexibility
  + Stakeholder analysis which maps receptive and less receptive units – broadening systematically the success stories, working with pilot entities or departments or units to set examples
  + Publicize good examples of management and staff stories

Flexible Work Arrangements at the UN

+ Flexibility is not new to the UN: it exists in many forms and actually is more than just the FWA. Therefore, not so much a change – as a broadening and realigning of understanding and practice

+ Flexible work arrangements available to UN staff :

- Staggered working hours
- Compressed work schedules: ten working days in nine
- Scheduled break for external learning activities
- Work away from the office (telecommuting)
- Job Share (but often limited to one host country nationals due to visa issues)

+ Entitlements in support of work life : maternity, paternity, sick leave/personal days, emergency leave

Flexibility
From what to what

Accommodation-based Flexibility
-Private deals based on individual's needs
-Inconsistent implementation, often secret
-Restricted Access to Flexibility

Business-Based Flexibility
-Decisions based on both businesses and individual needs
-Policy infrastructure that defines scheduling options and supports consistent implementation

Culture of Flexibility
-Incorporates options for formal arrangements as well as widespread, informal flexibility
-Culture that rewards results achieved rather than time spent
-Flexibility viewed as a management strategy

Flexible Work Arrangements

- MYTH – Massive Exodus of Staff clamouring to use FWA simultaneously and universally – especially telecommute
- Evidence – at any give time only about 20 percent will use any given arrangement
- Establish a Steering Committee to oversee and encourage implementation of flexibility
- Have it adopt principles for flexibility (exist) that guide in establishing, monitoring and contributing to successful FWA outcomes
- Integrate Flexibility into mainstream management practices e.g. establish flexibile management as a competency or requirement so stated in job descriptions
- Encourage use of team approach vs. individual approach to plan FWA in a given office or unit
- Select some managers to lead by example (and convince themselves that it works) i.e. Output and not face-time based staff assessment
- Systematically use metrics instruments such as surveys to document change in perceptions and use, as well as educate
- Publicize/designate FWAs FPs tasked to assist with informal resolution of FWA cases in each department without burdening administration
- Monitor requests, approvals and general issues with implementation
- Showcase current good practices
- OSAGI/ EO survey is now underway

Career Path Flexibility

+ Flexibility need not be limited to conceptualizing or applying it to the organization's daily or weekly work –
+ Rather, equally to longer term horizons – monthly, yearly work or careers over a life time (truth is there are many such long term staff despite contractual differences)
+ Encourage experimentation with sabatticals or seasonal schedules that reflect the ebb and flow of work, personal pursuits and most importantly, human well being e.g. *to combat burn out or brown out*
+ Creation of Leave Bank – team gifting of unused leave to an individual with pressing need to care for an elder
+ Succession Planning – rather horrified at its lack in the UN
+ Incorporate meaningful discussion on career vision in the epas
+ Encourage discussion on what matters to individuals – it is not unmanagable.
+ Rather a function of will and style

+ Example of good practice:
  + Deloitte – Mass Career Customization
    + Employees work with manager to customize career pace, workload, location and schedule, and role based on individual needs at current stage of life
    + All of the above dimensions can be dialed up or down

UN Women

+ The composite entity will have eight functions, as outlined in the Deputy Secretary-General's papers of August 2007 and July 2008. These include the following:

+ (h) **Monitor and report on system-wide compliance with intergovernmental mandates on gender balance, including at the senior and decision-making levels.** (Page 6 of A/64/588)

+ C. Headquarters-level functions
  11. At Headquarters, the composite entity will provide substantive support to Inter-governmental processes. In addition to other global functions, it will support regional and country-level activities. For its key Headquarters functions, the composite entity will:

+ (e) **Monitor and report on United Nations system compliance and efforts to develop and apply internal United Nations gender equality policies, including achieving gender balance, eliminating harassment and promoting work-life balance**; (Page 10 of A/64/588)

Role of UN Women

Strengthen coordination, accountability and implementation of policy and practice in all matters related to gender parity including ....work life

Organizational Culture
+ Communication and Advocacy Strategy at the highest level
+ Coordination of network of focal points
+ Create a UN award to recognize good practices

Flexible Work Arrangements
+ Provision of package of potential policy and tools
+ Periodically survey staff and managers for qualitative monitoring

Career Flexibility
+ Advocacy and assistance to organization to embed various forms of career flexibility
+ Highlight examples of women and men with successful flexible careers

OFPW Contact Info

Aparna Mehrotra
Focal Point for Women
mehrotra@un.org

Marilyn Dawson
Social Affairs Officer
dawsonm@un.org

OFPW website: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/fp.htm