Work-Life Policy, Practice and Potential:
Recommendations for the United Nations System

Background Paper Commissioned for Expert Group Meeting

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1. Introduction: The Establishment of UN Women

January 1, 2011 will be a milestone for women and girls around the world. In July of 2010, the United Nations General Assembly decided by a unanimous vote to establish a new UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women, known as UN Women, as a distinct entity within the United Nations system. UN Women is charged with accelerating progress towards gender equality in all its dimensions in all Member States of the United Nations. Here it is noteworthy that over a decade ago, in describing gender equality not only as an end in itself but a means to all other development goals including economic growth and productivity, in 1995, the year of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, the UN Human Development Report noted that where development is not engendered, it is endangered.

Until now the United Nations system has consisted of 31 autonomous entities. UN Women will constitute the 32nd entity, becoming the principal body assisting the Secretary-General to discharge his gender related mandates including on gender parity within the UN system and its monitoring and reporting. It is expected to become operational on 1 January 2011 and will incorporate, consolidate, expand and strengthen the existing mandates and work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Resolution of the General Assembly (GA) A/RES/64/289 on System-wide Coherence which establishes the entity states, in paragraph 53, on strengthening the institutional arrangements for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women: "decide(d) that the mandate and functions of the Entity (UN Women) shall consist of the consolidated mandates and functions of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, with the additional role of leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women …" Also, it is significant that the establishment of UN Women is the culmination of many years of consultation and advocacy by the global women's movement with the Member States.

With respect to the specific functions of UN Women, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated, "I commend the leadership and staff of DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI, and UNIFEM for their commitment to the cause of gender equality; I will count on their support as we enter a new era in the UN's work for women. I have made gender equality and the empowerment of women one of my top priorities – from working to end the scourge of violence against women, to appointing more women to senior positions to efforts to reduce maternal mortality rates. "

Further, in his report A/64/588 "Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women" to the GA, on which the resolution creating UN Women relied, the SG indicated that UN Women's mandate would extend both to the international community, partnering with Member States in their countries, and in the UN system itself where it is to "monitor and report on system-wide compliance with intergovernmental mandates on gender balance, including at the senior and decision-making levels **and** 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**.**"

The establishment of UN Women offers a two-fold opportunity: to contribute to innovative advances in the work methodology of the UN system and to disseminate them to its wider constituencies in Member States, with particular relevance to women in the global work force. More specifically, the objectives of the meeting are to bring together external expertise to explore state-of-the art research and analysis and identify good practices and lessons learned. In this context the Office of the Focal Point for Women, now located in UN Women and formerly a part of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, is convening a meeting from 9-11 November, 2010 to gather experts on work-life policy and practice. Outcomes will include a report containing recommendations for UN system's senior management on Work Life Policy and Practice and a strategy for its more effective implementation.

2. Work-Life Policy and Practice across the United Nations System

Mandate

The General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations – the governing body of the United Nations comprising 192 Member States - has set, since 1986, a series of evolving targets for the representation of women in the UN system, culminating in the target of achieving gender parity in the year 2000, pursuant to the Beijing Platform for Action agreed to by Member States in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Clearly, this goal was not achieved by the time set. Consequently, to accelerate progress, entities in the UN system introduced several policies including Flexible Work Arrangements in 2003. In addition, several Resolutions of the GA, as listed in appendix 2, also specifically reference the need to strengthen work life policy and its implementation.

Work Life Policy and Practice: Status of Implementation in the UN System

The data is compelling; equipping employees to better address their work-life needs is vital for the 21st century workforce. Powerful forces have come together that have dramatically changed the workforce and the workplace. The aging of the population and the changing demographics of the family – including the rise of dual career parent and single parent households - have changed the composition of the workforce. The explosion in technological resources – dismantling barriers to communication, enabling far greater connectivity, and resulting in a torrent of easily accessible information – has profoundly altered the way we work. As a result of all these changes, the importance of work-life fit and of helping employees to integrate their personal and work lives has become an important ingredient for organizational success, including in the United Nations System.

Consequently, from 2002, and in response to a request from the GA, the Secretary-General began to present, through his reports on the "Improvement of the Status of Women in the UN System", an analysis of progress toward gender parity' across the United Nations system. The importance of work- life policy and practice, including the need for effective FWAs have been consistent themes covered in these reports.

He has also utilized the mechanism of the Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB), a body he chairs and consisting of all heads of entities of the UN system, to enhance coordination, coherence and harmonization of policies and practices in this, and other areas of the work of the United Nations.

Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB)

While the Secretary-General's reporting covers the full United Nations system, each UN entity determines its own organizational practices including the availability of flexible work arrangements. For coordination and coherence purposes, however, the Secretary-General chairs, twice yearly, the CEB. Until now, gender issues have not benefited from a single high level advocate on par with the other heads of UN entities. This is expected to change as UN Women takes it seat as a full and equal member of CEB starting 1 January 2011, thus significantly raising the stature and level of all gender related issues.

In 2009 the CEB highlighted Staff Well Being (SWB) as an overarching theme for the UN encompassing work-life balance, staff mobility, and staff counseling. In this communication the CEB proposed two standards or packages for supporting SWB. These included a core or basic standard as well as a more comprehensive or gold standard. Each is outlined in the table below.

Basic Standard	Gold Standard
• Flex-time • Mandatory time off after duty travel • Parental, compassionate and home leave • Compensation of overtime for General Staff • Access to services of a Staff Counselor, Ombudsperson, and Mediator • Stress management and staff outreach support programs • Career development programs	Basic standard plus: • Part-time work • Compressed work weeks • Job sharing • Telecommuting • Compensation of overtime for all staff (including professional and executive staff) • Child care and sports facilities • Dual career and staff mobility programs

The CEB communication highlighted a lack of capacity in middle management to implement work-life balance measures as the primary obstacle to their success. It recommended the Human Resource Network across the UN, in partnership with OSAGI, focus on effective implementation of work-life supports.

The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)

The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the statutory body responsible for harmonization of policies and practices across the UN system, determines the issue of entitlements of the UN staff, e.g. for maternity, paternity, adoption and sick leave entitlements applicable in all entities of the UN System. FWAs and other work- life support policies do not constitute entitlements and so have been left to the discretion of the head of each UN entity, with the Secretary General of the United Nations being the highest as head of the largest UN entity, the UN Secretariat.

Flexible Work Arrangements in the UN Secretariat, Funds and Programmes

The formal introduction of a slate of FWAs for the UN Secretariat in January 2003 by Secretary-General Kofi Annan marked a major milestone in the UN's recognition of and support for work-life challenges. The four flexible work options introduced, and also adopted by the Funds and Programmes, were : 1) staggered work hours requiring each department or organization to define core hours around which employees could flex, 2) flexibility windows for educational opportunities including up to three hours away for up to two days per week, 3) a compressed schedule of nine longer days over a two week period to allow for a 10th day away from work, and 4) the ability to "telecommute" for up to two days per week.

In 2010, as in previous years, the report of the SG on the improvement of the status of women (A/65/334) included the weak implementation of FWAs amongst the several key challenges for the acceleration of progress towards the goal of gender parity. The availability and usage of the four flexibility options, as reported to OSAGI, is shown in the table below.

Type of Flexibility Option	**Availability**	**Easily to Very Easily Granted**	**Occasionally Granted**	**Almost Never Granted**
Staggered work hours	22/31* or 71%	15/22 or 68%	2/22 or 9%	
Compressed workweek	14/31 or 45%	8/14 or 57%		
Telecommuting	21/31 or 68%	8/21 or 38%	6/21 or 29%	1/21 or 5%
Flexibility for educational opportunities	16/31 or 52%	7/16 or 44%	4/16 or 25%	2/16 or 13%

* Positive response/total number of entity responses

While the majority of the 31 UN entities have a part-time policy and a small number offer job sharing, the four flexibility options outlined above would, in essence, constitute the core menu. The other major element of work-life support across the United Nations system includes the variety of leave options mentioned above (maternity, paternity, and sick/family leave, adoption and family emergency). Given the high percentage of expatriates (85% of UN staff) and the large number of UN staff in dual career families, it is not surprising that support for spouse employment also is an important component of work-life assistance across several UN entities.

Appendix 3 includes a table summarizing the policies and measures to achieve gender balance in the United Nations system including several work-life policies.

Survey on FWAs in the UN Secretariat

OSAGI has been proactively working to accelerate change regarding gender balance and work-life issues within the UN system, focusing on the Secretariat (where it is organizationally located and over which the SG exercises direct authority) as a "pilot". In the summer of 2009, therefore, OSAGI conducted a global flexibility survey of Secretariat staff world-wide, to explore the use of FWAs among its departments and offices at Headquarters, and also in field operations, with a broader aim of identifying current and emerging practice regarding work-life fit. Survey respondents (approximately 2500) highlighted multiple benefits of working on a flexible schedule, showing high interest in flexible work options as a modern management tool.

- 69% of FWA users reported working more efficiently, 67% being more satisfied with their jobs, 65% feeling more motivated at work, and 64% having an increased desire to stay at the UN
- Nearly 75% of respondents indicated a strong interest in using the four major FWAs options - compressed work schedules, telecommuting, staggered work hours, and flexible time off for learning activities
- 57% of respondents reported FWAs should be available to all UN staff if their use maintains or increases productivity and work-life balance fit while 67% indicated that FWAs are a modern tool allowing better work-life fit for employees

The survey results also highlighted several ongoing challenges for the UN Secretariat in its efforts to expand the use of and comfort with flexible work practices.

- Only one-fifth of respondents perceived senior management as supportive of the use of flexibility work arrangements in their departments; only 27% of middle managers were seen as supportive
- Less than half of respondents had proposed use of flexible work arrangements during the last two years primarily due to perceived lack of support and insufficient knowledge of the policies
- 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

An interesting contrast can be seen in a separate survey conducted within the Secretariat and focused exclusively on telecommuting, in which 73% of managers reported telecommuting arrangements were working well.

Flexible Work Arrangement Metric

To strengthen accountability for creating a more flexible work environment, a performance metric has been included in 2010 for all Department Heads within the Secretariat as well as an indication of the expectation of an action plan to implement FWAs within each department.

3. The Challenge and the Opportunity Ahead

One of the greatest difficulties in mainstreaming flexibility and work-life support across the UN system is its complex and highly decentralized organizational structure. That complexity is heightened by the mobility of the workforce and its presence around the world in environments differentially situated relative to the role of women and work. In addition, while several UN entities report the availability of FWAs and other work-life supports at the broadest level, in actual practice the usage and availability varies widely

The establishment of UN Women provides a rare window of opportunity to bring heightened attention and focus across the UN system to the needs and issues of working women, and increasingly also of men as they share responsibilities as equal partners. The Expert Group Meeting seeks a Work-Life Strategy and Action Plan, as a recommendation to it, with a two-fold objective:

a) First - to provide an articulated framework that enables each entity within the UN system to better understand and choose from among a set of work-life packages or options along a continuum (similar to the CEB core and gold standards mentioned earlier.) These packages will reflect the individual context including the starting point, goals and organizational culture in which each entity operates and finds itself.

b) Second - it is hoped that a recommended Work-Life Strategy and Action Plan, can, if adopted, position UN Women as a standard bearer around the world. The opportunity is to envision, and possibly realize an organization with policies and practices that truly reflect and accommodate the expectations, realities, needs and aspirations of the current and changing work force.

The challenge is to gain space for both the aspirational mindset of creating a new ‘model’ organization and the practical mindset of creating a strategy that informs the work-life practice of the highly variable entities which comprise the UN system. The upcoming meeting is convened to seek assistance in this endeavor from recognised experts, so that their best thinking can be reflected in the UN’s planning at this highly promising moment in advancing the rights and opportunities of women.

4. A Framework for Work-Life Policy and Practice: From Core to Leading Edge

Work-life support is a broad topic encompassing several foundational elements. This section will lay out these foundational pieces, considering each along a continuum from baseline to leading edge. Leading edge descriptors illustrate norms practiced by organizations in the vanguard of partnering with employees to best manage and integrate their work-life priorities. The model provides a framework for the UN to consider in the development of a work-life strategy for the UN system, including UN Women, as an example for others to follow.

Work-life support is broad and far reaching. The core elements of work-life support encompassed in this model are explicitly focused on the work environment and the way people work, both in the short term as well as over their careers. They include:

- Flexible work practices
- A flexible work culture
- Focus on work-life effectiveness
- Career path flexibility
- Infrastructure and positioning

There are several elements of work-life support such as time off policies, financial assistance and dependent care supports that are not covered in this paper and are not the UN's primary focus at this time. In addition, work-life support assumes a living wage and access to adequate health insurance as minimum requirements.

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)

Flexible work arrangements have long been a hallmark of work-life support policies and practices and are on the short list of requirements for any organization seeking to help employees manage the complexity of modern lives. The obstacles to their acceptance in many organisations arises from the perception that, despite their prevalence 'on the books', the usage of flexibility raises fears about career repercussions and a general sense that working on a flexible schedule is aberrant and not the normal way to work. The gap between a menu of flexible work practices and the actual usage of these flexible options by a broad representation of the work population is wide and deep. The table below highlights several characteristics of an organization's approach to flexibility that helps a policy on FWAs actually become practice.

Core Offerings	Leading Edge	Indicators

• Employee access to a menu of flexible work options:
  · Flextime
  · Telecommuting, remote work
  · Compressed work week (also available to professional staff)
  · Part-time, job sharing
  · Summer hours
• Clear and well understood process for seeking flexible work options
• A reason-neutral FWA policy
• Resources to support the usage of flexibility such as comprehensive written guidelines
• A formalized process for tracking usage of flexible work options
• Company shares in costs incurred by remote workers
• Profiles of sampling of employees on flexible schedules – include what they have learned through the process
	• Allows maximum customization of schedules
	• Broadly available by level, geography, gender
	• Flexible work options positioned as a tool for managing work vs. as an employee accommodation
	• Sortable in-depth profiles of employees on flexible options across the organization (a resource for employees and managers)
	• Collection of ongoing feedback regarding effectiveness of flexible work options with an eye toward continuous improvement (e.g. involve flex users, managers, co-workers, clients)
	• Approach is experimental and iterative
	• Managers receive skill building training to expand comfort and competence
	• Employees fully equipped to work off site
		• Employees feel like flexibility is 'about me' no matter their personal life situation, used by broad slice of workforce representing spectrum of needs
		• The success of flexible work options depends on the partnership between the employee and the manager
		• A request for a flexible work option is not met with a yes/no response from a manager but with a focus on mutually beneficial solutions, management assumes a problem solving orientation
		• A request for a flexible work option is a starting point rather than an ending point

Interestingly, some of the more programmatic aspects of flexible work options such as tracking usage and a formalized request process may at some point no longer be required for organizations that become seasoned around the use of flexible work options and have embedded flexibility into their cultures. But for organizations that are newer to flexibility – or have long made flexible work options available but

with little acceptance by management and/or staff - the more structured approach is often needed to build an experience base and convincing evidence that flexible work options can work with benefits for both.

Flexible work culture

The notion of a flexible work culture encompasses but goes beyond the provision and use of flexible work practices. A flexible work culture is one where employees feel far more comfortable working flexibly whether that be on a formal schedule or in a more ad-hoc way. It is a culture where managing flexibly is a strongly desired - if not required – management competency and where employees are empowered to challenge notions of where, when and how work gets done. The business case for flexibility is well understood and support for flexibility is characterized by clear and visible leadership support. In many organizations a flexible work culture is something that evolves through time. The table below indicates a practical approach for inculcating such a culture.

Core Offerings	Leading Edge	Indicators
• Informal/ ad-hoc flexibility widely used and available • Champions at highest levels who promote and support flexibility • Work-life support performance metrics tracked for leaders and managers • Manager training to build comfort and competence in flexibility management (not just informational but involves skill development) • Leadership briefings on flexibility, help leaders reflect on their personal work styles and norms	• Organizational practices/ norms that reinforce work boundaries (see indicators) • Align organizational systems to support flexibility (see indicators) • Leaders model use of flexibility, share personal approach to work-life management • Upward feedback for managers and leaders • Use pilot approach to learn what works and what doesn't and to adapt as needed • Both carrots and sticks are used to help managers adapt to a more flexible management style • Layered manager training and coaching - give managers input into the process • Flexibility coaches/ consultants (may be HR generalists trained with this expertise) available to provide just-in-time support, troubleshooting for managers and employees • Clarify role of many stakeholders in creating a flexible environment (e.g. HR, managers, employees, leadership, teams) – all have a role to play	• Examples of organizational norms include no meeting Fridays, no emails on weekends, guidelines for global teleconferencing sensitive to time differences, co-development of client expectations • Examples of organizational system adaptations include use of full-time equivalent vs. headcount system for staffing purposes, evaluation of part-time professionals on proportional basis in comparison to full-time peers • Employees understand their role in creating a flexible work culture (e.g. support co-worker flexibility, be honest about personal work style and contributing behaviors to overwork) • Managers are allowed time and space to move up the flexibility learning curve • Move beyond programmatic response to flexibility, goal to evolve the work culture

Focus on work-life effectiveness

Catalyst, the lead non-profit organization undertaking research on women in the work-force, defines work-life effectiveness (WLE) as " using flexibility in tandem with process improvements to support individuals, teams and businesses." The differences between flexibility and work-life effectiveness are described as:

Flexibility	Work-Life Effectiveness
• Focuses on the short-term – how to respond to current work demands. • Focuses on individual work solutions. • Is an accommodation for the few. • Alternatively disempowers or entitles employees. • Values time spent. • Regards employee needs, interests and concerns about burnout as obstacles to accomplishing work. • Focuses on managing employee schedules.	• Focuses on the long-term – how to support agility and sustainable performance. • Focuses on team solutions and coordination. • Is a tool for all employees. • Encourages managers and employees to develop solutions together. • Values results and effectiveness. • Uses employee needs, interests and concerns about burnout as a catalyst for creatively redesigning work. • Focuses on managing for strong performance and employee sustainably.

Source**:** Beyond Flexibility: Work-Life Effectiveness as an Organizational Tool for High Performance. Catalyst

With WLE as the compass, sustainability takes center stage as does the goal of approaching work from a more thoughtful, strategic perspective rather than always remaining in an urgent, operational mode. Persistent work overload is seen as a threat to long-term success rather than just an artifact of the modern work world. WLE is a highly solutions driven approach which realizes that helping employees remove obstacles at work so they can be effective and add their greatest value for the organization – while simultaneously enabling them to honor the other important aspects of their lives – is a powerful catalyst to drive problem solving and innovation. WLE is moving beyond the concept of flexibility and focuses on how we all work, regardless of schedule or location, so that adding value remains front and centre.

Core Offerings	Leading Edge	Indicators
	• Explicit focus on managing work overload • Local working groups develop customized flexibility solutions (identify true need and possible options) • Focus on flexibility at the team or workgroup level • Work redesign to challenge ineffective work approaches • Benefits of improved work effectiveness accrue to employees and the organization	• Work heroes are not defined by unlimited time and accessibility • Planful approach favored over constant crisis management • Consistent overwork is seen as a warning sign • Spotlight on how work gets accomplished as well on the work deliverables

Career path flexibility

Highly skilled knowledge workers such as those sought by the United Nations typically spend several early years in higher education and subsequently building their credentials through work experience. As these employees move into different life stages, the complexity of their lives typically accelerates and the challenges of combining work and home escalate. Seismic changes in the demographics of the workforce has fueled the focus on flexibility and flexible work practices yet careers are built over decades and increasingly through building a portfolio of work experience across multiple organizations.
Those organizations that want to retain employees for the longer-term need to partner with them in architecting career paths that allow for continued growth and development throughout multiple life stages. From anecdotal evidence, it appears that a large proportion of UN Staff, particularly at the middle and junior levels, feel rudderless due to the virtually total absence of career planning on the part of management.

Career path flexibility is profoundly important for women and increasingly for men who are playing a far different role in their home lives. In addition to working on a reduced schedule for a period of time or telecommuting from home a few days per week, career path flexibility may mean allowing employees to ramp down over a several year period before finally retiring or as the UN has proposed to do creating project opportunities for the spouses of relocating staff so that they can continue to develop professionally. Some pointers appear below.

Core Offerings	Leading Edge	Indicators
• Phased return to work from parental leave, medical leave • Support employees reentering the workforce	• Discussion of work-life issues embedded into career planning conversations • Ability to accelerate or decelerate careers without long-term career penalties • Provision of spousal support in dual career families • Option to phase out for retirement • Proactive approach for bringing alumni back to the organization • Availability of high level job shares	• Positions adapted with career path flexibility in mind (e.g. part-time partner at professional service firm, rotational assignments not requiring relocation) • Have the ability to limit travel, refuse assignments, postpone promotions without enduring career penalties • Goal in adapting positions and enabling more flexible career paths is to continue building expertise during multiple phases of life • Innovative approaches such as unbundling work to create discrete project opportunities

Infrastructure and Positioning

Organizations seeking to assist employees with integrating their work and personal lives require, as with any organizational priority, a vision and plan as well as resources for making it happen. Clarity in terms of the business case for organizational attention to work-life issues, a widely communicated strategy concretizing how the organization will go about inculcating this support, and resources in the form of budget and staff to facilitate the execution of the strategy are all necessary. The stalwarts of work-life support, those seasoned organizations focused on adapting their work cultures to better align with the needs of the 21st century workforce realities, typically see work-life support as an ongoing management issue. It is not just a program to be rolled out or a box to be checked off but a perspective woven into how the organization operates that evolves through time and practice, as indicated in the table which follows.

Core Offerings	Leading Edge	Indicators
• Have a clear and relevant business case, customized for major parts of the organization • Work-life efforts positioned within the context of a clearly articulated and widely communicated work-life strategy • Work-life efforts linked to key organizational objectives • Resources are devoted – in terms of staff and budget – to ongoing execution of the work-life strategy • Use tools to get ongoing feedback from employees on their experience of the work environment (e.g. employee opinion survey, pulse survey, focus groups, on-line chats)	• Use pilots (flexibility experiments) to measure impact of work-life support on productivity, employ pre and post measures • Local working groups determine relevant issues and customized solutions, ensure solving the right problem, engage managers and employees at the local level • Approach to work-life support is integrated rather than dispersed • Support for work-life issues is regarded as a core organizational value – as stated and practiced • Measure work-life progress over time (e.g. satisfaction, usage, participation, business impact) • Work-life perspective is embedded into other organizational systems and practices (e.g. performance management, training, job design, workforce planning) • Have a robust communications strategy – realize employees need ongoing messaging that flexibility is sanctioned	• Work-life support is not a program or a benefit but an ongoing management issue such as employee development • Work-life competence is seen as a management skill and not exclusively an HR initiative • Work-life support is communicated frequently, through multiple venues, and by many audiences • Realization that the way we work has changed dramatically and organizational practices and norms are catching up

5. United Nations Draft Work-Life Strategy

OSAGI has been charged with delivering a work-life strategy that will provide a vision and concrete actions for the United Nations system in their efforts to mainstream flexibility in work-life pactices and recognition and support of work-life issues. To that end, we have included a draft strategy proposed for review and discussion. The aim of this exercise should be to prepare the outline of a practical set of actions that the various entities in the UN system can realistically implement.

1) Evolving the Work Culture

A key component, perhaps the most important component of any work-life strategy, is to alter the work culture in ways that allow employees greater control over how they work and enable them to most effectively integrate their work and personal lives. Even greater is the need to bring managers to recognize that a mutually supported work-life culture and system also brings them advantages in productivity of staff. The UN, like many large organizations, could be characterized as command and control and hierarchical. Thus moving toward a far more flexible work culture will require the development of new skills on the part of managers and employees as well as new approaches to accomplishing work. This will require leadership engagement and support, management and employee skill building, continuing communication, experimentation and time.

Area of Focus: To build organizational competence and confidence in creating a more flexible work culture at all levels across the UN.

Actions:

- Make the cornerstone of the communication strategy the linkage between the goal of gender equality and work-life support within the UN system and the UN's foundational goal of empowering women and girls around the world. That clear connection should become second nature to UN staffers system-wide.

- Conduct briefings on work-life policy and practices for UN leadership at UN leadership forums such as the CEB meetings. Engage leaders in considering their own approach to work-life management and their vital role in setting the organizational tone.

- Conduct a targeted assessment of managerial attitudes toward flexibility. Conduct interviews with managers across the UN system - across a spectrum of perceived support - to better understand their hopes, concerns, and ideas for expanding the use of flexibility across the organization. Engaging managers, understanding their resistance to flexibility and helping them to see flexibility as a managerial tool to help accomplish their goals are all critical for having flexibility take hold in any significant way.

- UN Women should advise/require that each entity within the UN system undertake the following:
  - Develop a customized flexibility plan or programme that links to its unique challenges and needs.

- Convene a working group/ task force that helps translate the UN mandate for greater flexibility for the entity concerned.
- Require the entity to run at least one flexibility pilot project over the next 12 - 18 months. The pilot project will require pre and post measures to assess impact and to build a specific body of data on the flexibility plan/programme.
- Identify appropriate metrics for assessing ongoing support of flexibility and work-life issues. Build in performance metrics for managers and leaders regarding fostering a healthy work environment.

2) Expanding the usage of, and improving the management of, FWAs

Flexible work options are a concrete vehicle for employees to adapt the time, place, and scope of their work. While several entities within the United Nations have made available a menu of flexible work options for several years, usage remains low and many employees have strong doubts about managerial and leadership support. There are many steps that the UN can take in strengthening its approach to flexible work arrangements including requiring that all UN entities make available a minimum number of FWAs to their employees.

Area of Focus: To improve the management of, and expand the usage of, flexible work practices.

Actions:

- Develop a clear and transparent approach for seeking a set of FWAs that can be replicated across the UN system. This approach should require a proposal process which acts as a springboard for the employee and manager to discuss potential challenges and solutions. The end goal is to find a solution - among multiple options - that best meets the collective needs of the manager and employee in a particular entity, as there will not be a "one size fits all" formula. OSAGI/UN Women can assist in providing resource information in the form of a template proposal and a toolkit as referenced below.

- Require that each entity within the UN system make <u>at least two</u> flexible work options accessible to their employees.

- Train a group of professionals across the UN to function as flexibility advocates. These individuals will provide a vital resource for both managers and employees in the implementation and usage of flexible work arrangements in the various entities across the UN system.

- Convene a flexibility forum bringing together users and managers of flexible work practices across the UN (or in selected entities) to share their experiences and learnings. Distill these learnings into a toolkit for managing and working flexibly at the UN. (Alternatively, interview a sampling of employees and managers with experience regarding FWAs to gather this input).

- On an ongoing basis (and as part of the gender equality communication strategy), develop and publish profiles of UN employees working on FWAs. Purposefully profile the use of FWAs for a variety of needs (e.g. elder care, education, etc.) to reinforce that flexibility is for everyone. As a kickoff communication, start with 2 or 3 stories about male directors currently working on flexible schedules in the Secretariat (and if applicable among other UN entities).

- Develop a broadly available, sortable database of UN employees across agencies who have worked on - or are currently working on - flexible schedules. Include information on the type and duration of the arrangement, the position, the successes and challenges as well as contact information for both the employee working on an FWA and their manager. This will reinforce the reality that there is already a critical mass of UN staffers working flexibly.

- Develop ongoing 'listening systems' for getting feedback on the effective use of FWAs.
  - Conduct periodic surveys of flexible work arrangements
  - Strengthen systematic, anonymous web based exit interviews for all staff including input on the work climate
  - Create a virtual suggestion box where staff can present their experience with work-life fit policies as well as their suggestions for improvement

3) Embedding Greater Flexibility into Career Paths

Changes in the demographics of the workforce are necessitating far more fluidity in the development of career paths, particularly for the type of highly educated, highly mobile employees that comprise the UN's workforce. As such, a key area of focus of the UN's work-life strategy specifically addresses ways to communicate and create greater career path flexibility. Particularly for women, the ability to shape their careers in ways that fit within their larger life goals and priorities cannot be understated in retaining and engaging them for the long-term.

Area of Focus: To evolve the UN career model and architect more flexible career alternatives that seek to address the many complexities of the modern workforce (e.g. dual career families, blended families, the aging of the workforce).

Actions:

- Build in on and off ramps that allow for more gradual transitions. Create a phase in option for employees returning from parental or medical leave. Create a phase-out option for retiring UN staffers.

- Use the opportunity of a retirement wave at the UN as an opportunity to architect more flexible jobs and career paths. Identify how jobs and typical career paths could be restructured, particularly with dual career families in mind.

- Identify and highlight a broad range of career paths taken by UN staffers with the goal of emphasizing many models of making a career within the UN system. Highlight employees both moving across several UN entities as well as making a long-term career within 1 or 2 entities.

- Incorporate discussion of work-life issues into career development conversations and planning. Reinforce in development planning conversations (and at other times), the value the employee brings to the UN and specific ideas for future growth and development.

- Facilitate the employment of UN spouses.
  - Give preferential positioning to the qualified spouses of staff members locating to a new duty station when they are applying for positions within the UN system.
  - Identify voluntary UN work projects which enable the spouses of UN staff to continue to develop professionally by gaining experience within the UN system.

4) Enhancing Dependent Care Supports

As the traditional family - consisting of one member of a couple primarily devoted to paid work while the other was primarily devoted to managing at home - has become the exception rather than the norm, one way of helping to address the work-life needs of employees is through the provision of dependence care supports. These supports enable employees to remain focused on work knowing that their loved ones are being cared for in their absence. Dependent care support makes it possible for caregivers to work outside the home which is highly aligned with the UN's goal of empowering women to be financially stable and independent.

Area of Focus: The provision of dependent care supports to help address the work-life challenges of United Nations staff.

Actions:

- Collect information on the provision of dependent care supports across the UN system.

- Convene discussion groups/ support groups for care givers (e.g. working parents, elder care givers) across and within UN entities.

- Determine how existing work being done by the UN may be linked to organizational support for dependent care needs. For example, partnering with a local organization helping women to start up a family day care business is a means to bridge two UN goals – economic support for women in the community and the provision of child care options for UN staff members.

Appendix 1

Expert Group Meeting
Work Life Policy, Practice and Potential
November 9 – 11, 2010
United Nations, New York

Objectives:

- To envision and explore state-of-the-art work-life policies, practices, and norms for the 21st century workforce
- To bring together and learn from external experts on work-life support and flexibility
- To develop recommendations for policies and practices that will strengthen implementation of flexibility and inform the development of a work-life strategy for the United Nations system including the new entity UN Women

Day One November 9	**Activity**
9:00 – 10:00	**Welcome and introductions** o Review of meeting objectives and agenda o Review of the 'State of Flexibility 'at the UN o Round robin introductions of participants – • Name and affiliation • If you were to create a model organization aligned with your best understanding of the current and future workforce, especially women, what two or three ideas would you consider to be fundamental?
10.00 – 10.45	**Overview of Framework for Work-Life Support and Draft Work-Life Strategy (see background paper)**
10:45 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 11:30	**Career Path Flexibility: Expert Perspective** • Anne Weisberg, Deloitte : The Career Lattice and Mass Career Customization
11.30 – 12.30	**Career Path Flexibility: Working Groups** .
12.30 – 2.30	Lunch
2:30 – 3:00	**Career Path Flexibility: Report Outs and Full Group Discussion**
3:00 – 4:00	**Supporting Work-Life Issues around the Globe: Expert Perspective** • Deidre Anderson, Cranfield University: Work-life trends in Europe • Supriti Supriti : Work-life trends in Asia
4:00 – 5:00	**Supporting Work-Life Issues around the Globe: Working Groups**

5:00 – 5:30	**Supporting Work-Life Issues around the Globe: Report Outs and Full Group Discussion**
Day Two November 10	**Activity**
9:00 – 9:30	**Innovative Flexibility and Flexible Work Practices: Expert Perspective** · Carol Bryce Buchanan, FWI: Learnings from Making Work (30 minutes)
9:30 – 10:30	**Innovative Flexibility and Flexible Work Practices: Working Groups**
10:30 – 11:00	**Innovative Flexibility and Flexible Work Practices: Report Outs and Full Group Discussion**
11:00 – 11:15	Break
11:15 – 12:15	**Work Culture, Effectiveness and Productivity: Expert Perspective** • Amy Richman, WFD: People Oriented Work Redesign: IBM Case Study • Leslie Perlow, Harvard Business School: Team Based Flexibility
12:15 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	**Work Culture, Effectiveness and Productivity: Working Groups**
2:00 – 2:30	**Work Culture, Effectiveness and Productivity: Report Outs and Full Group Discussion**
2:30 – 2:45	Break
2:45 – 3:30	**Organizational Management in the 21st Century: Expert Perspective** • Stew Friedman, The University of Pennsylvania: Total Leadership
3:30 – 4:30	**Organizational Management in the 21st Century: Working Groups**
4:30 – 5:00	**Organizational Management in the 21st Century: Report Outs and Full Group Discussion**
Day Three November 11	**Activity**
9:00 – 10:00	**Review of Input on Work-Life Strategy** Review 'here is what we heard'. Clarify where needed.
10:00 – 10:30	**Exercise to Prioritize Most Important Issues and Actions**
10:30 – 10:45	**Break**
10:45 – 12:00	**Discussion of Final Recommendations and Closing**

Appendix 2

General Assembly Legislative Mandate for Work Life Policy and Practice

Date Adopted	Resolution	Gender sensitive work policy
6 February 1998	A/RES/52/96	Para 7: "...requests the Secretary-General to continue his work to create a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, both women and men, including through the development of policies for flexible working time, workplace possibilities, family leave, childcare and elder-care needs, as well as through training, particularly at senior levels..."
5 February 1999	A/RES/53/119	Para 8: "...requests the Secretary-General to continue his work to create a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, both women and men, including through the development of policies for flexible working time, flexible workplace arrangements, child-care and elder-care needs, as well as through the expansion of gender-sensitivity training in all departments and offices"
8 February 2001	A/RES/55/69	Para 6(d): "Requests the Secretary-General...[t]o intensify his efforts to create, within existing resources, a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, both women and men, including the development of policies for flexible working time, flexible workplace arrangements and child-care and elder-care needs, as well as the provision of more comprehensive information to prospective candidates and new recruits on employment opportunities for spouses and the expansion of gender-sensitivity training in all departments, offices and duty stations"
30 January 2002	A/RES/56/127	Para 6(e): "Requests the Secretary-General...[t]o intensify his efforts to create...a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, both women and men, including through the development of policies for flexible working time, flexible workplace arrangements and childcare and elder-care needs..[and] more comprehensive

		information to prospective candidates and new recruits on employment opportunities for spouses..and the expansion of gender-sensitivity training in all departments, offices and duty stations" Para 3(c): "Welcomes...[t]he objective of improving gender balance in action plans on human resources management for individual departments and offices...and encourages further cooperation, including the sharing of best-practice initiatives, between heads of departments and offices...which include specific targets and strategies for improving the representation of women in individual departments"
30 January 2003	A/RES/57/180	Para 6(g): "Requests the Secretary-General...[t]o intensify his efforts to create, within existing resources, a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, both women and men, by, inter alia, actively pursuing appropriate work/life policies, such as flexible working time, flexible workplace arrangements, career development and childcare and elder-care needs, and by providing more comprehensive information to prospective candidates and new recruits on employment opportunities for spouses, providing support for the activities of women's networks and organizations within the United Nations system and expanding gender-sensitivity training in all departments, offices and duty stations"
19 February 2004	A/RES/58/144	Para 6(h): "Requests the Secretary General...[t]o intensify his efforts to create, within existing resources, a gender sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, both women and men, including by actively pursuing appropriate work/life policies, such as flexible working time, flexible workplace arrangements, career development, mentoring programmes and childcare and elder care needs, as well as through the provision of more comprehensive information to prospective candidates and new recruits on employment opportunities for spouses, the

		provision of support for the activities of women's networks and organizations within the United Nations system and the expansion of gender sensitivity training in all departments, offices and duty stations, including more information and training of staff and managers on the benefits of the work/life policies on productivity and effectiveness"
10 February 2005	A/RES/59/164	Para 7: "...requests the Secretary-General to continue his work to create a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, both women and men, including through the development of policies for flexible working time, workplace possibilities, family leave, childcare and elder-care needs, as well as through training, particularly at senior levels..."

Source: Office of the Focal Point for Women 10/2010

Appendix 3: Policies and Measures to Achieve Gender Balance in the United Nations System

Policy or measure	*United Nations*	*UNDP*	*UNFPA*	*UNHCR*	*UNICEF*	*UNRWA*	*ILO*	*FAO*	*WFP*	*UNECE*	*WHO*	*ICAO*	*UPU*	*ITU*	*WIPO*	*UNIDO*	*IAEA*	*WTO*	*Total No. of organi-zations*
A. Recruitment																			
1 Special measures to achieve gender balance	x[a]	x		x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x			x	x		12
2 Human resources planning measures on gender balance	x		x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x			x	x		11
3 Other policies — cooperation of Member State through points of contact																	x		1
B. Promotion																			
4 Special measures to achieve gender balance	x	x		x	x	x	x		x			x			x				9
5 Human resources planning measures on gender balance	x		x	x	x					x		x							6
C. Retention – work/life policies																			
6 Flexible working arrangements	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x			13
7 Staggered working hours	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x			x			x		10
8 Maternity leave	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	18
9 Paternity leave	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	16
10 Child care facilities	x						x			x						x	x		5
11 Breastfeeding policies	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	12
12 Family leave for child care, adoption, family emergency	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		16
13 Part-time work	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	15
14 Job-sharing	x				x		x		x		x			x					6
15 Spouse employment	x	x		x	x			x	x		x	x	x		x		x		11
D. Gender awareness																			
16 Gender mainstreaming in programmes and policies	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x				x		x			11
17 Gender sensitivity programmes (including training)	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x			x		12
18 Policies on harassment, including sexual harassment	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		16
19 Other policies — special measures for protection from sexual	x																		1

Policy or measure	*United Nations*	*UNDP*	*UNFPA*	*UNHCR*	*UNICEF*	*UNRWA*	*ILO*	*FAO*	*WFP*	*UNECE*	*WHO*	*ICAO*	*UPU*	*ITU*	*WIPO*	*UNIDO*	*IAEA*	*WTO*	*Total No. of organi-zations*
exploitation and abuse																			
20 Other policies — mediator programme to deal with harassment issues																	x		1
E. Monitoring and accountability																			
21 Annual gender audits							x					x							2
22 Annual reporting to the governing body	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		14
23 Monitoring bodies/tools		x	x		x				x					x	x				6
Total number of measures	**19**	**12**	**11**	**14**	**18**	**9**	**14**	**13**	**16**	**12**	**14**	**11**	**9**	**12**	**10**	**11**	**15**	**4**	

Source: Based on ICSC/63/R.11, table 10. Report of the Secretary-General A/61/318, 7 September 2006

[a] "x" denotes the existence of a particular policy or measure in the organization.

Appendix 4

The Why for Work-Life Support: The Business Case

The data is compelling; equipping employees to better address their work-life needs is vital for the 21st century workforce. Powerful forces have come together that have dramatically changed the workforce and the workplace. The aging of the population and the changing demographics of the family – including the rise of dual career parent and single parent households - have changed the composition of the workforce. The explosion in technological resources – dismantling barriers to communication, enabling far greater connectivity, and resulting in a torrent of easily accessible information – has profoundly altered the way we work. As a result of all these changes, the importance of work-life fit and of helping employees to integrate their personal and work lives has become an important ingredient for organizational success.

A large body of research highlights the value of work-life supports. Below are several specific examples illustrating the myriad benefits of assisting employees in the management of their work-life issues and challenges.

Recruiting and retaining employees

WFD Consulting reported in a study of approximately 2,500 employees working in medium and large corporations that having control over one's schedule was among the strongest predictors of expected tenure. While parents dissatisfied with their 'schedule control' were twice as likely to indicate an intention to leave, dissatisfied employees without children were ten times as likely to report a propensity to leave their organizations. [i]

IBM, a long-time leader in partnering with employees to manage their work-life issues, found that work-life balance was the second leading reason identified by employees for potentially leaving the company. Based on a global work-life survey fielded in 79 countries, work-life balance was prioritized more highly than either compensation or benefits as a potential driver of turnover. [ii]

Forty-one percent of Deloitte managers reported the availability of *informal flexibility* enhanced retention 'very much' with an additional 24% reporting it enhanced retention 'a great deal'. Less than 5% of managers did not perceive informal flexibility as an aid in retention. [iii]

At Bristol-Meyers Squibb, 21% of employees hired over a three year period (30% of women in this group) agreed or strongly agreed that the company's FWA program affected their decision to join the company while 29% of flexible workers reported they would leave the company if not for their flexible work option. [iv]

Based on the Families and Work Institute's National Study of the Changing Workforce - reflecting a nationally representative sample of the U.S. workforce - they found approximately 90% of employees said having the flexibility to successfully manage their work and personal lives was an extremely or very important factor in their decision to take a new job. [v]

Enhancing employee morale and satisfaction

Employees agreeing that their manager provided adequate flexibility to meet their personal and family responsibilities reported 32% higher commitment scores than colleagues reporting lack of access to flexibility at Deloitte. Similarly, at JP Morgan Chase, 95% of employees working for managers sensitive to work-life issues indicated feeling motivated to exceed expectations compared with 80% of employees working for managers that they perceived lacked this sensitivity. Among employees who perceived they had a sensitive manager at JP Morgan Chase, 84% rated the productivity in their area or department as good or very good relative to 55% of employees without adequate access to flexibility. [vi]

Based on the study conducted by WFD Consulting representing approximately 2,500 employees working in medium and large corporations, respondents identified workplace flexibility as an important factor in their work satisfaction. Over half indicated flexibility was extremely or very important (59% of exempt women). Younger employees were more likely to identify flexibility as more important than their older colleagues with 25% of those under 30 reporting flexibility as extremely important to their work satisfaction in comparison to 16% of employees 60 and older. [vii]

At Eli Lilly, employees with the greatest degree of flexibility and control over their work hours (among four primary groups tracked) were the most satisfied and least likely to anticipate leaving the company. Manager performance ratings also did not vary by work schedules among the four groups including those working on a traditional schedule, a flex-schedule with daily variation around core hours, a compressed schedule, and a 'flexible flexweek' defined as employees working full-time who could change when they worked on a week to week basis. [viii]

Sustaining and improving employee productivity

A compressed workweek pilot at PNC Bank conducted over a seven month period resulted in several documented benefits including a reduction in absenteeism from 60 to 9 days, a cost savings of more than $100,000 related to reduced turnover during that period, and a dramatic reduction in cycle time. The bank identified enhanced innovation, improved cross training and more efficient staffing as contributing to the improved results. Based on feedback from managers and participants involved with a second compressed workweek pilot at PNC, flexibility catalyzed several improvements in how work was accomplished as a result of better planning, more effective meetings, more cross training and restructured work processes. The pilot was conducted among 200 employees in a shared service group. [ix]

Among employees working on flexible work arrangements at Bristol-Meyers Squibb, over 90% indicated their flexible schedules positively impacted their productivity. They also reported a 30% higher score on an index measuring commitment as well as feeling less stressed and burned out than the total employee population based on indices tracking these measures. [x]

With the goal of helping to address the stress and reduce the turnover of hotel managers, Marriott International implemented a flexibility pilot to shift manager focus from hours worked to tasks accomplished. Over a six month period managers reported working five fewer hours per week, positively

impacting stress and turnover, and without any negative influence on customer service or financial results. [xi]

Fortifying employee health and well being

Based on their longitudinal research, the Families and Work Institute found employees reported increased work-life conflict through time, especially among men. Between 1977 and 2008, the percent of men indicating work-life conflict increased from 34% to 45% based on data from FWI's National Study of the Changing Workforce. Three of four employees reported not having enough time to spend with their children, 61% with their spouses, and 59% for themselves. Insufficient time for family and self was linked with poorer health outcomes. Among those who often or very often lacked time because of work with their families and other important people in their lives, 23% had excellent overall health compared with 33% of those who rarely or never reported this result. The percent reporting low stress levels varied with 10% of those not having enough time reporting low stress in comparison with 31% of those rarely or never lacking time to spend with their families and other important people. Not surprisingly, those not having enough time were far less likely to report a positive impact of work on home (11% vs. 42%). [xii]

Research based on a sample of 2,100 employees and conducted by the London School of Economics and Policy Studies Institute reported 'the amount of pressure, stress, motivation and enjoyment of their job was more influenced by how much control employees felt they had over their time rather than by long hours worked.' [xiii]

The Families and Work Institute defined work-life fit for employees based on their research as including having sufficient scheduling flexibility to meet their needs, co-worker support, and supervisor responsiveness and sensitivity to personal/family lives. FWI reported, "Employees who have a high work-life fit fare much better than employees who have moderate or low levels of work-life fit." Comparing two groups of employees – those reporting high versus low work-life fit – FWI documented better overall health, better mental health and far lower stress levels for those in the high work-life fit category. [xiv]

Appendix 5

Work-Life Support in Action: Organizational Models

There are a plethora of fantastic organizational examples that illustrate work-life supports across the full range of topics covered in the preceding framework ranging from the positioning of work-life issues to mechanisms for adapting and shaping career paths to creating new organizational norms. This section will provide select illustrative models which concretize work-life support in action. These are a small sampling among many examples. At the end of this section will be a list of resources providing broad coverage of organizational models and practices.

Flexible work practices

Strategic implementation of flexible work options - Bristol-Meyers Squibb (BMS) approached the introduction of flexible work options strategically and comprehensively. Prior to their introduction, the company engaged managers and employees at the business unit level to understand what was important to them relative to managing their work and to identify business applications of flexibility. BMS took a major step by modifying the company pledge to include a specific commitment to work with employees in supporting their work-life integration. The company developed a framework for analysis and decision making and tools to support managers and employees (e.g. the approval process, special issues for specific parts of the business such as manufacturing and sales, the role of stakeholders [e.g. employee, manager, team]). A multi-faceted communications campaign - encompassing senior human resource and executive leader briefings and human resource generalists trained as internal flexibility consultants to provide just-in-time coaching and training - provided a strong foundation. In addition, ongoing communication about flexibility was embedded into several company communications and integrated into the performance management process. BMS's approached was anchored by defined metrics and outcomes from the outset including the impact on business goals and the satisfaction with the process in the eyes of flexibility users, managers and peers. The engagement of divisions throughout the company, the comprehensive launch of flexible work arrangements, and ongoing communications coupled with measurements have collectively embedded flexibility as a way to work at BMS. (BMS conference)

Expanding the talent pool with telework - The clinical services group of McKesson Health Solutions put in place a work-at-home model as a means to attract and retain registered nurses, a difficult and in-demand labor pool. The clinical services group flexibility pilot involved approximately 800 employees, primarily nurses providing counseling on disease management and telephone triage. Over a four year period, the clinical services group ramped up to 85% of employees working exclusively from home. The company realized several benefits including a substantial reduction in attrition from 37% to 20% and a major expansion in coverage during previously understaffed times. Innovation in Action

Strengthening reduced hour work options – As a means to support employees working on flexible schedules, the strategic management consulting firm McKinsey introduced the virtual FlexWork Forum. McKinsey employees working on reduced schedules use the forum to stay connected with the firm and each other and to share their learnings including best practices for working flexibly. The forum is a

resource not only for employees on flexible schedules but also for employees considering working flexibly as well as for McKinsey managers overseeing flexible schedules. 2009 Bold Guide

A flexible work culture

Creating work-life supportive organizational norms – In response to clear feedback through an employee opinion survey that Dow Corning employees were struggling to manage their work-life demands, the CEO assumed leadership for the roll out of the company's work-life strategy. The CEO - a long-term employee of Dow Corning recruited to the company as a member of a dual career couple – introduced global no-meeting weeks on a quarterly basis as a company practice. The leadership team identifies one week per quarter where the expectation is that employees will be able to catch up on work, take vacation, and know that they will not be on the road. The goal for managers is also to minimize meetings on Fridays to provide greater flexibility for employees. Another component of Dow Corning's work-life strategy was the customization of the compressed workweek policy through pilots within work groups. The usage of compressed workweeks was scant despite long being on the books. The *reintroduction* of compressed work weeks encouraged work groups to experiment to determine the application that would be a good fit for their specific challenges and constraints. For example, a call center wary of inadequate coverage on Fridays experimented and found that a bi-weekly approach was a highly successful solution for the group. (Making Change)

Changing work-life norms and career paths – The store manager role was the gateway for top leadership positions at Safeway, a major supermarket chain. In its efforts to expand the representation of women store managers, Safeway made a seemingly small change which had a major impact. Formerly company practice dictated that store managers would be on premises for all holidays, among the busiest times for grocery stores. Safeway changed the expectation to be that store managers could decide whether or not to be present on holidays. As a result, managers became far more focused on developing their assistant managers so that they could assume the leadership role and the store manager could choose which holidays they needed to be away from their families. Store manager positions were also made available as job shares. Those on a part-time schedule at Safeway have the same access to mentoring, leadership networks and participation in leadership development programs as those on full-time schedules. These changes – eliminating the norm that store managers were required to work every holiday as well as the availability of the store manager role within a job share – greatly increased the representation of women among this critical feeder pool for top talent. (Catalyst Award Winner)

Promoting flexibility through communications and resources – In order to expand the understanding and use of flexibility across the University of California system, two of the ten universities led a system-wide educational campaign and created resources to encourage the expansion of flexibility. UC-Berkeley developed and distributed a *Family Friendly Toolkit* to equip department chairs and deans to manage and support the use of flexibility on their campuses. UC Davis introduced a *Family Friendly Adviser Program* to assist faculty across the University of California system with career decision making in regard to potentially becoming a parent. (Innovation in Action)

Focus on work-life effectiveness

Transforming the culture with a laser focus on effectiveness - Best Buy has received significant media attention for its highly innovative cultural transformation known as Results Oriented Work Design or ROWE. With the knowledge that traditional flexibility was often greatly underutilized, Best Buy started with a unique premise – to enable employees to work whenever and wherever they chose as long as they accomplished their work. Best Buy identified continual monitoring of results, the trust of managers and senior leadership, and an ongoing focus on successes and challenges as factors in making ROWE work. CultureClincis ™ helped employees to learn how to operate in this unique work environment.
The company collected data before and after the introduction of ROWE within specific areas of the company and found an average 35% increase in productivity as well as a substantial drop in turnover of more than 50%. (Source Making Change, Innovation in Action)

Flexibility as a catalyst for improved productivity – American Airlines used the goal of improved productivity as an opportunity to improve the effectiveness with which teams at the company operated. Giving teams the latitude to determine their flexible schedules in combination with improvement goals enabled work groups to customize flexibility for their particular needs. The company reported this approach – linking process improvements with flexibility at the group level – resulted in improved retention, enhanced teamwork, and productivity gains. (BC paper)

Confronting work overload - Employees at Texas Instruments indicated struggling with expanding workloads and time at work in order to keep up with the demands. In response the company instituted a team-based process facilitated by internal work-life professionals which aided work groups in identifying root causes of overwork and potential solutions. Work groups focused on redesigning work processes such as reducing the number and/or duration of meetings and minimizing disruptions to create periods of focused work time.

Career path flexibility

Creating a new paradigm for career design –Deloitte found that despite a long history of supporting the work-life issues of employees and a proliferation of flexibility related program, employees continued to struggle to meet their work and life priorities. As part of an effort to revamp the vision and agenda of the Women's Initiative in 2004, the firm began to build a new model of career design which they named Mass Career Customization or MCC™. Envisioning the idea of a career lattice based on multiple options and pathways taken replacing the more rigid notion of a career ladder, primarily linear and upward, Deloitte architected a framework based on four key dimensions of pace (speed of advancement), workload (scaling from part to full time), location and schedule, and role (ranging from individual contributor to leader). Vital to Deloitte's new approach was connecting work-life choices and flexibility to career design and integrating MCC into the firm's talent management processes. Deloitte reported the introduction and roll out of MCC has resulted in far more robust career conversations between employees and their managers, substantial increases in the perception that employee have the support they need to manage their work-life priorities, enhanced employee satisfaction and morale, and an increased likelihood employees would recommend Deloitte as a great place to work. (Making Change)

Supporting more gradual career transitions – Many organizations including Mitre Corporation and the University of North Carolina (UNC) have introduced programs that allow employees to phase into retirement over time. Employees at Mitre who are at least 59 ½ can begin to reduce their hours and simultaneously start collecting retirement benefits. In response to employee requests, Mitre instituted the phased approach at low cost and with ease in administration. At UNC tenured full-time faculty can phase into retirement over a one to five year period. They relinquish tenure and develop individual contracts governing their part-time schedules over the negotiated ramp down window. (BC paper, Catalyst best practice)

Infrastructure and positioning

Work-life support as a marketplace differentiator – IBM provides among the best examples of using support for diversity including the varied work-life issues of employees as a means to differentiate itself in both the markets for customers and clients as well as in the market for talent. IBM has a long history of supporting the work-life issues of its employees including launching the first resource and referral service in the mid 1980's to assist IBM employees in locating child care. IBM has made available a long-term leave of absence – currently up to three years – since the mid 1950's as well as fielding company wide work-life surveys for more than two decades.

The turn of this century marked a focus on work-life issues *globally* across IBM worksites with a global work-life survey distributed across nearly 50 countries. IBM launched the Global Work-Life, Flexibility and Mobility Project as a means to accelerate change and better facilitate the wide ranging mobility that had already become a reality at the company. IBM determined that one in three employees worked at an alternative site other than an IBM office such as a home office, client site or on the road. Some of the extensive resources developed to support employees and managers included Going Mobile providing strategies for staying connected to the workplace and the Global Guide to Mobile Work to illustrate success stories of IBM employees across the globe working flexibly. IBM was a leader in using work redesign as a means to combat workload challenges as well as using pilot initiatives to continue pushing the envelope in providing greater autonomy for employees in how, when and where they work. IBM has developed extensive metrics to track its work-life activities and benefits. In its 2001 global survey the company found that over 40% of top performers and more than one third of IBM executives identified work-life fit as the first or second reason for potentially leaving the company. IBM's work-life efforts have clearly positioned the company as a global employer of choice.

Resources Providing Organizational Models of Work-Life Support

- Catalyst; Catalyst Award Winners, D&I Practices (yearly)
- Families and Work Institute; Bold Initiative, Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work (yearly)
- WorkatWork; Workplace Flexibility: Innovation in Action, 2008
- Boston College Center for Work & Family; Overcoming the Implementation Gap: How 20 Leading Companies are Making Flexibility Work, 2008

Endnotes:

[i] Source: The New Career Paradigm: Flexibility Briefing, pg. 14, 2007

[ii] Source: Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion, Corporate Voices for Working Families, November 2005, pg.9.

[iii] Source: Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion, Corporate Voices for Working Families, November 2005, pg.14.

[iv] Source: Bristol-Myers Squibb Company Presentation Build Great Flexibility … And Then Audit Well, AWLP Conference 2004; Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion, Corporate Voices for Working Families, November 2005, pg.9.

[v] Source: 2009 Guide to Bold New Ideas for Making Work Work, New Ideas from the 2008 Winners of the Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility.

[vi] Source: Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion, Corporate Voices for Working Families, November 2005, pg.14, 21.

[vii] Source: The New Career Paradigm: Flexibility Briefing, pg. 14, 2007.

[viii] Source: Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion, Corporate Voices for Working Families, November 2005, pg.13.

[ix] Source: Workplace Flexibility: Innovation in Action, WorldatWork, 2008, pg.32); Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion, Corporate Voices for Working Families, November 2005, pg. 22.

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