

The importance of time and flexibility: findings from the Business Week study

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The findings of the Business Week study indicate that the number of hours worked and whether employees have flexibility regarding work hours has a significant impact on their perceived quality of life both at work and outside work. If employees hours and flexibility are not considered, providing other “family-friendly” benefits may not have their intended results.

Failing to consider the number of hours worked and whether employees have some flexibility in terms of when they work these hours can have serious negative consequences. For example, expecting employees to work an unreasonable number of hours according to terms set only by the employer without taking into account an employee’s non-work responsibilities may result in an increased number of physical and mental health problems, along with unhealthy levels of stress.

In contrast, monitoring and attempting to limit the number of hours worked by individual employees and allowing employees to make their own decisions regarding when they work can be a tangible strategy to encouraging employee involvement. As a result of gaining more control, employees may be more productive and business goals may be more easily reached.

As a work/life practitioner, you can:

1. Encourage supervisors to keep lines of communication open in order to be more sensitive to the number of hours that employees are working.
2. Provide information (and tools) to employees, supervisors, and managers so that they understand flexible options and can work creatively to develop other possibilities to help employees.
3. Periodically assess the effectiveness of flexible policies and practices.
4. Recognize champions at the workplace for different flexible arrangements.
5. Establish clear linkage between selected business strategies (e.g., customer satisfaction) and flexible work arrangements.

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The Research Highlights for Practitioners Series has been designed to increase practitioners’ access to studies about current work/life topics. Each issue of the Highlights Series provides selected findings relevant to planning and decision-making about work/life issues. Select issues will include tools designed to help practitioners gather information about their own organizations.

The Boston College Center for Work & Family is a research organization within the Carroll School of Management that promotes employer and community responsiveness to families. The guiding vision of the Center is the strengthening of families, broadly defined to reflect the diversity throughout our communities today. The Center’s activities fall into three broad categories: employer partnerships, research, and information services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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About the Study

In collaboration with *Business Week*, the Boston College Center for Work & Family gathered information from nearly 12,000 employees working at 54 different companies. Companies on the Standard and Poor’s list of top 500 companies were asked to participate, as were other companies that were identified as being leaders in the area of work and family. Of these companies, 35 were on the Standard and Poor’s list, while 19 were other work and family leaders. Many of the companies that participated in the study are recognized leaders in the work/life field. With few exceptions, the companies decided to be part of the study because they felt that they had a reasonable chance of being selected for *Business Week*’s list of leading “family-friendly” companies.

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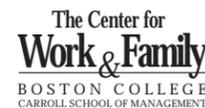
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Published by:



This series was supported by:



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS SERIES

The Importance of Time and Flexibility: Findings From The Business Week Study

A WRINKLE IN TIME¹

The scarcity of time frames many aspects of American society today. Nearly everyone has been forced through the portals of various time barriers. Children as young as three are beginning to show the signs of fatigue resulting from long days scheduled with numerous activities. High school students report feeling pressure to take as many advanced placement courses as possible in order to “place out” of required introductory college courses. As a group, Americans appear to believe in the adage: “More is better.” Today, it seems that nearly everyone is trying to discover ways to engage in a greater number of activities and to increase one’s list of lifetime accomplishments.

We have even created some new vocabulary that helps to describe different dimensions of our dilemmas with time: the hurried generation, time density, time crunch, and time famine.

A number of scholars have provided insights about our experiences with time:

- Juliet Schor of Harvard University opened the public dialogue about the changing dimensions of time devoted to paid employment in her book *The Overworked American* (1992). According to her analyses of national datasets, American employees in the 1980s worked, on average, 1 month per year more than their counterparts in the 1960s. In her most recent work, *The Overspent American* (1997), Schor links the “high stakes” of American consumerism with the willingness of employees to devote increasing amounts of time to paid work (enabling them to earn more so that they can purchase a greater quantity of expensive items).
- Studies conducted by Jerry Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson suggest that two groups are particularly vulnerable to devoting 60 or more hours per week to work: professionals/managers and employees who are partners in dual career couples. When comparing the length of the work week of U.S. employees with those in other industrialized countries, Jacobs and Gerson found that U.S. women are more likely to work long hours (50 hours+) than their peers in other industrialized countries. Their cross-national comparison of male employees found that higher percentages of men in the UK and the US work long hours (50+). It is important to remember that U.S. employees not only are more likely to work a greater number of hours per week, but also tend to have fewer paid days off (e.g., holidays, vacation time) in comparison with their counterparts in other nations.
- Terry Bond, Ellen Galinsky, and Jennifer Swanberg of the Families and Work Institute have reported that U.S. workers have increased their average work time by 2.4 hours per week, or more than 100 extra hours per year. In other words, Americans are now working an extra two and a half weeks per year.



Time/Flexibility Audit

Purpose

Companies can use this audit to consider the issues of job demands, work schedules, and the relationship between these two areas, as well as the use of flexible work arrangements at their workplaces. They can also assess worker perceptions of the impact of working a certain number of hours and having (or not having) flexibility regarding when and where these hours are worked.

What do we mean by “time” and “flexibility?”

An examination of issues related to time at the workplace usually includes a consideration of the number of hours that employees are spending on work and work-related tasks. Flexibility includes issues such as:

- the amount of control employees perceive they have with respect to both the number of hours worked and when these hours are worked;
- whether flexible work arrangements such as flextime, part-time work, compressed work weeks, job sharing, and telecommuting are available to employees; and
- whether these flexible options are utilized by employees.

The number of hours that employees work and the extent to which they have flexibility in completing their work can affect employees' experiences both at work and outside work.

Process Options

Information about the time that employees spend working and the amount of flexibility they have in their work arrangements can be used either as an employee assessment instrument or as a management tool (or both). Separate sample audit forms are provided for administration to employees and practitioners.

This audit can be modified to collect information in a manner that is most comfortable for your company. There are three common ways to invite employees to share their perceptions about the amount of time they are working, their feelings of control over the time they work, and the extent to which they have flexibility in their workplaces: interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

1. Interviews - Interviews can help to gain an understanding of employees' opinions about the number of hours

they work, when they work, and the amount of flexibility in their jobs. Talking one-to-one with employees gives them the opportunity to discuss their perceptions in a non-threatening atmosphere where others at the company will not hear their opinions.

You might want to start the interview with a comment such as: “I’d really like to hear about your job responsibilities and what is expected of you in your job.” You might begin by asking about how work gets done in the department where the employee works, who decides what needs to get done when, how much the employee is able to help make these decisions, and then ask more about work hours and flexibility in his/her job.

In order to generate ideas for interview questions, you may want to think about transforming statements into open-ended questions. For instance, a survey question may ask an employee to agree or disagree with the following statement:

In our company, the emphasis is on results more than the number of hours worked or when these hours are worked.

When you are interviewing employees, you may ask them whether their performance reviews depend more on the results of their work, or on the number of hours they are at their desks when their supervisors are present. You could then ask for examples of different situations. Don’t be afraid to follow-up with additional questions to help you to better understand the answers to your questions.

2. Focus Groups — One advantage of focus groups is that they provide a way for employees to share their impressions with one another. Comments made by one person can be confirmed or refuted by other participants, and the group interaction can give you a sense of the pervasiveness of an issue or problem. In addition, a statement by one employee may help to trigger thoughts or opinions of others that they would not have had without this precipitating comment.

A disadvantage of focus groups is that some employees may not feel comfortable being open with one another, especially if they do not know the other group members well or if they have more private concerns.

Similar to interviews, open-ended questions can be used to stimulate conversation in focus groups. Employees can be

invited to compare and contrast their experiences by asking questions such as: “Are these the types of hours you are expected to work in your department? Does your supervisor allow you to shift your hours to meet your work and non-work responsibilities?”

3. Surveys — The distribution of surveys allows information to be collected from a greater number of employees in a shorter period of time, and for responses to be summarized and compared in a systematic manner. This may involve presenting the percentage of employees who list different answers on each question, comparing employees in different business units, or examining those with certain demographic characteristics. Your company may also be interested in examining whether these percentages change if you distribute the survey at more than one point in time.

Audit Challenges

While the audit process can help you to get a better sense of the number of hours worked and the extent to which employees feel that they have flexibility in their jobs, you may want to keep in mind the following considerations:

- Within an organization, work load and the way that work gets done may vary considerably among different business units, departments, geographic locations, and even across positions within a work group. It is sometimes difficult to generalize beyond the individuals who have been studied, and this should be taken into account when presenting the findings.
- Unless you replicate data collection efforts at several points in time, the information you collect will represent a snapshot of hours worked and flexibility at one point in time. In most companies, this will fluctuate with the ebbs and flows of business deadlines, and with other organizational changes at the company. One partial solution is to ask about the extent to which employees feel that the information they are providing about hours worked and flexibility is an accurate portrayal of how they do their work during the year, or whether there are certain caveats that should be considered.
- The issues included in the audit samples are general examples of ways to ask about issues related to time and flexibility. However, there may be other more specific questions that will allow you to examine the number of hours worked and the extent to which employees have flexibility in their jobs at your company.

What's Next?

After you conduct the time/flexibility audit, what are the next steps?

You may find it helpful to use information that has been gathered as part of the time/flexibility audit to create an internal communications strategy that highlights the relationship between time/flexibility issues and business successes. You may want to identify strategies to emphasize those elements that promote work/life goals and minimize areas that conflict with these goals. If your company already offers flexible work options, you could use this information to decide whether employees are using these arrangements, what can be done either to increase the percentage of employees who use these arrangements or to expand the available options, and whether there are other jobs in the company that could be developed in a way that flexible schedules might be utilized.

You may want to look at a specific department within the company that has been particularly successful in implementing flexible work arrangements, and identify elements of these options that could be applied to other departments. Depending on what is reported with respect to work hours, you may want to re-examine how work is accomplished in different departments and consider whether adjustments can be made to accomplish the same amount of work in a shorter period of time. This can include work re-design considerations as a means of adjusting both the number of hours worked and the availability of flexible work options.

Use of Sample Audits

Attached are two sample audits that can be used to examine time and flexibility issues in your company. The Employee Survey is intended to give you a picture of how your employees view the number of hours they work and the extent to which they have flexibility in working their hours. The Human Resource Practitioner Survey will allow you or someone in the human resource department to assess how time and flexibility intersect with your corporate culture (including the business goals of your organization).

1. EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Flexible work options are seen as an essential strategy for responding to our customers.	<input type="radio"/>	Part-time employees are just as likely as full-time employees to receive interesting work assignments.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company views flexible work options as important for successful recruitment.	<input type="radio"/>	Employees who use flexible work options are expected to work extra hours.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our top managers promote flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>	Co-workers are usually supportive of employees who use flexible work schedules.	<input type="radio"/>								
Flexible work options are good for both the employee and the company.	<input type="radio"/>	Those working flexible schedules are just as likely to receive positive performance assessments as other employees.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company rewards the efforts of supervisors who have successfully implemented flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>	Our company provides training/resources to supervisors about flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
Offering flexible work options makes it possible for our company to hire more talented employees.	<input type="radio"/>	Employees at all levels use flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company's business success depends on employees keeping the number of hours they work under control.	<input type="radio"/>	Our company provides resources/technical assistance to employees who use flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company has a comprehensive range of flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>	Our company tells employees that working long hours can be bad for their overall work performance.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company promotes the use of flexible work options to address business issues.	<input type="radio"/>	Human resource policies and systems do not penalize employees for using flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
At our company, working long hours is an indication of being a committed employee.	<input type="radio"/>	Our company regularly reviews the effectiveness of our flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
Supervisors offer flexible options so they can ask employees to work longer hours during peak work cycles.	<input type="radio"/>	Supervisors regularly review job demands/work hours with the employees they supervise.	<input type="radio"/>								
Employees can use flexible work options as long as they enhance their performance.	<input type="radio"/>	Flexible work options are used to address inefficient work practices.	<input type="radio"/>								
In our company, people who telecommute can advance as quickly as those who do not telecommute.	<input type="radio"/>	When employees are required to work overtime, they are given enough notice to address work/life conflicts.	<input type="radio"/>								

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HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTITIONER SURVEY

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following are consistent with your company's corporate culture (including business goals).

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	QUITE A BIT	A GREAT DEAL		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	QUITE A BIT	A GREAT DEAL
Flexible work options are seen as an essential strategy for responding to our customers.	<input type="radio"/>	Part-time employees are just as likely as full-time employees to receive interesting work assignments.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company views flexible work options as important for successful recruitment.	<input type="radio"/>	Employees who use flexible work options are expected to work extra hours.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our top managers promote flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>	Co-workers are usually supportive of employees who use flexible work schedules.	<input type="radio"/>								
Flexible work options are good for both the employee and the company.	<input type="radio"/>	Those working flexible schedules are just as likely to receive positive performance assessments as other employees.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company rewards the efforts of supervisors who have successfully implemented flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>	Our company provides training/resources to supervisors about flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
Offering flexible work options makes it possible for our company to hire more talented employees.	<input type="radio"/>	Employees at all levels use flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company's business success depends on employees keeping the number of hours they work "under control."	<input type="radio"/>	Our company provides resources/technical assistance to employees who use flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company has a comprehensive range of flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>	Our company tells employees that working long hours can be bad for their overall work performance.	<input type="radio"/>								
Our company promotes the use of flexible work options to address business issues.	<input type="radio"/>	Human resource policies and systems do not penalize employees for using flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
At our company, working long hours is an indication of being a committed employee.	<input type="radio"/>	Our company regularly reviews the effectiveness of our flexible work options.	<input type="radio"/>								
Supervisors offer flexible options so they can ask employees to work longer hours during peak work cycles.	<input type="radio"/>	Supervisors regularly review job demands/work hours with the employees they supervise.	<input type="radio"/>								
Employees can use flexible work options as long as they enhance their performance.	<input type="radio"/>	Flexible work options are used to address inefficient work practices.	<input type="radio"/>								
In our company, people who telecommute can advance as quickly as those who do not telecommute.	<input type="radio"/>	When employees are required to work overtime, they are given enough notice to address work/life conflicts.	<input type="radio"/>								

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- Kathleen Christensen, Director of the Work-Family Programming Area at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, stresses the importance of remembering that time studies tend to measure the work time invested by an “average” employee. However, most families pool some of their time as a resource that is exchanged. For example, working parents in dual income families often negotiate responsibilities such as transporting children to and from school, supervising children during school vacations, and completing household tasks. Therefore, in addition to paying attention to the time that individuals spend on their work assignments, it is important to calculate the time that “families” as a social unit devote to work. Christensen refers to this as the “arithmetic” of work-family time.

- A few decades ago, the majority of American families had two adults to complete two jobs: one adult (usually the male) focused on the full-time job of paid employment and the other (usually the female) concentrated on the full-time job of unpaid family and home care. Today, the two adults in most two-parent married couples share three jobs: both adults engage in paid employment (on a full or part-time basis) and are also responsible for family care and home maintenance. Therefore, the time problem is compounded because families are more likely to have both adults in the workforce and each of these adults is likely to work more hours than employees 30 and 40 years ago, when there was usually someone else to attend to family and home care responsibilities.

About this Issue

This issue of the Research Highlights Series presents some of the findings of the 1997 *Business Week* Study of Family-Friendly Companies conducted by the Boston College Center for Work & Family (see back page for background information about this study). We discuss the following questions related to work time and flexibility:

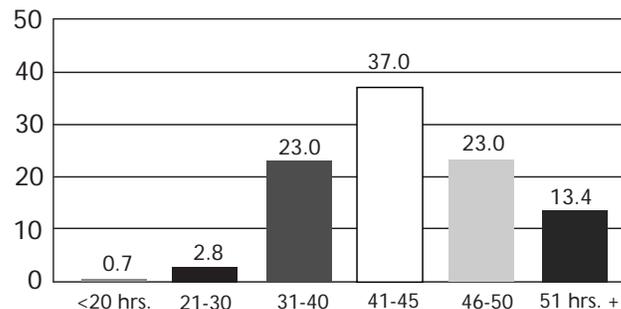
- 1) Does the number of hours worked per week affect how employees view the responsiveness of their companies to work-family issues?
- 2) Are employees who have access to flexible work arrangements more likely to feel that their workplaces are family-friendly?
- 3) How do different combinations of “work hours” and “workplace flexibility” affect employees experiences at work and at home?

In assessing the extent to which work time had an impact on the lives of the employees in the *Business Week* study, we examined the number of hours that each employee worked in an average week as well as the extent to which he/she had flexibility regarding when the hours were worked. Some interesting relationships were discovered between the number of hours worked/flexibility and both work and non-work measures.

HOURS WORKED AT FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMPANIES

The survey asked employees to report the number of hours they worked during a typical week: under 20 hours; 21 - 30 hours; 31 - 40 hours; 41 - 45 hours; 46 - 50 hours; and 51+ hours. As indicated by the following graph, approximately 1 of every 8 employees (13.4%) in this study reported that they typically work 51 hours or more per week.

Table 1. # Hours Worked / Week



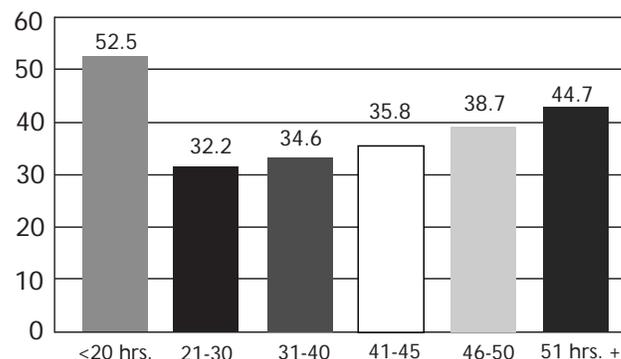
Hours Worked and Quality of Life at Work

The *Business Week* study asked employees to assess different aspects of the quality of their work life.

• Work Enjoyment

Employees who worked fewer than 20 hours per week and those who worked more than 51 hours per week were the most likely to report that they enjoyed their work “a great deal” (52.5% and 44.7%, respectively).¹ While this is quite interesting, it should be noted that a number of factors, such as challenging assignments may also affect employees’ feelings about their work.

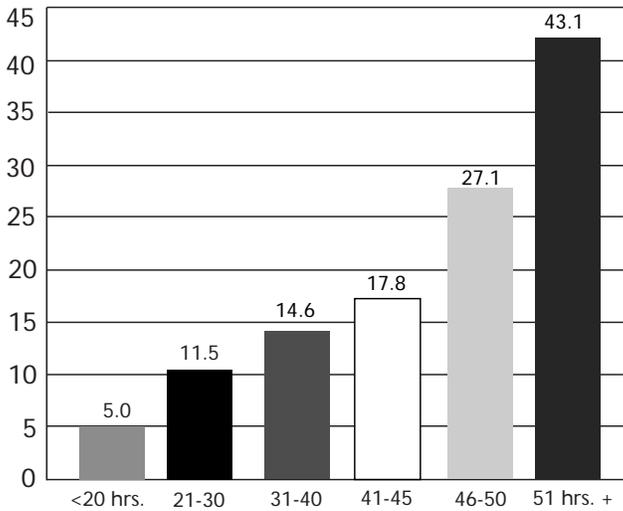
Table 2. Hours Worked and “Enjoy Work a Great Deal”



• Job Stress/Pressure

The percentage of employees who reported “a great deal” of stress and pressure from their jobs increased consistently and significantly as the number of hours increased. For example, whereas only 17.8% of those working 41 - 45 hours per week reported “a great deal” of stress and pressure, 43.1% of those working 51 or more hours experienced this level of stress.

Table 3. Hours Worked and “A Great Deal of Stress”



It is possible that there is a direct relationship between working longer hours and experiencing greater stress. However, at least part of this explanation may be due to employees in more stressful positions with greater job demands working longer hours.

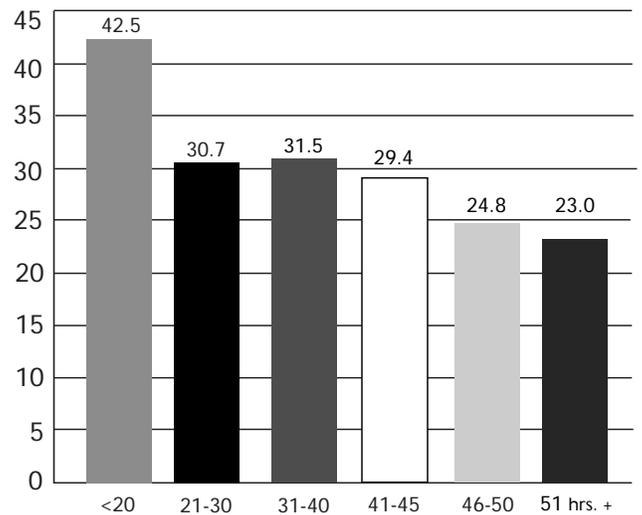
• Overall Quality of Work Life

People who worked less than 20 hours per week had the highest average scores (11.7) on the Quality of Life At Work Index, (see below) whereas employees working 51+ hours per week had the lowest average score (10.5) on this measure.²

Hours Worked and Overall Family Friendliness

The percentage of employees rating their company as “very” family-friendly decreased as the number of working hours increased. Less than one-fourth of those working 51+ hours per week felt that their companies were “very” family-friendly whereas approximately 2 of every 5 of those working fewer than 20 hours per week assessed their companies as very family-friendly.

Table 4. Hours Worked and “Very” Family-Friendly



THE QUALITY OF LIFE AT WORK INDEX

Employees responding to the *Business Week* study were asked to respond to seven questions related to their quality of work life, using a 5 point scale that ranged from 0 (“not at all”) to 4 (“a great deal”):

- Does management take people into account when making decisions?
- Does your job expose you to a lot of stress and pressure?
- Do you enjoy what you do on your job?
- Is your pay enough to meet your share of monthly expenses?
- Is your company’s benefits package (health insurance, pensions, etc.) adequate for your needs?
- Do you have job security where you work?
- Do you get the kinds of training you need to keep your job or find another if necessary?

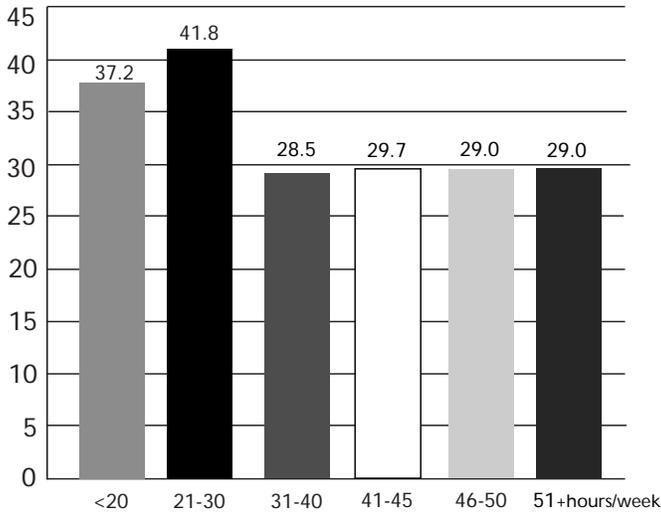
The scores for the 7 items related to quality of work life were summed to get a total score for the Quality of Life At Work Index. Therefore, if employees answered “not at all” to each of the 7 questions, their score for the index would be 0, whereas if they answered “a great deal” to all of the questions, the index score would be 28. The average (mean) score on this index was 10.8.

Hours Worked and Quality of Personal and Home Life

• Overall Life Satisfaction

Among the six groups designating the average number of hours worked per week, employees who worked 21 - 30 hours were the most likely to report that they were “very satisfied” with their lives. The percentage of employees who indicated that they were “very satisfied” with their lives was virtually the same for the four groups of employees who worked over 30 hours per week, with approximately 29% in each of these four groups reporting that they were “very satisfied.”

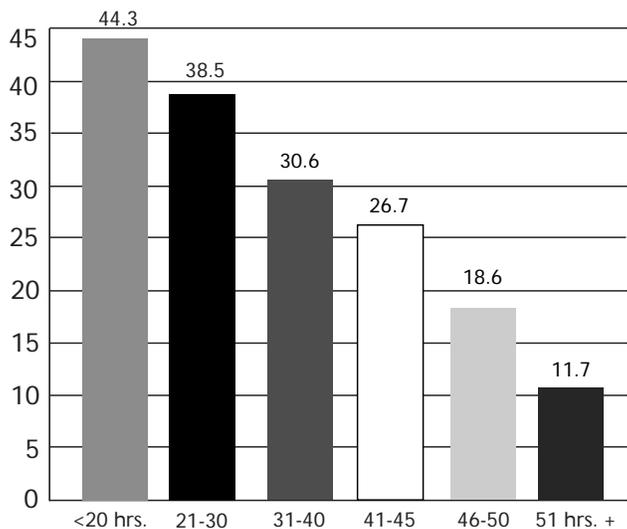
Table 5. Hours Worked and “Very Satisfied” with Life



• Overall Work-Family Balance

Although the corporations participating in the *Business Week* study were considered to be some of the most family-friendly companies in the country, many employees still felt that they were not able to achieve good work-family balance. As the number of working hours increased, it was even less likely that employees would report having achieved a “very good” sense of work-family balance. For instance, more than 4 of every 10 employees working fewer than 20 hours per week indicated that they had “very good” balance; this proportion dropped to approximately 1 of every 10 employees working 51 hours per week or more.

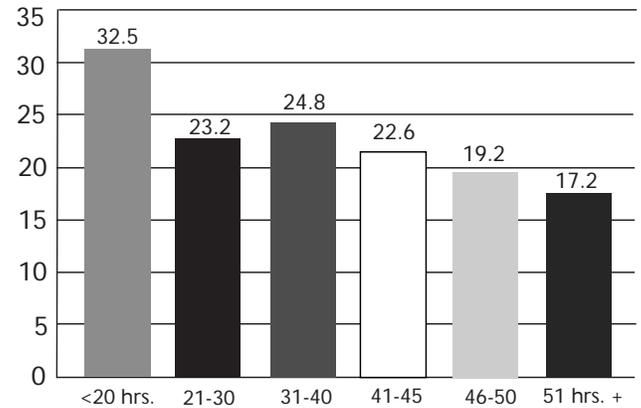
Table 6. Hours Worked and “Very Good” Work-Family Balance



• Impact of Work on Home Life

Employees who worked less than 20 hours per week were almost twice as likely as those working 51+ hours per week to report that work had a “very positive” impact on their home life (32.5% vs. 17.2%). Furthermore, employees working longer hours were also more likely to indicate that work was having a negative impact on their home life; of those who worked 51 hours or more, 13.8% felt that work was having a “very negative” effect on their home life. In contrast, among the four groups working 45 hours or less, no more than 5% of the employees felt that work was having this negative spillover to their personal and family lives.⁷

Table 7. Hours Worked and “Very Positive” Impact



FLEXIBILITY AT FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMPANIES

For some time, employees have been asking their employers for policies and work arrangements that provide them with flexibility, making it possible for them to reduce the schedule conflicts between work and home responsibilities. We were interested in finding out whether employees who work at family-friendly companies value flexible options.

THE WORK-FAMILY WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY INDEX

Employees responding to the *Business Week* study were asked to respond to four questions related to flexibility, using a 5 point scale that ranged from 0 (“not at all”) to 4 (“a great deal”):

- Can you vary your schedule to respond to family matters?
- Is your supervisor flexible when it comes to responding to your work-family needs?
- Are you comfortable taking time off to attend to family matters?
- Are you expected to work long hours no matter what it means for your personal or family life?

The scores for the four items related to workplace flexibility were summed to get a total score for the Work-Family Workplace Flexibility Index. Therefore, if employees answered “not at all” to each of the four questions, their scores for the index would have been 0 whereas if they answered “a great deal” to all four questions, the index score would be 16.

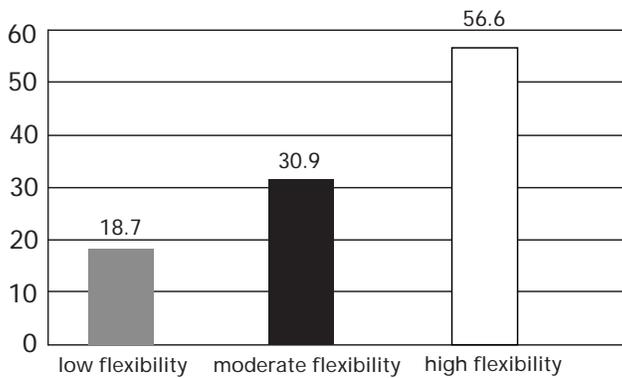
Flexibility and Quality of Life at Work

We used the Work-Family Flexibility Index (see page 4) to explore relationships between flexible work environments and employees' quality of life at work. As indicated by the following graphs, there appears to be a positive relationship between flexibility and the extent to which employees enjoy their jobs and a negative relationship between flexibility and job stress/pressure.

• Work Enjoyment

Employees reporting low flexibility (as measured by the Work-Family Flexibility Index) were much less likely to indicate that they enjoy their work. Whereas only one-fifth (18.7%) of those in low-flexible situations indicated that they enjoy their jobs "a great deal," this was true for over half (56.6%) of those in high-flexible situations.

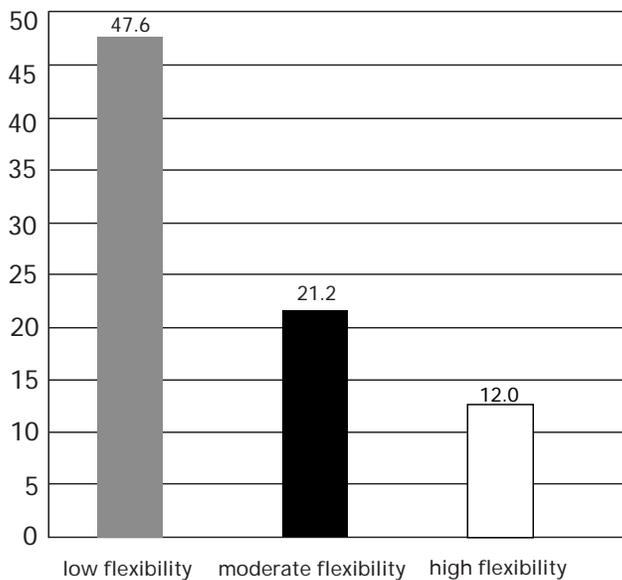
Table 8. Flexibility and "Enjoy Work a Great Deal"



• Job Stress/Pressure

Nearly 1 of every 2 (47.6%) employees in low-flexible situations indicated that they have a great deal of stress and pressure at work in comparison to 1 of every 8 (12.0%) employees in high-flexible situations.

Table 9. Flexibility and "A Great Deal of Stress"



• Overall Quality of Work Life

We compared employees' scores on the Work-Family Flexibility Index with their scores on the Work-Family Quality of Work Life Index to see whether employees who had greater flexibility in their jobs reported more positive feelings about their quality of work life. The results of this analysis indicated that in fact as the extent of workplace flexibility increased, employees felt that the quality of their work lives was better ($r = .60$; $p \leq .000$).

FLEXIBILITY AT LUCENT TECHNOLOGY

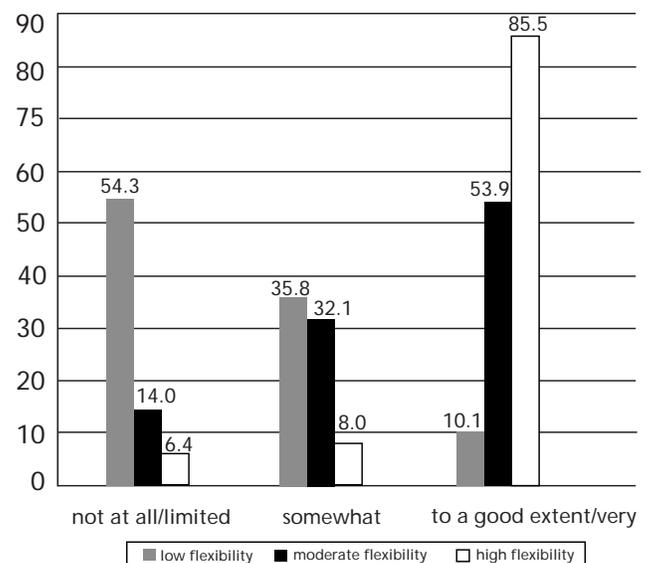
Lucent has had work flexibility policies in place for approximately 10 years. Our business units have the "flexibility" to implement flextime, telecommuting, virtual office, part-time or job share arrangements, and compressed work schedules in whatever combination best satisfies their business needs. We firmly believe that having flexible work arrangements works to our advantage in hiring and retaining the best, brightest and most creative employees in this tight labor market. Such arrangements also support Lucent's desire and efforts to create a high performance work environment and a workplace that is open, supportive and diverse.

In Lucent's 1998 "Value In People" employee opinion survey, which was completed with an unprecedented 76% response rate, employees who worked flexibly rated the company much more favorably in all categories than did employees not involved in a flexible work arrangement. In addition, many testimonials from employees in support of Lucent being named to Fortune magazine's 100 Best Companies list in 1998 reflect the positive impact working flexibly has had for them both professionally and personally.

Flexibility and Overall Family Friendliness

A clear relationship emerged between the flexibility of employees' work situations and their assessments of the family-friendliness of their companies. For example, a clear majority (85.5%) of those working in high-flexible situations felt that their companies were either family-friendly "to a good extent" or "very" family friendly. In contrast, just one of every ten (10.1%) of those working in low-flexible work situations felt that their workplaces were that family-friendly.

Table 10. Flexibility and Overall Family-Friendliness

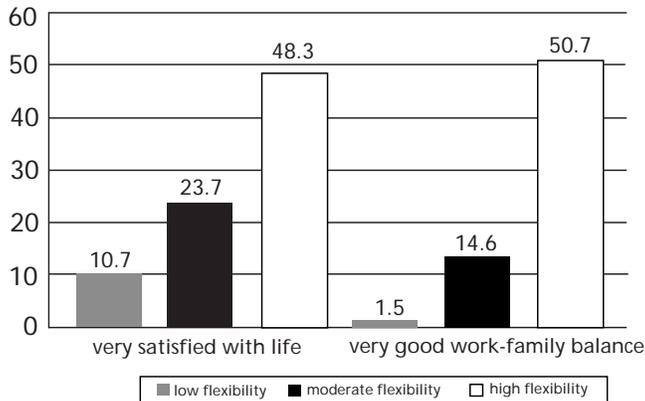


Flexibility and Quality of Personal and Home Life

• Overall Life Satisfaction

Whereas only 1 of every 10 employees in low-flexible situations (10.7%) indicated that overall they were “very satisfied” with their lives, half (48.3%) of those in high-flexible situations stated that they were this satisfied.

Table 11. Flexibility and Quality of Personal/Home Life



• Overall Work-Family Balance

Only 3 of every 200 employees (1.5%) in low-flexible situations reported that they had “very good” work/life balance in comparison to 50.7% of those in high-flexible situations.

• Impact of Work on Home Life

As expected, employees who reported that they had little flexibility were more likely to indicate that work had a negative impact on their home lives. One-fifth (21.8%) of employees in low-flexible situations reported that work had a “very negative” impact on their home lives, in contrast to 1.7% of those in high-flexible situations. Perhaps more surprising was the fact that employees who had a great deal of flexibility felt that work had a positive impact on their family lives. Although only 2.1% of those in low-flexible situations reported that their work had a positive impact on their home life, nearly half (42.2%) of those in high-flexible situations reported that work had a positive spillover.

HOURS WORKED AND FLEXIBILITY

The analyses presented above describe the relationships between the number of hours worked and various measures, as well as the impact of job flexibility on these same measures. However, these analyses did not address the issue of whether either of these issues (working different number of hours per week or having job flexibility) seem to be more or less important to employees. The final question we asked was: “How do different combinations of “work hours” and “workplace flexibility” affect employees experiences at work and at home?”

In order to examine the issues of work hours and job flexibility together, six new groups were created:

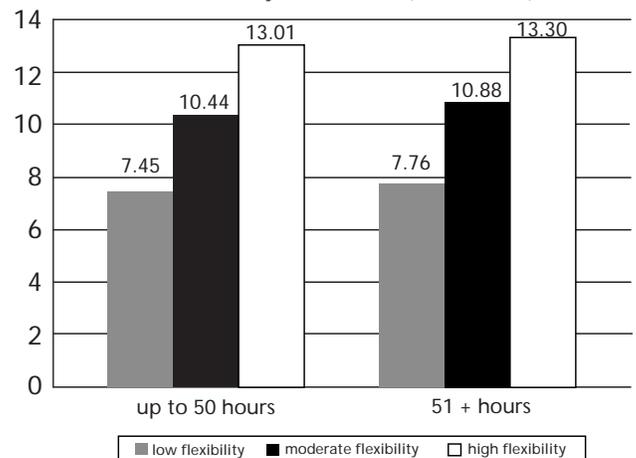
Group	# Hrs. Worked	Flexibility
1	≤ 50	Lo
2	≤ 50	Medium
3	≤ 50	High
4	≥ 51	Lo
5	≥ 51	Medium
6	≥ 51	High

Interestingly, when examining these two issues together, flexibility appears to “mute” the relationship between the number of hours worked and several different outcome measures.

• Overall Quality of Work Life

In comparing the 6 groups listed above, the means of the groups with the same level of flexibility were similar, regardless of whether they worked over or under 50 hours per week. For example, employees who worked 50 or fewer hours and who had low flexibility in their jobs had scores that were similar to those who worked a greater number of hours but who also had low flexibility. This trend can be seen in the chart below.³

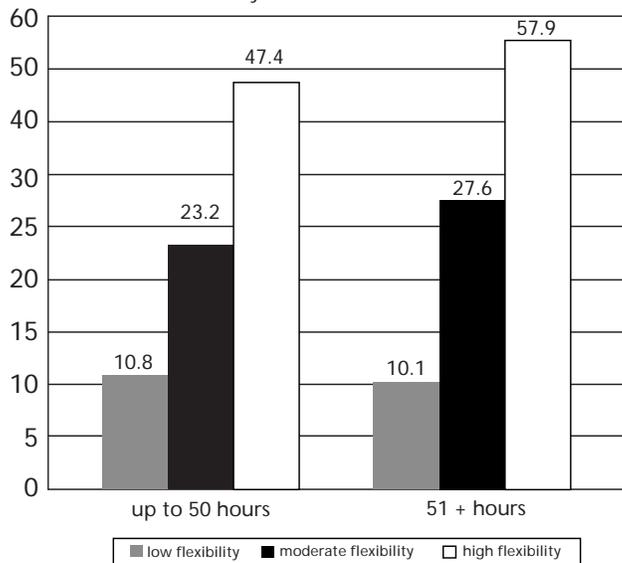
Table 12. Hours Worked/Flexibility and Overall Quality of Work Life (mean scores)



• Overall Life Satisfaction

When examining overall life satisfaction, there was a stronger relationship with flexibility than with number of hours worked. For example, employees in higher flexibility situations were more satisfied with their lives, regardless of the number of hours worked.

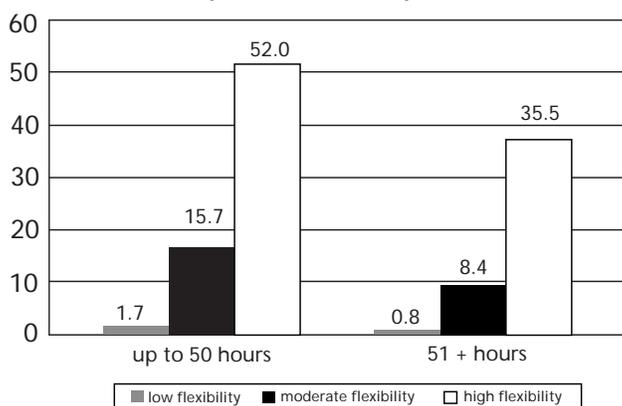
Table 13. Hours Worked/Flexibility and "Very Satisfied" With Life



• Overall Work-Family Balance

While a similar trend was found in analyzing employees ratings of work-family balance (i.e., the percentage of employees indicating that their work-family balance was "very good" increased with greater flexibility, whether they worked more or less than 50 hours per week), an even higher percentage of those who worked fewer hours assigned the top rating ("very good") to their work-family balance.

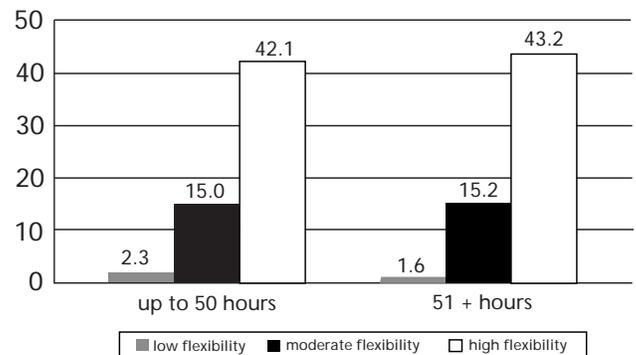
Table 14. Hours Worked/Flexibility and "Very Good" Work-Family Balance



• Impact of Work on Home Life

Finally, employees views of the extent to which work had a positive or negative impact on their home life followed a similar pattern, with flexibility appearing to be more important than the number of hours worked with respect to their assignment of a positive or negative rating. As expected, the highest percentage of employees assigning a "very positive" rating to the impact of work on home life was in the group that worked fewer hours (≤ 50) and had high flexibility. In contrast, the group with the highest percentage assigning "very negative" ratings on this item were those who worked more than 50 hours and who had the least amount of flexibility in their jobs.

Table 15. Hours Worked/Flexibility and "Very Positive" Impact



SUMMARY

The number of hours that employees work and whether they have flexibility can serve as powerful motivators or inhibitors to "getting the job done." The impact on productivity may ultimately affect a corporation's business goals and the extent to which the company succeeds or fails. In an era of downsizing and increasing work-related stress, monitoring work hours and developing flexibility whenever possible is especially important.

There needs to be a recognition that the number of hours and the need for flexibility may vary considerably throughout the different life stages of an employee. While working fewer hours at a certain point in time may be viewed by an employer as offering flexibility, many employees may need to have some flexibility in their work hours regardless of the number of hours worked. An individual employee's work situation should not be seen as static but as ever-changing throughout his/her life.

It is apparent that we have a great deal to learn about the importance of flexibility in a variety of jobs. While flexibility with respect to number of hours, work schedules, and where the work is done may be more easily accomplished with certain types of jobs, it may be more difficult and may require more innovative solutions for other positions. As indicated in this research highlights issue, however, both the number of hours and flexible work arrangements may be critical factors in determining levels of satisfaction among employees both at work and outside work.

¹Title borrowed from the book *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1962.

²Except as noted, all statistical differences were based on chi-square analyses and were significant at the $p \leq .000$ level.

³ $F=6.89$; $p \leq .000$.

⁴ $F=1068.91$; $p \leq .000$.