

Managing Today's Workforce: Succeeding in An Era of Globalization, PDAs and Dual-Career Families

As a manager, what keeps *you* up at night? Are you worried about meeting productivity goals? Keeping employees enthusiastic and committed? Decreasing turnover? Finding the right employees for the job? Keeping your employees healthy and reducing their stress? Meeting your diversity goals?

You might be surprised to learn that you can address many of these concerns with the help of resources that are readily at hand. These are the resources we call WorkLife.

Why WorkLife Matters

Forty or fifty years ago, most employees were men. Many had family members at home who could take care of personal responsibilities. Their parents and other extended family often lived nearby. The workday, too, was more straightforward. It began when employees walked into the workplace and ended, 8 or 9 hours later, when they left.

Today, 46% of all U.S. employees are women. More and more employees of both sexes have a spouse or partner who also works—or are single parents. Many employees are living at a great distance from their own parents. The hours they are expected to put in may be longer, especially when they are working with co-workers or clients in time zones across the country or around the world. Early in the morning, late at night, on weekends and even during vacations, work may spill over into their personal lives by way of cell phones, PDAs and personal computers.

And just as work can spill into the personal lives of employees, personal responsibilities and concerns can spill into employees' work time. Employees cannot, and do not, leave half of themselves at the workplace door each day.

ABC offers a diverse array of WorkLife programs and policies designed to support employees in all their roles, at every stage of their lives. But in order for employees to make meaningful use of these programs and policies, they must have your support. If you want the employees you manage to be at their most productive and effective at work, you'll want to make sure they feel comfortable using the tools and resources they need to be their most productive and effective at home. The key is to create a culture of WorkLife

There Are So Many Reasons To Get Behind WorkLife

Consider the world outside of ABC. Many of our competitors encourage employees to work flexibly and offer numerous other work-life resources. Not surprisingly, these kinds of programs are an excellent tool for recruitment—and

retention. If we want to be able to hire, and keep, world-class employees, we need to make sure our work environment is as supportive and inviting as that of our competitors.

We also know that having a broadly diverse group of employees provides us with a competitive edge. Our WorkLife resources are one way to make our workplace supportive and welcoming for employees of all different backgrounds and lifestyles.

ABC's presence in 40 countries around the globe, along with technologies that were unheard of a generation ago, means our business never sleeps. Employees who work alternative schedules can often provide low or no-cost coverage during non-standard hours. And thanks to these very technologies, employees can do their work from almost anyplace. Today's economic and environmental realities also include the ever-rising price of gas. Commuting to and from work each day has suddenly become a huge, unexpected expense for many employees--and is doing untold damage to the environment.

Finally, gaining a reputation as a great employer has tremendous benefits for business. Recent research has found:

- Companies on *Fortune* magazine's annual "100 Best Companies to Work For" list had higher than average annual stock returns, better operating performance and a higher than average return on assets (Vanderbilt University and Hewitt Associates).
- Companies with highly committed employees provided shareholders with a 112% return on investment over three years (Watson Wyatt Worldwide WorkUSA 2000 study).
- Flexible work arrangements increase shareholder returns by 3.5%, thanks to greater productivity and improved retention rates (Watson Wyatt 2002).

[Call Out Box – Title:]
WorkLife in Action

Business leaders across the company are turning the idea of a WorkLife culture into reality. 75% of all leaders find it acceptable for employees to work flexibly when they have made a good business case. 92% of employees report having the informal flexibility they need. Of those employees that have requested a formal flexible work arrangement, 83% have had their requests approved!

ABC also routinely receives surveys from groups representing socially responsible investors around the world. They want to know why they should invest in ABC, and two areas they often ask about are diversity and WorkLife.

Consider life here within ABC. *Flexibility is a two-way street. Employees who are respected and assessed based on the work they do, rather than the hours they put in, are more likely to "be there" for the company when and where they are needed.* Recent surveys and focus groups found:

- The ability to work flexibly is a major factor in employees' desire to continue working at ABC.

- 91% of employees who use a flexible work arrangement say that the arrangement has a positive impact on their productivity.
- 71% of managers report that flexible work arrangements do not impair their teams' ability to meet business goals and do not affect their own ability to manage.
- Employees who work for managers that are more concerned with results than with "face time" are 15% more engaged than their counterparts.
- 28% of employees say that back-up care is a critical or very valuable support
- Overall, 48% of employees view ABC's WorkLife programs as valuable in a crisis.

None of this is surprising. Research from around the world repeatedly has found that flexibility and other work-life resources are tied to greater employee loyalty, engagement and productivity, enhanced recruitment and retention, and reduced absenteeism and stress.

Consider your own responsibilities and goals. Helping your employees be as effective as possible in their personal lives has a direct impact on their productivity at work. And it's not as hard as you may think. Once you have gained an understanding of how WorkLife programs and policies work and how you can support your team's use of them, you'll have *less* to worry about, not more.

Finally, consider what's right. ABC Company promotes a culture that supports WorkLife effectiveness for all the business reasons just mentioned, but also for one more very important reason: it's the right thing to do. ABC is committed to fostering teamwork and to providing an environment that values, empowers and respects individuals. That's what a WorkLife culture is all about.

Your Key Role in Making ABC Supportive for all Employees

Just because ABC offers numerous WorkLife resources, doesn't mean employees always feel comfortable using them. Studies have repeatedly shown that manager support is essential to employees feeling that they can take advantage of workplace programs and policies. There are many things you can do to encourage them:

- *Set an example.* Use resources yourself. Work flexibly. Make it clear that you believe WorkLife resources are an important way to support the business—not an accommodation for certain employees.
- *Make WorkLife programs and policies a part of your toolkit as a manager.* Don't wait for an employee to ask about using a

[Call Out Box – Title:] **The Ever Rising Price of Commuting**

A U.S. employee who has a 30-mile commute each way would save about \$576/year in fuel just by working from home one day a week. This would also represent more than 10 tons of CO₂ emissions annually—the equivalent of planting 53 trees! Some ABC locations have instituted compressed work weeks, so employees can have more flexibility and save gas.

particular resource. Suggest WorkLife programs and policies as a solution to challenges employees bring you or to address your own concerns. For example, if an employee is having trouble focusing on a particular task because of frequent interruptions, consider suggesting he or she work alternative hours, to have quieter time early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Or, you might suggest he or she work at home one day. Consider inviting an HR representative to your next meeting, to remind employees of available WorkLife resources.

- *Be open* to employees' desire to take advantage of resources, especially flexible work arrangements. Ask yourself "Why not?" rather than "why?"
- *Ensure* that employees who are working in flexible ways or otherwise taking advantage of WorkLife resources are taken as seriously as other employees. Don't rule out a promotion just because an employee works part-time. Don't withhold assignments that involve travel or relocation just because an employee has young children or elder care responsibilities. Let employees decide what they can or cannot take on.
- *View employees and their work from a long-term perspective.* Don't take employees less seriously because they've decided that at this point in their career, they're not interested in pursuing an opportunity, or that they need to work 7 am - 3 pm. People's priorities, responsibilities and needs change over time.

It's All Part of Being a Leader

Supporting your employees' WorkLife effectiveness is not a distraction from your main goals as a leader. It helps *define* leadership. Consider ABC's attributes of

...individual leadership...

- *Display strong personal integrity.* ABC believes in WorkLife as a path to competitive excellence. When you help the company turn its philosophy into action, you demonstrate your integrity as a leader.
- *Lead by example.* When you make it clear that it really is okay to use WorkLife resources—and even make use of them yourself—you are leading by example.
- *Communicate effectively.* Successful implementation of many kinds of flexible work arrangements is dependent on strong and ongoing communications. The more flexible your team, the more likely you are to be practicing effective communications.

...team leadership...

Leading the Way Retaining Employee Capital

A New York-based Corporate Research Analyst was nearing retirement age at 55 years and looked forward to moving to North Carolina. But when she was eager to cut back on work, she knew she would want to stop working altogether. So she and her manager made a deal for her to work full-time from home. They planned to do so after a specific amount of time had passed. When that time would transition to full-time, continuing to work remotely. During particularly busy times, the employee still reported to her home office. She was thrilled with this arrangement-- a manager.

- *Build successful teams.* The appropriate use of flexible work arrangements can provide your team with an unusual breadth of coverage. It also encourages communication and teamwork among employees.
- *Develop leaders at all levels.* WorkLife resources are a way of supporting employees regardless of their personal situation, “leveling the playing field” so that all employees have the ability to develop their own potential as leaders.

...and market leadership.

- *Drive for results, grow the business, shape the future and create superior customer value* are all among the outcomes when employees are engaged and committed, when turnover is low and when the best possible employees are recruited—all results of an environment that supports and encourages the use of WorkLife resources.
- *Demonstrate a global perspective.* Promoting the use of flexible work arrangements provides expanded coverage in a 24-hour, global company and market. And it promotes diversity, essential to any true understanding of our customers around the world.

It’s Not Just Using Resources, It’s Using Them Effectively

Managing employees who are working in flexible ways or otherwise making use of WorkLife options may sometimes involve extra thought and creativity. In fact, one reason it is important for managers to support WorkLife is because it is good way to ***practice strong management skills***. Here are some things you can do to ensure that your team is productive and engaged, no matter where, when or how they are getting the work done:

Focus on results, not “facetime.”

Managers sometimes ask how they can tell an employee is working if the employee isn’t in the office (or works non-standard hours). An alternative question might be, how can you tell if employees are working when they are sitting at their desks? The answer, of course, is that you gauge an employee’s productiveness not by the time on the job, but by the quality and timeliness of the work.

Be aware of unspoken or conflicting messages.

For example, if you grant an employee the option to work flexibly, but then don’t consider him or her for a promotion, how likely will others be to pursue flexible work arrangements?

Consider developing some rules around time at the office.

If your employees work in teams, you might encourage them to agree on one or more days when all members will be at the workplace. Since Fridays are often a popular vacation day, consider a policy of avoiding unnecessary meetings on Fridays. To make it possible for employees to work a standard schedule without feeling pressured to come in early or work late, consider a rule against scheduling meetings before or after core business hours.

Leading the Way

Beyond Retention

A London [business unit] employee took advantage of a new sabbatical program to participate in a world yacht race. Taking a three-month leave, he worked with a team of 12 other amateur sailors to race a 68-foot clipper from Australia to Singapore and then on to China. Leaders at ABC, UK, had the goal of retaining high-performing employees when they instituted the program. But the benefits go beyond retention, according to the employee. *“The sabbatical made me much more open to doing new things and less prone to feeling under pressure. After you’ve faced 20-foot waves and gale force winds on the ocean, working in an office seems far less stressful.”*

Help Employees Get the Most Out of Time Off

Encourage employees to use weekends and vacation time to refresh and rejuvenate themselves by discouraging phone calls and emailing during weekends and vacations.

Keep employees who are on leave or telecommuting “in the loop.”

One of the most important things you can do to make leave or remote-work situations successful is to keep employees posted on news and events and give them opportunities to participate. For example, employees who take maternity leave in ABC London can work up to 10 “keeping in touch days” during their leave without affecting their leave status. They are encouraged to use these days to attend training events or conferences. While this is in accordance with specific recent legislation in the UK, there is no reason ABC managers in other parts of the world can’t encourage a similar connectedness for employees while on leave.

APPENDIX

ABC Can Help You Help You to Help Your Employees

Leading the Way

A Team Effort

“One of our key objectives is to make sure our employees are satisfied and motivated. After all, when our employees are happy, they deliver the best service to our customers. We looked at several different options that could provide our staff with greater flexibility at work and at home, while minimizing the impact on customers.”

Managers and Human Resource leaders at a U.S. call center offered their employees the opportunity to work a compressed week. 94% of them took advantage of it. The arrangement has been so successful that managers are looking into other kinds of flexible arrangements for those few who could not participate.

Remember, in order to be useful and effective, WorkLife resources must be embedded in a *culture* that promotes WorkLife effectiveness. That's why your role as a manager is so critically important. Around the globe, many tools and tips exist to help you promote the culture change that is WorkLife.

For more information in the U.S., [visit the Corporate HR Portal.](#) At other locations, see your local Human Resources ([link](#))

WorkLife Resources Exist in Many Forms at ABC Company

Many ABC employees around the world already take advantage of our WorkLife resources. We've been publically recognized for our WorkLife policies and culture globally, nationally and locally Now, we need to ensure that *all* employees feel they not only have access to WorkLife resources but that they are encouraged to use them.

Programs and policies will vary depending on your global location, but they may include:

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