

TUDÁS IMENEDZSMENT

A Pécsi Tudományegyetem
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Work/Life Balance conference

*Pécs, Hungary
2007 május 14-16.*

Faculty of HRD and Adult Training at University of PÉCS (FEEK) aims to organise an international conference on the subject of Work/life Balance in 2007.

This theme is being widely regarded as crucially important in all the member states of the EU. The most current issues to be resolved are how to improve the position of women's activity in the labour market and how to overcome the barriers to their higher levels of participation.

In May 2006 FEEK examined this theme at a national conference which explored a wide range of issues in particular:

- evaluating the roles of women in society
- family-friendly workplaces in Hungary
- challenges to men in creating a meaningful balance between roles at home and in the place of work
- policy orientations in the EU and their implementation.

Building on the success of that national conference, we are setting out to investigate the theme more exclusively drawing on the expertise of distinguished international experts to get a more thorough overview.

The conference will take place May 14-16 2007 and we are inviting you to declare an interest in attending.

This publication represents a first stepping stone in setting up the conference. This English-language edition will be followed-up by a Hungarian language publication showcasing research results from Hungary.

I am expressing my wishes that this publication enables readers to prepare for an effective participation at the conference.

Dr. Csaba Halmos Phd
Director of the Institute for HRD
Editor-in Chief of Tudásmenedzsment

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A fizetett munka – magánélet összhangja

A fizetett munka – magánélet összhangja (Work life balance) konferencia 14-16 May 2007, PÉCS

A Pécsi Tudományegyetem Felnőttképzési és Emberi Erőforrás Fejlesztési Kara jövő év májusában nemzetközi konferenciát szervez. A téma valamennyi EU tagállam számára egyaránt kiemelten fontos. A foglalkoztatás-politika számára a megoldandó kérdések közül az egyik legaktuálisabb: hogyan, milyen módon javítható a nők foglalkoztatottsági színvonala, milyen fékek, ellenőrzések akadályozzák a nők fokozottabb munkaerőpiaci részvételét.

Ez év májusában a Kar szervezésében egy hazai konferencián értékeltük e témát. Számos előadás hangzott el, melyek témája igen változatos volt:

- a nők és férfiak szerepének megítélése a társadalomban
- családbarát munkahelyek Magyarországon
- A férfiak szerepe a család és a munka összeegyeztetésében
- Az Európai Unió irányelvei és azok megvalósulása

E konferencia sikere alapján határoztuk el, hogy e téma nemzetközi áttekintésére a hazai és nemzetközi élet jeles képviselőinek részvételével

2007 május 14-16.-án konferenciát szervezünk, melyre minden érdeklődőt szeretettel várunk.

E kiadvány a konferencia előkészítésének jegyében készült. Ezen angol nyelvű kiadványt követni fogja egy magyar nyelvű, melyben hazai szerzők mutatják be kutatási tapasztalataikat.

A konferenciához mindenkinek sikeres, értékes munkát kívánok

Pécs, 2006. november

dr. Halmos Csaba PhD
Emberi Erőforrás Fejlesztési Intézet igazgató

Tudásmenedzsment
szerkesztő bizottság elnöke

A konferenciára jelentkezés: gender@human.pte.hu

Work/ Life Balance: Overview

What are Work Life Balance Policies and Work Arrangements?

Abstract

The following short introduction provides an overview of those practices employed by companies in the implementation of work/ life balance. It illustrates the breadth and range of option available, some of them are tried-and-tested, others are newer.

The case studies included in this edition give best practice examples of how well-known companies and individuals are putting them to good use.

Reproduced with kind permission from Irish Work Life Balance website.

Overview

Work life balance policies are those policies which help workers in combining employment with their family life, caring responsibilities and personal and social life outside the workplace. This definition includes statutory entitlements such as maternity, adoptive, force majeure, parental and carer's leave and other non-statutory measures such as childcare and employee assistance schemes.

There are many reasons why someone might be interested in work life balance working arrangements. They benefit employees by allowing flexibility in the workplace which allows them to effectively combine work and family responsibilities as well as their personal life. The benefits to the employer are that the policies allow for better retainment and recruitment of valuable employees which can save employers from costs associated with recruitment and training of new staff. The policies should aim to facilitate equality of opportunity for men and women in the workplace.

Flexible Hours Arrangements	Reduced Working Time
Flexitime	Job sharing
Annualised Hours	Job splitting
Flexible Leave Arrangements	Work sharing
Non-Statutory Leave Arrangements:	Part-time Work
Paternity Leave	Fixed part-time working
Compassionate Leave	Voluntary Reduced work-time
Term-time working	Flexible Location
Employment or career breaks	e-Working
Sabbaticals	Virtual teams
Study Leave	

Flexible Hours Arrangements

Flexitime: This is an arrangement whereby employers and employees negotiate hours of work that are of advantage to both. It usually involves defining 'peak' hours when all employees must be in work. Starting and finishing times, on the other hand, are normally flexible and there is usually provision for taking leave in lieu of additional hours worked.

Annualised hours : This scheme means that an employee is contracted to work a defined number of hours per year rather than per week. Working time can be scheduled to deal with seasonal variations and fluctuations in the demands of the business throughout the year – for example an employee may work longer hours at the one time of the year and shorter hours at another.

Non Statutory Leave Arrangements

Apart from statutory entitlements such as annual leave and maternity, adoptive, force majeure, parental and carer's leave, other leave arrangements are increasingly common. These include:

Paternity Leave: There might not be a legal entitlement to paid or unpaid paternity leave. On the other hand, a number of employers are recognising the importance of making some provision for such leave.

Compassionate or emergency leave: Most employers recognise the need for leave in emergency situations. Arrangements vary from organisation to organisation and are frequently informal.

Term-time working: This system means that the employee works during school terms but not during the school holidays. It appeals, in particular, to parents of school going children.

Employment or career break: At certain stages in working life a break may be needed, for example: to devote more time to other things or for personal development reasons. The facilitating of such breaks can assist in retaining valued staff. A growing number of organisations provide such breaks on either a formal or less structured basis.

Sabbaticals: This is a period of absence from work, which may or may not be on full pay, and duration is normally related to length of service. They provide an opportunity for employees to take a break from or reflect on their work, or engage in new activities.

Exam and Study Leave: When an employee is pursuing further education (this may or may not be job-related), an organisation may provide paid leave for the purposes of study and to enable the employee to sit exams. In the case of workers under 18, in some countries this may be mandatory.

Job sharing

This is an arrangement to divide one full-time job or to share work between two people with the responsibilities and benefits of the job being shared between them. The job can be shared in a number of ways:

On the basis of a split week; (eg: 2 and 3 day weeks).

On the basis of a split day.

On the basis of week on, week off.

Good management and communication are essential to effective job-sharing and this can be assisted where the job-sharer's can build and operate close working relations.

Job Splitting

This is an arrangement similar to job sharing except that the tasks involved in a full-time job are split between two people and each has responsibility for their own tasks rather than being equally responsible for the whole job. The need for co-ordination is, therefore, reduced. An advantage of job splitting is that a job can be split in such a way that certain tasks requiring particular skills can be grouped together. In addition, in certain situations the working times of those who have split a job can also overlap.

Work sharing

Work sharing is a development of the job sharing/job splitting concept which attempts to achieve business tasks while allowing for a wider range of attendance patterns. This arrangement requires a high level of employer/employee co-operation with a view to achieving the tasks that make up the job. It is important that the tasks are clearly defined, targets identified and the level of service decided upon before the workload is divided up. At this stage the manager and jobholders can agree on a system of work attendance to complete the work that best accommodates the staff.

Part-time work

Part-time working basically means working fewer hours than a comparable full-time worker in the same organisation.

There are various forms of part-time working:

Fixed part-time working : This is the most popular model. The employee works a reduced number of hours per day, or fewer days per week or even alternate weeks. This system is easy to understand and easy to manage.

Voluntary Reduced work-time : This is a scheme whereby an employee is allowed to reduce working time for a limited period with a right to return to full-time work.

E-Working:

The concept of e-Working means working at a distance, or even a remote location, and using technology to ease communications. It can also include a combination of e-Working and office based work. It is well suited to performing information technology tasks and works well in certain situations where the employee has a high degree of autonomy, eg: Architecture, journalism. Difficulties to be overcome can include issues of control, lack of face to face contact and consistency of service provision.

Virtual teams :

A further development in this area is the putting together of teams of e-workers to work in a mutually supportive way. The members of the team may never meet and

may not even be in the same country. This form of teamwork may be suitable in certain situations but the lack of personal interaction and human contact will render it inappropriate in situations where these factors are considered important.

References:

Further information and examples is available from: Irish Work Life Balance
<http://www.worklifebalance.ie/index.asp>)

Off the treadmill: Achieving Work/ Life Balance

Abstract

This article is the final chapter from the report: Off the treadmill, published in Ireland in 2003. It first outlines the findings in the rest of this very comprehensive policy review, providing a detailed study of comparative findings from over 900 practising companies. Finally, this chapter sets out indications of the future challenges for a wider implementation of work life balance.

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Issues & Challenges in Achieving Work/Life Balance

This chapter draws upon the findings and conclusions of the previous six chapters and presents the issues and challenges ahead for achieving Work-Life Balance.

- Chapter one set out the objectives of the study and outlined the methodology used.
- This was followed by a review of the Family Friendly/ Work-Life Balance literature drawing upon a range of international sources.
- In chapter three, international statistics were examined to show the position of Ireland relative to other EU countries in relation to the uptake and practice of flexible working options. The chapter also provided a summary of previous surveys conducted in Ireland on flexible working arrangements and childcare.
- Chapter four presented the findings of the survey of 912 employers in relation to the availability/take-up of flexible working time options and leave arrangements. It set out the costs/benefits to the organisation of such practices and their views on work-life balance.
- In chapter five the survey of 1006 employees in five organisations is covered. It dealt with the uptake/experience of, and attitudes towards, flexible working/leave arrangements of employees, managers and colleagues of employees who have availed, with a view to ascertaining the dis/advantages for employers and employees as well as obstacles to the further development of these arrangements.
- Chapter six set out the qualitative findings of the study obtained in the interviews with key informants, open-ended responses to the employer/employee surveys and focus group sessions.

This chapter synthesises the key findings from the chapters, as outlined above, by setting out the issues involved, followed by the challenges arising from these in terms of wider adoption of work-life balance.

Forces Supporting/Constraining Work-Life Balance

There are many forces operating that will increase, rather than reduce, the pressures to move towards greater flexibility and/or work-life balance. Section

7.1.1 outlines a number of forces supporting the demand for greater work-life balance namely: the increasing heterogeneity and changing nature of the labour force; economic conditions; information and communication technologies; public versus private sector adoption. Balanced against these is the increasingly pervasiveness of 'long hours' working. It is increasingly obvious from EU statistics that employees are heterogeneous and, over a life span, they seek different patterns of working initially casual and part-time while in school/college, shifting towards full-time working on a contract/permanent basis on entry to the labour market. Subsequent attachment to the labour market has traditionally been highly gender-tracked, with men remaining in full-time continuous employment, while women exited, took career breaks, switched to part-time/jobsharing and/or availed of flexitime. These arrangements were predicated upon the predominantly 'male breadwinner' model, with a dependent partner whose working life adjusted to parenting/caring roles. Across the European Union, this pattern is becoming less distinct with a falling birth rate and a rise in single person households, childless couples and dual career families.

Employers have noted in their survey responses that the current/changing profile of their workforce will require them to make progress towards the provision of work-life balance. In the current climate where family friendly working arrangements remain the most common forms of flexibility available, there are signs of resentment among employees between those who are allowed to avail (e.g. parents) and those who are not 'eligible' (e.g. single people). These divisions will need to be addressed as more employees seek multiple roles involving combinations of employment, parenting/caring, leisure/sports, business ventures, community/political involvement during their careers.

Apart from the grade divisions there are also major differences in the utilisation of work-life balance arrangements that relate to gender. While flexitime is utilised by women and men, homeworking is more common among men, particularly in managerial, professional and technical posts. In contrast, reduced working time, in the form of part-time working and job-sharing, is a predominantly female working pattern, particularly among women with small children. It is also significant that proportionately more women would like to avail of reduced hours, while men (including fathers) would prefer flexible full-time working and working from home. This increased demand by women for specific work-life balance arrangements that support reduced hours of working has to be offset against the finding from the focus groups sessions that suggest there is a 'penalty clause' in relation to the uptake of part-time working/job-sharing, that is not observed in relation to flexitime. The existence of this negative impression that opting for reduced hours signals that an employee has put their career "on hold" means that such arrangements will not attract men, nor more senior and managerial staff. There is a very real danger that part-time working/job-sharing will continue to remove employees from the career ladder.

Other sources of pressure have arisen in the tightening labour market associated with economic boom, especially in the mid to end 1990s which witnessed an excess demand for labour, reverse out-migration, greater encouragement to women returners and rising female participation rates. This excess demand for labour created opportunities for an increasing proportion of

women to work part-time while paradoxically, the economic constraints of the early 1980s created similar opportunities for work sharing in the Irish Civil Service that led to the introduction of job-sharing and career breaks. Hence the Irish experience to date shows that the impetus for flexible working arrangements can arise in conditions of economic growth and/or downturn. However the quality and/or quantity of work-life balance options available may be adversely affected by an economic downturn.

A further factor contributing to demand for work-life balance has come through changing technology. From an historical perspective, the industrialisation process based on technological innovation brought about the separation of home from workplace (when hitherto production was either farm or workshop and hence home based) as employment became factory and subsequently office based. Improvements in information and communication technologies (ICT) now offer support for 'working from a distance', either from home or a community located workplace. E-working and tele-conferencing are examples of alternatives to workplace-bound location patterns. There is also a recognised danger that ICT can militate against work-life balance by making employees constantly 'on call' via their mobile phones/emailing and that sometimes working from home can be a substitute for formal childcare arrangements and thereby place increased pressure on employees to juggle work/family in the home.

It is notable from the survey of employers that the Irish public sector, as in many other industrialised countries, has taken the lead in making available arrangements that contribute to work-life balance. In these organisations the preoccupation is with restrictions relating to eligibility and career prospects, since line managers are not responsible for the 'bottom line' results that would prevail in the private sector. In contrast, the private sector has been slower to make such arrangements available – with the frequent comment "We're not the Civil Service". It is evident that more supports are required to promote work-life balance especially in the private sector, to encourage the emergence and promotion of 'employer of choice' arguments through emphasising gains in terms of recruitment/retention, greater diversity, health and safety, higher morale/loyalty levels and greater productivity. There is evidence from this study that while these benefits are recognised by managers in both the private and public sectors, it is much more difficult to implement work-life balance arrangements in a manner that is equitable and allows access throughout different levels within organisations.

Against these forces that support the introduction of greater work-life balance, there is a growing pattern, in both the private and public sectors, that long hours of work, beyond the standard hours expected in the job, are the norm and, of even greater concern, working these hours has come to be seen as the hallmark, and price, of career progression into managerial grades. This leaves many line managers with the role of responding to demands for work-life balance arrangements that they may be unable to avail of themselves.

Benefits/Constraints

Unlike many previous studies that have concentrated on reconciliation issues for employees with children/other caring responsibilities, particularly women, this study has identified a much wider demand on the part of employees for work-life

balance regardless of their gender, family or marital status. The study shows that from an employer perspective, organisations are becoming increasingly conscious of the need to attract and retain high calibre staff and to accommodate them in achieving a better balance between their working and non-working lives. It demonstrates that the majority of employers rank work-life balance as important to their organisations. They also recognise from the profile of their workforce that demand for work-life balance is likely to expand rather than contract/remain stable in the future. The results of the survey demonstrate that for employers the benefits of work-life balance arrangements outweigh the constraints and costs, by acknowledging the direct benefits derived from increased satisfaction, morale, productivity and loyalty among their employees. Employers are also aware that there are additional indirect benefits through retention and reduction in recruitment/training and development costs of replacing valued staff.

Most employers support the view that their employees should be able to balance work and home life, though this has to be reconciled with the more widely held view that employers' first responsibility is to achieve their goals and employees should not expect to be able to change their working pattern if it disrupts the business goals of the organisation. Against these benefits are the constraints mentioned by employers in terms of complexity of implementation, lack of demand by employees and competition from other organisational priorities.

The survey of employers illustrates that flexibility is commonly sought and frequently a requirement of working (e.g. shifts in 24 hour manufacturing, health services, reduced hours in retailing and flexitime in the public service) within certain organisations. What is more difficult and presents a major challenge is the need to reconcile what can be quite specific employer requirements (e.g. staff presence at start/duration of production run in manufacturing, responding to customer/client's needs in professional services) with more equitable and workable hours that may vary, on a daily, weekly, seasonal basis, for individual employees.

The major constraints to introducing flexitime and reduced working time are: customer responsiveness, production demands, grade limits (e.g. employees who manage staff may not be eligible to avail) and scheduling 24 hour operations that require all staff to be available at set up time. These constraints are most acute in manufacturing, private and public services, especially in health care provision.

In relation to homeworking there is a wider array of difficulties to overcome: business needs, equipment/remote access provision and costs, documentation/paperwork, need to see customers face-to-face, professionalism and non-applicability in distribution sectors.

The size of the organisation is also important in supporting/constraining the availability and adoption of work-life balance arrangements. It is clear that in larger, and particularly public sector organisations, formal HR policies tend to set out what flexibility/leave arrangements are available and the terms under which such arrangements can be applied for. However, in themselves, these policies do not imply that all applications are granted as there may be limits pertaining to skills, grades, staff numbers, sectoral demands or even reason for applying, that limit access among an organisation's employees. Smaller organisations tend to rely on informal arrangements that allow the organisation to respond to requests on a

'case by case' basis. In either case the ultimate decision may lie with the line manager, outside of the HR ambit.

Not all employees seek the same solutions to the need for work-life balance and individual needs may alter radically throughout a person's lifespan. For example, part-time working might offer a route into and out of the labour force, and provide a transition back to full-time employment following a career break/maternity leave. At present, flexible working tends to be dealt with independently of leave arrangements. Current working hours, well beyond the standard for the job, and expanding commuting times pose major challenges to policy makers in targeting the provision of transportation, traffic management, childcare, housing policy and working time arrangements. The consequences of these pressures run totally counter to the need for work-life balance since by increasing the levels of stress, they also pose an issue for health and safety at work, for some employees/employers. Although a radical solution to these problems would extend well beyond the limits of this study, there is a case for re-examining 'core hours' that currently contribute to extremes of traffic congestion and a scramble for parking spaces at places of work.

This study reinforces the findings of previous research in demonstrating that the take-up of work-life balance is highly gendered. The options that imply no loss of pay (flexitime and working from home) or overtime tend to be sought equally, if not predominantly, by men. In contrast to this, women who seek flexibility have opted for reduced hours (mainly in part-time working/job-sharing and to a lesser degree term-time working) and many more seek such arrangements in preference to working from home. Apart from the potential loss of earnings there is also a perception borne out by this study (along with others) that opting for less than full-time hours signals a lack of commitment to the job/organisation and/or that the individual has put their career 'on hold'. Far from finding evidence to support this perception, the focus group sessions suggest the opposite – that employees who have a degree of work-life balance are more committed and loyal, as they value the opportunity to work flexible hours, and are also more productive since they frequently manage to get their tasks done in less time.

A major challenge will be to avoid a twin track in which men are in the fast lane involving continuous and often excessive hours in full-time employment, partly from home, and women in the slow lane working/seeking reduced hours and/or opt for career breaks. If these twin track conditions continue or are accentuated it will add to the existing evidence that work-life balance is for 'mothers of young children' and hence to be avoided by all other employees. This also points to a further challenge at the level of the organisation in transforming its culture to one in which flexibility is beneficial to all; accessible on a fair and equitable basis, in accordance with organisational limits; and managed in a professional, rather than an ad hoc manner. This can only be achieved by convincing those in senior management positions, in particular men, to actively promote and adopt such practices.

References:

Irish Work Life Balance website: <http://www.worklifebalance.ie/index.asp>, Full report can be downloaded from: <http://www.worklifebalance.ie/index.asp?locID=66&docID=-1>

Improving Work-Life Balance – What Are Other Countries Doing?

Abstract

This article from the Canadian government summarises developments in work-life balance in western nations setting out the issues which requires governments and the private sector to explore different solutions.

The Government of Canada is committed to building strong social foundations by providing supports to meet the needs of families and to ensure that children receive the best possible start in life. One approach to implement this commitment is to support working parents so that they can build strong and cohesive families. The Labour Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) encourages the development of workplace measures that improve work-life balance and support working parents.

The Labour Program has published several research studies to assist public policy development on work-life balance issues, and to help organizations design and implement programs and policies that facilitate work-life balance. This report is part of that body of work and is intended to provide valuable information on work-life balance issues to managers, unions, employees and human resource professionals.

This report provides an overview of different types of work-life balance initiatives that have been developed by industrial countries around the world. It shows that these governments are increasingly committed to reducing the social, health and business costs of work-life conflict.

Data from the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States illustrate that work-life conflict is a growing issue in these jurisdictions. Many workers report that they are dissatisfied with their working hours, stressed from high levels of work intensity, and suffer from health problems due to work demands. To improve their work-life balance, many workers would prefer to work reduced and more flexible hours.

Some countries, such as the U.K., New Zealand and Australia, actively endorse work-life balance as an explicit policy goal. They have launched work-life balance campaigns that focus on promotional activities and the voluntary compliance of employers to develop and implement work-life balance practices in their organizations.

These three countries have all developed websites on work-life balance that provide newsletters, case studies, publications and links to other relevant information and legislation. Work-life balance is also promoted through award programs. New Zealand and Australia, for example, both offer award programs to highlight organizations that demonstrate best practices. In addition, some governments have introduced legislation to support work-life balance. The U.K.

legislation to give parents the right to request flexible working arrangements is notable in this regard.

These work-life balance campaigns include a variety of resources to support employers. The U.K. and Australia have published guides to assist employers in evaluating whether work-life balance policies are well integrated into the organization's overall business plans and whether the programs are actually being used by employees. Guides are also aimed at making the "business case" for work-life balance – helping employers to understand that work-life conflict has significant business costs associated with absenteeism and turnover rates. In addition, the U.K. has programs to provide funding and consultancy services so that employers can develop practices that support work-life balance.

Other countries, such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, focus less on promotional activities and are more involved in developing legislative and other measures that support broad social policy goals to help workers balance paid work with unpaid responsibilities. They primarily seek to improve work-life balance by redressing gender inequities in the labour force and in the division of unpaid work, particularly with respect to care-giving.

Paid parental leave benefits in these countries, especially the parental leave schemes in Denmark and Sweden, are designed to encourage parents to take an active role in care-giving while staying attached to the labour force. For example, Denmark and Sweden both allow parents to work part-time and prolong their leave beyond the usual benefits period. Sweden's leave program includes an information campaign to emphasize the importance of the father's involvement in care-giving.

Initiatives to give workers more control over their working time, such as the Netherlands' Adjustment of Hours Law and Denmark's amendments to the Act on Part-time Work, also assist workers in improving their work-life balance. Other initiatives, such as the Netherlands' "leave savings" and Sweden's sabbatical leave, allow workers more time to devote to care-giving and to pursue other interests outside of work.

In addition, Sweden has implemented an action plan to reduce costs associated with sick leave and to reduce the impact poor health has on work-life balance. Gender inequities are also addressed. Swedish research indicates that women are more likely to be employed in occupations with inferior working environments and to have heavier workloads than men, when both paid and unpaid work is considered.

Finally, several countries have adopted individual pieces of legislation or policies that address some aspect of work-life balance. These initiatives are not necessarily part of a comprehensive program or policy approach to achieve work-life balance, but these measures could be seen as one way to improve an employee's balance between work and other responsibilities. Examples include France's reduction of hours in the statutory work week, Belgium's introduction of time credits, Ireland's "Work Life Balance Day" and the U.S. resolution to proclaim "Work and Family Month."

This report shows that there is not likely to be any "one size fits all" answer to work-life balance issues. A variety of approaches are available to support work-life balance, ranging from promotional programs that emphasize the importance of balance and provide support to employers to reduce the business costs associated

with work-life conflict, to legislation that supports parents with care-giving responsibilities.

It is clear that improving work-life balance is an important component of the policy agenda for many industrial countries, and the issue is likely to become even more important in future. Canadians can learn from the initiatives of other countries and determine whether these approaches could be adopted to suit the needs of Canada's workplace partners.

This report available from:
<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/wlb/iwlb/02summary.shtml>

Case studies: Flexible working

Working flexibly is one of the more popular ways in which a company can work together with their employees to establish a balance between the business's goals and the individual's need to organise the non-paid part of their life.

The increased use of part-time workers to meet irregular opening hours, "hot-desking" in different locations, working in school terms only, career breaks, changing working times to suit family responsibilities, – managers need training in organising staff times, a flexible and imaginative mindset to make this work. Implications for customer service, considerations about career development and promotions are all impacted. But universally, opinions are: where flexible working is working well, the benefits to both the business and to the individual are indisputable.

MSN UK

Innovation Employer of the Year 2004

Date of Study: 2004

Size: large

Sector: private

Region: UK

Type of Business: Computer software

MSN have boldly tackled the macho culture in a sector renowned for its long hours, heavy turnover and burn-out of young, enthusiastic staff.

Rapid growth and success for the business (part of the global company, Microsoft) has not always been so beneficial to MSN's staff. This was highlighted in an employee survey which indicated that presenteeism¹ was leading to significant loss of morale. Determined to do something about this, MSN have dedicated the same drive to this problem that they apply to any other business issue. Starting in 2002, they embarked on a cultural change project which has resulted in work-life being integrated into business objectives, with measures to combat excessive working hours. Their strategy includes a range of options open to all staff and this is constantly monitored through monthly pulse surveys, 6 monthly work-life appraisals an annual global survey and discussion forums. Working options now include home working, different location working, flexi hours, compressed working and sabbaticals.

MSN recognised that flexibility can't work without regular communication between team members, managers and clients. The project opened up a new dialogue with people and created an environment where people now talk openly about the working culture, work-life and diversity. From the start, managers were

¹ Presenteeism – the pressure to be at work long hours, even though much of the time may be under-productive.

made responsible for supervising at local level their team's work-life balance arrangements. This was done via weekly reports from each team which helped to ensure that issues were dealt with as they arose, communications remained current and success were celebrated.

Work-life is now enshrined in operational objectives – in project planning, evaluation, discussions, decisions, objectives and business commitments. Managers received mandatory training on managing flexi teams and 1-1 coaching for extra support to assist in the transition of working patterns with team members. All the UK leadership team participated in the project and worked at the local level with their teams as well as committing financial resources needed over the 22 month period of start-up.

Communications also included team events, promotion in the newsletter, developing computer share points and having work-life balance as a fixed agenda item at leadership team meetings.

The 2002 staff survey, prior to the culture change programme, indicated that staff morale was very low, with 64% indicating that they were thinking of leaving the company. Now, 89% say they would stay longer if they could work flexibly and 78% think that flexi working has improved work productivity and efficiency. 71% say customer reaction to MSN UK flexible initiative has been "I wish we had the same" and 83% of external clients think MSN UK is a cutting edge employer. The impact on employees' quality of life is significant with 84% saying it has lowered stress levels at home and 64% finding it has improved travel to and from work. It has also taught people to work smarter, rather than harder – 61% have learned more efficient working practices and 64% agree that long hours does not equal high output.

Mark West, program manager, works 7.30-3.30 so that he can spend time with his new baby and give his wife a break when he gets home. One drawback is that he misses out on after-work activities and the networking that this allows. He arranges meetings so that he does not suffer because of this, but says he is happy to relinquish socialising so that he can look after his children, saying "It's horses for courses".

Mark previously believed that by leaving early he was damaging his career prospects, but feedback from his manager has revealed no problem with his performance and that flexible working will have no negative impact on his reviews or job future prospects in the company.

85% of MSN now work flexibly, including 49% of men. Significantly, everybody has 'outperformed' during the period of culture change, with a 66% growth in the business. As a result, the success of the project has had a major impact, not only in the UK, but globally, where it is now being rolled out to other parts of Microsoft, including the United States.

(Reproduced with permission from Working Families website)

Jean – career breaker

Jean is on leave from work to care for her parents. She has worked for more than twenty years for her employer. In the past two years she has noticed that caring for her parents had begun to take more and more of her time and energy. At first it was just a weekend or an occasional evening. However, within the first year of her father's ailing health she noticed that it was taking a lot more of her time. This also meant that her workday was often disrupted by a call from her parents' home to deal with an ever-increasing number of needs. Indeed it was her immediate supervisor who suggested that she think about one of the firm's family friendly options.

The Organisation

The organisation has a range of family friendly policies, which include job sharing, reduced working hours, e-working and tele-working as well as unpaid leave options, all implemented with the support and agreement of the trade unions.

Following Jean's supervisor's sympathetic response to her plight, Jean discussed her ideas with her siblings, who all live abroad. They agreed to help with the financial cost of Jean giving up her salary for the duration of her unpaid leave from work. This allowed her to decide to make the application for a two-year career break. While she was unsure as to how much time she would actually need, her employer agreed that she could apply to return to work before that should her caring arrangements for her parents change in any fundamental way.

Benefits

The value of being able to devote her time fully to caring for her parents has ironically meant she has more time to pursue some of her own personal hobbies.

"After twenty five years working, it is a joy to take time out and find I can devote myself to caring for Mum and Dad but also catch up on things I had neglected for myself."

While on career break she is pursuing further education courses in her local college. This is an unexpected bonus. She does know that the care of her parents will increase as time moves on but now she has time to access all the support services. While she was at work she did not have the time to phone the various organisations that offer advice and help with older people. She also says the stress of taking time out of the workday and leaving in the middle of meetings to respond to a distress call is gone.

"It was neither fair on me or my colleagues or my boss."

The organisation is benefiting because this employee is deeply grateful to have an opportunity to care for her parents. She also has the security in knowing that she has a place in her organisation at the end of two years.

Concerns

Career breaks are mostly taken up in this organisation by very young employees, who tend to take time out to travel the world, and by those with younger children. In other words, the majority are employees at the beginning or early middle stages

in their career. Jean is aware that she is already past the mid career point at this time. This may have implications for any further promotion as well as having an impact on her pension entitlements.

In conclusion, however, she is aware of these issues and realises that the benefit of the career break has been not just to give her precious time with her parents but also to allow her space to think about how she might like to develop herself on her return to work.

(Reproduced with permission from Irish Work Life Balance website)

Newcastle Building Society

Size: large
Sector: private
Region: UK
Type of Business: Banking

Background

Newcastle Building Society employs 799 staff, of whom 529 are at the Principal Office in Newcastle, 270 are in branches and around 30 in subsidiary companies (although the flexible working policy does not formally cover the subsidiary companies).

The Society introduced the policy with the aim of becoming the 'best employer' in a tight labour market.

Flexible working arrangements

The policy gives all staff at the Principal Office (and to some extent in the branches) the right to request flexible working arrangements; not just those with young or disabled children or those that have worked for the company for over 26 weeks. [See right to request flexible working]

Newcastle Building Society defines flexible working as 'any working pattern that is different from the 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, working week' but states that 'any working arrangement must meet the needs of both the Society and the members of staff and for this reason not all flexible working arrangements will be applicable to every branch, department or role.'

In addition, the Society has a separate but linked written policy on working from home.

Take-up and patterns currently in operation

A total of 85 employees have 'flexed their contract' with the following patterns:

- 32 consolidated (compressed) hours (9 of them managers)
- 30 reduced hours (10 managers)
- 9 different working times (1 manager)
- 1 term-time only contract
- 13 working from home

One training officer works full time hours but in four days a week of compressed working, rather than five. The Society still get the same amount of training time from her as she does her admin work between 8.30 and 9am and 5 and 5.30pm when most staff are not available for training.

One of the 40-odd members of staff in the customer lending department at the Principal Office works full time but her 35 hours are compressed into four days to allow her to have a day off each week. She requested this as a preferable way of working for herself rather than the more typical reason of childcare. Her request was processed and agreed within two weeks.

She now works from 8.45am to 6pm, with 30 minutes for lunch, four days a week with Fridays off. Her manager said having Fridays off depends on business needs and the day off was subject to change, though this has never happened.

She is very happy with the arrangement and would recommend it to others, but points out that not everyone would be happy with the longer days. One problem is, she is applying for a higher post in a department where flexible working will not be available.

A member of staff in the Telecare department – which has 21 members of staff – works 20 hours a week, 10am-2pm five days a week. She wanted to switch her work hours to enable her to take Wednesdays off, so requested to work until 4pm on Mondays and Tuesdays to make up the four hours needed. Her request was agreed within days.

It worked out well because Wednesdays tend to be quiet days in that department – another member of staff had a request to have Mondays off turned down. She is not sure what will happen at 'statement time' – which is a very busy three weeks once a year.

Reasons for requests

Childcare is a major reason for flexible working requests but others have included working a nine-day fortnight to allow more time to spend with a spouse or partner and one who wanted to study.

Rejected requests

Requests that have ended up with a lot of debate are where HR feels the individual is not being reasonable. Usually requests have been reasonable as staff have thought it through themselves.

One request rejected was from a manager who wanted to compress her full-time hours into a four-day week. However, it was felt that the very early and late hours would be lost to the Society as there were no staff to be managed at those times. It was agreed she would reduce her hours to four normal days a week, the 5th day's money would be allocated to someone else and a new role for somebody could be created.

Response of line managers

There have not really been problems, and around 20 of the managers themselves have 'flexed' their contracts.

Union involvement

The union on site is Amicus, which generally enjoys good relations with the Society's management. The policy was initiated by management, who gave a draft to union officers for comment. All was agreed pretty quickly as the union was happy to have more generous provision than was required by law.

The union has had no involvement with the running of the policy, as matters are agreed directly between the individual concerned and the management.

Generally the union feels that the policy is currently working well, although it has a number of concerns, including:

People are often not aware of the policy, particularly if they are not parents of young children;

Flexitime arrangements are unduly restrictive and not operated fairly across the board;

The ability to work flexibly depends very much on what type of job you have. For example, if your job involves answering phone calls from the public, there is much less flexibility than for purely computer-based work; and

Flexible working arrangements are given on a first come, first served basis. If someone already has an agreed flexible working pattern, and another flexible working request conflicts with it, the request will be refused.

(Reproduced from Trades Union Council (TUC), UK)

Chris – part time worker

Currently Chris is attending a full time degree programme and is also working 28 hours a week. Before leaving school he started to work part time for his local supermarket. Now that he is in university he uses the income from his supermarket job to support himself at college. He is different from most of his friends who do not work while they are at college. Chris says,

"I love my college course."

He is now the most experienced part time employee at his workplace. The academic time frame is 9.00 a.m.- 5.00 p.m. almost every day. Part time work is carried out in the evenings and at the weekends.

The Organisation

His employer has an equal opportunities policy and relies heavily on part time staff to carry out the work. According to Chris and his boss the supermarket operates a part time and reduced hours policy. Staff choose the hours that they are willing to work and the store works the needs of the operation around the staff's availability. This can change from week to week, where a person may work ten hours one week and twenty hours the second week. While some staff have the same rota each week Chris operates a flexible system. Time off is also respected once an employee makes their request a week in advance.

Chris has proved himself to be a reliable and experienced worker. He has a good relationship with his boss. Now and then he needs a break to finish an academic project or do his exams. His boss is supportive of Chris at these times and he is not assigned to work while he dedicates himself to his studies. Chris would call this unpaid leave.

Benefits

This flexibility is a feature of the management of the store and one which has clearly benefited Chris, allowing him to achieve his goals of full time education and sufficient money to support himself. The demonstrated flexibility is clearly benefiting the store and the employee.

Another benefit to Chris is that the store is close to where he lives and in his very busy schedule this is a huge help. He also confesses he would miss the store and the camaraderie of his workmates if he were to give it up.

Concerns

Chris has heard his academic teachers say that students are advised not to work while at college. He is aware that as he moves through the four-year degree programme the demands on him to produce academic work will increase. He is concerned as to how he will balance the reality of his financial needs against wanting to achieve his academic goals. This means that he will continue to need his job. Grant assistance is a possibility but Chris is clear that it will not meet all his budgetary needs. Another concern is the pressure that can be exerted by a manager asking him to come to work on his precious free time. In his personal life, Chris has very little time for his girlfriend and his other friends.

In *conclusion*, Chris has demonstrated that he has found a way that allows him learn a lot about the reality of work, while at the same time pursuing his academic goals. He has an understanding of the nuances of management already which will give him a head start in joining the full time work force in a few years time. He has already had a good experience of fair play in action and has learned that flexibility and the freedom to negotiate around one's personal needs can be managed. Thus a very busy enterprise can achieve its goals in a way that allows an employee also achieve their personal goals.

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CATHERINE HAKIM

Women, careers, and work-life preferences

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ABSTRACT There are no sex differences in cognitive ability but enduring sex differences in competitiveness, life goals, the relative emphasis on agency versus connection. Policy-makers' and feminist emphasis on equal opportunities and family-friendly policies assumes that sex discrimination is the primary source of sex differentials in labour market outcomes*notably the pay gap between men and women. However, some careers and occupations cannot be domesticated*examples are given*and this also poses limits to social engineering. Recent research shows that high levels of female employment and family-friendly policies reduce gender equality in the workforce and produce the glass ceiling. Preference theory is the only theory that can explain these new trends, the continuing pay gap and occupational segregation. Preference theory implies that there are at least three types of career rather than one. However, the differences between men and women's career goals are smaller than sometimes thought. Society is man-made [1], and human beings are malleable, in the sense of responding to incentives and sanctions, at least in the short run (Levitt & Dubner, 2005). It does not follow that social engineering [2] works on a completely blank slate (Pinker, 2002). Many differences between men and women that were believed to be fixed, and probably innate (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), have recently been shown to be socially constructed and artificial. Most notably, once women gained access to higher education after the equal opportunities revolution, sex differences in cognitive abilities evaporated. Today, females regularly outperform males in educational qualifications obtained at secondary school level, especially during compulsory schooling (EOC & OFSTED, 1996). Sex differences in verbal, mathematical and spatial abilities have now shrunk to small and insignificant levels (Hyde, 1996).

However, some sex differences remain unchanged*notably in attitudes to sexuality, and what is often labelled as 'aggression' but extends to and includes rivalry and competitiveness as well as physical violence (Dabbs, 2000; Hyde, 1996 p. 114; Archer, 2004). A widely admired book by Gilligan (1982) argues that there are important sex differences in moral judgements affecting behaviour, which are sometimes summarised as differing emphases on agency versus connection. Reviews of the latest research evidence and experimental studies also conclude that many sex differences in personality and behaviour are not eroding over time; that public stereotypes of sex differences correspond closely to research findings and are hence based in reality; and that there are persistent sex differences in individualism versus

collectivism (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Eagly, 1995; Hakim, 2004a; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1988; Pinker, 2002; Swim, 1994).

However, many feminist scholars insist that there are no 'natural' differences between men and women, and that sex discrimination (direct and structural) is the primary reason for differences between men and women in labour market outcomes (see, for example, Bryson, 1992; Phillips, 2004). One consequence, unfortunately, is that political correctness now impedes rigorous research on the extent of sex differences in abilities, social attitudes, values, life goals and behaviour, and renders such research polemical and contentious (Eagly, 1995; Ginn *et al.*, 1996; Hakim, 1995, 2004a). Nonetheless, there is solid evidence that men and women continue to differ, on average, in their work orientations and labour market behaviour, and that these differences are linked to broader differences in life goals, the relative importance of competitiveness versus consensus-seeking values, and the relative importance of family life and careers (Hakim, 2000, 2003a, 2004a). These differences persist long after the equal opportunities revolution of the 1960s and 1970s gave women equal right to access higher education and all positions and careers in the labour force. However, they are differences of degree, with large overlaps between men and women. They are not fundamental qualitative differences, as often argued in the past in order to entirely exclude women from 'male' occupations such as management, the military and the professions.

The European Commission has adopted the feminist, ideological position rather than the evidence-based, scholarly perspective. It assumes that it is purely a social accident that certain careers, some of them well paid, are male-dominated and do not tolerate motherhood, long parental leaves, part-time hours of work, and familyfriendly arrangements. It has adopted as major policy goals the elimination of gender-based occupational segregation and the stubbornly stable 10_20% difference in average earnings (the 'pay gap') between men and women in the workforce, and it insists on achieving a 70% employment rate among women despite the dramatic collapse of fertility rates in Europe. It attributes these and all other sex differences in labour market outcomes to sex discrimination, and is setting up a European Institute for Gender Equality to campaign on equality issues (European Commission, 2005a, 2005b). The International Labour Office (ILO) also takes a similar position, and argues that occupational segregation, in all its forms, is an injustice which must be eliminated (Anker, 1998). Despite more temperate language, this seems also to be the OECD's position (OECD, 2002). The usual argument is that many more women would achieve the top jobs in the workforce if employers could be persuaded to adopt family-friendly work arrangements and benefits for employees*such as parental leave, part-time working and so forth (OECD, 2001).

There seems to be no doubt that family-friendly policies are popular among many women, and make it much easier for them to combine paid jobs with family work. What is in doubt is that such policies produce gender equality in the workforce. 280 Catherine Hakim The latest research evidence is that family-friendly policies do not make any major positive difference to gender equality in the labour market, as indicated by levels of occupational segregation, the pay gap and the glass ceiling. On the contrary, they exacerbate these problems. This conclusion has now been drawn by several scholars working independently (Charles & Grusky, 2004; Hakim, 2004a; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). The research evidence suggests that it is unrealistic to expect

that women could soon achieve half of the top jobs, that these might become fully integrated with a 50/50 split between men and women. This paper reviews this evidence, the problems, and the implications for personnel policy and careers advisory work.

Can all careers be domesticated?

One of the claims of the feminist movement, taken up by many social scientists (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004), is that there is no good justification for the 'male' stereotype of the career: an occupation or activity that is pursued continuously, with long full-time hours, and with a high level of dedication, virtually to the exclusion of a major investment of time and energy in family work and family life. It is commonly argued, or even simply taken for granted, that all occupations can be organised and carried out on a part-time basis, or done discontinuously, so that the work can be fitted around family life. The problem is seen as being created by rigid employers, who refuse to make such changes, or lack the imagination to redesign jobs and careers in family-friendly formats [3]. In effect, the argument is that all occupations, jobs and careers can be 'domesticated'*in the sense of being redesigned into familyfriendly formats.

There is no doubt that employers are often unwilling to reorganise work arrangements due to rigidity and/or due to the higher costs entailed. Many jobs that are routinely offered on a part-time basis in a country such as the Netherlands are available exclusively as full-time jobs in southern Europe, where part-time jobs are rare. The Dutch miracle of ending high unemployment by expanding part-time jobs was the result of determined, tripartite efforts at innovation by the government, trade unions and employers (Visser & Hemerijk, 1997). But this does not mean that all occupations and jobs can be transformed in this way, or that there are no important penalties for doing so. Space does not permit a detailed review of the limitations to work reorganisation, and of which occupations are inevitably more greedy or 'hegemonic', but some examples serve to make the point.

Some occupations and activities involve an enormous amount of travel, sometimes for long periods, often at short notice. This is obviously the case with occupations providing an on-site service of some sort (including professions like accountancy and architecture, as well as crafts such as plumbing repairs), and occupations that involve selling goods or services to a widely dispersed business clientele. Less obviously, many senior-level management jobs also involve vast amounts of travel, sometimes long distance, frequently on an unpredictable timetable, and periodically for extended periods of time away from the home base. Extensive amounts of travel are intrinsic to certain occupations, such as investment banking, news reporting, the airline and travel industries. Such occupations, and the **Women, careers, and work-life preferences** 281 careers based on them, are never going to be family-friendly. Attempts to organise family-friendly segments within them will be difficult, or the 'sedentary' versions of the job will never accumulate the same experience as the 'mobile' versions. Inevitably, the mobile worker will be promoted over the sedentary worker in such occupations and careers, because they have much wider experience and take greater responsibility.

Careers requiring extensive travel are just one example of the wider category of occupations, jobs and careers that have long and/or irregular work hours that eat into personal life and family time. Another example is public relations work. Jobs in this

industry can be enormously attractive to young, single people who positively relish glamorous expense-account entertaining, late nights at business-related social events, and meeting lots of people, some of them famous. Even without extensive travel, these jobs eat into private life and steal long hours of unpaid overtime. They do not generally appeal to women with children at home, and can rarely be made familyfriendly [4].

Careers and jobs like these expose the limitations of maternity leave and parental leave schemes to change the essential nature of occupations. Most women (and some men) in such hegemonic occupations will want to move on to different types of work after they have children anyway, so there would be little point in keeping their jobs open for them. Unfortunately, there is no well-developed language for distinguishing between jobs that are ‘demanding’ in the intellectual sense, and those that are ‘demanding’ in the sense of spilling out beyond normal work hours to invade private lives*for which hegemonic, greedy or monopolising might be the more accurate labels. Jobs at the top of the hierarchy are frequently demanding on both these dimensions, as well as others.

In some other occupations, the work can readily be organised on any basis at all (part-time, intermittent, self-employed or employee, term-time only, etc.), but the competitive nature of the industry suggests that the person who can devote themselves full-time and permanently to the job is far more likely to be a high achiever than the ‘dilettante’ part-timer. Artistic work of all kinds is just one example here. People whose artistic output is sparse and unpredictable are generally less likely to be in demand than those with a substantial, continuous and predictable output. The same logic applies in business as well. In a competitive environment, mavericks may do well in particular niches, but they may more often be shunned as unreliable.

In many fields, the highest achievements always require imagination, dedication, creativity, and an intensive work effort that is rarely, if ever, available from the parttime or intermittent worker. Pablo Picasso, Charles Darwin, Lance Armstrong, Marie Curie and Madonna are just some of the examples here. In these fields, parttime and intermittent workers are not excluded entirely; but they are unlikely to win the top prizes.

One reason is that many full-time workers are not doing an 8-hour working day, in comparison with the part-time worker’s 3_6-hour day. Many full-time workers are actually on the job, mentally or physically, for almost 24 hours a day. Their work takes priority over family life and social life, so they build up a momentum, knowledge, fitness and experience that can never be achieved by a part-time worker. It is no accident that today around half of the women in senior-level professional and managerial occupations in Britain are childless, even if they have married, sometimes more than once (Hakim, 2000, 2004a). Men can achieve the same effect by having a wife who is a full-time homemaker, or by remaining single*either way, they devote little or no time to domestic activities and family work.

Senior-level jobs may have relatively fixed hours most of the time, similar to other jobs. What differentiates them is the requirement to take responsibility for meeting deadlines, dealing with crises and solving unexpected problems*all of which can require (unpaid) overtime on an unpredictable and haphazard timetable [5]. Emergencies can arise in the workplace, just as in private life, and the employee who must leave on time every day at 5pm to collect a child from the nursery will

not be dealing with them. It is these unpredictable, stressful demands for overtime hours that makes senior positions less family-friendly and less attractive to women.

It is no accident that the jobs most likely to be organised on a part-time basis are lower-grade jobs with lower earnings, relatively little responsibility, and usually with fixed hours, as well as shorter hours of work. Higher-grade occupations can also be organised on a part-time basis, but they can quickly become smaller, less responsible versions of the full-time job rather than the same job with shorter hours. Employers' requests for overtime (even for training that cannot be squeezed into part-timers' restricted hours) are generally regarded as far more stressful and unfair by part-time workers than by full-time workers.

As a general rule, jobs with time sovereignty (some freedom to choose start and finish times, some control over the length of the working day, etc.) also have the longest working hours. Jobs with unpredictable hours tend also to be jobs with longer hours. Women who want family-friendly flexible work hours usually require short and predictable hours as well. This means that other workers will be left doing the unsocial hours and overtime that mothers avoid, and they will expect to be properly compensated for their extra availability. Family-friendly flexible work arrangements are never cost-free, and employers know this.

The limits to social engineering

Both the European Commission and the ILO believe that occupational segregation can and should be eliminated (Anker, 1998; European Commission, 2005a, 2005b). They have two main reasons. First, they claim that the segregation of men and women into different occupations is the principal reason for earnings differences between men and women. Second, they argue that occupational segregation restricts people's choice of career, especially in the crucial early years of adult life. The Commission would like to see all occupations having a 50/50 male/female split, and would like to impose positive discrimination, or quotas, in order to achieve this. So far, the European Court of Justice has ruled that such policies are non-legal.

These claims and policy goals ignore the latest research results. Cross-national comparative studies by the ILO, OECD, EC (Anker, 1998; European Commission, 2002; Melkas & Anker, 1997, 1998; OECD, 2002), and by academic scholars (see the reviews in Charles & Grusky, 2004; Hakim, 1998, 2004a), have been overturning some well-established assumptions that turn out to be myths rather than fact. First, we now know that there is no direct link between occupational segregation and the pay gap; the association is coincidental rather than causal, and the two are independent social developments or constructions. Second, there is no direct causal link between economic and social development and occupational segregation, or the pay gap; modern societies do not necessarily have lower scores on these two indicators of gender equality in the workforce. The country with the lowest level of occupational segregation in the world is China, not Sweden, as so many believe. Many countries in the Far East have lower levels of occupational segregation than in western Europe. The lowest pay gap in the world is not found in Sweden, as so many claim, but in Swaziland where women earn more than men, on average, followed closely by Sri Lanka. Third, higher levels of female employment produce higher levels of occupational segregation and a larger pay

gap; they do not serve to improve gender equality in the workforce, as previously assumed, but worsen it. Even within western Europe, countries with the lowest female employment rates tend to have the smallest pay gaps, as illustrated by Portugal and Spain compared to Finland and Germany.

Even more disconcerting is the evidence that family-friendly policies generally **reduce** gender equality in the workforce, rather than raising it, as everyone has assumed until now. This conclusion has now been drawn simultaneously by several scholars working independently (Charles & Grusky, 2004; Hakim, 2004a; Hunt, 2002; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). In particular, Sweden's generous family-friendly policies have created a larger glass ceiling problem than exists in the USA, where there is a general lack of such policies (Albrecht et al., 2003; Henrekson & Dreber, 2005). Women are more likely to achieve senior management jobs in the USA than in Sweden: 11% versus 1.5%, respectively (Rosenfeld & Kalleberg, 1990; see also Henrekson & Dreber, 2005; Wright et al., 1995). There is no doubt that familyfriendly policies help women to combine paid jobs with family work. What they do not do is solve the problem of gender inequality in the workforce.

Analyses to date have often failed to distinguish between horizontal occupational segregation and vertical occupational segregation. Horizontal occupational segregation exists when men and women choose different careers*for example, men are carpenters while women are cooks. Vertical occupational segregation exists when men dominate higher-grade higher-paid occupations and women are concentrated in lower-grade, lower-paid occupations in the same area of activity: for example, men are managers while women are secretaries, men are surgeons while women are nurses. Most studies have focused on horizontal occupational segregation, which many would regard as in some sense natural, or at least not noxious, and where there is no obvious link to earnings differences. Vertical occupational segregation is harder to measure, so is less studied. It has an obvious link to earnings differences between men and women, but these would generally be regarded as justified rather than sexist: in capitalist economies it is self-evident that managers earn more than their secretaries. The crucial question is why are women less likely to achieve the top jobs: lack of interest? or active exclusion? Analyses of macro-level national statistical data on the workforce cannot tell us anything at all about the social processes going on at the micro-level. It is wrong to assume that a low percentage of women in highergrade jobs is necessarily due to sex discrimination alone.

Strategic case studies of the professions and management

Case studies of women who have achieved high status professional and managerial jobs tell us a lot more about the social processes involved. They show, for example, that such women have greatly reduced, or even eliminated, their work-life balance problems by remaining childless, in about half of all cases, or by lower fertility, as illustrated by one-child families. In contrast, almost all their male colleagues are married, with several children, but also with wives who typically remain full-time homemakers, so that the couple operates complete role segregation in the family division of labour.

Another myth that has been overturned by recent research is the notion that women bring distinctively feminine approaches to management and top jobs. As

Wajcman (1996, 1998) has shown, there are no visible gender differences in styles of management. Female managers differ from male managers in their personal characteristics and family lives, but not in the way that they do the job.

Case studies of professions that have become fully integrated, employing equal numbers of men and women are also revealing (Hakim, 1998, 2003a). Across modern societies, pharmacy now employs equal numbers of men and women, and also employs disproportionate numbers of ethnic minority people. Due to chronic labour shortages, it is widely agreed that the profession is completely free of sex and race discrimination. Studies of the profession in the USA, Canada, Britain, and other European countries show a large degree of job segregation within the occupation. Women gravitate towards jobs that are local, can be done part-time or for short periods, and to jobs with fixed hours of work that can be fitted around family life. Men in the profession gravitate towards ownership of independent pharmacies, which entail the long work hours and additional responsibilities of self-employment and running a small business. Other men work towards management jobs in the large retail chains, again accepting long hours and more overtime in return for higher earnings. Given the absence of sex discrimination in the profession, it is clear that women are free to choose (even impose) whatever working arrangements they prefer. In Britain, there is no earnings difference between full-time and part-time workers in the profession, but there is a large 27% earnings differential between women and men working full-time, close to the average pay gap for all fully integrated professions (Hakim, 1998). Case study research shows that these sex differentials in the professions are due to substantively different work orientations among men and women, even among university graduates (Hakim, 2000, 2004a), and hence to very different career paths.

Preference theory

The latest research results on women's position in the labour market are making old theories, especially those focusing on patriarchy and sex discrimination, out of date. We need new theories for the 21st century, theories that take account of, and are consistent with, the newest research findings. Preference theory does this.

Preference theory is a new theory for explaining and predicting women's choices between market work and family work, a theory that is historically-informed, empirically-based, multidisciplinary, prospective rather than retrospective in orientation, and applicable in all rich modern societies (Hakim, 2000). Lifestyle preferences are defined as causal factors which thus need to be monitored in modern societies. In contrast, other social attitudes, such as patriarchal values, are either unimportant as predictors of behaviour, or else have only a very small marginal impact, by creating a particular climate of public opinion on women's roles (Hakim, 2003b, 2004b).

Preference theory predicts a polarisation of work-lifestyles, as a result of the diversity in women's sex-role preferences and the three related models of family roles. It argues that in prosperous modern societies, women's preferences become a central determinant of life choices*in particular the choice between an emphasis on activities related to children and family life or an emphasis on employment and competitive activities in the public sphere. The social structural and economic

environment still constrains women's choices to some extent, but social structural factors are of declining importance*most notably social class [6]. Preference theory forms part of the new stream of sociological theory that emphasises ideational change as a major cause of social behaviour. Giddens' theory of reflexive modernity emphasises individualisation as the driving force for change in late modernity. Individualisation frees people from the influence of social class, nation, and family. Agency becomes more important than the social structure as a determinant of behaviour, even when 'structure' is understood in Giddens' sense of rules and resources. Men and women not only gain the freedom to choose their own biography, values and lifestyle, they are forced to make their own decisions because there are no universal certainties or collectively agreed conventions, no fixed models of the good life, as in traditional or early modern industrial societies (Beck et al ., 1994; Giddens, 1991). Preference theory can be seen as an empirically-based statement of the choices women and men actually make in late modernity. It contrasts with economic theories of the family (Becker, 1991) that assume that women and men form homogeneous groups, with contrasting goals and preferences, which make some family division of labour optimal and efficient for all couples, and produces sex differences in investments in careers. In sum, preference theory predicts diversity in lifestyle choices, and even a polarisation of lifestyles among both men and women.

The diversity of family models and lifestyle choices is hidden in variable-centred analysis, which tends to focus on the average outcome, the modal pattern and the central tendency. The diversity of ideal family models and lifestyle preferences only emerges clearly in studies using person-centred analysis (Cairns et al ., 1998; Magnusson, 1998), which is still uncommon.

Preference theory specifies the historical context in which core values become important predictors of behaviour. It notes that five historical changes collectively produce a qualitatively new scenario for women in affluent modern societies in the 21st century, giving them options that were not previously available (Table 1).

TABLE 1. The four central tenets of preference theory

1. Five separate historical changes in society and in the labour market which started in the late 20th century are producing a qualitatively different and new scenario of options and opportunities for women. The five changes do not necessarily occur in all modern societies, and do not always occur together. Their effects are cumulative. The five causes of a new scenario are:

- the contraceptive revolution which, from about 1965 onwards, gave sexually active women reliable control over their own fertility for the first time in history;
- the equal opportunities revolution, which ensured that for the first time in history women had equal right to access to all positions, occupations and careers in the labour market. In some countries, legislation prohibiting sex discrimination went further, to give women equal access to housing, financial services, public services, and public posts;
- the expansion of white-collar occupations, which are far more attractive to women than most blue-collar occupations;
- the creation of jobs for secondary earners, people who do not want to give priority to paid work at the expense of other life interests; and
- the increasing importance of attitudes, values and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of affluent modern societies.

2. Women are heterogeneous in their preferences and priorities on the conflict between family and employment. In the new scenario they are therefore heterogeneous also in their employment patterns and work histories. These preferences are set out, as ideal types, in Table 2. The size of the three groups varies in rich modern societies because public policies usually favour one or another group.

3. The heterogeneity of women's preferences and priorities creates conflicting interests between groups of women: sometimes between home-centred women and work-centred women, sometimes between the middle group of adaptive women and women who have one firm priority (whether for family work or employment). The conflicting interests of women have given a great advantage to men, whose interests are comparatively homogeneous; this is one cause of patriarchy and its disproportionate success.

4. Women's heterogeneity is the main cause of women's variable responses to social engineering policies in the new scenario of modern societies. This variability of response has been less evident in the past, but it has still impeded attempts to predict women's fertility and employment patterns. Policy research and future predictions of women's choices will be more successful in future if they adopt the preference theory perspective and first establish the distribution of preferences between family work and employment in each society.

Source : Hakim (2000).

Reviews of the research evidence for the last three decades, particularly for the USA and Britain (Hakim, 2000, 2004a), show that once genuine choices are open to them, women choose between three different lifestyles: home-centred, work-centred or adaptive (Table 2). These divergent preferences are found at all levels of education, and in all social classes. Social class becomes less important than motivation, personal life goals, attitudes and values.

The three preference groups are set out, as sociological ideal types, in Table 2, with estimates of the relative sizes of the three groups in societies, such as Britain and the USA, where public policy does not bias the distribution. In this case, the distribution of women across the three groups corresponds to a ‘normal’ statistical distribution of responses to the family_work conflict [7]. In practice, in most societies, public policy is biased towards one group or another, by accident or by design, so that the exact percentages vary between modern societies, with inflated numbers of work-centred women or home-centred women.

TABLE 2. Classification of women's work-lifestyle preferences in the 21st century.

Home-centred 20% of women varies 10–30%	Adaptive 60% of women varies 40–80%	Work-centred 20% of women varies 10–30%
Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life.	This group is most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and unplanned careers.	Childless women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities in the public arena: politics, sport, art, etc.
Prefer not to work.	Want to work, but not totally committed to work career.	Committed to work or equivalent activities.
Qualifications obtained as cultural capital.	Qualifications obtained with the intention of working.	Large investment in qualifications/training for cultural capital employment/ other activities.
Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth, etc. Not responsive to employment policy.	This group is very responsive to government social policy, employment policy, equal opportunities policy/ propaganda, economic cycle/ recession/growth, etc., including: income tax and social welfare benefits, educational policies, school timetables, child care services, public attitude towards working women, legislation promoting female employment, trade union attitudes to working women, availability of part-time work and similar work flexibility, economic growth and prosperity, and institutional factors generally.	Responsive to economic opportunity, political opportunity, artistic opportunity, etc. Not responsive to social/ family policy.
Family values: caring, sharing, non-competitive, communal, focus on cohesion	Compromise between two conflicting sets of values	Marketplace values: competitive rivalry, achievement orientation, individualism, excellence

Source : Hakim (2000).

Work-centred women are in a minority, despite the massive influx of women into higher education and into professional and managerial occupations in the last three decades. Work-centred people (men and women) are focused on competitive activities in the public sphere*in careers, sport, politics, or the arts. Family life is fitted around their work, and many of these women remain childless, even when married. Qualifications and training are obtained as a career investment rather than as an insurance policy, as in the adaptive group. The majority of men are workcentred, compared to only a minority of women, even women in professional occupations (Hakim, 1998, 2003a). Preference theory predicts that men will retain their dominance in the labour market, politics and other competitive activities, because only a minority of women are prepared to prioritise their jobs (or other activities in the public sphere) in the same way as men. In the long run, it is workcentred people who are most likely to survive, and become high achievers, in greedy occupations.

Adaptive women prefer to combine employment and family work without giving a fixed priority to either. They want to enjoy the best of both worlds. Adaptive women are generally the largest group among women, and are found in substantial numbers in most occupations. Certain occupations, such as schoolteaching, are attractive to women because they facilitate a more even work_family balance. The great majority of women who transfer to part-time work after they have children are adaptive women, who seek to devote as much time and effort to their family work as to their paid jobs. In some countries (such as the USA and southern European countries), and in certain occupations, part-time jobs are still rare, so women must choose other types of job, if they work at all. For example, seasonal jobs, temporary work, or school-term-time jobs all offer a better work_family balance than the typical full-time job, especially if commuting is also involved. When flexible jobs are not available, adaptive women may take ordinary full-time jobs, or else withdraw from paid employment temporarily. Adaptive people are the group interested in schemes offering work-life balance and family-friendly employment benefits, and will gravitate towards careers, occupations and employers offering these advantages.

The third group, home-centred or family-centred women, is also a minority, and a relatively invisible one in the Western world, given the current political and media focus on working women and high achievers. Home-centred women prefer to give priority to private life and family life after they marry. They are most inclined to have larger families, and these women avoid paid work after marriage unless the family is experiencing financial problems. They do not necessarily invest less in qualifications, because the educational system functions as a marriage market as well as a training institution. Despite the elimination of the sex differential in educational attainment, an increasing percentage of wives in the USA and Europe are now marrying a man with substantially better qualifications, and the likelihood of marrying a graduate spouse is hugely increased if the woman herself has obtained a degree (Hakim, 2000; Blossfeld & Timm, 2003) [8]. This may be why women remain less likely to choose vocational courses with a direct economic value, and are more likely to take courses in the arts, humanities or languages, which provide cultural capital but have lower Women, careers, and

work-life preferences 289 earnings potential. This group of workers is most likely to drop out of greedy careers relatively early in adult life.

It is necessary to differentiate between a person's core values and life goals, and the multitude of topics on which public opinion data are collected. There is an important theoretical and methodological distinction between personal goals and preferences, which are causal in relation to individual behaviour, and general social attitudes and societal norms, which are usually non-causal (Hakim, 2003b, 2004b). There is a distinction between choice and approval, between personal goals and public beliefs, between what is desired by the survey respondent for their own life and what is considered desirable in society in general. The two are not coterminous, and there is only a weak link between societal norms and personal preferences and goals (Hakim, 2000). For example, people may agree that it would be better if everyone stopped smoking, yet choose to smoke themselves.

Implications for policy and practice

Preference theory provides a different explanation for the continuing pay gap and occupational segregation. Moreover, it predicts that they will persist in the 21st century, that men will continue to outnumber women in the top jobs, simply because they try much harder to get them. The majority of working women seek a large degree of work-life balance (Hakim, 2005), certainly more than men do. Women are more likely to ask for shorter work hours than to ask for higher pay or promotion (Babcock & Laschever, 2003).

It can be objected that the sex differences identified in reviews of research on personality and behaviour are often small, so should not matter. This argument confounds macro-level and micro-level perspectives. It is true that many sex differences today are relatively small, even if persistent, in studies at the aggregate, national level. But differences between people are much larger at the micro-level, and can be fundamentally important at the individual level. Selecting people for jobs or careers is done on an individual basis, and even quite small perceived differences between individuals can make the difference between being shortlisted or not, between winning the job or promotion or not. What is statistically small and relatively unimportant in a national study can still explain cumulative differences in success rates at the individual level, leading to major sex differences in careers.

There are wide implications for national social policy, for employer and trade union policies, and for careers advisors. Elsewhere I have proposed a fundamental reorientation of social policy in the European Union and in member states (Hakim, 2000). At present, equal opportunities policies assume that all women are careerist in their work orientations, and that more support needs to be given to working mothers, in the form of public childcare services and time off from work. If only a minority of women are in fact careerist, and many of them are childless, then policy is at present misdirected, as well as overlooking people with other life goals.

The most general requirement is for policies to be even-handed between the three groups of workers, rather than assuming that one-size-fits-all policies suit everyone. At present, the bias seems to be towards careerist women with children, a tiny minority of all workers. Gender-neutral policies require a sharp move away from the current focus on working mothers. Just one example is the new law in the Netherlands giving all workers the right to ask to work part-time hours, for any

reason or none. There is no reason to focus such special privileges on working mothers only, thus prompting jealousy and resentment among other groups of employees. Similarly, employers should offer long (unpaid) career breaks to all employees, rather than parental leave for new mothers only. Cafeteria benefits provides one way to ensure that there is something for everyone, and no one loses out.

We should also accept that there are at least three types of career rather than just one: the truncated career that probably ends with (delayed) marriage or babies, the adaptive career that demands a large element of work-life balance over the lifecycle as a whole, and what I have called above the 'hegemonic' or 'greedy' career that can easily become all-consuming, especially at senior levels. The evidence from a recent national survey in Britain (Hakim, 2003a) is that all three types of worker can be found working side by side in the same occupations, albeit in different types of job. Equal opportunities legislation allows women to choose any type of occupation, without having to squeeze into a small number of family-friendly occupations, such as teaching, as in the 20th century. Whatever their ambitions and lifeplans, women can now choose occupations far more freely than in the past. However, this diversity in the workforce does pose new problems for personnel managers.

For careers counsellors, this is perhaps the most startling conclusion: homecentred women seem to be just as likely to seek careers as pharmacists, lawyers, PR specialists or IT specialists as work-centred people. However, the kinds of jobs they do, and the level of promotion sought in each occupation, will differ from those chosen by work-centred people and adaptive people. It is career patterns and longterm ambitions that differ between the three groups rather than occupational choices. This conclusion is based on just one British survey, so needs to be confirmed by other studies and data for other countries, but it is consistent with case study research on the professions, as noted above.

Finally, we should also remember that many men are adaptive in their worklifestyle preferences. Work-centred men appear to be in the majority, but they are not the only type [9]. This is a hidden source of diversity in employee attitudes to work and careers, which extends and reinforces female diversity. The scope for unisex policies that recognise and value all three types of career, and benefit men and women equally, is far greater than feminist campaigners have imagined.

Notes

[1] The current fashion is to say that it is 'socially constructed', and duck the question of who has had most influence on contemporary social structures. In practice, men have so far been the dominant force in the development of social institutions and the character of public life, even if women have generally been dominant in shaping family life. It is therefore still reasonable to view society as manmade, predominantly.

[2] Social engineering typically consists of legislation and policies designed to alter behaviour, by changing the incentives and sanctions applied to particular behaviours. Laws prohibiting sex discrimination and equal opportunities policies are an obvious example (Hakim, 2004a).

[3] For example, Julie Mellor, the head of the Equal Opportunities Commission in Britain, when announcing her resignation in July 2005, argued that the lack of flexible work arrangements at every level of the economy was due to employers' 'lack of creativity and a lack of courage to try something they haven't tried before'.

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- [4] A polemical but nonetheless useful summary of the research evidence on explanations for the pay gap, and why occupations chosen by men generally pay more than occupations chosen by women, is given in *Why Men Earn More* (Farrell, 2005). A less polemical review of this research literature is given in Hakim (2004).
- [5] For example, when the Enron scandal broke, senior executives working in risk management, insurance, and other parts of the financial services industry found themselves working continuously for 48 hours or longer, sleeping at the office until their position was clarified. Similarly, hospital surgeons can find themselves working 'around the clock' after a major bombing incident or transport accident.
- [6] The declining importance of social class as a predictor of behaviour and choices in the 21st century is most obvious in politics*as illustrated by the fact that personal values, rather than social class, differentiated support for Al Gore and George W. Bush in the closely contested USA election of 2000.
- [7] The distribution set out in Table 2 is based on an extensive review of the empirical evidence for the last two decades presented in Hakim (2000), and has been reconfirmed by subsequent national survey research in European countries (Hakim, 2003a) and in the USA (Hattery, 2001).
- [8] Studies of 'self-service' marriage markets in modern societies show that most women are concerned to marry a man with equal or better education (and thus equal or better earnings potential), whereas most men place far less weight on this criterion in their choice of spouse. The majority of men with education beyond basic secondary education marry women with less education, because men give more weight to physical attractiveness (Hakim, 2000).
- [9] National surveys in Britain and Spain suggest that just over half of men are work-centred, and the rest are adaptives, with home-centred men too few to be counted (Hakim, 2003a). A more recent survey in Belgium (Flanders) found three-quarters of all prime age men (those aged 20_50 years) to be work-centred; only one-quarter were adaptives, and the home-centred group was so tiny as to be virtually invisible at around 1% of the age group (Corijn & Hakim, forthcoming).

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Case studies: Family-friendly practices

With the changing demography of the workforce, it is inevitable that much of the changes introduced under Work/ Life Balance are focused on the need to balance child-rearing responsibilities and work pressures. More women entering the labour market, the increase of women being appointed to senior positions, the growth in dual-income households, – such factors have brought about a review of the way of organising work to take families into account.

Providing workplace crèches, supporting the cost of childcare, family support groups, keeping jobs open-ended when departing for maternity leave, providing job share arrangements, – responsible and progressive employers are exploring many avenues to help their employees lead productive and balanced lives.

Miriam – job-share

Miriam works as a middle manager in a large public sector organisation in Munster. She has spent almost six years in full time education attaining a PhD. Following a short time in research she opted for a management career in the public sector.

She describes herself as a woman who has created herself at different junctures in her education and work careers.

"In the current climate there are lots of opportunities to recreate yourself, in this sense one has to grow one's own job."

This also applies to being able to redesign the job to fit in with the organisation's needs as well as one's changing personal circumstances.

Following the birth of her first child Miriam became increasingly convinced that she wanted to spend more time at home with the baby. She was aware of this personal dilemma as she left to take up her maternity leave, but opted to make no decisions until after the baby was born. However, following the birth of her baby it was clear the dilemma would not go away and she knew that she needed to discuss her needs and feelings with her line manager. Miriam was also clear she did not want to stop work altogether for two reasons. Firstly, she really liked her job and secondly she felt it was very important that a woman retains the potential to earn money.

The Organisation

The organisation provides a range of family friendly options agreed with trade unions, including job sharing. To avail of one of these options one negotiates with one's supervisor.

She and her supervisor had a frank discussion where she laid out her willingness to be flexible around the method to be adopted. At the outset no one structure was mentioned. When the discussion was finished her supervisor said,

"It looks like we are talking about job sharing. It was that easy" , said Miriam.

The supervisor advised her to think about this for a week and if still interested he would advertise the other half of the job. This allowed her the space to consider the financial implications of opting for job sharing and to firm up on her commitment to the new arrangement.

Benefits of job sharing I was confident in my ability to make it work.

The main benefit is that she has time with her child. The benefits to the organisation are that it has retained a highly motivated and creative manager. Both job sharers work at the relationship and as a result there is a real excitement in having professional support and partnership with another person. Miriam and her partner are convinced that the organisation is getting more than the sum of two persons working half time.

Concerns

One issue that needed to be managed concerned the staff. Initially in the job sharing arrangement the staff felt that when the second job sharing manager joined the office on Wednesday, the staff had two days work done, but the manager was full of start of the week energy. This could have had implications for the continuity and smooth running of the work. The matter was discussed with the team and this has ensured an awareness that allows team members to express their views and the managers to operate a more understanding approach to the staff. The essence of success for the team is that any change needs to involve all the parties, not just the immediate employees availing of the family friendly service.

In conclusion, a creative solution has ensured that two dynamic and participative middle managers are now providing a committed, professional service to their organisation, and they also have more time to be with their families.

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The Penguin Group

Family Friendly Employer of the Year 2004

Date of Study: 2004

Size: large

Sector: private

Region: UK

Type of Business: Book publishers

Penguin has a strong ethos about positive parenting and its value both to children and to the business. The company fully understands the wisdom of retaining talented people when they become parents and their demographics show that it is possible to reach the top and still have time for family life.

In a firm with a high proportion of female employees, 10% are likely to be pregnant or on maternity leave at any one time. Within the confines of a demanding job, Penguin tries to ensure that parents get as much time with their children as possible, within the confines of a job. Their measures to encourage this include up to 30 days annual holiday leave, extra time off for new mothers and four weeks paid paternity leave for new fathers. In addition parents can take up to 15

days compassionate leave for days when children or their carers get sick. There is a positive approach to all requests for part-time and flexible working wherever feasible and a 6 month career break available for family or developmental reasons.

As well as time, the organisation supports parents via the provision of a childcare allowance towards the cost of care of pre-school children (up to £95 per month) and is aiming to establish a 'parent's forum' to provide a mutual support network. Additional support comes from an employee counselling service, on-site occupational health centre and a stress-relieving gym.

Parents and kids get to spend more time together, not just when they are small but for special events like concerts, sports activities, medical checks or when they are ill etc. Children benefit from the free children's books that are a perk to parents at Penguin and are encouraged to feel involved with their mum and dad's workplace. For example, they get invited to parties and book launches, such as Madonna's book launch tea party.

As well as internal communications, Penguin benefit from positive external publicity about their work ethos. They have worked closely with Amicus and the NUJ (Trade unions) to develop and promote their policies and this has helped to encourage take-up. Recruitment materials outline what 'family friendly' policies are on offer and the company's values around these issues are promoted right from the start, during the induction process. Information is kept up to date on the company intranet site but HR also spend a lot of time talking to people as they recognise people would often prefer a person to a computer.

Absenteeism at Penguin is very low at 1.6% and the employee attitude survey shows a high level of satisfaction with the organisation's approach to work-life.

Family friendly working extends right to the top of the organisation. For example, Francesca Dow, Managing Director, Puffin, leaves work at 2pm in order to fetch her children from school at 3pm. She makes up the time in other ways and is able to support and encourage others in her team.

"My staff know that they can leave to have a child and there will be support and a job for them when they get back. Having to juggle work and a baby is challenging and the women who choose to do that tend to be very determined and make sure it works – for them and for us. That's important to me because it helps me retain valuable employees".

(Reproduced with permission from Working Families website)

HSBC

Family Friendly Employer of the Year 2005

Date of Study: 2005

Size: large

Sector: private

Region: UK

Type of Business: Banking and finance

All employees at HSBC have the right to request flexible working arrangements. A number of functions are now working collectively to develop local flexible working pilots and studies, with the aim of increasing employee engagement and optimising space planning. Key learning points will be shared with the whole Group and will contribute to a global set of minimum benchmarks on flexible working.

HSBC has led the field as a business with an extensive nursery network. There are 86 nursery partnerships throughout the country, providing 850 places for bank employees. These are subsidised to the tune of £1.5 million and provides each parent with up to 50% off their usual nursery fee. From October 2005, the number of places has been increased to over 400 UK-wide and, in addition, parents with children up to the age of 16 may apply for Childcare Vouchers via a salary sacrifice scheme.

A number of specialist forums exist which are funded by HSBC but run by employees for employees. These include Working Parents Networks which meet regularly to share ideas and discuss parenting issues, balancing work and home demands and coping strategies.

HSBC policies mean that children get to spend more time with their parents and know that in an emergency, their parents can be with them when they need them. They also get to experience what it's like to work for a good employer that values family life and there is a 'Take our Daughters and Sons To Work Day' which promotes awareness of the workplace, the diversity and opportunities that exist within it. Feedback from evaluation forms completed by the young people who attend is always very positive. There is also an annual Family Fun and Sports Day held during the summer holidays.

HSBC supports a huge array of educational and charitable projects to support young people. There is an HSBC Education Trust which helps disadvantaged children to build self-confidence and high self-esteem through a range of projects. It supports Outward Bound projects, sports challenges, Young Enterprise and a whole host of other projects, which demonstrate its commitment to young people.

In its most recent attitude survey, 75% of staff agreed that their workload allows them to maintain a good balance between work and life. The bank doesn't want employees to feel guilty by working flexibly and working parents know they will be rewarded on the same basis as any other employee, rather than being penalised for taking time off to look after children.

These family friendly policies have helped the bank to recruit, motivate and retain the very best people and to achieve the highest levels of performance and productivity. The nursery scheme, in particular, has contributed to the retention of

highly skilled employees and the maternity returner rate is constant at 80%. Flexibility also helps to serve the requirements of customers and HSBC has a flagship branch in Milton Keynes where the entire team work in a flexible way to suit their and customer's needs. These measures also help to reinforce the image of the company as having an ethical approach to employment, and in their last survey 88% of staff felt that the business operates ethically.

A number of initiatives are led by senior management to help create a flexible working culture. They have championed 'hot-desking', so that people can work either in the office or at home and resources have been made available to ensure that people have the technology to work away from their desk. The company also helps to drive the national agenda by hosting round table discussions and events for groups campaigning on behalf of parents and carers.

Information about policies is communicated via the company intranet and also detailed in staff handbooks. New initiatives and pilots are shared by all, via the company news circulars, direct mailings to home, the company TV channel, videos and through the employee forums and diversity training and development for managers.

Feedback from parents demonstrates the enormous value of HSBC's childcare support. One parent stated she could not have continued to work if the bank hadn't allowed her to change jobs when her child started school. Another says that she will be saving over £5000 per annum by joining the new childcare scheme as she has three young children.

(Reproduced with permission from Working Families website)

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Outlook for rural women in Central and Eastern Europe

Introduction

The post-socialist transformation and the establishment of a capitalist system completely reshaped rural societies in former Eastern Bloc countries. The end of the socialist period, however, also rendered life more uncertain and unpredictable for many. The economic transition has been particularly prolonged and difficult in most of the countryside.

After all, neither socialism nor capitalism provided equal opportunities for women so far. The socialist modernisation has brought two important consequences for rural women. The heavy feudal class structure disappeared, the unbreakable barriers of ownership, when rich married rich poor married poor did not count anymore. The other consequence was the liberation of women from closed family control and traditions. Thanks to education opportunities women could study and become also independent earners. However, life did not become easier for women. The low salaries, the two earners family model forced women to find jobs and besides that the burden and responsibility of the family and household also relied on them.

The new capitalism provided more freedom and also entrepreneurial opportunities for women. However these opportunities are rather limited for those rural women whose main agenda is daily survival, search for work and income for their families and themselves.

Studies that address the specific theme of gender inequality and the impact of economic transformation on rural inhabitants are quite rare. Gender inequality is rarely acknowledged as an important policy issue, and in many cases, gender and the principle of equal opportunities are still unfamiliar concepts.

This paper does not pretend to provide a comprehensive and systematic analysis, but, rather, focuses on the specific issues of employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas. My intention is to draw the reader's attention to the situation of rural men and women in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries.

The CEE agricultural transition story of the 1990s

The transformation of the agricultural sector caused by the political changes of 1989 and its aftermath has not followed a uniform pattern in all CEE countries. By and large, privatisation started quite rapidly with the emergence of a multiparty

system and a market economy. Former agricultural structures established during the previous decades, which were usually large scale (except in Poland and Slovenia) either disappeared or were significantly transformed. The creation of new "real" owners in agriculture involved different forms of privatisation, ranging from restitution to partial compensation. In short, the process entailed the abolition of many large-scale units (cooperatives and state-controlled farms) and the return of land and property to private ownership. The beneficiaries were sometimes the original owners or their successors, sometimes those who had been involved in the establishment of the farming collective, and sometimes simply those with enough money to buy. As a result of this complicated and complex hand-over, millions of small agricultural units were created or re-established within a decade. Former state-owned farms were transformed into private enterprises (small, medium or large-scale). Similarly, former agricultural collectives were also transformed, though in several countries they were not broken up, and thus passed intact into large-scale production units.

Putting into historical perspective this transformation was the third one during the past five decades, when producers in most cases had to start something very new often from the basics.

The first transformation occurred after WW II when large feudal estates were broken up and the land was distributed among landless and poor peasants, allowing the resumption of peasant farming. The second took place in the 1950s and early 1960s with the establishment of large-scale collective farming and the disappearance of peasant holdings. The third began in 1989, with the privatisation of the large-scale cooperatives and state farms. In each of these periods, previous structures and ownership relations were swept away. Farms, whether large, medium or small, came under a new system of management, which involved changes in stocks, labour requirements and so on. Almost everything had to be rebuilt at the start of each new phase. Whereas in Western Europe agricultural holdings were passed on from generation to generation, with each adding something new to the family holding, in Central and Eastern Europe each generation had to start the farming enterprise almost from scratch.

The average farm size in CEECs is 5 ha, compared to the 18.7 ha average for the EU-15.² The number of CEE farms is 9.2 million, approximately one and half times the total for the EU-15 (6,769,180 farms).

² Farm structure survey 1999/2000 Eurostat

Farm structure by size and area of cultivated land in CEEC-10						
		<5 ha	5 to <20 ha	20 to <50 ha	above 50	Total
Number of holdings	1000 holdings	7520	1384	216	63	9183
	%	82	15	2	1	100
Area cultivated	1000 ha	13319	13035	4557	18672	49583
	%	27	26	9	38	100
Average farm size	Ha	1	9	32	280	5

Source: The future of rural areas in the CEE new member states. Country Experts of the Network of Independent Agricultural Experts in the CEE Candidate Countries. (Table A 3.1.)

The above table shows that the two smaller categories account for 97% of farms and 53% of land under cultivation. The two larger categories account for just 3% of farms but 47% of the land under cultivation. Unfortunately, we do not have a statistical breakdown of the categories of people working on these holdings. An independent group of experts (INEXP)³ believes that farms with at least 20 hectares under cultivation have the best chances of long-term survival.

The independent experts also looked at prospects for each of the above categories, including the small farms with least chance of survival, in relation to which they say: "The majority of them should be classified as subsistence or part-time farms which cannot provide sufficient income for the farm household. Hence, off-farm activities or social payments are required for receiving additional income. Over a long period, most of these holdings are probably unable to survive."

In reference to the second category (5-20 ha), INEXP says: "These farms with an average size of 9 ha, have a potential both to earn a substantial part of the farm family income from agricultural production and to grow in the future so as to remain economically viable."

As can be seen from the table above, the farms between 20 and 50 ha represent only 2% of the total number of farms in CEE and 9% of the cultivated area. The average size of these farms is 32 ha, one and half time bigger than the EU-15 average farm size.

The last category of farms above 50 ha is made up of large family-run and commercial farms. They amount to only 1% of the total number of farms, but account for 38% of all cultivated land. The average farm in this category is 280 ha, which is already of such a size that special knowledge, appropriate cash flow, machinery, and contacts with markets, suppliers and financial institutions are required for its successful management.

Farming in CEE countries is characterised by a "dual farm structure", in which numerous small-scale often subsistence or part-time oriented farms coexist with

3 The Future of Rural Areas in the CEE New Member States (2004) Network of Independent Agricultural Experts in the CEE Candidate Countries (Peter Weingarten), Institut für Agrarwicklung in Mittel-und Osteurope Halle, Germany, January 2004: <http://www.iamo.de>

very large enterprises. A second major feature of CEE agriculture is land fragmentation. As the INEXP report (2004) observes, “the large holdings cultivate considerable lot sizes, while the small ones operate on very small plots; too small to use large machinery.”

This dual farm structure is not, however, the product of the economic transition. It was already a feature of socialist agriculture in several countries, and its roots ultimately lie in the feudal system. Structural development depends on whether medium-size family farms can grow strong enough to compete, or whether further concentration and fragmentation will ensue. The question is whether the dual farm structure can continue, or whether large-scale farms are destined to take over the small farms, leading to the formation of huge agricultural “empires.”⁴

While these features are similar to many CEE countries, countries and regions within countries face different challenges, and agricultural policies must reflect this diversity. The variety of structures found in the agricultural sectors demands specific measures that allow for their peculiarities. Similarly, the policies must also reflect the discrete objectives of the different countries. That said, all CEE countries seem to be committed to the common goal of avoiding the marginalisation of agriculture and keen to take advantage of existing opportunities (INEXP, 2004).

Rural employment, living standards and incomes in CEE countries

The enlarged European Union has some long-standing member states with an agricultural employment level of just 2%, whereas in the new member states and accession countries, agriculture still accounts for a vast number of workers. Many economic studies point to the imminent disappearance of small farms, which leaves unanswered the question of what will happen the people for whom, as the INEXP group put it, “agriculture plays an important role as a social buffer.” EU and national policies need to answer these questions with some urgency, because the repetition of earlier historical patterns (emigration, industrialization) is not viable.

The different historical background of the CEE countries has endowed agriculture with a role unlike that it plays in the EU-15. A Eurostat employment and labour survey⁵ points to the high level of employment in certain countries, and underscores the necessity of generating new jobs in rural areas.

“With the exception of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia, a considerably greater share of persons is employed in agriculture than in the EU. ...[T]his also means that the labour productivity in agriculture is extremely low and thus not competitive in the European or international context...[T]hese regions in the future will be subject to considerable adaptation pressure and the necessity to create other/new jobs for those persons who can no longer find employment here.”

4 The expression is from the keynote presentation of Professor Jan Douwe van der Ploeg at the XXI Congress of the European Society for Rural Sociology, Keszthely, Hungary, 2005.

5 Employment and Labour Market in Central European Countries 2002/1 Eurostat Theme: Population and Social Conditions, European Commission 2002, Luxembourg Office for Official Publications of the European Commission pp 31-32.

Employment is crucial for the well-being of rural areas and the best defence against social exclusion and poverty. The INEXP group describes the rural employment and unemployment patterns in the CEE countries on NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 level. For example, “in 2001, the official (registered) unemployment rates in the new Member States ranged between 1.6% and 43% on the NUTS-3 level. Regions with an unemployment rate of less than 10% are the capitals and large cities, as well as the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania and the coastal regions of Estonia.”

However, the NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 level analysis do not really show up the problems of subregions and rural communities. The NUTS 3 level maps are not able to show those subregions and local communities where the rural and agricultural unemployment can be 40-60%, or in some Roma ethnic villages even 90%.

The CEDAW⁶ report of the Hungarian Government in 2000 provides some insights to grassroots level issues from the perspective of rural women:

“Women’s quality of life is influenced fundamentally by the geographical location of their settlement, the degree of supply of the settlement, its distance from the more developed centre and so on. From the outset, women who live in small settlements (settlements with less than 1,000 inhabitants) and in very small villages have rather unfavourable odds to gaining social integration, to getting jobs, to accessing institutes for children and to accessing educational, health and social institutes.” (CEDAW Report of Hungary 2000. p 60).

Women NGOs contributing to this report emphasised the challenges facing women in balancing family life with a bread-winning profession, and recommended that more benefits should be granted to family-friendly employers. They also highlighted that gender inequalities in pay persist, and that the salaries in women-only jobs are very low.

In spite of significant differences among CEECs in rural and agricultural employment, the INEXP group also described “several consistent features” relating to male and female employment patterns.

“Average employment rates for men range from 73% in the Czech Republic and 71% in Romania to only 56% in rural Latvia and 54% in Slovakia. In rural areas, these rates are generally lower than in urban areas. Employment rates for women are, in all countries, lower than those for men, typically by around 7-8 percentage points. In the Czech Republic the difference between men and women is even 17 percentage points, whereas in Lithuania it is only 3 percentage points. Lower employment rates for women indicate that women are more involved in taking care of the family and have

6 The Government of Hungary submitted a combined fourth and fifth periodic Country Report to the Committee of CEDAW (the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), which was examined at an Exceptional Session in 2002. The government attached the opinion of the women’s civic organizations to the Report, as well as providing written answers to the questions of the UN Committee. The CEDAW report complies with the legalistic demands of the Convention in its description of the state of women in Hungary.

possibly more difficulties to find a job than men. Differences in the employment rates across the countries are partly caused by differences in registered unemployment rates.”

In relation to subsistence agriculture and the informal economy, which have a powerful bearing on rural life in most CEE countries, the INEXP group notes that “people may organise their lives according to different paradigms than those that lie behind the statistics.” These “different paradigms” need further research and an appropriate policy response.

Income from agriculture and the countryside

Measured in terms of per capita GDP, many people living in rural regions of the new Member States of the EU, especially those whose regions are predominantly rural, are poor by the standards of the EU-15, and some are getting poorer. Some are living in conditions of extreme poverty, particularly in Latvia, Romania and Bulgaria. High unemployment and low educational achievement are also common banes.

It is hard to provide exact figures for rural and agricultural incomes in CEE countries. Even if one has the figures for a given country, it is difficult to make direct comparisons. Accordingly, rather than searching for precision among the statistics, I have tried to use other data from different sectors of the economy to assess agricultural incomes and propose some general conclusions.

Average income per farm, annual gross wages and GDP per capita in 2001

	Average income per farm (EUR)	Annual gross wages (EUR)	GDP per capita	
			(EUR PPP)	(% of EU-15 average)
Estonia	4 320 ¹⁾	3 936	8 500	38
Latvia	2 148 ¹⁾	3 360	6 600	29
Lithuania	465 ²⁾	3 600	6 600	29
Poland	2 197 ¹⁾	6 684	8 700	39
Czech R.	1 1302 ¹⁾	5 160	13 500	60
Slovakia	105 960 ¹⁾	3 420	10 800	48
Hungary	2 673 ³⁾	4 836	11 700	52
Slovenia	5 589 ¹⁾	11 856	16 100	72
Romania	n.a.	1 980	6 000	27
Bulgaria	n.a.	1 524	5 400	24

Notes: 1) Net Farm Income (NFI) in EUR/farm. 2) Net Farm Income (NFI) in EUR/ha. 3) Personal Income (PI) in EUR/farm.

Source: Country experts of the Network of Independent Agricultural Experts in the CEE Candidate Countries.

The above table compiled by the Network of Independent Agricultural Experts makes it possible to make comparisons among CEE countries. Although no data is available for some countries, and some data, such as that for the Czech Republic and Slovakia, is hard to reconcile, we can see that, with the exception of Estonia, average income per farm is lower than the annual gross wage.

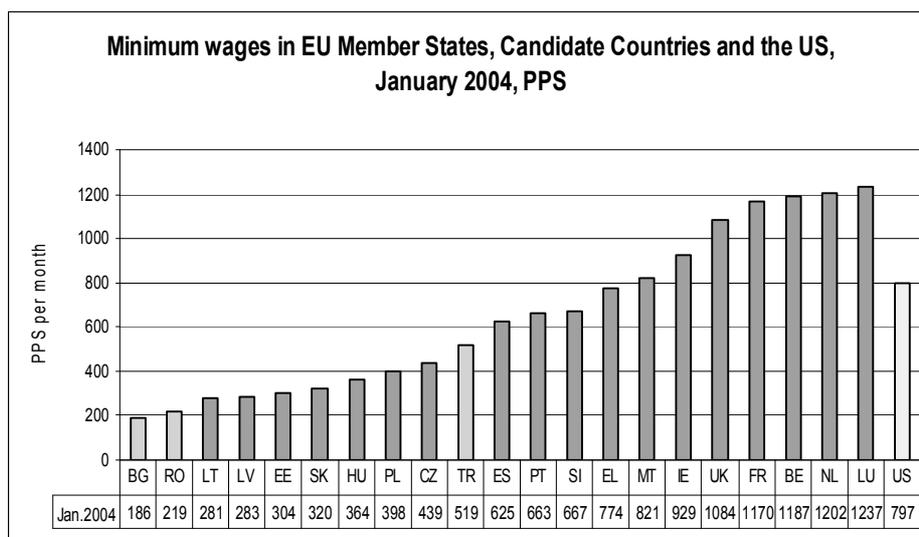
The latest World Bank report⁷ on Poland (2004) gives a detailed picture of the situation in the biggest CEE country.

“It is a paradox of the system transformation in Poland that the private peasant economy, which, compared to other segments of economy, was better prepared in ownership structure to adjust to the rules of the free market, has found itself in much more difficult circumstances. Private farmers working on their own lands as self-employed have experienced a radical worsening of their financial conditions. In 1999, 43.2 percent of households in urban areas and 66.2 percent in rural areas were below the social minimum level, and 3.7 percent in urban areas and 12 percent in rural areas were below the subsistence minimum (Zegar, 2002). Rural inhabitants account for about 70 percent of people considered as extremely poor. In the group of farmers, 13.3 percent have an income lower than the subsistence minimum. The problem of today’s rural areas lies in the dilemma of experiencing forced migration from agriculture, worsening the labour market outside of agriculture, or agreeing to the high hidden unemployment in agriculture (Zegar, 2002).” (118p)

Precise data for wages and incomes is always hard to come by, so we need to adopt a method that can allow us to make some sort of assessment. The statistics for minimum wages in Europe are suitable to our purpose, and allow us to analyse incomes and wages in agriculture in CEE countries. The size of the salary gap between CEE and other EU countries is striking. Obviously, minimum wages are not revealing in themselves. If, however, we combine them with statistics for purchasing power parity, we find that the gap between the extremes, though still extremely wide, narrows somewhat.⁸

⁷ World Bank Report (2004) Gender and Economic Opportunities in Poland: Has transition left women behind? Report No. 29205. Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit. Europe and Central Asia Region.

⁸ Anne Paternoster (2004) Minimum wages in EU Member States, Candidate Countries and the US. January 2004 PPS. Statistics in Focus. Population and Social Conditions. 10/2004. EUROSTAT.



Source: Statistics in Focus 10/2004 Eurostat

If we consider that 30-50% of wages in industry and services are at the minimum level, and bear in mind that agricultural wages are usually 10-20% lower than industrial wages, and that women's salaries are even lower than that by another 15-20%, then we can come up with a rough estimate for women's agricultural income.

We can also infer the low income of Romanian rural households from their very modest and self-sufficient way of living.

Monthly income of households by urban and rural areas in Romania, 2001

	Total monthly income of households		Monthly income per person	
	EUR	Ratio of urban/rural to total in %	EUR	Ratio of urban/rural to total in %
Urban households	217.4	108.5	76.9	110.7
Rural households	179.3	89.4	60.6	87.2
Total households	200.4	100.0	69.5	100.0

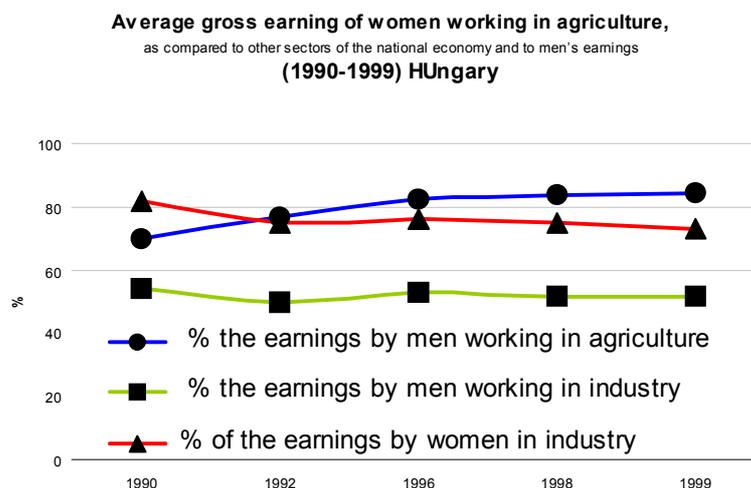
Source: Country experts of the Network of Independent Agricultural Experts in the CEE Candidate Countries (Coordinates of living conditions in Romania. Population incomes and consumption, NIS, Bucharest 2001).

This is not only a Romanian phenomenon. Rural populations in all the countries under consideration, even the more prosperous ones, include groups with similarly low incomes. In certain rural regions, a second generation of long-term

unemployed now exists. These are people who never saw their parents go out to work and have no experience of living in a household with an employed person.⁹

Wages vary substantially between sectors, with agriculture and trading activities often having the lowest rates. Wage rates also vary between regions and are typically much higher in the region where the capital is located. Wages are especially low in Romania and Bulgaria (around EUR 80 per month for agricultural workers). Women, overall, receive lower wages than men.

The difference is clearly visible in the figure below:



Rural incomes depend heavily on social payments and on paid employment in both the urban and the rural economy. For example, the INEXP group reports that social payments are the main source of income for around one third of rural households in Estonia, Lithuania and Poland.

The position of those who do not have income and have to rely on different social relief programmes is even worse. The following is from a World Bank report on Bulgaria:¹⁰

“In the 4 villages covered by the case study, the number of employed within the programme “From Social Relief to employment” run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy varies from 8 to 24 persons. The majority of these people is married and has 1-2 children. Usually they are the only employed in the family. It is frequent for a 4-member family to have this salary as its only means of support. These people, like many others, buy on credit and have debts of 200-300 BGN; in some households even the daily bread is marked down on credit.”(p. 51).

9 Laki László (1999), Falvak – problémák – társadalmi konfliktusok (Villages, problems, social conflicts), in Vidékfejlesztés, vidékpolitika (Rural Development, Rural Policy), Agroinform Kiadóház (pp. 195-216).

10 Survey on Rural Development Needs – Bulgaria, The World Bank, April 2004.

In a research paper (2002)¹¹ dealing with the situation in Hungary, Katalin Koncz cites a series of social and economic statistics that show how women bear higher risks and are more threatened by social exclusion and poverty than men. Women may suffer direct disadvantages such as lower wages, more demanding living conditions within the household, a lack of independent source of earnings, or indirect disadvantages that are often the consequences of their greater responsibility for a family in a difficult situation caused by long-term unemployment, a husband's alcoholism etc.

Koncz argues that increased poverty hits women harder than men even within the same families, because the organisation of family life is mainly a woman's task. In general, women do three times more household work than men, and for the active earning women the figure is 6.5 times more household work than their husbands. Another painful social phenomenon is child poverty,¹² which can be taken to impinge upon women more than upon men since it will usually be the woman in the house who is in charge of looking after the children.

Koncz also warns that the flexible forms of employment, which are often recommended for women, pose several problems. The jobs are often discriminatory and provide very low income and minimal security of tenure. Women are first to be dismissed whenever staff reductions are made. It is almost impossible to move from temporary to fixed employment. Another important factor contributing to the higher risk of poverty among women is gender segregation among professions. Women are pushed into the lower hierarchy of professions where the income, promotion, and workplace safety are below average.

Koncz challenges the notion that no difference exists in the level of poverty risk faced by women and men. She demonstrates through analysis of the evidence that, with the exception of single men, the direct poverty risk for women is higher than for men and that in every group, whether classified by economic activity or social composition, women are poorer.

Women entrepreneurs in the transition period- some examples

Ildikó Asztalos Morell has published several papers about the role of women in the socialist agriculture as well as the gender roles of the emerging new family farm enterprises during the transition period. In her latest publication Morell interviewed 30 successful entrepreneurs in the 60 circle around Budapest to explore the ways in which the degree and form of women's participation in the farm enterprise is related to their ability to influence farm decisions.¹³

Asztalos concluded that women's extensive participation in farm labour does not guarantee for them decisive influence (i.e. that one is considered as an equal partner) in farm decisions. .

11 Koncz Katalin (2002), A társadalmi kirekesztettség és a szegénységkockázat társadalmi nemek szerinti különbségei (Social exclusion and the differences of poverty risk by gender roles), *Esély* 1, szám.

12 See more on the UNICEF webpage Monee project, Social Monitor.

13 Ildikó Asztalos Morell (2005) Gender patterns of off farm/on farm work and control over farm resources in Hungarian farm family enterprises (1989-2002) Presentation on Congress of the European Society for Rural Sociology. Keszthely 2005.

“In general terms participation in marketing of products, and by this view over conditions of marketing as well as market contacts showed to be factors of crucial importance for gaining opportunity to participate in control over productive resources on the farm and in the enterprise. Women not engaged in the marketing of products were marginalised in farm decisions. Meanwhile, even the majority of the women who were involved in marketing of products were only exceptionally involved in the contract making process. Instead, they realised the contracts.”

To gain the increased participation of women in the family farm Asztalos summarised the major factors: “reliability and loyalty due to the kinship bond; know-how (typically administrative or agricultural skills originating from educational background and work-life experience); social skills embedded in local contacts; features originating from the home base of activities: availability and flexibility.” She also adds however that these factors „...at the same time limiting their positions. Their loyal and reliable skills used in supervising the labour force limit their mobility and external contacts; technological know-how is often valued superior to administrative and social know-how for the design and running of the enterprise.”

Asztalos made an interesting comparison on the level of authority between men and women on farm management and decision.

„Three main dimensions could be named: comprehensive contracts (men) vs. daily affairs (women); formalised external contracts (men) vs. local informal contracts (women) and contracts with dominant organisations (men) vs. contracts with subordinated ones (women). According to Errington’s (1998) ladder of succession, the most central decision areas are those of making payments and investments in capital projects, while decisions concerning the daily functioning of the farm (and staff issues) are on the bottom of this ladder. We can complete this list with decisions concerning transfers to the consumption sphere and the type of consumption goods selected.”

She also concluded from the interviews that

„...women can realise their roles as economic actors through the continued support of women from the older generation. These older women, i.e. grandparents manifest total loyalty and identification with the goals and needs of the dominant families of their children. It is the reproductive work of these older women that is the precondition for the younger generation women’s ability to participate in the production and capital accumulation process.”

Asztalos makes a note to the asymmetric position of men and women in this respect, that

„Women’s engagement is preconditioned by their ability to resolve the competing demands on their labour power. They have to comply with demands rising from the family’s daily reproduction and those dictated by the priorities of the enterprise. In her closing paragraph she makes two important notes „...the rise of family farms created a new arena, where the outcome of gender

relations cannot be taken for granted.” Nevertheless as concerning even the most balanced farms from gender point of view „...there is a hidden gender agenda, which divides feminine and masculine areas of authority.”

In another valuable essay about the transition period, Kovács Katalin and Váradi Mónika¹⁴ study the life histories of lower and middle class families, as well as of women in an agricultural town on the Hungarian Great Plain. Their findings in respect of the first group leave little grounds for optimism:

“What women workers’ lives demonstrate is the fast appearance of an almost closed pauperised working class as the dark side of the emerging capitalism in Hungary. System-change brought disappointment, humiliation, poverty, insecurity and isolation for factory workers...These are the losers in the transition, and not only in a material sense. The values that used to be the cornerstones of their adult lives have been degraded and now they feel insecure.”

The findings for the second group take us to the realms of smallholders, whose outlook seems more optimistic, even though their position, too, is very precarious. The restructuring and property distribution gave 15-20 per cent of former co-operative members¹⁵ the chance to become smallholders, report the authors. The small amount of property and second-hand machinery that former members¹⁶ could gain or purchase at a low price redressed some of the losses they suffered through transformation. As most of them came from poor peasant stock, successful independent farming, supplemented by service work in agricultural services is regarded as an important move up the social scale.

The study also looks at a third group, consisting of the entrepreneurial class, whose characteristics are largely similar to what Asztalos described in her study. Specifically, the entrepreneurs were market gardeners, where “the women more clearly fulfil a sort of business partner role than in the *tanya* farms.” Garden farming offers a sense of fulfilment and success, and poses no threat to the ‘management’ position of the man, because although the women are significant economic providers, they also accept the role of “home-maker”.

Kovács and Váradi note that in the entrepreneurial group, a shared working partnership exists between men and women, husband and wives.

“Amongst the gardening women there can be sensed a clear kind of particular professional consciousness, a self-conscious pride in the work which is shared with the men.”

Even here, however, inequalities persist in family tasks and duties.

“When their husbands finally collapse in front of the TV, they are still in the kitchen or herding the children towards their beds. They do not usually quarrel or rebel against this habitual division of roles, they feel it would be pointless. The cornerstone of their self-esteem is not the distribution of

14 Katalin Kovács – Monika Mária Váradi, *Work, Property and Livelihood: Lower Class Women’s Lives in Rural Hungary*, Central and North-Hungarian Research Institute of the Centre for Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Research Report

15 Both women and men.

16 Men only.

household tasks but their contribution within the common enterprise and respect for it on the part of the family members.”

Sawicka's study¹⁷ on the entrepreneurship of women in rural areas in Poland highlights different issues. This study focused more on certain groups of activities and their distribution by region and age than on a qualitative assessment of the involvement of women. Generally, the study found, fewer women than men go for self-employment. On average, every fifth company is run by a woman.

Sawicka compared the different age structure and educational level of women business entrepreneurs and women agricultural entrepreneurs. She found that most businesswomen (74%) were young – between 19 and 45 years, as compared with women farm operators, most of whom are at the retirement age (every fourth farm in Poland is still run by a woman).

“Business women are also better educated as most of them are at least graduated from a secondary schools, while women in rural areas generally have received only primary education.”

Of the 720 enterprises surveyed which were run by women on their own or in which women played an operators' role, the largest number, i.e. some 49%, were commercial enterprises (with shops accounting for 32%). In addition to shops, the commercial enterprises consist of wholesale warehouses, and so-called "door-to-door" selling. The predominance of trade is more a reflection of the fact that it is the simplest way of launching a private business, than of a particularly strong demand for consumer goods. This type of activity, Sawicka observes, “neither requires large financial outlays or capital expenditure nor particular qualifications.”

Sawicka's paper also includes a survey of women farm managers, whom she divides into three categories: (i) in 66% of cases, the wife has taken over after the death, illness, or physical disability of her husband. These farms fulfil a social rather than a productive role, and are common among women over retirement age. These farms tend to be, on average, economically weaker than the other two types; (ii) 30% of farms are run by women whose husbands and sons work elsewhere. These farms supplement family income and provide home produced food; (iii) a small remaining number of farms are professionally managed by young women with agricultural qualifications, and are no different from other progressive farms.

She also noted a high degree of mobility in the sector: “Within the 10-year period, nearly half of the women in the survey stopped farming. However, new farms were taken over by other women, so that, at the end of the period, the percentage of farms managed by women was unchanged at about 20%.” She also found that a majority of farms run by women were in decline, and suggested that if the economic climate were favourable, the “productive resources of these declining farms could be released to aid the goals of structural policy.”

A study by Pittlik Timea of a depressed border subregion in Hungary provides different example for rural women's entrepreneurship and employment in mid-

17 Sawicka j. 2001, The Role of rural women in agriculture and rural development in Poland, Electronic Journal of Polish Agricultural Universities, Economics, Volume 4, Issue 2. Available Online <http://www.ejpau.media.pl/series/volume4/issue2/economics/art-01.html>

level leadership positions.¹⁸ Pittlik's research began with the assumption that there were fewer opportunities for women in a small town, but just the opposite turned out to be true. Almost every position of leadership was filled by local women: the mayor, the school head, the director of the local welfare office, the managers of the local factories, the manager of the local bank, the director of the health care centre, the head of the post office and the head of the kindergarten. The study found that these management posts were in fact mid-level positions in larger hierarchies. The ultimate bosses were men at a higher level of hierarchy. Further, the women's immediate predecessors were also men who, upon retirement or promotion to a higher level, selected experienced local woman workers to fill their shoes.¹⁹ A common characteristic of these posts held by women is that they were awarded by appointment from above, not by competition. The women concerned always adapted themselves to fit in with existing workplace structures.

The other important finding was that women in positions of leadership in this small rural town did not show any ambition to move up the hierarchy. They considered their appointment a question of personal luck rather than a mark of their talent and ability. They expressed a preference for the traditional role of women in the family, if only their circumstances allowed for it. Although they had adapted to changed circumstances, they still regarded themselves primarily as mothers and wives.

Some assessments of the impact of transition – a CEE overview

In 1996, FAO WPW became one of first international institutions to publish a study²⁰ on the situation of rural and agricultural women in 10 transition countries.²¹ It was a historical moment, because the impact of the socialist period was still visible. Some institutions from the previous period, which delivered certain social benefits for women, still existed, but the effects of privatisation, the emergence of family agriculture, enterprise development, and so on were also making themselves felt.

The study explored the situation of rural women and compared the results of the 10 CEE countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Bulgaria) to three reference countries: Austria, Ireland and Finland. The scope of the study was quite broad, taking in women's role in rural areas, on the farm and in the family, their participation in education, training, agricultural services and organizations, as well as household and legal issues and the existence of development projects.

18 Pittlik Tímea(2000): Női életutak: 'sikeres' nők Sellyén (Women's career path: 'Successful women in Sellye'), in: Településszerkezet, társadalomszerkezet (Settlement structure and social structure) Rendszerváltás és helyi társadalom (Political system change and local society), University Press Pécs, 2000, pp 61-70.

19 Men with management capacities either commuted to larger towns whether they held higher hierarchical positions, or else transferred to agriculture where the seasonal watermelon production provides good income for families.

20 Overview of the socio-economic position of rural women in selected Central and Eastern European countries, FAO 1996, The regional office for Europe and the Women in development Service/Sustainable development Department.

21 The research was coordinated by Pirjo Siiskonen and the Mikkeli Research Institute and Helsinki University and several country experts were involved in the work.

The research was based on secondary data collected by national experts; no rural women were interviewed. The authors emphasise the rapidly changing character of rural issues and data in these countries, and advise that the results of the comparisons need to be treated with some caution. The aim of the study was to raise awareness of the factors hindering rural women's full participation in, and benefits from, rural development in the region.

The study warns against the simplistic use of "Communist countries" as an all-embracing label. Each country has its own history and culture, and a distinct rural environment. Consequently, "the economic activities and situation of rural women may also vary from area to area."

The study describes several cultural differences expressed through indicators such as the birth rate, family size, infant mortality, average marriage age, life expectancy at birth, and the divorce rate, and compares them to the three reference countries. The study uses the Gender Development Index (GDI)²² to illustrate the situation of women and men in the project countries, and found that for the early 90s, the Czech Republic and Slovakia scored highest among the CEE countries included in the study. The study shows that ranked by GDI, the situation in gender achievements in all the reference countries is not better than in the CEE countries, as Ireland scores lowest. At the global level, all the project countries and reference countries rank in the top one-third.

The study also confirmed that the role of rural women in public life is weak: "Rural women may become elected to the village board or local government, but they are seldom leaders in public life; most often the role of women is members only." The study makes favourable note of the countries' healthcare and social services and their welfare benefits. "All the countries provide maternity and child support benefits as well as state disability pensions for the rural population. Home care allowance, unemployment benefit and pension on transfer of the farm to a successor are social benefits more rarely encountered in the project countries. Abortion is legalized in all countries except Poland and Ireland" (UN, 1995).

As far as other services are concerned, the deficiencies are more numerous:

"There are also shortages and differences among different rural areas. The most severe problems in the supply of services are caused by distances, the lack of telephones, transport and adequate roads, and the price of transport as well as of medicine. Lack of birth control facilities in rural areas was also mentioned. The most general shortage is a lack of maternity clinics in some countries."

In respect of gender equality, the report says:

"In practice, however, women and men are not equal. The most common inequalities mentioned in both CEE countries and the project's reference countries are: discrimination against women in the labour market;

22 "GDI measures inequalities in achievement between women and men. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's GDI compared with its HDI. The indicators used are: share of earned income (percent); life expectancy (years); adult literacy rate (percent); combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (percent); and HDI rank minus GDI rank," UNDP Human Development Report, 1995, New York: Oxford University Press.

inequality in attitudes; in the privatization process; in public life; in incomes; in leadership both at work and in politics (also at parliament level); and in the amount of free time. Equality between the sexes is assured by law in principle, not necessarily in practice.”

The study provides a description of the division of labour by gender in both groups of countries, both on modern and on traditional farms.

“There are separate activities for men and women, but also activities carried out together...Both women and men participate in decision-making on the farm in the northern countries (the Baltic countries and Poland), but decision-making is done mainly by men in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia.”

The Southern European model received special mention in the study.

“In the Southern European model, the role of women may be the most demanding, and the working days of rural women are long and heavy... The grip of tradition in daily life is difficult to break, and rural women have no time or possibility for education and training or for organizations and public life.”

As regards enterprise initiative, the report observes:

“Entrepreneurship on the farm is quite rare. Yet, in the cases where entrepreneurial activities are found, men are more active than women (data from Croatia, Bulgaria and Hungary), although there is no data on rural women as entrepreneurs.”

The first years of the new century have given fresh impetus to studies and publications dealing with the social and economic transition of CEE countries and former Soviet Republics. The studies have looked at the situation and position of women in these societies, as well as the similarities and differences among the countries. The production of studies was particularly boosted by the process of EU accession, during which scholars sought to find out as much as possible about the social, economic, political, and family rights and obligations of women in the candidate countries. Almost all these studies are intended to put gender issues on the political agenda.

A World Bank study “Gender in transition”²³ aimed to raise “awareness of the gender implications of the dramatic social and economic changes experienced by these countries during the 1990s.” Covering the territory of the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, including Turkey, the report considered gender-based differences in several important areas of the social and economic life of these countries.

The report concludes with “three broad directions for gender responsive policy making in the region:

- strengthening capacity to monitor and evaluate gender differentials;
- addressing existing inequalities in access to economic opportunities; and

²³ World Bank (2002), Gender in transition, Pierella Paci (ed.), Human Development Unit, Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region.

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- mainstreaming gender in strategies for economic development and poverty reduction.”

Another important study²⁴ was prepared by the ILO Office in Budapest. This study investigated social security reforms in Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland “through the lens of gender equality.” The study points out that “the motivation to achieve gender equality was not often a force in shaping the reforms; and the gender dimension of major policy changes received relatively little attention, either during national reform deliberations or thereafter. Thus, it is the purpose of the study to reaffirm the importance of equal treatment in social security reform and to bring it into sharper view for public scrutiny.”

The authors draw the following very important conclusion:

“[W]e must also recognize that social security is not the tool of choice for combating gender inequality in society. The sources of such inequality lie in labour markets, social and family domains, and cultural values, beyond the reach of social security systems. The consequences of unequal treatment can be remediated by social security schemes to some extent... Yet social security alone is a weak instrument for reshaping the entrenched beliefs and practices that sustain unequal treatment of women and men.”

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) together with the KARAT Coalition and Network of East West Women/Polska promoted the “Gender and Economic Justice in European Accession and Integration” project. The project evaluates the impact of EU accession on the status of women in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. This project was developed in a framework of human rights, and sought to “address gaps in government compliance with their obligation to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women.” As the study also observes:

“All CEE countries have ratified the major treaties, including CEDAW, and in the context of fulfilling EU directives, most countries have revised or adopted new national legislation, established national women’s machineries, ombudsmen, or taken other measures to comply with EU standards. Yet in spite of such measures, women’s human rights are far from being fully realized, including in relation to their economic rights.”

The authors note with regret that certain themes such as the situation of women in rural areas, the situation of the working poor and the situation of women in general could not be encompassed by the report.

The Open Society Foundation – Romania and the Network Women’s Program of the Open Society Institute joined forces to produce “Bringing the EU Home”, a three-year project (2004–2006) of evaluation of the legislative status and effective application of equal opportunities in seven of the ten candidate countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Romania.

This project, in concomitance with the previous research and monitoring activities, covers the whole accession period, and measures the headway made by

24 The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland Budapest, International Labour Office, 2003 ISBN 92-2-113701-5

candidate countries in transposing EU Directives on equal opportunities into national law and practice.

A report published in 2005 called “Equal Opportunities for Women and Men” describes the existing national institutional mechanisms, policies and programmes for gender equality. It considers the general lack of awareness among women and men how the inequalities affect their everyday life. The authors of the report also point to the lack of political will to enforce existing national and EU gender equality policies. The report contains recommendations to national governments and EU officials, and its authors have promised on-going updates that will be published on the Web.

These studies provide a panoramic view of gender issues in CEE and CIS countries. The studies we have mentioned, along with several other research papers, case studies and national reports, all indicate that although the themes are well recognised, equal opportunities and gender issues are only very reluctantly included in the main political discourse. Meanwhile, the rural dimension is not only absent from the political agenda, but is also neglected even in research papers.

Masculin dominance – equal opportunities and better social order

The principle of equal opportunities has been legally adopted and institutionalised in CEE countries since 2000. As of May 2004, pre-accession funds and the Structural Funds tried to enforce the principle by providing support only for those projects that pay attention to the role of women. Other specific programmes to improve the situation of women are also available, but it will probably take one or two EU programming periods (14 years) before their impact is felt. The vision from the nineties that the XXI century will be the century of women is still takes time to be achieved.

In spite of these generous ideas and principles the everyday approach is not very often challenged by the usual masculine way of thinking and dominance. Mainly the feminists raise voice and show up us a mirror how often we overlook on the real situation of women and how reluctant we are to think differently. Adamik Mária, a feminist researcher selected a ballad to reflect the everyday blindness concerning the equal opportunity and equal treatment principle. The essence of the ballad of Kőműves Kelemen is known in Central Europe in different national context. The drama of the ballad is about builders who cannot complete the castle of Déva, because the walls what they build daytime falls apart at night. The solution to keep the walls erected is to kill the wife who is to be earliest to visit her husband at work. To put her body into the wall would save the work of the builders. The man whose wife arrives earlier called Kőműves (Builder) Kelemen.

Adamik translates this drama to recent social discourse:

“Kőműves Kelemen and his apprentices do not discuss it with the wife of Kelemen whether or not the Castle of Déva is a ‘common good’ and what should be done in case it collapses overnight. They discuss it with each other and with the ‘Power’ that makes them build the castle. This is the reason why there has never been a concept of any other ‘common good’, any other direction of social development, which would attach the highest value to the solidarity and consensus between Kelemen and his wife. According to such a concept the two of them together would say ‘no’ to the ‘Power’, which wants to have the castle constructed.

Naive as this archaic thesis might sound, it is revelatory. It shows, for example, that had the story happened in the other way round (the wife of Kelemen, what is more: many unknown wives of Kelemens are cooperating with the 'Power', so the Kelemens are built into the wall), it would not make us any happier. I would go one step further: it is not at all comforting that a few 'privileged' wives have already been given the trowel – as the result of the centuries-long economic development, and to calm down the misunderstood and misused struggle for equal opportunities.”

She further discusses the nature of masculin power in society, the characteristics of women- men power relations and the adjustment process of women to masculin power in different situations.

„Instead of using women in the debate on 'how much' state and 'how much' market is appropriate (the bad, old liberal/socialist debate), the question should be put in a radically different way: what type of state and what type of market do we need? We could go even one step further and ask: what sort of human relations, especially woman-man relations are rewarded and punished by the state and the market we have chosen? What quality rights do we promote instead of mechanically repeated and abstract citizenship and human rights?” Her questions referring to different values and social order could be guiding principles in actual social and political debates in every CEE and CIS countries.

If the political will were there, several of these equality issues such as the wage gap, the glass ceiling, low female representation in public life, the discounting of women's 'second shift' in household, could be rapidly solved. Other problems may take longer, because they relate to various different sections of society.

Before proposing solutions, we need to be clear about some of the issues at stake. In the first place, equal opportunities and gender discrimination are not woman-only concerns. Both men and women should be involved in the hunt for a solution. Secondly, equality will not come about spontaneously. It will require serious concerted action in a wide range of areas and active programmes rather than mere campaigns. Thirdly, although technical innovation may bring some benefits, it does not in itself directly influence human relations.

Without repeating several other proposals and initiations I can propose the following actions.

- Men and women must be educated and enlightened about the unequal status of women, and made to feel personally responsible for it and its effects;
- A root-and-branch awareness programme should be implemented to highlight inequalities, abuse, crimes, violence and human trafficking, and people made aware of the victims and the consequences of violence within families;
- Gender issues should be made part and parcel of mainstream political discourse;
- Tougher enforcement of the equal opportunity principle is required.

Summary

The arrival of the market economy and democracy created a special contradiction. People wanted to have democratic societies and a market economy, but were not prepared for its rules and mechanisms. After 15-16 years of democratic change,

many people still feel they are losers in the social transformation and cannot adjust their lives to new circumstances.

We looked at the features and major trends of structural changes in agriculture and rural employment in CEE countries. We also referred to a number of international studies dealing with gender and the social consequences of economic transition. With a view to providing some insight into the everyday life of rural women, the paper also looks at the changing role of rural women entrepreneurs. The paper touches upon the theme of rural employment, and makes a comparative review of living standards in the countries under scrutiny. It concludes with an appeal for a better social order providing women with equal opportunities.

Case studies: Retaining expertise

“People are our greatest asset”. One of the oldest truisms in the business world. But increasing pressures to perform in a competitive environment only increases the stress on employees. Working families in particular find the long-hours working culture hard to reconcile with home commitments. Responsible employers invest heavily in the development of their staff, they hope to get a return on their investment. Good workers are expensive to find, Good workers are important to keep. The burn-out threat in the competitive business world risks driving the best employees into the arms of a business rival with good Work/ Life Balance policies.

Glaxo Wellcome

Date of Study: 2000

Size: large

Sector: private

Region: UK

Type of Business: pharmaceuticals

Glaxo Wellcome is a world leading pharmaceutical company with around 13,400 employees in the UK. 42% of the workforce is female. The company is on record as saying 'people are the cutting edge of our business. Their efforts as individuals and team members create the company's success'. Beyond the rhetoric Glaxo Wellcome is taking steps to ensure it 'walks the talk'.

Beverley Jewell and Liz Ainslie, both senior Marketing Managers and mothers of young families certainly believe it's living up to its promises.

Beverley, Head of Marketing for GI Metabolic and Influenza, has been with Glaxo Wellcome for about 12 years. She switched to part-time working following the birth of her second child (now almost six). Having returned to full time work after the birth of her first baby two years earlier, Beverley was very clear about what she wanted this time around.

'In my head I was saying, 'ideally I would like to work part-time hours',', she recalls. She had also worked out a less flexible fallback alternative she was willing to accept before beginning negotiations with her manager. Pleasantly surprised that her manager agreed to her requests, Beverley believes the main reason was the shortage of people with her experience at Glaxo Wellcome at the time.

'There was a high business need to retain the skills I had, and half of Beverley was better than none of her,' she explains. It was also a time when lots of people were spending half their time on projects and half on regular jobs, so it was easy for her to slot into a project.

Over the last five years Beverley has had a number of part-time jobs and been promoted. She began her negotiations to work part-time expecting she might need to drop a grade as her part of the bargain. Or that she could find

herself stuck for ever in the same job (the price some women pay for working less than full-time). Neither has been necessary and she is 'very impressed' with the way Glaxo Wellcome has developed her career.

The job she's currently doing was new so it was possible to design it around her needs. But she has always approached her work as a negotiation about what she will and will not do. In the past this has meant parts of jobs being reassigned or dropped altogether.

Liz Ainslie has been with Glaxo Wellcome for ten years and is now a Senior Brand Leader. Her decision to work part-time came after the birth of her first child five years ago. She had been working very hard prior to Maternity Leave and knew that if she returned full-time she would never see her daughter. Liz has since had a second child – now almost two.

While working part-time Liz has been promoted twice. 'The longer you work part-time and prove you can deliver in unusual situations,' she says, 'the more likely people are to consider you for promotion. I've never felt my commitment has been questioned.' At Glaxo Wellcome development is based on competencies, so it should make no difference whether someone works full or part-time. But Liz does concede it can take longer to develop competencies if you need to limit the number of things you can get involved in.

As one of the first women in her group to work part-time, Liz didn't know whether it would work or not. 'I negotiated my hours and got on with the job; and I took ownership and responsibility for educating the people I work with', she recalls. 'For me there was a lot of learning about what I can actually do in three days. I got very good at saying no.'

Since then the process has become more structured. Anyone wanting to work part-time does so for a probationary period. Then they meet with a representative from Human Resources to assess whether part-time working is suitable in their situation. Only then will they receive confirmation of a permanent part-time contract.

'Glaxo Wellcome is very forward thinking,' says Liz. Not all jobs can be done part-time, but the company is 'very good at considering other flexible working options. People work job-shares and term-time only. The part-time contract that I have is a huge incentive to stay with the company. I have a job that's interesting, stimulating and challenging and that I can do in three days a week leaving me four days to do other things. The company is getting a great deal of benefit from me. They get more than three-fifths of effort and hours!'

Ian Brown, HR Manager for Glaxo Wellcome UK is justifiably proud of his organisation's family friendly ethos and flexible approach. He believes getting the work-life balance right engages people more fully with their employer so they are willing to give more to their work. 'Glaxo Wellcome is at the leading edge of science and technology. To get there and stay there we need to attract and retain the best people,' he says. 'Otherwise you're losing valuable resources – often to your competitors. So there's a darn good business case for doing so.'

For Ian, though, it goes beyond the business case. Rather than asking how a change will improve the business he prefers to ask whether the change will have a negative impact. If the likely impact is what he terms 'business neutral' then he says 'as long as the work gets done the real question in Glaxo Wellcome is 'why not?''

In pursuit of the optimal workforce Glaxo Wellcome promotes a range of flexible working options:

- Job Share Phased Retirement
- Part Time Secondments
- Reduced Hours Home working
- Staggered Hours Portfolio (project)
- Trust Time Working
- Flexi-Time Career Breaks
- Annualised Hours Sabbaticals
- Phased Return to Work Extended Maternity Leave

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Accenture

Date of Study: 2001

Size: large

Sector: private

Region: UK

Type of Business: management consultancy

"We work together with employees to create an environment where they choose to build their careers, business objectives are achieved and financial successes shared," says Accenture's Liz Mills. Accenture is a management consultancy company with 8 offices in London, 1 each in Manchester, Warwick and Bedford. It was a finalist in the large private sector category of the Employer of the Year Awards in 2001.

Work-life balance is part of the company's 'Great Place to Work' initiative. It is one of three strategic programmes, together with 'Bold Growth' and 'Operational Excellence', which is led by the CEO. Success in a professional services industry is heavily dependent on people capital. Recruitment and retention of skilled and quality employees is of paramount importance and explains the 'business rationale' behind the approach to work life balance. Retention, loyalty, image, morale, productivity, reduced absenteeism, commitment, diversity, inclusivity, cost minimisation/value maximisation and contributing to the community are all seen as business benefits to flexibility.

Employees are encouraged to ask for changes in their working patterns, either through performance appraisals or career counselling, or at any point in the year. This requires a culture of 'support and acceptance'. Training in diversity management and flexible working is conducted. The number of part-time and flexible workers is increasing consistently. This is encouraged from the top level as

many senior executives set an example to all staff. All partners and Associate Partners (as with other employees) are provided with the technology to work from home. A number of senior executives actively demonstrate new ways of working and are role models.

Flexible working policies part-time, flexitime, home and teleworking, compressed working weeks, job-shares outlined – are supported by providing the necessary technology to enable employees to take them up. All employees are entitled to a laptop computer which provides greater control over when and where staff work. Other innovative initiatives include a returners' programme to support employees on extended leave and encourage their return. Health days, executive medicals, a well-person programme and subsidised gym membership are offered to encourage employees to look after their health. Support mechanisms include a concierge service (to offer home and office based errands) and a domestic payroll to handle payment for childcare arrangements and tax deductions.

Accenture's innovative leave provisions include paid emergency leave, sabbaticals, paid study leave and parental leave.

A comprehensive booklet is distributed annually to employees, giving details of benefits and key policies including work-life balance. Several central databases provide all details of flexible working policies, as well as contact details should staff require further guidance. Career Counsellors/ mentors are equipped with briefing documents to advise their mentees. There are designated advocate roles for senior executives whose job is to champion flexible working arrangements.

Statistics related to gender, race, attrition and working patterns are monitored and reported at Board level. An employee satisfaction survey is conducted twice a year and the results are published for all. One of the sections analyses Accenture's management of diversity and flexible working patterns. The 'Great Place to Work' scheme is sponsored by the CEO and his leadership team and includes 360 degree feedback. Consultants' projects can be located anywhere in the UK and overseas. An inclusive scheduling approach has recently been implemented which includes personal preferences as well as business needs.

The work-life balance initiatives have contributed to reducing Accenture's attrition rate by 6% and set a trend of increasing numbers of staff working flexibly. The aim is to make this an integral part of the working culture at Accenture now and in the long term. Direct feedback on all work life balance initiatives is sought from pulse groups across all areas of the business, including a cross grade group chaired by the UK managing Director.

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Jaguar & Land Rover

Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Employer of the Year Award 2005

Date of Study: 2005

Size: large

Sector: private

Region: Midlands

Type of Business: Motor vehicle manufacturing

Jaguar & Land Rover are members of the Women's Engineering Society (WES), which provides the platform for an internal support group for women working in engineering functions. Membership is paid for by the Product Development Director and members value the opportunity to network externally as well as internally.

Recruitment teams at Jaguar and Land Rover are all trained in equal opportunities and diversity good practice. All recruitment agencies used are aware of the organisation's requirement for equal opportunities recruitment and selection tools and techniques. Benefits of particular interest to women include the maternity policy (52 weeks on full pay, and at Land Rover there is an option of an additional 52 weeks unpaid whilst retaining employee status). This has resulted in a 99% return rate from maternity leave. Further support is offered around the time of a second child, which has been identified as a time when women are more likely to leave and, at one plant, nursery places have even been offered to grandparents caring for their grandchildren.

There is also a range of flexible working policies, including part time, job share, variable hours, telecommuting, and unsupported home working. These are open to all employees regardless of parental status. Currently 81% of part time or job share employees are women, 19% are men. Two sites offer workplace nursery facilities and there are plans for a further site. The Company also offers concierge services, including dry-cleaning collection, photograph development, video hire and shops. There is either a workplace gym or corporate gym affiliation at five of the six sites. Future ideas include a plan to link up flexible retirees with parents wanting to work part-time in a job-sharing scheme.

Along with its broader diversity agenda is the increasing value placed on women as part of the design process of vehicles. 80% of car purchase decisions are influenced by women, so it is seen as important that the vehicles built will appeal to women as well as men.

As well as Dignity at Work Training, the need for Diversity and Work Life Balance is reinforced through an annual Work-Life Week. This aims to bring the business case, awareness and acceptance of flexible working to employees, alongside provision of wider recognition of personal issues, providing links with external support organisations. These are run predominantly by local Diversity Councils, made up of employees from each function, to encourage people that this is not just an 'HR initiative'.

This year, the Company is focusing on support in five key areas:

-
-
- 1.) Provision of appropriate employee facilities and services
 - 2.) Family & Caring Provisions
 - 3.) Introducing a range of different flexible working arrangements
 - 4.) Help and support for those with caring responsibilities such as nursery facilities
 - 5.) Promotion of employee well-being in the workplace.

The Company intranet has a page devoted to Work Life Balance initiatives, and also links to HR ONLINE, showing all flexible working policies.

An outcome from these policies and practices has been a significant change in culture around flexibility with people at all levels (including Board members) talking about their work-life balance issues and a significant number of men now taking responsibility as primary carers.

A male manager working in the finance department gained approval to reduce his hours from 37 to 29 hours per week in order to become the primary child carer for his three young children when his wife decided to return to full time employment. He says: "I was surprised by how supportive my senior management and human resources were in dealing with my reduced hours application and the ease with which I was given approval to go forward with my new working arrangement. It showed a real change in the attitude of the company to diversity issues from when I first joined the company eight years ago. It should be noted that, to be allowed to work flexibly, I have had to be flexible to meet the company needs as well, which involves a lot of forward planning and the ability to rearrange my schedule for important meetings and deadlines. So far this has worked very well. I find that I am more focused and efficient in the time that I am in work which has allowed me to by and large maintain my objectives compared to when I worked full time without a fall in performance" He goes on to describe the win-wins of the arrangement:

1. *I win as I stay in a job that I enjoy with peace of mind in my childcare arrangements*
2. *The company wins as they keep my expertise and at a reduced cost*
3. *The government wins as they get more tax income from my wife working*

Following treatment for breast cancer, one of the female launch managers came back to work full time but found she couldn't spend enough time on the post operative care she had been advised to take. She took the decision to reduce her hours and continue at work rather than carry on and potentially need more time off with illness. The Company responded immediately to this request for reduced hours and she was offered a new position that had been created as Business Office Manager. She still has a lot of treatments and appointments and this role allows her to take these without interrupting the working day and allows her to concentrate on building her health and fitness levels back up. She says: "I am very grateful for this flexibility and I feel so much better that I'm happy to contribute more hours when the situation arises. Without this I would have had to leave the Company,

because I had to feel I was doing everything possible to prevent a reoccurrence or secondary tumour. I'm sure for many people after a traumatic event there is a mental adjustment to make, and having more options during that period is very useful"

(Reproduced with permission from Working Families website)

TERRY GEORGE

FAQs

Q. What is work-life balance?

A. Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work, leading them to be able to enjoy an optimal quality of life. Work-life balance is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society.

Q. Why should business care?

A. Work-life balance business benefits include:

- Increased productivity
- Improved recruitment and retention
- Lower rates of absenteeism
- Reduced overheads
- An improved customer experience
- A more motivated, satisfied and equitable workforce.

To put it in bottom line terms, employee costs are often at least 50 percent of a company's expenditure, with replacement involving very high costs depending on seniority and level of technical skill.

Q. Isn't work-life balance just for parents – particularly mothers?

A. No, it's an issue that's rising up the agenda for everyone. Surveys show that graduates value flexibility more than pay when looking at prospective employers.

Having greater control over time has a beneficial impact upon worker satisfaction. Workers who have more say over their working time feel less stressed and are more satisfied with and committed to their work.

Q. What about people who just love to work?

A. Work-life balance is not just for people who want to reduce their working hours. It's about responding to individual circumstances to help individuals fulfil their responsibilities and aspirations. Many people love their work and for them the perfect 'balance' is working very long hours. The ideal 'balance' can also vary at different stages of the life cycle. For example, in your twenties you might be quite happy to work long hours in exchange for breaks to go travelling or to pursue a hobby; a few years down the line you may want to reduce your hours or have greater flexibility in how and when you work to fit in extra study or family responsibilities.

Q. Doesn't the work-life balance debate just demonise the workplace?

A. No. Many people love their work and work long hours because that's how they want to spend their time. The work-life balance debate recognises that there are

different ways of working, and is trying to shift the idea that 'long hours' is the only way to demonstrate commitment. What the work-life balance debate is trying to do is to recognise that there are different ways of working, to show that 'long hours' does not necessarily mean you are the best at your job, and to enable people to work in different ways so that they can achieve their aspirations inside and outside paid work.

Q. Is work-life balance just a fashion?

A. No, demographics show that this is going to become an increasingly important issue. More and more women are entering the labour market, we have an ageing population and people are continuing to demand that their employers enable them to have a better work-life balance.

Q. Does it mean more work for managers?

A. Setting-up WLB schemes will require management time but there are many examples and case-studies now available to draw on to help the process. Once the initial period of change has occurred, most people find that WLB schemes operate smoothly.

Q. Will it cost more?

A. At the beginning there could be some additional costs, in relation to publicising available schemes, training and purchase of equipment. Again, these should be weighed against the potential benefits and savings and will depend on what scheme is implemented. The evidence is overwhelming that the introduction of flexible working reduces absenteeism, improves recruitment and retention, increases efficiency and saves money. Chances are that this will occur in your organisation too.

Q. Does it mean more work for managers?

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Q. I manage front line staff so there needs to be cover at all times. Surely if they worked flexibly my business would suffer?

A. Flexible working should be balanced with business need. Often, by looking at things afresh, solutions can be achieved that suit everybody. But where that is not possible, organisations are entitled to refuse a request if it would be detrimental to the business or the colleagues of the individual.

In the case of front line staff a compressed working week, term time working, part time working, job share and flexi time are potential arrangements.

Q. Who will cover times when an employee isn't at work?

A. This depends very much on the arrangements you have in place. For example, Flexi Time could operate on a commitment-to-cover basis, where employees arrange time off amongst themselves to ensure there is continual cover. Arrangements such as compressed working are fixed in advance so you will be aware when an employee will not be at work. Other eventualities such as an illness

would apply, as with any other employee and in these situation flexible working may be particularly beneficial. If one job share partner is sick, for example, at least half the job is still done. Employees who are able to work flexibly are also more likely to help out with cover in such situations. Flexible arrangements can mean that you can extend the time your organisation is open for business.

Q. If one employee asks to work flexibly, will it cause a problem within my team?

A. All benefits should be offered on an equal basis. Provided requests are dealt with fairly and colleagues are not disadvantaged in any way, then conflict within a team should be minimal. Involve the whole team in determining what would work best.

Q. How do you supervise employees working at home?

A. The emphasis should be on the completion of tasks. Where a significant amount of home working is undertaken then performance measures should be agreed and then monitored.

Q. Don't home workers suffer from social isolation?

A. Where an employee is working at home special consideration should be given to communication. It is important that a worker does not feel isolated. Regular meetings, support groups and socials can all be useful. Make sure, though, that their private time remains private. It's a good idea to agree lines of communication from the outset, so that everyone knows what times an employee can be contacted.

Q. Are there too many distractions at home?

A. Some people may indeed find that they are unable to concentrate when they are working at home. For this reason it is advisable that home working is optional and not enforced. It is also recommended that a trial period is offered before an employee commits to home working. Time management training should be considered, to ensure that people are able to work at home effectively.

Q. I do not have any children – can I still expect to work flexibly?

A. Yes, Work-Life Balance is for everyone. With the shift in the age of our population many people may now be carers for elderly relatives instead of/as well as children. The encouragement of lifelong learning means that many more people now return to or continue to study once in employment and we all have activities and responsibilities outside of work. Flexible working may be beneficial in all of these situations and more.

Q. What if my circumstances change and I no longer need to work using the same flexible policy?

A. Working arrangements should remain open to future negotiation or amendments. Your terms and conditions of employment may have been altered so you will probably need to consult with your manager but organisations should be flexible to your requests.

Q. Doesn't a desire for work-life balance brand you as uncommitted and unmotivated?

A. This is one of the key issues that the work-life balance debate is seeking to tackle. In many workplaces there is an assumption that 'long hours working' is a

demonstration of commitment and quality. Organisations focusing upon clients may also feel the need to work long hours to ensure a high quality of service. However, this does not necessarily mean either the best job is done or that talent can flourish. The work-life debate is trying to shift the focus from inputs – time – to outputs. This is an ongoing process; many employees continue to worry that working flexibly will mean they do not progress as quickly in their career. Some organisations are gaining competitive advantage in the recruitment market from this by offering work-life balance and career progression to talented individuals – so change is starting to happen.

What do kiwi fathers want?²⁵

Abstract

Work/ Life Balance research and practices have traditionally focused on the prime family carer, stereotypically the mother in most households. This summary of an extensive review from New Zealand introduces a survey that remembers families have fathers, too.

Eighty percent of fathers generally wish they could spend more time with their children according to the EEO Trust's²⁶ on-line survey on fathering and paid work. Nearly 1200 New Zealand fathers completed the survey.

EEO Trust Executive Director, Trudie McNaughton, says this is in line with international research which shows men want to spend more time with their children than their fathers spent with them.

She says this is an issue for workplaces which have tried to help women balance work and family but have sometimes left men out of the equation.

"Workplaces sometimes assumed that what would work for mothers would also work for fathers, and sometimes neglected to consider fathers at all," she says. "However men are saying they also need flexibility in order to be the kind of fathers they want to be. And women recognise that equity at work is more likely when men share caring responsibilities."

"We conducted this survey to find out how men feel about fathering and paid work and how they would like their workplaces to help."

Eighty two percent of respondents said their paid work negatively affects the amount of time they spend with their children while 52% said their paid work affects the quality of the time they spend with their children.

The survey asked respondents how their workplace currently helps them be the sort of father they want to be.

Having access to a phone so they can contact their family was the most common assistance. Trudie McNaughton says that while office workers take this for granted, it is a major issue for some workers in other sectors such as retail and manufacturing. "It is very difficult for parents who can't be contacted by their children, or their children's caregivers or teachers."

The following table shows the full results of this question. Respondents could tick as many options as they wanted.

²⁵ Kiwi – New Zealanders' fun name for themselves

²⁶ EEO Trust – Equal Employment Opportunities Trust.

The Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Trust is a not-for-profit organisation tasked with providing EEO information and tools to employers, and raising awareness of diversity issues in New Zealand workplaces. The EEO Trust is resourced by fees from member organisations and Government.

Ways workplaces help	Number of respondents
Access to phone for contact with your family	890
Flexible start and finish times	680
Flexibility to have time off during the day	630
Sometimes being able to work from home	444
Your senior managers supporting you as a father	285
Being able to work part time or less hours	176
Your senior managers modelling good fathering	127
School holiday programmes	110

Respondents were also asked how they wanted their workplace to help them be the sort of father they wanted to be.

Flexibility in terms of start and finish times, sometimes being able to work from home and sometimes being able to take time off during the day were the most popular options.

Trudie McNaughton says it's interesting that support to take parental leave entitlements was the next most popular option. "The latest data shows that of the 14,477 receiving the government's paid parental leave in its first year, only 94 (0.065%) of them were men. While it's more likely that women will take parental leave in the first few months to recover from birth and establish breastfeeding, men may be more willing to take up parental leave and share in the care of their babies if they felt supported by their workplaces."

The following table shows the full results of this question. Respondents could tick as many options as they wanted.

Ways workplaces could help	Number of respondents
Flexible start and finish times	602
Sometimes being able to work from home	566
Flexibility to have time off during the day	538
Support to take parental leave entitlements	473
Less work pressure	439
Giving you access to a phone so you can be in touch with your family	364
More support from senior management for you as a father	355
Providing a school holiday programme	310
Meetings in core work hours	292
Being able to work part time or less hours	288
Senior managers modelling good fathering	284
Less travelling for work	254
Fine as it is	175
Change of shift	58
None of these would help	25

While most of the men who completed the survey were fathers, 126 were not. Of these, 82% wanted to have children in the future. When asked if they thought

they could be sort of father they wanted to be if they stayed in their current job, 55% said no.

"Men who feel they can't be the sort of father they want to be in their current job, are likely to try and find a new employer who will give them more support," says Trudie McNaughton. "Workplaces which are serious about recruiting and retaining the best people need to take men's desire to be good fathers seriously."

Ms McNaughton says that although the EEO Trust survey focussed on the needs of working fathers, issues for mothers in the workplace have not necessarily been resolved.

She says that everyone will benefit if fathers have more flexibility. "They can share the responsibility for children's needs and enjoy the benefits of good relationships with their children.

"It is in the interests of fathers, mothers and children to have good work-life balance. And it will deliver business benefits to workplaces. Men who are content with how they balance paid work and parenting are likely to be more satisfied, committed and productive employees. Costs related to absenteeism and turnover will often decrease markedly."

The voices of some kiwi fathers

What do kiwi fathers really want? The survey invited fathers to email comments about fathering and paid work. Excerpts of some of them follow:

"My daughters play hockey which I get great delight in watching as a spectator. I'd like to do a bit more and become a referee or even a coach for one of the teams but I can't. Work commitments make it impossible to leave at 2.30 in the afternoon to make it to school to help coach the team etc."

"It is possible that I could squeeze the time out with unpaid work but to do this for 20 weeks or so does not go down well!"

"Fathers care. Fathers try and do the best they can (and sometimes get it hopelessly wrong) but what I want as a father is nothing material (though I do love our tradition of giving me a trout fishing license for father's day each year) but those times when they show that somehow they recognise the efforts made and my often clumsy attempts at being a father are done through love and wanting the best for them."

"Nothing is better than the 'Hey dad, let's ...'"

"I'm a father and have been for seven years, I had my child when I was 16 years old and I was still at school.

"I left school just to find a job.....I've grown into a young man early but still adapting. I wish I could spend more time with my girl but can't get out of work or not enough annual leave, or whatever leave there is."

"Reality is some kids don't know their daddy anymore coz he's always at work or trying to impress the boss!!!"

"To me time off is everything, and I think we are pushed more and more into losing our free time to spend with family. After all, we did have a family to enjoy their upbringing and to be part of their lives..."

References:

- Equal Employment Opportunities Trust website:

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- <http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/index.cfm>
 - Full survey results can be downloaded from:
 - <http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/content/docs/reports/Work-Life%20Survey%202006%20Report.pdf>

Case studies: Working from home

The growth of Information and Communication Technologies has revolutionised the way we do business. Astute companies have also identified ways of using ICT to organise the way we work. Senior managers, in particular, stay in touch with their office when away on business. Laptops, broadband, handheld PC's, – the opportunities are increasingly limitless to stay in touch with the office.

More and more companies have used the opportunity to allow employees conduct work from home or remote locations.

Brenda – tele-worker

Brenda is a research scientist for an Irish private sector company. She has worked for them for almost eight years since leaving university. In that time she married a farmer. Her employer is located in a medium sized Irish town. She made her decision to seek an alternative arrangement to working at the company premises after the birth of her first child. She also wanted to establish a work arrangement that could include the possibility of a second child to be born close in age to their first. She admits that she had always had a desire to work from home, not just for family reasons but also for professional reasons. Firstly, she wanted to reduce her travelling time to and from work. Her home is about thirty-five miles from the company's premises. Secondly she wanted to carry out the kind of research that could be managed using information technology.

The Organisation

At the time she approached her employer to discuss this idea they had, as an organisation just begun to examine equal opportunities as it affected them. One of the issues which the organisation was concerned about was attracting quality researchers. The relatively rural geographical location of the firm together with the increasing buoyancy in the economy made this a live issue for the firm.

Brenda approached her supervising manager with a well thought out plan.

"Basically if they were unable to meet my request, I was considering becoming a freelance researcher from home."

She hoped that she would not have to resort to this "plan B" as she enjoyed working for her employer.

"When you have just had a baby, you don't want to have to start setting up a new business as well."

Her employer agreed that she could work from home on a pilot basis at first. This was some years ago now. Brenda was a pioneer in that she helped the formalisation of tele- working in her organisation. Indeed this private sector firm now operates a range of family friendly arrangements available to all staff, developed and agreed with the co-operation and support of the trade unions.

Benefits

Brenda has benefited because she has been able to achieve her goals, to start her family and carry out the kind of research work in the way she had always wanted. Her employer has benefited in that she is still working for them and contributing to the development and success of the firm.

Concerns

While the arrangement at first sight presents an idyllic picture, that of a young mother working for a go ahead company from home in the midst of rural bliss, in reality there have been things that were learned in the light of experience.

"At first my friends thought that if I was working from home it meant I was available for a chat and a coffee at any time of the day This was hard at first and then I realised if I did not lay down the ground rules to friends and family, no work would get done."

In the eyes of friends and family, being at home was interpreted as being available for socialising.

The second issue was that of having lots more time with the children. Cutting out the travelling helped, but it soon became clear that reading and writing for work was at odds with parenting. So Brenda brought the children to a minder, who lives close by.

Finally there is the isolation. While Brenda feels she is suited to work that involves a lot of solitude, she still needs human contact. Thus she now arranges to meet family and friends by appointment, just as if she were at work in town.

In conclusion, Brenda has had to work to develop this method of working. On balance she feels, however, that for her particular circumstances tele-working has given her the freedom to achieve her goals, both personal and professional.

(Reproduced with permission from Irish Work Life Balance website)

British Telecom (BT)

Carers in Employment (Joint) Employer of the Year 2005

Date of Study: 2005

Size: large

Sector: private

Region: UK

Type of Business: telecommunications

"We recognise the absolute benefits that can be gained for employers, employees and society at large of developing carer-friendly policies."

BT chairs Employers for Carers (EfC), an interest group that includes major employers, employers' organisations and Government agencies. As a Corporate Friend of Carers UK, BT supports the charity and also refers employees to their publications and Helpline.

Policies and practice on flexible working (which is open to all staff) are widely communicated throughout BT via their intranet site "Achieving the Balance". This site sets out in detail what BT policies are, ways of achieving flexibility and highlights areas of particular interest to carers. Through case studies, people are able to see exactly what can be achieved and how BT will help them create a more

flexible life. It highlights case studies of carers – both to demonstrate what flexibility can be achieved and to show role models within the business – all of whom are contactable within BT. Carers particularly value the insights of other carers and welcome the informal community of carers.

BT demonstrates a values-driven, open culture, which focuses on the needs of both the individual and the business: flexible working has achieved 20% less absenteeism than the national average and this figure is reducing all the time. Increased use of homeworking has led to reduced travel costs – savings of £9.7m – plus increased productivity as the home-based workforce reports being 7% happier than their site-based colleagues. BT call centre operators working from home handle up to 20% more calls, giving comparable or better quality responses, than their office-based colleagues. In addition, flexible working has helped BT's staff retention rates – for example, 99% of women return to BT after maternity leave, saving about £5m a year in recruitment and induction costs.

There are benefits to the community as a whole too: in 2001, BT estimates their flexible working policies reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 54,000 tons and conserved 12 million litres of car fuel.

Leadership from the top helps to convey the new culture at BT. Paul Reynolds, CEO of BT Wholesale is the work-life balance champion. Ian Bull, Chief Executive of BT Enterprises is a home-worker and other senior managers work flexibly and have elder caring responsibilities. Senior role modelling helps to dispel the fear of negative impact on career progression, which manifests itself in most organizations.

BT runs an internal communications campaign alongside the national Carers Week. This provides the opportunity to remind many and introduce others to the flexibility BT can provide to carers. During Carers week, staff discuss an issue about caring via Talking Point (an on-line moderated discussion forum). This forum enables people to voice their views and provides feedback on how policies are working within the company. The on-line accessible Diversity TV programme "Think about it" also features articles about carers, and caring responsibilities are featured in the soap-opera drama in the TV programme.

BT recently ran a flexible working competition to understand the depth of their outreach on flexible working. The winning team, which won an award, had a variety of reasons for wanting to work flexibly from wanting, simply, more time at home, to having caring responsibilities for relatives. This was achieved by the team and management agreeing on levels of cover and a common sense approach to meet their day to day business needs. They worked together as a team to devise new spreadsheets to ensure staffing levels were kept to agreed levels dealt with issues such as time recording which were resolved at regular meetings prior to the trial start date. The team have regular meetings to discuss any issues with their line manager who is pleased with the way the trial is running and has no issues regarding performance of the team.

Lisa Crowley who is young, single and a PA to a senior Director in BT Retail Service Agility. She lives with and cares for her elderly mum who is disabled. Her mum is extremely arthritic, which was worsened recently by skin cancer, and now has to use a wheelchair to get around. Lisa manages

her caring responsibilities on top of her work commitments by having a very understanding line manager, having the ability to occasionally work from home and making sure that all the areas of her life are dedicated the proper time needed. She says this is sometimes a struggle but the rewards are worth it.

"What is reassuring is that I don't feel I have to justify any absence. My manager and colleagues are aware of my situation, and they don't mind if I have to use the phone and office time for personal calls. This makes such a difference to me and my Mum."

(Reproduced with permission from Working Families website)

TERRY GEORGE

Corporate Social responsibility: The growth of a business phenomenon

Abstract

Work/ Life balance is one of the indicators of a responsible employer who is concerned to provide a “great place to work” for sound business reasons. In a world where product cost and quality often do not differentiate clearly between competing businesses, it is the quality of customer care as demonstrated by satisfied and motivated staff that can make the difference. This article puts the issue of work/ life balance into its wider context of corporate social responsibility.

Purpose

This first of two articles intends to make clear why the majority of the major global corporations now feel the need to report on their annual activities not just in terms of their finances and profit. It has almost become a given that firms with internationally known names report to their stockholders and their wider stakeholders on the social and environmental impact of their businesses as well.

This first article takes a descriptive approach with the purpose of explaining CSR to those who are new to the concept and are uncertain what CSR means. For people who may still be hazy about the difference between CSR, philanthropy and business sponsorship. This article is not intending to be critical or analytical. That more questioning approach will be applied to a follow-up article.

What is CSR?

Increasingly companies are beginning to recognize that society’s expectations of business continue to get more demanding. A recent survey concluded: ” A company’s responsibilities to society, environmental and labour practices are all seen by the public across 20 countries as more important than its economic contribution.²⁷

“CSR is about how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society.”(Source: Corporate social responsibility, www.mallenbaker.net/csr/)

“Corporate social responsibility is essentially a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment.” (Source: Promoting a European Framework for corporate social responsibility (2001) Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities)

²⁷ Environics’ Global Campus Monitor (2003) conducted among 1,200 undergraduates across the 20 largest economies in the world

"CSR is about business giving back to society" (Source: Making Good Business Sense (2000) The World Business Council for Sustainable Development)

"For the Academy, CSR is about the management of a company's impact on its stakeholders, the environment and the community in which it operates. It is more than just the amount of money donated to charitable causes. It is about the integrity with which a company governs itself, how it fulfils its mission, the values it has and what it wants to stand for, how it engages with its stakeholders, and how it measures its impacts and publicly reports its activities." (Source: CSR Academy (2004) The CSR competency Framework, www.csracademy.org.uk)

Customer satisfaction is where CSR begins and the bottom line is where it ends.

Why is a study of CSR important?

Progressive policies in the modern business world owe a great debt to the unethical behaviour of a number of high-profile globalised companies:

The verdict on the CEO of Enron in May 2006 reminded the world of the events which shook the sense of financial probity in the USA, leaving thousands of employees robbed of their retirement funds and the state of California struggling in the supply of its electricity.

In 1999, the world was shaken by photos of nine-year old children sewing Nike footballs in sweatshops in Pakistan. Since NGO have frequently highlighted dubious practices in the developing world as global giants out-source their manufacturing.

EXXON Valdez, the world's largest environmental disaster to-date in 1989, left the coastline of Alaska devastated for years, fifteen years later large elements of the ecosystem still had not recovered and the livelihoods of fishermen were severely reduced. A disaster made worse by a CEO who appeared before the world's TV screens and seemed to be both uninformed about the disaster his company had created and appeared not to care.

The advent of instant mass media brought these events into the world's living rooms. Is it any wonder that in recent surveys 48% of the global public declared little or no trust in large companies!²⁸ In a recent survey in the UK 62% of British adults said they do not trust business leaders.²⁹

Kraft, Nestle, Proctor & Gamble, Shell, BP, Microsoft, BBC, Unilever, Vodaphone, Starbucks, L'Oreál, Cadbury Schweppes, E-ON, Sony, Orange. Just a handful of the respected big-name companies who have incorporated reporting on the social and environmental impact of their business into their annual reporting systems, the so-called Triple bottom-line: How is our business doing: financially, environmental, socially. There is hardly a company within the US Fortune 500 Group that has not fully developed CSR practices and policies. More than half of the top 250 companies in the UK reports on environmental, social or ethical performance showing that non-financial disclosures have become of mainstream interest to outside stakeholders.³⁰ Not all of CSR companies and their reporting

²⁸ Voice of the People (47,000 adults across 47 countries), 2002

²⁹ MORI Trust Monitor, 2003

³⁰ Financial Times, 9 September 2003 Corporate Social Responsibility

methods are without their critics. But it is an indication of the breadth and depth of the trend towards CSR that “big business” feels it just has to account for their social and environmental impact, to their stakeholders and the wider public as well as reporting to their stockholders on the company’s economic and financial performance.

Scope of CSR

The “bottom line” is the traditional way for a business to report on its annual success. A message to shareholders and the money markets on the financial state of the company. Answering for their operations on the quality of their management and how well they have performed financially.

But the world is changing. And changing fast. Outside stakeholders are increasingly taking an interest in business activity, especially in those firms that have a global reach. These wider stakeholders too are taking an interest, enquiring what – for good or bad – the business has done. How its goods and services have impacted on the world, on the environment and on society – either locally or wider. Some of these stakeholders are “internal”: trade unions who are interested in how the company treats and develops its workforce. Others are NGO’s interested in the effects of out-sourcing of the manufacture of goods to developing nations where regulation of industry is less rigorous. Others are customers who – while still prioritising value for money, accessibility to goods and quality – want to ensure that the products they buy do not offend their personal values, such as cosmetics that have been tested on animals.

“Triple Bottom-line”

The phrase has become a by-word for the progressive business which claims to take its behaviour responsibly. A CSR company reports annually on its financial performance as always but now it also comments formally on the effects its operations has had on the planet and the impact of the business on society,:

Economic performance

The financial bottom line is predominantly the focus of financial analysts. It does not address the questioning demands of the wider network of stakeholders that surrounds every global company. But a business ignores prioritising its financial performance at its peril. No amount of concern for its environmental or social impact can relieve a business of its responsibility to perform well financially. Every CEO in charge of a struggling company knows that! But CSR companies are widening the scope of their responsibility to include the wider environment and the planet; its own internal environment, the climate within which its own employees operate.

Environmental effect

The impact of a business’s performance on the environment is reflected in two separate spheres:

What was it that prompted the tiny business that ferried the author to nature reserves off the coast of Wales to advertise that its business was “carbon-free”? For safety reasons, it had to use powerful speed-boats against the capricious tides, ironically burning up large amounts of fuel in order to bring its customers to

environmentally sensitive areas. Why did a small company with a fleet of only five speedboats feel duty-bound to put in its advertising that it compensated in other ways for its carbon emissions?

The sustainable development of a business is part of the PR a company projects about its activities to the world. A concern for the well-being of the planet may not be naïve idealism. Some businesses have demonstrated with considerable success, for example, the fact that reducing their emissions and re-cycling the heat they had previously emitted as waste into the atmosphere has significantly reduced costs. And contributed positively to the company's financial bottom line.

In addition to this concern for the external environment, many firms in the competitive market place have reviewed their internal environment, their own workplace, the way they treat and develop their own employees. In a world where quality and cost decreasingly differentiate between services offered by competing businesses, top firms are falling over themselves to attract the best employees they can. High-powered women executives who go off and have a baby should not be encouraged to return to work later and to take their expertise to a rival company. They will not if an effective HR programme has been organized that makes it possible for these valuable employees to ease their way back into work and offer their years of experience and expertise back to their former employer.

Social impact

Philanthropy has been the traditional way in which some businesses have contributed to society. In the 19th century, libraries were founded, concert halls built. The rich in business such as Rockefeller and Carnegie more than played their part. They made their money. And **then** they gifted to society lasting monuments to their name and business acumen. And the evidence from the Bill Gates Foundation, now joined by the world's second richest man Warren Buffett in June 2006, proves that philanthropy is still alive and well in the United States at least.

More of a 21st century phenomenon is ethical purchasing. Evidence from the success of the Body Shop group or the American ice-cream company and ethical pioneer Ben & Jerry's shows that value-based criteria in society do affect some consumers' purchasing behaviour. The anti-GM food campaign in Europe, the scare about iPods being produced in sweat-shop conditions, the manufacturers of the world's leading sportswear companies allegedly producing their goods in the de-regulated conditions of the developing world, reports of leading clothes manufacturers employing child labour in conditions that prevents them from finishing their schooling, – all of these provide evidence of a trend that society at large is keeping a close eye on the social impact of how a business operates. Many in the UK were shaken in 2006 when Body Shop was purchased by L'Oreal, a company whose policy on testing cosmetics on animals was not so absolutely clear-cut. A Brand Index survey has suggested that satisfaction ratings in the ethical cosmetics company Body Shop has slumped since the company was taken over by L'Oreal. According to the survey, satisfaction levels in the Body Shop have gone down from 25 points to 14.

The author himself enjoyed direct involvement in one of the UK's "academy" secondary schools. Fifteen years ago, a carpet manufacturer invested time, money and expertise in a failing school in south London. It had been a school in a poor

environment, attracting only those pupils other schools did not want. After management expertise from business contacts, pump-priming money from central government and the businessman, fifteen years later, the school is being held up as a shining example of what a community school can achieve, with outstanding pupil behaviour, high educational standards and excess demand for places. This pattern is being replicated nation-wide in the UK. Business investing in local schools and the future workforce, business working for educational excellence.

Businesses have responded to society's increasing demands and challenges. "Triple bottom line" reporting for many has become the norm:

- Economic performance
- Environmental effect
- Social impact.

Advocates for CSR – both in large and small companies – will invite business leaders to examine some core issues:

Customer service

If businessmen imagine that customer service is only about price and service, they should consider that the public's reaction to the EXXON Valdez disaster reduced the company's stock value from the largest oil company in the world to the third largest in just a few weeks. The public has also ensured that "EXXON Valdez" has permanently entered the world's vocabulary as a shortcut meaning business arrogance and ecological damage. In a world where price and quality differentiate little between the offer in the high street, for many companies, the value of a brand name has become huge. Kellogg's reckon that 97% of their stock value is attributable to their name. Dirty your name and you do serious damage.

Marketplace

Nike might have asked more questioningly what are the risk factors connected to the product you make when you out-source your manufacturing to suppliers in Vietnam or Pakistan. Or they might just have considered who are the customers about to boycott their products because the local suppliers they used were guilty of using child labour.

And Apple in 2006 – when they were accused in a British newspaper of having a supplier producing their iPods in the third world under sweat-shop conditions – might have wondered just how do you future-proof your business to go-with the emerging social trends rather than being tripped up by them.

And did Google seriously estimate correctly world reaction to their agreement to allow the Chinese government to control access to information when Google went live in China in 2006? Did they anticipate the reaction to their reputation as the world's most accessible route to e-information when they put considerations about competitive edge before social and business ethics? On this issue, one survey on a global internet forum for CSR specialists found a majority for maintaining home values while operating within the law (54%) and a strong 38% for not doing business under such conditions.³¹

³¹ Business Respect No. 92, April 2006, <http://www.mallenbaker.net/csr/>

Environment

There is no such thing as pollution, There is just a valuable resource in the wrong place at the wrong time. Are you paying twice for the things you never use? Once when you buy in your raw materials. And then again when you pay to have them taken away as waste. Many business have now worked out how to save money by handling their waste more effectively and cut down on unnecessary packaging.

Workplace

Your people are your greatest asset. You say it again and again. Do you really treat them like that? Do you nurture their pride in their company? Or do you burn-out their energy and commitment every waking hour while they plan to move to a more family-friendly company? British Telecom claimed it saved £3m in recruitment costs in the year to March 2003, since 98% of women returned after maternity leave. As a result of its flexible working programme, BT has 9,000 employees working from home and it reports an absenteeism rate of 20% below the UK average. Similarly, after introducing a more family-friendly policy of work-life balance, PriceWaterhousecooper, the global consultancy firm, reported in the UK an increase in return rate after maternity leave. In 1998 only 40% of their highly skilled and qualified women returned; by 2003 it had jumped to 80%. Unilever records 90% of its women managers return to them after starting a family but an internal survey found that 60% of the managers returning to work part-time would have left if they could not have worked flexibly.

Community

If you think you have a divine right to do business, your local community may surprise you. Like when you want to expand, they might not be so supportive. Or if you do not invest in the local community, they might not be able to supply you with the skilled staff you need to do business. And did Disney, the ultimate family-oriented company, really want an NGO splashing over the world media that workers building the Hong Kong Disneyworld were housed in inhuman conditions? Action Aid reported construction workers living in huts with 3-4 bunks used by 6-8 men, a shower stall which doubled as a toilet. And subjected to working untrained on constantly running machines with a high record of injury. Working 12-13 hours shifts for 6-6 days a week for 40 cents an hour. Is that the Disney dream its marketers promised itself?

Growth in interest

There can be no doubt that businesses move with the times. The world has changed, businesses have changed with it. The following causes are some of the reasons why – as a result of changing times – businesses have embraced the cause of socially responsible behaviour in business:

Advances in Information & Communication Technologies

When the Director of Shipping for EXXON was giving out good news to the press conference that the company had in place procedures that were coping with the world's largest environmental disaster, the world's media were overhead in helicopters filming the failure of such procedures. Through their own television

sets the world was able to judge for itself the value of those re-assurances and see for themselves what they were worth.

When the EXXON Chairman eventually went live on TV and showed he had not even read the latest plans for the clean-up arguing that was not the job of a Chairman, the media flashed instantly around the world into our living rooms his apparent lack of concern.

Instant communications means the CEO can no longer hide. Confronted by a strong tradition of investigative journalism in the world's media, bullet-proofing a business's financially-valuable reputation has become a major chore.

Stakeholder activism

It is everywhere. The media are out for a good story. NGO's in the developing world are casting suspicious eyes at global companies taking advantage of de-regulation. The supply chain, too, is under scrutiny, every Third world supplier knows any abuse of human rights is being watched and will be publicised. And it takes only hours for the world to be informed. Activism has become a professional undertaking. For some in the anti-globalism lobby it has become a full-time way of life. For the animal-liberation activist, the commitment is full-time. Even the middle-class housewife out shopping and wanting to avoid feeding her family unknowingly with GM-food – hardly the most radical of activists in the world – she too expects more of business rather than just making money. The concert-goers in 2005 who crowded into the Live 8 concerts around the world had a good time. But they knew what they were saying when these stakeholders chanted "Trade not Aid". Business leaders are not trusted any more than are politicians. They live under the microscope.

The demand for business to consult with their wider stakeholders has become the norm in terms of expectation. Businesses are increasingly being held up to account. Transparency in the way they report on how they do business is expected. The Enron scandal shook the corporate world of America when it discovered that its strict regulatory procedures could still let something on this scale happen. No longer is it acceptable for businesses to comply with the statutory minimum. A company that wishes to project itself as a positive and attractive employer has to be offering more than the minimum required by law. Or else!

Arguments over the influence of the energy industry on the Bush administration and US foreign policy remain unproven. But American companies are finding growing levels of attention being paid to their political donations by investors concerned about the use to which corporate funds are being put. According to the Financial Times in 2006, the issue is likely to become more prominent in the run-up to the November 2006 elections since candidates in close races will seek even greater funding from companies. Recent scandals have prompted demands for greater transparency on political contributions, which during the last big election cycle in 2002 totalled \$184m.

Transparency is now demanded. Otherwise one might get the recent accusations against the Australian company passing bribes to Saddam Hussein to help by-pass the UN food-for-oil sanctions. The increasingly sceptical public and the investing community still needs convincing and keeps searching for answers.

The days are long since gone when business could shrug its shoulders and glibly “That’s business!”

Supply chain responsibility

And if it wasn’t enough to be held accountable for a business’s own operations, global companies are kept under the microscope for the behaviour of their suppliers. It was not Nike that employed a nine-year old boy to sew footballs in Pakistan. It was one of their suppliers.

Stakeholders are holding big business accountable for the actions of their supply chain. And the more committed to CSR a business becomes, the more society stringently expects the well-managed, ethically responsible global company to police their suppliers in the third world to manage abuse of human rights, to wipe out unethical employment practices and to control pollution of the environment or in the workplace. Hypocrisy in the CSR world is dealt with more cruelly than any other business that has turned its back on the concept of “responsible business”.

Apple Computer produced a report into operations at its suppliers factories in China in the face of the criticisms in a UK newspaper in 2006 on sweatshop allegations. The report said that some discrepancies had been found, but there is no evidence of child or forced labour. The company's audit found that all workers at Foxconn's plant earned at least the minimum wage and over half the workers received more, with the opportunity for bonuses. But workers were often working over the 60 hours per week maximum. However, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) still doggedly criticised the report on the grounds that it had not been independently verified.

More positively, in July 2006 Greenpeace acknowledged the role of the food companies such as McDonalds in bringing soya traders to the negotiating table over the devastating deforestation in the Amazon. Multinational traders in soya beans had released a statement declaring a two year moratorium on buying soya from newly deforested land there. The move followed action by some of the leading food retailers including McDonald's which in turn had been prompted by world-wide publicity in the mass media about the deforestation issue. The group of traders and food companies remain under pressure on the issue nevertheless, with Greenpeace having warned that the moratorium will be seen as a token gesture unless further real change is delivered.

The purchasing power of the multi-national, it seems, is seen as a powerful weapon. The public expects big business to use it responsibly and is reluctant to turn a blind eye.

Government interests in CSR

Governments have long since taken an interest in the practice of business and regulated to control business behaviour. The trend continues:

The Indian government is to ban the use of children under the age of 14 working as domestic servants or at hotels and restaurants from October 2006. The penalty for breaking the law could be a jail term of up to two years. India is generally held to be the country where child labour is most common, and children working in restaurants and food stalls in particular are a highly visible sign of the

problem. The government said that such children are often made to work for long hours and undertake hazardous activities. Children are already banned from highly hazardous industries, but the ban is generally thought not to be effective. Doubts remain also about the viability of this latest measure, too.

A more novel approach has evolved in Europe more recently. The EU is probably in the lead among political institutions to have placed CSR at the heart of its competitive strategy. This will be addressed in a subsequent article. Suffice for now the statement that:

“The European Union is concerned with corporate social responsibility as it can be a positive contribution to the strategic goals decided in Lisbon ‘*to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*’ “.

Increasingly societal changes have shown a shift in balance from the dominance of government to regulate and control society to one where responsibility is shared more equitably with business and civil society/ NGO’s. These latter institutions have relatively grown in power and influence while those institutions attached to the nation state may have increasingly found themselves increasingly frustrated at their lack of ability to shape and manage events. For years, competing EU member states have argued in a self-protective way about a sustainable fishery policy while still fighting to preserve national interests. National governments negotiating with each other have come up with no solutions and continuing depleting stocks. Unilever wanted to stay in business and continue to sell fish products. With the power of their supply chain, they developed their own sustainable fishery policy. Business – acting in the interests of business in an environmentally responsible manner – succeeded where governments have consistently failed.

The business case for CSR

In a sense, there is none. Not if by a business case one means the provable reason why – in taking a course of action – a firm can expect to receive more benefits than it costs. There is no guaranteed business case for CSR, – just as there is none for innovation or marketing. Benefits from participating in CSR may be non-financial and hard to quantify; they may be long-term; they may not materialize at all. Just as some marketing campaigns can go wrong, just as innovations can fail to get to market. No guarantees, no bullet-proof business case. Success in doing CSR depends on the judgment in the selection of which actions to pursue. And the flair, skill and energy applied by management to achieving results. CSR is an art-form, not a science. It requires human judgement, humans are fallible. It is a discipline containing benefits, choices, dilemmas and disasters.

There are, however, common themes that emerge.

Reputation and risk management

Numerous surveys have been conducted to assess the growing movement of public opinion in the USA and Western Europe towards brands and companies with good

reputations. There is a body of evidence that a company which is considered to be socially responsible can benefit both from its enhanced reputation with the public as well as its reputation within the business community. The 2001 Environics International CSR Survey Monitor listed the three most important factors influencing public impressions of companies were: social responsibility (49%), brand quality/ reputation (40%) and business fundamentals (32%).

What I buy is what I am, – this is increasingly a perception of the purchasing public and it is a tool used by marketers to increase market share. While all businesses must first satisfy customers' key buying criteria- price, quality, availability, safety, convenience – studies show an increasing desire to buy (- or not to buy -) as a consequence of values-based criteria (“sweatshop-free”, not-tested-on-animals, GM-free, “child-labour-free”). Do I want to buy products tainted by such ideas if there is little to put between the competing products on the supermarket shelf in terms of price and quality? The western world has achieved levels of unparalleled well-being in the past years. Only a passing knowledge of Maslow's theory would lead one to expect a shift upwards to higher levels of concern. Worrying about your daily bread is being replaced for some with concerns for the world we live in, in the products we buy. And the way we do business. And this is particularly true of the well-to-do, the better educated, the well-connected and those for whom price is not the first consideration.

The distrust of business leaders and larger companies mentioned above is worrying when accountants are now adding the value of a company's brand image to the balance sheet. It is estimated that 96% of Coca-Cola's value as a business comprises intangibles like reputation and brand-image. American Express calculates 84%. What value does the company hold when such a valuable commodity as the brand-image is severely dented? The Exxon Valdez incident clear showed the answer.

In the context of the above social-change environment, a range of issues can threaten the value and future health of a company: human rights abuses in the supply chain, pollution incidents, environmental explosions such as in 2006 the accusations against Coca-Cola in India. Coca-Cola was alleged to have high levels of pesticide residues in its soft drink products. The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) said that its study, based on 57 samples from over 12 Indian states, showed that the drinks contain harmful residues. The group said that the levels in some samples exceeded standards by 140 times for the pesticide Lindane, a known carcinogen. Coca-Cola argued back that the NGO was not an accredited laboratory and did not operate to fixed standards. The company's products, it said, had been tested against stringent EU standards which had found no correlation for the allegations of pesticide residues. Nevertheless, both Coca-Cola and Pepsi faced a strong backlash in the wake of the attacks. Recently five Indian states placed partial bans on the sale of the products, with Kerala in addition opting for a more wide ranging ban. Of course, a management executive assesses risks every day, he has to convince itself that such incidents will actually bite. He had to assess the potential damage. Many might choose not to act, they might take the risk. But in the environment of CSR today and an increasingly demanding public global media, it is an ever-widening source of potential risk that the executive feels driven to examine.

86% of institutional investors across Europe believe that social and environmental risk management will have a significantly positive impact on a company's long-term market value ³². But despite that, less than 33% of respondents in another survey admitted to incorporating risks associated with sustainability into their risk assessment strategies. ³³ Evidence that there is still a long way to go before the link between the growing trend towards CSR and the widening of risk assessment is operating universally.

And the question of brand image is becoming increasingly important. And consequently reputations remain continuously vulnerable to market pressure. How can a product be top quality if it is produced in a sweat-shop? How can it be fun to use if it was manufactured by children unable to attend school because they are forced by poverty into work? Marketers go to great lengths to create an image of their brand in the public's eye. Many brands get tainted by stories that run counter to people's values:

Indian police in July 2006 rescued 160 children from a train that was taking them to work as child labourers at a plant run by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC). The children were aged between 10 and 14, and had been brought by a private contractor to work at the plant. Police acted on a tip-off, but failed to catch two agents that were escorting the children to the plant. ONGC, which features at number 13 in the list of India's most respected companies in the Business World survey, is a signatory of the Global Compact and states that it is committed to taking action against child labour.

Being caught out may not wipe out sales the next day. But such counter-productive images do have an impact, – especially when the competition has bullet-proofed theirs.

CSR offers a means by which companies can influence the attitudes and perceptions of their stakeholders, building up trust and developing the benefits of positive relations into business advantage. By encouraging firms to take a proactive approach to identifying risk across a widening range of features, including social and environmental impact, CSR offers the opportunity to reduce avoidable losses, identify new emerging threats and protect the value of its reputation.

Employee satisfaction

Business are run by people for people. Zadek describes companies as: „, no more or less than a human intervention for making things of other things and getting them into use” ³⁴ Businesses as such are dependent on its employees (people), on its relationships with its stakeholders (people) and on the creation of value (bought by people). It is not possible to separate employees out from a business, they are the business. Understanding and aligning their values with the business is critical for business success.

³² Taylor Nelson (2001) The European Survey on SRI and the Financial Community (conducted among 302 financial analysts and fund managers across Europe)

³³ PWC (2002) 2002 Sustainability Survey Report. PWC.

³⁴ Zadek, S. (2001) "The Civil Corporation: The New Economy of Corporate Citizenship" Earthscan.

"A new breed of job seeker is placing ethical considerations above financial incentives when considering a job offer. Future job packages need to reflect this new found ethical consciousness among job seekers if companies are to maintain their appeal". (Keith Robinson, website Director, totaljobs.com)

It is an ancient adage, "People are our greatest asset". Many firms today, even when faced with having to lose staff numbers over all, are working hard to attract and retain the best and most talented, Increasingly, especially among talented people, – in particular among the indispensable and well qualified young people every corporate wants to get their hands on and who accordingly can make demands to their own – good employment practice and ethical values are key factors in attracting and retaining the most talented in their workforce.³⁵

People spend a lot of time at work, they expect to grow and flourish there just as they do out of work. People want to work for a responsible organization.³⁶ Recent evidence in the USA suggests that 60% of people want to work for a company whose values are consistent with their own and that they will remain loyal as long as this consistency pertains.³⁷ An employer may support their image by encouraging employee volunteering and company charities. But fundamentally, the issue is increasingly whether the young bright and talented are proud to work for the company they are with. And that starts with the way the company does business – and the way it treats its employees.

Shareholder self-interest may play a part too: In June 2005, some of the largest shareholders in Wal-Mart wrote to the company urging action over the company's corporate reputation following a series of fines and class actions on workplace issues. Wal-Mart has been acquiring a name for poor employment practices. The letter, timed to coincide with the company's annual general meeting, argued that publicity around the poor reputation was beginning to impact on the company's share performance. The shareholders expressed 'serious concerns' about regulatory non-compliance.

Innovation & learning

Peter Senge's finding in MIT Review noted that corporate mortality is a symptom of a deep problem that affects all companies: they are poor learners.³⁸ In a survey of European business leaders, however, an astonishing 80% agreed that responsible business practice stimulates creativity, by integrating a focus on society and the environment into the main-core of their business practices, a CSR firm is per se a learning organization, it must be learning about the marketplace. The long-term survival of any business depends on understanding and responding to societal change. In a world of increasingly rapid change, given a planet facing significant social and environmental problems, dramatic changes in the way businesses

³⁵ The work Foundation (2002) The Ethical employee

³⁶ BITC (2003) Responsibility: Driving innovation, Inspiring employees. FastForward Research 2003, Business in the Community

³⁷ Environics' Global Campus Monitor (2003) conducted among 1,200 undergraduates across the 20 largest economies in the world

³⁸ Senge, P.M. & Carlstadt, G. (2001) Innovating our Way to the Next Industrial Revolution. MIT Sloan Management Review. Vol. 42. No. 2.

operate is inevitable. It was back in the more stable 1970's that Shell estimated the average lifetime of a corporate entity was forty years.³⁹ Rapid change and the drive to innovate continually threatens even that life-span now. The key to survival is renewal, innovation, creativity. Leaders of CSR companies are using their links to their stakeholders, society and the environment to promote innovation and are turning social and environmental learning into business opportunity.

Concern for the environment is creating product innovation. To save the environment in July 2006 Ford declared it would invest £1bn in the UK alone by improving ordinary engine efficiency and reducing the weight of cars through the use of advanced materials.

Or witness the growth of hybrid engines in cars. A new model which solves an environmental problem and has found itself a niche market among car-purchasing customers. But CSR does not come before the business case. Any product developed in the name of social responsibility which is a detriment to the success of the business is unsustainable. A zero-emissions car that drives like a dog and costs twice as much will not do. Performance equivalent to what the customer already has must be in-built into the design specification. Placing concern for the environment before implementing sound financial performance is not a business option.

Financial performance

The Institute of Business Ethics surveyed the FTSE 250 companies and discovered that those with an ethical code in place out-performed the average on economic and market value-added.⁴⁰ This mirrors the findings in the USA of a survey of companies which had performed successfully for fifty years. Those with a "vision" – a core purpose beyond making money – also achieved a far higher financial performance than their "non-visionary" peers.⁴¹

Corporate responsibility is considered by CEO's to lead to direct improvements on the bottom line. Nearly 70% of CEO's surveyed rated CSR as "vital" to profitability. Understanding how your company uses materials, re-considering the state of packaging, how waste and energy are managed have been proved to reduce operating costs. Integrating environmental considerations into new plant can reduce lifecycle costs and improve business efficiency. 78% of senior business leaders across Europe believe that, only by fully integrating responsible business practice into mainstream operations, will companies be more competitive, improve market positioning and profitability.⁴²

Preventing loss of shareholder value as a direct result of scandals should be every CEO's intention. In Australia in February 2006 the AWB Managing Director

³⁹ de Geus, A. (1988) "Planning as Learning" Harvard Business Review

(March-April 1988): 70-47, cited in Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organisation*, Century Business, London.

⁴⁰ www.ibe.org.uk/DBEPsumm.htm

⁴¹ Collins, C. & Porris, J.I. (2000) *Built to last: successful habits of visionary companies*. 3rd Edition, Random House, London.

⁴² Taylor Nelson (2001) *The European Survey on SRI and the Financial Community (conducted among 302 financial analysts and fund managers across Europe)*

was first to resign over an Iraq kickbacks scandal. During the food for oil sanctions, the company is said to have responded to the invitation of Iraqi officials to inflate wheat prices enabling them to grab then the excess to help fund Saddam's regime. Payments totalled Aus\$ 300m paid to Saddam Hussein. The AWB board has begun to take expected action to rebuild public confidence in the company, which wiped around one third from the value of the company's shares over one month. Shareholders are considering a court action against the monopoly wheat exporter. Shareholders are increasingly demanding greater transparency on what happens with their money. Damaged reputations as much as legal sanctions reduce market value.

Conclusion

Business motivation to adopt CSR

There are those who advocate CSR for its **intrinsic** value. Ethically, they feel it is the right thing to do. Some might even go far enough to declare it does not matter if it serves shareholders' interests. For example, some purists have been known to argue that a business should invest in the costs of controlling emissions – and thereby increasing their own costs – even when their business rivals do no such thing. It is the right thing to do environmentally.

Such a course of action might easily damage shareholder interests. As would refusing to pay bribes to officials in developing countries when your competitor does. And as a result the business rival wins contracts. But avoiding involvement in bribery, some feel, is morally the right thing to do.

Most businesses take a more **instrumental** view of CSR. They believe it works, they have convinced themselves it brings added value:

- It helps keep businesses within the law

- Philanthropic giving creates goodwill with customers

- Good HR improves productivity & staff retention – reducing costs

- Corporate “virtue” increases customer base

In this, such business leaders are convinced that benefits outweigh the cost and enhance shareholder value at the same time. That is their business case.

The following chart summarises where businesses feel they gain through involvement in CSR and where it impacts most effectively.

activity impacts most and whether what they are doing is replicable elsewhere or is a one-off.

The following chart summarises their reactions.

Why we are doing CSR	%
Company-led, thought-through business decision	92
Internal business need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employee motivation - re-structuring - recruitment - marketing opportunities 	38
External business need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social issues - threat of legislation 	38
Both internal and external need	23
How CSR is managed in the business	
Aligned with core business objectives, takes place with active company involvement through employees and resources	69
Community investment with no direct business involvement But half have close links with business interest	30
Philanthropy	1
CSR embedded into company strategy through policy or guidelines	16
Stakeholder partnerships	
Working with range of partners	30
Working with NGO or not-for-profit organisation	30
Working with trade unions	6
Impact and results	
Have a benefit to the business	94
Business benefit is a social impact	20
Success assessed by objective measure	25
Business effectiveness of CSR	
Potential for being repeated elsewhere	73
Being adopted by other companies	20
Remains on-going	95

In all the above, CSR is perceived by business respondents are primarily as business issue, it is pursued for business interests. Not for philanthropic purposes or causes.

Source: CSR Europe magazine (September 2003)

Further reading

Szerkesztő: Ágoston L (2006), Több mint üzlet: vállalati társadalmi felelősségvállalás / More than business: Corporate Social responsibility, <http://www.demos.hu/>

An excellent introduction to CSR from a Hungarian perspective, available in English and Hungarian.

Mallen Baker Corporate Social responsibility (website), <http://www.mallenbaker.net/csr/>

Up-to-date information from all over the world, newsletters published monthly. An easy way to keep up-to-date with the latest happenings.

Business in the community

A leading body in the UK for CSR, working with 700 leading companies committed to improving their positive impact on society

<http://www.bitc.org.uk/index.html>

Commission of the European Communities (2002) Corporate Social Responsibility: A business contribution to Sustainable Development, Brussels, COM(2002) 347 final

Further information

Grateful thanks are due to the organisations below that gave permission to reproduce the case studies in this volume. They each have informative websites which contain much more useful knowledge on work/ life balance: guidelines to employers, national legal rights of employees, employer of the year award schemes, draft policies and research reports.

Organisation	URL
Irish Work Life Balance (ROI)	http://www.worklifebalance.ie/index.asp
Trades Union Congress (UK)	http://www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/index.cfm?mins=468
Working Families (UK)	http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/asp/home_zone/m_welcome.asp