
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:

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- 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"

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