Just Another Day at the (Home) Office:

Employee Benefit Trends

An Honors Thesis (499)

By

Kathleen Newell

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Jennifer Bott

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May 2009

Graduation Date: May 2009
Abstract

As the American workforce has struggled to manage competitive work environments and employer demands while attending to active personal lives, work-life balance has become an important issue for most working Americans. Flexible scheduling and job sharing are two employee benefit trends that aim to satisfy employee needs while maintaining, and in many cases improving, an organization’s bottom line. Job sharing is the practice of having two individuals share one full-time position. Flex time programs allow employees to work non-traditional hours in non-traditional work settings. Corporate case studies, nationwide labor statistics, and a number of work-life balance studies prove that the benefits of flexible scheduling and job sharing far outweigh the costs of implementation. In order to support this conclusion, I provide an analysis of implementation factors for each work-life balance program and discuss a variety of direct and indirect benefits. Statistics on implementation factors and specific business outcomes are also included.

Acknowledgements

- I want to thank Dr. Jennifer Bott for serving as my professor, advisor, and mentor during my education at Ball State University.
- I would also like to thank Mr. Eric Wallace for helping me recognize my limits, and then showing me how to push them even further.
# Table of Contents

I. Introduction to Work-Life Balance .......................................................... 2

II. Flexible Scheduling .............................................................................. 3
   A. Flexible Scheduling Factors ............................................................. 5
      1. Personal Characteristics ......................................................... 6
         a. Gender .............................................................................. 6
         b. Race ............................................................................... 7
         c. Race and Gender ............................................................. 8
      2. Human Capital Characteristics .................................................. 9
         a. Education ........................................................................ 9
      3. Job Characteristics .................................................................. 10
      4. Work Hour Classification ....................................................... 11
   B. Advantages of Flexibility ................................................................. 11
      1. Human Capital Outcomes ....................................................... 12
      2. Business Outcomes ............................................................. 13
      3. Talent Management ............................................................. 15

III. Job Sharing .......................................................................................... 16
   A. Personal Characteristics ............................................................... 17
   B. Job Characteristics and Work Hour Classification ....................... 18
   C. Advantages of Job Sharing ........................................................... 19
      1. Talent Management ............................................................. 20
      2. Business Outcomes ............................................................. 20
   D. Mechanics of Job Sharing ............................................................. 21

IV. Conclusion ........................................................................................... 22

V. Works Cited .......................................................................................... 23
Work-Life Balance

While the term “work-life balance” was coined in 1986, the notion that working individuals need a comfortable balance between their respective lives at home and at work is not new. As the American workforce has struggled to successfully manage competitive work environments and increasing employer demands while attending to active personal lives and family needs, work-life balance has become increasingly important. Population demographics, new technology, and the changing meaning of work have made it vital for businesses to respond with new policies that help employees juggle their personal lives and work responsibilities. As Nancy Lockwood concluded in the Society for Human Resource Management’s 2003 Research Quarterly, “United States Management philosophy that expects employees to put work first, ahead of personal lives and family commitments, is becoming less accepted” (Lockwood).

Work-life balance is achieved when the demands of an employee’s job and his or her personal life are considered to be of equal importance. A 2002 New York Times survey revealed that 70% of more than 1,500 survey respondents said that they did not have a healthy balance between their personal and work lives (Lockwood). To an employee, work-life balance is about having the ability to both attend to personal responsibilities and successfully attend to work responsibilities without having to choose which one is more important. To an employer, work-life balance is about enabling employees to focus on work while at work, without being bogged down or distracted by personal issues. When employees experience equilibrium between their work lives and personal lives they are less likely to take off work, less likely to focus on
personal problems during work hours, and more likely to be committed to their jobs and
the organization (Lockwood). While it is often difficult to attach a price to the gains that
accompany an employer’s investment in work-life balance programs, it is clear that
employers should seriously consider implementing such programs for the benefit of
employees and employers alike.

Employers that support employees’ needs for work-life balance receive
numerous positive returns. Companies with a culture that fosters work-life balance
benefit from positive employer branding, gain the reputation of being “employers of
choice,” and promote organizational citizenship (Lockwood). Key measures such as
employee time saved, retention, increased motivation, productivity, absenteeism, and
decreased healthcare costs can provide information regarding the various returns on
investment in work-life balance programs. Increasingly, it is the cost of not adapting to
employees’ work-life balance needs that employers must consider.

The work-life balance options considered in this critique include flexible
scheduling and job sharing. These options have been the focus of considerable research
on work-life balance programming and have numerous implications for those
companies that support them. The costs and benefits of each respective option will be
explored and analyzed to produce a well-supported argument in favor of each
program’s implementation.

Flexible Scheduling

When the demands of an employee’s personal life make it difficult to work the
typical 9 to 5 shift, flexible scheduling programs are an attractive alternative. A study
performed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in May of 2004 found that more than 27 million full time wage and salary workers had flexible work schedules (Pritchard). One in four American workers can work a flexible schedule, yet only one in ten participate in a formal, employee sponsored flextime program (Economic News Release).

While a variety of scheduling options exist, the most popular flexible option is a “gliding schedule,” in which employees can vary their respective arrival and departure times while still working a specified number of hours every week (Beers). Employees on gliding schedules are present at the workplace during a company’s “core hours,” but may come to work earlier or leave later than employees on standard schedules. Some individuals on flextime schedules maintain the same schedule for a six-month period or longer, while others vary their work hours from week to week. Some employees want to work the same number of hours on each day they come to work, while others prefer a combination of longer and shorter workdays over the course of the week. Although a number of flexible schedule configurations are possible, the employer always retains the right to approve or reject an employee’s proposed work hours.

Many employers grant the opportunity to work non-standard hours on a case-by-case basis because it is commonly believed that offering a formal flexible scheduling policy to all employees would be detrimental to the organization’s operation. Numerous employers suspect that all the organization’s employees would take advantage of the flexibility, leaving the employer with a depleted workforce during crucial operating hours. Employee speculation that requesting a flexible schedule is a risky career move has also contributed to the low incidence of formal flexible scheduling programs. As
noted by Johnson, Noble, and Richman in the November 2005 Corporate Voices for Working Families Report, “A face time culture, excessive workload, manager skepticism...and fear of negative career consequences are barriers that prevent employees from taking advantage of flexibility” (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). While some workers may find that flextime is disadvantageous or unrealistic in their chosen career field, occupation is only one of a number of factors that affect an employee’s access to flexible scheduling.

Flexible Scheduling Factors

An analysis of data concerning flexibility in the workplace revealed numerous significant trends. In the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Monthly Review, Golden observed that an employee’s access to flexibility is significantly affected by personal characteristics, human capital characteristics, job status, and work hour classification (Golden). Personal characteristics include attributes such as gender, race, age, and marital status, while human capital characteristics are associated with one’s acquired education and training. Job status refers to the level of prestige attached to an employee’s position, which is influenced by the nature of an employee’s responsibilities and tasks and his or her level of education. Work hour classification refers to whether an employee works full time or part time, non-standard hours or standard hours, and whether the length of their respective work week is variable or invariable. Whether considered separately or in combination, each of these factors is a key determinant of employee access to flexible scheduling.
Personal Characteristics:

Gender

Common stereotypes support the assumption that women as a whole are less career-driven than men, and thus are more likely to desire greater work-life balance and work a flexible schedule. Contrary to this popular belief, men are in fact more likely to request and receive flexible schedules than women (Golden). The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ 2004 Economic News Release verifies that 28.1% of men report that they have flexible schedules, while 26.7% of women report that they have flexible schedules (Economic News Release). The occupational segregation that continues to exist between males and females influences females’ access to flexible scheduling. Female-dominated career fields are less likely than male-dominated career fields to be suited for flexible scheduling programs. The following chart lists the ten most female occupations in 2007:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percent (%) Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dental hygienists</td>
<td>98.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool and kindergarten teachers</td>
<td>97.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries and administrative assistants</td>
<td>96.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental assistants</td>
<td>95.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech-language pathologists</td>
<td>95.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses</td>
<td>94.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare workers</td>
<td>94.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdressers, hair stylists, and cosmetologists</td>
<td>93.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptionists and information clerks</td>
<td>92.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll and timekeeping clerks</td>
<td>92.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As recently as 2007, various “traditionally female” occupations have continued to exhibit significant gender segregation. While some industries support jobs that can be
effectively performed at nearly any time of day or night, these female-dominated industries are less likely to feature occupations for which a work schedule outside the hours of 9am to 5pm is reasonable. A significant proportion of preschool and elementary school educators are females and the potential for these educators to alter the starting or ending time of their respective work days is virtually zero. As public sector employees, teachers must be present during the school’s standard hours of operation, which are likely to be inflexible. Hairdressing, dental hygiene, and childcare are also female-dominated industries in which jobs are ill suited for non-traditional hours.

Race

In addition to gender, race is a personal characteristic that impacts an employee’s likelihood to have access to a flexible schedule (Economic News Release). While the interplay between race, gender, education, and other social factors makes it difficult to determine which individual factor carries more “weight” than the others in influencing access to flexible scheduling, merely considering race revealed statistically significant differences among racial groups. The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ 2004 Economic News Release presented the following data on race and flexible scheduling:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percent (%) with Flexible Work Schedules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An employee’s race significantly influences the probability that his or her job will feature flexible scheduling. In 2004, Asian individuals had the highest participation rates in flexible scheduling. As of 2007, whites had the greatest percentage of flexible schedule participation, followed closely by Asians. Blacks and African Americans had the third-highest rate of participation in flexible scheduling, while Hispanic and Latino employees composed the racial group with the lowest participation. Consideration of the percentage differences among the groups revealed a second data pattern: there is a distinct divide between the two groups with the highest percentages of participation and the two groups with the lowest percentages of participation. While there was a 1.3% difference in participation rates between whites and Asians, the difference in participation rates between Asians and African Americans was a whopping 7.7%. Asians and whites might jockey back and forth for the racial category with the highest participation in flexible scheduling programs, but African Americans and Hispanics lag far behind in this “race.”

Race and Gender

When both race and gender are considered, the pattern of access and participation in flexible scheduling is somewhat modified. It was noted earlier that the male population, as a whole, is more likely to have a flexible schedule than the female population, as a whole—but this rule no longer holds when race is accounted for. The probability that an employee either has a flexible schedule or feels that they have access to a flexible schedule is highest for white males. White males and Asian males were more likely to have flexible schedules than white females and Asian females,
respectively (Golden). In contrast, Black males and Hispanic/Latino males were less likely to have flexible schedules than Black and Hispanic/Latino females (Golden). The combined effect of race and gender on an employee’s access to a flexible schedule is attributable to the overlapping influences of racial and gender-based occupational segregation.

**Human Capital Characteristics:**

**Education**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Monthly Review further found that employees currently attending college are more likely to be on flexible schedules than employees who are not attending college (Golden). Employers are inclined to provide flexible scheduling opportunities to employees who are juggling work and a college education, though meta-analyses have yet to determine whether flexibility is the criterion or predictor in this circumstance. Employees with doctorate-level degrees and those without high school degrees are nearly equally unlikely to be in a flexible-scheduling program (Golden). While the lack of a higher education understandably funnels individuals into lower status jobs at organizations with fewer benefits and little potential for flexible scheduling, a doctorate-level education also appears to funnel individuals into jobs with little potential for flexible scheduling. The decrease in flexibility among individuals with doctorate degrees is attributable to the occupational distribution of such individuals. Individuals with doctorate degrees are more likely to be in career fields where working unconventional hours, those outside the 9 am to 5pm workday, is simply not feasible.
Job Characteristics:

Thomas M. Beers’ article in the June 2000 publication of the Monthly Labor Review notes that flexible working hours are most common among individuals in executive, managerial, administrative, and sales occupations (Beers). The following table of information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ 2004 Economic News Release illustrates the breakdown of flexibly scheduled employees according to occupation field:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Group</th>
<th>Percent with Flexible Schedules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management, business, financial</td>
<td>44.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales, office workers</td>
<td>29.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources, construction</td>
<td>17.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, transportation, material moving</td>
<td>14.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Occupation and industry clearly play a role in determining whether an employee has access to a flexible schedule. Occupations in production, transportation, and material moving had the lowest incidence of flexible scheduling (Economic News Release). Flexible work hours are understandably unrealistic in occupations such as local government, mining, and construction because the demand for these employees to be on the job is at its peak during standard employment hours. It is ineffective for a judge to have a 4am to 10am work schedule, and quite impossible for a member of a construction team to end his or her workday 5 hours after the rest of the team has left. Employer willingness and employee interest in flexible scheduling are certainly important, but these factors have little to no bearing on flexible scheduling when the job in question is simply unsuitable for such a program.
**Work Hour Classification:**

Schedule flexibility is further affected by whether an employee occupies a position that is full time or part time, was designed for standard hours or non-standard hours, and whether the length of their respective work week was intended to be variable or invariable. Part-time employees and those working more than 50 hours a week are most likely to have flexible schedules, a trend that is attributable to employee work hour classification (Golden). Part-time employees often work non-standard hours and have variable work weeks because employers commonly use part-time employees to adjust labor input quickly. Part-time schedules are often erratic, fluctuating on a seasonal or even weekly basis. A part-time schedule has greater potential for flexibility because part-time employees are not constrained to a traditional 9am to 5pm shift 5 days a week. Full-time employees that work more than 50 hours a week also have greater potential for flexibility. Those working more than 50 hours per week have the opportunity to alter their schedules as needed because they are similarly unconstrained by a traditional schedule. Employees that work either less than 20 hours per week or more than 50 hours per week are essentially gaining schedule work hour flexibility at the cost of work hour stability.

**Advantages of Flexibility**

Employers that embrace flexible scheduling demonstrate an interest in the personal lives of their employees and are better equipped to handle global competition and the effects of an aging American workforce. Johnson, Noble, and Richman concluded in the November 2005 Corporate Voices for Working Families Report that
flexible work programs contribute considerably to work-life balance and lead to a variety of positive work outcomes (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). The positive impacts of flexibility can be broken down into the following three categories: talent management, human capital outcomes, and financial, operational, and business outcomes.

**Human Capital Outcomes**

Employees' attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors are human capital assets to companies. Job satisfaction and commitment are two notable human capital outcomes associated with flexible scheduling programs. A 2005 Corporate Voices for Working Families flexibility study that included approximately 50 American companies established that employers have the capacity to influence positive employee attitudes and behaviors that will affect business performance (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). This study utilized qualitative and quantitative examples to support the conclusion that work schedule flexibility has a very significant positive effect on both employee job satisfaction and commitment.

Eli Lilly surveyed its employees and discovered that a linear relationship existed between the reported degree of flexibility and level of job satisfaction (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). Employees with the greatest amount of work hour flexibility and control over their individual schedules had higher rates of job satisfaction than employees with no work hour flexibility. Employees with the most flexibility also had less intention to leave the company than those on other schedules.

Astra Zeneca surveyed its employees and discovered that employees who reported they "have the flexibility that is needed," had commitment scores that were
28% higher than those who reported they “do not have the flexibility that is needed” (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). Committed employees identify with the organization, support organizational goals, and have a higher concern for quality than employees with little or no commitment. Eli Lilly and Astra Zeneca are two organizations that have experienced human capital gains by offering flexible scheduling plans to their respective workforces.

**Business Outcomes**

The Corporate Voices for Working Families flexibility study further indicated that flexibility influences employee productivity, absenteeism, level of client service, and organizational financial performance. Organizations that make flexible scheduling programs available tend to benefit from increased productivity and higher levels of customer service (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). When employees have flexible schedules and are able to tend to personal matters outside of work, they are less likely to have recurring absenteeism and more likely to be able to concentrate on the job at hand.

Employee absenteeism results in lost time and lost productivity in the workplace. According to Stephen Miller’s SHRM website article, the average cost of absenteeism in 2004 was $610 per employee. In 2005, the average cost of absenteeism per year rose to $660 per employee (Miller). As the cost of absenteeism continues to increase, employers face pressure to implement programs that reduce absenteeism and its related costs. Before absenteeism can be effectively reduced, however, the causes of
absenteeism must be identified. The following table presents the most common triggers of employee absenteeism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of Absenteeism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Entitlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stephen Miller, Work/Life Programs Tackle Unscheduled Absenteeism, 2005

Flexible scheduling programs have been shown to reduce employee absenteeism related to personal illness, family issues, personal needs, and stress. Rather than miss a full day of work in order to run personal errands, tend to an illness, or reduce stress, employees with flexible schedules have the ability to take care of these needs without sacrificing productive hours at work. When Johnson & Johnson Co. provided employees with new flexible work options and a family-leave policy, it experienced a 50% decline in absenteeism (Lockwood). While flexibility in scheduling does not reduce all forms of unscheduled absenteeism, it impacts a significant number of absenteeism triggers and ultimately improves a company's bottom line.

Total quality and value profit chain research maintains that employee retention and engagement results in customer retention and loyalty, which leads to an eventual increase in profit (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). Employees with flexible scheduling options are able to achieve greater work-life balance and are less inclined to quit their job for personal reasons. Customers are likely to receive a high level of service from such employees and are more likely to utilize the organization and its services in the future. Organizations with strong, loyal customer bases have higher long-run profits.
than organizations with weak, volatile customer bases. While it is difficult to place an exact dollar value on customer loyalty, employee productivity, and customer service, it is easy to calculate the costs of absenteeism and turnover that are attributable to a lack of job flexibility.

First Tennessee Bank trained managers at a select set of branches on how to be supportive of flexibility. One year later, employee retention rates at these select branches were 50% higher than the rates of other branches. It was also found that employee satisfaction at these branches had increased, and that customer retention had increased by 7% (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). At First Tennessee Bank, merely supporting work hour flexibility was enough to motivate and satisfy employees, reduce turnover costs, and increase customer loyalty.

**Talent Management**

If a company wants to attract new talent, it must have an edge on the competition. Workplaces that embrace and encourage flexibility are often seen as “employers of choice,” or organizations that are highly sought after because of their strong reputations. A 2003 global survey by Discovery Communications revealed that 95% of United States employees say that the availability of flexibility is a “critical factor” in taking a job (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). Work-life balance is one of the benefits that individuals with in-demand skills often seek from potential employers. Offering flexible scheduling contributes to an employer’s ability to acquire and retain talented employees.
In a work/life study at Accenture, a highly reputable global management consulting firm, 80% of employees said that their ability to manage work and home life roles had an impact on their desire to stay at the company (Johnson, Noble, & Richman). Accenture offers flexible scheduling programs to its employees, and it is clear that employees very seriously consider this benefit when making career decisions.

In an effort to estimate the financial benefit of maintaining its flexible scheduling program, Deloitte, an "employer of choice" for individuals in the field of accounting, focused on its turnover costs. Deloitte surveyed its professional employees, inquiring about the desire to seek employment elsewhere if the flexible scheduling program were cancelled. Deloitte then calculated the cost it would incur to fill the positions of those who would seek employment elsewhere if the flexible scheduling program did not exist. Deloitte estimated that it saved approximately $41.5 million during the 2003 fiscal year in estimated turnover costs by maintaining a flexible scheduling program (Johnson, Noble, & Richman).

**Job Sharing**

Are two heads really better than one? Job sharing is a work-life balance program in which two employees share the responsibilities of one job, with both employees working in that job on a part-time basis. "Job sharing is more than shift splitting by two part time employees; it involves partners acting as an integrated team, sharing the responsibilities, pay, and benefits of a single full-time position" (Hirschman). Job sharing has been a work-life balance practice since the early 1970s and is currently offered by 19% of all employers (Hirschman). A successful job sharing arrangement involves the
careful selection of job sharing partners, additional management responsibilities, and a clearly defined arrangement.

**Personal Characteristics**

Job sharing arrangements appeal to a specific set of employees and are most often initiated by the employee seeking to share his or her job. Individuals who enter into a job sharing arrangement maintain their current position on a part-time basis at lower pay, but many individuals prefer this type of employment. Prime candidates for successful job sharing are employees who seek to retain their position and responsibilities while gaining greater work-life balance. Job sharing often appeals to parents of young children, those close to retirement, students, and the disabled (Hirschman). Job sharing provides parents with the opportunity to spend more time with their children and less money on childcare, and aged individuals with the opportunity to slowly ease out of their current position as they near retirement. A job sharing arrangement enables students to devote more time to school and homework, and provides disabled individuals with a position that may fit their level of ability better than a full-time position.

Organized individuals who possess both superior communication skills and teamwork ability are strong candidates for successful job sharing arrangements. Job sharers must be solid performers who are willing to share their successes and failures with a partner. Partners must communicate with one another on a regular basis regarding projects and employee issues in order to present an ordered and unified front. When partners do not communicate effectively, there is a strong potential for
issues to be handled in an uneven pattern, some issues to be handled twice, or certain responsibilities to “slip through the cracks.” Organization further enables job sharing to be a successful venture because it smoothes the gap between partners. Partners are able to perform their roles effectively when they know where their work materials and documents are, and do not have to waste time hunting for information and current projects.

Ideal job share partners possess a variety of skills and competencies that result in overall improved productivity for the position. When partners are able to work well as a team, this arrangement utilizes the unique abilities and knowledge of each partner and thus adds value to the position.

**Job Characteristics and Work Hour Classification**

Jobs with specific duties and regular hours are most readily shared. Individuals in a job sharing program tailor their hours on the job to their needs, with employees alternating days, weeks, or even months with one another. The majority of job sharers arrange to have one of the employees work in the morning, while the other employee works in the afternoon (Hirschman). A job sharing arrangement is not intended for positions with low status and low levels of responsibility. Job sharing is further ill-suited for positions that include extensive travel or ambiguous tasks. Positions that require autonomy, tasks that are few and simple, and little or no experience are not practical for job sharing; sharing these positions does not add value to the position or organization. Employers are most likely to consider a job sharing arrangement when it allows the company to retain higher-status employees that would have otherwise left.
This arrangement is often a reactive measure that is pursued when an employee has already decided that they cannot or will not stay in their current, full-time position. Stephen Miller’s review of a job sharing study notes “By losing talent, companies also lose momentum, intellectual property, and succession planning” (Miller). When a mid to upper-level professional is unable to perform their position on a full-time basis and chooses to vacate that position, the organization loses an employee’s future contributions and faces the costs of lost productivity and turnover. Rather than lose valuable professional talents, skills, and abilities, an organization can retain an employee by enabling them to share their position.

Internal candidates who are already familiar with the work to be performed and the organization itself are potential job share matches. Job share arrangements can also be established between employees who have worked closely together in the past (Hirschman). Individuals who have worked with a job share-seeking partner in the past are likely to have a highly realistic job preview, and are able to evaluate whether teamwork will be possible. Human Resources can further advertise the position externally if the internal search for a partner does not prove successful.

Advantages of Job Sharing:

Careful planning and selection can allow both employees and employers to reap the benefits of a job sharing arrangement. Employees benefit from greater work-life balance and flexibility, while employers enjoy talent retention, reduced turnover costs, and increased productivity.


Talent Management

Melissa Lampo and Kathryn Manning are prime examples of a successful job sharing arrangement (Hirschman). For 3 years, Lampo and Manning have shared the position of Manager of Clinical Studies at Bayer Healthcare. Each of these women works 20 hours a week, with Lampo covering the first half of the week and Manning covering the second half of the week. Lampo and Manning had considered leaving Bayer Healthcare to achieve greater work-life balance, but a job sharing arrangement convinced them to stay and continue to offer their talents to the company (Hirschman). Lampo and Manning achieved the flexibility they required and improved the balance between their respective work and personal lives.

Business Outcomes

Job sharing arrangements feature fewer gaps in productivity than positions that are not shared because a job share partner is often able to provide coverage when his or her partner cannot come to work. Partners can cover for one another during vacations, sick days, maternity leaves, or any other type of personal absence. Rather than incur the cost of missed days and lost productivity, employers benefit from having a job share partner that may be able to fill in (Hirschman).

In addition to reduced turnover costs, employers further save on training and development costs. Job sharing brings together two talented, creative, and productive employees that each have unique skills and talents that improve the position. When each partner possesses a different set of abilities, the employer effectively gains “two minds for little more than the price of one” (Miller). It is more cost-effective for each
employee to perform the tasks for which they are already competent, than for the employee to train both employees to perform all job tasks. When one partner possesses the knowledge and skill to conduct exit interviews, the employer does not need to train the partner that is deficient in this area; the partner that is deficient in performing exit interviews can be responsible for performing the job tasks for which his or her respective partner is deficient. When each partner is responsible for the tasks that he or she performs best, training costs decrease and productivity increases.

**Mechanics of Job Sharing**

Some work-life experts maintain that job sharing arrangements require more management attention than other alternative work options. Instead of managing a position for which one employee is solely responsible, management bears the responsibility of overseeing and evaluating the work of two employees. Payroll must maintain two sets of employee records and payroll, human resources must arrange for two sets of benefits that may be similar or dissimilar, and management must perform two job evaluations for these employees (Hirschman). Like the job sharing arrangement itself, the performance evaluation procedure is established on a case-by-case basis. Some employees receive individual evaluations, some receive team evaluations, and others receive both individual and team evaluations. Performing team evaluations alone makes it difficult for a manager to determine which partner was responsible for a job well done; for this reason, both team and individual evaluations are most effective in assessing performance. In order to prevent any additional confusion or disagreement regarding job responsibilities and functions, the organization's human resources
department often creates a job sharing proposal that establishes the terms and conditions of the arrangement. When care is taken to ensure that job sharing partners are compatible and interested in working as a team, management does not face more difficulties managing the team than it does managing a single employee.

Conclusion

Flexible scheduling and job sharing programs considerably benefit both employees and employers. Flexible schedules are tailored to an employee's specific needs and enable him or her to accomplish work tasks on a non-traditional schedule. Job sharing positively influences work-life balance by enabling certain employees to share the responsibility of one full-time position. Flexible schedules and shared jobs contribute to employee satisfaction, productivity, and commitment. Employers that provide flexible scheduling and job sharing opportunities attract and retain talent, enhance the organization's human capital resources, and positively impact business outcomes. It is not a matter of how much the implementation of these programs will cost, but rather how much benefit they will produce when implemented.

http://moss07.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Toolkits/Pages/CMS_010588.aspx


www.bls.gov/news.release/flex.nro.htm


Swift, Mike. (2007). Strides to end occupational segregation in the ’70s and ’80s haven’t stopped jobs from being split according to sex. *San Jose Mercury News (San Jose, CA), March 12, 2007 Issue.*