Employees Feel Surprisingly Trusted but Inefficiencies Abound in How We Work

About the Research

In July 2015, the Flex+Strategy Group/Work+Life Fit, Inc. engaged independent research firm ORC International to conduct a telephone survey of a national probability sample of 617 full-time employed adults with a +/- 4 percent margin of error. The survey and the research report are the most recent installments in a biennial series of "reality checks" that have monitored the national progress of issues related to work life flexibility from the individual's point of view since 2006. The 2015 survey was co-sponsored by **Citrix**.

For the survey, "work life flexibility" was defined as having the flexibility in when, where and how you work. It allows you to flexibly allocate time and energy between your work life and personal life. A summary report with additional data and an infographic are available at **www.worklifefit.com/research**.

The Short Story

Almost all full-time U.S. workers believe their boss trusts them to get their job done regardless of where and when they do their work. While employees have become upbeat about their increasingly flexible workplaces, inefficiencies abound in how workers use technology and communicate, and there is a lack of training and infrastructure available to support flexible work.

With the growth of telework and open office environments, as well as the ongoing introduction of new technology, work life flexibility is naturally embedded in today's workplaces. However, we're stuck in the 1990s with outdated work and management practices that, along with a lack of training, put recent investments in workplace innovation at risk and could erode the current reservoir of employee goodwill.

Modernizing the workplace is about more than new floorplans, shiny devices and mobility. Clearly we have an unmet need and a huge opportunity for more widespread training and structure that supports flexible work. Leaders need to capitalize on the current wave of employee optimism and manage to the good that exists in their organizations in order to truly unlock the potential of their business and people.

Employees Feel Surprisingly Trusted

MY BOSS TRUSTS ME
to get my job or work done regardless of where and when I do my job or work.

9 out of 10 say…

TRUE
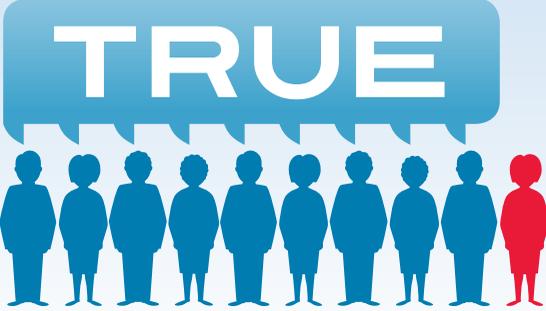
Historically, there has been an undercurrent of mistrust among management about potential "abuse" of work life flexibility by employees. However, our research found that 9 out of 10 employees feel their managers do trust them to do their jobs regardless of where or when they work. This suggests taking a more positive leadership approach that supports, rewards and recognizes employees for what they will do right with that trust. This requires more education to ensure employees, teams and managers know how to work together for flexible work success, and a recognition that we can't allow that one person who underperforms—with or without flexibility—to highjack the possibilities of trust-based culture.

One-Third Telecommute: Mostly Men, but Women Gaining Ground

Employees were pretty evenly split between where they said they do most of their work. One-third work from a remote location—a slight increase from 2013—while 34 percent work in a cube/open office environment and 28 percent work in a private office.

WHERE WORK GETS DONE

33%
remote location

34%
cube/open office

28%
private office

Men continue to represent the majority of teleworkers, 3 out of 5 in 2015, but the percentage of women increased significantly (39%) from (29%) 2013.

We no longer arrive at the same physical location at the same time every day with the same people to do our jobs. Work life flexibility is now inherent to the way business operates and it affects everyone from the individual doing most of their work from a remote location to the broader team to the manager or supervisor. When one-third of full-time U.S. workers report that they do most of their work from a remote location which includes home, business center or other location, the boundaries that used to separate work from the other parts of life are gone.

Where do you do most of your work? Would you say in a…

	TOTAL 2015	TOTAL 2013
Private office at an employer site	28%	30%
Cube or open office environment at an employer site	34%	33%
Remote location, which includes home, business center or another location	33%	31%
Don't Know	4%	4%

The survey reaffirmed that flexible work is not a "women's issue," with men continuing to represent the significant majority of teleworkers (3 out of 5 in 2015). However, the number of remote workers who are women increased significantly to 39% (from 29% in 2013). If we continue to insist that only "moms and women" want or need to work "differently," organizations will not invest in the new processes, skills and tools to unlock potential across all flexible workspace options.
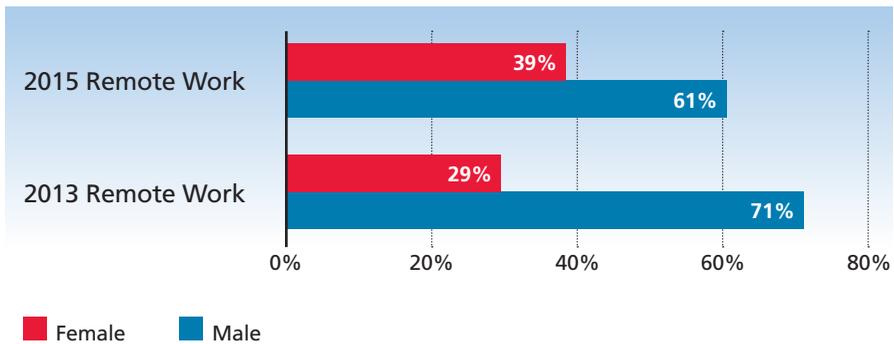
Remote work includes home, business center or other location.

We Turn to Technology More than Each Other

Nearly 60 percent of full-time U.S. workers use email, word documents or spreadsheets "frequently" to update colleagues about work progress and performance. That compares to 55 percent who meet in person and 43 percent who use the phone. To us, this finding means physical proximity no longer drives the method of communication. As such, performance in a flexible workplace should focus less on where work is done and more on making all types of communication and collaboration strategies—virtual and face-to-face—as effective and efficient as possible.

Tools **"frequently"** used to inform supervisors and colleagues about work progress or performance:

NEARLY

60%

use email, word documents or spreadsheets.

55%

meet in person.

Gen-Y (59%) & Gen-X (58%) significantly more likely to meet than **Boomers (46%)**.

43%

use phone.

Remote workers were **more likely** than those who work in a cube/open office to use phone.

Young People Like to Meet More than Boomers

Surprisingly, younger people prefer more face-to-face contact when updating supervisors and colleagues of work progress and performance. Gen-Y (59%) and Gen-X (58%) were significantly more likely than Boomers (46%) to frequently meet, in person, to keep others informed. These findings directly challenge the conventional wisdom that younger employees, especially those in the Gen-Y demographic, don't like to have conversations and prefer to communicate electronically.

How often do you use the following tools to inform supervisors and colleagues about your work progress or performance?
(Percentage who said "frequently")

	GEN-Y	GEN-X	BOOMER
Email/Video Conferencing/ Project Management	52%	67%*	55%
▪ Email, spreadsheets and word documents	50%	66%*	54%
▪ Video or web conferencing	7%	7%	9%
▪ Project Management Software	5%	8%	5%
In-Person Meeting	59%*	58%*	46%
Telephone calls or conferencing	38%	48%*	38%

*Statistically Significant Difference

Perhaps Boomers are continuing to operate the way they did when everyone came to the same office, every day, at the same time, and you didn't need to make an extra effort to coordinate your workflow by informing others. Your presence assumed performance. That is not the case today. Because face-to-face conversations are no longer the default method of communication, Gen-Y and Gen-X workers may have recognized their unique power to make connections and get things done in this new more flexible work and life reality.

Remote Workers Prefer Conversation Over Technology

One of the arguments against remote work and in favor of more open, collaborative workplaces has been that working together in the high-density open space with low or no walls encourages more conversations with supervisors and colleagues. What our research showed is that those who work remotely were more likely than those who work in a cube/open office to frequently use the phone to inform supervisors and colleagues about work progress or performance while those onsite were more likely to use email, word documents or spreadsheets. This finding helps to dispel the notion that teleworkers disconnect from the workplace.

How often do you use the following tools to inform supervisors and colleagues about your work progress or performance?
(Percentage who said "frequently")

	TOTAL	PRIVATE OFFICE	CUBE	REMOTE LOCATION
Email/Video Conferencing/ Project Management	60%	75%*	65%*	46%
▪ Email, spreadsheets and word documents	59%	74%*	64%*	44%
▪ Video or web conferencing	8%	7%	7%	10%
▪ Project Management Software	6%	7%	5%	7%
In-Person Meeting	55%	61%	55%	50%
Telephone calls or conferencing	43%	46%	36%	47%*

*Statistically Significant Difference

Slow Adoption of Collaboration and Communication Technologies

If the focus shifts away from where work is done to making virtual and face-to-face communication and collaboration more effective and efficient regardless of location, then web/video conferencing and project management technologies play an important role. Despite widespread availability, frequent use of such tools was in the single digits. Conversely, 8 out of 10 employees have never used project management software and two-thirds have never used video/web conferencing.
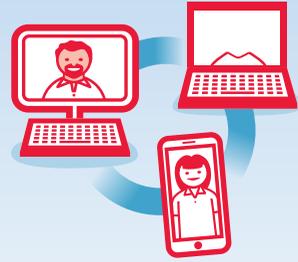
8 out of 10 never used project management software.

2/3 never used video/web conferencing.

The survey also found employees were inconsistent in where they saved and stored work across company and personal platforms. This makes it difficult for supervisors and colleagues to have easy, remote access to email, word documents and spreadsheets that full-time employees are most likely to use to inform others on work progress. This mismatch between the distributed way we do our jobs and the limited capabilities of outdated technology ultimately undermines the potential of flexible workplaces and the benefits to employees on and off the job. Employees, teams and managers need support and guidance to try different approaches.

Perspective from Citrix:
Technology's Role in the Future of Work

The Citrix vision for the future of work is that technology works for people, not the other way around. Your apps know which monitor or computer screen to appear on, and it changes automatically as you move from place to place. Your documents are always available to you, wherever you are and on any device you're using—even if it's something you've just written or sketched by hand. When you walk into a conference room, the lights turn on to greet you, collaboration software fires up a new session for your meeting, and every participant gets the link to join, without you having to do a thing. If you are in the car, one touch automatically dials a meeting phone number and participant code from your calendar and broadcasts the audio on your car speakers. The good news is that this vision is a reality for Citrix customers who leverage flexible work and IT infrastructure solutions. As a result, they can instantly embrace new ways of working while optimizing security, flexibility and ultimately, their experience.

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Technology Aids Working Flexibly and in Teams but Backlash Noted, Especially Among Men

⊕

Almost **7 out of 10** feel the increase in workplace **technology** has made it **easier to collaborate & communicate** with colleagues.

More than half said it made it **easier** to **work flexibly**.

⊖

28% said **technology** created **more work**.

Nearly **1/4** feel a **"bit like 'big brother'** is watching you,"with **men** significantly **more** likely **than women** to voice that view.

How would you describe your feelings about the increase in technology available to inform colleagues and supervisors about your work progress and performance?

	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN
It's made it easier to team up with and update supervisors or colleagues	69%	67%	70%
It's made it easier for you to work more flexibly such as occasionally changing your hours or the location of where you do your work	56%	56%	56%
It's created more work for you	28%	32%	24%
It feels a bit like 'big brother' is watching you	24%	32%*	16%

*Statistically Significant Difference

In a flexible workplace where one-third of full-time U.S. workers do their jobs from a remote location not at their employer's site, technology plays a critical role in getting the work done. The survey found that, for the most part, employees see the benefits; however, technology does require an extra level of effort to learn and manage. As organizations close the gap between the capabilities of the new tools to optimize flexible workplaces and adoption by individuals and teams, it will be important that these perceived benefits continue to outweigh the additional effort and management required.

Employers Committed, But Training Lacking

Almost all employees (96%) have work life flexibility.

56% said their employer still has a strong commitment to work life flexibility, up from 46% in 2013.
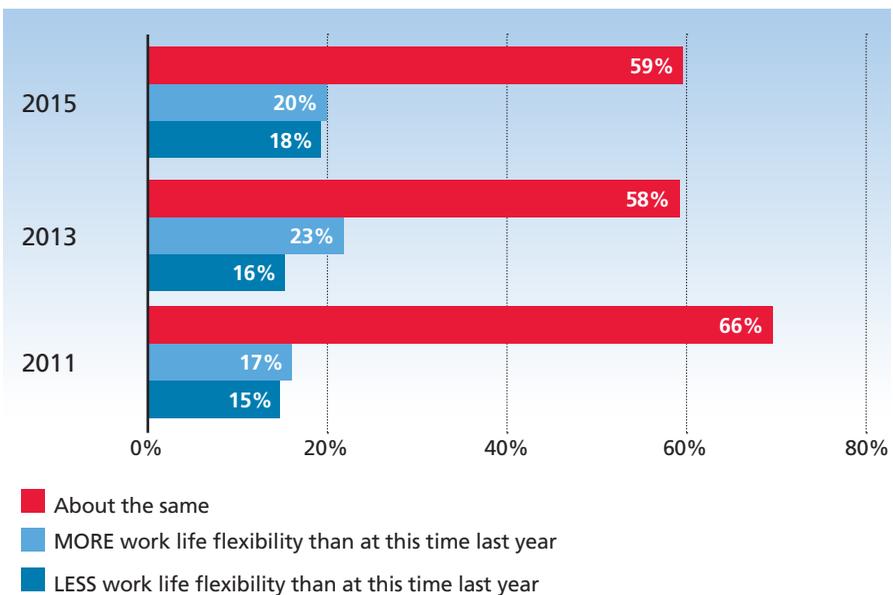
But, more than half (52%) received no training or guidance to help manage work life flexibility.

In 2015, almost all full-time U.S. employees had some type of work life flexibility, unchanged from 2013 and 2011. Work life flexibility was defined as "having the flexibility in when, where and how you work. It allows you to flexibly allocate time and energy between your work life and your personal life."

2015 — 96% | 3%
2013 — 97% | 2%
2011 — 98% | 2%

■ Have Some Degree of Work Life Flexibility
■ Don't Have any Work Life Flexibility
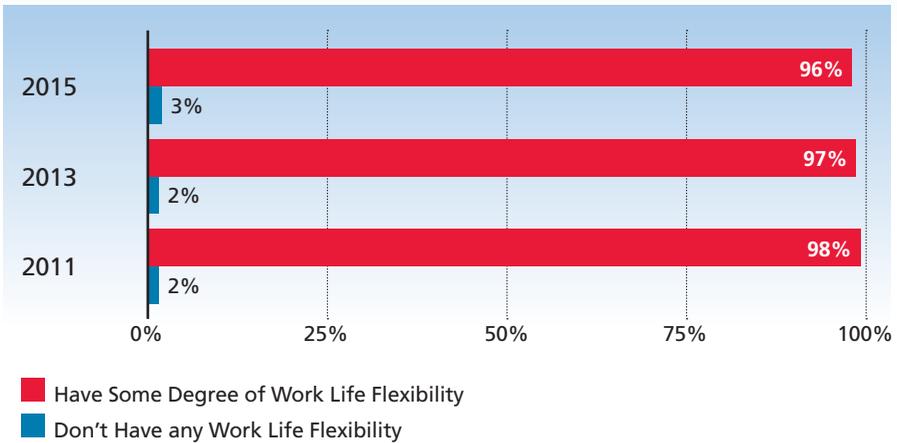
In 2015, as in the previous surveys, almost 8 out of 10 said that the amount of work life flexibility they had was either the same or more than at this time last year.

2015 — 59% | 20% | 18%
2013 — 58% | 23% | 16%
2011 — 66% | 17% | 15%

■ About the same
■ MORE work life flexibility than at this time last year
■ LESS work life flexibility than at this time last year

Once again, the survey reaffirmed that work life flexibility is and will continue to be a consistent and growing part of every organization's operating model.

Informal, Occasional Flexibility Most Used and Fastest Growing

Traditionally, work life flexibility meant formal flexible work arrangements or formal plans that officially change how, when and where work is done for a period of time. However, the survey challenged this assumption by showing that 6 in 10 full-time U.S. workers with work life flexibility currently use informal, occasional shifts in where and when they work, an increase from 55% in 2013, while the percentage with formal flexible work arrangements stayed relatively steady at 44%.

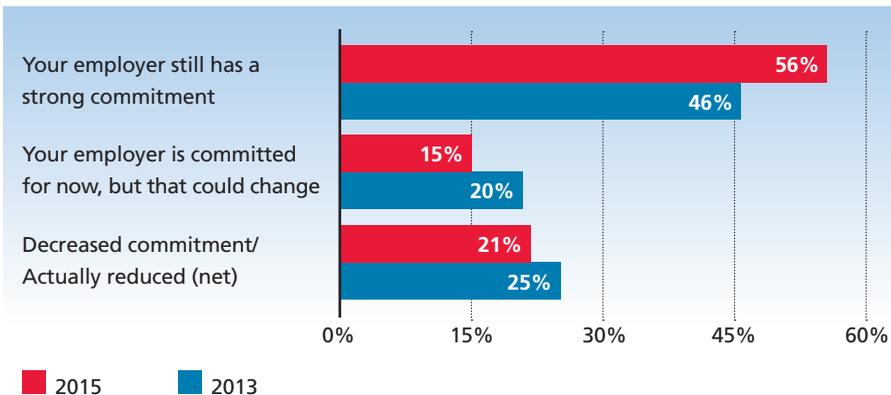*Which of the following types of work life flexibility do you currently use?*

2015
- 61%
- 44%

2013
- 55%
- 42%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%
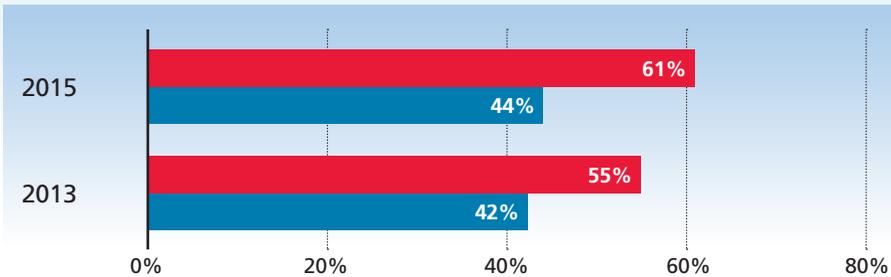
■ Informal flexibility such as occasional changes in your schedule or occasional changes in your work location other than your employer's office

■ Formal flexibility in which you have agreed upon an arrangement with your employer or supervisor to work a schedule other than a traditional schedule or at a location other than your employer's office

Employer Commitment to Work Life Flexibility

Perhaps reflecting acceptance of its staying power, the survey found that employees felt increasingly positive about their employer's commitment to work life flexibility with a majority (56%) noting they felt it remained strong, up from 46% in 2013. This growing sense of commitment to work life flexibility, coupled with the high perception of trust, creates a solid base from which to leverage the potential of new flexible ways of working to benefit both the business and employees.

How would you describe your employer's commitment to work life flexibility?

Your employer still has a strong commitment
- 56%
- 46%

Your employer is committed for now, but that could change
- 15%
- 20%

Decreased commitment/ Actually reduced (net)
- 21%
- 25%

0%   15%   30%   45%   60%

■ 2015   ■ 2013

Despite Supportive Culture, Barriers Exists

Despite a more supportive flexible workplace culture, employees still report barriers to further flexibility improvements. Slightly more than half (59%) cited at least one reason that kept them from using or improving their work life flexibility, which was relatively unchanged from 62% in 2013. Again in 2015, workload and lack of time was the top barrier (37%, unchanged from 2013). However, those saying nothing kept them from using or improving their work life flexibility, increased somewhat to 39% from 35% in 2013.

*Barriers from using or improving work life flexibility:*

	TOTAL 2015	TOTAL 2013
ANY reason	59%	62%
Your workload has increased or you have no time for flexibility	37%	37%
You might make less money or lose your job	24%	28%
You struggle with how to manage your work and personal life schedule and priorities together	20%	18%
You might hurt your career and/or worry others will think you don't work as hard	19%	20%
You worry your boss would say no	17%	16%
NOTHING has kept me from improving my work life flexibility/**I am satisfied** with my level of work life flexibility	39%	35%

Training Still Lacking for Most

To optimize the opportunities in an inherently flexible workplace, individuals, teams and managers need to learn new ways to think, work and manage their lives. This requires training and guidance that is currently not happening.

The survey found that a higher percentage (47%) of full-time U.S. workers received training or guidance to help manage work life flexibility in 2015, but more than half (52%) remained on their own with no instruction. Those who received training or guidance were significantly more likely than those who did not to report nothing kept them from using or improving their work life flexibility/I am satisfied. (43% with training vs. 34% without training).

Does your employer provide any guidance or training to help you manage your work life flexibility?

■ No	■ Yes
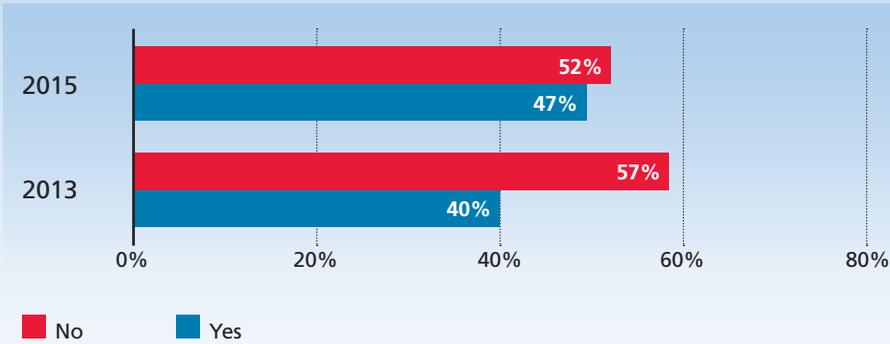
From 2013 to 2015, the level of training did increase but primarily focused on employees with formal flexible work arrangements, even though the majority of employees flex informally.

	2015 FORMAL FLEXIBILITY	2015 INFORMAL FLEXIBILITY	2013 FORMAL FLEXIBILITY	2013 INFORMAL FLEXIBILITY
YES Training/Guidance	59%	49%	47%	40%
NO Training/Guidance	40%	50%	52%	59%

Employers need to train individuals, teams and managers how to use the complete continuum of informal and formal work life flexibility. This includes small, informal day-to-day shifts in how, where, and when work is done as well as formal flexible work plans that officially reset the way work and life fit together. In addition to introducing a new set of processes, skills and tools, the training and guidance must also include opportunities to pilot these new ways of working.

As a result:
- Individual employees can take control of their work+life fit day-to-day and at major life transitions, and leverage flexibility, technology and workspace options to be their best on and off the job.
- Teams can coordinate their individual work life flexibility goals to ensure the work gets done productively and efficiently.
- Managers can coach and facilitate this flexibility by adding a layer of planning, communication and coordination to their everyday management of people and workflow.

Training, guidance and pilot opportunities must actively re-calibrate four "tensions" for success in the new flexible work and life reality:
- Flexibility and Structure
- Adaptability and Consistency
- High Performance and Well-Being
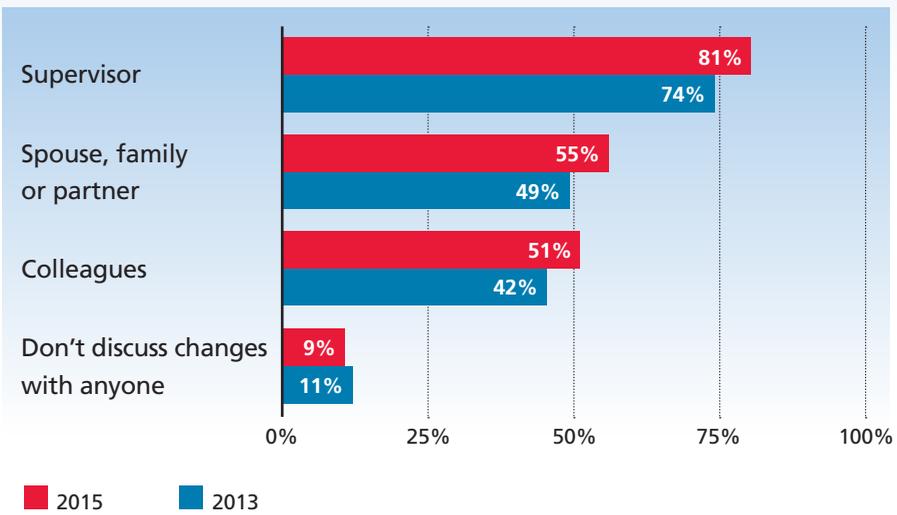- Business Needs and Personal Needs

Positive Outcomes

The survey found a number of positive outcomes for businesses and employees when there is adequate training, guidance and structure to support flexible working.

Better Communication/Coordination of Informal Flexibility

Because most work life flexibility is informal (occasional changes in how, when and where we work), employees need to communicate more effectively with supervisors and colleagues to coordinate individual flexibility goals. While employees were communicating more in 2015 compared to 2013, there remains room for improvement especially with keeping colleagues informed.

When you make those informal, occasional changes to how, when and where you work, do you discuss those changes with…

Category	2015	2013
Supervisor	81%	74%
Spouse, family or partner	55%	49%
Colleagues	51%	42%
Don't discuss changes with anyone	9%	11%

■ 2015 ■ 2013

The survey found that those who received work life training or guidance from their employer were significantly more likely (58%) than those who did not (45%) to say they discussed informal, occasional shifts in how, when and where they worked with co-workers.

When you make those informal, occasional changes to how, when and where you work, do you discuss those changes with…

	RECEIVED GUIDANCE/ TRAINING	NO GUIDANCE/ TRAINING
Your supervisor	84%	78%
Your spouse, family or partner	61%	50%
Your colleagues	58%*	45%
No one, do not discuss changes with anyone	5%	14%*

*Statistically Significant Difference

Better Morale, Greater Health, and More Engagement and Productivity

Finally, as our workplaces become more flexible, the benefits of such flexibility have become even clearer to employees. For each of the potential impacts—loyalty, heath, performance—7 out of 10 now see that without a strategic, deliberate, coordinated approach to work life flexibility both business and people are not able to reach their full potential.

Without work life flexibility…

	TOTAL 2015	TOTAL 2013
Employee loyalty and morale are affected	72%	68%
Health is affected—you're stressed or lack time for exercise and other healthy habits	71%	64%
Performance including engagement, creativity and productivity is affected	70%	64%
NONE—lack has no effect	13%	12%

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Flex+Strategy Group/Work+Life Fit is a flexible workplace strategy firm that has shown hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals new ways to manage work, life and business. Founder Cali Williams Yost is an internationally recognized workplace strategist, innovator and author who has shaped the global workplace dialogue for nearly two decades. Learn more at **www.worklifefit.com.** For media interviews, please contact **pam@superpear.com**.

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Mobile Workspace Technology Checklist

The blending of work and life is a reality and people now expect all of the innovation they have seen on the consumer side to be reflected in the technology they use for business. Unfortunately, this is much easier said than done. Businesses struggle to adopt and implement various technologies that will allow secure delivery of work apps and data to non-standard or employee-owned computers and mobile devices. This is where mobile workspace solutions come in. Mobile workspaces are the next generation "desktops"—they provide employees an always on, always connected environment that is available no matter where they go, no matter what device they choose to use, and no matter what connectivity they happen to be leveraging. It gives people access to all of the content they need to get their work done on the same devices that host personal content.

For people to get the most out of these new solutions, a mobile workspace must incorporate the following six characteristics:

☑ **Access to applications**. The number and types of applications that people use is growing. IT organizations now need to think about providing secure access to not only Windows apps, but to mobile and SaaS apps as well. A mobile workspace must provide access to any and all applications that a person would need to be productive.

☑ **Access to corporate data**. To get work done, people need access to their data. Whether it is a Word document, a PowerPoint presentation, or a set of customer contacts, without this data, work doesn't get done. A mobile workspace must include secure access to all of a person's corporate data so they can work or share anything at a moment's notice.

☑ **Access to collaboration tools**. When outside of the office, the ability to continue working with colleagues and customers is incredibly important. A mobile workspace must include the tools that will enable people to collaborate, videoconference, and share files as if they were all in one place.

☑ **Access to the intranet and other internal resources**. Accessing corporate resources, both apps and data, when outside the firewall is not always easy—but it needs to be. People working off the corporate LAN need tools to give them secure access to all of this content. A mobile workspace must make this possible by providing seamless access to content behind the firewall after appropriate device and identity checks are complete.

☑ **Content access wherever people are and on the device of their choice**. People work from a variety of locations, using a mix of personal and corporate devices. In fact, most information workers use more than 3 devices in a given day! A mobile workspace must be accessible from all of these devices regardless of location to ensure people can be productive from anywhere.

☑ **Flexibility for IT to provide services over any network and from any cloud**. IT services are no longer simply delivered from the local datacenter or over the LAN. Instead, services must be able to run in any cloud (private, public, or hybrid) and delivered over any network (LAN, WAN, 3G/4G, etc.). A mobile workspace must allow IT the flexibility to host services in the most appropriate place and deliver them, with a great user experience, over any network.

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