

New Research Finds Employees Sense Weakened Commitment to Work Life Flexibility

Lack of Training Contributes to Eroding Confidence

Madison, New Jersey, May 14, 2014—More than 4 in 10 full-time employees surveyed reported their employer's commitment to work life flexibility may have waned in the past year, despite the overwhelming availability of workplace flexibility, according to a new research report from the [Flex+Strategy Group/Work+Life Fit, Inc.](#) (FSG/WLF).

The findings are based upon a national probability telephone survey of 556 full-time employed adults conducted by [ORC International](#) with a margin of error of +/- 4 percent. The FSG/WLF research, part of a biennial study first conducted in 2006, also found:

- Almost all full-time employees (97%) reported having some form of work life flexibility in 2013.
- But, a majority (57%) of employees did not receive training or guidance on how to manage work life flexibility.
- A majority of employees (62%) continue to cite obstacles to work life flexibility with the number of employees noting their workloads increased/they had no time rising from 29% in 2011 to 37% in 2013. Women (44%) cited this as an obstacle significantly more than men (33%).
- A higher percentage of respondents (85% in 2013 compared to 66% in 2011) believe employee loyalty, health and performance suffer in workplaces without work life flexibility.

"It's not just Yahoo, Best Buy and Bank of America that have sent mixed signals on flexibility in the past year or so," said Flex+Strategy Group CEO [Cali Williams Yost](#), a flexible workplace strategist and [author](#). "Despite the fact that almost all full-time employees had some type of work life flexibility in the last year employees see and sense employer ambivalence toward work life flexibility.

"Ambivalence, however, is not a strategy," Yost warned. "Organizations need to be intentional and deliberate about what type of flexibility works for their business."

The latest FSG/WLF research found respondents were equally split between the 46% who described their employer's commitment to work life flexibility as strong and the 45% who described it as uncertain. Among those who described the commitment as possibly weakening, 20% said it was evident their company reduced flexibility, 5% said they heard rumors or noticed signs of a decreased commitment and 20% said their employers are committed for now, but that could change. Further, 8% responded they didn't know.

One reason for this eroding employee confidence is that nearly 60% of respondents said they did not receive any guidance or training to help manage their work life flexibility compared to only 40% who did receive such guidance/training. Those who did not were more likely to say it was evident their employer reduced work life flexibility while conversely those who did receive guidance/training were more likely to say their employer had a strong commitment.

Waning Employer Commitment/2

“We can’t expect employees to effectively manage and leverage work life flexibility when most receive no guidance or training. It’s not enough to just offer the option or provide a laptop,” explains Yost. “A strategy to maximize workplace flexibility should be as important to a business as a strategy to develop new products or identify new markets.”

More than ever, the need for such guidance is critical as a higher number of respondents in 2013—more than 8 in 10—cited negative impacts of workplaces without work life flexibility. A majority agreed employee loyalty (68%), health (64%) and performance (64%) suffer.

“The way we live and work is changing and how well we each manage that change can affect health, wellbeing and business performance. Work life flexibility, or fit, is not only key to employee health and wellness, but also an important factor in sustainable business success,” Yost explains. “With a better understanding of this new reality, employers can empower their people to take personal accountability and action and develop informed strategies that suit the unique needs of their business and their workforce.”

Yost advises organizations to analyze how, when and where employees are working and then develop a strategic approach to work life flexibility tailored to those findings. This includes providing guidance and training that helps employees do their best both on and off the job while helping the business improve productivity, reduce costs and increase employee morale and engagement.

Yost will discuss her latest research in more detail and describe the critical elements of Intentional Flexibility in a 45-minute webinar Thursday, May 21 at 2 p.m. EST. [Register here](#). A summary report and infographic are available at <http://www.worklifefit.com/research>.

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