

# Overview of the Report

## Project Purpose and Overview

Since 1990, the Boston College Center for Work & Family has been working with human resource directors and other organizational leaders around a shared interest in creating effective workplaces where employees feel successful in their work and their nonwork lives. Over that time, numerous programs, policies, and initiatives for flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have been rolled out with much fanfare and optimism. Indeed, many benefits accrued for organizations at the forefront of this movement, such as improved recruiting and retention, and employee engagement and satisfaction. For a while, it looked as if the utilization rate of these policies was increasing year by year.

Recently, however, the use of these policies has stabilized or even declined (Golden, 2001). From academic and corporate research, as well as from the popular press, we have learned that these flexible work arrangement programs are available but not widely used, some would say, not *usable*. For these and other reasons, there is much unevenness in the extent to which these flexibility programs are meeting the needs of employees or businesses. **It has been suggested that there are missing links in the process between setting up a program for working flexibly and making it work, which Lewis and Haas (2005) have labeled the “implementation gap” (p. 350).**

This report represents what we hope will be the first of many efforts to fill that gap. Rather than focusing on why these programs are not working to the desired extent, our focus is on what makes some of these programs very successful. Here we present in detail an array of exemplary programs from leading companies along with insights, recommendations, and strategies believed to be responsible for their success.

To find these exemplars, we contacted representatives of 20 companies, most of whom are members of the Boston College Center for Work & Family National Roundtable. We asked each representative if they had one or more programs for working flexibly that they deemed to be highly successful, i.e., “worth bragging about,” a program that worked well for the employee and the business. We interviewed one person in each company who was knowledgeable or responsible for the FWA program (usually an HR manager or representative), one employee who was currently using the program, and one manager of an employee currently using the program. In total, we conducted 58 interviews and gathered detailed information about the process of carrying out a variety of programs and approaches to making flexibility work. In addition to the interviews, we conducted a review of both practitioner and academic research related to flexibility in the workplace and in the lives of workers.

This report presents:

- A brief literature review of research about the effectiveness of flexible work arrangements
- Insights drawn from commonalities among the successful implementers
  - Recommendations for research to be conducted before implementing flexible work arrangements
  - Strategies for gaining commitment for the program
  - Tips for effective design processes
  - Methods for implementation of the program
  - Suggestions for monitoring the program, making necessary adjustments
- Detailed descriptions of 20 model flexibility programs. For each exemplar, we also include:
  - Drivers of the initiative
  - Obstacles faced and overcome
  - Recommendations for effective implementation
  - Perceived benefits to the organization.
- Compelling quotations from managers and employees who hail the success of the programs
  - Reluctant managers who are won over
  - Grateful employees who are loyal to the company

## List of Participating Companies

| Company                         | Topic   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Alcatel-Lucent                  | Part-Time Work  |
| American Airlines               | BOLD Initiative                                       |
| AstraZeneca                     | New Approach for Flexible Work Arrangements           |
| Baxter                          | Alternative Work Arrangements Proposal Kit            |
| Best Buy & CultureRx            | Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE)                  |
| Booz Allen                      | Teleworking   |
| Dell                            | Virtual Call Centers                                  |
| Deloitte & Touche USA LLP       | Personal Pursuits Program                             |
| Eli Lilly & Company             | Teleworking   |
| First Horizon                   | Prime-Time Schedule                                   |
| GlaxoSmithKline                 | Part-Time Sales Force                                 |
| Hewlett-Packard                 | Teleworking and Job Sharing                           |
| Intel                           | New Parent Reintegration                              |
| International Business Machines | IBM Flexible Work Options–New Communications Strategy |
| KPMG                            | Reduced Workload Model                                |
| MITRE                           | Phased Retirement                                     |
| PriceWaterhouse-Coopers LLP     | FWA Database  |
| Raytheon                        | 9/8o Work Schedule                                    |
| Takeda Pharmaceuticals          | Work Paths  |
| TAP Pharmaceuticals             | Job Sharing for Field Sales Representatives           |

## Intended Audience

Our hope is that this report will be of value to a wide audience, as our findings include not only detailed reviews of specific types of flexible work arrangements, but also insights as to what made them particularly successful. It is especially intended as a reference tool for work-life professionals, and others charged with implementing flexible work arrangements in their companies. The Executive Summary and selected other portions of the report may also be used by leaders and managers in anticipating obstacles that they may face in developing new ways of working. The report may also be useful to senior managers, employees, and academics. The report can be useful in its entirety or by referring to one or more of its many parts noted above.