

May 2012

Prepared by the Boston College Center for Work & Family

CWF RESOURCES:

[Work-Life in China](#) Executive Briefing

[Work-Life in India](#) Executive Briefing

[Work-Life In Japan](#) Executive Briefing

[Work and Life in China](#) Report

[Flexible Work Arrangements in Asia](#) Report (username: global; password: metrics)

[EAP in China](#) BCCWF information request (username: global; password: metrics)

FLEXIBILITY RESEARCH:

- [Does Working From Home Work? Evidence From A Chinese Experiment](#), March 2012, by N. Bloom, J. Liang, J. Roberts and Z. J. Ying.

The frequency of working from home has been rising rapidly in the US, with over 10% of the workforce now regularly working from home, but researchers have had difficulty quantifying changes in productivity in this work environment. Researchers now report the results of the first randomized experiment on home-working in a 13,000 employee NASDAQ listed Chinese firm, finding a 12% increase in performance from home-working.

Key findings:

- 8.9% increase in performance is from working more minutes of per shift (fewer breaks and sick-days)
 - 3.3% from higher performance per minute (quieter working environment)
 - no negative spillovers onto workers left in the office.
 - Home workers also reported substantially higher work satisfaction and psychological attitude scores
 - job attrition rates fell by 50%
 - Interestingly, despite success, a quarter of employees returned to working in the office following the experiment and a quarter of the control group began to work from home. Further research is examining age, career stage, and family status to better understand these trends.
- Driving Cultural Change to Achieve Work-Life Balance address 10 key barriers to work-life success in Hong Kong and approaches to overcome them (Community Business, 2011, attached).
 - A study of Australian employees found that flexible work schedules make a significant contribution to employee well-being and an employee's ability to balance their work and personal life ([Hayman, 2010](#), p. 76-87).
 - Merck's Global Flexibility Baseline survey found that engagement is 30 percent higher for employees who have the flexibility they need, and turnover intention is about half the level for those with flexibility ([Richman, 2011](#))
 - [Bain & Company's 2010 global flexibility survey](#) found that effective implementation of a flexible work model can increase the retention of women by 40% and of men by 25%.

ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH:

- [Harnessing a Global Workforce](#) Establishing trust—both between managers and employees and among team members—is crucial. Developing trust in a global virtual team is much more difficult than in co-located environments because team members do not know each other as well, must rely more on written and verbal communication, and have less time for getting to know one another and the specific role and contributions each person will have on the team.” The article provides best practices to consider.
- [Blessing White’s Employee Engagement Report 2011](#)
- [PWC’s 10 minutes on the CEO Agenda:](#) “Empowering people to share and collaborate through mobile technologies, wherever and whenever ideas may strike, has become a priority for many leading companies.”

FLEXIBILITY CORPORATE BEST PRACTICES IN ASIA

Dow Chemical Company: Flexible work hours are offered to all Dow employees in 13 countries across Asia. Core time is set in some locations, such as Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan and varies depending on local needs. The arrangement allows people to come in early or stay late. The arrangement was created to help employees deal with excessive commuting times, taking children to day-care center or senior care at home. They estimate that all employees use it from time to time. ([Flexible Work Arrangements in Asia](#))

Royal Dutch Shell: A package of FWAs offered to all employees in Singapore, consisting of the following: Working from home (most common), Career breaks – sabbatical, and Flexible hours. There are standard working hours, but subject to the operational requirements, employees may discuss and agree with their supervisors on different start and end times to suit their needs, Job-sharing, and Part-time work 2-4 days. ([Flexible Work Arrangements in Asia](#))

Hewlett Packard: Subject to business needs, employees are offered a flexibility program in China where they can work from home 1-2 days a week. Approximately 50% of employees use this option with significant real estate cost savings for the company and reduced stress for employees and increased retention of talent. ([Flexible Work Arrangements in Asia](#))

Daikin, in an effort to promote work-family integration, prohibits employees in Japan from weekend or holiday work and designates one day per week when workers must end work at a fixed time (BC CWF EBS: [Work-Life in Japan](#)).

Shiseido hires specially trained part-time employees to partner and share job responsibilities with employees who are parents of young children and are legally permitted to leave work early. (BC CWF EBS: [Work-Life in Japan](#)).

IBM, throughout Asia, has a flexibility approach with five major components: mobile, work at home, individualized work schedule, regular part-time, and leave of absence. **IBM** India undertakes measures for the advancement of women and for promoting workplace flexibility as part of its global diversity initiatives that are based on the three pillars of equal opportunity, affirmative action and work-life programs. (BC CWF EBS: [Work-Life in India](#) and [Work-Life in China](#)). IBM India also allows employees to go to work at the IBM office nearest their home, and provides home connectivity to most employees to allow work from home ([Professional Women in India report](#))

Procter & Gamble India has been offering work from home for its employees, and reduced work schedules, both of which have been a great enabler in maximizing productivity and helping manage work-life balance. (BC CWF EBS: [Work-Life in India](#))

General Electric’s Technology Centre in Bangalore (John F. Welch Technology Centre) initiative a program called RESTART, oriented at hiring women technologists who are on a career break. RESTART contains a detailed flex program and manager training in addition to numerous other supports. (BC CWF EBS: [Work-Life in India](#))

Deloitte India offers virtual connectivity such as laptop computers, PDAs, wireless computer cards and home internet allows professionals to have the tools to work away from the office ([Professional Women in India report](#))

GENDER AND WORK-LIFE IN INDIA

Trend: India has a significant “leaking pipeline” which takes place early on in a woman’s career - from junior to middle level positions (Source: [Gender Diversity Benchmark Asia 2011](#)).

Implications:

- At the junior level, women comprise just under 29% of the workforce in MNEs in India, which drops off to just under 15% at the middle level, an attrition rate of almost 50%, and to under 10% of the workforce at the senior level.
- As female workers face the transition to middle management, with the additional time and responsibilities involved, a significant number decide to drop out of the workforce altogether to focus on household responsibilities. Their partner’s income provides the necessary financial cushion. (**Source:** Economics Journal: [Why Do Indian Women Drop Out of the Workforce?](#), WSJ 2011).

Actions

- Provide assistance with career planning from an early stage. Present options that are available for women at different stages in her career and life so that managing a family and a career is seen as an achievable goal (Source: [Gender Diversity Benchmark Asia 2011](#)).
- Offer flexible arrangements including reduced hours, career break leave, responsibility leave, and parental leave.
- Develop programs for women that do drop out of the workforce to maintain an ongoing relationship and assist with re-entry. (see GE’s RESTART program as an example: [Work-Life in India](#) 2009)
- Promote programs for the advancement of women which are essential for attraction, development, and retention of women in a culture that does not empower women. (Source: CWF’s Executive Briefing: [Work-Life in India](#) 2009)

Trend: Cultural and family expectations have a significant impact on women’s career decisions.

Implications: Certain career choices are made ‘to please parents’ while opportunities away from home are often declined because of not wanting to be too far from family, and in particular aging parents. At

the same time flexible work arrangements are not readily available and commuting hours are long, so juggling family life and a career can be especially tough (Source: [Gender Diversity Benchmark Asia 2011](#)).

Actions:

- Message flexible work arrangements
- Develop mentoring programs that present role models of women who have achieved both a successful career and raised a family.
- Offer opportunities for family to attend corporate events where their mother, wife, and daughter can demonstrate her professional contributions and successes.

Trend: India’s rapid economic expansion has boosted corporate profits and employee incomes but has also sparked a surge in work-related stress and lifestyle diseases. Moreover, very few Indian companies have done anything to tackle this (Source: Daily News & Analysis: [Survey finds 57% rise in work-related stress in India](#) 2009).

Implications: An astounding 87% of Indian women claim feeling stressed most of the time, with an additional 82% asserting they had insufficient time to relax (Source: Nielson: [Women of Tomorrow Report](#) 2011)

Actions:

- Increase health consciousness by providing more information about good exercise and healthy eating, and by providing health check-ups. Though some companies provide gyms, basketball courts, and other recreational facilities, the climate and culture make it difficult to exercise at work.
- Create a collegial atmosphere at work with opportunities for colleagues to interact informally, such as creating communal and casual spaces for chatting, listening to music, or getting a cup of tea or coffee with friends (Source: CWF’s Executive Briefing: [Work-Life in India](#) 2009)