

**Face-time, Trust and Change: Managers  
Tell the Truth about Flexible Work  
Research Study: Fall, 2011  
Sponsorship Opportunity**

**Overview**

Boston College's [Overcoming the Implementation Gap](#) was the first study of its kind to identify the best practices of companies who were successfully implementing flex on a broad scale. The best practices highlighted in that report laid the foundation, but the role of managers in supporting flexibility and the best methods for building their support remain an opportunity for further study.

[Life Meets Work](#), [Career Life Alliance](#) and [Boston College Center for Work & Family](#) have come together to conduct the first research of its kind to identify managers' concerns about workplace flexibility, propose solutions for overcoming their resistance, and implement successful flex pilots. The result of this research will be a blueprint for organizations to sustain a truly flexible work culture.

**Why Now?**

Over the past decade, a significant portion of work/life research has been dedicated to identifying and measuring the bottom-line benefits of workplace flexibility on an organization and its workforce. There's been little attention paid, however, to the challenges companies face trying to integrate flexible work into their culture.

Consequently, many companies find themselves with pockets of flexibility where innovative managers are making it work. Full-scale implementation remains elusive. Flexible work programs fall short of meeting the goals set by the organization. HR, Diversity and Work/Life professionals responsible for these programs are left to speculate why flex has not been fully embraced by, or adopted into, their corporate culture.

**Background**

In World at Work's 2011 [Survey on Workplace Flexibility](#), only 36% of respondents rated themselves high enough to earn an established flex culture rating. The average company rated their flex program as informal, yet aspired to be more strategic about flex over the next two years.

Three studies in the last year have identified the source of the problem. A study called [Alternative Workplace Strategies in the Current Economy: Results from New Ways of Working's Benchmarking Study](#) conducted by New Ways of Working, LLC cited executive buy-in and manager resistance as two of the top three barriers to wider implementation of workplace flexibility.

The Booz Allen study, [On Demand Government: Deploying Flexibilities to Ensure Service Continuity](#), reviewed the implementation of flexible work programs by federal governmental agencies. In it, they attributed the lackluster implementation records of most agencies to manager resistance. The most recent data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management show that although 62% of federal employees are eligible to work remotely, less than 6% of all full-time federal workers telework even one day a month.

Finally, a joint study by the Sloan Foundation and AARP that found managers overwhelmingly supported flexibility, but most admitted that they don't know how to make it work.

### **Purpose**

We believe that managers hold the keys to successful, full-scale implementation of workplace flexibility, but that most of them are ill-prepared or unable to manage in a way that supports a flexible culture. We will identify and address managers' concerns and provide solutions that help them become champions for workplace flexibility, so that companies can better achieve their strategic workforce goals.

The result will be a model for engaging managers in the wide-scale implementation of flex that may include:

- change management concepts
- ongoing supports for managers and teams
- training elements
- additional methods for overcoming face time

### **Audience**

Research participation is appropriate for any organization that wishes to initiate or expand a workplace flexibility effort.

### **Methodology**

1. Implement up to three flex pilots within each sponsor organization and measure their progress toward achieving a bottom-line business metric of their choosing.
2. Conduct online pre-pilot and post-pilot surveys of employees and managers participating in designated flex pilots. Conduct virtual focus groups of select line, mid-level, and senior managers within sponsor organization's designated area to measure their perceptions of workplace flexibility.
3. Design and conduct manager training sessions to address concerns raised in survey/focus groups and teach flex team management skills. Virtual and onsite training are available. Travel expenses for onsite training will be billed separately.

4. Implement additional manager supports and provide consulting help for flex communication and implementation plans during the study period.
5. Conduct post assessment survey with managers of pilot teams to determine key success components, barriers, and challenges in the process of implementing flex.
6. Compare perceived barriers before training & implementation with actual reported barriers after pilot period.

### **Timing**

The goal is to begin in Fall 2011 and complete by Spring 2012. The study will be published in the Fall of 2012.

### **Deliverables**

The findings from the research will be released in a white paper in which participants will be featured. Each sponsor will receive a copy of the findings specific to their organization and the overall report.

Sponsors will also have an opportunity to participate in a conference call with other sponsors to discuss the aggregate results. We will also work with sponsors to produce marketing materials to highlight participation in the study. These materials may include a press release, speaking opportunities, articles, and case studies.

### **Benefits**

Benefits of sponsorship include:

- Complete report with aggregate research results and analysis
- Customized report for each sponsor of the results from the manager survey, focus groups, and post-assessment
- Manager training sessions including tools and strategies to address flexible work concerns
- Ongoing support throughout the three-month pilot program
- Virtual networking and best practice sharing among sponsors
- Named sponsor of the report with company name and logo inclusion on the report, in all marketing materials and the websites of Life Meets Work and Boston College Center for Work and Family
- Promotional opportunities that may include:
  - recorded interviews for use on LMW, Boston College and sponsor's website
  - webinars to review findings and key takeaways
  - press release with possible national media coverage case study development and promotion
  - speaker opportunities at work/life and HR conferences

**Sponsorship**

*Sponsorship Price: \$20,000*

*(As an individual consulting project, this work would generally be valued at \$50,000 or greater.)*

