

required duty. For example, all employees may be required to be at work during the core hours of 10 am to 3 pm, but may have “flexbands” at the beginning and end of each day allowing them to vary their start and stop times.

- Part-time work allows employees to work a specified number of hours below the standard work week. In order to be considered a true “alternative” in terms of work-lifestyle balance, part-time work options must be *voluntary*, and employees who take advantage of the option must maintain their entitlement to full or prorated *benefit coverage*.
- Job share arrangements allow two workers to voluntarily share the responsibilities of one full-time job with salary prorated. Again, benefit coverage should be maintained (or at least prorated) if this is to be considered an employee-supportive option.
- Compressed work week (CWW) schedules condense the standard 40-hour work week into fewer than the standard 5 days. The most common formulas are four 10-hour days, three 12-hour days, or the 9-day fortnight.
- Telework, telecommuting, or flexplace allows employees to work at home or at another site during regularly scheduled hours on a regular basis.

In all cases, research shows that the criteria under which these flexible arrangements can be used should be transparent and there should be mutual accountability around their use (i.e. employees need to meet job demands but organizations should be flexible with respect to how work is arranged). With respect to work arrangements, employers should also let employees determine whether or not they wish to work overtime.

Supportive Work Environments

Organizations who wish to become best practice in the area of work-life balance should also focus on the development of a supportive work environment. What do we mean by this? First they need to get supportive policies in place (i.e. develop and implement policies around flexible work arrangements). Second, they need to recognize that these policies are necessary for balance but not sufficient. The organization also needs to make sure that employees are encouraged to use the policies and feel safe doing so (i.e. career not in jeopardy because take family leave). They also need to support their use by having senior management modeling the appropriate behaviour in this regard and increasing the number of supportive managers within the organization. Finally, they need to measure the use of the different policies, reward best practices in these areas and question managers in those areas where use is low. To make the work environment more supportive the organization also has to move away from a focus on hours to a focus on output. To do this they need to reward output not hours or face time and what is done, not where it is done. They also need to publically reward people who have successfully combined work and non-work domains not promote those who work long hours and expect others to do the same.

Our research in the area (Duxbury and Higgins, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001) indicate that supportive management is key to the creation of supportive work environments. Empirically, we have determined that supportive managers display the following behaviours: good communicators who provide positive and constructive feedback, listen well, coach and mentor their subordinates, and focus on output not hours. In other words, supportive managers are good at the “people part of the job.”

The question then becomes: How can organizations increase the number of supportive managers? Our previous research in this area would suggest that this can be done by giving managers the skills, tools, time and incentives to manage people. Managers can learn these