

METRICS MANUAL

Ten Approaches

to Measuring

Work/Life Initiatives

Supported by



The Center for
Work & Family
BOSTON COLLEGE
CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

by Kathy Kane

Chair, Advisory Committee for *The Metrics Manual*

THE CUTTING EDGE

The pace of change in the work/life field has been incredible. During the past two decades, we have witnessed an evolution in process. The work/life field began in the realm of the warm and fuzzy. Not very long ago, we “sold” work and family programs to senior management by telling stories that tugged at their heart strings. At that time, programs were viewed as “nice things” to do for employees, especially working moms. Policies, such as flexible schedules, were often seen as temporary accommodations that could be used for a short while until employees could resume a more traditional work life. A few years back, the term “work/life” replaced “work and family,” and it became even more clear that our “work” in the work/life field was not nearly done.

Today, the field is being challenged to move to the next level. This requires that we strengthen our ability to measure progress, evaluate results, and responsibly manage investments. *The Metrics Manual* lays some of the foundations for the work/life accomplishments that will be achieved in the future.

Becoming a Strategic Function

Work/life is just now joining the ranks of strategic human resource functions, much like the diversity and organizational development fields. This emergent strategic perspective of work/life has resulted, in part, from a recognition that work/life initiatives can be a competitive advantage because they enhance companies’ abilities to recruit and retain top talent. Increasingly, on-campus interviewers for new hires indicate that students are raising questions up front about a company’s work/life environment. Recruiters are asked for evidence that their companies actually “walk the talk” of work/life.

Companies have also found that their work/life initiatives have helped them establish a positive public image. Media exposure of the field is increasing, and businesses compete to have their work/life stories worthy of print. Companies that provide documentation of their accomplishments come out ahead with the press. Data about availability, usage, and employee satisfaction bring credibility to the sometimes too-good-to-be-true descriptions of company programs.

As a strategic function, we should expect that a higher level of accountability will be demanded of work/life practitioners. This heightened accountability will require the development of metrics that can be used to gauge our progress. The metrics will not necessarily be purely objective nor only numerical in nature, but they will provide markers of our accomplishments. Furthermore, metrics will be indicators that we are serious about what we are doing.

FROM PRACTITIONERS TO STRATEGISTS

The work/life bar has been raised. Consequently, work/life leaders will need to become highly specialized knowledge experts. Many companies started their work/life initiatives with an internal human resource person who may not have had extensive experience with the functions that are associated with today's work/life programs. These pioneers in the field learned on the job and were responsible for the substantive development of today's core programs.

Over time, the role of the work/life practitioner has become more professionalized. Today, there is a growing cadre of business leaders who have this specialized expertise. Professionals in the work/life field now have many opportunities to develop and grow sophisticated knowledge and skills.

One of the dimensions of this emergent work/life expertise is the ability to substantiate decision making and document progress. Today's work/life professionals must be able to meet the challenge of measurement.

Chances are good that you have already felt some kind of push from your company to prove the value of your work/life programs with data. Or maybe you have been asked to justify concrete reasons for implementing a new program. You may have been quizzed about what the competition is doing, or whether employees who *don't* use the particular work/life programs offered by your company are impacted by their existence. Subjective explanations can often help shape opinions, but it is objective data that creates believers.

WHY METRICS?

Metrics are an important part of today's business world. The work/life field, if it is to be taken seriously, is not exempt from the expectation for measuring accomplishments and outcomes. A growing number of companies have invested millions of dollars in work/life initiatives, and they want to know that they are getting their money's worth. In fact, the top management in some companies are also looking for an additional return on that investment. In concept, the metrics process for work/life programs is not dissimilar to metrics processes for other parts of your business. The main difference is that we are just not used to having to be so accountable.

Getting Ready to Start

If you have an established work/life program, chances are that you have already used some of the metrics discussed in this manual. Many companies have done some sort of benchmarking before getting started, whether through a formal or informal process. Many have also conducted needs assessments in varying degrees of complexity. If your company has experienced any of these processes, it would be helpful for you to locate the resulting data and keep it handy. It may prove to be useful as you move forward.

Don't expect to begin using all these measurements at once. Rather, decide what is most important for the successful growth of your program and start there. It is critical that you understand your company's values and align your objectives and evaluations appropriately.

Before beginning, thoroughly assess your company's present circumstances. For instance,

- Is your program just getting off the ground, or well established?
- How much need has been expressed by any of the stakeholder groups for more information?
- What would help your program to be successful - more resources, more management support, a more supportive work environment in general, higher utilization?

Once you understand where you are, you will be better able to decide which metrics can help you move forward.

• **FUNDING**

You will most likely need to obtain funding and other resources before you initiate a metrics project. When making a proposal for funding, you should focus on measurements that connect to company priorities and values. Most management teams are aware of the resources that are already being spent on work/life programs, so many would like to see some evaluation of how they are working. Make sure that you understand what costs will be involved before you ask for funding - it's always easier to ask for it all up front than to have to keep going back for more.

You may be more successful with a funding request if it comes from a team or task force rather than just from one person.

• **STAFFING**

In several of our chapters, we recommend the use of a measurement team or task force. Although measurement projects can be championed by one person, in some situations it is more effective to engage a team.

To find internal resources for a task force or special project team, look for people who have achieved some success in their own field, have already expressed interest in work/life initiatives, are from diverse areas of the company, and understand the importance of sharing evaluative information.

You may choose to include a consultant or external support person to manage the process. This often works well when you wish to apply a high level of expertise to your process. To find external resources, ask for references from work/life managers at other companies, vendors in the field, or organizations that focus on work/life (i.e., The Boston College Center for Work & Family, The Alliance for Work/Life Professionals, etc.).

MEASUREMENT: A PATH TO BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

You will probably want to use the findings of your work/life measurement project to gain more support from management, convince line managers of the value of work/life programs, help human resource people implement programs, and to promote a broader understanding about work/life issues among employees at your company.

• SENIOR MANAGERS

Sharing the findings of your measurement project with senior managers helps to reinforce the idea that their decision to develop your company's work/life initiatives was a good one. If senior management was the empowering force in initiating your work/life programs, then you owe them accountability for their investment. In addition, senior managers may become work/life champions if you can give them a good story to share when they are speaking to internal or external stakeholders or the public.

• MIDDLE MANAGERS

At most companies, some middle managers highly value work/life programs whereas others remain skeptical. Sometimes, middle managers recognize that these programs have helped them to successfully keep good people, so confirming that with data is like icing on the cake. Others may not believe your data until they have seen it multiple times, over an extended period of time. The skeptics will need regular reinforcing messages about the value-added nature of work/life programs.

• LINE MANAGERS

Local or line managers often have mixed feelings about work/life programs. These managers are typically under intense day-to-day pressure to "get it all done," and in today's world that often means doing more, faster, with fewer resources. Making room for employees to deal with family and personal issues can be viewed by line managers as making it difficult for them to achieve goals and objectives. Data on the effects of work/life programs on turnover, absenteeism, and productivity can be useful. Line managers may also be interested in information about ways that work/life initiatives can help them attract the best talent. These managers need to see information quite regularly, but they need it in a format that is quickly digestible and immediately usable.

• HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS

Your human resource team can be important allies who can spread the word about the value of work/life programs because they are constantly in touch with employees and managers. Human resource staff members may be able to offer to managers and employees ideas about work/life solutions to their immediate problems. Members of your human resource team might also have success convincing managers to try something new which has a work/life twist. This team, perhaps more than other groups of managers, will appreciate the value of the subjective information that is gathered by your measurement project. They will probably also be interested in the objective data, because that information will help them to convince others about the strategic value of work/life programs.

• EMPLOYEES

Management within your company is not the only group interested in your information. From the beginning of your measurement project, you will want to consider how to share different types of information with your employees.

Before doing a survey or needs assessment, communicate with employees what you are doing and why. Carefully communicate that uncovered issues will be thoroughly evaluated and solutions offered as deemed appropriate. You can communicate that the company cares about its employees enough to assess their needs. Acknowledge up front that no company can solve everyone's work/life dilemmas, but that your company will do its best to address significant issues.

If employees have participated in your measurement project, you should absolutely share the results. Some companies are concerned that sharing information will set up an expectation by employees that solutions will be offered for all issues discovered. You can manage this challenge with some careful planning.

View communications with employees as opportunities to talk with employees about the company's commitment to its people. If appropriate, you may want to share information with employees about how your company's work/life initiatives measure up against other companies'. The most interesting comparisons will be to competitive companies and other local employers.

• SHARING INFORMATION WITH OTHER COMPANIES

Sharing information that has come from your measurement project with other companies requires thoughtful consideration.

If you are trying to benchmark your company against others, you may have to promise to share your findings in order to obtain their cooperation and participation. If you can obtain information about competitors through indirect means, it may allow you to protect the information you gather and use it to gain competitive advantage.

If you are intensely competitive with other companies for recruiting new people or retaining your experienced employees, you should seriously consider the impact of sharing information. It may, however, be to your advantage to share as much as possible with other companies. You may be able to obtain valuable information in return, possibly saving you time and money, if other companies have data you can use.

Information sharing may lead to some potential collaborative efforts that will solve mutual issues, such as jointly building a child care center.

• SELECTING FINDINGS FOR THE PRESS

The media can help you to share the results of your measurement project with "the public" who may be very interested in the findings. Work/Life issues continue to be a hot topic in the media; several major newspapers carry these types of stories regularly as do many trade publications. If one of your work/life goals is to enhance your company's public image, then you should be prepared to discuss your programs and measurement projects with the media.

When planning to deal with the media, decide what the message is that you would like to get across. Once you have the message, then build the case for supporting it. Metrics can be very powerful here. Many interviewers can understand the intrinsic value of work/life programs, but they are looking for data that proves it. Personal interest stories of employee struggles and subsequent successes are important components of the case you build, but they are more compelling when put in the context of supporting data.

While sensational stories might work with some journalists, it's the real stories accompanied by data that will appeal to the readers looking to learn more about your company. Additionally, anything that seems even a little different or new will set your company apart and give you a higher probability of finding your company in print.

DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

How you present your data will affect the receptivity towards the project and its findings. The following suggestions may be helpful:

Fancy charts and graphs typically are impressive, even in a company that is used to them.

Try to match your presentation style to the audience. For example, if there are a lot of operational people in a particular group, remember that they are used to reviewing results presented by business people.

Whenever your data can be linked to important business goals or strategies, do so.

And don't forget the "take aways" - handouts that can be carried back to a desk and serve as frequent reminders.

BUILDING YOUR METRICS DATABASE

Convincing others of the value of work/life initiatives is not the only use for the data that result from your measurement project. You can maximize the value of the information collected by creating a metrics database that can continue to develop. You may want to create a database that makes it possible for you to compare some of your findings with published research statistics or data from other companies.

If your work/life initiatives are to be truly successful, careful short- and long-term planning for their progression and evolution must take place. Accurate evaluations of current programs' effectiveness, as well as goal-setting based on internal needs assessments and external benchmarking, will allow you to strategically plan for this evolution. You can draw from your metrics database and add to it as your work/life initiatives grow.

Planning ahead will also help you be prepared for future evaluations. Once you begin gathering data, you can continue to build upon that information through use of your metrics database. Properly organized, you will be able to use the information you gather for future comparisons, evaluations of progress, and other in-depth analysis.

Try to think ahead about the next several steps of data gathering and metrics reporting so that the data you gather now can be reused or reapplied as appropriate. If you have the internal resources, someone at your company may be able to build a database for you. Otherwise, external support can be found through consultants or Information Technology experts.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

The Metrics Manual is an edited volume that has been organized into ten separate chapters, each one focusing on a different aspect of measurement. This manual was designed to help you get started collecting and presenting data about your work/life initiatives. We believe that the measurement processes presented in *The Metrics Manual* offer companies practical options for measuring their work/life initiatives.

We have been fortunate to have engaged authors who not only have specialized areas of expertise, but who also have been patient and understanding that it was necessary to make adjustments to their chapters so that they were compatible in structure and format with the other chapters submitted.

By no means are we presenting *The Metrics Manual* as the definitive text on the subject. The ten approaches to measurement presented in this manual will help you become more familiar with some types of measurement. This volume landscapes the current state-of-the art. We should remember that the work/life field is just beginning to appreciate the value of different measurement processes and we are really just starting to develop and refine the implementation steps. We are cognizant that new approaches are continually being developed.

CHAPTER I: BENCHMARKING: STRIVING FOR QUALITY

Benchmarking is a valuable process that helps you gather information about what other companies are doing in the work/life arena. In this chapter, Judith Gordon explains that benchmarking is most successful when a company has made a sincere commitment to Total Quality Management. These companies typically already value the benchmarking process, understand how the findings could be used, and want to encourage employee involvement.

CHAPTER II: REACHING FOR A VISION: THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE APPROACH

The standards of excellence approach to measurement encourages your company to continue to raise the bar. Sharon Lobel stresses, however, that the success of this approach depends on the ability of your company to articulate a vision which captures the *raison d'être* of your work/life programs.

CHAPTER III: NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Needs assessments are particularly useful when the company requires additional clarity about the priority of work/life needs before developing a plan of action. In this chapter, Marcie Pitt-Catsoupes suggests that needs assessments can also be beneficial if the company is considering making changes in the configuration of its current work/life initiatives and is receptive to employee input. Finally, this approach may be used if the company wants to check to see if work/life initiatives have actually addressed employees' needs.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYZING AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION

The analysis of availability and utilization rates can offer important opportunities for organizational self-evaluation. Douglas Creed and Maureen Scully take the time to point out that data can provide a window to look at workplace culture/climate and determine whether the work environment is actually friendly to employees' diverse work/life needs and/or supportive of the company's work/life solutions.

CHAPTER V: ESTABLISHING THE LINK WITH BUSINESS STRATEGIES: THE VALUE ADDED APPROACH

Companies that already carefully plan, communicate, implement and evaluate core business strategies are most likely to appreciate this important measurement perspective. Susan Lambert provides important information about how you can begin to measure the value that work/life initiatives add to core business strategies.

CHAPTER VI: MEASURING IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE APPLYING ACCOUNTING MEASURES TO WORK/LIFE INITIATIVES

The bottom line orientation of businesses suggests that it is always important to consider whether financial measures can be incorporated into assessments of work/life initiatives. Jeffrey Cohen and Greg Trompeter provide a number of suggestions for using standard accounting processes to measure work/life initiatives. They also remind us that there may be times when this approach may be difficult to implement because financial data are not always readily available or may not be directly applicable to work/life programs.

CHAPTER VI: EVALUATION: USING A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Evaluations explore whether or not programs are meeting expectations, making a difference in employees' quality of life experiences, and having a positive impact on business operations. Mindy Fried suggests that companies which value employee involvement may be especially interested in participatory evaluations because they capitalize on some of the fundamental principles associated with employee involvement teams.

CHAPTER VIII: EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF WORK/LIFE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS ON EMPLOYEES, SUPERVISORS, AND CO-WORKERS: INDIVIDUAL IMPACTS AT THE WORKPLACE

Companies interested in the overall effects of work/life initiatives on productivity may want to consider measuring the impact of these programs on supervisors and co-workers. Leon Litchfield helps us to reach beyond the boundaries of most measurement efforts which focus primarily on the employees who use work/life policies and programs.

CHAPTER IX: MEASURING IMPACT ON EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS RELATIONSHIPS

Companies may want to measure how their work/life initiatives contribute to positive relationships with external stakeholders such as customers, shareholders, and business partners. In this chapter, Phil Mirvis charts some new measurement territory, as he explores issues such as the metrics connections between the neighbor of choice and employer of choice strategies.

CHAPTER X: MEASURING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Companies that want to make the most of their work/life initiatives will be interested in understanding and maximizing the secondary benefits of those programs. Andrew Scharlach explains how measuring unintended consequences can surface some of the less visible problems associated with program implementation and utilization.

In order to make it easier for readers to compare and contrast the ten different approaches to measurement, we have structured each of the chapters into a uniform format.

In the text of each chapter, you will find the following sections:

- I. **Overview:** A definition and general description of the metrics and processes involved in measurement.
- II. **Background:** How the approach to metrics has evolved and its importance to business.
- III. **Key Questions:** Some important thoughts to keep in mind while you are assessing whether a particular approach would be a good fit with your company's needs.
- IV. **What is measured?** A description of the metrics yielded by the measurement process.
- V. **Stages:** A step-by-step description of the stages involved in the process of developing the metrics.
- VI. **Considerations:** Issues pertaining to why a particular measurement approach might work for you and what challenges it might present.
- VII. **Worksheets:** All chapters include worksheets that you can use in implementing the various stages of each process. This section of each chapter also includes an example to help illustrate the process. While all are grounded in reality, each are fictionalized - that is, none are exact situations that could ever be attached to a particular company's experience.

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IS JUST ONE APPROACH THE RIGHT FIT?

For discussion purposes, these chapters have been organized to stress some of the differences inherent in the alternative approaches. In reality, of course, there are many areas of overlap. Furthermore, these approaches are often compatible with each other.

As you read the chapters, you will see that often times data collected in one process can be used in part of another process. Understanding these links up front will help you to determine not only which process to use first, but what other processes may make sense for your company at a later date.

Most companies will want to tailor these approaches so that they fit with their own circumstances. Sometimes, that will result in a “hybrid” approach where two or more approaches are combined. Your knowledge about your own company’s culture will help you to determine what approaches will work best for you.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

We anticipate that work/life metrics will continue to evolve in their breadth and depth. For example, a number of companies are currently working with the Boston College Center for Work & Family on the National Work/Life Measurement Project that will collect data across the companies. This project will yield unparalleled comparative information for the work/life field, but in addition it may also uncover new measurement processes.

Look into the future and you will see? We expect to see more headlines, such as:

“Work/Life Programs: A Critical Success Factor in Recruiting and Retaining Knowledge Workers”

“Work/Life Programs Impacting Loyalty and Commitment”

“Work/Life Programs Enhance Employees’ Effectiveness at Work and at Home”

Our goal for *The Metrics Manual* is to help you to begin a journey towards excellence in measurement. The Boston College Center for Work & Family is committed to continue to focus on the development of metrics that will, in turn, facilitate the development of the work/life field by companies around the globe.

On behalf of the Advisory Committee, I am pleased to have worked with the Boston College Center for Work & Family to bring you to the leading edge of the work/life field.

BENCHMARKING: STRIVING FOR QUALITY

by Judith R. Gordon, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: Each year, numerous awards are given to family-friendly companies. Although practitioners often report that this type of competition and recognition can motivate some employers to strengthen their work/life initiatives, it is not always clear what criteria have been used to identify exemplary practices.

The benchmarking process makes it possible for practitioners to select the criteria for best-in-class that are most appropriate for their own companies and employees.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Understand** the purpose and objectives of benchmarking.
- Become **familiar** with the four basic stages of benchmarking.
- **Generate** relevant benchmarking questions.
- **Develop** a plan to initiate a benchmarking process.

BENCHMARKING: STRIVING FOR QUALITY

I. Overview

What is
benchmarking?

Benchmarking is a process that helps practitioners compare the performance of their organization's work/life services, products, functions, and practices to those which are considered to be best-in-class. This approach to measurement provides companies with a framework to collect and analyze data in a systematic fashion.

Benchmarking typically occurs within the context of Total Quality Management. A Total Quality organization seeks to continuously improve the quality of products or services in response to the preferences and priorities of customers and members of other stakeholder groups. (In the world of work/life, the customers refer not only to employees who use work/life policies and programs, but might also include employees family members, co-workers, supervisors and managers, and business units.)

Successful benchmarking enables companies to develop a comprehensive understanding of their own work/life practices which leads to recommendations for improving them or evolving new practices as a way to enhance company performance.

What are you
comparing?

Benchmarking compares your company's work/life initiatives to best-in-class or "state-of-the-art" practices that have been established by other companies or that might exist in particular departments or divisions within your own organization.

Comparing with the Best-in-Class



Highlights of the
benchmarking
process

Benchmarking helps companies:

- **Establish targets** for improving existing work/life practices, specify objectives for new practices, and identify inefficient or ineffective practices that should be phased-out.
- **Engage** in a continuous learning process.
- **Develop plans** for change based on factual information about current and state-of-the-art work/life practices.

The benchmarking process moves through four basic stages:

- Stage 1. Examine your company's work/life policies, programs, practices, products, and/or processes.
- Stage 2. Document the characteristics of best-in-class work/life policies, programs, products, and/or processes.
- Stage 3. Compare your companies' work/life initiatives to best-in-class.
- Stage 4. Use the findings to either improve your organization's work/life practices, validate current practices, develop new practices, or discontinue existing practices.

II. Background

The four pillars of Total Quality Management include:

- continuous improvement,
- employee involvement,
- customer focus, and
- executive leadership.

In general, the success of Total Quality Management depends on the firm's ability to establish a company-wide effort for improvement that includes employees, suppliers, and customers.

Benchmarking contributes to continuous improvement, one of the hallmarks of Total Quality Management. By understanding the characteristic elements of quality work/life programs and practices, managers can develop ways to improve these initiatives in their own organizations.

The Japanese used benchmarking as early as the 1950s, but it did not become a significant tool in the United States until the 1980s. When Xerox discovered that the Japanese were selling their photocopying machines at the amount it cost Xerox to make theirs, Xerox benchmarked every function and task involved in copier manufacturing and sales for productivity, quality, and cost. They used companies inside and outside their industry, who became Xerox's *benchmarking partners*. Xerox learned, for example, that the company had nine times the number of suppliers; the product took twice as long to reach the market; and their defects per 100 machines were seven times worse than their competitors' (Zairi and Leonard, 1994). As a result, Xerox made changes including: reducing their suppliers from 5000 to 300; increasing the commonality of parts from 20 to 60 percent; and introducing cross-functional "Teams Xerox" (Omachonu and Ross, 1994).

The benchmarking process helps companies reduce the cost of poor or inadequate quality through:

- prevention of problems (positive outcomes quality planning, design review, training, process control)
- appraisal of potential problems (inspection, testing, inventory evaluation)
- attention to internal indicators of failure (scrap, rework, re-test, downtime, yield losses)
- attention to external indicators of failure (complaint adjustment, returned material, warranty charges, loss of future business)

**Stage 1: Examine
Work/Life Initiatives**

**Stage 2: Document
Best-in-Class**

Stage 3: Compare

**Stage 4: Use Findings
to Improve**

III. Key Benchmarking Questions

What is the current status of your work/life programs and policies?

- What specific policies and programs do you offer?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and programs?
- Which policy(ies) or program(s) will you benchmark?

What are the best practices in the area of work/life selected for study?

- Which are the best-in-class companies (worksites or divisions)?
- How might you engage the best-in-class companies to participate in your benchmarking study?
- What specific work/life policies and programs do they offer?
- How successful are the best-in-class policies and programs?
- What specific characteristics make them successful?
- What resources are necessary to make these policies and programs successful in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and cost?

How do your company's current work/life practices compare to the best practices?

- What indicators of the quality of work/life policies and programs are most important to your company?
- How does your company measure performance?
- What are the differences between your company's work/life practices and the best-in-class?
- What problems or gaps exist in current practices that hinder the performance of your company's work/life policies and programs?

What changes can be made to make your company's current practices closer to the best practices?

- What are the learnings from the best-in-class practices? How can you apply these learnings to your own company?
- What changes can be made?
- What types of resources are necessary to make the recommended changes? Are these resources available?
- What is your company's attitude toward such changes? Are the recommended changes consistent with your company's culture? If your company has standards of excellence for its work/life initiatives, do the recommended changes reflect these standards? (See Chapter 2, "Reaching for a Vision" by Sharon Lobel.)

IV. What is Measured?

Benchmarking can be used to evaluate the quality of different aspects of your company's work/life policies and programs.

At the most simple level, benchmarking assesses the scope of your company's work/life policies and programs. Therefore, you would examine whether your company offers the same types (e.g., the number and range) of work/life policies and programs that the best-in-class companies offer. For instance, does your company offer flexible work hours? Does it provide referrals for elder care and subsidize specific elder care supports? Does it offer deferred compensation options?

The following table includes some examples of questions that could help you profile the scope of your company's work/life initiatives. In many cases, it will be appropriate to attach additional comments and descriptions.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF SCOPE			
WORK/LIFE ISSUE	EXTENT OF AVAILABILITY		
What policies, programs, or practices help employees reconcile work/life tensions associated with time pressures?	Available on a "case-by-case" basis only	Available to some groups of employees	Available to all employees
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
What policies, programs, or practices provide managers and supervisors with information about using work/life initiatives as management tools?	Available on a "case-by-case" basis only	Available to some groups of managers	Distributed to all managers
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
What policies, programs, or practices help employees fulfill their dependent care responsibilities?	Available on a "case-by-case" basis only	Available to some groups of employees	Available to all employees
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

You can also compare your company's work/life programs to best-in-class companies according to criteria such as: **effectiveness** (e.g., utilization; outcomes for employees and the company), **efficiency** (e.g., simplicity of administrative steps, timeliness), and cost (e.g., implementation costs; costs of services to employees using policies or program). The following two tables offer suggestions for the measurement of effectiveness and efficiency. See Chapter 6, "Measuring Impact on the Bottom Line" by Jeffrey Cohen and Greg Trompeter for suggestions pertaining to the measurement of cost.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS			
	not very	to some extent	very
In general, how familiar are employees with the work/life policies, programs and practices available to them?	_____	_____	_____
	low	moderate	high
To what extent do existing work/life policies, programs, and practices address the priority work/life needs of employees in different life circumstances?	_____	_____	_____

SAMPLE MEASURES OF EFFICIENCY			
	To a minimal extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent
Are the administrative responsibilities for the work/life policies, programs, and practices clearly delineated?	_____	_____	_____
	Infrequently	Sometimes	Most of the time
Are employees' requests to use specific work/life options (e.g., alternative work schedules) processed in a timely fashion?	_____	_____	_____

Benchmarking leads to two types of metrics or performance measures (Zairi, 1996).

- Qualitative data (descriptive recordings which depict the opinions, behaviors, or attitudes of individuals or groups) describe *success factors* or *critical factors* that lead to the achievement of superior performance.
- Quantitative data (numbers which represent the opinions, behaviors or attitudes) provide a measure of performance at a particular time. When quantitative data are collected, it is easier to measure the gap between current and benchmarked practices.

Both of these types of data will help your company to:

1. determine the critical quality elements of a specific work/life policy or practice (e.g., What practices characterize a quality telecommuting policy?);
2. specify the differences between your company's current work/life practices and best-in-class practices (e.g., What do you need to do to improve your work/life initiative?); and
3. develop targets designed to measure the planned-for improvements in your work/life policies and programs.

It is possible to repeat the benchmarking process, and collect both qualitative and quantitative data. That way, it becomes possible to track the results over time and determine whether the gap between current and best-practice performance is increasing or decreasing.

V. Benchmarking Stages

The benchmarking process is initiated with a decision about which work/life policies, programs and/or practices to benchmark.

Selecting the work/life practice(s) for benchmarking

The following questions can help structure a process for determining what to benchmark.

Considerations:

- Which work/life areas are most important to your firm's customers?
- Which work/life areas are most important to your employees?
- Where are competitive pressures being felt? Do these pressures have a different impact on particular work/life areas?
- Are the work/life areas being considered consistent with your mission and strategy?
- Do the work/life areas being considered reflect an important business need?
- Are the work/life areas being considered significant in terms of costs or key nonfinancial indicators?
- Is there significant room for improvement in the work/life areas being considered?
- If additional information were available, could the practices of the work/life areas being considered be improved?

- Could improvements in the work/life areas being considered lead to a competitive advantage?
- Which work/life areas have experienced particular problems?

Forming the benchmarking team

Once the overall focus of the benchmarking process has been established, a benchmarking team will be organized. This team is comprised of representatives from groups who are stakeholders in your company's work/life initiatives. The team can be an intact work group, cross-functional team, or ad hoc team. It can include internal and external benchmarking specialists as needed. An effective benchmarker has functional expertise, credibility, good communications skills, and team spirit.

Training will help prepare managers and employees for the benchmarking project. The training could focus on benchmarking strategies, selecting benchmarking partners, approaches to data collection and analysis, and formulation of action plans. After the benchmarking team has been assembled and oriented to the purpose of the study, each member of the team should be familiar with the chronology of the activities and expectations for their involvement.

In the beginning, the benchmarking team concentrates on gathering information about the details of your company's work/life policies and programs.

Reviewing your work/life policies, programs and practices

Considerations:

- What is the current profile of your company's work/life policies, programs and practices? For example, what do you offer in the following categories:
 - education/information about work/life issues and work/life supports
 - resource & referral
 - assistance with different types of dependent care issues
 - policies pertaining to the flexible use of time
 - options for leaves of absence
 - alternative work options
 - assistance with home and personal life management
 - supports for community-based programs that offer services to working families
 - supports for education (employee and employees' family members)

Gathering in-depth information

The benchmarking team needs to collect detailed information about the policies, programs, practices, and processes selected for benchmarking. The team will make recordings and flow charts of all relevant processes.

Considerations:

- What are the key elements of the work/life policy(ies) or program(s) being benchmarked?
- How do line employees, supervisors, and managers use or access this policy(ies) or program(s) being benchmarked?

- What are the principal aspects of implementation?
- What are the quality indicators for the policy(ies) or program(s)?

During this stage, the benchmarking team determines the key characteristics of the best-in-class work/life practices.

Benchmarking partners

An important task that will be completed during Stage 2 is the selection of one or more benchmarking partners.

A benchmarking partner is a workplace organization (department, division, worksite, or company) which: (1) is recognized as having a best-in-class work/life policy, program or practice in the work/life area of interest to your company; and (2) is willing to participate in the benchmarking process, and to share appropriate information about selected quality characteristics.

Companies often prefer to identify two or more partners so that the experiences of different workplaces can be juxtaposed.

The team should engage in a process of brainstorming and then prioritizing the criteria they will use for selecting benchmarking partners. It is important to clarify what characteristics are most valued by your company. For example, whereas some companies might want to focus on increasing program utilization, others might be more interested in return on investment. The criteria selected by the benchmarking team will have a direct impact on companies that might make the most appropriate benchmarking partners.

Best-in-class companies

The benchmarking team must first search for the best-in-class companies. Potential partners include recipients of special awards, those who receive media attention, top-rated firms in industry surveys, and companies with excellent financial results. Leads for benchmark partners include customers, suppliers, company employees, professional associations, industry experts, consultants, researchers, trade shows, newspaper and magazine articles, and practitioner publications.

The benchmarking team may find it useful to consider the criteria used by the following groups and organizations to recognize quality work/life initiatives: *Business Week's* Family-Friendly Companies, a study conducted in collaboration with the Boston College Center for Work & Family; *Working Mother Magazine's* Best 100 List; annual awards given by the Association of Work/Life Professionals; and the Families and Work Institute's "Family-Friendly Index."

Considerations:

- Which organizations are known as either the best-in-class or best-in-industry?
- Do other departments, operating units, or worksites of your own company have successful work/life policies or programs?
- How do some of your competitors who sell to the same or similar customer base view the quality factors for the work/life policy(ies) or program(s) being benchmarked?

What if it is hard to find companies with state-of-the-art practices?

Ideally, benchmarking should result in identifying state-of-the-art practices. It is possible that your company may select a particular work/life policy or program where only a few companies have demonstrated state-of-the-art practices. In these situations, benchmarking either needs to consider standards for similar policies/programs which can be applied, or develop standards that go beyond existing programs.

For example, few programs specifically address the needs of midlife professional women (Gordon and Whelan, 1998). If your company is interested in benchmarking programs for this particular population group, the benchmarking team might want to consider the applicability of standards that have been developed for other population groups. Alternatively, the team might decide to modify the "Standards of Excellence" approach which is discussed in Chapter 2 (authored by Sharon Lobel) in this manual.

Engaging potential benchmarking partners

It is important that the team identify potential partners willing to provide the information needed. The feasibility of a potential benchmarking partnership should be carefully assessed, thinking about the likelihood that it will be possible to collect the data, given the time and budget constraints faced by the benchmarking team.

Considerations:

- Is the potential benchmarking partner within a reasonable geographic proximity?
- Does the potential benchmarking partner have organizational similarities to your company (e.g., size of workforce, industry, etc.)?
- Are there any indications that the company might be willing (or unwilling) to participate in the benchmarking processes?

Some companies have formed cooperative sharing agreements. For example, the Center for Quality Management based in Cambridge, Massachusetts has created a consortium of companies willing to benchmark specific practices.

Reaching an agreement with a potential partner is not as straightforward as it might seem. Many best-practices companies have been deluged with requests for benchmarking information. Some are reluctant to release information that might reduce their competitive advantage. A willingness to reciprocate can often form the basis for establishing a relationship. Customers, professional associates, or even friends may be able to provide the entree into a company for benchmarking.

Articulating the purpose of the benchmarking study

Before contacting another company about benchmarking its practices, the benchmarking team should have a clearly articulated purpose for the proposed study. You should tell the contact person what type of information will be requested, how the information will be used, and provisions to safeguard confidentiality. It is important to remember:

It does not make sense to ask for information from another company that your own company would be unwilling to release.

The benchmarking team should think about ways that the benchmarking partner might benefit from participating in the study. Your company could agree to provide the partnering company(ies) with data acquired by the benchmarking team that the benchmarking partner could then use to improve their own processes.

Considerations:

- Has the team prepared a “statement of purpose” for the benchmarking process?
- Have you anticipated how the benchmarking partner might benefit from participating?

Beginning data collection

In general, the team should initiate the data collection with a manager as high in the organization as possible. The team can then extend the data collection throughout the organizational hierarchy and include other managers and employees at various levels and in different functions.

Making use of published information

As a first step in the data collection process, it is advisable for one member of the team to gather information about the partnering firm(s) which is available to the public. For example, valuable data is gathered by the government, trade associations, business sources, and academic institutions as well as organizations such as the American Productivity & Quality Center. It is also useful to check out the World Wide Web. In addition, it makes sense to ask the partnering firm to send you a briefing package which can be reviewed prior to telephone conversations and site visits. This package might include a statement of purpose for the work/life initiative, descriptive information about the policy(ies) or program(s) being benchmarked, and relevant data about the organization.

Options for data collection

Information about the practices of the benchmarking partner(s) can be gathered during a site visit, over the telephone, or can be taken from written materials (e.g., products, records) sent to your company. The team could consider the following options to gather information:

- interview employees;
- observe the daily activities; and/or
- survey selected employees of the partnering company.

The choice of data collection methods will depend on the time available, the complexity of information to be gathered, the importance of detail, and the resources available for data collection.

Considerations:

- Has the team reviewed all relevant written materials about the partnering organization prior to interviews and/or site visits?
- Will the information gathered address the priority questions of the benchmarking team?

The team should consider how to get the information needed with minimal interference to the daily operations of the partner company. Careful planning can help ensure that the team uses its on-site time as effectively as possible. The team should stick to the agenda agreed upon with the partner(s) prior to the visit.

Debriefing

The team might conduct a debriefing before they leave the site to ensure the information they collected is accurate and complete.

Considerations:

- Has the team prepared a summary report for each of the benchmarking partners?
- Has the team developed a process to respond to questions raised by the benchmarking partners?

Stage 3: Compare

The benchmarking team compares the practices of the benchmarking partner with those at your company. It is important that the team has access to in-depth information that provides insights into quality factors such as effectiveness, efficiency and cost.

The team should develop a summary chart that highlights the elements of the quality of the particular work/life policy(ies) or program(s), and then compares these elements across companies.

Considerations:

- Which aspects of your company's work/life policy or program are most similar to the benchmarking partners' policy or program?
- Which aspects of your company's work/life policy or program are different from the benchmarking partners' policy or program? Are these differences important indicators of quality?

Stage 4: Use Findings to Improve

The team should develop a list of recommendations for decision makers with responsibility for work/life policies and programs that focus on changes needed to improve the quality of your company's work/life program. The findings of the benchmarking process should be linked to an action plan.

A process for effectively communicating the findings to different stakeholder groups should be created. Successful communication strategies can help gain acceptance for recommended changes and increase understanding about the importance of work/life issues.

Finally, the team should make recommendations for the next phase of benchmarking (to be implemented in the future) so that continuous learning is built into the process.

Considerations:

- Should some of the most successful existing practices be maintained (or expanded to other divisions)?
- Should some of the existing practices be modified to enhance their quality?
- Should new practices be developed?
- Should some existing practices be discontinued?
- What changes would be necessary to incorporate the best practices into your company?

When is
benchmarking
most
appropriate?

VI. Considerations

Benchmarking work/life policies, programs, and practices is most successful when a company has made a sincere commitment to Total Quality Management. In these situations, the company would:

- value the benchmarking process;
- understand how the findings could be used; and
- want to encourage employee involvement.

Companies that promote on-going, planned change are most likely to embrace the benchmarking concept.

Benchmarking can support a company's work/life agenda by:

1. encouraging the people responsible for work/life policies and programs to adopt a continuous improvement philosophy for these initiatives;
2. educating managers about programs that are feasible to establish and maintain;
3. helping managers to set goals and objectives which are both challenging yet within the realm of possibility;
4. making the company more competitive in its ability to hire top-flight employees who want to work in a company with high quality work/life programs; and
5. precipitating a change program.

How might
benchmarking
contribute to
your work/life
strategy?

Are there any
particular
challenges
associated with
benchmarking?

At first glance, the benchmarking process may appear to be fairly straight forward. However, many of the challenges become more visible as the process unfolds.

There may be some resistance to the benchmarking process among particular groups of employees.

It might be possible to minimize resistance by involving (directly or indirectly) employees who could be affected by possible changes. In some cases, these individuals might participate in the benchmarking team. In other situations, the team might interview these employees to get information. Effective communication can keep these employees informed about and engaged in the process.

It is counterproductive to try to do too much. Early on in the benchmarking study, you will need to define the scope of the project and be sure that the research tasks appropriately match the skills and resources of the benchmarking team. If your company is interested in benchmarking a number of different work/life policies and programs, it will be necessary for the firm to devote sufficient resources (e.g., staff, budget, time, etc.) to the study.

Benchmarking can be a very comprehensive task that could overwhelm the internal benchmarking team.

Why might my firm want to consider benchmarking?

The benchmarking partners may be reluctant to discuss key aspects of their work/life policies, programs and practices because these initiatives provide them with a competitive edge.

The success of your benchmarking assessment depends heavily on the willingness and ability of your benchmarking partners to share information and insights related to the lessons they have learned. A company which is recognized for excellence but which is not fully engaged in the process will not make a successful partner. The importance of carefully selecting your benchmarking partner(s) cannot be overstated.

Comparing your company's performance to the performance of best-in-class companies makes it possible for your work/life initiatives to take advantage of the experiences of the most successful companies. These leading companies continuously look for new ways to better meet the work/life needs of their employees, and their progress can be seen as a challenge for other companies to improve.

Your company may decide to use a benchmarking process if it wants to:

- identify the best practices relevant to the work/life processes being examined;
- honestly appraise its work/life operations relative to best practices; and
- apply the lessons.

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Selected Resources

Publications:

Camp, R.C. 1989. *Benchmarking: The Search for Industry Best Practices that Lead to Superior Performance*. Milwaukee: ASQC.

McNair, C.J. and Leibfried, K.H.J. 1992. *Benchmarking: A Tool for Continuous Improvement*. New York: Harper Business.

Omachon, V.K. and Ross, J.E. 1994. *Principles of Total Quality*. Delray Beach, FL: St. Luci Press.

Zairi, M. 1996. *Benchmarking for Best Practice: Continuous Learning Through Sustainable Innovation*. Oxford: Reed.

Zairi, M. and Leonard, P. 1994. *Practical Benchmarking: The Complete Guide*. London: Chapman & Hall.

Organizations:

American Productivity & Quality Center

A membership and consulting organization that works with enterprises to improve processes through research, benchmarking studies, networking, education, programs, publications and events. Maintains the International Benchmarking Clearinghouse.

123 North Post Oak Lane, 3rd Floor

Houston, TX 77024

www.apqu.org

1-800-776-9676 (for US and Canadian callers)

1-713-681-4020

American Society for Quality

Provides access to latest technical standards and specifications. Maintains an online database.

Located at:

CSSinfo

310 Miller Avenue

Ann Arbor, MI 48103

USA

www.cssinfo.com/info/asqc.html

1-800-699-9277 (for US and Canadian callers)

734-9309277 (for callers located outside of North America)

Center for Quality of Management

Offers courses on different aspects of quality management and publishes an on-line newsletter.

One Alewife Center
Suite 450
Cambridge, MA 02140
www.cqm.org/
617 873-8950

Goal/QPC

*A membership organization that conducts research to identify best examples of organizational improvement and quality management practices. Publishes **The Journal of Innovative Management**. Offers courses and conferences.*

P.O. Box 329
Lawrence, MA 01842-0629
www.gaolqpc.com
800-207-5813 (for US and Canadian callers)
603-893-1944 (for callers located outside of North America)

The Benchmarking Exchange

*An electronic information system designed for benchmarking and process improvement. Members can sponsor surveys to address topics of interest. Information for firm self-assessment is available. Publishes an on-line newsletter, **Benchmarking Update**.*

7960-B Soquel Drive
Suite 356
Aptos, California 95003
North America
www.benchnet.com
1-800-622-9800 (for US and Canadian callers)
1-408-622-9800

INTRODUCTION TO THE BENCHMARKING WORKSHEETS

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

Many companies have separated "standard" benefits, such as health care insurance and dental insurance, from their work/life initiatives. However, employees often consider fringe benefits to be important indicators of their companies' commitment to work/life issues.

Some firms have established flexible benefits accounts, or cafeteria benefits plans, as one way to respond to the diverse family needs of their employees. Flexible benefits accounts have the potential to create a "win-win" situation because they can:

- 1) enable employees to select options that best fit their own circumstances; and
- 2) strengthen the administrative efficiency (and possibly reduce some of the costs) of particular aspects of benefits

A benchmarking study of cafeteria benefits plans will be used in the following worksheets for illustrative purposes.

Stage 1: Worksheet A

Clarifying the Focus of the Benchmarking Study

PURPOSE

Develop a description of the benchmarking project's purpose.

CASE EXAMPLE

If your company is interested in benchmarking its cafeteria benefits plan, you may want to consider the following questions:

- What is the purpose of benchmarking cafeteria benefits plans?
- Did the request to benchmark cafeteria benefits plans originate with a top manager committed to innovative policies and programs, the human resource department which wants to offer individualized benefits, a work/life manager who feels that a cafeteria benefits plan could add strategic value to the firm's work/life initiative, or a group of employees interested in the equity of benefits?
- How might the findings be used? What types of information would be most useful?

INSTRUCTIONS:

Use the questions in the following table to help create a statement of purpose.

Elements of the Purpose Description	Comments
• What is the overall purpose of the work/life initiative?	<i>For example: The cafeteria benefits plan plan allows employees to individualize their benefits.</i>
• Why is benchmarking important?	<i>For example: Benchmarking will help our company to be sure that the cafeteria benefits plan is competitive with other firms.</i>
• How will the results of the benchmarking study be used?	<i>For example: The compensation and benefits department will use the results to make recommendations for changes in the existing elements of our cafeteria benefits plan.</i>

Stage 1: Worksheet B

Forming the Benchmarking Team

INSTRUCTIONS

The following table will help you organize your preliminary assessments of individuals who might be potential members of the benchmarking team.

Key Stakeholder Groups	Possible Individuals	Comments
<i>For example: Compensation & Benefits Director</i>		
<i>Employees in Different Family Circumstances</i>		
<i>Manager of Selected Business Unit</i>		
•		
•		
•		

Stage 1: Worksheet C

Developing a Workplan

INSTRUCTIONS

Create a table such as the one below to outline tasks associated with the benchmarking study.

Task	Completion date	Who is responsible?	What is the expected outcome of the activity?
• <i>Develop a process for gathering detailed information about the processes and practices associated with the company's existing cafeteria benefits plan.</i>			
• <i>Review information about existing cafeteria benefits plan with members of the benchmarking team.</i>			
•			
•			

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Stage 1: Worksheet D

Profiling Your Company's Work/life Initiatives

INSTRUCTIONS

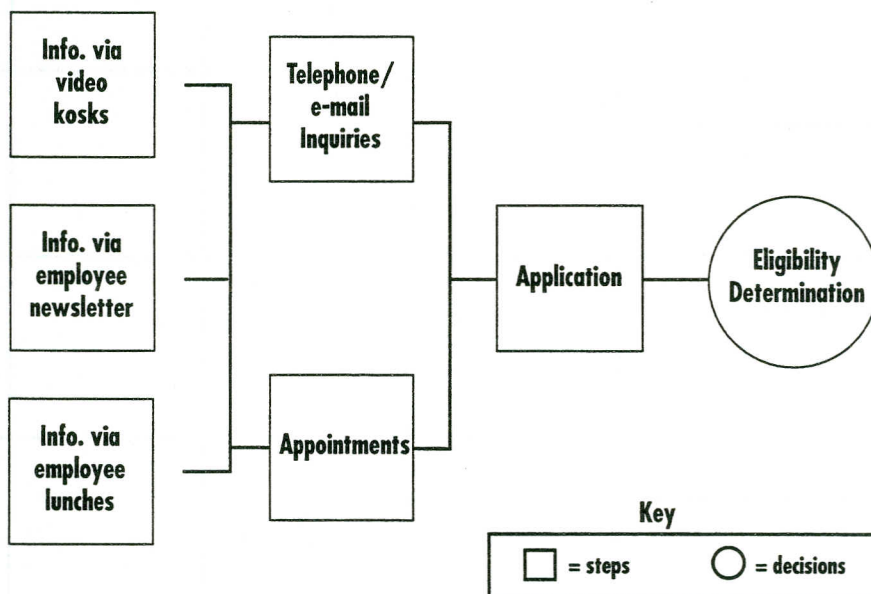
If your company offers a cafeteria benefits plan, a detailed self-assessment is conducted. Data are collected about the benefits that are included under the cafeteria benefits umbrella, employees' awareness and understanding of this plan, cost (firm contributions plus administrative costs), and utilization.

Particular attention is paid to mapping the current processes (e.g., administration, utilization, financing, communication, etc.). Information is also collected about the outcomes (for employees and the company) associated with the existing cafeteria benefits plan.

If your company does not offer a cafeteria benefits plan, data will be collected about the benefits currently offered that could be consolidated if a cafeteria benefits plan were introduced. Separate process maps would then be developed for each of the benefits that might be considered for a cafeteria benefits plan.

Use the following diagram as a guide to develop process maps that illustrate the steps and decisions associated with different implementation processes. Please note: It is likely that you will need more than one map.

Sample Process Map for Cafeteria Benefits Plan Application Process



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Stage 1: Worksheet E

Describing Processes Associated with the Work/Life Practice

INSTRUCTIONS

A careful analysis of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of your firm's existing cafeteria benefits plan will help identify some of the areas that might be of most interest for your benchmarking research. For example, if your company's communications strategies have promoted increased awareness among employees, the benchmarking team might consider selecting one or more benchmarking partners with demonstrated excellence in internal communications.

Use a table such as the one below to record information about each step.

Observations (such as):				
Processes	Administrative Efficiency	Utilization	Service Quality	Outcomes
Step 1: _____ <i>Disseminate information to employees via video kiosk.</i>				
Step 2: _____				
Step 3: _____				
Step 4: _____				
Step 5: _____				

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have planned your benchmarking study and assessed the work/life initiative selected for benchmarking.

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Stage 2: Worksheet A

Considering Potential Benchmarking Partners

PURPOSE

Clarify the indicators of a best-in-class work/life policy or program.

CASE EXAMPLE

After reviewing the findings of the self-assessment, the team will develop a list of desired characteristics of the work/life initiative selected for benchmarking. This list should reflect your company's business priorities and they may include: overall administrative costs; employee satisfaction with benefits packages; simplicity of administrative processes; and employees' perceptions of tailoring benefits to their families' needs and priorities.

A benchmarking study that is focused on a cafeteria benefits plan would specifically define what indicators such as "simplicity of administrative processes" means.

This list will be used to select potential benchmarking partners and organize the information collected from each of these partners.

INSTRUCTIONS

The following chart suggests a way to assess possible benchmarking partners.

Reasons for consideration (such as)			
Potential Partners	Proximity?	Are workforces comparable?	Status as being best-in-class? (Specific comments)
Company A (Division A)			
Company B (Division B)			
Company C (Division C)			
Company D (Division D)			

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Stage 2: Worksheet B

Summarizing the Findings

INSTRUCTIONS

A chart such as the following could be used to synthesize the information gathered from each of the benchmarking partners.

Sample Elements of Cafeteria Benefits Plans	Company A (Division A, etc.)	Company B (Division B, etc.)	Company C (Division C, etc.)	Company D (Division D, etc.)
What is the scope of the benefits plan?				
What benefits are "required" as part of the cafeteria benefits plan?	<i>none</i>	<i>Medical</i>	<i>Medical Dental Disability</i>	<i>Medical Dental Disability Life Insurance</i>
What benefits are options?	<i>Medical Dental Child Care Elder Care Subsidies Retirement Disability Life Insurance</i>	<i>Dental Retirement Life Insurance Disability</i>	<i>Child Care Long Term Care</i>	<i>Retirement</i>
Do employees receive reimbursement for unused benefit dollars?	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
How are benefit dollars allocated?	<i>dollars</i>	<i>dollars</i>	<i>points</i>	<i>dollars</i>
What are the annual administrative costs?				
How is employee satisfaction with the benefits plan assessed?				
What is the level of employee satisfaction with different aspects of the plan?				
How is the plan implemented?				
What are the indicators of administrative efficiency?				

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have collected and synthesized information about best-in-class work/life initiatives.

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Stage 3: Contrasting the Best-in-Class Processes and Outcomes

PURPOSE

Make comparisons between your company's work/life initiative and those established at best-in-class companies.

CASE EXAMPLE

At this point in the study, the benchmarking team identifies the differences between your company's work/life initiative and best-in-class initiatives. The team should pay particular attention to exemplary practices that might be different among the benchmarking partners. These differences might provide you with insight about options for quality practices.

The information collected from each of the benchmarking partners during Stage 2 is compared to determine the strengths and weaknesses of your company's cafeteria benefits plan, from a quality perspective.

INSTRUCTIONS

Develop a process for analyzing the information gathered from the best-in-class companies.

Salient Components of Best-in-Class Initiatives	How does your company compare?
<i>For example: 6 week open enrollment period once annually</i>	
<i>For example: web site addressing "most frequently asked questions"</i>	
<i>For example: annual evaluations of employee satisfaction</i>	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have compared your work/life initiatives with best-in-class policies, programs and practices.

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Stage 4: Worksheet A

Use Findings to Improve

PURPOSE

Use the results of the benchmarking study to make recommendations for improvement.

CASE EXAMPLE

Once the benchmarking data have been collected, the team must develop a set of recommendations.

- If your company already has a cafeteria benefits plan, the benchmarking team might recommend:
 - maintaining or expanding those elements of the plan which are consistent with the "best-in-class" plans;
 - introducing new components which characterize the quality cafeteria benefits plans but do not yet exist at your company;
 - modifying existing elements of your company's cafeteria benefits plan so that they are more consistent with the "best-in-class" plans; or
 - eliminating those aspects of your cafeteria benefits plan which detract from the quality of your plan.
- If your company has not yet established a cafeteria benefits plan, the team would make recommendations for the development of a quality plan.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the following table to outline recommendations and steps for implementing them.

Recommendations/Objectives	Suggested Action Plan
Implementation of best practice #1:	
Implementation of best practice #2:	
Implementation of best practice #3:	
Implementation of best practice #4:	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified options for collecting information about the intended and unintended consequences of your work/life initiatives.

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THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE APPROACH: REACHING FOR A VISION

by Sharon Lobel, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: Work/life managers often express frustration about the difficulties they have when they try to explain to top decision makers the "end state" of work/life initiatives.

The standards of excellence approach provides a framework for articulating what work/life initiatives can accomplish in the long run.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Think** about the ultimate goals for your firm's work/life initiatives.
- **Adopt** "out-of-the-box" thinking.
- **Use** your vision statement as a guide for measurement.

REACHING FOR A VISION: THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE APPROACH

I. Overview

What is the
"standards of
excellence" approach
to measurement?

The standards of excellence approach is a measurement process that compares the current reality of work/life policies and programs to a vision of an "ideal" responsive workplace.

This approach emphasizes the importance of articulating "what could be." The standards of excellence approach encourages companies to think beyond existing practices to develop a shared vision of what is possible in the future.

This approach:

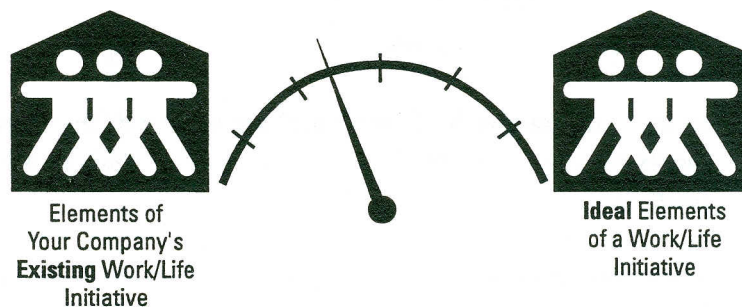
- helps companies establish *high standards* for work/life policies, programs and practices.
- provides measurement *guideposts* against which firms can gauge their progress.

Visions of ideal responses to work/life issues can encourage practitioners to expect more from work/life initiatives. In contrast to benchmarking, which uses actual practices from benchmarked organizations as the basis of comparison, the standards of excellence approach focuses on the most desirable possible practices.

What are you
comparing?

The standards of excellence approach compares specific elements of existing work/life policies, programs or practices to expectations for the future.

Comparing to Standards of Excellence



The standards of excellence approach focuses attention on the purposes and the core goals of work/life initiatives. This approach to measurement uses work/life goals as horizons toward which organizations can work.

Although there are a number of activities and work tasks associated with the standards of excellence approach, there are three basic stages:

- Stage 1. Develop a vision that challenges your company to strive to reach new possibilities. Identify standards of excellence connected to your vision that can be used as indicators of accomplishments.
- Stage 2. Assess the existing elements of the work/life initiative.
- Stage 3. Create a plan of action to close the gap. Hold yourselves accountable for raising the bar as indicated.

II. Background

Key Elements

The standards of excellence approach reflects two fundamental beliefs:

- 1) Companies committed to work/life issues want to do the best job they can so that employees, their families, and the organization all benefit.
- 2) Companies can (and should) constantly challenge themselves to improve their understanding of and responses to work/life issues.

Interest in standards of excellence was initially fueled by the publication of Peters and Waterman's best-seller, *In Search of Excellence*. The authors touted the idea that having a vision of excellence is a powerful motivating tool in the quest for organizational effectiveness.

How are standards of excellence different from other indicators of workplace values?

There are several different terms which tend to be used interchangeably:

- a vision statement
- a mission statement
- an aspirations statement
- principles of excellence

In general, "standards of excellence" are usually differentiated from other value-driven statements because they are accompanied by measurable indicators that serve as benchmarks of progress.

Examples of Visions for Work/Life Excellence

There have been a number of efforts to elaborate visions for excellence that are relevant to a broad cross-section of organizations. For the purposes of discussion, the work of two organizations will be highlighted. The Boston College Center for Work & Family and Catalyst have each worked with groups of practitioners to develop different types of visions that detail specific elements of excellence.

The "Principles of Excellence" developed by the Boston College Work & Family Roundtable provide examples of standards for a company's overall work/life initiative. Four core principles are accompanied by specific indicators of progress in the four areas.

PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE IN WORK & FAMILY

The Principles of Excellence have been developed by the Boston College Work & Family Roundtable for employers striving to create a work environment that maximizes both organizational and individual effectiveness. They are designed to guide organizations through a self-assessment process and to be broadly applicable to employers regardless of size or industry.

1. THE EMPLOYER RECOGNIZES THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF ADDRESSING WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE ISSUES.

- Business is practiced with sensitivity to employee's personal life needs.
- Work/personal life solutions are aligned with business goals.
- The employer's commitment to addressing work/personal life issues is viewed as a long-term investment.
- Work/personal life strategies are flexible to meet changing organizational and employee needs.

2. THE WORK ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS INDIVIDUAL WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE EFFECTIVENESS.

- The employer's informal culture supports healthy work/personal life balance.
- The employer provides meaningful work/personal life programs and policies.
- The employer is committed to ongoing education of key stakeholders: employees, management, and the community.
- The employer strives for continuous improvement through ongoing evaluation and assessment.

3. THE MANAGEMENT OF WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE EFFECTIVENESS IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE.

- Managers and employees are empowered to develop solutions that address both business and personal objectives.
- Managers and employees are held accountable for their behavior in support of these objectives.

4. THE EMPLOYER DEVELOPS RELATIONSHIPS TO ENHANCE EXTERNAL WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE RESOURCES.

- Partnerships are formed to maximize the value of employer and community resources available to employees and community members.
- The employer serves as an active role model.
- The employer is open to working with the public sector to strengthen policy that benefits both employers and individuals.

Catalyst's standards for flexibility were designed to be used as generic guidelines for organizational self-assessment. These standards are presented in the publication *Making Work Flexible: Policy to Practice*.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT

The goal of the project was to identify and describe practices that overcome barriers to the successful implementation of alternative arrangements. Catalyst selected 16 corporations and 15 professional firms recognized as having successful experiences with workplace flexibility to participate in this project.

Flexible work practices and strategies were categorized into four general goal areas, each critical to the creation of a work environment that fosters flexibility. As a result of this process, a new framework emerged.

GOAL I: BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

- Define and explain the link between flexibility and business goals.
- Ensure and communicate senior management support.
- Articulate the organization's commitment to flexibility.
- Identify and support pilot programs.

GOAL II: SUPPORTING MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

- Provide tools.
- Evaluate effectiveness.
- Share models and case studies.
- If necessary, revise systems.

GOAL III: INTERNALIZING THE PRACTICE OF FLEXIBILITY

- Incorporate flexibility into other organizational initiatives.
- Create and support relationships and networks.
- Expand and refine human resource department roles.
- Assess the perceptions, experiences, and acceptance of alternative arrangements.

GOAL IV: SUSTAINING THE COMMITMENT TO FLEXIBILITY

- Communicate internally about the issues.
- Look for ways to promote flexibility externally.
- Implement accountability measures.
- Review and evaluate the work environment and modify activities accordingly.

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**Stage 1: Develop the
Vision and Standards**

**Stage 2: Assess Your
Work/Life Initiatives**

**Stage 3: Create a
Plan of Action**

III. Key Questions

The standards of excellence approach to measurement helps practitioners adopt a long-range perspective about the possible accomplishments of their work/life policies and programs. The questions focus on the desired end-state of work/life initiatives.

In the long run, what are you trying to accomplish?

- What characteristics would define the ideal environment for work/life balance in your organization?
- What are some measurable indicators of employer commitment to work/life issues?
- In your ideal organization, “who” (e.g., which groups of people) do you want to support with your work/life policies, programs, and culture?
- How inclusive is your vision for a workplace which is responsive to work/life issues?

Are you making progress toward your long-term goals?

- How are you doing relative to your standards? How far are you from the ideal?
- How consistent have you been in making progress among the different aspects of your vision? Are there some areas that require more attention than others?

What do you need to do to move closer to your vision?

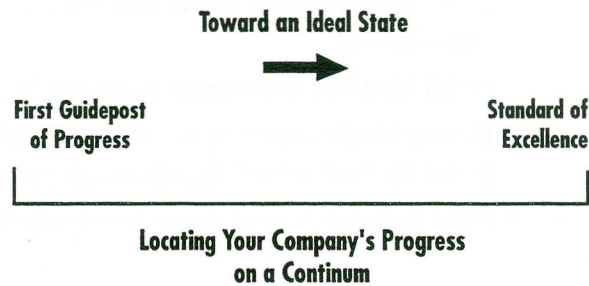
- How can you close the gap?
- What actions can be taken to address those areas where you have made little or no progress?
- Do you need to do anything to ensure continued support for areas that are close to your vision of excellence?

How is progress determined?

IV. What is Measured?

The standards of excellence approach measures progress towards the defined ideal state. It is possible to think of progress towards a goal as a linear path, where the current position is somewhere along the line and the goal is at the end.

Making Progress Toward Excellence



Carefully define each standard

In order for standards to be useful as a gauge, we need broad agreement about the meaning of the terms used to describe our goals and we need a way to measure changes in progress.

Let us use one standard of excellence, the existence of widespread supervisor support for company responses to work/life issues, as an example. This standard of excellence could be stated as:

“Supervisors understand the business rationale of work/life initiatives.”

- First, we would need to develop common agreement about what constitutes the business rationale of work/life initiatives. We would need to clarify how work/life initiatives could support business goals and objectives.
- Next, we need to be able to measure progress, in this case, by quantifying the level of understanding among supervisors. It would be important to consider how supervisors demonstrate that they understand the business rationale for the company's work/life strategy.

Merck developed a strategic approach to work/life issues. Each element of the strategic model, such as Rewards, Supervisor and Team Commitment, or Business Strategy, has a subset of standards of excellence to describe the ideal in that area.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF SUPERVISOR SUPPORT FOR WORK/LIFE VISION

(Adapted from Standards developed by Merck)

(Using focus groups or written surveys, employees could be asked to assess supervisors' support.)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

	Not at all	To a moderate extent	To a very great extent
• My supervisor understands the business rationale for our company's work/life initiatives.			
1 _____	_____	_____	_____
2 _____	_____	_____	_____
3 _____	_____	_____	_____
4 _____	_____	_____	_____
5 _____	_____	_____	_____
• My supervisor is familiar with our company's work/life initiatives and understands how to use these options as management tools.			
1 _____	_____	_____	_____
2 _____	_____	_____	_____
3 _____	_____	_____	_____
4 _____	_____	_____	_____
5 _____	_____	_____	_____
• My supervisor links our work/life initiatives to business strategy.			
1 _____	_____	_____	_____
2 _____	_____	_____	_____
3 _____	_____	_____	_____
4 _____	_____	_____	_____
5 _____	_____	_____	_____

Now, consider another example:

“The workplace culture supports healthy work/personal life balance.”

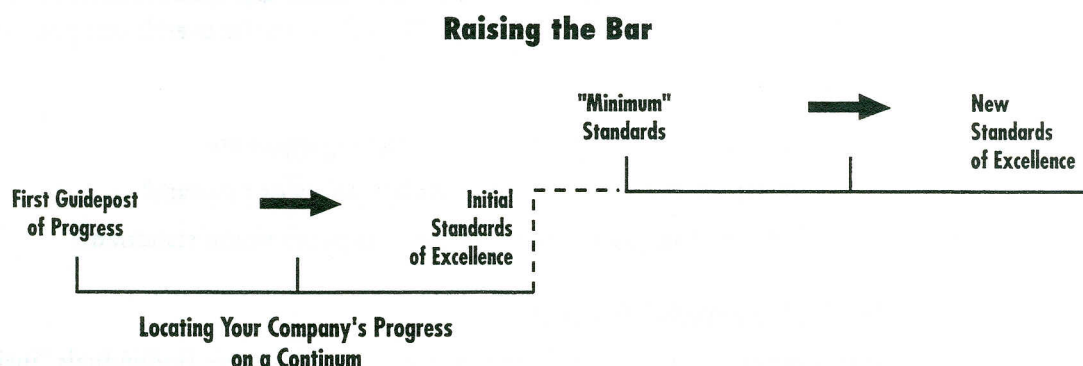
For this standard to be useful, we would need shared definitions within the organization of “culture,” “healthy,” and “work/personal life balance.” Then, we need to be able to measure changes in informal culture over time, using surveys or other data collection methods to assess aspects of culture that support or inhibit our goal of healthy work/personal life balance.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF WORKPLACE CULTURE AND STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

(Employees could be asked to assess how workplace values and attitudes affect their work/life balance.)

	Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Agree
• The members of my work team think it is important to consider how our business plans affect our work/life balance.			
1 _____	_____	_____	_____
2 _____	_____	_____	_____
3 _____	_____	_____	_____
4 _____	_____	_____	_____
5 _____	_____	_____	_____
• At our company, we focus more on “results” than “face time.”			
1 _____	_____	_____	_____
2 _____	_____	_____	_____
3 _____	_____	_____	_____
4 _____	_____	_____	_____
5 _____	_____	_____	_____
• People who use alternative work arrangements are just as likely to get challenging work assignments as other employees.			
1 _____	_____	_____	_____
2 _____	_____	_____	_____
3 _____	_____	_____	_____
4 _____	_____	_____	_____
5 _____	_____	_____	_____

From time to time, companies should reassess their values/standards because external events and changes within the organization may shift the way that the vision is defined and interpreted. The work/life field is continuously evolving, so it is likely that practitioners will want to periodically raise their expectations for ideal work/life initiatives.



V. Stages in the Standards of Excellence Approach

Stage 1: Develop the Vision and Standards

The standards of excellence approach begins with the articulation of a vision for your company's work/life policies and programs.

- Connecting organizational mission with work/life vision

In a few organizations, corporate decision-makers have developed organizational mission statements that incorporate a work/life vision. Typically, these visions have originated from top managers who have other functional or general expertise. Consider, for example, the Aspirations Statement for Levi-Strauss:

"We all want a company that our people are proud of and committed to, where all employees have an opportunity to contribute, learn, grow, and advance based on merit, not politics or background. We want our people to feel respected, treated fairly, listened to, and involved. Above all, we want satisfaction from accomplishments and friendships, *balanced personal and professional lives*, and to have fun in our endeavors." (italics added).

In many settings, corporate leaders have developed company mission statements that do not explicitly refer to work/life issues but these connections can be made. For example, Eastman-Kodak aspires to be a “world leader in imaging” and US West’s vision is “By the year 2000, US West will be the finest company in the world connecting people with their world.” Work/life leaders who want to use the standards for excellence approach for measuring work/life progress should consider how to link their work/life efforts to the overall company vision.

Considerations:

- Does a vision statement exist for the organization?
- What are the goals for the work/life policy or program?
- How do the goals connect to the company’s vision statement?

Developing a work/life vision

At this point in the process, it may be useful to ask people (individuals “inside” your company as well as other informed individuals) for their perceptions of visions of excellence. One way to refine or develop a work/life vision is to inventory the work/life values that exist at your workplace using focus groups, surveys, interviews with people who have different perspectives, or “community” meetings. The findings of this inventorying process can help to ensure that the vision will stretch the work/life program enough. Your company may also want to benchmark its vision statement with the vision statements developed by other firms.

Considerations:

- How do members of different stakeholder groups describe their visions for work/life initiatives?
- What are the hoped-for consequences of your work/life initiatives?
- Who has the information and opinions you need to develop standards?
- How will you get the information?
- Have other workplace organizations or work/life groups developed standards of excellence for work/life initiatives that can serve as models?

Developing measurable indicators

Once there is some clarification about the different dimensions of the ideal work/life policy(ies) or program(s), you will need to develop specific standards to accompany the different aspects of the work/life vision.

Considerations:

- What standards are appropriate for your organization?
- What standards can people agree on?
- Have any key categories of standards or criteria for success appeared as themes?

Moving toward consensus

It can be difficult to arrive at some consensus about the standards of excellence to be used for measuring the progress of your work/life initiative. However, companies should try to resist the temptation to rush through this part of the process.

Considerations:

- Can you reach agreement and shared understanding about standards of excellence?
- Can you identify measurable indicators of these standards?
- Are your standards specific, challenging but within the realm of possibility, and applicable to a broad cross-section of organizational members and other stakeholders?
- What specific practices, behaviors, or policies would you expect to find at different points along the path towards your goal?
- What attitudes and behaviors would you expect to find across the different levels of your organization at the stages you have identified?

Assessing the feasibility

If you find that some information needed to measure certain standards is difficult to obtain (e.g., too costly to gather, insufficient management support for data collection, etc.) even though desirable, you will need to consider whether you should revise the specific indicators of success.

The second stage of this process focuses on a self-assessment to determine exactly where your company is on the “continuum of excellence.”

Considerations:

- What information do you need to measure your progress?
- How will you get the information and from whom?

Locating your company's progress

After you have collected the information needed to gauge your progress, you will be able to assess the extent to which your work/life policy(ies) and program(s) have begun to approach the standards of excellence.

Considerations:

- How are you doing relative to your ideal goals?
- Does the pace of progress meet your expectations?
- Can you identify recurrent themes in the information you have collected?

Once you have determined the gap between your current work/life initiative and the ideal, you will need to recommend steps that your company might take to make additional progress along the continuum of excellence.

Considerations:

- What areas of your work/life agenda need more attention?
- Do you want to re-evaluate your goals?
- Do you need to re-evaluate your indicators of progress?
- How will you develop a workplan to address the areas which need more attention?
- How can you communicate the results of your measurement process?

VI. Considerations

The standards of excellence approach to measurement encourages your company to continue to raise the bar. However, the success of this approach depends on the ability of your company to articulate a vision that captures the *raison d'être* of your work/life programs.

The process of clarifying standards of excellence reinforces the value of work/life initiatives and clarifies their overall direction. Consequently, it is critical that work/life leaders create and articulate visions that can be adopted and enthusiastically endorsed by workplace decision makers and other organizational members.

Once defined, standards of excellence can be used to measure progress, prioritize activities, and evaluate specific work/life initiatives. The standards of excellence approach can further companies' work/life agendas by:

1. facilitating a spirit of continuous improvement;
2. stressing the underlying purpose of workplace response to work/life issues; and
3. enhancing the capacity of work/life leaders to be catalysts for change.

There are three challenges which are frequently encountered when companies use the standards of excellence approach to measurement: difficulties defining principle goals, lack of sincere commitment to the process, and problems identifying standards that provide an appropriate "stretch."

Company leaders skip over the step of clearly defining goals.

It can be very difficult to achieve consensus about goals and the meaning of terms such as "work/personal life balance." You may be tempted to develop fuzzy standards, but in the long run ambiguous goals will not provide the guideposts necessary for evaluating your company's progress.

When is it
appropriate to
use the standards
of excellence
approach?

How might the
standards of
excellence
approach
contribute
to your work/
life strategy?

Are there any
particular challenges
associated with
the standards
of excellence
approach?

A number of factors can discourage companies from articulating precise goals.

- Practitioners are often fighting fires or are too mired in program administration details to take the necessary time to develop a long-range vision.
- It is difficult to reach agreement about visions.
- The processes associated with this approach to measurement have the potential to surface disagreements about visions. Some people may advocate for vague goals because they are less likely to alienate potential supporters.
- Discussions about goals may surface underlying value conflicts within the organization.

If agreement on a vision cannot be achieved, practitioners can recommend that the work/life standards be considered a “work-in-progress.” In this situation, those engaged in the visioning process should make a commitment to participate in activities designed to facilitate the articulation of a goal statement.

Your company articulates a set of standards but lacks sincere commitment to them.

Sometimes, companies are able to develop a vision statements and standards of excellence, but unless they are meaning to people, employees do not really buy into them. In these situations, it is very difficult to hold the company accountable for its progress.

Accountability to the standards may be increased if the performance assessments of managers and supervisors include a review of their contributions to the work/life vision.

It is hard to determine if the bar is set at the right place.

If you set your goals high enough, your company will not reach them overnight. Some companies like the challenge of reaching for excellence and are comfortable waiting for the results. Other firms may become frustrated with standards that seem out of reach because they want to be able to demonstrate that rapid progress has been made. Decisions makers need to understand that the establishment of systems and structures for measuring progress will occur over a period of time. It will be necessary to develop specific strategies to maintain interest in the standards of excellence while progress is being made.

If you set your goals too low, your company may be excited that it will be possible to point to its accomplishments within a short period of time. However, low standards may create unintended complacency.

The standards of excellence approach provides your company with an unusual opportunity to think about “what is possible” to accomplish with a quality work/life program. This process typically frees-up the thinking about these important issues and consequently can pave the way for innovation.

Sharon Lobel Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Management at Seattle University. As a member of the Wharton/Merck Work/Life Roundtable she has been active in efforts to develop training materials for business schools and corporations on work/life concerns. She teaches courses on team building and Leadership Skills at Seattle University, the University of Washington Executive Programs, and the Pacific Coast Banking School. She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Why might your firm want to use the standards of excellence approach?

Selected Resources

Publications:

Catalyst. 1996. *Making Work Flexible: Policy to Practice*. New York: Catalyst.

Center for Work & Family Roundtable. 1996. *The Principles of Excellence*. Chestnut Hill, MA: The Boston College Center for Work & Family.

Jick, Todd. 1993. *Managing Change*. Homewood, IL: Irwin. (See especially Module 2, "Envisioning change.")

Parker, Marjorie. 1990. *Creating Shared Vision*. Clarendon Hills, Ill. Dialogue International.

Peters, Thomas and Waterman, Robert. 1984. *In Search for Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*. New York, New York: Warner.

Organizations:

Catalyst

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INTRODUCTION TO THE THE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE APPROACH WORKSHEETS

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

Companies may be interested in using a standards of excellence approach either to assess the overall progress of their work/life initiative or to examine a selected policy, program or practice.

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act has established the minimum requirements for leave provisions. Furthermore, a number of individual states have passed legislation that has increased these standards.

Companies that are work/life leaders have considered how to establish standards of excellence that go beyond mere compliance. These firms have challenged themselves to set goals for their leave policies and adopt measurable indicators of their progress.

For the purpose of illustration, the following worksheets will provide examples pertaining to family leave policies established by a fictitious company.

Stage 1: Worksheet A

Connecting the Company's Mission to a Work/Life Vision

PURPOSE

Develop a work/life vision statement that is congruent with your company's mission. Select measurable standards to gauge your progress.

CASE EXAMPLE

Perhaps your company has a vision that it should help employees successfully meet their work responsibilities and their commitments outside of work. The availability of a family leave would then be seen as an option that could help employees respond to their personal or family needs.

INSTRUCTIONS

If your company has a mission statement and a work/life vision statement, use the following chart to consider the connections between them.

Mission Statement	Implications for Work/Life Initiatives
Our company believes that it should help employees successfully meet their work responsibilities and their commitments outside of work.	
Our family leave policy helps employees respond to personal or family needs that require a period of absence from work.	
The work environment will support the appropriate use of personal and family leave.	

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Stage 1: Worksheet B

Drafting a Work/Life Vision Statement: Ideas From Internal Stakeholders

INSTRUCTIONS

If your company does not have a vision statement, gather suggestions from different stakeholders (e.g., managers, employees with different work/life situations, etc.). You may want to ask people to identify the characteristics of an ideal environment for achieving work/life balance in your company. Summarize the suggestions in a table, such as the one below.

Perspectives and Suggestion for a Work/Life Vision	Do themes emerge?	Implications for Specific Policies, Programs and Practices
<i>Our company is committed to the development of work/life initiatives that enhance employees' abilities to meaningfully engage in work and family activities.</i>		
<i>Promoting "win-win" for employees and the company.</i>		
<i>The family leave policy option enables employees to continue their affiliation with the company during a time when they must devote significant attention to a personal or family situation.</i>		

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Stage 1: Worksheet C **Drafting a Work/Life Vision Statement:** **Ideas from Other Companies or Organizations**

INSTRUCTIONS

Collect vision statements from companies recognized as work/life leaders. Summarize the information on a chart, such as the one below.

Model Company or Organization	Reason for Selection	Key Elements of their Standards of Excellence
XYZ Company	The firm implemented a family leave policy two years ago and is using it as part of their recruitment program	The standards indicate that the specific conditions of leaves will be customized and developed jointly by the employee and the supervisor.

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Stage 1: Worksheet D

Selecting Measurable Standards

INSTRUCTIONS

Begin with your vision statement. Identify standards of excellence for each aspect of your statement.

Some companies may want to focus on particular work/life policies and programs. In those situations, you could explore how specific standards would link accomplishments of the particular program or policy to the work/life vision. List each standard, state your objective for that standard, and create action steps for reaching your vision of excellence.

When considering indicators of visions of excellence relevant to your family leave policy, you might consider the standards such as:

- utilization patterns (including reasons for non-utilization);
- turnover rates;
- employee morale and productivity;
- the absence of grievances related to work/life issues;
- awareness of eligibility requirements among the managerial and employee population;
- employee and family health/well-being;
- administrative costs; and
- attitudes towards work/life policies and programs.

If you are not sure what indicators are appropriate for a particular standard, consult external sources (e.g., the Report to Congress on Family and Medical Leave Policies)

Standards of Excellence	Measurable Standard	Action Steps to Achieve Goal
<i>Managerial training on work/life programs</i>	<i>100% participation by managers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training program • Test program • Evaluate program • Establish timeline for training all managers within 12 months
<i>Consistent communication that reinforces linkages between work/life programs and business objectives</i>	<i>Create language</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory publications/correct language if appropriate
<i>Consistent message and language about family leave in company communications</i>	<i>Inform managers of language to be used</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor for consistency

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have defined your vision of excellence for work/life balance and developed measurable standards.

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Stage 2: Worksheet A

Developing the Assessment Plan

PURPOSE

Specify how your company will gather information about the progress it is making toward the standards of excellence.

Determine "where" your company is on the continuum of excellence.

CASE EXAMPLE

If you are interested in determining the extent to which your leave policy is measuring up to your firm's standards of excellence, it will be necessary for you to compare each work/life standard to your firm's current accomplishments/experiences.

You will need to develop a plan for gathering the information needed to make these assessments.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the following chart to clarify:

- the practices, behaviors or policies you expect to measure at different points along the path toward your goals;
- the data will you need;
- the processes for obtaining the necessary information; and
- the sources of the information needed.

Indicator	Data Needed for Measurement	Method of Collection	From Whom?
	Use "win-win" examples in managerial training.	Review training plan; survey sample of participants.	trainers, program participants
	Documentation of examples used.		

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Stage 2: Worksheet B

Summarizing the Findings

INSTRUCTIONS

Use this worksheet to highlight information about the progress you are making toward your vision of excellence.

To assess progress to date, you might compare changes in the information related to a specific standard over a particular period of time (e.g., since a particular aspect of the family leave policy was introduced, before and after an activity such as a training about family leave occurred, etc.).

Standards of Excellence	Indicator(s)	Measures of Progress	Assessment of Rate of Progress
<i>Our family leave policy creates a win-win situation by: 1) helping employees respond to personal or family needs that require a period of absence from work, and 2) retaining valued employees whom might otherwise resign.</i>	• <i>Reduction in unwanted turnover.</i>	<i>Turnover will be reduced by 10% during the first year after implementation.</i>	<i>On target</i>
<i>Our family leave policy enhances employee commitment because employees feel that the company cares about them as people.</i>	• <i>Perception by employees that company, managers, and supervisors are supportive of employee requests for family leave.</i>	<i>5% increase in positive assessments of company's commitment to work/life balance on annual employee satisfaction surveys during the first year after implementation.</i>	<i>Target not met.</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have examined how closely your current work/life initiatives are aligned with your ideal vision.

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Stage 3: Creating a Plan of Action

PURPOSE

Identify ways to improve your work/life initiatives so that the company can move closer toward its vision.

CASE EXAMPLE

A firm interested in improving its leave policy will need to develop strategies for addressing challenges that may be impeding progress and design a workplan for increasing its progress toward the vision of excellence.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Referring to Worksheet 2-B above, list the standards where your company is furthest from your ideal vision.

- Do these suggest areas that need more attention?
- Do you want to re-evaluate your work/life goals?
- Do you need to re-evaluate your indicators of progress?
- Are there specific challenges or barriers that are hindering your progress?

List the standards that are close to your ideal vision.

- Do you expect continued progress along these dimensions?
- Is it time to "raise the bar"?
- Are there lessons to be learned that can be applied to other work/life policies, programs and practices?

Standards of Excellence	Indicator(s) of Progress	Challenges	Action Steps
Our family leave policy creates a win-win situation by: 1) helping employees respond to personal or family needs that require a period of absence from work, and 2) retaining valued employees whom might otherwise resign.	• Increased perception of firm as a company of choice.	Too few employees (or potential employees) are aware of the unique components to the company's leave policy.	Intensify efforts to get managers on board. Review communications strategies.

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have developed a plan of action to "close the gap" between your current efforts and your ideal vision.

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NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

by Marcie Pitt-Catsoupes

Editor's Note: Needs assessments provide company decision makers with important information that can guide the development of work/life initiatives. However, the value of needs assessments is not limited just to those companies that are "just beginning." This approach to measurement offers on-going opportunities for companies to customize their work/life initiatives so that they truly "fit" with the priority needs and circumstances of their employees.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- Become **familiar** with the basic components of needs assessment.
- **Understand** how needs assessments can produce practical information that is relevant for planning and evaluation.
- **Plan** a work/life needs assessment.

NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

I. Overview

What is a needs assessment?

Needs assessments:

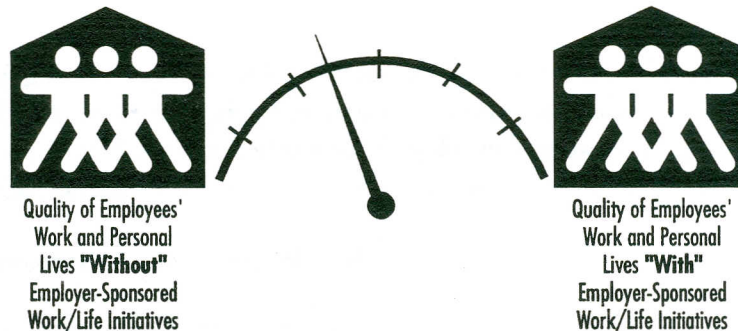
- document the prevalence of employees' work/life needs,
- prioritize employees' work/life needs, and
- determine the extent to which existing resources (available at the workplace, in the community, or at home) address priority work/life needs.

If they are repeated over a period of time (e.g., once every 3 - 5 years), needs assessments can also track changes in employees' needs, thereby providing a measure of the impact of employer-sponsored initiatives on employees' work and personal/home experiences.

What are you comparing?

Work/life needs assessments gather information about: 1) employees' "quality of life" at work and at home; and 2) the impact of work/life initiatives on work and personal/home experiences.

Comparisons Made by Needs Assessments



Highlights of the Needs Assessment Process

Needs assessments gather information about employees' perceptions of their own work and personal/home experiences, document the prevalence and severity of particular work/life situations, and profile the variations in work/life experiences of different groups of employees. In addition, needs assessments collect data about resources (e.g., supports, services, programs) that address work/life needs.

The needs assessment process consists of five basic stages:

- Stage 1. Assess employees' work/life experiences, needs and priorities.*
- Stage 2. Identify work/life resources (at the workplace and in the community). Collect information about supports and services (e.g., those which exist or could exist) that employees use (or could use) to address priority work/life concerns and challenges.*

Stage 3. Evaluate the impact of existing work/life initiatives.

Stage 4. Determine the implications for your company's work/life initiatives.

Stage 5. Make recommendations. Communicate findings.

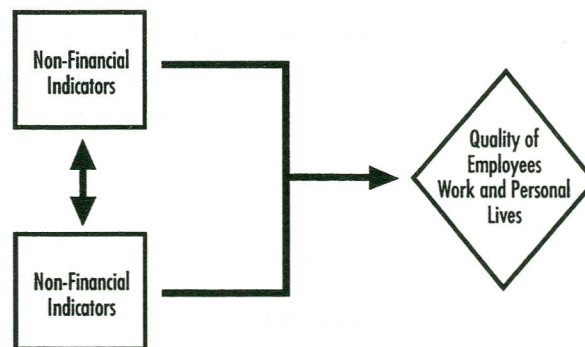
* *In many situations, companies gather information about needs and resources at the same time. For the purposes of discussion, these have been separated into two discrete stages.*

II. Background

Focus on the
Quality of Life

As suggested by the Needs Assessment Model below, this approach to measurement helps determine whether work/life policies, programs and practices could (or have) improve(d) the quality of employees' work and personal/home lives.

The Needs Assessment Model



Needs at Work,
Needs at Home

For the past two decades, work/life champions have recognized that effective work/life initiatives can create "win-win" situations by simultaneously offering business benefits and supporting the quality of employees' lives at home and at work. As indicated by the following figure, work/life needs assessments focus on the documentation of employees' needs.

Needs Assessment Framework

FOCUS OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

	on the company	on employees at work	on employees at home
positive impact			
neutral impact			
negative impact			

III. Key Questions

Core needs assessment questions focus on the extent to which work/life initiatives address and ameliorate employees' priority needs, conflicts, and problems.

How do employees feel about the quality of their work lives?

- Which aspects of their work lives are the most satisfying?
- Do particular aspects of employees' work lives (e.g., stress, time commitments, pressured work environment, short term work contracts, etc.) have negative impacts on their personal/home lives? Do particular aspects of employees' work lives (e.g., sense of personal accomplishment and fulfillment, supportive work relationships, career opportunities, etc.) have positive impacts on their personal/home lives?
- Which aspects of their work lives are the most problematic for employees' overall work/life experiences? What are the priority needs?
- Are the current priority work needs of employees similar to/different from the needs of employees at some earlier date (e.g., 5 years ago)?

How do employees feel about the quality of their personal/home lives?

- Do particular personal/home life situations (e.g., break downs in arrangements for dependent care, commitments to educational pursuits, unanticipated family responsibilities, unresolved personal problems) have negative impacts on work experiences? Do particular personal/home life situations (e.g., career enhancing experiences, supportive family relationships, health habits, interests or hobbies that offer opportunities for a sense of rejuvenation, etc.) have positive impacts on work experiences?
- Which aspects of employees' personal/home lives are the most problematic for their overall work/life experiences? What are the priority needs?
- Are the current priority personal/home needs of employees similar to/different from the needs of employees at some earlier date (e.g., 5 years ago)?

What types of policies, programs, or practices address (or could address) employees' work/life needs?

- Are employees aware of your company's existing initiatives?
- Do employees who report that they have specific work/life needs use the policies, programs, and practices that currently exist at your company?
- Do employees who report that they have specific work/life needs report that they use community-based supports to address their work/life priorities?

Do existing work/life supports address employees' priority work and personal/home needs?

- Is there evidence that existing workplace-based supports address current needs?
- Have some of the existing workplace-based supports been designed to address needs that are not seen as high priorities by employees?

**Stage 4:
Determine
Implications for
Work/Life
Initiatives**

- Do employees feel that the existing workplace-based supports are complementary to (or duplicative of) community-based supports?
- Which priority needs are not sufficiently addressed by existing workplace-based supports?
- What has been the impact of specific work/life initiatives on employees' needs over time? Do the positive impacts on employees' priority needs plateau after a period of time? Does it take a certain amount of time before the benefits of some work/life initiatives can be observed?
- Do employees have suggestions for changes in work/life initiatives that could enhance the extent to which they meet their priority needs?

Is there a good match between your company's work/life initiatives and the priority needs of employees?

- If you made some adjustments in particular policies, programs or practices, would they more effectively address employees' priority work/life needs?
- Do employees report that existing work/life initiatives address both work and personal/home needs? Is there evidence that existing initiatives are more effective in addressing priority work needs? Is there evidence that existing initiatives are more effective in addressing priority personal/home needs?
- Is there evidence that some work/life policies, programs or practices should be reduced or discontinued because they do not address priority needs?

**Stage 5: Make
Recommendations**

Have you developed a plan to communicate the findings of the needs assessment to different stakeholders?

- Who are the various stakeholders in the needs assessment findings?
- What information would be of most interest to employees?
- What information would be most useful for managers and supervisors?
- Who might be most affected by the recommendations?
- What communication strategies might be the most effective?
- Which work/life champions might support the recommendations?

IV. What is Measured?

If you want to assess whether your work/life initiatives are meeting employees' priority needs, it will be necessary to develop measures that assess: 1) the extent to which employees are aware of and are actually using the available policies, programs, and practices; 2) employees' perceptions of the extent to which existing work/life initiatives respond to their needs in a satisfactory manner; 3) the interaction between work and home life experiences; and 4) employees' perceptions about the quality of life at work and at home.

Work/Life Policies and Programs: Measuring Awareness, Use, and Satisfaction

Many companies have tailored needs assessment instruments to reflect their own work environments. In addition to collecting information about past/current use, you may want to gather preliminary information about anticipated future use of existing initiatives. This data may be helpful when you begin to consider possible changes in your work/life initiatives.

Practitioners often find that employees have only a vague awareness of work/life policies and programs, despite concerted efforts to provide accessible information about these supports. Needs assessments provide an opportunity to gauge employees' familiarity with existing work/life initiatives.

SAMPLE MEASURE OF AWARENESS		
Are you aware that our company offers the following work/life policies and programs?	yes	no
Financial Assistance		
• financial support for adoption	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
<hr/>		
Information and Referrals		
• seminars: helping children apply to college	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____

If your company wants to measure the extent to which existing initiatives address employees' priority needs, it will be important to document the number of employees who actually use formal policies and programs (e.g., career development seminars, etc.) as well as informal practices (e.g., occasional schedule flexibility to meet personal/home responsibilities).

SAMPLE MEASURE OF UTILIZATION & SATISFACTION					
Have you ever used any of the work/life policies and programs (e.g., in the past, currently)?	no	yes	not at all satisfied	neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	very satisfied
Financial Assistance					
• financial support for adoption	_____	_____	1	2	3
•	_____	_____	1	2	3
•	_____	_____	1	2	3
•	_____	_____	1	2	3
•	_____	_____	1	2	3
Information and Referrals					
• seminars: helping children apply to college	_____	_____	1	2	3
•	_____	_____	1	2	3
•	_____	_____	1	2	3
•	_____	_____	1	2	3
•	_____	_____	1	2	3

The needs of employees typically change over time. Your firm may be interested in gathering data about projected needs, understanding that these forecasts are just one way to anticipate future needs.

SAMPLE MEASURE OF ANTICIPATED USE		
Do you think you might use any of the following work/life policies and programs in the future?	yes	no
Financial Assistance		
• financial support for adoption	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
Information and Referrals		
• seminars: helping children apply to college	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____

Needs assessments offer practitioners opportunities to measure: 1) the extent to which personal/home experiences affect work experiences (in a positive or negative way); and 2) the extent to which work experiences affect personal/home experiences (in a positive or negative way).

SAMPLE MEASURES OF INTERACTION						
SELECTED ITEMS FROM BOHEN AND VIVEROS-LONG, 1981						
How often do you feel each of the following?	Always	Most of	Some of the time	Rarely the time	Never	Not applicable
• My job keeps me away from my family too much.	1	2	3	4	5	6
• I feel I have more to do than I can handle comfortably.	1	2	3	4	5	6
• I feel physically drained when I get home from work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
• I feel more respected than I would if I didn't have a job.	1	2	3	4	5	6

If your company does not routinely gather information about employees' perceptions of the quality of their work life, you may want to include in your needs assessment one (or more) overall measures of work experiences as well as some measures of particular dimensions of employees' work experience, such as job satisfaction, satisfaction with the time devoted to work, assessment of job demands, commitment to the job, assessment of the quality of work relationships, self-assessment of the match between skills and job task, satisfaction with opportunities for advancement, and assessment of workplace climate.

The Work Environment Scale, developed by Moos, assesses the social environments of different types of work settings. This scale (90 items) focuses on three dimensions of the work environments: relationships, personal growth, and system maintenance/system change. Normative data are available for the Work Environment Scale, making it possible to compare the responses of your employees to national samples.

SAMPLE MEASURES SELECTED FROM THE WORK ENVIRONMENT SCALE		
Moos, 1986		
	True	False
• The work is really challenging.	_____	_____
• People go out of their way to help a new employee feel comfortable.	_____	_____
• Supervisors tend to talk down to employees.	_____	_____
• Few employees have any important responsibilities.	_____	_____
• People pay a lot of attention to getting work done.	_____	_____
• There is constant pressure to keep working.	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____
•	_____	_____

There are a number of different measures that assess the quality of home life and personal relationships. Some of these collect information about employees' perceptions of their overall satisfaction with their lives and with their families. Others focus on particular dimensions of home life. The following tables provide some sample questions from two instruments.

The FACES-III instrument, developed by Olson and his colleagues, focuses on three dimensions of family life (cohesion, adaptability, and communication).

SAMPLE MEASURES OF FAMILY LIFE: SELECTED ITEMS OF THE FACES-III						
OLSON ET AL., 1986						
	Always never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always	Not applicable
Describe your family now:						
• Family members ask each other for help.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
• Family togetherness is very important.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
• Children have a say in their discipline.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
• Our family changes its way of handling tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

The Family Environment Scale, developed by Moos and Moos, has 3 primary sections measuring: relationship dimensions, personal growth dimensions, and system maintenance dimensions. This instrument has been widely used by researchers, making it is possible to compare the responses of your employees with the responses of other population groups.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF FAMILY LIFE: SELECTED ITEMS FROM THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT SCALE		
MOOS & MOOS, 1981		
	True	False
Cohesion		
• Family members really help support one another.	_____	_____
• We often seem to be killing time at home.	_____	_____
• We put a lot of energy into what we do at home.	_____	_____
Activity		
• We spend most weekends and evenings at home.	_____	_____
• Friends often come over for dinner or to visit.	_____	_____
• Family members are not very involved in recreational activities outside of work or school.	_____	_____

**Stage 1: Assess
Work/Life Needs
and Priorities**

V. Stages in Needs Assessments

Needs assessments are designed to document employees' perspectives of their salient work/life experiences. Practitioners can then aggregate the information to determine the extent to which particular situations are shared among different groups of people.

Considerations:

- Do particular groups of employees indicate that they are experiencing acute stress at home? At work?
- Do employees who report a sense of satisfaction with their personal/home lives indicate that they are more satisfied with their work lives?
- How are today's work/life needs and priorities similar to (or different from) the needs and priorities that were evident 5 years ago?
- Which work/life conflicts seem to have the most significant repercussions at work and/or at home?

**Stage 2:
Identify
Work/Life
Resources**

Some companies have developed a range of innovative strategies for addressing employees' priority work/life needs. The most familiar work/life supports may be specific policies (e.g., flexible work options), programs (e.g., work/life careers programs), or benefits (e.g., long-term care insurance). However, many companies report that some of the most successful work/life initiatives are less visible, such as work redesign or culture change initiatives.

Considerations:

- What types of resources and supports might address employees' priority work/life needs? Are these available at the workplace?
- Do employees report that they use community-based supports (e.g., before and after school programs, community transportation, etc.)?
- Is there evidence that the lack of adequate community-based supports (e.g., health care services available during the evenings or weekends) introduces particular types of work/life stresses?
- Could certain types of technology help employees reconcile some of their work/life conflicts?
- How could work demands, the physical work environment, and workplace culture be used as resources to address some of the most pressing work/life needs?

**Stage 3:
Evaluate Impact
of Existing
Work/Life
Resources**

Information collected during needs assessment studies can be used to strengthen existing initiatives and to examine whether existing workplace-based supports are meeting employees' priority needs.

Companies interested in determining whether work/life initiatives available at the workplace effectively meet employees' needs may want to consider two data collection options:

1. *Repeat Needs Assessments:* If an unmet need is identified during a needs assessment study, your company might decide to develop a new type of work/life support. Once the new initiative has been implemented, the needs assessment process could be repeated to see whether the incidence/significance of the work/life need has been decreased.
2. *Compare Results of Different Worksites:* Large companies often report that there is significant variation in specific work/life policies and practices across business units and worksites. In these circumstances, it is possible to compare the work/life needs of employees in one location where a particular program might be available with the work/life needs in another location where the program is not available. Although it would be important to consider whether other factors (such as prevailing workplace attitudes) may affect any differences in work/life needs, this type of comparison can offer some insights about the extent to which established work/life supports are truly responsive to employees' needs.

Considerations:

- What factors affect variations in the work/life needs of different groups of employees?
- Are there indications that employees with particular work/life needs are actually using the work/life resources designed to meet those needs? If not, why?
- Are some work/life supports used more frequently to meet particular work/life needs?
- Do some work/life supports seem to be more effective in meeting the work/life needs of employees than others?
- Do some work/life policies, programs and practices reduce the negative spillover from home to work but increase the negative spillover from work to home?
- Do some work/life policies, programs and practices reduce the negative spillover from work to home but increase the negative spillover from home to work?

The findings of needs assessments can be used for different types of decision making. The results can:

- 1) Help to clarify whether new work/life initiatives are desired and warranted.
- 2) Determine whether specific work/life initiatives should be more accessible or available to the firm's worksites.
- 3) Help determine if the current configuration of work/life policies, programs or practices should be continued "as is" because employees' work/life priorities are being adequately addressed.
- 4) Identify whether existing work/life initiatives are addressing the needs of some employee groups but not others.

Considerations:

- Do the findings of the needs assessment help the company target its efforts toward one type of work/life issue or another?

Stage 5: Make Recommendations

- Are there some types of work/life issues, such as needed supports for disabled family members, that are difficult to address at the workplace? Are there opportunities for the company to address these issues by supporting community-based organizations?
- Can the company respond to some (but not all) work/life issues without fueling resentment among employees who may not experience that particular work/life need?

The communication of the findings of needs assessment studies can be complicated because it is likely that different stakeholders will be interested in the different types of information.

For example, employees who have participated in the needs assessment process may be curious about certain elements of the descriptive data, may want to confirm that their opinions concerning work/life needs have been heard, and may be interested in decision makers' plans to respond to selected findings. On the other hand, program administrators may be more interested in analyses that help them to determine how to improve work/life initiatives so that they more effectively meet the work/life needs of a greater number of employees.

Considerations:

- Who has contributed to the needs assessment process? What information is likely to be most important to them?
- How can information be shared with different constituent groups in a timely manner?
- How can communications about the needs assessment be leveraged so that opportunities are created to increase employees' awareness about the purpose and the specific components of your company's work/life initiatives?
- How can communications about the needs assessments reinforce important messages about the strategic connections between business strategies and work/life initiatives?

VI. Considerations

Needs assessments are particularly useful in the following situations:

- The company needs additional clarity about employees' priority work/life needs before developing a plan of action.
- The company is considering changing the configuration of its current work/life initiatives (e.g., developing one or more new components, expanding one or more components) and is receptive to employee input.
- The company wants to check to see if existing work/life initiatives have actually reduced employees' conflicts.

Needs assessments can offer a framework for targeting resources so that work/life initiatives can focus on priority concerns. In addition, needs assessments can gather information about work/life conflicts that have a particular impact on certain business strategies, such as being an employer of choice. This type of data can help companies document the strategic value of work/life initiatives.

When are needs assessments most appropriate?

How might needs assessments contribute to your work/life strategy?

Are there any particular challenges associated with needs assessments?

Companies may experience some of the following challenges when conducting needs assessments: employees' expectations are raised; participants may not represent the overall workforce; and forecasting information is inaccurate.

Employees may expect that the company will “do something.”

Needs assessments ask employees to assess their work/life needs; therefore, this approach to measurement focuses attention on the difficulties employees face as they attempt to meet their work and personal/home responsibilities. Despite the fact that many employers make extraordinary efforts to tell employees that the company cannot promise to meet all of the needs identified, the needs assessment process may raise the expectations of some employees that the company will respond to their own most pressing work/life conflicts.

Employees with the most pressing needs tend to participate.

It is usually easier to get people who have significant work/life conflicts to participate in needs assessments than to engage other employees. As a consequence, the findings may be somewhat skewed toward unresolved work/life needs.

Employees who indicate that they have particular needs may not actually use policies and programs subsequently established to meet those needs.

Some needs assessments are designed to gather information about the anticipated use of a new work/life option that might be implemented. For example, companies that are considering whether to allow employees' family members to use the wellness center on weekends might include questions in a needs assessment to find out approximately how many employees would be interested in a “family membership.” However, people's responses to hypothetical questions are often different from the choices that they make when this option actually becomes a reality.

Why might your firm want to use needs assessments?

Many companies have found that needs assessment are a practical and relatively low-cost way to examine whether their work/life initiatives meet employees' priority needs. Needs assessment studies offer company decision makers opportunities to consider work/life issues from employees' point of view.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE NEEDS ASSESSMENTS WORKSHEETS

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

A computer manufacturing company, Compcorp, wanted to assess its work/life initiatives and strategically re-position them. The firm was particularly interested in examining the work/life needs of the young women who worked at the plant because there was a high turnover rate within this employee group.

Compcorp decided to conduct a needs assessment to accomplish several objectives:

1. Remind employees about the existing policies and programs.

The needs assessment process was seen as an opportunity to:

- open dialogue about the company's commitment to work/life issues,
- talk with employees about the firm's work/life strategies, and
- disseminate information about the existing work/life initiatives.

2. Determine whether the existing initiatives responded to employees' most pressing work/life issues.

The company wanted to examine the fit between employees' priority needs and the current profile of work/life initiatives.

3. Expand the company's understanding of emergent work/life needs so that changes could be made in work/life initiatives, making them more responsive to employees' priorities.

The following worksheets use the experiences of this company to illustrate how a needs assessment study can help make adjustments in work/life initiatives so that they more effectively meet the needs of the company and employees at work and at home.

Stage 1: Worksheet A

Identifying Information Needed About Employees' Work/Life Needs

PURPOSE

Consider options for gathering information about employees' work/life experiences.

CASE EXAMPLE

Compcorp decided to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather information about employees' work/life issues. Due to the particular interest in the work/life experiences of the female employees, in-depth information was collected about their needs.

Focus group discussions were used to identify emergent issues that may not yet have become visible to company decision makers. The findings of the focus groups were used to guide the development of an employee survey that was distributed to all employees. The survey collected information about employees' awareness of existing programs, their assessments of particular work/life experiences, and recommendations for resources and supports that could improve the quality of their lives at work and at home.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use a chart such as the one below to plan your needs assessment study.

Considerations	Comments
What information would help your company understand employees' assessments of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the quality of their work lives• the quality of their personal/home lives• the impact of work on their home lives• the impact of home on their work lives• work/life priorities (e.g., unresolved conflicts, etc.)	<i>The manufacturing company wanted to gain a better understanding about how particular aspects of the employment experience (e.g., work schedules) affected employees' quality of life.</i>
Is your company interested in asking employees about the factors that most affect the quality of their work and personal/home lives?	
What information would help you understand the work/life priorities of different employees groups? For example, would information about the following factors be useful? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• demographics (e.g., age, gender, etc.)• job responsibilities (e.g., worksite, job demands, position)• affiliation with the company (e.g., tenure, employment status)	

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Stage 1: Worksheet B

Workplan for Collecting Needs Assessment Information

INSTRUCTIONS

Summarize your plan for gathering information about employees' work/life priorities.

Key Needs Assessment Task	What decisions need to be made?	Who is responsible?	What is the timeframe?
<p>• Determine Information Needed</p> <p>What are the key questions you want answered?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>Are you particularly interested in some work/life issues?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>Are you particularly interested in the experiences of particular groups of employees?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>• Select Data Collection Methodologies</p> <p>How might you want to gather the information?</p> <p>What types of information can you obtain from our information systems? From surveys? From discussion groups? From interviews? Other methods?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>• Develop Instruments</p> <p>How might the instruments be pilot tested?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			

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Stage 1: Worksheet B

Workplan for Collecting Needs Assessment Information

(continued)

Key Needs Assessment Task	What decisions need to be made?	Who is responsible?	What is the timeframe?
<p>• Select Sample</p> <p>Should all employees be invited to participate in the needs assessment? If information is collected from a sample of the workforce, how should the sample be created?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>• Develop Communications Plan</p> <p>Who should be aware of the needs assessment study? Who would be interested in the findings?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>• Create a Data Analysis Plan</p> <p>What types of analysis would be most useful for planning and decision making?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>• Collect Information (as appropriate)</p> <p>How should questionnaires be distributed? When and where should interviews be conducted? When and where should focus groups be convened? What is the best way to obtain data from the firm's HRIS?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have made planning decisions about key elements of your needs assessment study.

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Stage 2: Worksheet A

Identifying Information Needed about Work/Life Resources

PURPOSE

Determine what information is needed about the resources employees might use to address their work/life priorities.

CASE EXAMPLE

At Compcorp, some of the participants in the focus groups convened during Stage 1 talked about the problems they had obtaining prenatal and neonatal health care.

During Stage II of the needs assessment project, the company conducted an inventory of maternal and infant health care resources located in nearby communities.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the following table to consider what information about employees' use of work/life resources would be useful for your company and how you might gather that information.

Considerations	Comments
<p>What information would be of most interest to your company? For instance,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees' awareness of the work/life initiatives that currently exist at the workplace • employees' current use of your firm's work/life initiatives • employees' use of your firm's work/life initiatives "in the past" • employees' anticipation of their use of your firm's work/life initiatives "in the future" 	<p><i>The manufacturing company was especially interested in gathering information about the strategies used by employees (e.g., flexible scheduling options) to meet the medical needs of their family and household members.</i></p>
<p>Would you like employees to make suggestions about policies, programs, or practices that would improve their work/life experiences?</p> <p>What types of suggestions would be most useful?</p>	
<p>Are you interested in resources located "outside of the workplace" that your employees might use to address their work/life needs? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees' current use of work/life services and programs that are available in the community • employees' satisfaction with the community-based supports that might be available • employees' current use of work/life supports offered at the workplace of a spouse or other household member • employees' satisfaction with work/life supports that they have used sponsored by the employer of a spouse or other household member 	

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Stage 2: Worksheet B

Workplan for Conducting a Resource Inventory

INSTRUCTIONS

Summarize your plan for gathering information about work/life resources.

Resource Inventory Task	What decisions need to be made?	Who is responsible?	What is the timeframe?
<p>•Determine Information Needed</p> <p>What are the key questions you want answered? Are you particularly interested in some work/life resources? Are you particularly interested in the resources used by particular groups of employees?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>•Select Data Collection Methodologies</p> <p>How might you want to gather the information? What types of information can you obtain from our information systems? From surveys? From discussion groups? From interviews? Other methods?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>•Develop Instruments</p> <p>How might the instruments be pilot tested?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			

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Stage 2: Worksheet B

Workplan for Conducting a Resource Inventory

(continued)

Resource Inventory Task	What decisions need to be made?	Who is responsible?	What is the timeframe?
<p>• Select Sample</p> <p>Should all employees be invited to participate in this aspect of the study?</p> <p>If information is collected from a sample of the workforce, how should the sample be created?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>• Develop Communications Plan</p> <p>Who should be aware of the inventory of work/life resources?</p> <p>Who would be interested in the findings?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>• Create a Data Analysis Plan</p> <p>What types of analysis would be most useful for planning and decision making?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>• Collect Information (as appropriate)</p> <p>How should questionnaires be distributed?</p> <p>When and where should interviews be conducted?</p> <p>When and where should focus groups be convened?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have made planning decisions about conducting an inventory of work/life resources.

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Stage 3: Worksheet A

Identifying Priority Work/Life Needs

PURPOSE

Consider whether your firm's work/life resources respond to employees' priority issues and concerns.

EXAMPLE

Compcorp's needs assessment/resource inventory found:

- only a minority of employees indicated an awareness about the existing scope of the firm's work/life policies and programs;
- the most significant work/life concerns were associated with the uncertainty of long-term employment (an issue that had not been addressed by any of the existing work/life policies or programs);
- nearly half of the young women who were currently pregnant were not receiving an adequate level of obstetrical care due to problems of access (e.g., hours of medical appointments, transportation, etc.).

INSTRUCTIONS

Use a table such as the one below to summarize the key findings of the needs assessment study.

List the work/life needs that emerged as "priorities" for employees:	Have any existing initiatives been designed to address this issue?	If "yes," how effective do they seem to be?	Are there any resources "outside" of the workplace that might help employees address this need?	Do employees have suggestions about changes in the work/life program that might address the priority?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>High stress associated with increased job demands</i> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>annual employee survey</i> • <i>360 evaluations</i> • <i>wellness programs</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>existing initiatives appear to be minimally to moderately effective for specific groups of employees</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>no</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>conduct assessment of work assignments</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inability to "charge" sick time "by the hour" (rather than taking off full days) discourages non-exempt employees from scheduling medical appointments during the work week.</i> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>no</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NA</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>a few clinics offer evening and weekend hours</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>offer routine medical services at the workplace</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 				

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Stage 3: Worksheet B

Assessing the Extent to Which Existing Initiatives Address Priority Needs

INSTRUCTIONS

Use a table such as the one below to consider the extent to which existing work/life initiatives address employees' work/life priorities.

List your current work/life policies, programs and practices in the left hand column (column 1). List the top four work/life priorities at the top of columns 2 - 4. Summarize how the existing work/life initiatives might address the top four work/life priorities.

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
	<i>For example: requirement that sick time be taken in full day increments</i>			
• Information, Resources, and Referrals 1. work/life library 2. 3. 4.	no			
• Child Care Assistance 1. on-site child care center 2. 3. 4.	no			
• Flexible Work Options 1. periodic flex time 2. 3. 4.	yes, if approved by supervisor			

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have made assessed the extent to which your initiatives respond to employees' priority work/life issues.

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Stage 4: Determine Implications for Work/Life Initiatives

PURPOSE

Develop recommendations that could increase the extent to which your firm's work/life initiatives can meet the priority needs of the company and employees.

CASE EXAMPLE

Compcorp planned a series of action steps so that the work/life initiatives would more effectively address employees' priority work/life needs. A review of the company's policies pertaining to flexibility was conducted to determine how exempt and nonexempt employees might be better able to access them.

In addition, partnerships were established with two community hospitals that began to offer routine prenatal care at the workplace. The company anticipated that it would realize significant savings in health insurance costs if the workplace-based prenatal care prevented even one premature birth per year.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the following table to highlight some of the recommendations based on the findings of your needs assessment study.

Selected Findings	Recommendations
Findings from the Needs Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none">Approximately 25% of hourly wage employees who are pregnant do not receive the recommended level of prenatal and postnatal care. This problem jeopardizes the health of our employees and their newborns.	<i>Changes in preventive health measures could be a "win-win" for the company and for employees. If routine obstetrical visits were scheduled 2 times monthly at the workplace during convenient times (e.g., before the beginning of the work day, during lunch hours, early evenings), the percentage of employees receiving this care would increase. It is anticipated that this improve the birth outcomes and would, over time, reduce health insurance premiums.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">	
Findings from the Resource Inventory <ul style="list-style-type: none">During the focus groups, some of the women mentioned that they preferred obstetrical health centers that welcomed the prospective grandmothers as well as the fathers during the visits.	<i>The health clinic area where obstetrical check ups are conducted should be a "welcoming" environment for members of the pregnant woman's extended family.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have outlined some of the recommendations based on the needs assessment study.

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Stage 5: Make Recommendations

PURPOSE

Develop a plan to share the findings of your needs assessment with key stakeholder groups.

CASE EXAMPLE

Compcorp created a comprehensive communications plan. Once company decision makers were briefed on the findings of the needs assessments, short summaries of selected results were included several issues of the employee newsletter. Care was taken to communicate the new partnerships for the prenatal care arrangements. The company decided to focus the media attention on the innovative leadership demonstrated by the two hospitals as a way to connect its community relations strategies with its work/life strategy.

The company convened a community meeting to discuss the findings and the firm's plan of action. The meeting was scheduled at 9:00 in the morning and was announced well in advance.

A work/life fair was held at the same time so that employees could gather information about the company's work/life initiatives before and after the meeting.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use a chart such as the following to develop a communications plan.

List Stakeholder Groups	What Types of Information Would be of Most Interest?	What Communication Strategies Might Be Most Effective?	"When" During the Needs Assessment Study Should They Receive Some Information?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Participants in the study</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Highlights</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Short summaries in the employee newsletter</i>• <i>Posting on the bulletin board in the employee break rooms</i>• <i>Short updates during staff meetings</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>When employees are invited to "volunteer" for the evaluation team</i>• <i>Once the basic design elements have been determined</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have developed an outline for your communications plan

ANALYZING AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION

by Doug Creed, Ph.D. and Maureen Scully, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: The assessment of utilization rates is, perhaps, the most common way to measure the apparent success of work/life initiatives. Work/life practitioners who take the time to look closely at utilization rates may find that they gain insights into workplace culture and better understand the value of work/life initiatives, whether utilization rates are high or low. However, as discussed in this chapter, the stories behind utilization rates may not be unambiguous.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Create** a framework for examining utilization rates.
- **Look** beyond the numbers to discover factors that may affect utilization.
- **Understand** how utilization data can help focus attention on the symbolic value associated with the availability of work/life initiatives.

ANALYZING AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION

I. Overview

What is an analysis
of availability/
utilization?

Utilization assessments typically examine the extent to which work/life initiatives are used, and identify factors that may affect the utilization rates.

Utilization data can also be used to discern the “meaning” that work/life initiatives have for employees and other stakeholders. It is important to note that the “meaning” of a particular work/life initiative may not be immediately clear from the numbers alone. Furthermore, a low utilization rate does not necessarily connote disinterest in the initiative.

In this chapter, we focus particular attention on the links between availability/ utilization and workplace values.

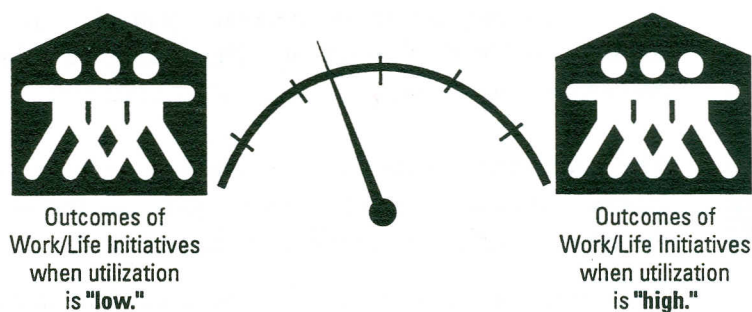
What are you
comparing?

An analysis of availability/utilization provides an opportunity to examine the instrumental and symbolic value of work/life initiatives, regardless whether utilization rates are high or low.

The instrumental value of a policy or program refers to the beneficial outcomes that can be measured in economic terms (e.g., reduced absenteeism, increased recruitment of highly skilled employees).

The symbolic value of a work/life initiatives refers to the impact which the availability/utilization has on stakeholders’ perceptions of and attitudes toward the organization. In turn, these attitudes affect the company’s ability to accomplish important business objectives.

Comparing Variations in Utilization and Outcomes



The analysis of utilization rates proceeds in four stages:

Stage 1. Measure utilization rates.

Stage 2. Measure instrumental value and symbolic value associated with the availability/ utilization.

Stage 3. Identify factors that might affect utilization.

Stage 4. Develop strategies to enhance utilization (if indicated) and maximize value of availability/utilization.

II. Background

The analysis of utilization rates encourages work/life practitioners to consider different aspects of their work/life initiatives, such as the “fit” between employees’ needs and the company’s policies, programs, and practices. In particular, however, this approach to measurement also offers opportunities to determine the relationships between workplace climate/culture and work/life initiatives.

This chapter discusses two ways to think about utilization rates that go beyond the notion that utilization is simply a reflection of employees’ needs or interests. First, obstacles to utilization may provide a window into the work climate and may offer insights about the perceived responsiveness of the workplace. Secondly, low utilization rates may mask the broader goodwill that can be gained when an organization provides progressive benefits.

An analysis focusing on the gains/losses in instrumental value would examine the relationships between utilization rates and organizational outcomes that can be evaluated in financial terms. The measurement of instrumental value pays particular attention to factors that might affect variations in utilization rates (e.g., the administration of the benefit).

For example, if the company has estimated that each telecommuter saves the company a certain amount of money each year (e.g., increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, savings related to compliance with reductions in commuting patterns as mandated by EPA regulations, etc.), the overall savings increase in proportion to the number of telecommuters. Of course, the company may not accrue these savings indefinitely. For most work/life initiatives, there is some optimal level of utilization. This is the point where the organization (and other stakeholders) achieve maximal benefits and minimal costs.

The assessment of symbolic value considers the impact of availability/ utilization on work/life stakeholders, such as employees who appreciate the availability of such benefits, even if they do not use them at that particular point in time.

For example, the availability of certain dependent care benefits might have a positive impact on the tenure of employees who do not have children as well as those who do. It is possible that employees without dependent children may be more inclined to remain with an organization if they feel the benefits offered to parent employees provide evidence of a company’s social responsibility. Other employees who do not have children may appreciate the availability of dependent care benefits if they feel that these policies, programs, and practices might be important to their own future families.

Turning to domestic partner benefits (DPBs) for a more extended illustration, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) employees who do not use DPBs may nonetheless feel validated by the organization's recognition of their existence and their lifestyle. The experience of one company which recently participated in a case study is illustrative. During an interview, the CEO remarked to us that fewer than 100 people at his company had signed up for DPBs and most of these employees were people with opposite-sex relationships. However, the CEO estimated that the availability of DPBs had contributed to the positive perceptions of perhaps as many as 1000 GLBT employees that they were valued by the company. It was the opinion of this CEO that DPBs are one of the relatively few work/life programs that buy the goodwill and enhanced commitment of 10% of the population almost immediately after implementation. His estimates are based on a commonly quoted figure, from the Kinsey studies from the 1950s, which suggests up to 10% of the American population have GLBT identities. It should also be noted that the circle of stakeholders extends beyond this 10% because DPBs may be received positively not just by GLBT employees but also by their straight friends and coworkers and by employees who have gay relatives and friends.

The example of DPBs illustrates how the positive symbolic value of a benefit can be overlooked during a utilization assessment. Of course, some negative attention may also be attached to the adoption of DPBs. Thus far, however, the feared boycotts and backlash have either not materialized or proven ineffective, even in highly visible cases like Disney. Lotus Development Corporation received much attention for being the first publicly traded organization to offer DPBs. In fact, positive reactions from employees, shareholders, and other stakeholders outnumbered negative reactions 4:1 (Harvard Business School, 1994).

Many work/life professionals report that hidden aspects of the corporate culture can have a profound affect on the utilization of policies and programs. In some situations, employees fear that their use of work/life benefits might send a signal that they are not serious about their careers. A catch-22 can be created in competitive work environments that offer comprehensive work/life benefits. That is, cultural values discourage the use of work/life benefits and the lack of use reinforces the cultural assumptions.

Sometimes, employees may not want to use particular benefits because they are concerned that by using them, they might call attention to certain aspects of their identities or personal lives (even though those benefits are created precisely to acknowledge those identities and needs). The image of the traditional employee is still deeply culturally rooted: a straight, white man with a wife and a couple of children is often perceived as being the "ideal" employee. For example, women with children may be concerned about stereotypes that they are not committed to their work, so they under-utilize work/life policies and programs in order to prove their commitment. Similarly, domestic partner benefits (DPBs) may be under-utilized by GLBT employees who fear the potential consequences associated with being out in the workplace, ranging from subtle inequities to overt hostility.

Practitioners can learn a lot about their organizations if they couple the measurement of availability/utilization with an assessment of workplace culture/climate. Four issues related to workplace values are especially relevant:

- 1) definitions of "family"
- 2) stakeholders in the employment contract
- 3) perceptions of fairness and equity
- 4) the value of bringing one's whole self to work

Defining a family

Employees' domestic lives may include adopted children or stepchildren, extended families, same-sex partners, and non-traditional dependents such as elders, young adults who have yet to find employment, or siblings who recently lost jobs. The elasticity of employers' definitions of "family members" is particularly important to people working in the United States where health care is a perquisite of employment rather than of citizenship.

Stakeholders in the employment contract

The employment contract (implicit and explicit) is generally seen as defining the relationships between the employer and the employee. In this chapter, we propose that there are multiple stakeholders in the employment contract. The stakeholder groups include all the parties who have an interest in the types of benefits offered at the workplace and the use of those benefits. Our definition of stakeholders includes employees who sign up for a benefit, employees who appreciate the availability of the benefit (whether or not they currently use it), individuals in the broader community who receive care as a result of their relationship to an employee who uses the benefit, and other people (e.g., customers) who appreciate or resent the benefit's existence.

Fairness and equity

In general, employees tend to assess whether they receive fair treatment at the workplace by making social comparisons; that is, they contrast their own situations with the circumstances of other employees. Perceptions of fairness or unfairness do not happen in a vacuum.

Nor are employees' perceptions of fairness static. Consequently, while companies may develop new benefits to address perceived inequities, these new policies and programs change the social landscape and the standards for comparison.

The whole self at work

Employers used to think that employees could leave their personal and family lives outside the factory gates. Indeed, it was regarded as professional to do so.

Today's employees often express a greater need and a greater willingness to bring their whole selves to work. The changes in family demographics have created circumstances where many employees simply have no option but to simultaneously carry their family and work place responsibilities. The more integrated whole self philosophy is also bolstered by social movements that encourage people to be proud of who they are.

Some workplace organizations have found that it is in their own best interests if employees bring their whole selves to work. For example, a team may perform better if its members can adaptively respond to the family and personal emergencies experienced by members of the team. This, in turn, helps to create a spirit of reciprocity that aids the team's work. The

absence of such team support can interfere with the group's ability to get the work done successfully.

The most obvious reasons that some employees hesitate to be themselves at work is fear. We have already mentioned that some employees are concerned that their use of benefits may trigger certain stereotypes. The fear of being oneself at work can be extreme for some employees. James Woods, in the book *The Corporate Closet*, discusses factors that affect how difficult it is for gay men to be open about aspects of their personal lives – or out of the closet – in the workplace. According to Woods, having a personal trait such as one's sexual identity set apart, ridiculed, and called unnatural or immoral is likely to make managing the perception of one's sexual identity "a central project in [one's] career" (1994: 30).

III. Key Questions

The approach to measurement discussed in this chapter focuses attention on utilization rates, the impact of availability/utilization, factors that might affect patterns of utilization, and strategies that might increase the positive benefits associated with availability/utilization.

Stage 1: Measure Utilization Rates

What are the current utilization rates?

- What were our expectations for utilization?
- How do our utilization rates compare with our original goals and objectives?
- How do our utilization rates compare with those of other companies?

Stage 2: Measure Instrumental and Symbolic Value

What organizational benefits result from the availability/utilization of a particular policy, program, or practice?

- Do variations in the utilization rate affect the *instrumental value* of work/life initiatives? For example, do the savings associated with decreased absenteeism vary depending on utilization?
- Do variations in the utilization rate affect the *symbolic value*? For instance, are employees' perceptions of the company affected by the availability/ utilization of work/life initiatives?
- Do utilization levels reflect unintended or mixed messages sent to employees?
- What company values are communicated by the availability/utilization of the policy, program, or practice? Are these values congruent with the values of different stakeholder groups?

Stage 3: Identify Factors that Might Affect Utilization

What factors might be affecting utilization rates?

- Do employees *know about* the availability of the policy, program, or practice?
- Do employees feel that the financial *costs* are reasonable?
- Does the *quality* of the policy, program, or practice affect utilization? For example, how satisfied are employees who have used it?

- Could utilization rates be affected by the way the program has been implemented or *administered*?
- Do *eligibility* requirements for “family” benefits communicate a narrow or broad definition of “family”?
- Do employees have access to similar *work/life supports* outside of the workplace?
- Does the policy, program, or practice address a *priority issue*?
- Are there any indications that employees feel that there are *hidden risks* associated with the use of the policy, program, or practice?
- How do *workplace* values affect utilization?

What strategies might increase the positive benefits associated with availability/utilization of work/life initiatives?

- If indicated, what steps could the company take to affect utilization rates?
- How might information about utilization rates be communicated to managers and supervisors in a way that deepens workplace support for work/life issues?
- How could the company address contradictions in “espoused values” and “values in practice”?

IV. What is Measured?

The analysis of utilization collects information using four sets of measures: utilization, instrumental value, symbolic value, and factors that might affect utilization.

Descriptive data are collected about different behaviors that indicate employees’ connection to or participation in a particular work/life initiative.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF UTILIZATION

- What percentage of the workforce uses the benefit?
- What percentage of the workforce was estimated to be the *target population* (e.g., those people whose life circumstances suggest that they might use the benefits)?
- Do the utilization rates vary by worksite?
- Do the utilization rates vary by demographics (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, gender, household composition, income, etc.)?

Companies interested in the meaning associated with the availability/ utilization of work/life initiatives will need to gather information about the symbolic value as well as the instrumental value of these policies and programs.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF INSTRUMENTAL AND SYMBOLIC VALUE								
INSTRUMENTAL VALUE								
Has utilization of the benefit resulted in any of the following cost savings:			Would the economic gains be affected if utilization were increased?			Would the economic gains be affected if utilization were decreased?		
• increased productivity	no	yes	no	yes		no	yes	
• reduced absenteeism	no	yes	no	yes		no	yes	
• reduced turnover	no	yes	no	yes		no	yes	
• successful recruitment	no	yes	no	yes		no	yes	

SYMBOLIC VALUE (e.g., as perceived by employees)					
Do you agree with the following statements?		Strongly Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Strongly Agree	
• I feel proud of the work/life initiatives available at our company.		1	2	3	4 5
• The types of work/life benefits available at our company validate who I am as a person.		1	2	3	4 5
• I am willing to do what it takes to get my work done because I feel supported by our company.		1	2	3	4 5
• It takes a load off my mind to know that this work/life benefit is available if I need it.		1	2	3	4 5

Companies want to derive as many benefits from their work/life policies as possible. As a consequence, it is important to understand the positive factors that facilitate achieving the desired level of utilization and the negative factors that inhibit reaching the desired level of utilization.

To better understand these factors, employers might want to gather information from two groups of employees: those who have used the work/life benefit and those who have not. A focus group might be convened with those people who used it, asking them for their thoughts about factors which have affected their utilization. This group might also be able to provide some insight about the symbolic value that this benefit has for other stakeholders (e.g., coworkers). A few sample questions are included in the following table.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF FACTORS				
Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree		Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Strongly Agree
• I feel proud of the work/life initiatives available at our company.	1	2	3	4 5
FACTORS RELATED TO WORKPLACE VALUES AND ATTITUDES				
• I am comfortable discussing my work/life experiences at work.	1	2	3	4 5
• My coworkers encourage one another to use the work/life benefits that would best meet their own circumstances.	1	2	3	4 5
• Employees in my department who request a part-time schedule are not seen as being committed to their work.	1	2	3	4 5
OTHER FACTORS				
• The quality of our company's _____ (name of policy or program) is excellent.	1	2	3	4 5
• The cost to employees of our company's _____ (name of policy or program) is high in comparison to other providers.	1	2	3	4 5
• Employees who want to use _____ (name of policy or program) must go through a lot of red tape.	1	2	3	4 5

V. Stages in the Analysis of Availability & Utilization

In this section, we discuss some of the special considerations that arise during the different stages of conducting a utilization analysis.

Stage 1: Measure Utilization Rates

The information collected during Stage 1 describes the patterns of access and utilization. These data profile employees who use the work/life benefit and those who do not.

Considerations:

- Is it possible to gather descriptive information about the utilization rates for different components of the benefit (e.g., outreach, inquiries, one-time users, repeat users, etc.)? If these data are not readily available, is it possible to estimate the use of particular work/life benefits?
- Can you compare the utilization rates at your company with the rates of other companies?
- Are there logical comparisons that can be made with the utilization of other work/life benefits that may help you make predictions of (or interpret) actual utilization levels?

Stage 2: Measure Instrumental and Symbolic Value

Utilization rates become more meaningful when they are considered in relationship to the instrumental value and symbolic value associated with the work/life initiative being assessed.

Considerations:

- Are there relationships between attitudes toward the company (and its services/products) and availability/utilization of the work/life initiative?
- What do the findings of a work/life culture audit suggest about the symbolic value of the availability/use of the work/life initiative?
- Do some benefits raise concerns about fairness or equity?

Stage 3: Identify Factors that May Affect Utilization

Utilization rates can be affected by a number of different factors. Companies with concerns about under-utilization of benefits should examine workplace culture and climate. For example, employees may be reluctant to use particular work/life initiatives because they are concerned that this might send a signal that they are not serious about their careers.

Considerations:

- How have factors such as the following affected utilization:
 - values, attitudes and expectations which exist at the workplace about different work/life issues
 - perspectives of supervisors and coworkers
 - communication practices
 - quality
 - cost
 - administrative processes (including practices which affect confidentiality)

- Do the experiences of other companies offer insight into some of the cultural, administrative and programmatic factors that could affect utilization rates?

Many organizations have found that they can gain a strategic advantage by linking work/life and diversity initiatives. The diversity perspective encourages companies to become cognizant of and remain sensitive to the many kinds of domestic arrangements (and related work/life issues) of their employees that may reflect their race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, or culture.

Considerations:

- What steps could be taken to increase the access which employees have to work/life benefits?
- What communication strategies might:
Inform employees about the existence of the policy, program, or practice? Increase awareness about work/life issues?
Reinforce the company's values about these issues?
- What might be done to enhance the positive attitudes of supervisors and coworkers toward the policy, program or practice?
- How might the administrative processes be adapted to minimize the risks to confidentiality?
- Can the company make any adjustments to reduce the costs assumed by the employees who use the policy, program, or practice?

VI. Considerations

The analysis of utilization rates can offer important opportunities for organizational self-evaluation. In particular, the examination of utilization data provides a window to look at workplace culture/climate and determine whether the work environment is actually friendly to employees' diverse work/life needs. This approach to measurement can:

- Help managers understand and reconcile any differences between expected and actual rates of utilization.
- Identify possible changes (e.g., program improvements) that might maximize the beneficial outcomes related to the availability/utilization of work/life initiatives.
- Raise some "red flags" about workplace values that run counter to the purpose of your company's work/life initiative.
- Encourage employees to become involved in the process of a work/life culture audit.

How might this approach contribute to your work/life strategy?

Are there any particular challenges associated with this approach to measurement?

Why might my firm want to examine utilization rates?

Work/life practitioners recognize the importance of understanding how workplace values and attitudes affect both the utilization of work/life initiatives and the outcomes associated with them. By linking the assessment of utilization to the measurement of instrumental and symbolic value, practitioners will be able to develop strategies that are responsive to complex work/life issues.

Practitioners may encounter two types of challenges: the lack of reliable data and the difficulties of measuring symbolic value.

At first glance, it may seem that it should be relatively easy to obtain information about program utilization. However, many practitioners have reported that their companies do not keep records for some important work/life policies and practices such as alternative work schedules and telecommuting. Customized work arrangements are often negotiated between the employee and the supervisor, without any involvement of the central human resource department, and it may be difficult to obtain information about the prevalence of these arrangements.

The concepts related to symbolic value (e.g., "equity") can be particularly difficult to measure. Although conventional research methodologies (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups) can provide important insights into some aspects of workplace culture, it is often difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding about symbolic value. Despite this challenge, it remains especially important to develop an understanding of the symbolic value of a benefit or initiative because such programs signal a company's values to many more stakeholders than just eligible employees.

Companies interested in gaining a better understanding about workplace culture and climate might use the assessment of utilization rates as a way to begin to examine the symbolic value of work/life initiatives.

Selected Resources

Publications:

Grant, Sara. 1994. "Lotus Development Corporation: Spousal Equivalents." Harvard Business School. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

James Woods. 1994. *The Corporate Closet: The Professional Lives of Gay Men in America*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHEETS FOR ANALYZING AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

During recent years, domestic partner benefits (DPBs) have been identified as a cutting edge work/life initiative. DPBs are provided to unmarried, long-term, live-in partners of employees. The initial request for DPBs usually comes from gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered (GLBT) employees who want benefits for their same-sex partners. Companies that have offered benefits to employees' domestic partners usually report that they have engaged in meaningful discussions about the definitions of "family."

Domestic partner benefits will be used to illustrate some of the salient activities associated with the analysis of the availability/utilization of work/life policies, programs and practices. The issue of domestic partner benefits provides an especially good illustration for two reasons. First, employees making the case for DPBs often argue that they will not be prohibitively expensive, because the utilization rate will be low. On the one hand, this argument may be effective at persuading organizations to adopt DPBs and manage backlash arguments about special treatment. On the other hand, there is an irony to this argument. As an attractive benefit, more employees – not fewer – ought to be taking advantage of them. If they are not, it may indicate that the organizational climate contributes to a low utilization rate, which is a source of concern despite the cost savings.

One company, which we call FinCo, participated in a recent study which we conducted. The CEO of this Fortune 100 financial services company realized that it was necessary for the company to try to remove hurdles confronting employees – such as everyday worrying about loved ones – if the company wanted to get the best out of its employees. He also wanted to communicate to key stakeholders, customers as well as to employees, that times and the competitive environment were changing and that the company was changing with them. Valuing and empowering a diverse workforce was key to his global competitive strategy.

The experiences of the fictitious company FinCo will be used in the following worksheets for illustrative purposes.

Stage 1: Measure Utilization Rates

PURPOSE

Consider utilization data pertaining to the work/life initiative being assessed.

CASE EXAMPLE

The actuarial approach to measuring program utilization begins with demographics. It draws on estimates about the size and nature of a population to calculate what percentage of employees are eligible and how much their use of a benefit might cost.

It is commonly estimated that 10% of any given population are gay, bi-sexual, lesbian, or transgendered (GLBTs) and that three quarters of this sub-population are involved in long-term domestic partnerships. In an organization of 1000 employees, that would mean that an estimated 75 employees might be GLBTs and could be considered as potential participants in domestic partner benefits (DPBs). It is also estimated that approximately one-third of this group of employees are likely to have partners who do not have their own employer-provided insurance (e.g., They are self-employed, students, in transition between careers, etc.). Consequently, the company might estimate the expected utilization rate to be 25 employees.

In practice, these estimates tend to be high. At Lotus, during the years since its introduction of DPBs in 1991, about 10 to 20 people out of a population of approximately 2,500 have signed up for DPBs each year.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the following table to record information about utilization.

Work/Life Initiative: _____

	Comments
Anticipated Utilization Rate	10%
Actual (or Estimated) Utilization Rate	3%
Are there variations in different departments, divisions, or worksites?	The utilization rate among sales employees is 5% and among programmers is 3.5%.
Are there variations among different groups of employees (e.g., demographic characteristics such as age)?	Utilization is higher among employees under the age of 30 years than those who are 30+ years old.
How do these utilization rates compare to the rates of other companies?	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have reviewed the available utilization data.

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Stage 2: Measure Instrumental Value and Symbolic Value

PURPOSE

Determine the instrumental and symbolic value that work/life initiatives have for members of different stakeholder groups.

CASE EXAMPLE

To create a more inclusive and empowering environment and to increase employee commitment, the CEO of FinCo wanted to signal that the company values its employees for who they are and for the contributions they make to the organization. Offering DPBs was one way he chose to communicate this message to the members of different stakeholder groups.

The partial list of FinCo's stakeholders in DPBs includes:

- *GLBT employees who sign up for the benefit.*
- *GLBT employees who do not use the benefit.*

At FinCo, a pattern emerged where lesbian employees were signing up far more frequently than gay men, prompting the question, "Where are the gay men?" The interests of each of the sub-groups included in the GLBT population were considered. Was there something about the environment – perhaps a macho ethos – that made it more difficult for gay men to come out? Were there differences in the utilization rates of DPBs according to characteristics such as age and race? For example, were older workers more reluctant to come out than younger? Did black employees experience greater taboos in coming out?

- *Unmarried heterosexual employees in long-term relationships.*

Unmarried employees may appreciate their inclusion in DPBs or resent their exclusion. FinCo decided to offer DPBs to unmarried heterosexuals because this policy was consistent with some of the company's broader strategic goals. (Among those companies which have established DPBs, a majority exclude unmarried heterosexual employees.) To date, the majority of FinCo employees who have used DPBs have been heterosexual employees. One of the HR representatives at FinCo indicated that the company's decision to extend its DPBs to heterosexual partners reflected the organization's sensitivity to disability issues. The company was aware that some heterosexual partners may decide against getting married if one of them is disabled and cannot work because being married would mean forfeiting government benefits and incurring unmanageable health care costs.

- *The managers of GLBT and unmarried heterosexual employees.*

Managers may be indirectly affected by the availability/utilization of DPBs. For example, managers may notice changes in morale of employees as a result of the availability of domestic partner benefits.

Stage 2: Measure Instrumental Value and Symbolic Value

(continued)

INSTRUCTIONS

Identify stakeholder groups that may have an interest in or be affected by the availability/utilization of the work/life initiative being assessed. Design procedures to collect information about the instrumental value and symbolic value of the work/life initiative for each group.

Stakeholder Group	Options for data collection	Instrumental Value of the Work/Life Initiatives	Symbolic Value of the Work/Life Initiative
• Company as a whole	<i>Question added to annual employee survey</i>	<i>Increased organizational commitment from employees who appreciate existence of DPBs</i>	<i>Reputation as an employer of choice that values inclusivity</i>
• Business unit			
• Employees who use policy, program, or practice			
• Coworkers of employees who use policy, program, or practice			
• Particular employee population groups			
• Managers/supervisors			

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have considered ways to gather information about the instrumental value and symbolic value that may be associated with the availability/utilization of the work/life initiative selected for assessment.

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Stage 3: Identify Factors that Might Affect Utilization

PURPOSE

Consider factors, including workplace values, that might facilitate or inhibit utilization of the work/life initiative being assessed.

CASE EXAMPLE

Utilization rates that are lower than expected should prompt investigation into deeper cultural issues, fundamental assumptions, and myths.

A culture audit will help to determine whether employees feel accepted and valued at the workplace. For example, the CEO of one organization better understood why sexual orientation is indeed a relevant workplace issue when he realized that the top prize for salespeople – a much coveted Caribbean cruise for the employee and their spouse – was not of value to high-performing GLBT employees (or unmarried heterosexual employees, we also learned). Why? Because employees were not formally allowed (nor were they encouraged) to bring domestic partners. A host of benefits that straight employees take for granted – such as spousal use of company cars, reduced rate gym memberships for family members, or tuition reimbursement for family members in universities – may become visible symbols of inequitable treatment. Although designed to reward employee performance, they had the unintended effect of undermining some employees' beliefs that they were valued employees.

Heterosexual employees with domestic partners and GLBTs with domestic partners who have not signed up for DPB might be able to provide important information about factors that have deterred utilization.

Focus groups and interviews provide a chance to learn more about the cultural issues that underlie the utilization of benefits and indicate whether an apparently low utilization rate is a source for concern. You may want to first contact employees who are using DPBs and invite them to participate in the assessment. A snowball sampling technique can widen the group of employees canvassed. While being careful to respect the privacy of GLBT employees who choose not to be out in the work place, participants can nominate others who they think might be willing to talk about their experiences and their decision processes about utilizing the benefit or not. These small group discussions can generate additional questions to ask and can guide the construction of questions to include on a survey of the full workforce. Of course, all these methods must be customized to the norms of your organization.

At some companies, it might not be appropriate to directly approach these individuals to ask for this information. As a consequence, the company might decide to distribute an anonymous survey and gather some information both about the inhibiting factors as well as the potential symbolic returns.

Stage 3: Identify Factors that Might Affect Utilization

(continued)

INSTRUCTIONS

List the factors that have been identified in the left column. Assess the extent to which these factors have affected utilization (e.g., facilitated or inhibited).

To What Extent do the Following Factors Affect Utilization?	Not at All	To a Moderate Extent	To a Very Great Extent	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of benefit utilization or program participation <p><i>Additional cost for adding partner to DPBs</i></p>	1	2	3	<i>For example: The use of DPBs increases an employees' personal tax liability, unlike similar benefits for married employees.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative processes <p><i>Requiring that employees sign an affidavit about their relationships as part of process requesting DPBs</i></p>	1	2	3	
•	1	2	3	
•	1	2	3	
•	1	2	3	
•	1	2	3	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have summarized factors that have affected utilization rates.

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Stage 4: Develop Strategies to Maximize Positive Outcomes

PURPOSE

Identify action steps for enhancing the instrumental and symbolic value of work/life policies, programs and practices.

CASE EXAMPLE

Your company may want to consider strategies for either:

- 1) increasing utilization (if indicated); or
- 2) enhancing the instrumental value and symbolic value associated with availability/utilization.

For instance:

• Making Utilization Easier

The administrative characteristics of the DPBs may affect utilization rates.

For example, certain companies require that employees sign an affidavit that their partnership has been of a certain duration and involves the same residence. Some employers argue that this practice protects the program from abuse, despite the fact that they do not require married heterosexual employees to sign similar forms. While preventing abuse is a legitimate goal, many organizations do not consider the burdens such affidavits might represent. Executing affidavits requires that both the employee and his/her domestic partner come out of the closet to some degree, an act that could put not only the employee but also the domestic partner at risk. We found one organization which did not require affidavits about the domestic partners' relationship because the company was concerned for the safety and job security of their employees' domestic partners. While the organization offering DPBs was committed to assuring its own employees a safe work place and to preventing the misuse of such documentation, it could not guarantee that such affidavits would not be used against the domestic partners in their respective work places.

• Addressing Attitudes

Practitioners interested in increasing the use of DPBs will need to strengthen those aspects of the workplace culture and climate that promote inclusivity.

It is difficult to implement strategies designed to change attitudes. Culture change does not happen overnight. For example, employees who might want to use DPBs will need time to assuage their own fears about the potential unintended consequences of bringing their whole selves to the work place.

Employees and other stakeholders will be more willing to believe that there is a commitment to inclusivity if they are able to witness evidence of this organizational value. Some companies that want to encourage employees to use DPBs have expanded their EEO statement to include sexual orientation.

In addition to a widened array of benefits, a more inclusive climate can be created through educational efforts. For example, speakers' bureaus and brown bag lunches provide a chance for GLBT employees to share their experiences and for straight co-workers to ask questions in an environment where "any question is OK."

• Reducing Costs

The economic consequences of benefit use often affects utilization rates. For instance, the IRS regards DPBs as taxable income, which could create an unmanageable tax burden for the employee.

Stage 4: Develop Strategies to Maximize Positive Outcomes

(continued)

Select those factors identified in Stage 3 that have had the most significant impact on utilization. Develop strategies to address these factors so that utilization can be enhanced.

Specify instrumental and/or symbolic value of the work/life initiative being assessed. Develop strategies so that the value can be enhanced.

Factors with Significant Impact on Utilization	Strategy to Enhance Utilization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactions at the workplace • Efficient processing of requests 	<p><i>Develop procedures to ensure confidentiality.</i></p> <p><i>Recognize employees who process requests for work/life policy, program, or practice effectively and efficiently.</i></p>
•	
•	

Instrumental or Symbolic Value	Strategy to Enhance Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees' appreciation that company supports their coworkers and colleagues 	<p><i>In employee newsletter, feature an interview an employee who champions gay rights but who is not, himself, a GLBT employee.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlash from employees who do not use work/life initiative 	<p><i>Address issues of GLBT employees in mandatory diversity training sessions.</i></p>
•	
•	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have developed strategies to increase utilization (if indicated) and enhance the value associated with the availability/utilization of the work/life initiative being assessed.

THE VALUE-ADDED APPROACH: ESTABLISHING THE LINK WITH BUSINESS STRATEGIES

by Susan J. Lambert, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: Many practitioners report that work/life initiatives have an "image" problem because they are perceived to be somewhat peripheral to core business activities.

The value-added approach is one way to identify and document how work/life policies, programs, and practices affect a company's ability to meet objectives associated with key business strategies.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Understand** the importance of linking the measurement of work/life initiatives to key business strategies.
- **Consider** options for measuring employees' willingness to "go the extra mile."
- **Plan** an assessment that collects data about the value-added by work/life initiatives.

THE VALUE-ADDED APPROACH:

ESTABLISHING THE LINK WITH BUSINESS STRATEGIES

I. Overview

What is the value-added approach to measurement?

The value-added approach first documents changes in employee performance that are related to employer-sponsored work/life supports, then examines how improved performance can contribute to the success of particular business strategies.

Work/life initiatives can affect performance in two ways:

- Work/life policies, programs and practices can *reduce problems that interfere* with worker performance. Left unresolved, work/life conflicts can make it difficult for employees to “give it all” to work tasks.
- Employees who appreciate the fact that the company has established work/life policies, programs, and practices may be willing to “*go the extra mile*” for the organization. Employee loyalty may be increased, whether or not the employee actually uses a particular policy or program.

This symbolic pathway to the bottom line is often ignored when considering the pay-offs of policies and programs, but it is key to linking work/life efforts to strategic goals and innovative management methods. Measurements of the symbolic value of work/life policies and programs help connect them to changes in workers’ attitudes toward the company and, ultimately, to specific aspects of employee performance.

What are you comparing?

The value-added approach examines changes in employee performance that are important to key business strategies.

Comparisons Made by the Value-Added Approach



With the value-added approach, the ultimate measurement of the benefits of your company's work/life policies and programs is reflected in the success of key business strategies.

The value-added approach begins with the identification of one or more business strategies that have been endorsed by the company and are widely accepted as being critical to business success (e.g., valuing diversity, TQM, etc.). Then, the relationships between the company's work/life initiatives and business strategies are examined and documented.

The value-added approach process includes five basic stages:

- Stage 1. Identify possible links between the company's work/life initiatives and key business strategies.
- Stage 2. Specify employee behaviors that contribute to key business strategies.
- Stage 3. Select measures for each component of the value-added model.
- Stage 4. Design the assessment process.
- Stage 5. Evaluate the findings to determine how work/life initiatives contribute to organizational objectives and related key business strategies.

II. Background

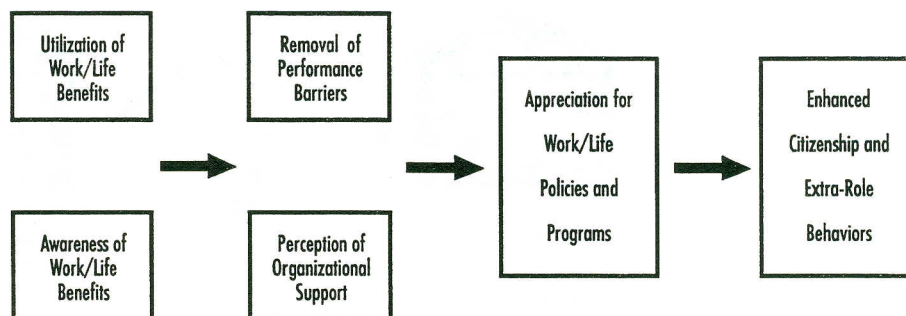
The value-added approach examines how awareness and use of work/life policies and programs affect citizenship behaviors that can contribute to the success of key business strategies.

What are *citizenship behaviors*?

The term "citizenship behaviors" (sometimes defined as "extra-role performance") refers to the additional things people do at work that are beneficial to the organization, but not formally part of a job description. Throughout the day, workers choose whether to help co-workers, to share insights on improvements, and to volunteer to help out as needed. This positive employee orientation can make a significant difference in the organization's ability to perform smoothly and productively.

The following model depicts how the utilization and awareness of work/life benefits can either reduce performance barriers and/or increase employees' perceptions of organizational support that, in turn, can impact citizenship behaviors.

The Value-Added Conceptual Method



Much of the work/life research conducted during the past two decades has focused on the outcomes of work/life conflicts that are not adequately addressed. For example, numerous studies have examined the effects of childcare "breakdowns" on attendance and concentration on work tasks.

Less attention has been directed to the impact of unresolved work/life conflicts on the firm's ability to effectively implement key business strategies. It is widely recognized that the success of many business strategies depends on a range of employee citizenship behaviors, such as employees' ability and willingness to participate in training sessions. The success of innovative business strategies depends, in large part, on the extent to which employees are ready to "go the extra mile" for the company.

Katz (1964) long ago pointed out how critical extra-role performance is to organizational effectiveness and commented that organizations would fall apart if workers only did what was prescribed. If anything, extra-role performance has become even more important as organizations struggle to implement redesign efforts and total quality management that require the active and enthusiastic participation of workers at all levels.

Studies of work/life policies have identified some value-added effects of increased citizenship behavior of employees.

- The study of Fel-Pro Incorporated (Lambert et al., 1993) found that regardless of how many benefits employees had used, the more workers appreciated available supports, the more likely they were to submit suggestions for improvement and to participate in problem-solving sessions.
- A study at Dupont used self-report data from employees to establish a link between workers' views of the company's work/life policies and their commitment to the company, including their willingness to "go-the-extra-mile." The study found that employees who used work/life programs were 45% more likely to demonstrate citizenship behaviors than those who had not used them (Rodgers & Associates, 1995).

Both of these studies show how work/life policies can affect workers, regardless of their use of available benefits. They also provide examples of how work/life initiatives may help create an organizational culture that supports high-involvement managerial strategies.

III. Key Questions

The value-added approach to measurement will help practitioners gauge the extent to which awareness and utilization of work/life efforts affect employees' contributions to selected business strategies.

What are the links between the company's work/life initiatives and key business strategies?

- Is there general consensus about the priority business strategies?
- How might work/life initiatives (in general) or specific work/life policies, programs or practices support the success of the priority business strategies?

**Stage 2: Specify
Employee Behaviors**

Which employee behaviors contribute to key business strategies?

- Is it clear how different groups of employees are expected to contribute to the key business strategies?
- Do employees understand how their citizenship behaviors contribute to the success of priority business strategies?

**Stage 3: Select
Measures**

How does *utilization of work/life initiatives* affect employee participation in key business strategies?

- Left unresolved, how do work/life issues make it difficult for employees to contribute to key business strategies?
- How do work/life policies and programs remove specific barriers to employees' performance?
- How does utilization of work/life policies and programs help employees engage in extra-role work tasks?
- How does utilization of work/life policies and programs affect work relationships among team members?

How does *awareness about your company's work/life policies* affect employees' contributions to key business strategy(ies)?

- How does the existence of work/life initiatives communicate a message that is consistent with the values and expectations necessary for the implementation of key business strategies?
- To what extent do workers appreciate the set of work/life policies available to them, whether or not they use them?
- How does awareness of work/life policies and programs affect citizenship behaviors? Organizational loyalty? Job commitment?
- How does awareness of work/life policies and programs affect work relationships among team members?

**Stage 4: Design
Assessment**

What are the basic elements of the assessment process?

- What information is needed to document the link between employees' awareness/utilization of work/life initiatives and citizenship behaviors that contribute to priority business strategies?
- What is the most appropriate way to collect the information?
- How will the assessment process be managed?

**Stage 5: Evaluate
Findings**

How do work/life initiatives connect to organizational objectives related to key business strategies?

- Which work/life initiatives are most consistently related to employees' citizenship behaviors?
- What changes could be made in the firm's work/life initiatives that would strengthen the link between these initiatives and priority business strategies?

IV. What is Measured?

Companies using the value-added approach may find it useful to collect information about the six information domains depicted in the Value-Added Model:

- awareness of work/life benefits;
- use of work/life benefits;
- performance barriers;
- perceptions of organizational support;
- appreciation of work/life benefits; and
- citizenship behaviors related to selected business strategies.

It is possible to measure experiences, attitudes, and behaviors in each of these domains. The following pages summarize some standardized measures that might be useful for your company. However, it is important to tailor the questions so that they are relevant to your employees, their work performance, the kinds of policies implemented at your workplace, and the types of innovative business strategies adopted by your company.

In order to link perceptions of organizational support and citizenship behavior to work/life efforts, it is necessary to measure workers' awareness of these benefits and their use of available supports. How you measure awareness and use will depend on what you think is important at your organization. For example, are you interested in the whole package of benefits available to workers? If so, then provide a full check-list and ask workers whether they have used each of the benefits, programs, and policies. If you are interested in a particular set of benefits, such as those for dependent care, then focus your questions on these areas.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION		
POLICY, PROGRAM OR PRACTICE	ASSESSMENT OF EMPLOYEES' AWARENESS/USE	
		yes no
• Option for phased return after leave of absence	• Are you familiar with the company's provisions for a gradual return to work after a leave of absence?	_____
	• Have you used this option during the past year?	_____
	• Have you used this option sometime but <i>not</i> during the past year?	_____

Your company will need two types of information to determine the extent to which unresolved work/life conflicts introduce barriers to employee performance: assessments of performance, and assessments of the extent to which unresolved work/life conflicts have affected work performance.

Depending on your company's MIS system, it may be possible to use annual performance ratings or to request supervisors' assessments of employees' performance. Most often, companies using the value-added approach to measurement ask employees to assess their own performance and perceptions of barriers that have challenged their abilities to successfully fulfill their job responsibilities. Some firms gather this type of information as part of a needs assessment.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE BARRIERS				
	Very Positive Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Very Negative Impact
• How have your home and family responsibilities affected your ability to fulfill your work tasks?	_____	_____	_____	_____
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
• Overall, how would you rate your job performance during the past year?	_____	_____	_____	_____
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
• To what extent to you agree with the following statements?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• During the past week, I have arrived at work late at least once because of a need to take care of family responsibilities.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• I am often energized at work because of the joys I experience at home.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• I usually feel that it is too much for me to handle both work and family responsibilities.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Most often, members of my family and my friends offer help to me if I need to pay more attention to my work responsibilities.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Measuring
Employees'
Perceptions of
Organizational
Support**

Indicators of perceived organizational support measure the extent to which workers believe the organization is committed to them, is proud of their accomplishments, and does its best for them.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT				
(EISENBERGER & HUNTINGTON, 1986)				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
• (company name) strongly considers my goals and values.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• (company name) really cares about me.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• (company name) would ignore any complaint from me.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• (company name) takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• (company name) values my contribution to the company.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• If given the chance, (company name) would take unfair advantage of me.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• (company name) is willing to help me when I need a special favor.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• If (company name) could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary, it would do it.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• If I asked, (company name) would change my working conditions if at all possible.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Measuring Workers'
Appreciation of
Work/Life Benefits**

Measures of workers' appreciation of work/life programs are frequently considered to be "perceived benefit usefulness." These measures capture the extent to which the company's supports make it easier for workers to balance their work and personal/family responsibilities, help them through difficult times, and provide them with benefits they might not otherwise be able to afford.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF PERCEIVED BENEFIT USEFULNESS				
(LAMBERT ET AL., 1993)				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
• (company name) strongly considers my goals and values.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• If I had to pay for them myself, I couldn't afford most of the benefits and services (name of company) provides.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• (name of company) benefits make it easier for me to balance my work and personal life.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• (name of company) benefits have helped my children do things they wouldn't have been able to do otherwise.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• (name of company) benefits have helped me get through some bad times.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Indicators of organizational citizenship capture the frequency of behaviors such as workers helping other employees and their supervisor, volunteering to do things not formally required by the job, and attending events not required by their job that enhance the company's image. These measures require that either employees rate their own behavior or have their supervisor do so. Having a supervisor rate citizenship behavior is usually considered superior to having the workers themselves do so, but supervisors can also be biased in their ratings. For the Fel-Pro study (Lambert et al., 1993), organizational records were consulted to document the "number of suggestions submitted for quality improvement," which was used as a measure of citizenship behavior.

Whether data on organizational citizenship behavior is gathered from workers themselves, their supervisor or coworkers, or from organization records, the key to a value-added approach is to devise ways to measure key aspects of performance particularly valued by your company. Clearly, it will be important to link work/life efforts to your organization's specific strategic goals. If a major goal is product innovation, then the number of suggestions for products introduced by individual employees may be a good measure. If you're moving toward total quality management, then the extent to which workers participate in problem-solving groups is important.

The value-added approach requires that you think creatively and consider measures beyond the traditional aspects of performance such as attendance, recruitment, or intentions to leave. Williams and Anderson (1991) have developed one scale of organizational citizenship. The following sample may suggest other ideas for measuring extra-role behaviors that can be important to your company.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP

(ORGAN & KONOUSKY, 1989; SMITH, ORGAN, & NEAR, 1983)

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
• (company name) strongly considers my goals and values.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• I help other employees with their work when they have been absent.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• I volunteer to do things not formally required by my job.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• I take the initiative to help orient new employees to my department.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• I help my co-workers when they have too much to do.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• I assist my supervisor with his/her duties.	_____	_____	_____	_____
• I willingly attend events not required by my job, but which help (name of company)'s image.	_____	_____	_____	_____

V. Stages in the Value-Added Approach

The value-added approach begins with the clarification of those business strategies that are true priorities for your company. Sometimes, company decision makers assume that there is a consensus in the company about core business strategies, and that most employees are at least somewhat familiar with these strategies. The value-added approach begins with a careful examination of these assumptions. Then, you will articulate direct/indirect relationships with your company's work/life initiatives.

Considerations:

- Are the following business strategies (or others) priorities for your company?
 - cutting costs
 - increasing intellectual capital
 - investing in technologies
 - strengthening work force diversity
 - identifying new markets/customer groups
 - expanding appeal to potential shareholders
 - improving customer relations through quality

Stage 1:
Identify Links

**Stage 2:
Specify
Key Employee
Behaviors**

- Is your organization currently experiencing any particular successes or struggles as it attempts to move toward its strategic goals?

The value-added approach examines expectations for employees' contributions to business strategies (including citizenship behaviors). The value-added approach considers how work/life experiences affect worker performance, and how worker performance affects key business strategies.

Considerations:

- Can line-managers identify specific citizenship behaviors and attitudes that are important to the accomplishment of the organization's strategic goals?
- What data sources might provide information about employees' discretionary behavior (e.g., attendance lists for meetings and training sessions, suggestion programs, customer service records, etc.)?

**Stage 3: Select
Measures**

At this stage, you will need to specify what information you need to document the linkages between work/life initiatives, employee performance, and the success of business strategies.

It is possible to either use standardized scales or develop indicators which are meaningful for your business. Be sure to select measures for each of the six domains in the Value-Added Conceptual Model: utilization of work/life benefits; awareness of work/life benefits; performance barriers; perceptions of organizational support; appreciation of work/life benefits; and citizenship behaviors related to important business strategies.

Considerations:

- What aspects of benefit use and appreciation are important in your organization?
- What aspects of citizenship behavior are most likely to show the effects of your work/life efforts?
- Which aspects of employees' performance would decision makers be most interested in learning about?

**Stage 4: Design
Assessment**

There are a number of options for collecting data, and it will be important to make decisions that are appropriate for your company. One way you can assess the effects of a particular work/life effort is to gather information from workers before and after implementation. In this way, the perceived organizational support and citizenship behaviors of workers would be compared before and after a specific policy or program is introduced.

It is also possible to use the value-added approach to look at the effects of a package of supports that is already in place. This is done by comparing workers in terms of their use and appreciation of available supports and then relating these to measures of organizational citizenship behavior.

**Stage 5:
Evaluate Findings**

**When is measuring
the value-added by
work/life benefits
most appropriate?**

**How might the use
of a value-added
approach to
measurement
contribute to your
work/life strategy?**

**Are there any
particular challenges
associated with the
value-added
approach?**

Considerations:

- Will your study design be able to establish a link between employees' citizenship behaviors and their awareness and use of work/life benefits?
- Is the study design feasible to implement?

The analysis of the findings will determine the extent to which your data document linkages between work/life benefits and employees' citizenship behaviors.

Considerations:

- To what extent do employees report that they are adequately informed about available benefits?
- Do the relationships between experiences with work/life efforts, perceptions of support, and citizenship behaviors vary among different groups of employees?
- Are there any indications that some groups of employees feel excluded by work/life initiatives?
- Is it possible to identify obstacles that stand in the way of employees reaping the full impact of work/life initiatives?
- Could some employees more readily participate in organizational change efforts if their jobs were modified (e.g., increasing flexibility)?
- How should the findings of the value-added assessment be communicated to different groups?

VI. Considerations

Companies which carefully plan, communicate, implement and evaluate core business strategies are most likely to appreciate the importance of the value-added approach.

The value-added approach is an alternative way to measure the contributions that your work/life initiatives make to critical business objectives. Often, work/life initiatives are perceived as being somewhat peripheral to core business operations. By establishing a link between work/life benefits and selected business strategies, the value-added approach helps to keep these work/life issues on the business agenda.

A major challenge associated with the value-added approach to measurement is the need to consider alternative explanations for links discovered between workers' experiences with work/life initiatives, perceptions of organizational support, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Obviously, work/life policies are not the only things that affect what workers think about the organization or what they do at work. Thus, in order to isolate the contribution work/life

Why might your firm want to use the value-added approach?

efforts make to perceptions of organizational support and citizenship behavior, you must measure other major features of the workplace as well. For example, the literature suggests that having an understanding supervisor is key to workers perceiving that the organization is supportive and to employees' engagement in citizenship behavior. There are scales you can use to measure how workers view their supervisor. You can then statistically control for the effects of supervisor support, enabling you to identify the association between workers' use and appreciation of benefits and their citizenship behavior – regardless of how supportive workers find their supervisor.

The control variables you include in your study should reflect what you think contributes to or interferes with workers' perceptions of your organization and their participation in citizenship behaviors. You may want to consider control variables such as: seniority, the number and ages of children, type of occupation, salary, basic job characteristics such as autonomy and flexibility, and relationships with coworkers and managers. Although it is not possible to measure everything that might influence workers' participation in change efforts, you can focus on those factors that appear to be the most relevant.

The value-added approach can:

- Place business goals at the center of the measurement discussion.
- Get the attention of business leaders who might not yet have recognized the importance of your company's work/life initiatives because it focuses on core business strategies.
- Measure how work/life initiatives make a difference to organizational effectiveness.
- Explore the impact of corporate culture on work experiences.
- Use a work/life lens to frame an assessment of workplace climate.
- Broaden the circle of work/life stakeholders to include key business units.

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Selected Resources

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INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHEETS

MEASURING THE VALUE ADDED BY WORK/LIFE INITIATIVES

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

Increasingly, companies are expanding their work/life initiatives to include supports for the development of programs and policies available in employees' communities of residence. For example, some companies provide grants to nonprofit organizations that offer family services (e.g., after school programs), cultural events, or recreation programs.

This community orientation is usually seen as a strategy that complements the work/life programs and services available at the workplace. Furthermore, support for community-based services helps to create linkages between the company's work/life strategy (and the associated employer of choice strategy) and its Neighbor of ChoiceSM business strategy.

The neighbor of choice strategy¹, which has emerged as a core business strategy for some companies, recognizes that the company's relationships with different communities and community groups can have an impact on the company's reputation and, therefore, can influence the perceptions of investors and customers, as well as employees.

For illustrative purposes, the following worksheets consider how a firm's support for community-based work/life programs could add-value to the company's decision to be a neighbor of choice.

¹ The Neighbor of Choice strategy is a concept that has been developed by the Boston College Center for Corporate Community Relations.

Stage 1: Measuring the Value-Added by Work/Life Initiatives

PURPOSE

Identify how the outcomes of work/life initiatives provide direct and indirect support for core business strategies.

CASE EXAMPLE

Many companies want to help employees with some aspect of their child care responsibilities. The development of programs such as preschool child care and school vacation care can enhance firms' efforts to become a neighbor of choice (as well as the employer of choice strategy). For example, contracts can be developed with local recreation organizations (e.g., YMCA, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, etc.) for some services.

INSTRUCTIONS:

List each of your company's work/life initiatives. Then, identify one (or more) key business strategy(ies) that is supported by these initiatives.

Please note: In some cases, the connection between work/life initiatives and core business strategies is more clear if "clusters" of work/life initiatives are considered as a group. For example, it may make sense to think about the work/life education programs (e.g., on-site seminars, work/life library, etc.) together.

Work/Life Initiatives	Which business strategy (ies) does it support?	How strong is this connection?				
		Strong Direct Support		Weak Indirect Support		
Support for training of family day care providers.	neighbor of choice strategy; employer of choice strategy; total quality	1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have reviewed your work/life initiatives to determine the linkages between them and core business strategies.

Stage 2: Specify Key Employee Behaviors

PURPOSE

Specify expectations for employees' contributions to the success of core business strategies.

CASE EXAMPLE

The application of the value-added approach to the neighbor of choice business strategy would focus on how work/life programs affect:

- 1) workers' perceptions of organizational support; and
- 2) their participation in particular business strategies and organizational change efforts directed toward becoming a neighbor of choice.

For example, your company might be interested in tracking changes in employee volunteerism as one aspect of the neighbor of choice strategy.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Identify the core business strategy. Then, list the specific employee citizenship behaviors that would contribute to that strategy. Consider whether there are particular groups of employees who are most expected to exhibit the particular behavior. Finally, specify which work/life initiatives could be most useful in encouraging the employee citizenship behavior.

Core Business Strategy: _____

For example: *Being a Neighbor of Choice*

What employee citizenship behaviors contribute to the success of this strategy?	Are there particular groups of employees most expected to contribute to the business strategy?	Which work/life initiatives (either individually or as a group) could promote the desired citizenship behaviors?
<i>volunteerism</i>	<i>employees at all levels of the company</i>	<i>flextime options family community projects</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified the key employee behaviors that support core business strategies.

Stage 3: Select Measures

PURPOSE

Develop a plan to measure:

- workers' use of work-family supports,
- their appreciation of these benefits, and
- their involvement in programs/activities associated with the company's core business strategies.

CASE EXAMPLE

Measuring workers' citizenship behavior is key to understanding how work/life benefits add-value to key business goals and objectives, such as those associated with the neighbor of choice strategy. Workers who value the fact that their employers are contributing to the community where they live may feel more obligated to give something back to the company. As a consequence, it might be appropriate to look at rates of voluntary participation in company-sponsored events or other indicators of employees' active support of company-wide change efforts (e.g., employees' willingness to develop specific skills needed to implement new community programs such as linking up public schools to the internet; participation in cross-functional teams convened to address community relations problems; active participation in inter-departmental meetings).

Information could be collected about:

- employees' awareness/use of work-family policies and programs;
- employees' awareness of/participation in the company's efforts to support community organizations (e.g., through a grant, other projects);
- information related to job performance (e.g., descriptive information about characteristics of the job, perceptions of the work environment, relationships with their supervisor and coworkers, etc.);
- workers' perceived organizational support;
- the importance/impact of these community programs on the employees themselves, their families, and coworkers;
- citizenship behaviors related to the company's neighbor or choice strategy and/or other selected business strategies;
- workers' affiliations with community-based organizations (e.g., religious organizations, social service agencies, recreation groups, etc.);
- unanticipated negative outcomes (e.g., What happens when employees' submit proposals asking the company foundation to support a community program of interest to them, but the proposal is not funded? Do workers develop a more negative view of the company than they would otherwise?).

INSTRUCTIONS

The Value-Added Model on page 118 of this chapter provides guidance about the types of information you can use to measure the extent to work/life initiatives that have contributed to a core business strategy, such as being a neighbor of choice. Although some standardized measures do exist (e.g., job performance indicators), it may be necessary to customize them to your own company.

Stage 3: Select Measures

(continued)

Information Needed	How might you measure this?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of specific work/life benefits 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of specific work/life benefits 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the availability/use of work/life initiatives removes potential barriers to employee performance 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees' perceptions of organizational support 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of employees' appreciation of work/life initiatives 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which employees participate in extra role behaviors which contribute to one or more core business strategies 	<i>Do employees serve on committees that review requests for small grants to community groups?</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have selected measures for the value-added assessment.

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Stage 4: Design the Assessment Process

PURPOSE

Develop a plan for gathering information about the value-added by the work/life initiatives selected for assessment.

CASE EXAMPLE

When focusing on a business strategy such as being a neighbor of choice, you could invite representatives from other business units, such as the community relations and public affairs departments, to participate in the design and implementation of the assessment process.

INSTRUCTIONS

Create a chart such as the one below to help you plan the value-added assessment.

Tasks	Timetable	Who is responsible?
Develop data collection instruments. 1. 2.		
Determine how to gather information (e.g., focus groups, existing records, etc.). 1. 2.		
Collect data. 1. 2.		
Analyze data. 1. 2.		

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have developed a plan for gathering information about the value-added by work/life initiatives and for analyzing the data collected.

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Stage 5: Evaluate the Findings

PURPOSE

Analyze the study results to determine whether there are linkages between business strategies and work/life initiatives.

CASE EXAMPLE

Companies interested in examining the connection between work/life initiatives and the neighbor of choice strategy might want to consider whether employees who use a greater number of work/life supports are more likely to participate in workplace-sponsored volunteer projects or are more likely to report that they are involved in community activities.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the questions in the table below to guide the analysis of the findings.

Questions:	Comments:
Are the connections between work/life initiatives and business strategies clear?	<i>Is there documentation that people who appreciate the existence of the company's work/life initiatives are more in the neighbor of choice strategy?</i>
Do the findings suggest that there are ways to modify your company's existing work/life initiatives so that they can more effectively contribute to core business strategies?	<i>Could the company develop partnerships with community-based groups that could offer supports/services to employees?</i>
What are your recommendations?	<i>Would it be advisable to develop work/life strategies which connect community well-being with employees' quality of life?</i>
How will you communicate your recommendations?	<i>Could the findings be announced in the community relations section of your employee newsletter?</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have reviewed your work/life initiatives to determine the linkages between them and core business strategies.

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MEASURING IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE: APPLYING ACCOUNTING MEASURES TO WORK/LIFE INITIATIVES

by Jeffrey Cohen, Ph.D. and Greg Trompeter, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: A growing number of corporate decision makers recognize that work/life policies and programs are important management tools. However, a disconnect continues to exist between the “dollars and cents” perspective of the business world and work/life initiatives.

Despite the challenges inherent in trying to translate people issues into monetary terms, accounting procedures can be used to examine some of the financial implications for work/life initiatives.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Understand** some of the basic elements of eight different accounting processes.
- **Select** one (or more) accounting processes appropriate for your company.
- **Develop** a plan for assessing your work/life initiatives that uses one (or more) accounting processes.

MEASURING IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE:

APPLYING ACCOUNTING MEASURES TO WORK/LIFE INITIATIVES

Applying
Accounting
Measures to
Work/Life

I. Overview

This chapter describes the application of a number of standard accounting measures to the evaluation of work/life initiatives. The accounting processes discussed have been successfully used in product-related decisions and can potentially provide a rigorous framework for analyzing whether work/life programs pass the bottom line test.

The advantage of using accounting processes is that they can help translate some of the subjective, non-financial information about work/life initiatives into monetary equivalents. This approach to measurement can help to switch the firm's thinking about work/life programs from being a "debit" to being an "asset." Therefore, the use of accounting tools can help establish your firm's business case for work/life initiatives.

Which accounting
approaches
can be used?

Eight accounting approaches are highlighted:

- Return on Investment (ROI)
- Cost/Benefit Analysis
- Break Even Analysis
- Productivity Measures
- Balanced Scorecard
- Payback
- Net Present Value (NPV)
- Internal Rate of Return (IRR)

Highlights of the
Process

Each of the accounting processes discussed in this chapter uses a financial yardstick. Although the calculations for eight processes are different, each approach proceeds through the same four basic stages.

- Stage 1. Specify the goals and expected outcomes of the work/life initiative.
- Stage 2. Select financial (or financial equivalent) measures for the outcomes.
- Stage 3. Collect the data and make the calculations.
- Stage 4. Make recommendations to maximize the financial benefits.

II. Background

Accounting principles developed for profit entities and manufacturing environments can be adapted to measure different aspects of work/life issues. The application of accounting tools to the assessment of work/life initiatives is predicated on the fact that it is possible to make financial calculations pertaining to the investments in, costs of, and returns on human resources.

A few fundamental accounting concepts are clarified before each of the eight accounting processes are introduced.

There are important differences between investments and costs. For example, investments in assets occur because we capitalize expenditures and view them from a long term perspective. When we buy machinery, we view the cost as an investment in an asset rather than a cost that is immediately recognized as an expense.

If we truly believe our employees are the most important assets, then expenditures that help employees maintain a work/life balance will be viewed as investments creating long term value for the company and not as a cost that is immediately expensed and drags down the bottom line figure.

Firms may decide to consider costs such as:

- planning and design costs
- salaries for the personnel needed to administer, monitor and evaluate the work/life initiative
- costs associated with developing and distributing materials that provide information about the work/life initiative
- training needed for participation, oversight, or implementation of the work/life initiative
- costs associated with recruitment
- costs associated with hiring temporary staff

Accountants also make a distinction between returns and benefits. The concept of returns is the broader term that refers to the profits (revenues minus costs) generated for a particular investment. The notion of benefits is narrower and refers to the possible increase in revenues or decrease in costs that may occur.

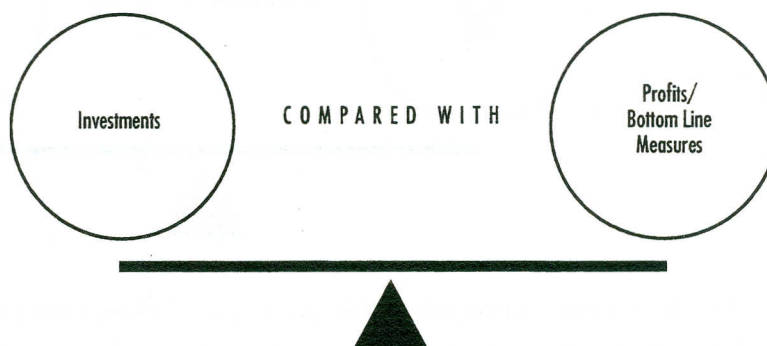
The return on investment (ROI) is perhaps the accounting approach that may be most commonly used by work/life practitioners. This measure compares the relative profitability of a program with the investment required to implement and maintain it.

For example, in a flexible scheduling context, if the design and implementation of the program require an investment of \$500,000 dollars, and the improved productivity and reduced absenteeism decreases net costs by \$150,000 then the ROI would be:

**(Change in Operating Income ÷ Investment in Program = ROI) or
(\$150,000 ÷ %500,000 = 30% annually).**

This would allow the organization to compare investment in a particular work/life program with other investment opportunities that are competing for scarce capital.

Return on Investment



2. Cost/Benefit Analysis

Cost/benefit analyses compare all costs (direct and indirect) associated with the development and implementation of a program with the cost savings (direct and indirect) or increased profits associated with the use of the program.

The cost/benefit perspective has been successfully implemented in various settings. It has been particularly useful in analyzing programs that require a broad view of cost and especially benefits.

To be successful, one should measure both direct and indirect costs and savings. For example, a firm could attempt to measure direct savings associated with a work/life program by coming up with an equivalent dollar amount for increased commitment and satisfaction of those taking part in the program and even perhaps imputing a cost for those not taking part and who resent the program. Similarly, there may be indirect savings associated with a work/life program such as changes in client satisfaction which, in turn, may affect the retention of old clients and the generation of new services. Although the figures would vary from company to company, it might be possible to calculate that highly committed employees are likely to generate a certain number of repeat sales during a year (attaching the dollar figure to the sales). Then, it might be possible to estimate the extent to which employees' use of work/life supports contributes to increased employee commitment.

**(Direct Costs + Indirect Costs ÷
Direct Savings/Profits + Indirect Savings/Profits) or**

**(Direct and Indirect Costs of Administering Work/Life Programs ÷
Direct and Indirect Profits Attributed to Increased Repeat Sales of Highly Satisfied
Customers Served by Employees Who Used/Appreciated Work/Life Programs)**

In contrast to ROI, cost/benefit does not look at the relative return one gets in an investment. Instead, it evaluates the overall profitability of the program.

Cost/Benefit Perspective



3. Break Even Analysis

An off-shoot to cost/benefit is the calculation of a break even point. This approach calculates the use-rate of a particular work/life initiative that is necessary to generate sufficient profits/cost savings to re-coup the money spent on planning/implementing the work/life policy or program.

In traditional accounting terms, the break even point formula is:

$$(\text{Fixed Costs} \div \text{Contribution Margin per Unit} = \text{Break Even})$$

To use it in a human resources context, you might calculate the break even point for the number of employees per year to take part in a specific program in order to justify the costs. For example, if the costs of running the program are \$360,000 and increased productivity and commitment result in a net (after variable costs) of \$12,000 per employee, the break even point is:

$$(\$360,000 \div \$12,000 = 30 \text{ employees})$$

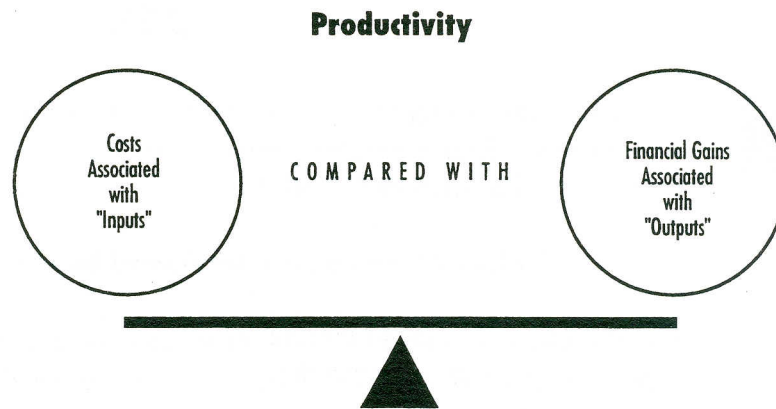
Thus, if the estimated cost structure is accurate, a company will need 30 or more employees to take part in the program in order to not lose money.

Break Even Analysis



4. Productivity Measures

Evaluation of work/life programs can be accomplished through collection and analysis of various productivity measures of input and output. Some of the measures are related to inputs such as changes in absenteeism or in expenditures associated with stress-related medical services. Cost data can then be used to measure changes in the costs attributable to the program (e.g., cost of absences). Employee turnover cost is another important measure to examine. In this case, it would be important to compare costs of a program with the reduction in training and recruiting of new employees. One could further examine outputs to determine whether the program has had an effect on factors such as amount of sales, billable hours or quality of work performed.



5. Balanced Scorecard

Another accounting tool to use is known as the balanced scorecard. This tool, developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton, is strategic in its orientation. Essentially, it recognizes that it is important for organizations to develop measures that encompass four areas:

- (1) financial
- (2) customer
- (3) internal business processes
- (4) learning and growth

Every program (such as a work/life initiative) or investment would be examined for its impact on each of these areas. For example, a flexible scheduling program should not only be examined for its financial return, but how it affects the ability to service clients, efficiently perform distinctive competencies, and whether the program allows learning and growth to occur throughout the organization. According to Kaplan and Norton, the relative weighting of each of these four areas will vary by organization, which would mean that the success of the program is contingent upon the organization in which it is implemented.

Balanced Scorecard



6. Payback

Long term investments are always quite risky. One method to help evaluate the risk is the payback method. Simply put, the payback method computes how long will it take to recoup an investment. The payback formula is:

$$(\text{Net Initial Investment} \div \text{Net Annual Increase in Cash Flows} = \text{Payback})$$

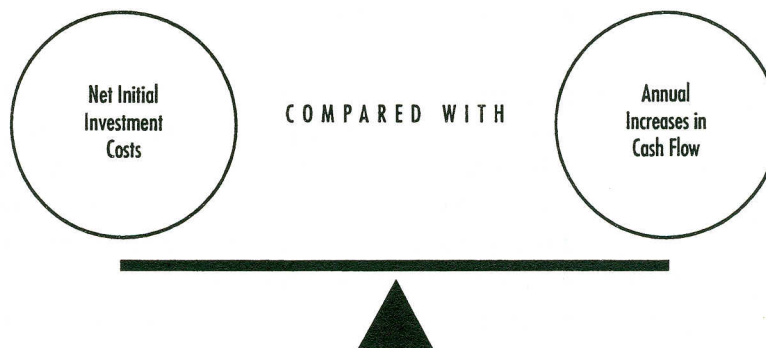
For example, if it costs \$1,000,000 to set up a national flexible scheduling program and you expect that you will save \$250,000 per year through increased productivity, your payback period is four years.

$$(\$1,000,000 \div \$250,000 \text{ per year} = 4 \text{ years})$$

Thus, the shorter the time period, the less risky the investment is considered to be.

This method is popular because of its ease of computation and it provides an straight forward way measure to assess risk.

Payback



Although the payback approach is similar in spirit to breakeven analysis, payback calculates the time to recoup an investment while breakeven calculates the number of units (which could be number of employees in a work-family context) to recoup the investment.

7. Net Present Value

One limitation of the payback method described above is that it ignores the “time value” of money. For example, a dollar today is worth more than a dollar in the future because of risk and inflation. To overcome these weaknesses, the net present value (NPV) method attempts to discount all future cash flows into present dollar terms.

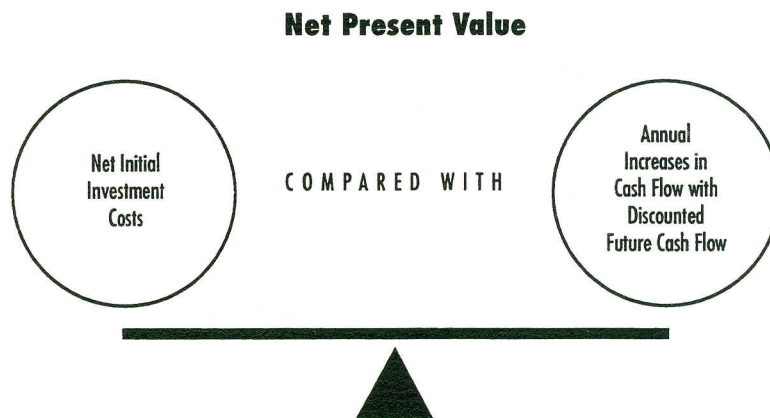
The calculation can be performed on many calculators or by using readily available present value tables. (See any cost accounting or finance textbook for the appropriate formulas. An excellent reference is the ninth edition of *Cost Accounting: A Managerial Emphasis*, by Horngren, Foster and Datar published by Prentice Hall.) Using NPV, a program is acceptable if it generates a positive net present value.

One important factor that affects the analysis is determining the appropriate discount interest rate. The higher the rate, the less the future cash flows are worth (i.e., If I can invest money today and earn a very high rate of return, then promises of future cash look less attractive.). For example, using a 10 percent discount factor, the net present value for a program that costs \$1,000,000 and saves \$250,000 for eight years will be +\$333,750. Stated differently:

\$1,000,000 investment this year has a cost, in present value terms, of \$1,000,000. The savings of \$250,000 for eight years is \$2,000,000 in absolute dollars

$$(\$250,000 \times 8 \text{ years} = \$2,000,000)$$

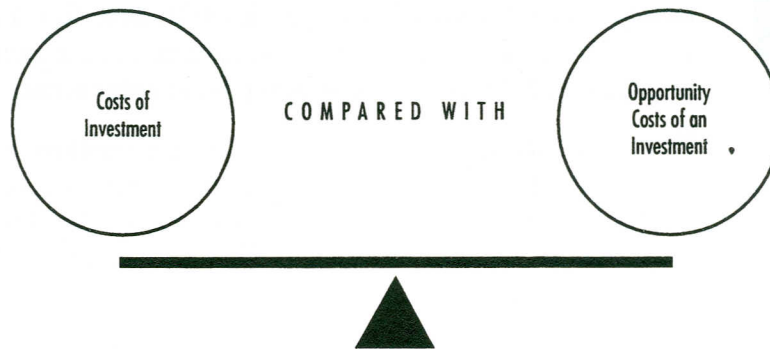
and has a present value of \$1,333,750.



8. Internal Rate of Return

Another approach that uses discounted cash flows is called the Internal Rate of Return (IRR). The IRR gives you a discount rate that will make the Net Present Value equal to zero. In effect, you can view this as a relative opportunity cost of an investment. If the program's IRR exceeds a targeted hurdle rate, it will be accepted. A hurdle rate could be viewed as the cost of capital associated with a particular project. For instance, if corporate policy states that projects must yield a minimum rate of 10 percent and the IRR for a flexible scheduling program equals 12 percent, then the program will be accepted. Another way of looking at IRR is that it will give you in present value terms the breakeven discount rate so that a work/life program will not lose money.

Internal Rate of Return



Which approach should you use?

Companies should select one or more of the accounting approaches according to the questions that are most important to decision makers.

III. Key Questions Addressed by Accounting Approaches

Stage 1:
Specify Goals &
Objectives

What are the goals for your work/life initiative?

- To what extent do the company's work/life policies and programs directly contribute to the bottom line in the short term?
- To what extent do the company's work/life policies and programs indirectly enhance the bottom line in the short term?
- To what extent do the company's work/life policies and programs directly contribute to the bottom line in the long term?
- To what extent do the company's work/life policies and programs indirectly enhance the bottom line in the long term?
- Do the firm's work/life policies and programs increase or decrease elements of financial risk?
- Do the firm's work/life policies and programs affect the company's relations with key stakeholder groups?
- Do the firm's work/life policies and programs have an impact on the business decisions made by key stakeholder groups (e.g., investing, purchasing, etc.)?

Stage 2: Select
Financial
Measures

What financial measures can be used to document the extent to which work/life policies and programs meet financial objectives?

- To what extent do work/life policies and programs increase or decrease measurable aspects of employees' job performance?
- How might the availability of work/life policies and programs affect the job performance of employees who do not use them?
- To what extent do work/life policies and programs increase or decrease unwanted/desired turnover?

**Stage 3:
Collect Data &
Make Calculations**

**Which measures
will you need to
use for the
accounting
approach selected?**

**Stage 4: Make
Recommendations**

- To what extent do work/life policies and programs increase or decrease measurable aspects of productivity?
- Do work/life policies and programs “pay for themselves”? Over what period of time?

Which non-financial outcomes of your work/life initiatives can be translated into monetary equivalents?

- To what extent does the availability of work/life initiatives reduce the costs of recruitment?
- How do work/life initiatives affect employee morale (which affects job performance)?
- Does the utilization of work/life initiatives contribute to job commitment (which affects job performance)?

What level of investments has your company made in your work/life initiatives?

- How much was invested in planning and start-up?
- Will the firm need to invest in the initiative on an on-going basis?

What are the costs associated with your work/life initiatives?

- What costs have been charged to business units and departments?
- How can some of the indirect costs be identified?

What are the savings/expenses associated with your work/life initiatives?

- What savings/expenses are associated with administrative processes?
- What savings/expenses are associated with personnel?
- What savings/expenses are associated with operations/implementation?
- How does the work/life initiative affect the savings/expenses of related employees benefits (e.g., stress-related health care costs)?
- How does the work/life initiative affect the savings/expenses of related business objectives (e.g., ability of employees to participate in training or career development programs)?

What are the financial gains/losses associated with your work/life initiatives?

- How does the work/life initiative affect employee performance?
- How does the work/life initiative affect production, sales, or service?

What should the company do to maximize the financial contributions that work/life initiatives can make to the bottom line?

- Would increased utilization have an impact on the bottom line?
- Could changes be made in program implementation that could reduce costs while maintaining quality?

- How could the program be modified so that positive outcomes related to enhanced employee performance could be increased?

IV. What is Measured?

Using Financial
and Non-
Financial Data

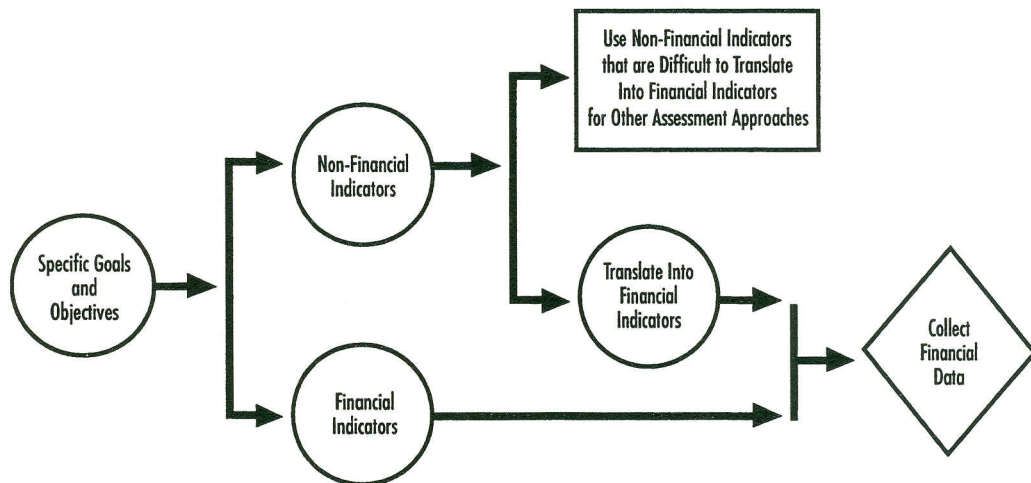
The information that needs to be generated is both financial and non-financial. For example, the costs of implementing a program are obviously financial, while the ability to service customers and clients effectively may be non-financial and subjective. It is important to understand that the eight different approaches to accounting may use many of the same measures although the calculation vary.

Accounting processes provide a framework for translating some non-financial information into financial data.

From Goals to
Measures

In determining what to measure, one must remember that the most important factors may be the most difficult to quantify. Once the goals of a specific program have been determined, it is then necessary for the members of the firm to agree upon appropriate measures. These metrics may be readily available, or they may need to be acquired or developed internally.

Highlights of Measurement Process



From Goals to
Financial
Measures

For example, if a company opens a day care center primarily to reduce absenteeism, then measuring the change in absenteeism could be sufficient and relatively simple. However, this would be a very narrow focus.

It is likely that the organization would also like to increase employee satisfaction, enhance its image as a family-friendly employer and increase the productivity of its workforce. This would require development of survey instruments to measure satisfaction and perceived image to go along with more traditional productivity measures. It is important to acknowledge that it is often difficult to measure increased quality of work (e.g., quality of a report is more difficult to measure than number of reports produced).

There are many difficult items to wrestle with. For example, if we measure changes in employee satisfaction, how will this affect profits? If there is a possibility that employee satisfaction might affect employee stress, it is imperative that we track costs that might be directly or indirectly associated with stress. For example:

- costs associated with health care utilization (which might fluctuate due to changes in stress levels)
- costs associated with recruiting and training/orientation (which might be affected by the amount of turnover associated with employees stress)
- costs associated with hiring temporary employees (which might be related to stress-related absenteeism).

On the profit dimension, it is essential to track any changes in the firm's relationships with stakeholders who might affect the bottom line.

Could work/life initiatives help employees be more responsive to clients? Could increased client satisfaction associated with employees' responsiveness translate to increased sales from the customer? Information collected about client satisfaction could be compared with information about employees' responsiveness and their work/life experiences.

Similarly, if the company's work/life initiatives enhance the firm's image and reputation, will this result in a differential increase in sales? One way to track this may be by comparing data with a competitor who does not have these initiatives in place.

Finally, will these policies change supervisor-supervisee relationships, and if so what does that mean in terms of the bottom line? Perhaps one way to document this is through measuring the cost savings generated by any new responsibilities voluntarily taken on by someone partaking in these initiatives.

The following table provides some suggestions about how to measure and evaluate work/life initiatives.

WORK/LIFE GOALS AND FINANCIAL MEASURES		
SAMPLE GOALS/ DESIRED OUTCOMES	SAMPLE MEASURABLE INDICATORS	DETERMINING COST EQUIVALENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduced employee stress associated with unresolved work/life conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stress self reports physical conditions associated with stress (back pain, asthma, etc.) utilization of mental health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes in utilization of health care worker compensation claims associated with stress factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased performance as a result of: decreased distractions associated with unresolved work/life conflicts; enhanced job commitment; strengthened company loyalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> job performance ratings (either supervisors or employees' self-reports) "before" and "after" the introduction of specific policy/program comparisons of job performance ratings in one site offering specific work/life benefits with other sites where the policy/program is not available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> calculations of dollar equivalent associated with specified % increase in performance of employees at different levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduced absenteeism resulting from unresolved work/life conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # days per year an employee is absent or on leave due to work/life conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> calculations of per diem rates (taking into consideration any additional time that supervisors and co-workers must invest to coordinate work missed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduced tardiness resulting from unresolved work/life conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # hours per year employees are absent due to work/life conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> calculations of hourly rates (taking into consideration of any additional time that supervisors and co-workers must invest to coordinate work missed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased ability of employees to accept career advancement opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> employees' participation in training "before" and "after" the introduction of specific policies/programs employees' acceptance of offered promotions and/or challenging job assignments comparisons of career advancement indicators in one site offering specific work/life benefits with other sites where the policy/program is not available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> calculations of monetary equivalent of employees' contributions as a result of career experiences such as training or particular assignments calculations of changes in contributions made by employees at different levels of the company
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gaining strategic advantage as a result of being an employer of choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> typical time required to complete a successful hire of different types of positions typical investment of staff time required to complete a successful hire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reductions in costs associated with recruitment savings associated with attracting new employees who have the skills to "start the job running"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reducing unwanted turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of unwanted resignations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recruitment costs orientation and training cost costs associated with new employees learning new job

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**Stage 1: Specify
Goals & Outcomes**

**Stage 2: Select
Financial Measures**

**Stage 3: Collect
Data & Make
Calculations**

V. Stages in the Accounting Approach to Measurement

Clarify/prioritize the goals and objectives associated with the selected work/life program. Specify how these goals and objectives fit with the strategic imperatives of the firm.

Considerations:

- Are the goals and outcomes of the work/life initiative clear?
- Is there consensus about the anticipated outcomes?
- Which goals are compatible with a business strategy, such as the firm's plans to enter new markets?
- Does the company feel that the anticipated outcomes of the work/life initiative are directly related to the bottom line?
- How might the anticipated outcomes contribute to the bottom line in an indirect way?

During Stage 2, it is necessary to select specific outcomes associated with the goals/objectives that you would (ideally) like to measure.

Considerations:

- Which goals/objectives are priorities for the company?
- Which goals/objectives might have the most significant impact on the bottom line?

Once specific goals/objectives have been chosen, you will need to brainstorm possible measurable indicators that might offer some insight into the priority questions.

Considerations:

- How do the outcomes of the work/life initiative affect employees' ability to successfully meet their job responsibilities (e.g., manufacture the product, deliver the service, interact with potential clients, etc.)?
- How do the outcomes of the work/life initiative affect the firm's reputation with stakeholders (e.g., customers, investors) who might affect the bottom line?
- Is it feasible to gather the data necessary for the different measures being considered?
- Which measures will provide your company with the most relevant financial data?

Calculate/estimate any short-term (those that might be realized in a year or less) and long-term costs and savings that might be associated with particular indicators.

For example, it is possible that a work/life initiative might contribute to reduced turnover, and it will be important to understand how changes in turnover can affect short-term and long-term costs and savings.

- The decrease in turnover could result in both short-term and long-term costs related to recruiting and training costs. These savings can be directly calculated.
- The reduced turnover could also be a long-term savings because the company will retain a greater pool of experienced people that it will be able to tap for promotion and increased responsibilities.

**Stage 4: Make
Recommendations**

**When is the use
of accounting
processes most
appropriate?**

**How might the
use of accounting
processes
contribute to
your work/life
strategy?**

Considerations:

- What types of information are necessary to complete the calculations?
- Is the information available from existing information systems? Will it be necessary to gather the data directly from employees?
- How can the assumptions built into the equations be made explicit (e.g., anticipated turnover rates, average recruitment costs, typical training investments made in new employees, the time period which elapses before new employees are functioning at maximal performance levels, etc.)?

Once the calculations provide insight about the connections between the work/life initiative selected for assessment and your company's bottom line, you will need to consider alternatives for maximizing the profits/savings and minimizing the losses/costs.

Considerations:

- How might the "scope" of the initiative (e.g., number of employees using the program, number of business units where the option is available, etc.) affect the financial measures?
- To what extent might the financial measures be affected by the length of time that the program has been in operation? For example, are the savings/ investments higher soon after the program has been implemented or several years later?
- Could programmatic changes affect the financial measures (e.g., Are there ways to change particular aspects of the program so that the quality is retained but the costs are reduced?)?

VI. Considerations

The bottom line orientation of businesses suggests that it is important to consider whether financial measures can be incorporated into their assessments of work/life initiatives. Of course, there may be times (e.g., just after a new initiative has been introduced) when this approach may be more difficult to implement because the data are not available.

By measuring the outcomes of work/life initiatives against financial standards, practitioners acknowledge that work/life benefits are an integral part of core business functions rather than being relegated to the status of a peripheral (and not essential) activity.

Accounting analyses can:

- help generate the interest of "business skeptics" in work/life strategies;
- provide financial documentation that clarifies relationships between work/life benefits and profits; and
- offer monetary justification for the company's commitment to work/life policies and programs.

Are there any particular challenges associated with this approach to measurement?

Why might my firm want to consider an evaluation of its work/life initiatives?

The most significant challenge that practitioners will encounter when they attempt to use accounting measures to assess their work/life initiatives is that it can be very difficult to translate all of the appropriate factors into financial measures or monetary equivalents. For example, your company may determine that ratings of employee loyalty are higher among employees who use part-time work options. However, it may be difficult to translate this positive outcome into precise financial measures, particularly if supervisors' ratings of employee performance are highly subjective.

A related difficulty is that some firms using accounting procedures to assess their work/life initiatives may focus the calculations on those measures that are more easily translated into financial terms. As a consequence, many of the outcomes associated with work/life initiative may not be measured at all.

The use of accounting processes makes it possible for firms to evaluate the financial contributions that work/life policies and programs make. Accounting processes are familiar to the business world, so it is fairly easy to obtain the support of most decision makers for this type of an assessment. Despite some of the challenges with the accounting approaches to measurements, most companies would like to be able to generate financial measures that provide some insight into the connections between their work/life initiatives and the bottom line.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ACCOUNTING MEASURES WORKSHEETS

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

Flexibility is a core concept associated with work/life issues. Many studies have found that employees strongly value options for structuring their work so that they can effectively meet their work and their family/home responsibilities. Flexible options help employees and employers to think creatively about:

- the amount of time that employees work (e.g., customized work options that make it possible for employees to work for fewer hours than the standard 40 hour work week/50 weeks per year)
- the place(s) where an employee might work (e.g., telecommuting options)
- the scheduling of the work load (e.g., compressed work weeks, flex-time, etc.)
- the design of jobs (e.g., how work tasks are organized and assigned to maximize positive work/life outcomes)

For the purposes of illustration, the following worksheets will consider how accounting measures can be used to assess a telecommuting policy.

Stage 1: Specify Goals & Objectives

PURPOSE

Identify the goals and objectives relevant to the work/life initiative selected for assessment.

CASE EXAMPLE

One of the goals of a telecommuting policy may be to increase workforce diversity in general and, in particular, to increase the percentage of women in specific business units.

INSTRUCTIONS

List the goals and objectives for your work/life policy, program, or practice.

If the goals and objectives seem unclear, you may want to re-frame possible outcomes as questions. For example,

“Does our company expect that our telecommuting policy will affect our ability to attract job candidates for positions that are hard to fill?”

“Does our company expect that our telecommuting policy will reduce the unwanted turnover of highly valued employees after they have taken a personal or family leave?”

Work/Life Policy, Program, or Practice: _____

For example: telecommuting

Goals	Objectives
Increase workforce diversity	Increase the proportion of women in technical positions by 5%.

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified the goals and objectives of your work/life initiatives.

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Stage 2: Select Financial Measures

PURPOSE

Determine the financial measures needed to make the calculations.

CASE EXAMPLE

Once you have selected the accounting process(es) that will best meet the information needs of your company, you will need to list the specific measures that capture the impact of the work/life initiative on the bottom line.

For example, if you are assessing your company's telecommuting policy, you will need to determine the costs/savings associated with factors such as: changes in employees' needs for equipment and computers, training and orientation of employees and supervisors to the off-site work arrangements, changes in insurance costs (e.g., liability, workers compensation), costs of off-site support services for technology, productivity changes in the employee and the employee's supervisor (e.g., associated with periods of uninterrupted work time, impact of fewer meetings to coordinate work tasks, changes in time that the employee and supervisors devote to communication, etc.), changes in recruitment connected to the availability of the telecommuting policy, and changes in turnover rates that are connected to the availability of the telecommuting policy.

INSTRUCTION

Create a chart, such as the one below, to specify the financial measure you will need to make the calculations associated with the accounting process you have selected.

Investments	On-Going Costs	Revenues	Productivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• staff time invested in developing the telecommuting policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• costs of recruitment• costs associated with training new employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• increased sales resulting from higher customer satisfaction associated with workforce diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• assessment of employees performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• staff time devoted communicating the option to managers and employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• costs of providing equipment and off-site IT support• costs training employees who have been approved for telecommuting		

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have selected financial measures that are relevant to the goals and objectives of your work/life initiatives.

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Stage 3: Return on Investment

PURPOSE

Use the financial measures to determine the impact of work/life initiatives on the bottom line.

CASE EXAMPLE

It is possible to use each of the eight accounting approaches to gain a better understanding of the impact that telecommuting can have on the bottom line.

INSTRUCTION

Use tables such as those below to make the financial calculations.

Calculation	Factors	Comments
Change in Profits/ Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• profits - productivity• investments - equipment purchase, training, etc.	<p>Assume that your company had conducted a one-year experiment, allowing 20 salaried employees to telecommute. The initial technology-related costs were \$75,000. Performance assessments indicated that the telecommuters were 10% more productive than their colleagues at the workplace.</p> <p>If each employee earned \$50,000 per year, then 10% additional productive time would result in increased productivity of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$50,000 X 10% = \$5,000 (increase per employee)• \$5,000 X 20 employees = \$100,000 <p>This simplified "before the effects" equation for the Return on Investment produces the following</p> $\$100,000/\$75,000 = 133\%$ <p><i>Note: If the program is extended beyond one year, then present value techniques (i.e., Net Present Value method) should be used to assess the value of costs and benefits in future years.</i></p>

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Stage 3: Cost/Benefit

(continued)

Calculation	Factors	Comments
Costs/Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct costs - technology • indirect costs - weakened coworker relationships; customer satisfaction • direct benefits - productivity • indirect benefits - increased employee loyalty; customer satisfaction 	<p>As stated above, the direct costs of technology enhances were \$75,000 and the direct benefits were \$100,000 in productivity. The indirect benefits that need to be measured would include increased commitment to the firm expressed by employees participating in the telecommuting programs. This increased commitment could be assessed using financial measures such as the costs of turnover and training of new employees. Similarly, the indirect costs/benefits associated with client satisfaction of customers interacting with the telecommuting employees could be calculated.</p>

Stage 3: Break Even Point

Calculation	Factors	Comments
Fixed costs/ contribution margin per unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct fixed costs - technology enhancements • indirect fixed costs - staff resources for planning and assessment • direct benefits - employee productivity • indirect benefits - increased job commitment contributing to savings realized as a result of reduced turnover 	<p>Assume the company wants to calculate the number of employees that need to telecommute in order for the investments in the fixed costs to "break even" with the company's investments.</p> <p>Taking the \$75,000 invested for technology enhancement, and the \$5,000 productivity increases realized per employee per year, it would be possible that it would be necessary for 15 employees to participate before the company would reach the break even point.</p>

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Stage 3: Productivity

(continued)

Calculation	Factors	Comments
Input/Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> input - personnel costs (e.g., paid days vs. days worked) output - performance measures such as customers served during specified time period 	You would want to calculate the reductions in costs, such as reduced absenteeism and tardiness. It would also be relevant to estimate the costs of recruitment that would need to be invested for employees who would have otherwise left the firm. It will be important to define productivity measures to determine the impact of telecommuting on performance.
	•	
	•	

Stage 3: Balanced Scorecard

Calculation	Factors	Comments
Impact on four areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> financial customer internal business processes learning and growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> financial - see investments/ costs and savings/benefits discussions above customer - indicators of customer relations and transactions with customers internal business processes - impact on administrative efficiency learning and growth - ability of employees to participate in continuous learning experiences 	It will be important to evaluate how the telecommuting program affects each of the four areas. For example, how does the program affect the ability of employees to participate in continuing education opportunities? If the flexibility often afforded by telecommuting makes it easier productivity measures to determine the impact of for employees to attend classes that could enhance their contributions to the firm, the telecommuting program would be seen as contributing to this area.
	•	
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Stage 3: Payback

(continued)

Calculation	Factors	Comments
Net Initial Investment Net/Annual Increase in Cash Flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> initial investment -technology increase in cash flow - annual savings resulting from work/life initiative from decreased turnover, increased sales due to 24 hour responsiveness capacity, etc. 	If the initial investment costs were \$75,000 and the net increase in productivity was \$5,000 per employee during the first year. If 20 employees participated in the program, it can be estimated that the payback period would occur at 9 months ($20 \times \$5,000 / \$75,000 = .75$ year).
	•	
	•	

Stage 3: Net Present Value

Calculation	Factors	Comments
Initial Investment Discounted Future Cash Flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investments - technology enhancement, training, etc. discounted future cash flow - productivity, sales related to customer satisfaction, etc. 	<p>The firm may want to calculate the net present value before it decides to expand the telecommuting policy nationwide. It may anticipate that the initial program investment would be \$10,000,000.</p> <p>The net increase (after program maintenance costs) in productivity for each employee who takes part is \$4,000 (assuming that the productivity increases result in a \$5,000 benefit minus the \$1,000 per year annual maintenance). If 500 employees participate, the benefits equal \$2,000,000.</p> <p>If the firm expects that the benefits will last for eight years and a 10 percent discount factor is used, the present value of the savings is \$670,000 ($5.335 \times \\$2 \text{ million} = \\$10,670,000 - \\$10,000,000 = \\$670,000$).</p>
	•	
	•	

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Stage 3: Internal Rate of Return

(continued)

Calculation	Factors	Comments
Net Initial Investment/ Annual Increases in Cash Flow with Discounted Future Cash Flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investments - technology enhancement, training, etc. • discounted future cash flow - productivity, sales related to customer satisfaction, etc. 	<p>Recall that the Internal Rate of Return is the rate or discount factor that will make the Net Present Value equivalent to zero. In the example above, the internal rate of return is approximately 12% (the discount factor that would make the annual savings of \$2 million equivalent to the initial cost of \$10,000,000).</p> <p>Thus, the program would be accepted if corporate policy wanted a project that brought a return in present value terms of 10 percent and it would reject the program if corporate policy wanted a project that brought a return of greater than 12 percent.</p>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have made preliminary calculations that indicate how your work/life initiatives impact the bottom line.

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Stage 4: Make Recommendations

PURPOSE

Use findings of accounting measures for decision making.

EXAMPLE

If the calculations suggest that the break even point for an expanded telecommuting program is 100 employees, the work/life practitioner might gather information (e.g., using focus groups or surveys) to determine whether a sufficient number of employees and their supervisors indicate an interest in and a receptivity toward telecommuting.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use a chart such as the one below to highlight the findings and implications.

Finding	Implications
<i>For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The payback period for the telecommuting program is 9 months.	<i>The company will have re-couped the amount of its initial investment within a short time frame, making the pilot program a low risk for the company.</i> <i>Given this assessment, the practitioner may recommend that the program be pilot tested in more than one site to determine whether similar levels of savings can be realized in different locations.</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have made recommendations based on the findings of your assessment.

EVALUATION: USING A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

by Mindy Fried, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: The development of new work/life policies, programs, and practices is almost always an exciting adventure. However, sooner or later, someone at the workplace begins to wonder, "What have our work/life initiatives accomplished? Have they had the effect that we thought they would?"

A carefully designed and implemented evaluation can provide information that is important to company decision makers. In addition, a successful participatory evaluation can also engage the interest of people throughout the company who may then become work/life champions.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Consider** options for a meaningful evaluation process.
- **Articulate** measurable indicators relevant to the goals and objectives of work/life initiatives.
- **Plan** for evaluations when work/life programs are being developed and implemented.

EVALUATION:

USING A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

What is
evaluation?

I. Overview

Evaluation is one approach to assessment that compares the actual experiences and accomplishments of a program or policy with the original expectations. These anticipated outcomes are usually stated as goals and objectives.

Evaluations monitor how well work/life policies, programs, and practices are functioning and assess the extent to which they have achieved the desired outcomes.

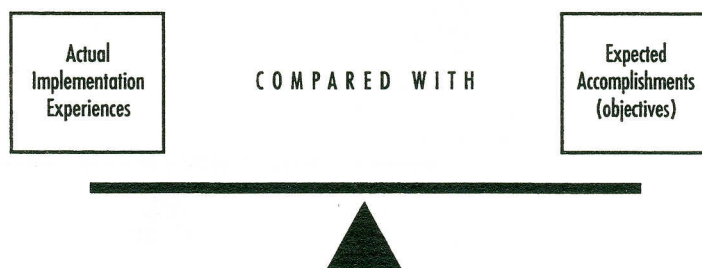
Participatory evaluations involve key stakeholders in the process of carrying out the evaluation.

What are you
comparing?

Program evaluations make two levels of comparisons.

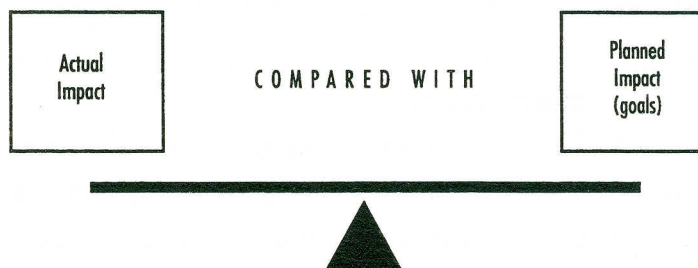
Level 1- Monitoring Objectives: The experiences companies have implementing programs are compared with original objectives, providing guideposts related to specific accomplishments.

Comparing with Objectives



Level 2 - Assessing Goals: The impacts experienced by employees and the company are compared to the intended outcomes.

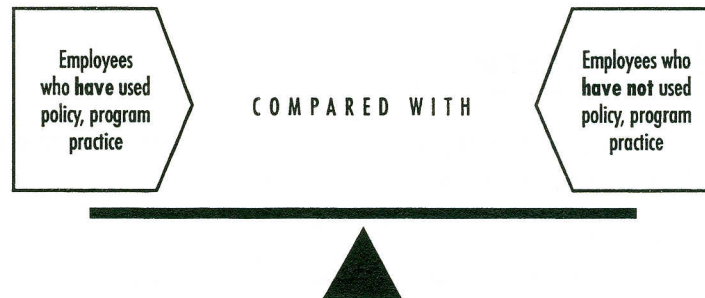
Comparing with Goals



Evaluators may also compare different groups of employees to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which work/life initiatives have accomplished their objectives and goals.

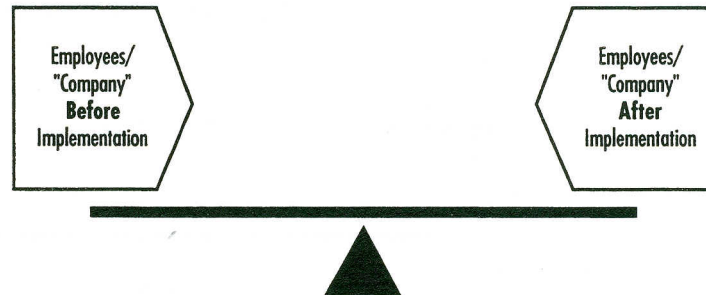
- The experiences of employees who have used the policy, program, or practice can be compared to the experiences of people who have not used it.

Comparisons with Different Groups of Employees



- The experiences of employees (and/or the company) before the policy, program, or practice was established can be compared to their experiences after it has been implemented.

Comparisons Made at Different Points in Time



Highlights of the Evaluation Process

Evaluations collect information to document the progress that has been made toward the expectations for a particular policy, program or practice.

In addition, a successful evaluation provides evidence of the outcomes that a work/life initiative may have had for employees in different parts of the company, for their families, and for the company as a whole.

The evaluation process moves through five basic stages:

- Stage 1 Create an evaluation team by inviting the participation of members of key stakeholder groups.
- Stage 2. Clarify the objectives and goals that will serve as the guideposts for measurement.
- Stage 3. Design & implement the process for collecting information.
- Stage 4. Use the findings to either improve your organization's work/life practices, validate current practices, develop new practices, or discontinue existing practices.

Stage 5. Assess the evaluation process to identify key “learnings” that can be used to improve future evaluations.

II. Background

The Strengths of a Participatory Approach

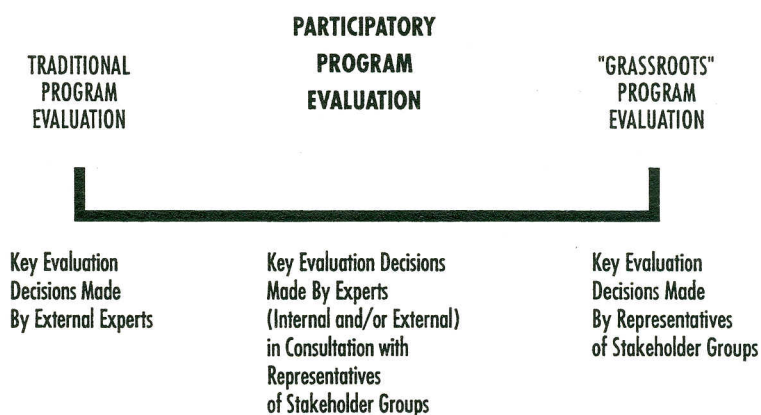
In its most traditional form, an evaluation is carried out by an outside expert who designs the evaluation, develops the data-gathering tools, analyzes the data, interprets findings, and makes recommendations. In some situations, this approach can be very useful. For instance, your company may need the skills of a researcher or it may be particularly important to bring in an expert who will have a more objective perspective about the merits of a particular program.

The *participatory approach* to program evaluation aims to integrally involve key stakeholders in defining what is to be evaluated, making decisions about the processes used to gather information, determining how the evaluation should be implemented, and developing recommendations based on the findings. For instance, an evaluation that involves employees can benefit from their special expertise, skills, and perspectives.

How much involvement?

The extent of stakeholder involvement in program evaluations will vary from evaluation to evaluation. Sometimes, the technical aspects of an evaluation may require that the evaluation team depends heavily on the expertise of one or more consultants. In these situations, the evaluation team will probably limit its role to making decisions about the overall direction of the evaluation, but will delegate most of the design, data collection, and analysis to the evaluator(s). However, key decisions made during a participatory evaluation are ultimately determined by the evaluation team.

The Participatory Continuum



Comprehensive evaluations include two types of assessment: formative and summative assessments. It is likely that the members of an evaluation team involved in a participatory evaluation will press for and make use of data from both of these assessments.

- *Formative assessments* gather monitoring information about program implementation. This type of assessment attempts to identify ways to improve the work/life policy, program or practice on a continuous and timely basis.
- *Summative assessments* are designed to capture insights about the effects of implementing a particular policy, program, or practice after a certain time period has elapsed.

Evaluation Assessments

	FORMATIVE	SUMMATIVE
FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives • Indicators to Related Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals • Indicators Related to Impact
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine if implementation has proceeded as planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine if work/life program has made a difference
TIMING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring during implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation either at the end of program or end of program cycle

**Stage 1: Create
the Evaluation
Team**

**Stage 2: Clarify
Objectives
& Goals**

**Stage 3: Design
& Implement
Evaluation
Process**

III. Key Questions Addressed by Program Evaluations

Evaluations are designed to collect information about the implementation and impact of work/life policies, programs and practices.

Who should be invited to participate in the evaluation?

- Who has an interest in the success of the work/life initiatives?
- Which departments might be most affected by the work/life experiences of their employees?
- Who might have skills and experiences that would add-value to the evaluation?

What are the objectives and goals for this particular program or policy?

- How can you tell if you are making progress toward the goals?
- Which indicators can help you measure the extent to which your company has accomplished the objectives?

What are the key elements of the evaluation?

- What types of information are important?
- What is the best source for that information?
- How might your company collect the information needed?

Has this program achieved its goal(s)?

- Is the work/life program, policy or practice making a positive difference in employees' work/life experiences?
- Are you closer to meeting your goals than before?
- Are there any gaps in the progress toward your goal(s)?

Has this program met its objectives?

- Have there been any problems with the implementation process?
- Is the program, policy or practice being implemented as planned?
- Is the rate of utilization meeting your expectations?
- Which objectives have not been fully met?
- What factors have interfered with your company's ability to meet the objectives for this program?
- What factors have contributed to your success in meeting the objectives for this program?
- What are the perspectives of the different stakeholder groups about the program's quality? Its scope? The efficiency of program implementation?

What outcomes have been associated with the implementation of this program?

- What have been the benefits of this program for your company?
- What have been the benefits of this program for your employees?
- What have been the benefits of this program for particular business units?
- What have been the benefits of this program for other stakeholder groups (e.g., customers, investors, suppliers, community partners of the company, etc.)?

What are the program's strengths and weaknesses?

- What lessons have you learned about this program?
- How might you improve this program?
- What factors seem to be limiting your progress?
- What factors seem to have contributed to the progress which has been made?
- Have you learned any lessons that suggest that some program elements should be modified?

How can the findings be shared?

- Who might be interested in the information collected?
- What is the communications plan?

What have been the strengths and weaknesses of the participatory evaluation?

- Has the evaluation produced information that is useful for the company?
- How have the members of the evaluation team assessed the evaluation process itself?
- Do the members of the evaluation team (or other people) have suggestions for improving future evaluations?

IV. What is Measured?

A successful evaluation depends on the development of practical yardsticks that can help your company measure the progress that has been made toward the objectives and goals associated with a particular work/life initiative. Your success with measurement will reflect:

- 1) the clarity of the objectives and goals;
- 2) the degree of consensus about the objectives and goals; and
- 3) the identification of measurable indicators that are relevant for each objective and goal.

Measuring Objectives

The terms “objectives” and “goals” are not consistently defined by evaluators; however, objectives usually focus on specific, achievable accomplishments. Objectives usually communicate expectations for implementation, utilization, or specific program “outputs” (e.g., service units, products, etc.). Objectives may specify the anticipated dates for finishing different elements of the workplan and expected rates of utilization.

Companies often use objectives as a way to gauge the apparent success of a particular work/life initiative. For example, a workplace that is pilot testing a reduced hours work option policy might consider an objective such as: “Convene 5 training sessions during Quarter III and IV to inform managers and supervisors about the new policy.”

Measuring Goals

Goals usually refer to the long-term purpose of your work/life initiative. A goal statement should identify the desired outcomes of a particular work/life policy, program, or practice. Companies attempt to measure progress toward goals as a way to examine whether their work/life policies and programs have made a difference to employees, their families, and/or to business operations.

Although some companies develop explicit goals for particular work/life policies or programs (e.g., “The reduced hours option has been developed to provide employees with a strategy for achieving work/life balance.”), sometimes the goals remain implicit (e.g., “The reduced hours program provides supervisors and line employees with a management tool which can accomplish a win-win result: employees may use a reduced hours schedule to address specific work/life priorities, and supervisors may be able to reduce the number of involuntary lay-offs.”)

SAMPLE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS ASSOCIATED WITH REDUCED-HOURS/PART-TIME WORK OPTIONS		
GOALS	OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish part-time work options for professional, managerial, and hourly employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble a task force. • Ask the task force to recommend a process for managers, supervisors, and or employees to request that a full-time job be redesigned so that a reduced hours/part-time work option could be considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees indicate an awareness of the policy's existence pertaining to reduced-hours/part-time work. • Employees feel that the company is supportive of the use of this option. • Managers use the policy as a tool to meet human resource objectives.

V. Stages in Participatory Program Evaluation

Stage 1: Create the Evaluation Team

The evaluation team is comprised of stakeholders in your company's work/life initiatives, and may include representatives from: upper level management, middle-management, non-management employees, employees' family members, the Board of Directors, vendors, and consumers/clients.

During the early stages of the evaluation process, it will be necessary for the members of the evaluation team to determine the level of their participation.

The activities of the evaluation team are guided by the evaluator/facilitator. The evaluator should be carefully selected, and should be someone who has evaluation research skills and experience, is familiar with the work/life policy or programs being assessed, and understands the philosophy and processes associated with a participatory evaluation. The evaluator may be an employee or an outside consultant. Depending on the roles and responsibilities of the members of the evaluation team, the evaluator may carry out some (or most) of the evaluation functions.

Considerations:

- What roles will each member of the evaluation team assume?
- Does the team reflect the diversity of the work environment?
- Do the members of the evaluation team understand why the evaluation is important? Do they know what the evaluation process will entail?

Stage 2: Clarify Objectives and Goals

The clarification of the work/life initiative's objectives and goals is one of the first evaluation tasks. This step is not as simple as it may seem. It is actually very common for programs to either have goals which are out-of-date and/or goals which are so poorly defined that they do not help to focus the evaluation.

Considerations:

- Are there any public documents that define the objectives and goals? Do these objectives/goals seem relevant to the program as it currently exists?
- Are there any indications that it would be appropriate to update or modify existing written statements of objectives/goals?
- If there are not any written objectives/goals, how might the team generate them?

Select measurable indicators

After the objectives/goals have been clarified, the team will focus on the identification of measurable indicators. Indicators are signs or evidence that an objective/goal is being achieved. The indicators may be quantitative (e.g., a numerical description) or qualitative (e.g., documentation of actions, attitudes, behaviors).

Considerations:

- What are the indicators or signs that the objective/goal has been met?
- What type of information would indicate whether your company has made progress toward the objectives/goals?

The evaluation team and the evaluator/facilitator will need to make a number of important decisions about the evaluation design, including instruments that will be used, methods for gathering information, and approaches to the analysis of the data.

Determine basic elements of the research design

The evaluation will be framed around key evaluation questions related to the objectives and goals.

Considerations:

- What information needs to be gathered?
- What information do you already have? Is there any data that has already been collected by the company? Is the company planning to gather information that could be used for your evaluation?
- What new information do you need?

Develop instruments

The development of data collection instruments requires meticulous attention. Unless the evaluator possesses significant experience with the development of data collection instruments, companies are advised to consult an expert at this point.

Quantitative methodologies use numbers to describe and organize experiences. For example, written surveys often ask people to answer questions by marking numbers.

Qualitative methodologies encourage respondents to describe their experiences and interpretations in their own words. For example, interviews and focus groups might invite individuals to describe how they are affected by their own work/life situations.

Considerations:

- Has the research design addressed issues related to confidentiality?

Field test

Before you make final decisions about the questions included in your instruments, the evaluation team will want to field test them. Be sure to ask people who are participating in the field test for their recommendations for improving the instruments.

Considerations:

- Is the wording clear?
- Are the research questions valid and reliable?
- Are you gaining important insights by asking these questions?
- Has anything been left out?
- Are people comfortable with the tone of the questions?

Collect information

The evaluation process becomes “alive” when the information is finally collected.

- Who (and what) might be your data sources?
- What methods of data collection are most suitable for your company? Interviews? Observations? Focus groups? Review of materials? Surveys?

Analyze and interpret information

Data analysis is a two-step process which entails organizing the information, and then interpreting what the findings mean.

If you have gathered quantitative data, arrange in advance to have experts available for the analysis.

You might consider the following approaches for analyzing qualitative data:

- 1) Organize your data by source.
 - 2) Create groups of respondents according to your demographic data.
 - 3) Categorize your data by response themes.
- What is the plan for data analysis?
 - Are people confirming what you thought you already knew?
 - What new information has emerged?
 - Does the information tell you whether or not the program is achieving its goals?
 - What are the implications for program or policy changes?

The work of the evaluation team is not complete until the results have been shared with different stakeholder groups and an action plan has been articulated that ensures continued support for the strengths of the program and addresses any weaknesses uncovered.

Considerations:

- Who needs to hear about what you learned?
- How will you communicate the findings to all of the members of the evaluation team, top decision makers, and the company at-large?
- What do you need to tell them?
- How are you going to tell them?
- How will you use the evaluation results? To promote the program? To improve program outcomes? To improve program administration?

The evaluation process itself should be assessed in the spirit of continuous learning.

Considerations:

- Did team members enjoy being a part of the evaluation process?
- Did they receive enough support from their superiors to sustain their participation?
- Did the evaluator respond to input from team members about the evaluation process?
- Did the team feel that useful information came out of the evaluation?

When are
participatory
evaluations most
appropriate?

How might
participatory
evaluations
contribute to
your work/life
strategy?

Are there any
particular
challenges
associated with
participatory
evaluations?

Why might your firm
want to consider an
evaluation of its
work/life initiatives?

VI. Considerations

Evaluations can help companies address some of the most challenging questions that confront work/life departments: Are our work/life initiatives meeting our expectations? Do our policies and programs really make a difference to the quality of life experienced by our employees? Have they had a positive impact on our business operations?

It is readily apparent to most decision makers that the evaluation of work/life initiatives is an indicator of good management practice. The information collected can provide important data that can be used to consider changes in policies and program administration.

Companies that value employee involvement may be especially interested in participatory evaluations which capitalize on some of the fundamental principles associated with employee involvement teams. Participatory evaluations acknowledge that people who are most directly involved in and affected by work/life policies, programs, and practices (e.g., stakeholders in work/life initiatives) often generate practical solutions to implementation problems.

By conducting an evaluation in a participatory manner, it may be possible to:

- Break down barriers among different groups who have little previous experience working together.
- Build skills of collaboration among evaluation team members.
- Augment the strategic thinking and program planning abilities of evaluation team members.
- Enhance employees' sense of ownership of and commitment to your company's work/life initiative.
- Build support for recommendations that result from the evaluation process.
- Increase the likelihood of work/life buy-in from different business units.

There is almost always some ambivalence about conducting evaluations. While it is widely recognized that evaluations can help improve work/life initiatives, they also create opportunities for critique and criticism. People who are responsible for the administration of work/life initiatives may be particularly reluctant to engage in the evaluation process.

If the evaluation team is involved in the data collection process, it will be important to develop explicit steps to ensure the confidentiality of employees who participate in the evaluation.

The participatory evaluation process is labor-intensive and time-consuming. While some may welcome this inclusionary approach to evaluation, others may feel that it will "rock the boat" too much, or build expectations prematurely or unnecessarily. Therefore, participatory evaluation may not be right for every situation.

By their very nature, participatory evaluations must develop processes to respond to the diverse perspectives of the evaluation team and the evaluation expert(s). Many evaluation teams find it difficult to resolve differences of opinion.

Once work/life policies and programs get established, companies are often interested in what has been accomplished and the value of these accomplishments. Program evaluations can generate information that is specific to your own organization and can be used to make improvements.

Mindy Fried Ph.D. is the Project Director and Co-Principal Investigator of the National Work/Life Measurement Project at the Boston College Center for Work & Family. Her research interests focus on organizational behavior, gender issues in the workplace, and the impact of corporate culture on family policy implementation. She is the author of several books on work and family-related issues, including the most recently published, Taking Time: Parental Leave Policy and Corporate Culture. She received her M.S.W. from Syracuse University and her Ph.D. from Brandeis University.

Selected Resources

Publications:

Gooding, Cheryl. January, 1996. "Reflections on Training as Capacity-Building Strategy." Medford, Mass.: Tufts University, Lincoln-Filene Center.

Gray, Sandra Trice (ed.). 1993. "A Vision of Evaluation: A Report of Learnings from Independent Sector's Work on Evaluation." Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector.

Jurmo, Paul and Folinsbee, Sue. 1994 "Collaborative Evaluation: A Handbook for Workplace Development Planners." Ontario, Canada: ABC Canada.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION WORKSHEETS

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

On-site child care centers are the focal points of some work/life initiatives. Evaluations of child care centers are essential to ensure that the child care services benefit the children as well as the parent employees.

The Fam-Corp Child Care Center (fictitious) is located on-site at the Giant Shoe Corporation. A majority of the 4,000 employees are assembly workers. Approximately 30% of management are women.

About ten years ago, the company had a major problem with employee absenteeism and tardiness. An employee survey found that sixty percent of the workers reported child care problems contributed to these problems. After studying a range of options for child care support, Giant established an on-site child care center.

Giant's evaluation of its on-site child care center will be used to illustrate some of decisions and activities associated with evaluation.

Stage 1: Worksheet A

Forming the Evaluation Team

PURPOSE

Identify individuals who might participate in the evaluation.

CASE EXAMPLE

Giant decided to use a modified participatory approach to evaluate its on-site child care program after it had been operating for several years. An employee from the research department was asked to shepherd the evaluation.

Editor's Note: It is suggested that practitioners interested in planning an evaluation of on-site child care centers consult an expert in early childhood education and work/life experiences during the early stages of the evaluation design.

INSTRUCTIONS

Complete the following table to identify stakeholders who might be members of your evaluation team.

Stakeholders	Reason for selection	Level of commitment to the team (high, moderate, low)	Areas of Expertise/ Possible Role on Evaluation Team
At Fam-Corp the evaluation team included:			
• a manager from corporate HR	• knowledge about systems relationships	• high	• knowledge about MIS systems
• the director of the Fam-Corp Child Care Center	• knowledge about all aspects of center decision making	• high, with some ambivalence	• ability to approve evaluation processes
• two teachers from	• familiarity with	• moderate	• curriculum

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Stage 1: Selecting Evaluators/Team Facilitators

(continued)

INSTRUCTIONS

Complete the following table to identify potential expert evaluators/ facilitators who might assist you with the evaluation process.

Evaluation Tasks Requiring Specific Expertise	Possible Evaluators/ Facilitators	Qualifications/Reasons for Recommending
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• early childhood education expert• survey design expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• university researchers• company research department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• expertise in child development• responsible for annual employee survey

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will be ready to invite individuals to participate on the evaluation team.

Stage 2: Clarify Goals and Objectives

PURPOSE

Develop statements that clearly communicate the expected accomplishments and the purpose of the work/life initiative being evaluated.

CASE EXAMPLE

Two goals for the Fam-Corp Child Care Center surfaced:

- To provide high quality, affordable child care.
- To increase the productivity of working parents.

The team members further clarified the goal regarding productivity. They realized that productivity was one indicator that the program was cost-effective. As a consequence, the second goal was modified:

- To provide cost-effective child care that increased the productivity of working parents.

INSTRUCTIONS

List goals, objectives and indicators you will measure to determine the success of the work/life initiative being evaluated.

Goals	Objectives	Measurable indicators
<i>For example: Provide high quality, affordable child care.</i>	<i>For example: Meet quality standards set by the National Association of the Education of Young Children(NAEYC)</i>	<i>For example: Staff/child ratios are high. Group sizes are small. Teachers are certified and trained.</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have specified the goals, objectives and indicators for the work/life initiative being evaluated.

Stage 3: Worksheet A

Evaluation Design

PURPOSE

Develop a design for the evaluation study and a plan for implementation.

CASE EXAMPLE

The evaluation team at Fam-Corp explored different options for obtaining the information needed. Program records (e.g., log-books, manuals, etc.) were consulted for information about the staff/child ratios and group size. Parents were invited to participate in focus groups and children were observed in the classroom.

INSTRUCTIONS

Determine what information is needed to document your company's progress toward its goals and to assess whether the objectives have been met.

Information needed	From whom?	Method of data collection	When
<i>For example: Characteristics of interactions between teachers and children. Teachers are actively involved in the early childhood education experience. Teachers respond to distressed children in timely fashion. Teachers provide stimulation to children. Teachers use supportive, non-punitive behavior management techniques.</i>	<i>Trained observers.</i>	<i>Arrange for observer to visit class or a week.</i>	<i>After observation protocol has been field tested.</i>

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Stage 3: Worksheet B

Data Collection Processes and Instruments

(continued)

PURPOSE

Consider options for developing instruments and data collection protocol.

CASE EXAMPLE

The evaluation team at Fam-Corp developed a guide that was used to interview the teachers about their training, professional satisfaction, and perceptions of the quality of care provided at the child care center. The interview protocol was semi-structured, but was flexible enough to respond to the issues raised by the teachers themselves.

The following list includes some of the questions excerpted from the interview protocol:

Name _____

Age _____

Title _____

Race/Ethnicity _____

Female _____ Male _____

1. How long have you worked at Fam-Corp?
2. How would you describe your job?
3. What is your early childhood education background?
 - a. training?
 - b. education?
 - c. experience?
4. Are you satisfied with your salary? If no, why? Probe: Do you think this dissatisfaction will affect how long you plan to work at Fam-Corp?
5. What are your goals for your early childhood career?
6. How does working at Fam-Corp fit into these goals?
7. How would you describe the quality of care at Fam-Corp?
8. As a teacher, do you get the kind of support you need to provide quality care?
9. What are the most positive things about the care provided to children at Fam-Corp?
10. What are areas that need strengthening?

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Stage 3: Worksheet B

Data Collection Processes and Instruments

(continued)

INSTRUCTIONS

Consider the options for alternative approaches to data collection. Many workplaces have found it useful to combine qualitative approaches (such as interviews) and quantitative approaches (such as reviews of existing records or surveys).

Stakeholders	Reason for selection	Level of commitment to the team (high, moderate, low)	Areas of Expertise/ Possible Role on Evaluation Team
Options for data collection	Advantages	disadvantages	considerations
<i>For example: Focus groups</i>	<i>May gain insights into parents' assessment of the extent to which the curriculum responds to the developmental needs of their children.</i>	<i>Some parents may be reluctant to express concerns in a group setting.</i>	<i>Structure focus groups so that a casual discussion is possible. Stress the importance of confidentiality.</i>

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Stage 3: Worksheet C

Data Analysis

PURPOSE

Organize the information collected during the evaluation.

CASE EXAMPLE

The evaluation team at Fam-Corp identified the strengths and weaknesses of the on-site child care center using the goals and objectives as benchmarks.

After interviewing teachers, the team found that the staff was highly qualified, most with masters degrees in education. The majority of teachers was very satisfied with their jobs. Nonetheless, the annual turnover rate at the center was 25%. While this is lower than the national average, parents and administrators felt that it affected the overall quality of care. When this information was fed back to Board of the center, it decided to prioritize fundraising activities that would increase teacher salaries. Also, the HR representative initiated a task force to look into providing other benefits for teachers such as more training and health insurance.

INSTRUCTIONS

List the program goals and objectives established during Stage 2. Record summary information from the evaluation to consider the extent to which progress has been made toward the goals and whether objectives have been met.

Program Goals (impact)	Positive Outcomes to Date	Barriers to Success	Recommendations for Change
<i>For example: To provide affordable child care.</i>	<i>Fees are comparable to market rate.</i>	<i>Loss of qualified teachers increase costs.</i>	<i>Explore options for obtaining grants for piloting innovative curriculum that could also provide supple- mental funds to increase the salaries of "master" teachers.</i>
Objectives (accomplishments)	Positive Outcomes to Date	Barriers to Success	Recommendations for Change

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have considered elements of your study design, data collection, and analysis.

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Stage 4: Communicate the Findings

PURPOSE

Develop a communications plan.

CASE EXAMPLE

The evaluation team at Fam-Corp decided to prepare some summary reports that were distributed to company managers. In addition, meetings were convened with the staff at the child care center and with parents.

INSTRUCTIONS

Specify how your plan for communications will respond to the needs of different stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Group	What information would be most pertinent/interesting?	How Will You Share Information?	When?
<i>For example: To provide affordable child care.</i>	<i>Fees are comparable to market rate.</i>	<i>Loss of qualified teachers increase costs.</i>	<i>Explore options for obtaining grants for piloting innovative</i>
<i>For example: HR recruiters at Giant Shoe Corporation</i>	<i>Information about accomplishments of the child care center that position company as employer of choice.</i>	<i>company's internal web site</i>	<i>1 month after findings have been presented to top decision makers</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified important components of a communications plans.

Stage 5: Assess the Evaluation Process

PURPOSE

Assess the effectiveness of the program evaluation process.

CASE EXAMPLE

The evaluation team at Fam-Corp met with the VP of HR to discuss different aspects of the evaluation process and how the "learnings" could be applied to the evaluation of other HR initiatives.

INSTRUCTIONS

Convene a meeting of the evaluation team and discuss the questions listed in the following table.

Sample Questions	Comments Made by Members of the Evaluation Team
Did you have a good understanding about the evaluation project before you agreed to participate on the evaluation team?	
Were you provided with appropriate information about the work/life initiative being evaluated?	
Have you participated in an evaluation before?	
Did you feel comfortable with your role on the evaluation team?	
Did you feel that the evaluation process made good use of your skills and expertise?	
How would you assess the overall organization of the evaluation project?	
What new skills did you develop?	
How might you apply these new skills to a project in the future?	
What suggestions might you have to improve the evaluation process?	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified important components of a communications plans.

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EXAMINING IMPACT ON SUPERVISORS AND CO-WORKERS: ASSESSING THE RIPPLE EFFECT

by Leon C. Litchfield, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: Traditionally, work/life assessments have focused on the impacts of work/life initiatives on employees who use them and on the organizations that offer them. This approach extends the discussions about measurement into the domains of supervisors and co-workers who may be affected directly and indirectly by employees' utilization of particular work/life policies, programs and practices.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Consider** how the work experiences of supervisors and co-workers may be affected by the use that other employees make of work/life initiatives.
- **Explore** how employees' relationships with their supervisors and co-workers might be affected by the use of work/life initiatives.
- **Develop** a plan for gathering information about the direct and indirect impacts of work/life initiatives on supervisors and co-workers.

EXAMINING IMPACT ON SUPERVISORS AND CO-WORKERS: ASSESSING THE RIPPLE EFFECT

I. Overview

What is entailed
in this approach
to measurement?

This chapter discusses how to measure the extent to which work/life policies and programs – developed to have a positive impact on employees who use them – also have an effect on two other groups at the workplace: supervisors and co-workers of the employees who access work/life initiatives.

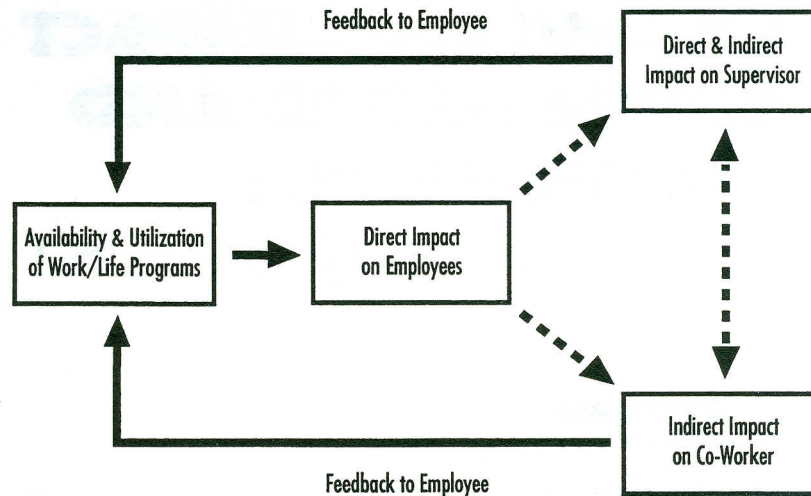
Efforts to measure the outcomes of work/life initiatives are still in a formative stage. In fact, many companies have not assessed how their work/life policies and programs affect the life balance issues for individual employees. Furthermore, businesses rarely examine whether work/life policies and programs have had an impact on employees' supervisors and co-workers.

Measuring the impacts of work/life initiatives on work experiences and relationships is similar to viewing the ripples that are made when a pebble is thrown into a pond. While the biggest splash occurs where the pebble enters the water, the effects can be seen in bands that surround the point of entry to the edge of the pond. In a similar manner, work/life programs and policies are intended to directly impact individual employees, but may also affect supervisors and co-workers throughout the company.

This approach to measurement will help corporate decision-makers to consider how the use of work/life initiatives by some employees can affect the work tasks, work load, and workplace relationships experienced by supervisors and co-workers.

As depicted in the conceptual model below, work/life programs and policies are available to some or all of the employees at the workplace, and are utilized by a certain percentage of workers for whom they are available. While specific programs are designed to have a direct impact on employees, they may also have an indirect impact on supervisors and co-workers. In addition, the indirect impact on supervisors may affect co-workers, and vice versa.

Assessment Model



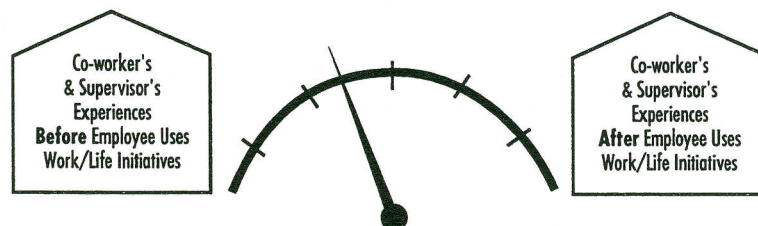
It is interesting to note that within the model, individuals may have multiple roles. For example, an employee may use a benefit, and this may have an impact (either positive or negative) on his/her supervisor and on other co-workers. Their responses to this employee's utilization may affect whether or how the employee continues to use this benefit, or considers using other benefits in the future.

The same employee may also be impacted by other employees who use different benefits (and this employee would shift from being considered the employee in the model to the co-worker). Similarly, if a supervisor uses a work/life benefit such as flextime, this may have an impact on the employees in the work team.

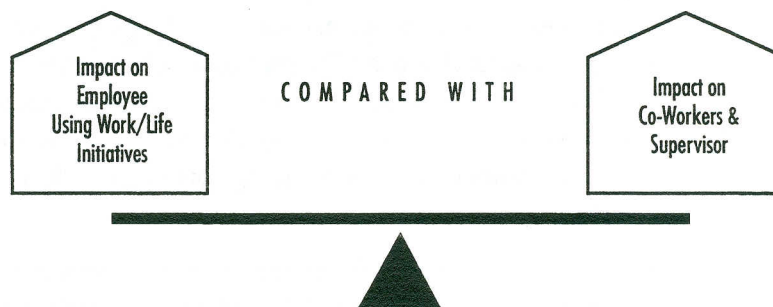
By focusing on the ways that work/life programs and policies impact supervisors and co-workers, this approach allows for a number of different types of comparisons.

These comparisons will make it possible for corporate policy-makers to have a more comprehensive view of how the introduction, development, modification, and elimination of specific work/life benefits may affect different groups of employees.

Making Comparisons



What is being compared?



There are six basic steps involved in assessing impacts on supervisors and co-workers:

- Stage 1. Assess the utilization of workplace programs and policies.
- Stage 2. Identify possible direct impacts of programs and policies on employees.
- Stage 3. Identify possible impacts on supervisors.
- Stage 4. Identify possible impacts on co-workers.
- Stage 5. Develop methodology and instruments to measure impacts.
- Stage 6. Evaluate findings, including differential impacts on the three stakeholder groups.

II. Background

Typically, evaluations of work/life programs and policies in corporate settings have focused on cost, utilization, satisfaction, and benefits for the companies that sponsor them.

During the past few years, some studies have examined how the attitudes and behaviors of supervisors and co-workers affect employees' work/life experiences. For example, employees working for supervisors who are supportive of work/life issues may be more likely to request alternative work arrangements.

To date, however, there has been relatively modest attention paid to the experiences of supervisors and co-workers of employees who have used work/life policies and programs. Two notable exceptions are studies conducted by Catalyst and the Families and Work Institute.

Catalyst, a non-profit organization working to advance women in business and the professions, recently researched the outcomes of voluntary part-time work arrangements (1998). This study, entitled "A New Approach to Flexibility: Managing the Work/Time Equation" focused primarily on the employees who used these arrangements, but also collected information about the indirect impacts on supervisors and co-workers.

Catalyst concluded that despite certain challenges, there was an overall positive impact on supervisors with part-time professionals in their work teams. Even when supervisors perceived an increase in their own responsibilities as a result of supervising part-time workers, they did not object because the skills of these workers were so highly valued. In addition, they did not feel that their own performance was compromised as a result of supervising part-time employees.

Is there backlash?

Challenges reported by supervisors regarding the supervision of part-time employees included a lengthy approval process for part-time schedules, increased attention to facilitating communication, and scheduling difficulties when there are unexpected complications. In addition, the supervisor must monitor not only the impact on the individual part-time employee, but also the performance of the whole team, providing oversight to ensure that the team is working well together.

The Catalyst study also found that part-time work has an impact on co-workers with respect to their work responsibilities, job performance, and the accomplishments of the work team. In fact, co-workers (referred to as 'colleagues' in the Catalyst study) were more apt to report an impact on their own work responsibilities and performance as a result of working with part-time employees than were supervisors. While 25% of co-workers reported a decline in the team's overall productivity as a result of having part-time employees on the team, this was identified by only 4% of supervisors.

Other negative impacts reported by co-workers as a result of having part-time employees on a work team were additional work responsibilities and scheduling difficulties. However, it should be noted that about two-thirds of co-workers reported no problems related to having colleagues who worked part-time.

"The 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce" conducted by the Families and Work Institute also examined the indirect impact of work/life initiatives on the experiences of supervisors and co-workers. Bond and his colleagues collected information about possible work-family backlash, asking workers whether they resented benefits used by their co-workers that did not benefit them personally, as well as how they felt about occasionally doing extra work to accommodate the personal or family needs of co-workers. In this study, there was *no* evidence to support the idea that employees without dependents were resentful of benefits for workers with dependents. Similarly, they did not seem to mind doing extra work from time-to-time to accommodate the family or personal needs of co-workers.

The study concluded that having a more responsive and supportive environment was a key factor in eliminating resentment among co-workers without dependents. The authors felt that employees who have a better understanding about the changing needs of co-workers during different life stages might be less likely to resent their co-workers' use of work/life policies and programs.

Since the explicit goals of work/life initiatives tend to focus more on the anticipated benefits for employees and the company, the importance of considering the impact on supervisors and co-workers may be overlooked.

A final point to be made about evaluating the impact of work/life initiatives on supervisors and co-workers is that these outcomes are often less visible than the direct impacts on either individual employees or on the organization. Consequently, companies may find that it is easier for them to document the direct impacts on employees who use particular policies and programs than to measure supervisor and co-worker impacts.

Visibility of Supervisor and Co-worker Impacts

**Stage 1: Assess
Availability and
Utilization**

**Stage 2: Identify
Direct Employee
Impacts**

**Stage 3: Identify
Supervisor Impacts**

**Stage 4: Identify
Co-worker Impacts**

III. Key Questions

This approach to measurement will help practitioners evaluate the extent to which work/life strategies have had an impact on supervisors' and co-workers' work tasks, work load, work relationships, and overall work experiences.

Which groups of employees are using different work/life policies and programs?

- What work/life policies, programs, and benefits are available to employees?
- To what extent do employees utilize these policies, programs, and benefits?
- How much variability is there among groups of employees regarding their knowledge about and utilization of specific benefits?

How does utilization affect the work experiences of employees who use them?

- Does utilization affect employees' ability to perform work tasks?
- Does utilization affect the types of work that the employee can effectively complete?
- Does utilization affect the amount of work that can be accomplished by employees?
- Does utilization affect employees' workplace relationships?
- Does utilization affect employees' willingness to "go the extra mile" to get work done?

How does utilization of work/life policies and programs affect the supervisor of the employee who uses them?

- Do the work/life experiences of employees who use work/life policies and programs affect the work experiences of supervisors?
- Does the utilization of work/life policies and programs affect the supervisors' work load? For example, are supervisors responsible for working with employees to develop plans for flexible work arrangements?
- Does the utilization of work/life policies and programs affect the supervisors' approach to particular work tasks? Do supervisors pay more attention to important communication issues?
- Does utilization of work/life policies and programs affect relationships among the members of the supervisors' work team? Do supervisors' teams work more effectively because the utilization of work/life initiatives generates "good will" among team members who feel that the company cares for them as people?
- Do supervisors feel that the availability of work/life policies and programs provides them with additional management tools?
- How do the experiences of employees who use work/life benefits change their relationships with their supervisors?

How does utilization of work/life policies and programs affect the co-workers of employees who use them?

- Do the work/life experiences of employees who use work/life policies and programs affect the work experiences of co-workers?

- Do co-workers feel that the company is responsive to their work/life priorities?
- Does the utilization of work/life policies and programs affect co-workers' work load? For example, do co-workers have to assume extra work responsibilities when employees take leaves of absence?
- Does the utilization of work/life policies and programs affect the co-workers' approach to particular work tasks? Do teams find that they more effectively plan meetings so that they are productive for individuals who telecommute and only come to the office periodically?
- Does utilization of work/life policies and programs affect relationships between employees who use work/life policies and programs and their co-workers? Are employees less stressed and do they work together more successfully?

What would be the most appropriate way to gather data at your company?

- What are the best methods to collect information from supervisors?
- What are the best methods to collect information from co-workers?
- What instruments should be developed to collect the information that is needed?

Does the utilization of work/life policies and programs have a negative, neutral, or positive impact on the supervisors and co-workers of employees who use them?

- In general, how does the utilization of work/life policies and programs affect the work experiences of supervisors?
- In general, how does the utilization of work/life policies and programs affect the work experiences of co-workers?

IV. What is Measured?

Your company will want to consider how different aspects of supervisors' and co-workers' work experiences might be affected, including:

- scope of work (e.g., the range of work tasks)
- work load (e.g., the amount of work)
- work demands (e.g., intensity of expectations)
- workplace relationships (e.g., interactions)
- implementation of work tasks (e.g., how business is conducted)

It should be noted that in some cases the impacts will be direct (e.g., all members of a team attend an orientation session about telecommuting before one or more employees begin telecommuting) and in other cases the impact will be indirect (e.g., the work experiences of co-workers improve because employees who use work/life policies and programs relieve stress).

When employees utilize specific work/life programs, policies or benefits, there may be an impact on several aspects of a supervisor's job, including: specific job responsibilities, scheduling challenges (both getting members of the work team together and meeting with the employee who uses the benefit), their own job performance, their own job satisfaction and stress levels, and production of the work team.

Supervisors can be asked whether supervising employees with certain work/life issues has had an impact on their jobs as supervisors. For example, your company might be interested in supervisors' perceptions of the performance of employees who use certain benefits to determine whether these changes (positive or negative) might, in turn, affect the supervisors' jobs.

When selecting measures, it is important to remember that supervising employees who use work/life benefits can have positive and/or negative impacts on supervisors. The following tables provide examples of the types of questions that might be appropriate to ask individuals who have supervisory responsibilities for telecommuters.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF IMPACTS ON SUPERVISORS

How does supervising an employee who telecommutes affect you?

	very negative	somewhat negative	somewhat positive	very positive
What has been the impact on:				
• your own work load?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• the range of your work tasks?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your stress at work?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your job satisfaction?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your relationship with the employee who telecommutes?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your relationships with the other employees in your work group?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• scheduling individual meetings with the employee who telecommutes?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• scheduling meetings with your work group (including the employee who telecommutes)?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• the productivity of your work group?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your supervisory skills?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Overall, how would you rate your experience supervising a telecommuter?	_____	_____	_____	_____

	no	yes	It depends. (Please explain.)
• Given a choice, in the future would you be willing to approve employees' requests to telecommute?	_____	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
• Would you recommend to other supervisors that they allow their supervisees to telecommute?	_____	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

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Co-workers may be impacted when other employees use certain work/life benefits because the co-workers may be asked to take on new responsibilities or to adjust their schedules to accommodate others in their work group. This can result in both behavioral and attitudinal changes (either positive or negative).

Employees can be asked about the impact of having their co-workers use certain work/life benefits on various aspects of their jobs or on their attitudes towards their co-workers. It may also be appropriate to measure employee job satisfaction and commitment, and the extent to which these areas are affected by co-worker use of benefits.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF IMPACTS ON CO-WORKERS

How does working with an employee who telecommutes affect you?

	very negative	somewhat negative	somewhat positive	very positive
What has been the impact on:				
• your own work load?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• the range of your work tasks?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your stress at work?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your job satisfaction?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your relationship with the employee who telecommutes?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your relationship with your supervisor?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• your relationships with the other employees in your work group?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• scheduling individual meetings with the employee who telecommutes?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• How would you rate the impact of having a team member who telecommutes on the productivity of your work group?	_____	_____	_____	_____
• Overall, how would you rate your experience working with a telecommuter?	_____	_____	_____	_____

	much less work	less work	more work	much more work
• In comparison to the other members of your work team, how does the work load of the telecommuter compare to other employees who work the same number of hours?	_____	_____	_____	_____

	no	yes	It depends. (Please explain.)
• In the future, would you be enthusiastic about working with a co-worker who telecommutes?	_____	_____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

**Stage 1: Assess
Utilization**

**Stage 2: Identify
Direct Employee
Impacts**

**Stage 3: Identify
Supervisor
Impacts**

V. Stages

If your company does not regularly collect accurate information about the utilization of its work/life initiatives, you may want to conduct a utilization analysis (See Chapter IV of this manual, "Assessing Availability and Utilization").

This information may help you consider which work/life policies and programs might be most appropriate for studying the impact of work/life initiatives on supervisors and co-workers.

If your company does not have reliable utilization data, you may decide to survey employees about their use of work/life policies and programs. In this case, you would probably want to combine the activities of Stages 1 and 2.

Although this type of assessment focuses on the outcomes experienced by supervisors and co-workers, you will first need to assess the impact of work/life initiatives on the employees who use them. This step is very important because it is necessary to determine whether the impacts on supervisors and co-workers varies depending on the experiences of the employees who use work/life policies and programs.

For example, an employee who works part-time and is very satisfied with the flexibility of this arrangement might "pass on" the positive assessments to the supervisor and/or co-workers, whereas another employee who finds that the decrease in income has had a more deleterious impact on family well-being than anticipated might "pass on" negative feelings about part-time work arrangements.

Employees who use work/life policies and programs can be asked about their work/life balance and whether they think that the benefit is helping them with this balance. If information is collected both before and after an individual employee begins using a specific benefit, an attempt can be made to attribute any changes to the use of the benefit. However, when this is not possible, determining whether the employee and his/her supervisor perceives an impact as a result of using a specific benefit can also be useful.

By asking each employee about the specific benefits that he or she uses, it will be possible to conduct analyses to determine whether employees' own utilization affects their assessments of the impact of their co-workers' utilization.

At this point in the assessment, you may want to invite supervisors with responsibilities for employees who have used work/life initiatives to share their assessments of the impact that the use of these policies and programs has had on them.

It will be important to ask questions about the number of employees in the department, frequency of work/life problems and concerns, and utilization of specific work/life benefits. In addition, you will need to ask the supervisor about the extent and ways in which this utilization has had an impact on his/her responsibilities and performance.

**Stage 4: Identify
Co-worker
Impact**

Similarly, employees should be asked about the extent and ways in which having a co-worker who utilizes certain benefits has had an impact on his/her work experiences.

As noted earlier, an employee may be considered a “user” for one type of benefit and a “non-user” (i.e., a co-worker) for another type of benefit. Your company may decide to gather data from employees about these different perspectives at the same time. This approach would be possible if employees respond to survey or interview questions, first thinking about the utilization of work/life benefits as a “user” and then as a “non-user”.

**Stage 5: Develop
Methodology and
Instruments**

After you have made decisions about the specific type of information for your assessment of impact on supervisors and co-workers, it will be necessary to make decisions about the best and most efficient ways to collect this information. You may decide to convene focus groups, distribute a self-administered questionnaire, or conduct interviews (via telephone or in-person).

The usual considerations should be weighed, including the prior use of different methods, costs, and availability of staff to conduct interviews. Following methodological decisions, instruments can be developed to collect impact information from supervisors and co-workers. Since some of the same questions will be asked, it may be most efficient to develop one set of questions for both co-workers and supervisors and a separate section just for supervisors.

Your company may want to collect information from employees at periodic intervals. In these situations, the least intrusive way to ask these questions may be to include them in general company surveys that ask about other issues such as job satisfaction or specific work/life topics.

**Stage 6: Evaluate
Findings**

The last stage is to analyze the information that has been collected. In the simplest case, this will involve developing an aggregate summary of supervisor and co-worker responses, and comparing their answers for similarities and differences.

For example, whereas co-workers may report taking on additional work as a result of another employee's use of a particular benefit, the supervisor may not be as aware of this impact on co-workers.

Collecting data before and after benefits have been made available (or have been utilized) is somewhat more complicated, although it is generally methodologically superior to collecting data at one point in time. This study design may be difficult because:

- 1) Collecting data before a benefit is offered to employees requires foresight and commitment by companies. It is more common for companies to question the impact of specific benefits after they have been offered for a period of time.
- 2) It may not be clear how much time would typically elapse before the utilization of a particular policy or program is expected to have an impact on employees, supervisors, and co-workers. If data are collected too early after a benefit has been offered, sufficient time may not have passed in order for a measurable impact to have occurred. Alternatively, if too long a time period has passed, there may have been a short-term impact that is no longer discernible. Ideally, impacts will be measured at several points in time in order to detect both short and long-term impacts.

- 3) Linking the impact to a specific benefit may also be difficult, since other events may have occurred either within or outside the company that may have been responsible for the impact. Asking questions that attempt to link the particular benefit to the impact will help.
- 4) Additional analyses will have to be conducted that incorporate the views of supervisors and co-workers at different points in time.

VI. Considerations

When should you use this approach?

The impact of work/life programs, policies, and benefits on supervisors and co-workers may be equally as important as the impact on the employees who use the benefits. By assessing the impact on other stakeholder groups (i.e., supervisors and co-workers), companies can more realistically evaluate the overall impact on productivity. Other impacts (either positive or negative) may be missed if companies focus solely on the employees for whom the benefits are intended.

What are the advantages of using the supervisor/co-worker impact approach?

The main advantage to using this approach to measurement is that it allows companies to take a more systemic look at the impact of a specific program, policy, or benefit. This approach will result in information that companies can use to determine the overall impact of benefits as they plan for future programs and policies.

What are the challenges associated with using this approach?

There are a few notable challenges connected to this approach:

- 1) Your company has to be open to evaluating broader impacts beyond those that are traditionally assessed.
- 2) By asking supervisors and co-workers about impacts, you may unintentionally raise their expectations that the company will address any concerns that are voiced. For instance, if these groups report increased work loads as a result of employees in the department using certain benefits, they may expect the company to initiate changes to reduce these work loads.
- 3) It may be more difficult to collect data from non-users than from users because supervisors and co-workers may be reluctant to share information that could either reflect poorly on colleagues or that might focus attention on some of the unintended consequences of important work/life policies and programs.

Why might your company want to use the individual impact approach?

Your company may want to use this approach to measurement in order to plan for future policies, programs, and benefits. The results will provide valuable data about the effects of specific benefits, and will allow company decision-makers to determine how to maximize the positive outcomes of these benefits. This information can be critical for improving the quality of programs, policies, and benefits, as well as for maintaining overall productivity and achieving the company's business objectives.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHEETS FOR MEASURING THE IMPACTS ON SUPERVISORS AND CO-WORKERS

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

Many companies have developed policies regarding off-site work. Although off-site work has been traditional for some types of jobs such as sales, increasing numbers of employees at different levels are telecommuting on a part- or full-time basis. In some situations, the off-site work arrangements have resulted from a core business strategy, such as cost-cutting measures that attempt to reduce the costs associated with office space. In other companies, the interest in telecommuting has emerged because employees view this option as an important strategy for improving work/life balance. For instance, employees who spend over 45 minutes commuting to and from the office may prefer to work at home so that they can make better use of the 30+ hours they spend commuting each month.

It is common for companies to "try-out" telecommuting arrangements on a pilot-test basis before establishing company-wide policies. Typically, at the end of the pilot, company decision-makers gather information about the telecommuter's work performance. However, few companies have focused on the impacts of these arrangements on supervisors and co-workers.

For illustration purposes, the following worksheets will provide examples pertaining to the telecommuting policies established by a fictitious company, Process Incorporated.

Stage 1: Assess Availability and Utilization

PURPOSE

Determine the extent to which your company's work/life policies and programs are being used.

CASE EXAMPLE

Although Process, Incorporated had developed guidelines for telecommuting arrangements, the firm knew that many supervisors and employees had informal agreements for occasional and part-time telecommuting. As a consequence, the company was interested in gaining a better understanding about the numbers of employees who were currently (or had in the past) telecommuting. The company distributed a short, written questionnaire to a 10% sample of its workforce.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the table below to summarize descriptive data about the utilization of your firm's work/life policies and programs.

Work/Life Policy or Program	Utilization Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• telecommuting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5% of employees indicated that they currently telecommute 1 or more days per week.• an additional 2% of employees reported that they telecommute "periodically."• 3% of employees indicated that they had telecommuted in the past but do not currently telecommute.

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have documented the patterns of utilization of your firm's work/life policies and programs.

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Stage 2: Identify Impacts on Employees who Use Work/Life Policies and Programs

PURPOSE

Identify how work/life policies and programs affect those employees who use them.

CASE EXAMPLE

As part of its survey described in Stage 1, Process, Inc. included questions about impact. The company was particularly interested in assessing whether the use of work/life benefits had affected employees' stress levels, job satisfaction, and desire to remain with the company.

INSTRUCTIONS

Ask employees who telecommute to answer questions such as those included in the following table. Ideally, you would obtain this information before they started to telecommute and then at one or more points in the future (e.g., six months after starting, a year after starting, etc.) to assess whether the changes remained the same or not. Otherwise, employees can be asked to comment on their recollections about any changes in the outcomes.

It may also be possible to use your company's human resource information systems for data about impacts on users (e.g., annual performance reviews).

Stage 2: Identify Impacts on Employees who Use Work/Life Policies and Programs

(continued)

Sample Impacts on Users	Sample Questions	Other Sources of Information
Job Performance	Has telecommuting affected your job performance? If so, how?	- performance reviews - employee awards or recognition - attendance records
Work/Life Balance	Has telecommuting affected your work/life balance? If so, how? Has telecommuting affected the quality of your life? If so, how?	- indicators of stress
Organizational Commitment	Has telecommuting affected your commitment to the company? Has this arrangement affected your plans to stay with the company? Would you consider working for a firm that did not offer telecommuting?	- turnover among telecommuters and non-telecommuters - interest of job applicants in telecommuting arrangements
Job Satisfaction	Has telecommuting affected your overall job satisfaction? Has telecommuting affected your satisfaction with your ability to manage your own work? Has telecommuting affected your relationship with your supervisor?	- employee attitude surveys

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have assessed the impact of your firm's work/life policies and programs on employees who use them.

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Stage 3: Identify Supervisor Impacts

PURPOSE

Identify how work/life policies and programs affect the supervisors of employees who use them.

CASE EXAMPLE

Process, Incorporated wanted to determine whether supervisors of telecommuters had experienced any changes – positive or negative – in their own job experiences. The company was particularly interested in determining whether these supervisors had strengthened their own skills developing annual work contracts with employees and monitoring the effectiveness of their communications.

INSTRUCTIONS

Ask supervisors with employees who telecommute how their own jobs have been affected. Ideally, you would collect information before their employees begin to telecommute and then at some future point(s) (e.g., six months later, one year later). If you are not able to get the information at two different points in time, you may decide to ask supervisors if they feel that there has been a change in the impacts over time.

The information may be gathered using surveys, interviews or focus groups.

Use a table such as the one below to summarize the findings.

Stage 3: Identify Supervisor Impacts

(continued)

Sample Impacts on Supervisors	Sample Questions	Other Sources of Information
Work Load	Has supervising a telecommuter affected the amount of work you have?	- changes in the supervisor's job description
Scheduling	Has supervising a telecommuter affected your ability to schedule meetings?	- employee attitude surveys
Job Satisfaction	Has supervising a telecommuter affected your overall job satisfaction? Has supervising a telecommuter affected your satisfaction with the range of your responsibilities? Has supervising a telecommuter affected your relationships with your supervisees?	- employee attitude surveys
Supervisory Skills	Has telecommuting affected the effectiveness of your supervision? If so, how?	- 360 degrees feedback
Productivity of Work Group	Has telecommuting affected the quality of the work completed by your work group? Has telecommuting affected the quantity of work completed by your work group?	- productivity indicators

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have determined the impact of your firm's work/life policies and programs on the supervisors of employees who use them.

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Stage 4: Identify Co-Worker Impacts

PURPOSE

Identify how work/life policies and programs affect the co-workers of employees who use them.

CASE EXAMPLE

Anecdotal stories indicated that there were feelings of “backlash” among some of the co-workers of telecommuters at Process, Inc. The company decided to interview a sample of co-workers to determine the pervasiveness of these negative feelings.

INSTRUCTIONS

Ask co-workers of employees who telecommute how their own jobs have been affected. The information may be gathered using surveys, interviews or focus groups.

Use a table such as the one below to summarize the findings.

Sample Impacts on Co-Workers	Sample Questions	Other Sources of Information
Work Load	Has working with a telecommuter affected the amount of work you have?	- changes in the co-worker's job description
Scheduling	Has working with a telecommuter affected any aspects of your own work schedule?	- employee attitude surveys
Job Satisfaction	Has working with a telecommuter affected your overall job satisfaction? Has working with a telecommuter affected your satisfaction with the range of your responsibilities? Has working with a telecommuter affected your relationship with that person? Has it affected other work relationships?	- employee attitude surveys
Productivity of Work Group	Has telecommuting affected the quality of the work completed by your work group? Has telecommuting affected the quantity of work completed by your work group?	- productivity indicators

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have determined the impact of your firm's work/life policies and programs on the co-workers of employees who use them.

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Stage 5: Develop Methodology and Instruments

PURPOSE

Decide how to collect information and develop instruments to measure relevant data.

CASE EXAMPLE

The Work/Life Director at Process, Inc. decided to use written questionnaires to gather most of the information from telecommuters and from co-workers. As mentioned above, some interviews were also conducted with a sample of co-workers. Process, Inc. convened focus groups with supervisors, hoping that these sessions would surface some of the strategies that supervisors had developed to maximize the positive outcomes of telecommuting arrangements.

INSTRUCTIONS

Review the worksheets from Stages 2, 3, and 4. Use the following table to help you make decisions about the design of your measurement study.

Possible Areas of Impact	Information Sources	What Instruments Already Exist at your Company?	What instruments will you need to develop?
What types of potential impact are most important to your company?	How can information about these impacts be obtained?		
Work/Life Users • <i>plans for career advancement, etc.</i>	- <i>surveys</i>	- <i>annual performance review meetings</i>	- <i>add questions to annual feedback session</i>
Supervisors of Employees Using Work/Life Policies & Programs • <i>management skills, etc.</i>	- <i>focus groups</i>	- <i>results of 360° feedback</i>	- <i>focus group protocol</i>
Co-Workers of Employees Using Work/Life Policies & Programs • <i>job satisfaction, etc.</i>	- <i>phone interviews</i>	- <i>employee attitude surveys</i>	- <i>add questions to annual survey</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have selected data collection processes.

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Stage 6: Impact on Supervisors

PURPOSE

Decide how to summarize the impacts of selected work/life policies and programs on employees, supervisors and co-workers, and to make recommendations about the evaluation's findings.

CASE EXAMPLE

Process, Inc. found that telecommuters generally reported that these arrangements had positive impacts on their own productivity and on their work/life balance. Some telecommuters, however, expressed concern that they felt disconnected from their colleagues and felt out of the "communications loop."

Many of the supervisors indicated that it took them awhile to learn how to effectively supervise a telecommuter. For example, it was necessary for them to learn how to measure employees' performance according to outcomes rather than process. It was interesting that some of the supervisors felt that they had developed new strategies for supervision that were effective both for telecommuters as well as other employees working in the office.

In general, co-workers reported negligible impacts resulting from the telecommuting arrangements of members of their work teams or departments. A minority of co-workers felt that telecommuters received more interesting assignments, such as preparing reports.

As a result of the study, Process, Inc. encouraged all work teams to have quarterly staff meetings to "take stock" of the work arrangements and to coordinate work tasks.

INSTRUCTIONS

List the impacts on supervisors and co-workers. Identify strategies to maximize the positive impacts and minimize the negative impacts.

Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
<i>Telecommuters are more satisfied with their jobs, etc.</i>	<i>Supervisors invest additional time to manage meeting schedules.</i>
Strategies to Maximize Positive Impacts	Strategies to Minimize Negative Impacts
<i>Distribute information to supervisors about the positive experiences with telecommuting, and encourage them to consider such arrangements for some of their employees.</i>	<i>Establish regular "meeting" days when telecommuters are expected to be in the office.</i>

Stage 6: Impact on Co-Workers

(continued)

Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
<i>Co-workers appreciate the fact that the company offers a range of work/life supports.</i>	<i>Some co-workers resent the fact that their job assignments preclude telecommuting.</i>
<i>Feature articles in the employee newsletter about the success of telecommuting arrangements and explain the company's rationale for supporting them.</i>	<i>Invite employees to discuss their work/life priorities during annual review meetings to determine the possibility of developing telecommuting options.</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified the impacts on supervisors and co-workers.

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MEASURING IMPACT ON EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

by Philip Mirvis, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: The work/life field has evolved under the banner of the "dual agenda" because work/life initiatives can offer benefits both to companies and to employees.

However, it has become apparent that there are many other stakeholder groups with interests in work/life initiatives. The stakeholder framework helps companies to recognize how work/life initiatives can create strategic connections between core business activities and stakeholder groups such as customers and investors.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Identify** how the members of key stakeholder groups may be affected by work/life initiatives.
- **Create** assessment processes that gather information about the interests and priorities of particular stakeholder groups.
- **Develop** options for measuring the impact of work/life initiatives on the members of different stakeholder groups.

MEASURING IMPACT ON EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

What is a stakeholder assessment?

I. Overview

The stakeholder approach to measurement focuses on the impact that work/life initiatives can have on different stakeholder groups. The conventional definition of a corporate stakeholder is a group or interest affected by the policies and practices of the company. In the broadest sense, stakeholder groups give the firm a “license to operate.”

Work/life policies, programs and practices are designed to benefit the company and employees (who constitute one important “internal” stakeholder group). This chapter discusses ways to measure the impacts of firms’ family-friendliness and employees’ work/life balance on “external” stakeholder groups. For example, work/life initiatives may affect the loyalty of customers, the confidence of shareholders, and the commitment of business partners.

In contrast to some of the other approaches to measurement, there is neither a specialized body of knowledge nor time-tested methods for assessing either the impact of work/life initiatives or the resultant work/life balance on external corporate stakeholders. However, this chapter offers an overview of the important considerations when assessing the connections between work/life initiatives and external stakeholder relationships.

What are you comparing?

The stakeholder approach to measurement gathers information about the firm’s relationships with stakeholders who are aware of/affected by the company’s work/life initiatives. The data are then compared to documentation of the relationships when the stakeholders were either not aware of or affected by the work/life initiatives.

Comparisons Made When Measuring Impact on Stakeholders



Highlights of the process

There are four basic stages associated with measuring the impact of work/life initiatives on stakeholders:

- Stage 1. Identify primary stakeholder groups. Specify groups that are either affected by or have an interest in the firm's business activities.
- Stage 2. Assess the quality of the stakeholder relationship. Collect information about different aspects of the firm's relationships with members of priority stakeholder groups.
- Stage 3. Determine the impact of work/life initiatives. Consider how the company's relationships with different stakeholder groups might be affected directly or indirectly by the presence and utilization of work/life policies and programs.
- Stage 4. Redesign stakeholder strategies. Develop ways to maximize the positive impact that work/life initiatives can have on the company's relationships with priority stakeholder groups.

II. Background

Key Elements

This approach to measurement examines the connections between a supportive work environment and the firm's stakeholder relationships. The concept of a supportive work environment, sometimes referred to as a family-friendly company, is complex and somewhat difficult to define because it can mean different things for different companies. Despite this challenge, there are two widely recognized dimensions:

- 1) the availability of important work/life policies, programs, and practices; and
- 2) the presence of workplace culture and climate that promote work/life balance and support the usage of available work/life policies and programs.

Who are the stakeholders?

It is widely recognized that stakeholder groups include but extend beyond shareholders. The roster of external stakeholders includes:

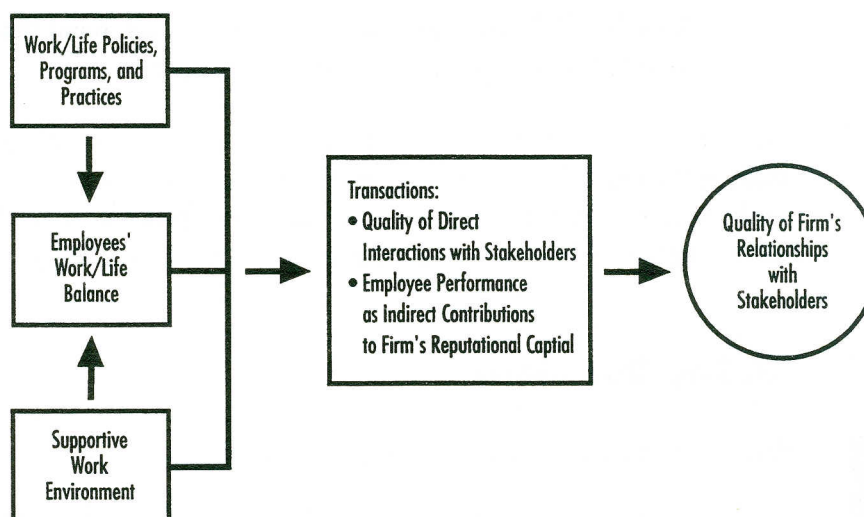
- current and prospective customers
- suppliers, contractors, vendors
- investors
- other companies involved in business alliances
- prospective employees
- community groups
- interest groups
- media
- employees' family members, friends and acquaintances
- governments
- society-at-large

What are direct and indirect impacts of work/life initiatives?

Some of these parties – such as the suppliers of raw materials and capital or the consumers of goods and services – are identifiable participants in a firm's value chain. The benefits and “harms” that arise from the company's relationships with them are readily amenable to measurement and financial calculation. Other groups, say the government, community groups, the media and the public, may have a more distal relationship with the firm. While they may not directly conduct business with the enterprise, they may regulate, respond to, or publicize (or expose) its practices

In thinking about the import and impact of work/life balance and supportive work environments on stakeholder interests, it helps to distinguish between the direct and indirect effects of work/life initiatives. The direct effects result from exchanges between “insiders” (e.g., employees) and “outsiders” where the employees' attitudes and behaviors have a significant bearing on the value of the exchange. The indirect effects are outcomes that are influenced by the company's reputation.

Impact of Work/Life Initiatives on Stakeholder Relationships



Direct Effects - Companies anticipate that their work/life initiatives will enhance interactions between employees (internal stakeholders) and their families (external stakeholders) and hope that competency and good cheer cultivated in the workplace will spill over into family life. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that people who are satisfied with their work have a happier personal and home life. Case studies document how interpersonal and conflict management skills learned at work can be carried over into dealings with family and friends. In turn, there are also findings that family life can add to or detract from life at work.

Studies of customer sales and service functions confirm that the attitudes and responsiveness of front-line employees affect customer satisfaction. A friendly and customer-oriented outlook can, to some extent, smooth over hitches and glitches in sales and service delivery and personalize the transaction. This is why airlines like British Air, dealers like Saturn, and high street shops like The Body Shop put so much emphasis on staff training and on boosting the morale of the front line. In these cases, the measurement of work/life initiatives could focus on the extent to which policies and programs promote exemplary interactions with customers (or other stakeholder groups).

Does reputational capital matter to stakeholders?

Indirect Effects - More generally, commitment to work/life issues feeds companies' "reputational capital" - an intangible form of wealth that results from people's knowledge and perceptions about a company, its values, and products/services. Knowledge about a company's work/life initiatives can affect reputational capital, which in turn may influence the judgments of the members of different stakeholder groups, including customers and investors.

Many firms strive to capitalize on the positive impact that work/life innovations can have on their reputational capital by issuing informative brochures, contributing to articles, presenting at conferences and in other ways doing PR about their work environments. Media outlets, such as *Working Mother* and *Business Week*, raise the stakes by rating companies in this regard.

Studies have documented the general impact that reputation can have on company effectiveness and profitability. For example:

- A study of over 200 companies found that the market value of companies was higher for firms with a strong reputation for social responsibility after controlling for financial performance.
- A study of 200 undergraduate business students found that a vast majority were attracted to jobs in high reputation companies.

Obviously, family-friendliness is but one ingredient in overall corporate reputation. Yet, in many instances, it is a telling indicator of the overall corporate climate. The Laborforce 2000 study, as an example, found that companies with a progressive work/life outlook typically have more progressive human resource practices (Mirvis et al., 1993).

III. Key Questions

**Stage 1:
Identify
Stakeholders**

Who are the company's principal stakeholder groups?

- What are the priorities of the firm's principal stakeholder groups?
- To what extent are the stakeholder groups aware of the company's work/life initiatives?

**Stage 2: Assess
Quality of
Stakeholder
Relationships**

What is the quality of the firm's relationships with different stakeholder groups?

- How does the firm currently assess its relationships with these stakeholder groups?
- Who interacts with the stakeholders?
- Other than direct interactions with employees, what factors affect the firm's reputation among stakeholder groups?

**Stage 3:
Determine
Impact
of Work/Life
Initiatives**

How do the company's work/life initiatives affect relationships with different stakeholder groups?

Direct Impacts

- How do employees' work/life experiences affect services or other interactions with stakeholders?
- How do employees' work/life experiences affect the quality of products?

Indirect Impacts

- How do perceptions of the firm's commitment to work/life issues affect its reputation as an employer of choice?
- How do perceptions of the firm's commitment to work/life issues affect its reputation as a provider/supplier of choice?
- How do perceptions of the firm's commitment to work/life issues affect its reputation as an investment of choice?
- How do perceptions of the firm's commitment to work/life issues affect its reputation as a neighbor of choice?
- How do perceptions of the firm's commitment to work/life issues affect its reputation as a business partner of choice?
- How do perceptions of the firm's commitment to work/life issues affect its reputation among other stakeholder groups?

How can the firm use its commitment to work/life issues to enhance relationships with different stakeholder groups?

- What should be communicated to the members of different stakeholder groups about the company's work/life initiatives?
- How can the company encourage employees to use work/life policies, programs, and practices as tools to strengthen relationships with stakeholder groups?
- Can the firm's work/life initiatives be enhanced so that the positive benefits are manifested in the interactions between employees and the members of stakeholder groups?

IV. What is Measured?

As depicted in the model, "Impact of Work/Life Initiatives on Stakeholder Relationships" on page 229, this approach to measurement focuses on five sets of measures:

1. employees' assessments of the company's work/life policies, programs, and practices
2. employees' assessments of the supportiveness of the work environment
3. employees' perceptions of their work/life balance
4. the transactions (direct and indirect) between the firm and members of the priority stakeholder groups
5. stakeholders' assessments of their relationships with the firm

There are many ways for a company to gather information about the extent to which employees are aware of existing work/life programs, have ever used these programs, and think that the work/life programs have contributed to their sense of work/life balance.

This information could be gathered as part of a needs assessment, employee community meetings, or employee surveys.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF EMPLOYEES' ASSESSMENT OF WORKPLACE POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND PRACTICES

	Are you aware that this is available to you?		If yes, have you ever used it?		If "yes," to what extent did it contribute to a positive sense of work/life balance?				
	no	yes	no	yes	not at all	somewhat	to a great extent		
• flexible schedules	—	—	—	—	1	2	3	4	5
• compressed work weeks	—	—	—	—	1	2	3	4	5
• customized work schedules	—	—	—	—	1	2	3	4	5
• plan for reduced summer hours	—	—	—	—	1	2	3	4	5
• trial part-time positions for professional and hourly employees	—	—	—	—	1	2	3	4	5

A number of studies have indicated the importance of supportive workplace values and attitudes. Although it can be difficult to precisely document the pervasiveness of particular attitudes, it is possible to gather information that provides insights about workplace culture and climate.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Agree	Neither Disagree nor Disagree	Strongly Agree
• The top decision makers at our company believe that work/life balance contributes to our business success.	1	2	3
• Our company encourages supervisors to use work/life policies and programs as management tools.	1	2	3
• People at our company focus on "results" not just the amount of time spent at the office.	1	2	3

The stakeholder approach to measurement examines whether employees' work/life circumstances either directly affect interactions with stakeholder groups or indirectly affect the firm's reputational capital.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF WORK/LIFE BALANCE			
Are you satisfied with the following aspects of your life?	dissatisfied	neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	satisfied
• The top decision makers at our company believe that work/life balance contributes to our business success.	1	2	3
• the career opportunities that you have	1	2	3
• the extent to which you can participate in community activities	1	2	3
• the extent to which you can participate in family activities	1	2	3
• the sense of "balance" among the different aspects of your life	1	2	3
• the "pace" of your life	1	2	3

For this aspect of the measurement, the firm needs to examine the relationship between employees' work/life situations and their interactions with stakeholders. Several studies have documented strong, positive relationships between employees' opinions of their companies and customer attitudes. Schneider (1990) demonstrates how the work climate in companies is mirrored in staff attitudes and, subsequently, in customer satisfaction. He makes the point that employees, as service providers, embody a corporate ethos in their manner and service delivery. Interestingly, he also finds that customers make good estimates of positive and negative aspects of the work climate based on their transactions with front line personnel.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF EMPLOYEE INTERACTIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Please rate the following aspects of your interactions with (specify name of vendor)

	not at all		to a moderate extent		to a very great extent
• Were you able to provide the vendor with information about our company's business objectives relative to the project?	1	2	3	4	5
• Were you able to clarify the company's expectations for the vendor's responsibilities/ contributions to the project?	1	2	3	4	5

Did the following factors help you to improve the company's reputation with the vendor?

• preparation/training provided by the company	1	2	3	4	5
• degree of your personal interest in the project	1	2	3	4	5
• the company's commitment to work/life issues	1	2	3	4	5

Companies have developed different strategies for gauging the quality of their relationships with particular stakeholder groups. Significant attention has been devoted to the relationships with customers.

How do firms document the customer experience? Typically, companies gather information either at the point of sales or service delivery or shortly thereafter (e.g., via surveys, telephone interviews, focus groups, etc.). Reviews of comment cards and customers' letters or complaints add depth to information about the overall customer experience. Other firms use mystery shoppers to sample services. Some companies analyze customer receipts and market profiles to determine repeat business. When thoughtfully constructed and analyzed, these data help a firm to identify the perceived strengths and weaknesses of face-to-face customer care as well as support functions.

SAMPLE MEASURES OF THE FIRM'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

(Questions that might be asked of an investment analyst.)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about our company?

	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	No Opinion
• Employees take pride in the company's best-in-class products (services).	1	2	3	4
• The company's commitment to its employees is an indicator that it is well managed.	1	2	3	4
• The company is responsive to investors' priorities.	1	2	3	4

V. Stages: Measuring the Impact on Stakeholder Relationships

Stage 1: Identify Stakeholders

During Stage 1, companies need to identify their principal stakeholder groups and specify how these stakeholder groups are connected to business success, business strategies, and particular business outcomes.

Considerations:

- Which stakeholder groups are most important to current business priorities?
- Why are these groups important?
- How do they affect the bottom line?
- Which stakeholder groups are most likely to be affected by/interested in the company's work/life initiatives?

Stage 2: Assess the Quality of the Relationships

Given the company's interest in strengthening its relationships with key stakeholder groups, it is important to carefully plan how the company wants to gather this information.

Considerations:

- What do stakeholders expect from the relationship?
- Are the stakeholders satisfied with the current relationship?
- What does the firm expect from the relationship?
- Is the firm satisfied with the relationship?
- Is the relationship expected to be short-term or long-term?
- How often do the stakeholders interact with the company?

Stage 3: Determine Impact of Work/Life Initiatives

Information should be gathered about the direct and indirect impacts that work/life initiatives may have on the company's relationships with different stakeholder groups.

Direct impact

Employees' work/life experiences could directly affect the company's relationships with several stakeholder groups including customers, suppliers, vendors, and contractors. For example, face-to-face customer service could be negatively affected by employees' work/life issues which have not been adequately addressed. Certainly, sales or service employees who are frazzled, inattentive, or sour because of personal or family circumstances risk turning-off customers. By contrast, those who feel personal equanimity have a better chance to delight customers and provide superior service. Naturally, it is in the company's best interests to ensure that front line sales and service personnel have a positive attitude when dealing with customers.

Considerations:

- What factors most strongly influence the company's relationships with the stakeholder groups?
- How do employees' experiences affect their interactions with members of external stakeholder groups?

Indirect impact

The indirect effects of the company's commitment to balance and work/life issues play out in a firm's reputation. If the members of a stakeholder group, such as investors, perceive that the presence of a quality work/life initiative is an indicator of a well-managed company, then the relationship between the firm and the stakeholders may be indirectly affected.

Obviously, a company's reputation in these regards is a factor in employee recruitment. A survey of over 400 human resource executives found that the most consistent benefits of their work-family innovations to be an "enhanced reputation" (Parker and Hall, 1994).

Considerations:

- How do work/life initiatives affect the company's reputational capital?
- How does the presence of a supportive workplace influence the firm's reputation among different stakeholder groups?

Analyzing the data to determine the impact

Companies may gather qualitative data (e.g., from focus groups, interviews, etc.) and quantitative data (e.g., from surveys, existing records) to gain insights into their stakeholder relationships.

For the quantitative data, it will be necessary to conduct statistical analyses to determine whether there are any connections between work/life initiatives and the quality of stakeholder relationships. Three types of analyses may be relevant.

Correlations - Correlate measures can document the statistical relationships between the firm's relationships with stakeholders and: 1) employees' work/life balance, and 2) assessments of the workplace environment. In some instances, you can track this at the level of individual employees and their specific interactions (e.g., with customers). In other situations, the data will reflect the interactions with a department or business unit.

Comparisons - It may be possible to compare the quality of interactions that stakeholders have with two similar work units: one which is perceived by employees as being supportive of work/life issues and one which is not. This approach might work well if practices such as flex-time or telecommuting are available at one unit but not at the other.

Before and After - Some companies may be able to conduct pre and post measures of stakeholder interactions for a department that is adopting a new work/life policy or program. This approach may be appropriate for relationships with stakeholders such as suppliers, vendors, or contractors who may have repeat contact with the employees in the unit establishing the policy or program.

Firms that take a proactive posture toward strategic reputation management develop action steps to advance their image among stakeholders.

Considerations:

- Would the company's relationships with stakeholder groups be strengthened if they had more information about the work/life initiatives?
- Would the company's relationships with stakeholder groups be strengthened if they had more information about the positive outcomes associated with the work/life initiatives?

- Would the company's relationships with stakeholder groups be strengthened if the utilization rates of particular work/life supports were higher?
- Would the company's relationships with stakeholder groups be strengthened if managers were more supportive of employees' use of work/life initiatives?
- Would the company's relationships with stakeholder groups be strengthened if changes were made to the firm's work/life initiatives?

VII. Considerations

When is it most appropriate to measure the impact of work/life initiatives on stakeholder group relationships?

How might the use of this approach contribute to your work/life strategy?

Are there any particular challenges associated with this approach to measurement?

Some studies conducted during the past decade have suggested that work/life initiatives have the potential to contribute to firms' positive relationships with different stakeholder groups. Companies that are leaders in the work/life field are beginning to push the boundaries of work/life assessments and are starting to collect data to document these important outcomes.

It has been long acknowledged that work/life initiatives can add to a company's employer of choice strategy. The assessment of the firm's relationships with external stakeholders offers an opportunity to determine how work/life initiatives can contribute to other strategies, such as being an investment of choice or a supplier/provider of choice.

Marriott, for example, is bundling its work/life initiatives with other employee programs and supports to create a "brand" identity that is important not only for current and prospective employees, but also for customers, communities, and business partners. Marriott has received national attention for its innovative collaborations with community-based organizations, service providers, and other employers to create new child care services. These accomplishments have strengthened the corporation's relationships with several different stakeholder groups.

Companies interested in getting the most from the positive impacts of their work/life initiatives are advised to tailor their communications and publicity about their work/life initiatives to different stakeholder groups. For instance, flextime programs might offer employees greater ability to match their work schedules with personal/family priorities. However, these options may also make it possible for employees to work during "off peak" hours, enabling the company to better serve the customer.

It is difficult to precisely calculate the extent to which employees' feelings about work/life balance or the company's work environment contribute to the relationships between the firm and stakeholders. This is a complicated undertaking because specific work/life policies, programs and practices are but subsets of a fuller panoply of practices and corporate values.

Although researchers and statisticians can specify and test analytic models that link specific work/life practices and employee attitudes with stakeholder relationships, it is difficult to "prove the case" because so many factors can affect the measures.

Suppose one finds a strong positive correlation between an employee's work/life balance and a customer's ratings of front-line service. You still cannot draw a causal inference from correla-

Why might your
firm want to use
this approach to
measurement?

tional studies. Furthermore, it is possible that an unmeasured factor (like the employee's upbeat personality, sense of empowerment, or feelings of solidarity with other employees) may be the key drivers of superior performance.

Practitioners recognize that the value of work/life initiatives is enhanced when policies, programs and practices are linked to key business strategies. Companies with well articulated strategies for building strong stakeholder relationships will find it beneficial to pursue this approach to measurement.

Phil Mirvis Ph.D. is an organizational psychologist whose research and private practice concerns large scale organizational change and the character of the workforce and workplace. A regular contributor to academic and professional journals, he has authored six books including: The Cynical America, Building the Competitive Workforce, and Joining Forces.

Selected Resources

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT WORKSHEETS

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

An insurance firm was recently recognized for its commitment to work/life innovations. In and of themselves, the policies and programs developed at this company were impressive. However, what was even more impressive was the company's efforts to weave its work/life initiatives into virtually all of the firm's core business strategies.

The company had established information systems that documented the contribution that work/life initiatives had made to its employer of choice strategy. The data made it clear that work/life policies and programs had helped to reduce unwanted turnover, increase the extent to which women were seeking higher level positions, and augment specific performance measures.

The strategy team of this corporation wanted to "push the envelope" of measurement further and began to explore ways to examine the relationships between work/life initiatives and external stakeholder groups. The firm was especially interested in developing systems to track the impact (direct and indirect) of work/life initiatives on two groups: customers and investors.

The experiences of Finan, Inc. (a fictitious name) will be used in the worksheets for illustrative purposes.

Stage 1: Identify Primary Stakeholder Groups

PURPOSE

Identify the principal stakeholders affected by (or interested in) your company's work/life initiatives.

CASE EXAMPLE

Finan Inc. was pleased that its work/life initiatives provided supports to employees so that they would better meet their work and personal responsibilities. There were a number of indications that existing policies, programs and practices had contributed to improved employee morale, high levels of job commitment and job satisfaction, and increases in various measures of performance and productivity.

Finan Inc. identified two external stakeholder groups that could also be affected by its work/life initiatives: customers and investors.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the following table to assess how the members of external stakeholder groups might be affected by your work/life initiatives.

Stakeholder Group	Importance to core business strategies?	Strength of the current relationship	How might group be affected by work/life initiatives?	Awareness/ understanding that stakeholder group has of work/life initiatives
Investors	Critical	Investors are more interested in quarterly profits than in the long-term viability of the organization.	Recognition of exemplary work/life initiatives may be indicator of well managed, visionary company that makes investments in its most important asset: people who create/deliver financial services.	Very limited.

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified the key external stakeholders in your company's work/life initiatives.

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Stage 2: Assess the Quality of Stakeholder Relationships

PURPOSE

Identify options for assessing your firm's relationships with members of its principal stakeholder groups.

CASE EXAMPLE

Finan Inc. initially focused the assessment on its relationships with customers. The company was able to measure different dimensions of customer satisfaction (e.g., adapting a total quality approach). The data described customers' interactions with individual employees and were aggregated to depict the experiences that customers had with particular departments and offices.

Summarize your plan to assess your company's relationships with one (or more) key stakeholder group.

Name of Stakeholder Group: _____

For example: customers, media, etc.

Consideration	Comments
• Who (i.e., which group of employees) interacts with the members of the stakeholder group?	
• What is the nature of that interaction?	
• How often does the interaction take place?	
• Is the relationship with the stakeholder group long-term or short-term?	
• What are the stakeholders' expectations of the company?	
• To what extent are these expectations met?	
• How might you measure the extent of the stakeholders' level of satisfaction with the relationship to the company?	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will be ready to invite individuals to participate on the evaluation team.

Stage 3: Determine Impact of Work/Life Initiatives

PURPOSE

To document the direct and indirect impacts that your company's work/life initiatives have on its relationships with key stakeholder groups.

CASE EXAMPLE

By linking the results of its customer satisfaction surveys and daily diaries maintained by a sample of employees, Finan Inc. was able to determine:

1. There was a link between employee stress and customer satisfaction, with customers giving lower service ratings to employees reporting high stress levels.
2. Some unresolved work/life conflicts (e.g., sick children) affected employees' work/life balance and contributed to their stress levels.
3. As the range of Finan Inc.'s work/life initiatives expanded, there were indications that the level of employee stress decreased.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the following table to highlight your recommendations for collecting information about the impact of your company's work/life initiatives.

Stage 3: Determine Impact of Work/Life Initiatives

(continued)

Name of Stakeholder Group: _____

For example: customers, media, etc.

	Comments
• List the ways that employees' work/life experiences might affect your firm's relationships with members of the stakeholder group.	
• What indicators could you use to measure these interactions?	
• How might you collect the information needed to document the interactions?	
• How could you link the information about interactions with members of the stakeholder group and employees' work/life experiences?	
• List the ways that the firm's reputation for its commitment to work/life might affect its relationships with members of the stakeholder group.	
• What indicators could you use to measure the outcomes of the firm's work/life initiatives?	
• How might you collect information needed to document the firm's reputation?	
• How could you link the information about the firm's reputation for its commitment to work/life and its relationships with members of the stakeholder group?	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will be ready to invite individuals to participate on the evaluation team.

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Stage 4: Redesign Stakeholder Strategies

PURPOSE

Consider how to use the findings of the stakeholder assessment so that relationships with stakeholders are enhanced.

CASE EXAMPLE

Once Finan Inc. had documented the contributions that its work/life initiatives made to profits as a result of improved customer service and customer relations, it decided to use this information to strengthen its relationship with another external stakeholder group: the investment community. The company began to educate Wall Street analysts about the links between work/life initiatives, business strategies, and corporate success. Finan Inc. wanted to convince the investment community that work/life initiatives are important indicators of sound management strategies.

INSTRUCTIONS

Assess your current relationships with one (or more) external stakeholder group. List recommendations for improving these relationships.

Name of Stakeholder Group: _____

For example: customers, media, etc.

	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the key elements of your current strategy for maintaining positive relationships with members of the stakeholder group?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How might the existing strategy be enhanced by linking your firm's commitment to work/life issues with the stakeholder strategy?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What steps could be taken to increase the benefits that your company's commitment to work/life issues has for members of the stakeholder group?	

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will be ready to invite individuals to participate on the evaluation team.

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ASSESSING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

by Andrew E. Scharlach, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: During the past decade, many work/life leaders have challenged themselves to address a fundamental but very profound question: Are we making a difference? Most of the attention has been devoted to an examination of the extent to which work/life initiatives have resulted in desirable benefits for companies and for employees.

Amidst the flurry of activity focused on the measurement of work/life issues, we sometimes forget to look for the unintended consequences (both positive and negative) that might be related to work/life policies, programs, and practices.

This chapter will help work/life practitioners:

- **Document** some of the unexpected benefits that work/life initiatives may have offered to the company and/or to employees.
- **Grapple** with the possibility that some work/life initiatives may have had negative impacts on the company, particular business units, employees, or family members.
- **Design** strategies for maximizing positive, unanticipated benefits and minimizing the negative ones.

ASSESSING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

I. Overview

What is involved
in measuring
unintended
consequences?

When companies establish work/life initiatives, they anticipate that their policies, programs, and practices will result in positive consequences (e.g., benefits) for the company as well as employees. Assessments of work/life initiatives often focus on the extent to which these positive results have actually been realized.

The assessment of unintended consequences focuses on the measurement of unanticipated or secondary consequences of work/life initiatives on the company, employees and their families, co-workers, and the communities in which they live.

From this point of view, it is possible to measure three types of outcomes:

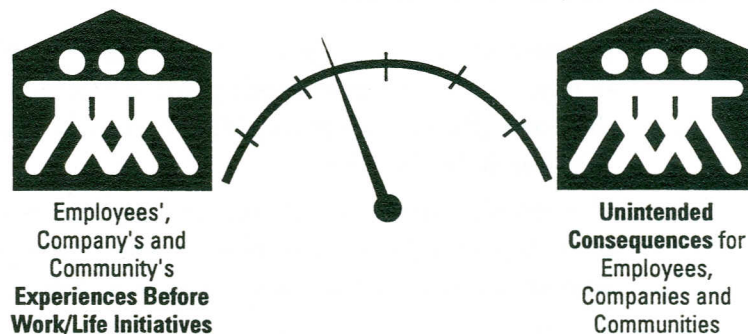
- positive, anticipated consequences of work/life initiatives
- positive, unanticipated consequences of work/life initiatives
- negative, unanticipated consequences of work/life initiatives

The measurement of *unintended consequences* focuses on the last two types of impacts - positive and negative unanticipated consequences.

What are you
comparing?

The measurement of unintended consequences examines the relationships between the availability and utilization of work/life initiatives with both positive and negative outcomes that were not expected when the policy, program, or practice was initiated.

Making Comparisons: Unintended Consequences



This approach to measurement:

- Examines impacts that were not explicit in the original goals and objectives for your company's work/life initiatives.
- Assesses the consequences for different stakeholder groups, including groups that may not usually be considered as the primary "work/life customers."
- Considers both positive and negative outcomes of work/life policies and programs.

There are four basic stages involved in measuring unintended consequences:

- Stage 1. Identify possible intended and unintended outcomes associated with the implementation of a particular work/life policy, program, or practice.
- Stage 2. Develop a process for gathering information about unintended outcomes.
- Stage 3. Analyze information to determine possibilities for maximizing the positive unintended outcomes and minimizing the negative outcomes.
- Stage 4. Consider whether insights about the unintended consequences of the company's work/life benefits warrant a re-examination of the explicit goals and objectives.

II. Background

The availability and utilization of work/life programs may have a range of unintended consequences for different groups such as particular business units, managers and supervisors, employees who use work/life options, co-workers, the firm, community organizations, and even society-at-large.

For illustration purposes, this section provides examples of unintended outcomes as experienced by employees, employees' families, and the company.

Making Employment a Possibility: The experience of working can have secondary, positive effects for employees, particularly those with dependent care responsibilities. Having access to needed work/life supports may be a critical factor that makes it possible for some people to consistently stay in the workforce.

- Mothers who are in the paid labor force, for example, generally report higher levels of physical and mental well-being than do mothers who are not working outside of the home (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Barnett & Marshall, 1991; Repetti et al., 1989; Waldron & Jacobs, 1989).
- Women who have responsibilities as caregivers for disabled family members and who work display higher levels of mastery, self-esteem, and life satisfaction than do those who are not in the labor force (Moen et al., 1995).
- Employed caregivers are less stressed and less depressed than those who are not working (Giele et al., 1987; Tennstedt et al., 1993).

Negative
Unintended
Consequences for
Employees

Career Compromises: During the past 25 years, there has been a significant increase in the number of companies who have offered personal and family leave options to their employees. While the intended consequence of leave policies has been to help employees respond to specific personal needs or family responsibilities, researchers have begun to study the possible unintended negative impacts of leaves on career advancement.

A report prepared by the Families and Work Institute for the U.S. Labor Department's Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) documented that using flexible work arrangements might negatively affect women's careers. Women who used family-friendly programs were thought to be "less serious about their jobs than people who [didn't] use them," said Joyce Miller, Glass Ceiling Commission's former executive director. Many of the employees taking leave also felt their peers resented them for taking time off ("Women Fear Using Leave, Flexibility Will Hurt Their Career Advancement," 1994).

Positive Secondary
Consequences for
Families

New Work Arrangements, New Challenges: The rapid growth of computer technology and electronic communications has contributed to the numbers of employees who work away from the main office, often at home or in a satellite office (Christensen, 1988, 1993). Despite the advantages that telecommuting can offer to employees and to companies, home-based work can cause employees to experience a range of unintended negative consequences, including communication problems with management, isolation from co-workers, and reduced chances for promotion.

Moreover, arrangements for home-based work may require employees to provide office furniture and work supplies, and to maintain equipment such as computers and telephones.

Home-based work may also leave workers at risk for occupational injuries, for which they typically are not covered under existing Workers' Compensation laws.

Attitudes of the Future Workforce: It is widely recognized that work/life initiatives can offer benefits for workplaces and for employees (the dual agenda). Many work/life initiatives are also designed with the presumption that work/life supports will also have positive impacts on family members (i.e., anticipated positive outcomes). However, some employers may be surprised to learn that their work/life initiatives have had positive consequences which had not been anticipated. For example, research suggests that the self-esteem and career aspirations of school age children and adolescents are enhanced when they perceive that their parents are satisfied with their work/life balance.

Negative
Unintended
Consequences for
Families

Longer Work Hours: Some work/life initiatives, such as flexible work arrangements, were originally established to customize work schedules so that they would better meet the needs of the workplace and of employees. However, some work/life managers have reported that flexible work policies sometimes encourage employees to simply work longer hours.

There has also been some controversy about the extent to which work/life initiatives contribute to a work environment which is so appealing that employees want to remain at work for longer hours. Is it possible that the demands and rewards of work may lead certain individuals to reduce their involvement in family-related responsibilities? Hochschild, in *The Time Bind* (1997), argued that workplace supports can actually lead some employees to place less value on family responsibilities.

Less Time with Family Members: Indeed, a potential unintended negative consequence of many work/life programs is that they may reinforce the tacit value that work should take precedence over family. For example, some employees may interpret the availability of sick child care supports as a message that it is more important for employees to be at work when their child is sick instead of at home with the child.

Growing numbers of child care facilities (e.g., on-site centers, family care providers, etc.) are staying open for extended hours. Although these extended services can offer employees added flexibility, some may find that the increased availability of care makes it more difficult to justify taking time from work or refusing to work overtime because employees need to be with their children. While keeping child care centers open for additional hours may create positive outcomes for the employer and even the employee, it may not be as beneficial for the child.

Financial Gains: In many cases, the establishment of work/life initiatives can result in secondary benefits and tax savings for employers. For instance, dependent care assistance plans are usually implemented to enable employees to save on some of the costs associated with dependent care by setting aside pre-tax dollars (intended consequences for employees). However, the tax provisions also enable employers to avoid paying social security, unemployment insurance, and other taxes on the deducted amounts (secondary benefit to the company).

The proportion of part-time positions has been increasing as a percentage of the total number of jobs, partly as a result of the shift to contingent work arrangements. While part-time work options can help employees to have more time available for personal and family needs (intended consequence for employees), these options can also have positive outcomes for employers such as reduced benefit costs and decreased absenteeism.

Increased Absenteeism: During the past two decades, increasing numbers of companies have established on-site child care centers in response to employees' continued needs for quality, affordable, easily accessible child care. Some of the anticipated consequences of employer-sponsored child care include: increased supply of quality early childhood education programs, decreased distractions, and improved employee productivity. However, increased absenteeism has emerged as one unintended negative consequence of employer-sponsored child care programs (Friedman, 1989). Apparently, participation in group day care can increase the incidence of illness among the children who attend, resulting in more absenteeism as parents stay home to take care of their sick children.

Low Rate of Utilization Raises Questions About Need for Employer Sponsored Programs: Emergency child care is one of the most widely endorsed work/family programs. However, the implementation of these programs has been challenging, in part because of utilization rates which have been lower than anticipated.

For example, in 1989 several Get Well Centers were established in Kansas City, Missouri. However, after they had been established, few parents brought their children to them. Coors Brewing Company dropped a pilot sick-care program after serving only one employee in one year. Similarly, Transamerica Life Companies closed down a sick-care center at a nearby medical center due to low utilization (Ruben, 1991).

**Stage 1: Identify
Intended &
Unintended
Consequences**

**Stage 2: Develop
& Implement Data
Collection Processes**

**Stage 3: Analyze
Information**

III. Key Questions

The measurement of unintended consequences will help practitioners document the full range of outcomes associated with their work/life initiatives.

What are the unintended consequences associated with work/life policies, programs and practices?

What stakeholder groups may be affected by your firm's work/life programs?

How should the company collect information about unintended consequences?

- Who might be affected by your company's work/life initiative, even if they do not use them? What is the most appropriate way to encourage these people to share their perceptions about unintended consequences?
- Which business units might have been affected by the availability of work/life benefits?
- Are there particular points of time when it might make sense to assess the unintended consequences of your work/life policies, programs, and practices? For example, could a work team assess these consequences as part of its post-project analysis?

How has the availability and utilization of work/life policies, programs and practices affected each of the following:

- employees' attitudes about their work responsibilities?
- employees' attitudes about their family responsibilities?
- co-workers' attitudes about their work responsibilities?
- supervisors' attitudes about their work responsibilities?
- perceptions of key business units about the company's work/life initiatives?
- investors' perceptions about the company?
- customers' perceptions about the company and its business practices?

Are the perceptions about the unintended consequences widely shared among members of different stakeholder groups?

- Do employees with different types of work responsibilities identify similar unintended consequences?
- Are some of the unintended consequences unique to particular population groups (e.g., managers, older workers, etc.)?

What do the findings of your assessment mean?

- Which unanticipated consequences have had the most significant impacts?
- Do the effects of the unanticipated consequences change over time?

What adjustments should your company make in its work/life initiatives?

- How can your company leverage the positive unintended consequences?
- How can your company minimize the negative unintended consequences?
- Should your company modify the goals and objectives of its work/life policies, programs, and practices to incorporate some of the positive unintended consequences?

IV. What is Measured?

The specific measures of unintended consequences will be tailored to the particular stakeholder groups. For example, the types of unintended consequences experienced by the compensation and benefits department are likely to be different than those experienced by customers.

This section discusses some of the measures which could be appropriate for two stakeholder groups: (1) employees and (2) supervisors/coworkers.

Stress-Related Outcomes: Work/life initiatives may help employees to address particular work/life conflicts (e.g., the fulfillment of work responsibilities makes it difficult to meet family responsibilities; the fulfillment of family responsibilities makes it difficult to meet work responsibilities; etc.). However, once their most salient work/life conflicts have been addressed, some employees feel that they can devote even more time and energy to work rather than attempting to achieve a desired state of work/life balance. Information could be collected about questions such as:

- To what extent are employees satisfied with their ability to handle multiple work, family, and personal responsibilities?
- Are employees who use work/life benefits more or less likely to feel that they have “too much to do”?
- Do employees report that they have enough time for themselves?
- To what extent do employees indicate that their social activities or personal relationships have been affected (either positively or negatively) by their work and family responsibilities?
- Do employees report that their physical health has been affected by the strategies that they use to fulfill their work and family responsibilities?

Changes: The use of work/life policies and programs may make it necessary for employees to make some type of transition. For example, employees may request a compressed work schedule in order to gain some additional flexibility (i.e., intended consequence). However, as the employee transitions to this work arrangement, some unintended consequences (e.g., difficulties coordinating the schedules of other family members) may emerge. Companies may want to examine questions such as:

- Have specific daily life experiences changed? Is the quality of their lives better or worse, from the employee's perspective?

- Does the employee who is “new” to telecommuting report that time which may have been used during commuting (e.g., getting ready for meetings, pleasure reading on the train) is no longer available?

Costs: Employees may find that they must spend resources (e.g., financial, time, and energy expenditures) if they want to make use of specific work/life programs and benefits. These costs should be compared to other employees who are not using these programs or benefits.

- How much time does an employee typically spend trying to locate and access work/life benefits?
- Has the use of a particular work/life benefit had an impact on the daily life choices which affect employees’ expenditures (e.g., reduced use of gas for commuting, increased purchasing of meals during work hours)?
- How easy or difficult is it for an employee to negotiate the processes needed to apply/get approval for a work/life option such as a flexible work schedule?
- Is it necessary for employees using specific work/life benefits (e.g., telecommuting) to purchase any additional supplies or equipment?

SAMPLE MEASURES OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Strongly Agree
• I get more exercise now than when I worked on a 9 to 5 schedule (positive unintended consequence).	1	2	3	4	5
• I take more work home now than I did when I worked on a 9 to 5 schedule (negative unintended consequence).	1	2	3	4	5
• It is easier for me to coordinate meetings with my supervisor now that I am working on a flexible schedule (positive unintended consequence).	1	2	3	4	5
• It costs more for me to change the hours of my child care now that I am working on a flexible schedule (negative unintended consequence).	1	2	3	4	5

Companies interested in gaining insights about the potential effects of work/life initiatives on supervisors and co-workers must make a commitment to gathering information from members of work units where one or more employees use or have used work/life benefits.

It may be relevant for companies to explore some of the following issues:

- To what extent are the actual/perceived workloads of supervisors or co-workers affected when an employee uses a work/life benefit?
- How does the availability of work/life benefits affect the job commitment of the supervisors and co-workers of employees who use these benefits?
- Is there any indication that employees who do not use work/life benefits resent the “special arrangements” made for those employees who do use them?
- How is communication among co-workers and with managers affected by employees’ use of work/life benefits?
- What do supervisors and co-workers think about employees who take advantage of work/life programs and benefits?
- How much supervisory time is devoted to interpreting work/life policies for employees, responding to employee requests and concerns, and dealing with the impact of work/life issues on the work unit?
- Are specific groups of employees excluded from using specific work/life benefits (e.g., employees who work at satellite locations; employees who work for managers who do not support the use of specific work/life benefits; employees who work part-time or on a contingent basis?) What is the attitude of these employees about the restricted availability of these policies and programs? How might the attitudes of these employees directly or indirectly affect their job performance?

SAMPLE MEASURES OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES AFFECTING COWORKERS

(The following questions could be addressed to employees who report that they do not use particular work/life policies, programs, and practices.)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Strongly Agree
• I am proud to work for a company which encourages professional employees to consider working part-time even though I have never used this option myself (positive unintended consequence).	1	2	3	4	5
• Our team must spend extra time and energy coordinating work tasks with people who telecommute (negative unintended consequence).	1	2	3	4	5
• The morale and "team spirit" of the people in my work unit is improved because our company encourages employees to seek a positive work/life balance (positive unintended consequence).	1	2	3	4	5
• When employees take a leave of absence, the other employees in the department have to work harder (negative unintended consequence).	1	2	3	4	5

V. Stages in Measuring Unintended Consequences

The measurement of unintended consequences begins with listing the explicit goals and objectives of selected work/life initiative and possible results which were not anticipated. The measurement of unintended consequences will succeed only if:

- 1) The people responsible for the assessment are familiar with the goals and objectives of the work/life initiatives and the benefits which they can offer to different stakeholder groups (e.g., the intended consequences for the company, employees, employees' families, business units, customers, investors, communities, etc.); and
- 2) They are willing to "dig a little deeper" to see how work/life policies, programs and practices might affect stakeholder groups in ways not originally anticipated.

**Stage 1: Identify
Intended &
Unintended
Consequences**

Considerations:

- Who are the various stakeholder groups who might be affected?
- What are some of the positive outcomes that might be associated with the availability/utilization of a specific work/life benefit, even if those outcomes are not reflected in the explicit purpose (e.g., goals/objectives) for the benefit?
- What are some of the unintended negative outcomes that might be associated with the availability/utilization of a specific work/life benefit?

Once the list of intended and unintended consequences has been developed, it will be necessary to determine what information is needed to document the unintended consequences and the processes to gather that information. The success of an effort to gain insight into the unintended consequences of work/life initiatives depends on the company's ability to collect information from members of stakeholder groups who might be affected (directly or indirectly) by the availability/utilization of work/life policies, programs and practices.

It is particularly important for companies to structure an assessment process that encourages members of different stakeholder groups to share their reactions about the company's work/life policies, programs and practices. In order to capture information about unintended consequences, it may be helpful for companies to supplement existing employee surveys with semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

Considerations:

- Would it be helpful to create an advisory committee or task force to help design the assessment of unintended consequences?
- What is the best way to collect information from representatives of the different stakeholder groups? Would people feel more comfortable discussing these issues in person or would they prefer to provide feedback anonymously (e.g., through a written questionnaire)?
- How often should the information be collected?
- How can you communicate to employees that despite the company's interest in examining unintended consequences, the company may not be able to respond to each and every concern that might be identified?
- Is it possible to use the data collection process as an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of the company's work/life initiatives?

During this stage, you will need to analyze the information collected to determine possibilities for maximizing the beneficial unintended outcomes and minimizing the deleterious outcomes.

Considerations:

- To what extent can changes be made in the administration/implementation of the program to emphasize the beneficial outcomes?
- To what extent can changes be made in the administration/implementation of the program to minimize any deleterious outcomes?

The measurement of unintended consequences culminates with a consideration of whether the insights gained about some of the unintended consequences of the company's work/life benefits warrant a re-examination of the explicit goals and objectives.

Once specific unintended consequences have been identified and documented, it will be possible to structure future work/life evaluations to measure changes (e.g., increases or decreases) in the indicators of these specific unanticipated consequences over time.

Considerations:

- Is there evidence that the availability of specific work/life policies or programs has contributed to business goals in unexpected ways? Have any business units – such as training & development, diversity, product development – indicated that the establishment of work/life programs has helped them to implement important strategies?
- Would the company benefit from re-framing the stated purposes of its work/life initiative so that it can focus on (and maximize) some of the beneficial unintended consequences?

VI. Considerations

By assessing unintended as well as intended consequences of work/life initiatives, companies are demonstrating that they are committed to:

- “raising the bar” for standards of excellence;
- identifying and strengthening those aspects of their work/life policies and programs which contribute to positive experiences at home and at the workplace;
- confronting elements of the corporate culture that may give employees mixed messages about the organization's values and expectations; and
- minimizing any unintended negative consequences associated with creating and maintaining work/life policies, programs and practices.

The depth of a company's commitment to its work/life initiative is reflected in the seriousness of its efforts to evaluate the outcomes. Businesses that create policies and programs but do not invest the time and resources to consider the impacts of these initiatives might not really believe that they can make a difference.

The assessment of unintended consequences is not an exercise for those who are only interested in discovering the positive impacts of work/life initiatives. It is very possible that the assessment of unintended consequences will uncover some negative effects. However, it is also possible that many positive (but previously unknown) effects will also be identified.

How might measuring unintended consequences contribute to your work/life strategy?

Are there any particular challenges associated with measuring unintended consequences?

Why might your firm want to measure unintended consequences?

By considering unintended consequences, a company will be able to:

1. identify some of the secondary benefits which can be maximized;
2. surface some of the less visible problems associated with implementation so that they can be either eliminated or minimized;
3. pay attention to the experiences of individuals who may not use work/life policies, programs, or practices but who may be indirectly affected because of their relationships with employees who do use them;
4. increase the likelihood that the workplace can “make the most” from the availability of their work/life initiatives; and
5. explore whether there are any inherent contradictions or “tensions” which have emerged during implementation (e.g., presence of attitudes at the workplace which discourage the use of specific components of the work/life initiatives).

One of the most difficult challenges associated with attempts to document unintended consequences is that the process usually begins before the unintended consequences have been identified; that is, it is necessary to begin to “look for” unintended consequences before you know what you are actually “looking for.”

Those responsible for the assessment process need to be comfortable with this type of ambiguity until the findings begin to emerge.

Without measuring unintended consequences, any evaluation of work/life initiatives runs the risk of missing impacts that are as important as, or more important than, intended consequences.

There are indications that some of the most salient organizational benefits of work/life policies, programs and practices may actually be outcomes which were not originally included in explicit statements of goals and objectives. For example:

- An increasing number of companies are reporting that they have received positive press coverage as a result of their work/life innovations. As a result, successful work/life programs have strengthened the company's image in the outside world (although this was not the original purpose for establishing them).
- Some companies that have offered benefits such as telecommuting as a way to provide flexible options to their employees, have found that these practices have enabled them to achieve other goals, such as compliance with legal mandates for air quality.

Despite the best laid plans, serendipity and happenstance are pervasive experiences. The unexpected is woven into the fabric of our individual lives as well as our organizational experiences. The measurement of unintended consequences is one way to structure our assessment of these “out of the box” experiences.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MEASURING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES WORKSHEETS

BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CASE EXAMPLE

The availability of emergency child care may enable employees to work on days that their children are ill (intended positive consequence). However, some companies have identified some unanticipated consequences related to these programs.

Possible Unintended Consequence: Employee Stress Resulting from Desire to Access a Service That is Too Costly

One factor that needs to be considered is the cost of care. Unless emergency child care is subsidized by the company, a day at a sick care facility adds an additional \$35 to \$50 to regular daily child care costs. In-home care can exceed \$100 per day.

Possible Unintended Consequence: Value Conflict Between Wanting to Nurture Ill Child and Wanting to Be Present at Work

Although employees may express interest in sick child care programs such as in-hospital or at-home sick child care, most prefer to stay at home with an ill child rather than entrust the child's care to strangers. In part, this may reflect parents' reluctance to take an ill child out of her or his own familiar surroundings to a sick care facility where she or he will be exposed to other ill children.

Possible Unintended Consequence: Potential for Prolonged Recuperation Time for Children

The impact of emergency child care on the children themselves can also be assessed. It may be possible to examine whether children who attend sick child care centers actually remain ill longer or have a greater incidence of iatrogenic illnesses than do children who are cared for at home. Similarly, it is possible to compare illness patterns of children whose parents stay home to care for them with those who are cared for by paid care providers.

Possible Unintended Consequence: Message that Employees Should Come to Work Rather than Care for Ill Family Members

Many medical and child-development professionals have expressed concerns that work/life initiatives such as sick-child care programs may promote a society that values economic productivity over childrearing.

The worksheets on the following pages will use the example of emergency child care to explore the process of measuring unintended consequences.

Stage 1: Identify Intended & Unintended Consequences

PURPOSE

Identify intended and possible unintended consequences of your company's work/life initiatives.

CASE EXAMPLE

The following questions may help practitioners to identify some unintended consequences:

- Do employees' behaviors provide any clues about unintended consequences of emergency child care?
- Do utilization patterns suggest the presence of positive or negative unintended consequences associated with emergency child care?
- Do satisfaction surveys indicate that the emergency child care program has had any positive or negative unintended consequences?

INSTRUCTIONS

Information pertaining to this worksheet could be gathered in different ways. For example, your company might want to lead a brainstorming session at staff meeting, conduct focus groups with employees, or include open-ended questions on user satisfaction surveys distributed to employees who have used the work/life policy, program or practice selected for assessment.

List your company's work/life policies, programs and practices	Intended Consequence(s)	Who is affected by the availability of this support?
<i>emergency child care</i>	<i>May enable employees to work on days when their children are ill.</i>	<i>employees employees' families co-workers supervisors company</i>

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Stage 1: Identify Intended & Unintended Consequences

(continued)

List your company's work/life policies, programs and practices	Potential Positive Unintended Consequence(s)	Who is affected by the availability of this support?
<i>emergency child care</i>	<i>Formation of new corporate-community partnerships if services are community-based.</i>	<i>local health care delivery systems, local school systems</i>

Stage 1: Unintended Negative Consequences

List your company's work/life policies, programs and practices	Potential Positive Unintended Consequence(s)	Who is affected by the availability of this support?
<i>emergency child care</i>	<i>Working parents may be ambivalent about being away from children when they are mildly ill.</i>	<i>employees employees' family members</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified some of the intended and unintended consequences of your work/life initiatives.

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Stage 2: Develop and Implement Data Collection Processes

PURPOSE

To plan and implement a study of unintended consequences.

CASE EXAMPLE

It is often difficult to identify the most effective processes for gathering information about unintended consequences, particularly those consequences which have had a negative impact on people. The assessment of unintended consequences depends on the willingness of people to share their perceptions of the direct and indirect consequences of work/life benefits. Working parents may be reluctant to talk about their decisions to stay at home and care for their children because they may feel that the company would disapprove of their decisions. Some of these parents may not want to admit that they have "called in sick" rather than honestly discussing their situations with their supervisors.

The data collection plan should develop assurances that all information will be held in the strictest confidence.

INSTRUCTIONS

Identify the policy, program, or practice selected for assessment. List the possible unintended consequences which have been identified in Stage 1. Identify who might be able to provide you with information about that possible unintended consequence. Make recommendations for gathering information from these groups of people.

Name of Policy, Program, or Practice: _____

For example: emergency child care

List potential unintended consequences.	List people who might provide relevant information.	How might information be collected?	What steps can be taken to ensure confidentiality?
<i>employee ambivalence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• employees who have dependent children (those who have used emergency child care and those who have not)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus groups• in person interview• anonymous surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• no names recorded• no identifying information on summary reports

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have identified options for collecting information about the intended and unintended consequences of your work/life initiatives.

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Stage 3: Analyze Information

PURPOSE

Use the information about unintended consequences to gain a greater understanding about “why” the unintended consequences have occurred and “how” the unintended consequences have affected the members of different stakeholder groups.

CASE EXAMPLE

Some parent employees may indicate that they would not use emergency child care for mildly ill children unless the location was close enough to the worksite that they could go to the facility and check their child during break times and/or during lunch. Other parents may indicate that their reluctance to come to work is related to the difficulties they experience picking up homework assignments. This type of information may suggest modifications in the administration of the program that could alleviate parental concerns.

The following questions may help practitioners to consider the implications of the unintended consequences identified in Stage 2.

- What are the unintended consequences experienced by the members of different stakeholder groups?
- How pervasive are the unintended consequences?
- What factors seem to have contributed to the unintended consequences?
- Do the data suggest options for maximizing the positive unintended consequences and minimizing the negative unintended consequences?

INSTRUCTIONS

List the unintended consequence at the top of the chart. Then record interpretations about each consequence. Complete a chart for each of the positive and the negative unanticipated consequences discovered during Stage 2.

Stage 3: Analyze Information

(continued)

Positive Unanticipated (or secondary) Consequence: _____

For example: School age children receiving care at a hospital or neighborhood clinic for a mild illness might informally receive developmentally appropriate hygiene information.

Who has been affected by the unintended consequence? How did it seem to happen?	Why has the unintended consequence occurred?	Has the unintended consequence affected the members of other stakeholder groups?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school age children • health care providers wanting to find alternative ways to educate children about important health issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health care providers use interactions with children as a way to provide information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • piloting coordination with school health professionals

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will have considered how to maximize the unintended positive consequences and minimize the unintended negative consequences of your work/life initiatives.

Stage 4: Reexamine Work/Life Goals and Objectives

PURPOSE

Re-examine the goals and objectives for your company's work/life initiatives.

CASE EXAMPLE

Companies may decide to provide educational health materials to parents and children who use a program for mildly ill children.

The following questions may help practitioners to re-conceptualize the goals and objectives of their work/life initiatives:

- Do the results of the assessment indicate that your work/life initiatives have the potential to achieve goals and objectives which are different than those originally articulated?
- Do some of the unintended consequences suggest that it is no longer appropriate to pursue the one or more of the goals and objectives as they were originally conceived?

INSTRUCTIONS

Determine which of the unintended consequences you would recommend that the company address. It may be important to consider factors such as the significance of the unintended consequence and how easy it would be to address the unintended consequence. Develop an action plan.

Selected Unintended Consequence: _____

For example: Parents feel that supervisors disapprove of employees who stay at home to care for sick children.

Recommended course of action	If implemented, would this change modify the goals or objectives for this program?	Next steps
<i>Develop a component of the existing management training that addresses the consequences of contradictions between company policies and workplace attitudes.</i>	<i>None anticipated.</i>	<i>Work with training department to develop module. Pilot test module in 6 months.</i>

Upon completion of this worksheet, you will be ready to make recommendations about changes in your work/life initiatives that address unintended consequences.



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