

# A broad view from “Abroad”

Graeme Russell  
Macquarie University

# Flexibility abroad

- A brief history
  - Observations of changing perspectives
- Key points
  - Diversity in flexibility
  - Senior managers are engaged
  - Addressing inflexibility in flexibility
  - Moving from mutuality to a “two-way street”
    - What does the two-way street look like?
  - The case for flexibility is complex
    - ? What are business needs?

# A brief history

- Everyone wants flexibility
- Flexibility is “good to do” and “good for some people”
- Emerging tensions: owned by HR and business not really engaged
- HR and participant advocates: “It does work”:
  - Process and “Outcome” data
- Managers and businesses began paying more attention
- Emerging management view: We must do this
  - Demographic pressure
  - It needs to be different from how it has been
  - A case study to illustrate

A shift in mindset is required about employees and what they are motivated by.

- High number of employees have dual/multiple focus in their lives.
  - Live with spouse/partner 67%
    - Partner employed full-time 68%
    - Partner employed part-time 14%
  - Have children 50%
  - Have additional caring responsibilities 17%

# Flexibility is a “must do” Management view

- Diversity in mindsets about the nature of flexibility
- 83% articulated a “business case”
  - Diversity in Recruitment
  - Attraction and retention of talent
    - Motivated and “engaged”
  - Increased productivity
  - Customer service and retention: Profit Chain Model
  - Also acknowledged potential costs
- 70% articulated a Personal Case

DOGBERT'S SEMINAR  
ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

THIS IS ALLEN. HE  
DIDN'T BALANCE HIS  
WORK AND PERSONAL  
LIVES.



www.dilbert.com scottadams@aol.com

ALLEN DID NOTHING  
BUT WORK, WORK,  
WORK. AND NOW LOOK  
AT HIM.



2-25-04 © 2006 Scott Adams, Inc./Dist. by UFS, Inc.

I'M THE ONE WHO  
TRIED TO BALANCE  
EVERYTHING. THAT'S  
ALLEN. HE'S A %\$\*0!  
CEO NOW!



# Employee view: 90% agree there is a strong business case

## Perceived High impact on

Employee satisfaction	56%
Retention	52%
Employer of choice	52%
Reducing absenteeism	49%
Employee engagement	48%
Retention of key business knowledge and skills	42%
Attraction of more talented employees	41%
Creativity and innovation	36%
Team work and knowledge sharing	34%
Customer service	34%
<b>Health and well-being</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Reduction in employee stress</b>	<b>47%</b>

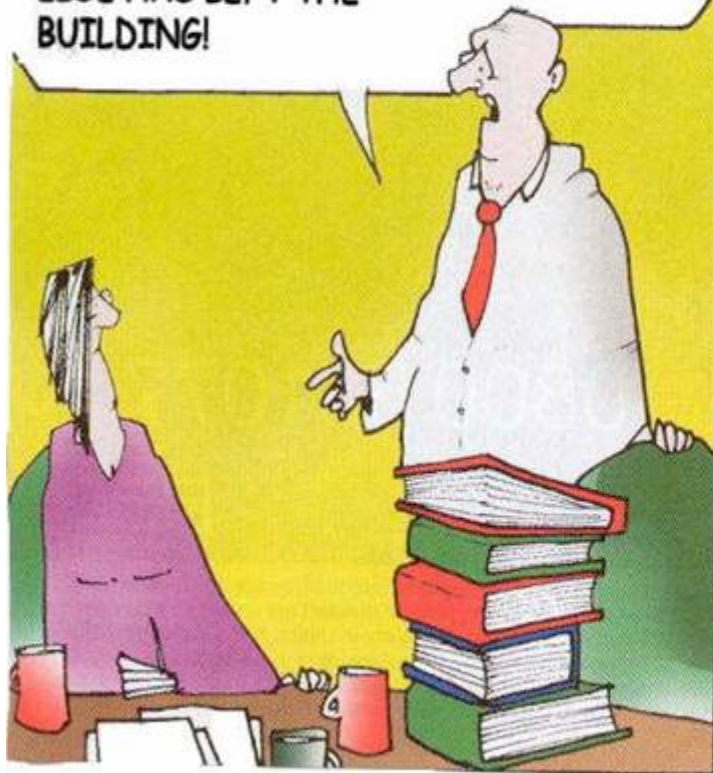
“No, not there please, that is where I’m going to place my head!”



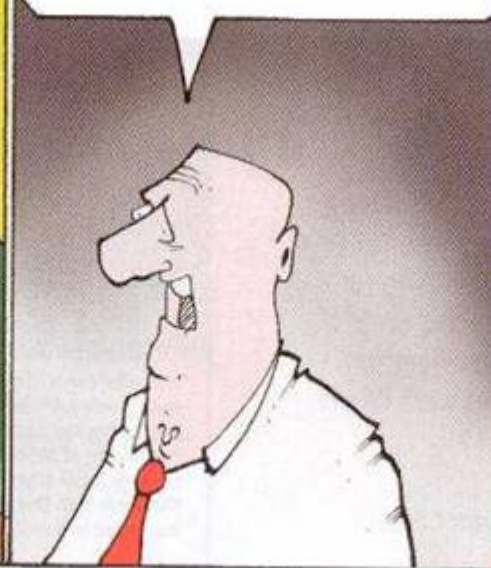
# Assessment of the current situation

- Management view
  - Ratings of effectiveness of implementation
    - 6% Highly effective
    - 75% Moderately effective
    - 19% Not effective at all
  - Reasons why not effective?
    - Inflexibility in flexibility
    - Policies not always effective (eg., part-time and telework)
    - Middle managers and team leaders lack passion and skills
    - Business needs have to be met
    - Flexibility is not seen as a “two-way street”

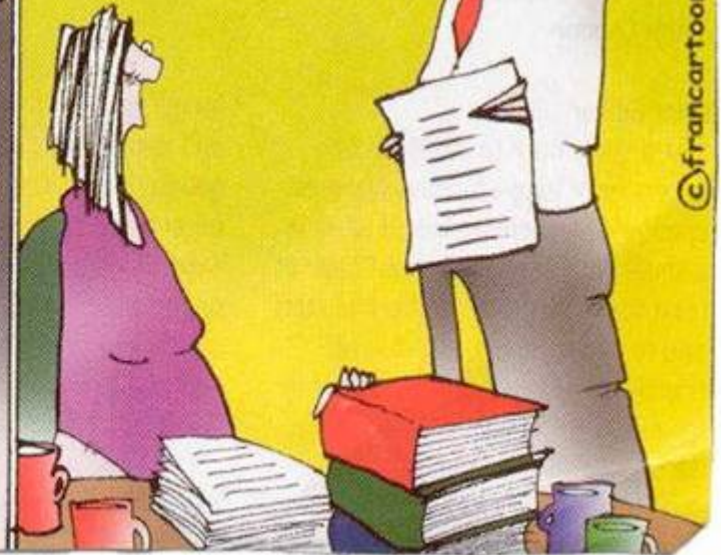
IT'S BEEN BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION THAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING A LOT OF UNPAID OVERTIME...COMING IN EARLY GOING HOME HOURS AFTER EVERYONE ELSE HAS LEFT THE BUILDING!



I KNOW THAT YOU'RE AS CONCERNED ABOUT THE BUSINESS AS I AM ...BUT AS YOUR MANAGER I CAN'T LET THIS CARRY ON WITHOUT TAKING SOME ACTION...



SO HERE'S A BILL FOR THE EXTRA UTILITIES YOU'VE BEEN USING, LIGHTING, HEATING... AND A NOMINAL CHARGE FOR USE OF THE TOILET FACILITIES.



## People who supervise others self-rated have high level of skills to

Make decisions about requests for flexibility	54%
Manage the performance of people who work flexibly	48%
Develop team work and knowledge sharing when people work at different times	47%
Understand the business case for flexibility	44%
Identify flexibility opportunities for my business area	43%
Assess the impact of flexibility on business outcomes	43%

**Note: Lower for Assistant Managers and Team leaders**

Overall assessment: how effective has the implementation of flexibility been in **your work area**?  
 Illustrates diversity and complexity

	extremely effective	moderately effective	not at all effective
Different business area			
<b>Support</b>			
A (people)	<b>33%</b>	50%	17%
B	21%	54%	<b>25%</b>
C	19%	58%	<b>23%</b>
D	<b>13%</b>	64%	<b>23%</b>
<b>Line</b>			
E	22%	61%	17%
F	19%	60%	21%
G (customer)	15%	55%	<b>30%</b>

## Perceived critical enablers of effective flexibility (why does it work?)

Management support	68%
Managers with open, flexible mindsets	67%
Managers believe there are business benefits	64%
Managers with skills to implement	62%
Focus on flexibility as two-way street	60%
Having technology to support	57%
Focus on customer needs	55%

## Utilisation some summary points

- Highest use (63%): flex start & finish
- Utilisation varies by job and work area
  - Reflects what is available and possible
    - Working from home high for managers
    - Compressed work weeks: Support
    - RDOs -- Customer facing
    - Flex-time -- Customer facing
    - 14% part-time

# Flexibility gaps? expressed needs

- Generally, reported unmet need for:
  - Compressed work week 60%
  - **Flexible career path** (and P/T) **51%**
  - Working from home 50%
  - **Cross-training** **49%**
  - **Rotation opportunities** **43%**
  - Flex-time 43%
- Part-time work for caregivers 30%
- Phased retirement for older workers 61%

# Analyses of differences based on ratings of own work area

- Significant differences for

	<b>flexibility effectiveness</b>		
	High	Med	Low
<b>Well-being</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>
Organisational commitment	3.4	3.1	2.9
Team support	3.3	3.0	2.7
Active support for flexibility	3.5	2.9	2.4
Considered leaving -- lack of flexibility	5%	13%	38%

# Flexibility = Independent contributions to:

	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Well-being</b>
Use of flexibility time options	No	Yes	Yes
Comfortable in using Options	Yes	No	No
Flexibility in when, Where and how work	No	Yes	Yes
Active support for Flexibility	Yes	Yes	Yes

# The future

## A consistent view

- Having a clearer, broader definition of flexibility (eg., to include careers)
- Emphasising flexibility as a two-way street
- Defining what the business needs are in relation to flexibility
- Managers having the mindsets and skills to be effective and proactive in leading and implementing flexibility
- Having consistency in application of flexibility **principles** in different areas
- Employees know about flexibility policies and practices and understand how these link with business needs and business benefits.

# The two-way street

- Different from mutuality
  - Usually considered in context of building a case for flexibility = the business case
- What is the evidence for a two-way street?
  - 32% were on the business side of the street in past four weeks.

## Those who were on the business side of the street . . .

- Reported:
  - More positive team environment
  - Higher utilisation of flexible time options
  - Higher levels of “active support for flexibility”
  - Greater flexibility in WWH
- Came from all areas of the business and all levels.

A possible framework  
(adapted from Haas & Hwang)

- Proactive support for flexibility (20%)
- Active support for flexibility
- Conditional support for flexibility
- Passive opposition to flexibility (20%)