MAKING CHANGE

BEYOND FLEXIBILITY

Work-Life Effectiveness as an Organizational Tool for High Performance

catalyst ®

About Catalyst

Founded in 1962, Catalyst is the leading nonprofit membership organization working globally with businesses and the professions to build inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for women and business. With offices in the United States, Canada, and Europe, and the support of more than 370 member organizations, Catalyst is the premier resource for research, information, and trusted advice about women at work. Catalyst annually honors exemplary organizational initiatives that promote women's advancement with the Catalyst Award.

Catalyst's *Making Change* series is designed to give business leaders new perspectives on common workplace issues.

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Beyond Flexibility—Work-Life Effectiveness as an Organizational Tool for High Performance

In the last two decades, dramatic changes have redefined the workplace. In addition to globalization and new technologies, organizations now grapple to maintain long-term sustainability and success in economically turbulent times. Employees struggle to innovate and maintain quality and productivity in the face of increasing demands while sustaining meaningful lives at home and at work. At the same time, employees have become more diverse in work styles, values, perspectives, and experiences.[1] Their expectations of time at work, engagement in work, and career growth opportunities have evolved, requiring new value propositions for businesses that wish to remain employers of choice.

Catalyst has advised many global corporations and firms on how to shape work cultures that work for both employees and the workplace. Our counsel is based on a sophisticated workforce approach we call work-life effectiveness (WLE). WLE advances the historic practice of flexibility from a request for "me" to an organizational tool for "us." It simultaneously benefits employees and businesses by identifying pragmatic solutions that engender sustainable high performance and agility.

About This Series

This series of two publications describes Catalyst's WLE approach, why it is good for businesses and employees, and how individuals can support WLE in their daily work. This first booklet explains the framework and concepts of WLE and shows organizations how they can incorporate it into

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1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, "Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity"; "Table 2: Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population by Detailed Age, Sex, and Race, Annual Average 2006," unpublished data, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2005.

their business strategies. The second publication, *Beyond Flexibility—Creating Champions for Work-Life Effectiveness*, describes how leaders, managers, employees, and human resources practitioners can become WLE champions. Both publications can be obtained through our website at www.catalyst.org.

Table 1: Beyond Flexibility—An Overview	
Beyond Flexibility—Work-Life Effectiveness as an Organizational Tool for High Performance	*Beyond Flexibility—Creating Champions for Work-Life Effectiveness*
What is WLE? What is the business case for WLE? How can organizations support WLE? How can organizations assess progress?	How does WLE sustain peak performance? How can leaders support WLE? How can managers support WLE? How can employees support WLE? How can HR support WLE?

What Is WLE?

Many organizations already support workplace flexibility as a means to recruit and retain talent, to enhance employee commitment and satisfaction, and to increase employee productivity.[2] But as currently practiced in most organizations, flexibility has not been leveraged to its full potential. Flexibility is still seen as an individual accommodation, executives are perceived to work continuously, and workplace "heroes" continue to be those with few limitations on their time or accessibility. In this context, employees are expected to spend the majority of their time working together in an office during so-called

2. Catalyst, *Making Change: Building a Flexible Workplace* (2002); Corporate Voices for Working Families, *Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion* (November 2005).

"traditional" work hours while, increasingly, working additional hours as well.

Today's workforce needs and expects more.[3] Talented employees expect their work to add value to the business, and they will not work to the exclusion of the other priorities in their lives; they want to work smart and be recognized for their contributions. At the same time, today's consumers expect more. Consumers expect products to be ready now, customized to their needs, and created using environmentally friendly[4] practices. Meeting these employee and consumer expectations requires a paradigm shift in management and opens an exciting window of opportunity.[5]

Catalyst's work-life effectiveness (WLE)[6] approach responds to that window of opportunity by using flexibility in tandem with process improvements to support individuals, teams, and businesses. While flexibility is often understood as an employee benefit or accommodation, WLE is built on a mutually beneficial partnership between businesses and employees that aims to identify solutions to common challenges such as lack of business agility, team inefficiencies, and employee burnout. Understanding that WLE is a management tool—rather than a burden—is fundamental.

Table 2 details the differences between flexibility as it is typically practiced and Catalyst's WLE approach.

3. Ellen Galinsky, Nancy Carter, and James T. Bloom, *Leaders in a Global Economy: Finding The Fit for Top Talent* (Families and Work Institute and Catalyst, 2008).
4. See Richard Handford, *Managing the Company's Carbon Footprint: The Emerging Role of ICT* (The Economist Intelligence Unit: February 2008) and Margaret Walls and Peter Nelson, *Telecommuting and Emissions Reductions: Evaluating Results From the Ecommute Program* (Resources for the Future: December 2004).
5. Brad Harrington and Jacquelyn B. James, "The Standards of Excellence in Work-Life Integration: From Changing Policies to Changing Organizations" in Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes, Ellen Ernst Kossek, and Stephen Sweet, eds., *The Work and Family Handbook: Multi-Disciplinary Perspective and Approaches* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006): p. 665-684.
6. This definition of WLE as an organizational approach is consistent with that espoused by the Alliance for Work-Life Progress (http://www.awlp.org). Both definitions expand on prior research that utilized the term as an individual outcome measure.

MAKING CHANGE

Table 2: Differences Between Flexibility and Work-Life Effectiveness	
Flexibility	**Work-Life Effectiveness**
Focuses on the short-term—how to respond to current work demands.	Focuses on the long term—how to support agility and sustainable performance.
Focuses on individual work solutions.	Focuses on team solutions and coordination.
Is an accommodation for the few.	Is a tool for all employees.
Alternatively disempowers or entitles employees.	Encourages managers and employees to develop solutions together.
Values time spent.	Values results and effectiveness.
Regards employee needs, interests, and concerns about burnout as obstacles to accomplishing work.	Uses employee needs, interests, and concerns about burnout as a catalyst for creatively redesigning work.
Focuses on managing employee schedules.	Focuses on managing for strong performance and employee sustainability.

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WLE creates an agile work environment that can respond to changes in business needs quickly, creatively, and efficiently. At the same time, WLE provides employees with the control they need to work smarter, to address their non-work priorities, and to be resilient and effective. At its essence, WLE enables strong performance—for individuals and organizations—over the long term. Table 3 describes the concepts that characterize Catalyst's WLE approach.

Table 3: Fundamental Concepts of Catalyst's Work-Life Effectiveness (WLE) Approach

- **WLE is good business.** WLE improves organizational agility, sustainability, and performance by challenging current practices.
- **WLE is a management tool.** WLE is not a single solution but an approach for thinking more broadly about how flexibility can directly support business results.
- **WLE goes beyond flexibility.** The umbrella of WLE includes flexibility in the time and place of work, but also encompasses changes in work processes and organizational norms that expand job and career path options as well as team structures.
- **WLE is a partnership between managers and employees.** WLE assumes that managers and employees are the experts on the work and each plays a critical role in ensuring the strategic and more expansive use of flexibility.
- **WLE rewards contributions and value rather than time.** WLE identifies what detracts from work effectiveness and finds pragmatic solutions that benefit both businesses and employees.
- **WLE is a workplace and workforce issue, not a women's issue.** WLE emphasizes teamwork and productivity while also recognizing diversity. WLE enables women and men of all ages to come up with solutions that work for them as well as for the workplace.

What Is the Business Case for WLE?

Business leaders are concerned about a wide range of issues connected to WLE, including:

- Quality and innovation—Do employees have the information and time they need to step back and think about the big picture? Can they focus on high-priority work? Do they have time for follow-through?
- Nimbleness—Are teams effective? Do employees have the energy and resilience needed to shift gears? Can they add new activities that seize opportunities?
- Human energy[7]—What is the energy expenditure of current work practices? How much of this is actually necessary?
- War for talent—Is your business seen as an employer of choice? Is your organization on lists of the best places to work? Does your organization have a reputation for diversity and sustainability?
- Employee sustainability[8]—Can employees keep up the pace and quality? Is the workplace a place where employees can stay as they shape their careers and lives?
- Reputation—What do all the stakeholders think about the organization?

Wise business leaders already grasp the connection between workplace and employee sustainability. These leaders think about energy usage and place of work in terms of reducing their carbon emissions. They connect process improvement activities with work-life effectiveness. They understand that improving global collaboration will ensure agile responses to new markets, clients, and customers. They want to develop talent and team effectiveness. They challenge—rather than cling to—outmoded work practices. These leaders also understand that encouraging their employees to refuel and be

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7. Tony Schwartz, "Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time," *Harvard Business Review* (October 2007): p. 63-73. In this article, Tony Schwartz illustrates the shifting equation for employers to sustain strong business outcomes by supporting the resilience of employees.
8. Lori Muse, Stanley G. Harris, William F. Giles, and Hubert S. Field, "Work-Life Benefits and Positive Organizational Behavior: Is There a Connection?" *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 29, no. 2 (February 2008): p. 171-192.

resilient adds to, rather than detracts from, business results.[9]

In addition to starting to change how work is done, many organizations realize that they must broaden who is doing the work by increasing the diversity of their workforces.[10] Attention to work-life issues and the creation of a flexible work culture respects differing career goals and ways of working. It also enables organizations to draw from an expanded talent pool that may include:
- Younger employees who value control over their schedules and time for personal priorities.
- Employees juggling the demands of both work and care-taking responsibilities.
- Aging employees with retirement on their horizons.
- Employees who are physically disabled and can more easily work from home or a virtual environment.
- Employees with outside commitments (e.g., community work, further education).
- Talented employees who work and live in remote places.
- Employees in dual-career families.

Ultimately, how we work and the talent organizations can attract to execute business strategies both affect the bottom line. WLE is valuable because it proactively addresses these issues to facilitate a more efficient, productive, and inclusive workplace. The results will be evident in employee engagement, team cohesion, and organizational performance.[11]

9. Ellen Ernst Kossek and Alyssa Friede, "The Business Case: Managerial Perspectives on Work and the Family" in Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes, Ellen Ernst Kossek, and Stephen Sweet, eds., *The Work and Family Handbook: Multi-Disciplinary Perspective and Approaches* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006): p. 611-626; Rachael King, "Working From Home: It's in the Details," *BusinessWeek* online (February 12, 2007).
10. Laura Sabattini and Faye J. Crosby, "Overcoming Resistance: Structures and Attitudes" in Kecia Thomas, ed., *Diversity Resistance in Organizations: Manifestations and Solutions* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007): p. 273-301.
11. Corporate Voices for Working Families, *Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion* (November 2005); Arvind Malhotra, Ann Majchrzak, and Benson Rosen, "Leading Virtual Teams," *Academy of Management Perspectives*, vol. 21, no.1 (February 2007): p. 60-70.

How Can Organizations Support WLE?

Sustaining high performance with WLE requires institutional culture change. Implementing that change takes time, effort, and leadership. With the necessary support in place, organizations gain the potential to improve retention rates and engagement, increase revenue, and reduce costs.[12]

Voices From the Trenches: Status Quo Isn't Working[13]

- I work smart. I focus, coordinate with others, get my work done, and leave; but I am seen as less committed than the people who work more hours. It doesn't make sense for the company. And, I am worried about career consequences.
- Try to get your work done when you are booked eight hours a day at meetings. It's impossible; you take it home, so that is your balance.
- We don't manage our work efficiently, and we don't concern ourselves about others' time that is wasted.
- The company has a problem [with employees in dual-career situations]. They don't know how to solve the dual-career thing, and it's another reason they lose talent.
- We say we have flexible schedules but we don't promote them. It's a secret. We need to strengthen leadership and management skills. We have managers who are technically talented but not as good at managing others.

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12. Kossek and Friede; Muse et al.
13. Quotations come from Catalyst Advisory Service diversity assessments.

Organizations can use the following steps as a guide in their efforts to fortify both business and employee sustainability and success.

Step 1: Support a WLE Culture

Culture change needs proactive support to take root. Specifically, organizations must pay attention to fundamental change drivers: articulation of the business case, visible leadership support, tracking of and accountability for progress, and regular communication.

- Identify examples of WLE in your workplace. In Catalyst's experience, successful instances of WLE can already be found in most workplaces; they can be seen as successful examples that demonstrate how WLE can make a difference.
- Calculate the opportunities and benefits presented by WLE (e.g., higher productivity and engagement) and the costs of ignoring it (e.g., lost opportunities, turnover, additional stress, and burnout). Identify what practices detract from work effectiveness, analyze what contributes to people's intent to stay or leave, and understand what environmental supports allow employees to be most successful.
- Encourage senior leaders to demonstrate support of WLE in their behaviors and words by communicating the importance of employee sustainability, sharing how they have managed work-life issues in their own careers, and acting as role models for sustained effectiveness.
- Monitor employee engagement and attention to WLE through ongoing "listening" exercises such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
- Communicate support for WLE to employees through town hall meetings, intranets, and emails as well as through management, leadership, and HR. Consider using similar messaging externally so that support of WLE becomes a brand differentiator that sets the organization apart from the competition.[14]

14. Malhotra et al.

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Diversity & Inclusion Practice

Infosys—*Driving Work-Life Effectiveness Through Employee Empowerment*

As a rapidly growing global company, Infosys recognized the need to employ talented and diverse individuals who reflect their global clientele, as well as provide these employees with multiple career supports. In 2003, Narayana Murthy, Chief Mentor and Co-Chairman of Infosys, launched a global council of six internal senior women of varying nationalities to conceptualize and implement an initiative that would create a gender-sensitive environment to attract, hire, and retain top talent, including women. Most of this council's resulting programs and policies directly address the challenges employees face when trying to balance work and family priorities.

A central component of Infosys' strategy was the creation of the role of global counselors—female project managers and above—who are trained to sensitize and educate other employees on gender-related matters, including managing work and personal situations, childcare concerns, managing conflicts at home, harassment in the workplace, and personal safety and security. Counselors also support career management at Infosys, are instrumental in helping individual women seek flexible work arrangements and alternate roles, and mediate with managers. Providing individual employees with a voice and a role in these efforts has increased buy-in from all managers, especially men, and

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has accelerated the dissemination of knowledge about the new programs and policies. Infosys has also found that empowering employees as counselors and sounding boards for others has made women and men more open to discussing their concerns and challenges.

Through these counselors, Infosys learned that a substantial work-life issue affecting employees was difficulty commuting to and from work. While long commute times affect both women and men, they are especially troublesome for women who are the primary caregivers to the rest of the family. To address this issue, one of the most senior women at Infosys spearheaded an effort to lobby the Chief Minister of India to improve the roads and systems in Bangalore, where Infosys is headquartered. Knowing that a reasonable commute time is critical to the retention of talent—especially that of women who have significant family demands—she presented the Indian government with a petition signed by 40,000-50,000 people, including employees from across the company.

Infosys also provides a host of work-life policies and programs to help employees remain productive, effective, and satisfied. Female and male employees have use of on-site childcare facilities, a satellite office, flexible arrival and departure times, as well as telecommuting. By combining programs and policies with the voices of individuals, Infosys has been able to achieve a number of goals related to attracting and retaining top talent, which is critical to being a leader in the global marketplace.

Step 2: Revise Policies to Position WLE as a Business Tool

It is critical to assess how policies may conflict with or convey mixed messages about organizational support for WLE. For example, Catalyst found in the *2005 Catalyst Benchmarking Report* that more than 80 percent of organizations offered part-time work and telecommuting, and of those that track it, less than 4 percent of employees used these options.[15] Other research also indicates that many women and men feel unable to use flexible options due, in part, to fear of jeopardizing their careers.[16]

In many organizations with which Catalyst consults, policies remain a significant deterrent to WLE and help to explain employee reluctance to be seen as "working differently." For example, some flexibility policies treat the reason for needing flexibility as a primary decision-making variable. Far more consistent with support for WLE is a flexibility policy that does not focus on the reason for flexibility but instead focuses on the best way to accomplish the work. This keeps attention on workplace needs, takes employees seriously in terms of their work contributions, and doesn't put managers in the difficult place of needing to judge if one reason is more compelling than the next. It also establishes that flexibility is not just for dependent-care needs but is a tool all employees can use to manage their work-life interests and challenges.[17]

Another policy revision to consider is the headcount system, which remains a significant barrier to WLE in

15. Catalyst, *2005 Catalyst Benchmarking Report* (2005): p. 20. Fifty-one percent of responding organizations tracked formal reduced/part-time work arrangements and 36 percent of organizations tracked formal telecommuting arrangements.
16. Barbara Bagilhole, "Family-Friendly Policies and Equal Opportunities: A Contradiction in Terms?" *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, vol 34, no. 3 (2006): p. 327-343; Jodie Levin-Epstein, "Responsive Workplaces: The Business Case for Employment That Values Fairness and Families," *The American Prospect* (March 2007): p. A16; Catalyst, *Women and Men in U.S. Corporate Leadership: Same Workplace, Different Realities?* (2004).
17. Harrington and James.

many organizations. Headcount systems allot a finite "number of heads" per manager; they generally do not allow a job to be split into components that would accommodate reduced schedules or sustained team capacity. The headcount system penalizes managers for having employees on part-time schedules by directly reducing their team resources. A full-time equivalent system that allows for greater fluidity in staffing goes a long way in supporting WLE and thereby sustaining strong performance.

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Lastly, performance management systems may also need to be revised. Many organizations use performance ranking systems in which employees on reduced schedules are directly compared to their full-time counterparts. As a result, the contributions of those on reduced schedules are devalued, advancement opportunities may be limited, and opportunities to leverage valuable contributors are often missed. Employees on reduced schedules should have their contributions prorated to more accurately measure their value.

Even when direct systems are not in conflict, management practices may be. For example, in *A New Approach to Flexibility*, a manager reported[18]:

> We are a pay-for-performance company and maybe don't give part-time employees as high a rating as our full-time employees because we can only have so many high ratings and we don't want to waste them on part-time employees. I'd much rather give my high ratings to someone I have to look at eight hours a day versus four hours a day.

Many workplaces that focus on process improvements treat these practices as distinct from flexibility: one is about work, the other about personal needs. But WLE addresses both work and personal needs. Organizations are strongly advised to assess how their policies may not be aligned with their efforts to support WLE. By revising measurement methods and rewards, your organization sends a clear message that all contributions that lead to greater success are valued.

18. Catalyst, *A New Approach to Flexibility: Managing the Work/Time Equation* (1997): p. 32.

Step 3: Measure and Reward Contribution, Not Time

A central component of effective management is the ability to articulate and reward desired outcomes. While in most organizations and in many jobs more time spent on a task doesn't necessarily produce better results, "face-time" continues to be a proxy for performance. In Catalyst's work with member organizations, the importance of being seen in the office, or ever connected to electronic equipment, is clearly evident. Those who are rewarded at work are often employees who can work the longest hours. These "heroes" are not necessarily working smart and often challenge the efforts of their coworkers, direct reports, and managers to work smarter. They may not be very good at planning or coordinating efforts with colleagues or even flagrantly disregard the WLE efforts of others. However, they often receive formal and informal recognition because time spent is used as a substitute for commitment and performance.

In professional services firms, the explicit connection of time and contribution through the billable-hours system is even more problematic. In the billable-hours system, time spent working on client matters is directly linked to increased revenue. Yet equating time with performance fails to recognize associated costs, especially management inefficiencies and turnover of high performers who want to do high value work and for whom a singular focus on work is not desirable.

Voices From the Trenches: The Real Cost of Face-Time[19]

- It's almost like a competition of who works the most…It's like efficiency's almost frowned upon…"Oh, if you got it done in 40 hours, you don't have enough work to do." Or if you're really fast at something or you're really good at it, it almost seems like you're slacking.
- Sometimes I feel it's not efficient at all as to how we spend time. Like, most of the time I spend time attending meetings that are meaningless so I totally felt that when I was working at home and doing the same job that I'm doing here right now, I got so much more work done…I'm probably 200 percent more effective in what I do offsite than when I'm at headquarters with all the meetings.
- They don't accept that it is okay not to have everyone in the office from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. The merit badge is platinum if you are physically there. I am working at 6:00 a.m. but not in the office. I want them to know that we can change the culture and drive more results.

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19. Quotations come from Catalyst Advisory Service diversity assessments.

To promote a culture of WLE, organizations need to better define contributions—including those that result in efficiencies and fewer hours worked on a particular task—and measure and reward them accordingly. Clarifying what adds value to the organization and encouraging behaviors and results that adhere to that value would greatly improve both business performance and employee engagement.

Diversity & Inclusion Practice

Best Buy—*Results-Only Work Environment*

Best Buy's *Results-Only Work Environment* (ROWE) program[20] allows employees greater flexibility and the power to do "whatever they want whenever they want as long as the work gets done." Adopting ROWE consists of manager introductions, departmental kick-off meetings, small groups Sludge[sm] sessions where teams learn to identify negative language unrelated to results from work, and a CultureClinic[sm] where employees learn how to operate effectively within a counterculture environment. Key elements to the success of ROWE include constant monitoring of ROWE departments, continual conversations about successes and challenges, and trust from managers and senior leaders.

Best Buy has seen that ROWE attracts different generations of workers and helps the company retain these employees. ROWE teams at Best Buy report lower voluntary turnover rates than non-ROWE teams, and employees report that ROWE has changed their personal and work lives for the better.

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20. Since the launch of ROWE at Best Buy, the former employees who implemented the effort, Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson, have founded CultureRx, a wholly owned subsidiary of Best Buy.

Step 4: Allow for Multiple Career Paths

Rigid career paths built on the expectation that all employees advance at a similar rate and on a similar trajectory may frustrate and deter employees who want or need a different approach. In particular, the up-or-out career model, whereby employees continue to move up the career ladder or are expected to leave, unduly challenges many professionals—women, in particular—as well as businesses that want to keep talent they have nurtured over many years. Enabling employees to shape their career paths in ways that reflect their life priorities can improve business and employee sustainability, work effectiveness, and engagement.

New career path options may also help businesses to ramp up and down in response to business cycles and fluctuating staffing needs, reducing costs and keeping organizations nimble. Career models that allow employees to work different schedules at various life stages and support individuals with nontraditional career aspirations and expectations regarding career velocity lead to such agility.[21]

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21. Michael B. Arthur, Svetlana N. Khapova, and Celeste P.M. Wilderom, "Career Success in a Boundaryless Career World," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 26, no. 2 (March 2005): p. 177-202; Harrington and James.

Diversity & Inclusion Practice

Deloitte LLP—*Mass Career Customization:*
A New Model for Building Careers and Developing Talent

Deloitte has long had a culture that supports the work-life effectiveness of employees through informal flexibility and formal flexible work options. But in 2004, when the leaders of Deloitte's Women's Initiative revamped its vision and agenda, they realized that both women and men were struggling to meet their work and life priorities. Despite the existence of more than 69 flexibility-related programs, most Deloitte employees could only name a few. Deloitte realized that it needed to rethink how it approached work-life issues for employees, and it decided to redefine how careers are built using a unique model, *Mass Career Customization*, or MCC™.[22]

The MCC framework deconstructs careers into four primary dimensions:
- Pace, or how quickly an employee assumes increasing levels of responsibility (scale ranges from decelerated to accelerated).
- Workload, or the quantity of work performed (scale ranges from reduced to full).
- Location and schedule, or where and when work is performed (scale ranges from restricted to not restricted).
- Role, or the category of an employee's position, job description, and responsibilities (scale ranges from individual contributor to leader).

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22. Mass Career Customization is a patent-pending process. To read more about it, see Cathleen Benko and Anne Cicero Weisberg, *Mass Career Customization: Aligning the Workplace with Today's Nontraditional Workforce* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007).

MASS CAREER CUSTOMIZATION

PACE	WORKLOAD	LOCATION/ SCHEDULE	ROLE
Accelerated	Full	Not Restricted	Leader
Decelerated	Reduced	Restricted	Individual Contributor

MCC Common Profile

The framework provides several, but not infinite, options along each of these core dimensions and makes explicit the interconnection among the dimensions. While the framework gives employees choices, it also helps them understand the trade-offs connected with those choices. In this way, MCC provides a structured approach that facilitates collaboration between employees and their managers to design career paths that make sense within their broader life contexts along with the context of the business.

Integrating MCC with talent management processes is critical so that MCC is not a standalone effort but a core part of how talent is developed. The MCC profile enables more robust career conversations by allowing managers and employees to discuss career goals and progress over time, reviewing employee MCC profiles and revising them as necessary, as well as tracking and evaluating performance against goals at the end of the year.

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MCC is used to foster transparent, comprehensive career conversations, helping employees and managers work more collaboratively in discussing career paths and time frames and identifying mutually beneficial solutions that support employee goals and business needs. The vision is that give and take between managers and employees will lead to the best work.

As Deloitte continues to launch the initiative throughout the firm in 2008 (more than 7,500 employees participated in MCC pilots and the initial roll-out from 2005 to 2007), impressive findings are emerging. To date, Deloitte has found no negative impact on client service standards. Employee morale has increased, as has the perception of employees that they have the support they need to manage their work-life priorities. Fifty-five percent of employees in the roll-outs report that they believe MCC will positively impact their overall satisfaction, and 62 percent say that MCC has a positive impact on their likelihood to recommend Deloitte to others as a great place to work. Retention of high performers in the roll-outs is higher than retention of this group within the firm overall, and higher than retention of all roll-out participants. Interestingly, the floodgates for dialing down careers have not opened the way some managers were concerned they might. Instead, two to three employees are requesting to dial up their careers for every one requesting to dial down.

Step 5: Educate and Support Management

Often, managers receive emphatic messaging that their organization wants them to support the work-life needs of their employees. Yet they receive little subsequent assistance in translating that philosophical viewpoint into practical decision-making. Managers suggest process improvements but don't get the support they need to be strategic about work on a daily basis or to question deadlines when necessary. They often feel caught in a bind—support employees, but get the work done—and in response many managers may absorb extra work to balance the equation.

Through the use of WLE, managers mobilize individuals and teams to work on top priorities and produce results. This approach requires a different level of management skill and sophistication than the traditional line-of-sight model that is prevalent in many organizations. As a result, organizational cultures that do not highly value management skills and results tend to be less successful at creating a work culture that supports work-life effectiveness.

Arming managers with the skills and tools—and a consistent message that the organization supports their WLE efforts—sets the foundation for significant and lasting culture change. However, organizations need to understand that managers build their sophistication through time and trial and error. Giving them the opportunities and support they need to develop their WLE management skills is fundamental to success.

How Can Organizations Assess Progress in Creating an Agile Workplace?

Once efforts to create an agile workplace have begun, it is necessary to monitor progress. Metrics that organizations can use to measure their progress through time follow.

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Employee Feedback

- Hold periodic focus groups with managers and employees to gather feedback on the benefits and challenges of WLE.
- Use exit interviews to gauge opportunities to use daily and career path flexibility.
- Assess employee work schedules biannually to analyze both what is working and what could be improved. Make sure to include those on a variety of schedules, their coworkers, managers, and internal and external clients.
- Use employee surveys to estimate the amount of time spent on low-value work, opportunities for work process input, pervasiveness of negative comments about flexibility, and concerns about career vulnerability if using flexible work arrangements.
- Have frequent check-ins about workload, distribution of work, coordination, and communication among team members.

Outcomes

- Track responses to employee opinion or pulse surveys related to support of WLE.
- Track productivity, including product innovations, customer satisfaction, and time and cost savings of departmental WLE efforts.
- Analyze the links between WLE and energy utilization and consider ways to track reduction of carbon emissions.
- Assess work schedules, including usage of formal alternative work arrangements overall and by gender, level, department, business unit, and functional area.
- Track the number and types of successful work design and redesign activities.
- Count the number of visits to intranet material related to creating a WLE culture.
- Compare the ranking and promotion rates of employees on alternative schedules to those who are not.

Organizational Support

- Track the participation of leaders and managers from every level, department, business unit, and functional area in WLE training.
- Monitor the prevalence and progress of working groups or taskforces charged with developing customized WLE solutions. Such groups may identify root causes limiting WLE, identify and prioritize action steps, share findings, and implement changes.
- Track the availability of internal WLE consultants, including front-line managers, who can provide support and guidance in managing flexibly.

Recognition

- Track external recognition of the organization's efforts to support a WLE culture (e.g., press coverage, awards, employer-of-choice lists, recruits that ask about WLE).
- Benchmark and track recognition of other organizations that support WLE.

In Summary

Organizations are in the throes of a dramatic workforce and workplace transformation that requires new approaches. Through our work with member organizations, Catalyst understands the opportunities and challenges of the workplace of tomorrow and knows the steps organizations can take to move forward. Catalyst's WLE approach helps organizations successfully support business performance by capitalizing on today's realities.

In this changing work environment, the ability to discern what is most important, stay focused, and respond effectively is what matters most. Implementing WLE will ensure that processes make sense and that high-priority work is accomplished while simultaneously allowing employees to be energized, focused, and engaged at work. In so doing, WLE enables the resilience and sustainability of employees and of organizations.

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