



EMPLOYEE AND LABOR RELATIONS  
INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

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SOCIETY FOR HUMAN  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Managing a Diverse Workforce:  
Aligning and Managing Work/Life  
Relationships in Organizations

*By Ellen Ernst Kossek, Ph.D.*

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# Managing a Diverse Workforce: Aligning and Managing Work/Life Relationships in Organizations

## SUMMARY

Managing work/life and work/family relationships has become an increasingly important diversity and productivity challenge for employers. The blurring boundaries between work and personal life due to technology (e.g., cell phones, the Internet, etc.), the accessibility of work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and an increase in the caregiving demands of employees have contributed to the challenge of balancing work/life demands. Even workers without family responsibilities increasingly expect that employers offer more workplace flexibility to support their work/life preferences. In times of increased job stress and smaller pay raises, having a favorable work/life environment can provide employers with a competitive edge by ensuring that they have fully engaged, committed employees.

This module discusses how employers can manage work/life relationships from several aspects. Each aspect is addressed in one of the three classes in this module.

## THREE ASPECTS

### Strategic

The first aspect involves an organization's strategic alignment of work/life and work/family policies to address changing employment relationships due to demographic, social, cultural, legal and economic changes in the external environment. Top management strategy, culture and philosophy, and business objectives and processes are examined. Work/life and work/family issues are seen as a strategic lever to promote competitiveness and foster workforce inclusion in local, national and global labor markets and to support a robust local and global staffing strategy. Organizations vary in strategic alignment, from a person-oriented approach to a systemic strategic approach.

### Cultural

The second aspect pertains to the alignment of formal work/life policies and informal practices as well as their implementation, including effective customization and cultural support. Organizations vary in the degree to which formal work/life policies are effectively implemented to align with workplace cultures, practices and norms. Sometimes formal policies exist, but cultural resistance impedes their effective communication, access and use.

## Employee-employer work/life relationships

The third aspect involves aligning employer and employee perspectives and embracing diversity in employment relationships, work/family relationships and different ways of working. Employers and employees must understand flexstyles—the different preferences and ways in which individuals, groups and organizations use flexibility to manage work/life relationships (Kossek and Lautsch, 2008). Flexstyles can range from segmentation (working in blocks of time to keep work and family separated) to integration (constant mixing of work and family roles during the work day), and can have positive and negative effects.

This module explores how employers can help employees manage work/life relationships from several perspectives:

- 1) Formal HR policy versus informal practice and implementation.
- 2) Employer versus employee.

The formal HR policy perspective on work/life relationships refers to the development and implementation of HR policies, such as flextime and other work/life policies. Some of these policies are optional so that employees can choose to request a flexible work arrangement. Other policies apply to all employees, such as rules and restrictions regarding whether it is permissible for employees to handle personal matters during working time.

The informal practice and implementation perspective focuses on how available policies are adopted by the HR department. This involves HR managers working with line managers to empower employees to more effectively self-manage work/life relationships and use available policies and practices to benefit both employees and the organization. Policy implementation can vary from work unit to work unit depending on business needs in that unit. Business needs may include the nature of the work and customer interface, the degree to which jobs involve close teamwork, and organizational and national culture.

The employer versus employee perspective recognizes that employer perceptions regarding how work/life flexibility should be implemented may sometimes conflict with employee preferences. For example, an employee who works for a retailer may request time off right before the holidays. However, this may be the employer's busiest time of the year, and permitting the employee to take time off may conflict with the employer's need to have enough employees to do the work. Thus, views on flexibility implementation may conflict. Steps must be taken to align employer and employee preferences to ensure that policies are implemented in a fair manner that benefits the employee and the employer. Since work/life policies are relatively new as a diversity issue in organizations, many employers are learning and experimenting with how to adapt their policies, informal practices and organizational cultures to implement new ways of working.

## AUDIENCE

The module is geared toward upper-level undergraduate and graduate students and working adults.

## LENGTH

This module was developed to be presented in three 50-minute segments. These include:

**Class 1:** Work/Life Policies: A Strategic Lever to Manage Diversity and Workforce Inclusion.

**Class 2:** Linking Work/Life Policies to Organizational Culture and Effectiveness.

**Class 3:** Managing Flexstyles and Work/Life Relationships.

Each class includes optional activities, suggested readings and teaching notes.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this module, students will:

1. Learn that work/life policies can be a strategic lever to manage diversity and workforce inclusion and can be viewed from multiple stakeholder perspectives (such as employee and employer) with competing tensions.
2. Understand how to implement and link work/life policies to the human resource management (HRM) system, organizational culture and business objectives.
3. Understand flexstyles—the different styles used to manage work/life relationships. Flexstyles can help employees, managers and teams address work/life preferences and implement flexibility practices to effectively manage work/life relationships.

## TEACHING NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

Each class includes the following instructional material:

1. Outline and text.
2. PowerPoint slides that include teaching notes.
3. Discussion and assessment questions.
4. Activities.
5. Additional readings (if relevant).

It is not necessary to use all activities, readings or assessments for each class, so select those that best fit your students. The PowerPoint presentations can be distributed in class or posted on a web site for students to download.

The classes in this module are appropriate for the following HR or management courses:

- Organizational Behavior and Management.
- Introduction to Human Resource Management.
- Compensation and Benefits.
- Managing Diversity and Multiculturalism.
- Organizational Development and Change.
- Employee Health and Wellness.
- Work and Family.
- Managing Careers and Talent in a Changing Workforce.

# Class 1: Work/Life Policies: A Strategic Lever for Managing Diversity and Workforce Inclusion

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the completion of this class, students will understand that work/life policies can be a strategic lever to manage diversity and workforce inclusion and can be viewed from employee and employer perspectives with competing tensions.

## OVERVIEW OF MAIN TOPICS

- Why work/life relationships are an increasingly critical management and HR concern.
- Workplace trends that make work/life a strategic and workforce diversity inclusion issue.
- Variation in work/life policies accessibility for different jobs and employers.
- Diversity challenges; the gaps between work/life policy adoption and employment laws.
- Employer objectives for work/life alignment.

## TEACHING OPTION

This class can be presented in two parts. The first part concludes at slide 12, and trends and laws can be discussed in a second class. If time is limited, another option is to have students complete one of the exercises suggested at the end of this module in small study groups instead of the lecture for the last half of the class.

## SUGGESTED READINGS

Kossek, E., & Distelberg, B. (2009). Work and family employment policy for a transformed work force: Trends and themes. In A. C. Crouter and A. Booth (Eds.), *Work-Life Policies* (pp. 3-49). Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.

Kossek, E. (2006). Work and family in America: Growing tensions between employment policy and a changing workforce. A thirty year perspective. In E. Lawler and J. O'Toole (Eds.), *America at Work: Choices and Challenges* (pp. 53-72). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

## REFERENCES

Bond, J., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E., & Prottas, D. (2002). *Highlights of the national study of the changing workforce*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

Kossek, E., & Lobel, S. (1996). *Managing diversity: Human resource strategies for transforming the workplace*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Allegretto, S. (2005). *The state of working America 2004/2005*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Moen, P. (2003, May, 16). Presentation. Sloan Annual Meeting. UCLA, California.

O'Toole, J. (1974). *Work and quality of life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Radcliffe Public Policy Center with Harris Interactive. (2000). *Life's work: Generational attitudes toward work and life integration*. Cambridge, MA: Radcliffe Public Policy Center.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2004). *Learning for tomorrow's world: First results from PISA 2003*. Paris: OECD.

ThirdPath Institute, [www.thirdpath.org](http://www.thirdpath.org).

## SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Questions to Prepare for Class Discussion or Assessment

- a) Discuss the main trends that are making work/life a strategic HR issue over time.
- b) Discuss the relationship between some existing employment laws and work/life policies.
- c) Discuss why work/family policies are a workforce inclusion issue and how they relate to diversity management.
- d) Based on the reading, pick one work/life trend that would require a change to an employment policy at an organization where you worked or with which you are familiar.

### **Work/Life E-Resources Research Exercise**

This exercise can be completed individually or as a team assignment where you assign the teams with questions and web sites to research. It can be used as an assignment either before the first class or as an assessment of learning at the end of the class.

Instructors should ask students or teams to investigate the following web sites and lead a discussion about the questions that are listed below each web site.

**Access the following web sites and answer the following questions.**

#### ***U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: National Compensation Survey***

**[www.bls.gov/ncs/eps/sp/ebtb0002.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/ncs/eps/sp/ebtb0002.pdf)**

1. What types of work/life benefits are the most and least common in the United States?
2. How does access to flexibility vary by industry and job type?

#### ***Boston College Sloan Work and Family Research Network***

**<http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/academics.php>** (This is a direct link to the “Resources for Teaching and Training” section of the web site).

1. Research a work/family policy (e.g., flextime, teleworking, etc.) that you believe employers should develop a greater understanding about.
2. Define the issue. Note trends in the literature on implications of the policy for employer and employee effectiveness.
3. What are the benefits to employers who effectively implement this policy?

#### ***Families and Work Institute***

**[www.familiesandwork.org](http://www.familiesandwork.org)**

1. What is the *National Study of the Changing Work Force*?
2. What is the *National Study of Employers*?
3. Compare and contrast these surveys from the employer and employee perspective.
4. Think about an employer for whom you or acquaintances have recently worked. What trends from these studies provide understanding of the strategic nature of work/life issues? Which trends do you think are most useful for diversity management and why?

#### ***WorldatWork, Work-Life Home***

**[www.worldatwork.org/waw/home/html/worklife\\_home.jsp](http://www.worldatwork.org/waw/home/html/worklife_home.jsp)**

1. Assume you are working for a Fortune 500 company. Develop the rationale on the pros and cons of your employer subscribing to this web site for work/life information.

***U.S. Office of Personnel Management: Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules***  
**[www.opm.gov/oca/AWS](http://www.opm.gov/oca/AWS)**

1. Identify an alternative work schedule you are unfamiliar with and find an example of a private-sector employer using the schedule. Search online in *Business Week*, *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *the Economist*, *Fortune* or *Forbes Magazine*.

***U.S. Department of Labor (DOL): Leave Benefits***  
**[www.dol.gov/dol/topic/benefits-leave/fmla.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/benefits-leave/fmla.htm)**

1. If one has pregnancy complications, can this be counted against FMLA? Are there any diversity or workforce inclusion implications of this practice?
2. Research another policy on time off, such as vacations, on the DOL web site. Are employers required to give employees paid vacations? How might DOL regulations on vacation pay relate to diversity and inclusion issues?

# Class 2: Linking Work/Life Policies to Organizational Culture and Effectiveness

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the completion of this class, students will develop critical thinking skills to understand how to implement and link work/life policies to the overall HRM system, organizational culture and business objectives.

## OVERVIEW OF MAIN TOPICS

- Many organizations find it difficult to link work/life policies to organizational culture and effectiveness.
- Policy adoption is not the same as effective implementation.
- The U.S. approach to work/life issues is unique among industrialized countries.
- Organizational cultural stages of work/life implementation are reviewed.
- Organizational benefits of work/life policies are evaluated.

## TEACHING OPTION

This class can be presented in two parts, or instructors can choose to spend more time on the global case and have students complete the lecture content online or in a separate class.

## SUGGESTED READINGS

Kossek, E., & Hammer, L. (2008, November). Work/life training for supervisors gets big results. *Harvard Business Review*, 36.

Ryan, A., & Kossek, E. (2008). Work-life policy implementation: Breaking down or creating barriers to inclusiveness. *Human Resource Management*, 47(2), 295-310.

Kelly, E., Kossek, E., Hammer, L., Durham, M., Bray, J., Chermack, K., Murphy, L., & Kaskubar, D. (2008). Getting there from here: Research on the effects of work-family initiatives on work-family conflict and business outcomes. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 2, 1, 305- 349.

**Additional sources referenced in the PowerPoint presentation:**

Block, R. N., Berg, P., & Belman, D. (2004). The economic dimension of the employment relationship. In *The employment relationship: Examining psychological and contextual perspectives* (pp. 94-118). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cascio, W., & Young, D. (2003). The business case, or “why should my firm invest in family-friendly work policies?” In *Changing the metaphor: From work-family balance to work-family interaction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kelly, E. (2006). Work-family policies: The U.S. in international perspective. In *Work and family handbook: Multi-disciplinary perspectives, methods, and approaches* (pp. 99-124). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kossek, E., & Block, R. N. (Eds.) (2000). *Managing human resources in the 21st century: From core concepts to strategic choice*. Cincinnati OH: Southwestern/ITT Publishing.

Kossek, E., & Friede, A. (2006). The business case: Managerial perspectives on work and the family. In *The handbook of work-family: Multi-disciplinary perspectives, methods, and approaches* (pp. 611-628). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kossek, E. (2005). Workplace policies and practices to support work and families. In *Work, family, health, and well-being* (pp. 97-116). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kossek, E., & Distelberg, B. (2009). Work and family employment policy for a transformed work force: Trends and themes. In *Work-Life Policies* (pp. 3-49). Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.

Office of Personnel Management. *Handbook on alternative work schedules*. Retrieved from [www.opm.gov/oca/AWS](http://www.opm.gov/oca/AWS).

Stebbins, L. F. (2001). *Work and family in America: A reference handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Van Dyne, L., Kossek, E., & Lobel S. (2007). Less need to be there: Cross level effects of work practices that support work-life flexibility and enhance group processes and group-level OCB. *Human Relations*, 60, 1123-1153.

## SUGGESTIONS AND OPTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Questions for Class Discussion or Assessment on the Reading

1. Discuss the differences between formal work/family policy adoption and informal implementation. Give examples from an organization with which you are familiar. If you have any stories or examples of successful organizational change or effective implementation, please describe.
2. What does the research tell us about the effectiveness of work/family policies?
3. What are family-supportive supervisory behaviors? How might you design a training intervention to increase this behavior?
4. Why are work/life policies both barriers and supports to workplace inclusion?
5. Assess the development stages when implementing work/life policies and give examples of those stages based on an organization with which you are familiar.

### International Work/Life Case Study and Exercise

You are the director of human resources for a global U.S. company. You need to set up a weekly two-hour virtual meeting for a global team that supports HR clients in multiple countries. Your team members are in New York, UAE, Switzerland, China and Australia. In a global team you were part of while working in Europe, you often had to get up in the middle of the night to participate in virtual meetings. You resented this, especially because you had just had a baby and had been getting limited rest. Managers from some of the non-U.S. organizations complain about meeting times interfering with their work/life needs.

You find an online tool ([www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html)) to figure out times and dates for different countries.

1. What time did you pick for your meetings and what tools did you use for the meeting? Why?
2. Discuss the criteria and process you used to set up the meetings.
3. How would you evaluate work/life effectiveness?

Suggested responses to the questions:

- Balanced equity and efficiency concerns (e.g., not the same countries always inconvenienced, but a system for setting up meetings that was not overly complex to be unrealistic).
- Considered work/life effects on sleep and family.
- Considered implementation and cultural challenges noted in the case.
- Applied the work/life inclusive workplace definition effectively.

Ask if any students are from or lived in these countries and have any experiences with work/life culture and norms in those countries.



### Instructor's Note

Divide the class into groups to solve the case.

# Class 3: Managing Flexstyles and Work/Life Relationships

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the completion of this class, students will understand flexstyles and the different approaches to managing work/life relationships. Flexstyles can help employees, managers and teams have productive discussions about work/life preferences and implement flexible practices to effectively manage work/life relationships.

## OVERVIEW OF MAIN TOPICS

- Learn about flexstyle preferences as measured by the Flexstyle Indicator®.
- Explore the benefits, pitfalls and characteristics associated with each style and sub-style.
- Learn general strategies to gain control and be more satisfied.

It is recommended that students complete the life bucket exercise and the flexstyle assessment before class. If you use class time to complete the assessments, you will probably want to present this content over two classes.

## SUGGESTED READINGS

Kossek, E., & Lautsch, B. (2008). *CEO of me: Creating a life that works in the flexible job age* (pp. 1-40). Upper Saddle, NJ: Wharton School Publishing.

Kossek, E., & Lee, M. (2008). Implementing a reduced-workload arrangement to retain high talent: A case study. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 11*, 1, 49-64.

Additional sources used in the PowerPoint slides for this class:

Bond, J. T., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E., & Prottas, D. (2002). *Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce: Executive summary No. 3*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Questions for Class Discussion or Assessment of the Readings

Compare and contrast employer and employee perspectives on how flexstyles and flexibility should be managed using examples from your own work experience or from someone you know.

1. What actions can HR leaders take to address these varying perspectives?
2. Have you observed any positive examples where employees' flexstyle preferences were met and employer productivity needs were achieved?
3. Have you ever worked on a team or for a manager who had a different flexstyle than you? What were some of the challenges? How did you resolve your differences?
4. How can flexstyles vary across gender, generations, cultures, jobs and industries?
5. Consider linkages to alternative work arrangement implementation and career development.

### **Research or Evaluation Assignment**

1. Access the work/life and diversity research web site at <http://ellenkossek.lir.msu.edu/>. There are many studies on this site, along with the links to major studies funded by NIH and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Download a few of the technical reports on either health or reduced-load work or unions and work/life flexibility.

From these research reports, develop two practical findings for HR practitioners on why work/life policies and flexibility are key workforce diversity management issues.

### **Class Exercises**

It is recommended that instructors read *CEO of Me: Creating a Life That Works in the Flexible Job Age*. These exercises can take place over two classes instead of one, depending on the amount of interaction and discussion desired.

#### **Life Bucket Analysis**

After doing the assigned reading in Kossek and Laustch (2008), students should complete the life bucket analysis on pages 12-13 and the self-assessment on pages 32-33. Ask them to compare and contrast their present and ideal life bucket analysis based on how they currently divide their time in the 168 hours in a week, including sleep, commuting time, work, family, etc. How are their life buckets similar and different?

#### **Finding Your Flexstyle Exercise**

Ask students to add their flexstyle scores on pages 32-33. In class, during the lecture discussion, have students discuss their findings in small groups.

SHRM members can download this case study and many others free of charge at  
[www.shrm.org/education/hreducation/pages/cases.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/education/hreducation/pages/cases.aspx).

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