



Work Life

**Work-life balance finally
fulfills its promise.**

In partnership with:


**Alliance for
Work-Life Progress**
An Affiliate of WorldatWork®

▶ During the 20 years that Kimpa Moss has worked for RSM McGladrey, an accounting, tax, and business consulting firm based in Bloomington, Minn., her schedule has “changed with the seasons of my life,” she says. Moss, 44, a mother of four children ranging in age from seven to 20 years old, has worked all permutations of full-time, part-time, and flex-time, depending on where she was at any given stage in her life. “None of it has had any negative impact on my career,” says the senior vice president of integrated client services. “I never felt I had to ignore my life outside of the office.”

In 2003 Moss was a member of RSM McGladrey’s executive management team. When she adopted a five-year-old boy from Russia, Moss’s managers took in stride the two lengthy trips she needed to make to complete the adoption process. “I didn’t even know how long the second trip would be and I didn’t have my BlackBerry with me. I wasn’t checking e-mail or calling the office,” she recalls. Her manager’s response when he found out that Moss was adopting her son: “Congratulations. We’ll figure out the rest of the details for work.”

Now that she is part of management, Moss says the most significant thing she can do is model the behavior she wants from the teams she works with. “I’m not concerned with face time. I don’t care if the work gets done

“I never felt I had to ignore my life outside of the office.”

at home, in the office, at Starbucks, or the park,” she says. “My assistant has changed her schedule three times in the past year to suit her family life, and that’s okay.” She’s quick to point out that she views none of this as charity. “We retain people we might otherwise lose, not to mention the fact that it simply reduces daily stress. When we’re in front of clients, I want them to see calm energy, not nervous energy. This is just smart business.”

▶ **Unleashing Human Capital**

A major paradigm shift is taking place in the work-life arena. The traditional programs and policies that were put into place more than a decade ago to address the ever elusive notion of balancing work and life—telecommuting, job sharing, flextime, to name a few—are giving way to something far more powerful and, experts say, more sustainable. What’s driving this progress is the realization by increasing numbers of companies that human capital—yes, that’s you—is an asset of monumental proportion. In fact, say the experts, many of the current shifts in this arena are occurring because smart managers have finally grasped one crucial idea: A company only really competes on the value of its people—its human capital.

“The way we’re moving forward is by taking a much broader and more encompassing view of what work-life means,” says Sandra Burud, a professor at Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, Calif., and co-author of *Leveraging the New Human Capital* (Davies-Black, 2004), a book that looks at changing employee and business needs. “Leaders are beginning to realize that the increasing



complexity of people is an advantage. We're in a human capital environment, and that's where new ideas and real relationships come from." You can't just give people a flexible schedule and feel the issue is solved, adds Burud. You must give them "more control over their career paths and more choices for how they integrate all aspects of their lives."

A number of factors are coming together to fuel this new way of thinking, says Burud and other work-life experts. For starters, technology has all but erased the dividing line between what can be done in the office and what can be done elsewhere. Rob Rolleston, a lab manager with Xerox Corp. in Rochester, N.Y., has two children, ages 14 and 16. If he has early evening plans with his kids and a late-afternoon teleconference is going to interfere, he'll leave work early to get the commute out of the way, conduct the teleconference from his home at the specified hour, www.fortune.com/sections

and still have enough time for his children. "The call, and what gets accomplished, are the same no matter where I am," he says.

► **Keeping Talent Onboard**

The evolution into a more tech- and information-centric world is making it abundantly clear that we live in an age of the knowledge worker. Hanging on to talent is more than a matter of reducing turnover costs, say work-life experts. It's the only truly sustainable competitive edge a company has.

Indeed, a 2005 study by the Families and Work Institute, a New York-based nonprofit research organization, found that supporting employees and their families is not the main reason that companies offer work-life programs in the first place. Of the more than 1,000 companies included in the study, nearly half report that they provide these initiatives to recruit and retain workers, and another 25% use them to enhance productivity and

commitment. Says Ellen Galinsky, an author of the study and one of the most influential voices in the work-life arena: "Work-life policies and programs are no longer a human resource response. They are a business response to the profound changes that have occurred in the workplace."

Changing demographics are certainly part of this seismic shift. Over the next decade 77 million baby boomers—the generation that pretty much defined 80-hour workweeks—will be eligible for retirement. Coming up behind them are 20-somethings, a generation that demands an active life outside the office, flexible schedules, and job-to-job mobility. What does this say about corporate loyalty? It's a quaint relic of their parents' time. "Younger workers are much more willing to trade the traditional rewards of success—more money, a bigger office—with the things that they view as more valuable, such as more time for family or the time to volunteer. Companies clearly have to

Practicing What He Preaches

Steve Tait gives his people flexibility to do what they need to do.

Steve Tait, president of RSM McGladrey, an accounting, tax, and business consulting firm in Bloomington, Minn., has 8,000 people to please every day: his employees. When he joined the firm in 2003 he decided to make that task easier by granting them more autonomy in managing their lives in and out of the office. Here Tait, 46, talks with FORTUNE Custom Projects' Susan Caminiti about how his policies work.

Why make flexibility about work hours and personal time a priority at your company?

If you create the right conditions for employees, everything else becomes easier. You attract the right kind of talent, you retain the right kind of talent, and ultimately you derive more value for your clients. So we recruited a full-time human-resources person to work on this area for us, which we hadn't done before.

What were some of your initiatives, and how were they received?

The key is giving people the flexibility to do what they have to do when they need to do it. So we now offer compressed workweeks, telecommuting, job sharing, flexcareer, flextime, reduced work schedules, and flexyear, which allows an employee not to work at various times such as the summer. We back all of this up with training for our managers and employees.

How do you know if your program is working?

When you're starting these programs you have to make a leap of faith because it's very difficult to pinpoint direct cause and effect. We know we're retaining employees longer. We also know through employee satisfaction surveys that people feel less stress about getting the job done. They feel they have more control.

What are some of the most common mistakes that companies make with work-life programs?

They institute short-lived programs that aren't sustainable. A successful work-life program has to be thoughtfully implemented. For example, when we first began to roll out our work-life programs to senior managers, we did it



via a webcast, expecting them to embrace everything and bring it to their employees. It didn't work. So we decided to bring those folks together in person and work through different issues and scenarios with everyone present. It was much more effective.

The second most common mistake is not asking employees what they want. We use work-life surveys, satisfaction surveys, and other tools to help us understand exactly what employees need. The policies and benefits have to be customized.

As the head of the company, what's the most important message you can send to your employees about work-life?

We're not just doing this because we love our employees. I want them to also understand that this is a strategic business issue.

How do your employees know that they won't be penalized for leaving the office early or working from home?

I'm happy to be the role model. There was a period in my life when I was leaving the house at 5:00 A.M. and getting home at 9:00 P.M. Now I spend 35% to 40% of my time working from my home office. Work, without question, is not the most important thing in my life. That doesn't mean I'm not committed to what I do. But my family—my wife and my daughters—is the anchor point in my life. Because of that I believe that I make a better contribution at work.



► Resource Guide

Business Wire, a Berkshire Hathaway company, is the global leader in commercial news distribution. We provide targeted solutions for your news release and multimedia distribution, document disclosure, online newsroom management, and media research needs. www.businesswire.com

HR Marketer is the #1 Internet marketing and media visibility service for companies selling to human resource departments and/or targeting employee benefit brokers and consultants. www.HRmarketer.com

use different motivators with this generation, because the old ones aren't working," says Kathie Lingle, director of the Alliance for Work-Life Progress (AWLP), an organization that helps companies develop the best methods to improve work-life effectiveness.

► Young Workers' Demands

Jessica Wood, 25, certainly embodies the upcoming generation of workers. After graduating from Oregon State University with a degree in chemical engineering, Wood says she knew it was time for a change. "I just wanted to spread my wings and escape my

comfort zone," she says. Those wings took her all the way across the country where she landed a job as a product delivery engineer at the Xerox facility. "My job is about product consistency with the chemicals and toners used in our machinery," she says. "It's sort of like making one perfect margarita and then being able to reproduce that same quality in a barrel."

Soon after arriving at Xerox, Wood created a website for new, young hires like herself. The site—www.rochesterafterhours.com—highlights local social events such as concerts, picnics, sporting events, and

clubs. "When I moved here I didn't know anyone, so I figured this would be a good way to socialize and meet other people," says Wood. The site—a grass-roots project—is more than just a social hub, she believes. "The attitude of the young workers I know at Xerox and elsewhere is 'work hard and play harder.' If I need to work ten hours in a day, I'll do that. But then I know I can work the next morning from home. As long as I'm producing for the company, there really isn't an issue about where I am."

What does Wood think Xerox gets in return for that attitude? "People don't want to leave this company,"

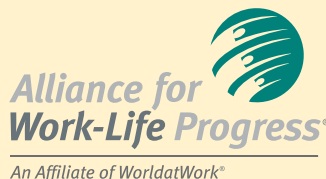
► Ensuring Success in Work and Life

Imagine a world where every employee is satisfied and engaged, having a direct impact on stellar business performance and results. Imagine a world where business leaders and employees have a common understanding of each other's needs and priorities, and collaborate to ensure success in work and life. It's already happening in many workplaces, and it can happen in yours, too.

Alliance for Work-Life Progress is a global network of professionals—practitioners, academics, consultants, researchers, and service providers—committed to advancing work-life effectiveness. Founded in 1996, AWLP® facilitates work-life thought leadership, research, and practical strategies to influence better integration of work, family, and community. Through professional development,

publishing, and networking, AWLP helps the work-life profession quantify the ROI of corporate work-life programs. Known for its leadership of National Work & Family Month each October, AWLP also sponsors the Work-Life Innovative Excellence Award and the new Rising Star award to recognize exemplary work-life practitioners.

AWLP is now part of WorldatWork (www.worldatwork.org), the total rewards association. The associations joined forces in 2003 to advance total rewards, which includes focusing on an employment value proposition centering on work and life. You and your organization can benefit from this expertise, and you can help shape the future—a future where employees feel successful both at work and at home. For more information, visit www.awlp.org or call 800-874-9383.



she says. "I mean, sure, there's always going to be someone who can offer more money or a bigger title, but then what? I grew up watching my father travel about 75% of the time, and I always wished he could have been around more. I truly believe that life is more than just the money or the stuff you have."

► **An "Anywhere" Worker**

The Dow Chemical Company is another company that realizes the role that work-life balance plays in maximizing human capital. The company also prides itself on being gender-neutral. A spokeswoman says that 43% of all the flexible work arrangements at the company are utilized by men.

Mark Stewart is a good example of how Dow makes it work. Stewart, 32, joined the company's Freeport, Texas, location in 1997 as a senior research specialist and admits that a flexible work arrangement "wasn't even on the radar back then." But earlier this year Stewart mentioned to his supervisor that he would be starting business school this fall. Together they came up with the idea that Stewart would work from home every other Friday. "Most of the meetings I'm in are teleconferences, so where I am making the call from is not really an issue," says Stewart. In addition, working from home on those Fridays makes calls to Europe—a regular part of his job—that much easier. "I'm not rushing to work to get on the phone before their workday ends," he adds. The arrangement also has personal benefits: Not only does it help cut down on a nearly two-hour commute, but it also allows him to get to his 4 P.M. class on time.

Curtis Swisher, Stewart's supervisor, says the arrangement has "no impact on Mark's performance. I've worked a flexible schedule in the past, my spouse works one, and so I am a strong advocate of it." Swisher also points out that in Texas the demand for talented engineers is only going to grow in the next several years. "In Houston, the war for chemical engineers right now is fierce. "With energy www.fortune.com/sections

► **The Right Balance**

George Mason University, recognized internationally for its innovation, diversity, and entrepreneurial spirit, offers a wide array of work-life programs to its faculty and staff. From flextime and telework, commuter choice, training, relocation packages, reward and recognition programs, and tuition assistance, to childcare and elder-care resources, Mason is committed to helping its employees find just the right work-life balance.

George Mason University has been recognized by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, the Northern Virginia Family Services and the *Washingtonian* magazine, among others, for its quality of work-life and employee programs.

To learn more, visit hr.gmu.edu.



costs so high there is strong demand for engineers who can help develop different and new ways of creating value," he says. "As a company we have to do everything we can to attract and keep the best ones."

A more sophisticated understanding of work-life concerns is also beginning to penetrate organizations outside the corporate sector. Allan Merten, president of George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., recalls that when he was interviewing for his job in 1996, the staff was pretty much taken for granted. "In all the documents about the university, there was hardly anything written about the staff," he recalls. "Of course, the success of the university depends upon having world-class thinkers on the faculty, but without a motivated and solid support staff the university just doesn't run."

► **A Productivity Surge**

Once Merten realized he could make a difference to staffers, he rolled up his sleeves. Rather than have the staff on a rigid 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. schedule, he took a page from the faculty book. "The university is running with classes from eight in the morning until ten at night," he explains. "I thought we could be more aggressive with our policies on flextime, job-sharing, and telecommuting by allowing staff to adjust their schedules within those hours," he says.

Now GMU also goes to great lengths to recognize its staff with awards, prizes, and commendations, actions that Merten believes pay

huge dividends. For example, each month GMU selects an employee of the month. "This is my show," Merten says proudly. "The whole thing is done in my office and the person's family is invited." Prizes include gas cards, a choice parking space for the month, and gift certificates to local restaurants and sporting events, to name a few.

The payback from such changes? "People just feel good about the place," Merten says. "Productivity is up, turnover is down, and people genuinely will go beyond their jobs when they feel they are respected and appreciated."

As the conversation continues to shift away from the policies and procedures of work-life into the broader realm of human capital management, progress is inevitable. "When you can align what's right for the organization with what's right and good for the employee, then everyone wins," says Claremont professor Sandra Burud. "That's not accommodation. That's strength."

—Susan Caminit

Editorial Consultant: Karol Rose
Ms. Rose, author of Work-Life Effectiveness: Bottom-Line Strategies for Today's Workplace (WorldatWork, 2006), consults and conducts executive briefings and training on work-life and human capital issues. Her current focus is on using cutting-edge technology and flexibility to recruit hidden talent.

For more information about our Work-Life sections, or to order reprints, contact Debbie Linehan at 212-522-4632.