

UPDATE: SUMMER 2004

The 'Right to Request' flexible working is one year old and the consensus is it's been a great success. Nearly a million parents asked for a change in their working hours in the last year. Eight out of ten requests were granted – by employers large and small. And another one out of ten were partly accepted, or a compromise reached.

Nine out of ten employers say they have no significant problems with the new right.

And seven out of ten say they would consider flexible working requests from all staff – well timed as the government has just launched a debate on extending flexible working rights to carers.

But not everyone is painting such a rosy picture. In early 2004 the Maternity Alliance conducted its own survey and found that:

- While 68% of parents had their request for flexible work agreed or reached 'a compromise', 27% of these parents had suffered detrimental treatment. Typical examples include: being forced to accept a cut in pay, demotion or heavy workloads in order to secure at least some flexibility in their work.
- 45% of parents said their employer did not know or did not follow the correct procedure for considering their request for flexible work.

- 92% of parents whose employers refused their request for flexible work said they did so for reasons not allowed by the law.

For more information go to:

www.maternityalliance.org.uk

Not sure if your managers are following correct procedures?

HalsAllan have developed two checklists designed to guide managers through the correct procedure and help them fully evaluate a request for flexible working. Contact us for copies free of charge.

WORKING FAMILIES HAS JUST LAUNCHED ITS EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS FOR 2004.

If you're proud of the way your organisation is supporting staff in their search for work-life balance, why not enter? Full details can be found at:

www.workingfamilies.org.uk/eya

Interim Manger or Consultant – which to hire?

People Management online currently carries an article explaining the differences between Interim Managers and Consultants and the circumstances in which it would be appropriate to hire one or other.

At HalsAllan we offer clients a third choice:

Before becoming consultants, we both held senior line HR roles. We bring to clients the specialist expertise of Consultants combined with the operational understanding of Interim Managers.

We will work with you to plan and implement changes, and to transfer our specialist knowledge to your own staff, ensuring the sustainability of those changes.

Unlike interim managers we will agree with you a very specific project plan, with identified timings, milestones and outcomes and will focus our energies only on meeting these.

We are a small specialist consultancy so with us 'what you see is what you get' –no danger of 'buying the expert and getting the trainee'.

For the last three years we've been involved in a range of DTI Challenge Fund projects covering issues such as policy audits and updates, developing the business case, convincing managers, training staff and advising on work-life balance accreditation.

To find out what we get up to have a look at our web log:

<http://halsallan.blogspot.com>

Book Reviews



The Balancing Act: Work-Life Solutions for Busy People by Fiona Parashar Simon and Schuster 2003 ISBN 0 7432 3112 0

Parashar approaches the work-life balance dilemma from a coaching perspective. Her emphasis is on getting the work bit of the equation right, and then the rest will follow.

The main tenet of her argument is that living a stressed and busy life is a personal choice. There are no valid reasons for doing so, just surface excuses underpinned by deeper fears – of not doing the right thing, of losing our jobs, of the unknown.

No two people have an identical picture of what work-life balance means for them; and it's a dynamic picture changing in response to life events. It's not necessarily about spending less time in the office but about feeling productive and positive about what we do while we're there.

For most people, achieving their 'personal band of balance' is about small adjustments and dealing successfully with the small, but personally important events.

In her experience, as in ours, achieving balance comes down to a few simple skills: the confidence to be assertive about our needs, effective communication which enables us to be authentic at work; and personal control – of our time, and our life choices!

Business Across Cultures by Fons Trompenaars and Peter Woolliams Capstone 2004 ISBN 1 84112 474 5

Trompenaars and Woolliams suggest cross-cultural theory has partly stagnated and is now too constrained by the original bipolar models used to describe it from the 1970s. Too much of its development is influenced by Anglo-American research and thinking. It's time to offer an alternative to simply recognising cultural differences and develop ways of crossing these.

In this book we are offered steps towards a systematic approach of 'cultural due diligence' to apply to business processes.

We are introduced to four extreme stereotypes of corporate culture – the Incubator, the Eiffel Tower, the Guided Missile and the Family. Where a business needs to move from one model to another, we are shown examples of the typical dilemmas involved and provided an outline template of how to tackle them.

While the chapter on HR is a little sketchy, it will be the subject of a further title so we can expect it to be dealt with in more detail later.

This is not a 'toolkit' in the sense of a detailed how-to-do-it guide, but it is a well-drawn map marking obstacles and opportunities the authors have experienced. The choice of route is in the hands of the reader.

Does your work-life balance programme support your diversity agenda?

Work-life balance is individually defined and influenced by a person's values, beliefs and culture. It is also shaped by individual needs which vary across groups and lifestyles.

HalsAllan runs a half-day open workshop (*The diversity agenda in work-life balance*) designed to raise awareness of the needs of different cultural groups and provide guidance on developing inclusive work-life balance and flexible benefits policies.

For more information, contact us or see our details on:

www.trainingpages.com

You will find a full list of our workshops on Training Pages.

This update has been brought to you by the directors of HalsAllan:

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