Binge-time careerism, compressed hours, zig-zag careers, nomadic workers, virtual office, keyboard corporations, cluster communities, techvilles, shadow careers, demuting, non-linear working patterns, swing time.

Changing the way we work.
The Chief Executive’s Statement

Less conventional, more inventive ways of working can realise the full potential of businesses and people. Transforming the Workplace.
Imagine a world where greater choice and economic opportunity for individuals results in increased productivity and profitability for businesses...

The world of work is changing rapidly - shifting labour markets, the challenges of globalisation, the 24/7 society and changing work-life needs and aspirations of individuals. The time is ripe for innovation and a dynamic forward-thinking approach to how the workplace is organised and how individuals access opportunities in the 21st Century.

Some employers are leading the field and already see opportunities to attract a more diverse workforce and raise productivity by opening up new ways of working. Others tell us they are open to fresh thinking but are unsure how to put it into practice.

Working together with employers and others, the EOC’s investigation into transformation of work will explore and develop innovative models and solutions to better match the workplace of the future with the workforce of the future.

A workplace of the future?

“We run as a virtual firm, all our lawyers and typists/support staff work from home on total flexi-time and flexi-holidays. We have no offices.

“We get incredibly-high-quality lawyers from top firms joining us because of the lifestyle they can achieve. We would never attract those lawyers to a small firm like ours without this flexibility. We have never had any issue with trust or how long people have worked etc. Good professional people know what hours to work and don’t need it enforced.” - Woolley & Co, Solicitors

It’s not just big business...

“Everyone who comes to Listawood is surprised by the degree of flexible working and how easy it is. It’s allowing us to become an agile manufacturer with quick and flexible responses to customer needs... work patterns are extraordinarily diverse and we’ve found that flexibility is a two-way street. It isn’t just about us allowing our staff to work the hours they need - what we’ve found is that staff repay our flexibility with a commitment to help the company when it needs it.” - Arthur Allen, MD, Listawood, Small manufacturing company with under 200 staff

“Working in a flexible working environment allows me to look after my elderly parent and to balance my work and caring responsibilities.” - Part-time worker with caring responsibilities

“Because I work in IT, I can work remotely from my home (which) I can do in the evenings after I’ve dealt with the children. It is very convenient and fits round the childcare.” - Lone parent

Work Foundation research has found that 88% of people believe that employers should offer flexible working to all staff.

The EOC discovered that 83% of girls and 68% of boys would like a job that would allow them to combine work and family responsibilities.
The Production Line

Can be a lot more productive by being flexible, working fewer hours more efficiently, delivering more wealth and leisure at the end of the line.
Increasing productivity in manufacturing

Unilever Foods UK runs a 24/7 operation at their factory in Essex. Through negotiations with their unions, they introduced annualised hours, a seven-day continuous shift working and abolished overtime as part of a modernisation exercise to halt spiralling labour costs and low productivity, which was damaging competitiveness. The benefits have been enormous with a huge increase in employees’ leisure time and dramatic improvements in operational efficiency - from around 40-50% in the first year, climbing to a peak of 70% by 2000. Basic pay has risen by 30-35%, all of which is pensionable, but this is offset by the massive reductions in overtime pay.

“People wanted to try and get things operating well rather than constantly focusing on the next overtime opportunity.” – HR Manager, Unilever Foods UK

Source: Managing Change, DTI

MSN – turning around the long-hours culture

A staff survey at MSN revealed that a massive 64% were considering leaving because of the company’s long-hours culture. Their MD led an extensive culture change programme to try and turn around this low staff satisfaction. Various options were put forward including working from home, flexible working, compressed week, and compressed fortnight. Managers were then asked to pilot the scheme, and tailor a programme to meet both their work-life balance needs and the business objectives. For example, the Sales Director leaves each day at 4:45pm and works from home on Fridays. A key component of this programme was management ‘leading by example’, to demonstrate the organisation’s commitment to transforming the mode of working.

The scheme was then rolled out across the organisation with great success. The increased flexibility has been used in a variety of ways. 75% of staff don’t have children, and many have used the opportunity to pursue an interest or hobby – one person learned how to play polo! Productivity has increased by 60% and customer service levels have improved by 80%. 90% of staff now want to stay with the company and their work environment is the envy of others in their sector.
The Board Room

Can be as accessible from home as it is from the office. It's about attracting and retaining talented people, using their talents creatively, offering room to manoeuvre.
Adopting an on-ramp

The management and technology consultancy firm Booz Allen (based in the USA) has initiated a ‘ramp-up, ramp-down’ flexible programme to allow professionals to balance work and life and still do the interesting and lucrative client work they enjoy. The key to the programme is the ‘unbundling’ of standard consultancy projects and identifying chunks that can be done by telecommuting or short stints in the office. For the company it is a way to retain links to valued consultants, and since many of these talented people (often women) will eventually return to full-time consulting employment, the company wants to be their employer of choice – and to keep their skills sharp in the meantime.

"Flex careers are bound to be slower than conventional ones, but in ten years' time you probably won't remember the precise year you made partner. The point here is to remain on track and vitally connected.” - DeAnne Aguirre, VP, Booz Allen

Source: Harvard Business Review

Keeping women on the path to partnership

In the mid-1990s turnover for female employees at Ernst & Young (E&Y) in the USA was considerably higher than among their male counterparts, and while equal numbers of both sexes were entering the company as auditors, only a tiny percentage of the partners were female. The company was losing talent, continuity on assignments and incurring massive recruitment costs.

To tackle this situation, E&Y set an ambitious new programme led by the company’s Chair. The features of the programme include developing and advancing women into leadership roles; inventive flexible working policies; the creation of professional women’s networks; a flexibility website where employees can track how certain flexible working arrangements have been implemented; and the evaluation of a manager’s performance in fostering an inclusive flexible work environment. Since this work commenced, the percentage of women partners has more than tripled, and the downward trend in retention of women at every level has been reversed.

Source: Harvard Business Review
Working Parents

Life and work don’t have to take separate paths. Innovative working methods pay dividends in lifestyle and productivity that could be right up your street.

Testing out ideas
‘Anytime, Anywhere’ - breaking the presenteeism culture

Out of BT’s 100,000-strong workforce, 75% are working flexibly - whether they are homeworkers, nomadic workers or on annualised hours. It has developed an ‘anytime, anywhere’ approach to working that allows many employees to control the hours and location of their working day. This approach has been driven by a move to an output-based or outcome-based performance management system, which measures not how much or how people work but what they deliver. Job design has been crucial in ensuring that employees have good work-life balance and can stay in control of their working time.

This flexibility has provided the organisation with tangible benefits including an estimated saving of £5m in recruitment costs by retaining 99% of their female employees who take maternity leave, an estimated £5-6m extra in terms of productive time saved through homeworking, and a 25% reduction in stress-related absence in its Customer Service Centres.

“We empower people to make decisions for themselves, and decisions about the quality of delivery are agreed with individuals. We hope this will help us prevent the slip into the kind of very intensified jobs which are almost dehumanised...In an organisation where 75% of people work flexibly we have broken the presenteeism culture. It is not about whether you are seen to be there or not, because most people actually aren’t...It is what you are seen to deliver and that is a major step forward in managing the cultural change.” – Caroline Waters, Director of People Networks, BT

Meeting increased competition for graduates

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) instigated a work-life balance project after research among its employees, post merger, found that 60% were dissatisfied with their work-life balance. Added to this was a recognition of the demographic trends, such as an ageing population, that would make competition ever more fierce for the best graduates. PwC launched an intranet site called PwC Lifestyle to provide staff with access to the different resources the firm was offering to help employees deal with their own work-life needs. The company supports a range of flexible arrangements including annual days, reduced days, reduced hours, flexible working and home-based working, as well as extended careers breaks. 70% of staff now feel satisfied with their work-life balance, 92% of requests have been approved and 92% of employees who have taken maternity leave have returned - up from 40%.

Source: Managing Change, DTI
The Office Junior

Why does work have to be at work, full-time or in office hours - if you can do it just as well or better with a little help at home? It could prove more productive.
The EOC's new investigation into the Transformation of Work will build on the findings from the EOC's investigations into occupational segregation and flexible working - in particular our discovery that many women are trading down and working below their potential at a time when employers and the economy need increasingly to make the best use of the talent available.

An outdated model

Despite the potential and the many examples of innovative employers, there are still workplace rigidities that restrict opportunities for parents, carers and employers. Some organisations are stuck in traditional and increasingly outdated models of work that are failing to meet anyone's needs.

Working together and drawing on the expertise and innovative ideas of the best employers, we hope to find some new and creative ways of transforming work to create real flexibility and believable choices for individuals and employers, turning conventional job design on its head to bring in the skills that are needed.

Wasted potential...Outdated ideas...

“...the less complicated the job (the more) it lends itself to part-time, because you are just looking for a bum on a seat as opposed to the continuity of the individual.”
- Manager, public sector

“I don’t think the company taps into us at all. They’ve got this huge resource of people like myself who’ve worked for a variety of industries and they could use us to improve things...but nobody’s ever asked us...It’s sad.” - Part-time worker operating below potential

“I was a divisional manager in an education institution before having a baby. My experience of attempting to work flexibly after returning from maternity leave was unsuccessful and humiliating: I had to undergo a whole day of interviewing in order to return to my old job, only for it to be given to a junior colleague because I had expressed a preference for reduced hours. The only flexible option offered was for me to become a PA, even though I had a good degree, 10 years' management experience and had handled million-pound budgets. Although I am currently in a management position, it has taken me years to get back to the level I was at before my maternity leave.” - Woman forced to work below her potential after maternity leave
The Rush Hour

We need a transformation where new models of working mean that people are not all jammed into the same travel and working times. Or the same working methods.
Throughout the investigation we will test out emerging findings through:
- our investigation advisory group comprised of key stakeholders including employers, policy-makers and unions;
- expert seminars; and
- symposia of influential and future thinkers.

Stage 1:
Choices and trends
The first stage of the investigation will look closely at lifecycle choices and routeways into work, and examine the key trends predicted in the next 20 years of Britain’s changing workforce. What are the work choices being made by women and men today? Are these different for different groups? Are the choices constrained for certain groups of individuals – those from ethnic minority groups, lone parents, women returners, graduates, carers? Are the routeways into work delivering for these varying groups? What is the evidence for future work trends, and what are the gender implications of the future workplace?

Stage 2:
What do employers and individuals think?
In the second stage, we will be conducting large-scale surveys of employers and individuals. We want to discover what employers think will best deliver for the 21st century and how key groups of individuals are accessing opportunities into work, and what constraints they feel are hindering them from realising their aspirations both inside and outside the workplace.

Stage 3:
Innovative models of work: A win-win solution.
In the third stage, drawing on the experience of business leaders and other key stakeholders and on our investigation findings, we will create new models of work. The new models will seek to deliver for business and the economy by increasing productivity and diversity in the workforce, and by meeting employees’ aspirations and work-life needs – creating a win-win solution.
A wider call for evidence

The Staff Car Park

Businesses and people are already transforming the workplace, building a competitive edge and meeting customer needs. Tell us how you go to work and where it gets you.
Binge-time careerism, swing time, zig-zag careers, nomadic workers, virtual office, keyboard corporations, techvilles, cluster communities, shadow careers, demuting, non-linear working patterns, compressed hours...

Are you delivering a workplace for the 21st century? Is your organisation a leader in developing an innovative approach to adapt to the changing workplace and workforce with real business benefits?

Are you working in an innovative way in order to meet your work-life needs and aspirations?

How you can help us
We want to hear from employers and individuals who are leading the way in transforming the workplace and balancing work-life needs. If you would like to be involved or can assist in any way, email us at: transformingwork@eoc.org.uk

Visit our website www.eoc.org.uk/transformingwork for further information and updates on our investigation.

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Free, confidential and impartial advice and information on sex discrimination and equal pay.

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