

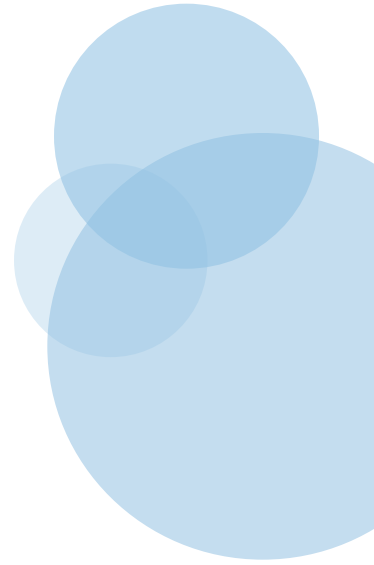
MAY 2011

Research

# Men and Work-Life Integration

## A Global Study

By Peter Linkow and Jan Civian, WFD Consulting  
in collaboration with Kathleen M. Lingle, WLCP, WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress



## Research and Writing Team

Peter Linkow, WFD Consulting  
Jan Civian, WFD Consulting  
Kathleen M. Lingle, WLCP,  
WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress

## Media Inquiries

Marcia Rhodes, marcia.rhodes@worldatwork.org, 480-304-6885  
Jan Civian, jan.civian@wfd.com, 617-219-8712

## Design

Senior Manager, Community, Creative and Web | Barry Oleksak  
Art Director | Jamie Hernandez  
Creative Services Manager | Rebecca Williams  
Graphic Designer | Hanna Norris

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WFD Consulting ([www.wfd.com](http://www.wfd.com)), based in Boston, is a management consulting firm with over 25 years of experience developing and implementing work-life, diversity and talent management solutions for Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and colleges and universities. WFD's action-oriented solutions are based on sound research and measurement, draw on its extensive global experience and emphasize innovation.

## About WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress®

WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress advances work-life as part of an integrated total rewards strategy. This alliance defines and acknowledges best practices and innovation, facilitates dialogue, and elevates work-life thought leadership. Each year, the alliance leads a national awareness initiative celebrating October as National Work and Family Month. Recognizing that work-life encompasses a wide array of programs, the WorldatWork Society of Certified Professionals established the Work-Life Certified Professional (WLCP®) designation in 2007.

## About WorldatWork

WorldatWork ([www.worldatwork.org](http://www.worldatwork.org)) is a global human resources association focused on compensation, benefits, work-life and integrated total rewards to attract, motivate and retain a talented workforce. Founded in 1955, WorldatWork provides a network of more than 30,000 members and professionals in 75 countries with training, certification, research, conferences and community. It has offices in Scottsdale, Arizona, and Washington, D.C.

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# Acknowledgements

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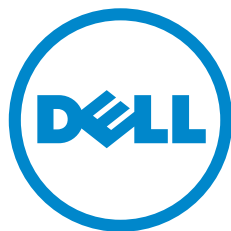
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## Introduction

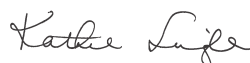
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A quarter century after its emergence and a decade after the business case was established, the work-life field is challenged to understand the barriers that persist in preventing both employees (especially men) from fully utilizing work-life options, and managers (often men) from fully supporting them. WFD Consulting and WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress partnered to investigate these challenges on a global scale. GlaxoSmithKline and Workplace Options were signature sponsors of the investigation, with additional funding provided by Bright Horizons Family Solutions, Ceridian, Dell, IBM and WorldatWork.

This report summarizes data collected in six countries in late fall 2010. The findings were presented and discussed at a retreat hosted by WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress in New Orleans in February 2011, which brought together an invited group of sponsors, work-life professionals, corporate leaders, content experts, fathers and observers of work-life trends. This report focuses on the key findings of the study and, more importantly, the implications and action recommendations discussed by retreat attendees, a predominantly male assembly. We hope we have started a conversation that will continue to generate stimulating dialogue and innovative solutions to a range of workplace issues that appear to defy obvious demographic trends and the social needs of workers, and which ultimately undermine the success of workers and the businesses that employ them.



**Peter Linkow**  
President, WFD Consulting



**Kathleen M. Lingle, WLCP**  
Executive Director,  
WorldatWork's Alliance  
for Work-Life Progress

## About the Study

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**B**ecause women are differentially affected by work-life challenges, program development and organizational culture change efforts have focused especially on the needs of women (e.g., managing maternity, child care, out-of-school time). Work-life professionals and organizations traditionally have believed that programs designed to improve work-life integration for mothers would improve the work-life integration of all, including men, those without children, and those with elder-care responsibilities. Hence, the field moved from the language of work-family balance to that of work-life integration.

Twenty years later, it is unclear whether men have achieved the full benefit of a workplace that embraces work-life integration. Men still perceive work-life programs as primarily serving the needs of women, and most use work-life options at lower

rates than women. This study set out to understand two questions:

- How can organizations remove the stereotypes and barriers that prevent men from using work-life options?
- What prevents leaders and managers — who often are men — from supporting the use of work-life options by others?

To address these questions, WFD Consulting designed a questionnaire that was fielded by a global market research firm to 2,312 employees in six countries: Brazil, China, India, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. Data were gathered in November and December 2010. Respondents worked in large (500-plus employees) for-profit organizations. The sample was balanced by gender and age. ■

# Results

Study results are organized into four areas (see Table 1), and data are examined by:

- Emerging countries (Brazil, China and India)
- Developed countries (Germany, United Kingdom and United States)
- Gender
- Leadership role.

## Identity

Stereotypes persist that women tend to be more identified with personal/family matters and men with their work. Two measures were constructed to investigate this: one for work identity and one for personal/family identity.<sup>1</sup> Work identity differed by gender in only two countries — India and Germany — and in those countries women scored higher than men.<sup>2</sup> Similar results were found on the personal/family identity scale: Men and women did not differ on this scale except in India, where women once again scored higher than men. *Among employees in large organizations, the stereotypes*

*of the work-identified male and home-identified female were not borne out.* In fact, in India and Germany, the women in the study were more work-identified than their male counterparts.

Employees in emerging countries reported much higher work identity scores than employees in developed countries. (See Figure 1.) In terms of personal/family identity, developed countries scored slightly higher, but not appreciably. In emerging countries and the United States, personal/family identity scores were correlated with employee engagement (i.e., higher levels of personal/family identity were associated with higher levels of employee engagement).<sup>3</sup> This suggests that in these countries investments supporting employees' personal/family lives may translate into outcomes related to engagement, such as higher productivity and retention.

## Challenges and Solutions: Managing Work and Personal/Family Life

The most pressing work-life challenges over the career life cycles of both men and women were examined, as well as the solutions respondents found most valuable.

TABLE 1: Four Study Themes and Framing Questions

Identity	Are men more work identified than women? Are women more personal/family identified than men?
Challenges and Solutions	What are the top work-life challenges men face and which work-life solutions do men use most frequently?
Organizational Culture	Do employees believe they are supported in using work-life benefits? Or do they believe there are repercussions for doing so?
Leadership Attitudes	Has the business case for work-life been made to company leaders? What are leaders' attitudes toward employees who are committed to their personal/family lives? What are leaders' concerns when evaluating a flexible work request?

<sup>1</sup> The work identification and personal/family identity scales were derived by factor analysis. The work identity scale included four items: "My personal/family life is only a small part of who I am," "most of my interests are centered around my work," "most of my personal life goals are work-oriented," and "my job/career is a major source of satisfaction to me." This scale had an estimated Cronbach's alpha of .77. The personal/family identity scale also included four items: "My work is only a small part of who I am," "most of my interests are centered around my personal/family life," "most of my personal life goals are oriented to interests outside of work," and "my personal/family life is a major source of satisfaction for me." This scale had an estimated Cronbach's alpha of .73. Special thanks to Jeffrey H. Greenhaus, Ph.D., of Drexel University for permission to use and adapt several of these items.

<sup>2</sup> Differences described in the report are statistically significant at  $p < .05$  or less. Because this report is intended for a general audience, the results of each statistical test conducted are not included.

<sup>3</sup> Employee engagement was measured with WFD Consulting's seven-item validated scale capturing affective attachment, alignment with organizational goals and discretionary effort. See Richman, A., Crawford, B.N., Rodgers, C., & Rogers, E.S. (1998) *WFD Workplace Survey: Validation Study*. Waltham, MA: WFD Consulting.

The survey offered 37 work-life challenges, including “none.” Items ranged from professional pursuits to life-stage issues (e.g., marriage, child-related issues, care for elders). For solutions, the survey offered 32 choices, including “none.” Choices included policies (e.g., flexible work arrangements) as well as numerous program options (e.g., assistance with child care, legal and financial services). For both questions, respondents could select up to three options.

Among 37 work-life challenge options, “financial stress” and “finding time to spend with family” topped the list for men and women alike. Some gender differences emerged, namely that men reported more difficulty finding time to spend with family, and women reported more difficulty finding time

for chores and errands. (See Table 2.) Establishing professional credibility at work was more important in emerging countries (15%) than in developed countries (7%) and did not vary by gender.

In terms of solutions, men and women around the world resoundingly sought workplace flexibility options to help them manage their work and personal/family challenges, starting first with when they begin and end their workday. (See Table 2.) Respondents also sought “just in time” flexibility: the ability to take time off on short notice for a personal/family matter. Consistent with expressed concern about difficulties in finding time for exercise, respondents valued health and wellness programs as well.

When employees were asked about their use of flexible work arrangements (on a regular or occasional basis), the results by country type were marked — and unexpected. While the researchers would have predicted that employees in developed countries would use workplace flexibility at greater rates than employees in emerging countries, this was not the case among respondents.

With the exception of flexible start/end times, respondents from emerging countries reported using flexible work arrangements at greater rates than those in developed countries. (See Figure 2.) Indeed, 27% of respondents in developed countries indicated they were not using any flexible work arrangement, compared to only 13% of respondents in emerging countries who reported no use of flexible work options. In emerging countries, women reported higher use of telework, remote work, compressed workweek and reduced hours than men. This is a pattern unseen in

FIGURE 1: Work and Personal/Family Identity Scores by Country

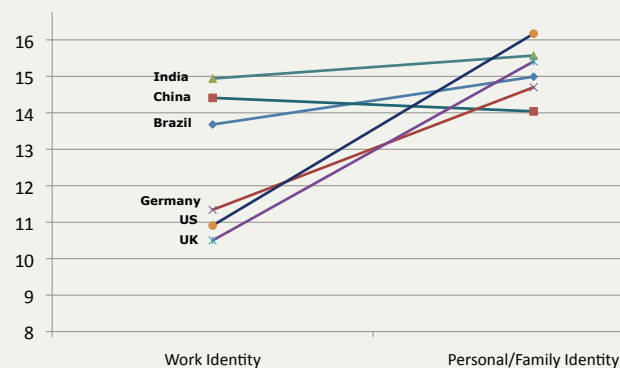


TABLE 2: Top Work-Life Challenges and Solutions by Gender

	Challenges			Solutions	
	Men	Women		Men	Women
Financial stress	23%	24%	Flexible start/end times	34%	35%
Finding time to spend with family	25%	19%	Take time off on short notice for personal/family matter	22%	22%
Finding time for personal hobbies, self-development	23%	19%	Health and wellness	16%	17%
Finding time for exercise	19%	21%	Compressed workweek	15%	14%
Finding time for chores, errands	11%	17%	Telework	14%	15%
Finding time to socialize with friends	16%	12%	Paid time off to care for a sick family member	13%	15%



developed countries, where the study replicates the findings of other research showing that men use telework and remote work at higher rates, while women are more likely to reduce their hours of work.

## Organizational Culture

Employees were asked a series of questions to measure perceptions of organizational support of personal/family responsibilities (the Support Index)<sup>4</sup> and the degree to which employees felt they had to be secretive in managing those responsibilities (the Stealth Index).<sup>5</sup> Again, differences by employee gender were small, as were differences by manager gender. Differences were notable, however, when comparing emerging and developed countries, with employees in emerging countries giving their employers higher scores on both support and the degree of stealth they felt was required.

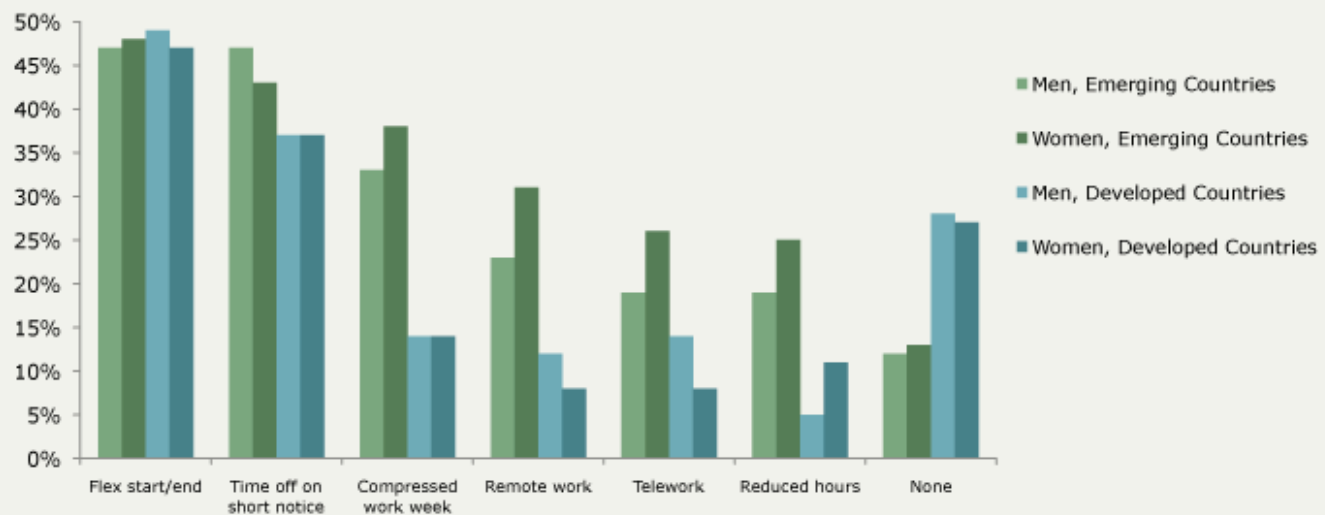
In the emerging countries, employees rated their companies moderately high for work-life support, translating to 3.83 on a 5-point agreement scale versus 3.45 in the developed countries. Paradoxically, Stealth Index scores were similarly high — translating to 3.66 in the emerging countries versus 3.2 in the developed countries. *Respondents seem to be reporting that, while*

*the leaders in their companies recognize the economic and organizational benefits of work-life initiatives and endorse them, those leaders also believe there are real costs associated with implementing work-life initiatives, sending mixed messages about the use of those programs and policies. (See Figure 3.)*

The results of another survey question drive home this point. Employees were asked if they had experienced or perceived they would experience any of the nine repercussions for using flexible work arrangements or other policies and programs designed to help employees manage their work and personal/family responsibilities. (See Table 3.) It is clear why Stealth Index ratings are high: Half or more employees in emerging countries and a quarter or more employees in developed countries directly experienced or perceived they would experience repercussions for using work-life programs.

For example, 68% of employees in emerging countries received or believed they would receive an unfavorable job assignment, while 35% in the developed countries held this view. The total number of repercussions trended much higher in emerging countries (average incidence of a repercussion = 3) than in developed countries (average incidence = 1).

FIGURE 2: Use of Workplace Flexibility by Country Type and Gender



<sup>4</sup> The Support Index was derived by factor analysis and included eight items: "I take the time I need to manage my personal/family life," "my work gives me the autonomy I need to manage my work and personal/family responsibilities," "my company is supportive of my personal/family life," "my immediate manager is supportive of my personal/family responsibilities," "employees are given ample opportunity to perform both their job and their personal/family responsibilities well," "there are people like me who advance in their career in this company," "offering employees flexibility in when and where they work is viewed as a sensible business practice," and "opportunities for growth and advancement are based on performance." This scale had an estimated Cronbach's alpha of .87.

<sup>5</sup> The Stealth Index was derived by factor analysis and included three items: "Attending to personal/family responsibilities during the work day is frowned upon," "the way to advance is to keep person/family matters out of the workplace," and "when I take time in the work day for a personal/family matter, I usually don't tell others at work." This scale had an estimated Cronbach's alpha of .63.

FIGURE 3: Support Index and Stealth Index Scores by Country Type

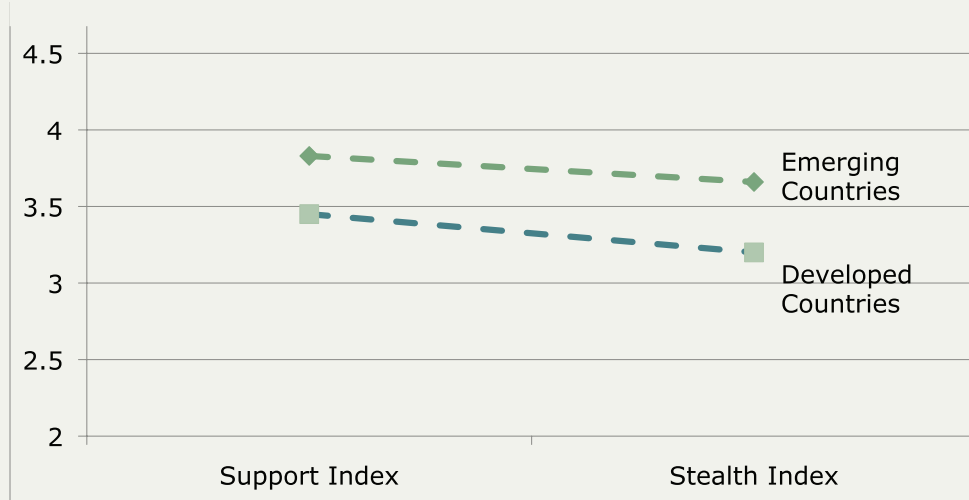


TABLE 3: Repercussions for Using Flexible Work and Other Work-Life Programs

		Emerging Countries	Developed Countries
Overtly or subtly discouraged from using policies and programs	Have Experienced	31%	11%
	Believe I Would Experience	31%	23%
Receive unfavorable job assignments	Have Experienced	40%	14%
	Believe I Would Experience	28%	21%
Receive negative performance reviews	Have Experienced	30%	12%
	Believe I Would Experience	28%	20%
Receive negative comments from co-workers	Have Experienced	36%	18%
	Believe I Would Experience	29%	23%
Receive negative comments from supervisor	Have Experienced	31%	18%
	Believe I Would Experience	29%	20%
Be excluded from social or business networks	Have Experienced	25%	8%
	Believe I Would Experience	25%	17%
Be excluded from consideration for career-advancing assignments	Have Experienced	26%	10%
	Believe I Would Experience	30%	29%
Be denied a promotion	Have Experienced	28%	12%
	Believe I Would Experience	29%	24%
Have my commitment to my job questioned	Have Experienced	29%	14%
	Believe I Would Experience	31%	23%

Clearly, an especially oppressive environment exists in the emerging countries for using work-life programs. In developed countries, while the environment was not as oppressive, negative consequences — real and imagined — exist for many workers regarding the use of work-life programs. Interestingly, in developed countries, fear of reprisal exceeds respondents' actual experience of reprisal. In emerging countries, experience with reprisal is comparable to or greater than fear of reprisal on most items. No differences by gender were found.

## Leadership Attitudes

A subset of questions was asked of leaders (executives, managers, supervisors) participating in the survey to understand their attitudes about work-life programs and policies, as well as their perception of employees who use them. The researchers sought to understand the degree to which business leaders held the notion that an ideal worker is “work dominant” (i.e., one who has few personal/family responsibilities and is always available to meet business needs).

The contradiction in leadership attitudes was profound. Respondents were asked, “How important are work-life programs (e.g., flexible work arrangements, dependent-care supports, health and wellness programs, EAP) to:

- Recruiting top talent

- Retaining top talent
- Employee satisfaction
- Employee productivity.”

In both emerging and developed countries, more than 80% of leaders responded “important” or “very important.” (See Figure 4.) No differences were found by gender in the developed countries, but female leaders in the emerging countries were more empathetic than men, recording more than 90% endorsement compared to more than 80% endorsement among men. Leaders — both men and women alike — avow support of work-life programs and policies. No differences were found in the developed countries when data were examined by leadership role, but managers and supervisors in emerging countries exceeded executives in their support of work-life programs and policies.

However, when asked about the attributes they value in employees, many leaders — especially those in emerging countries — valued workers who were “work dominant” and have few personal/family responsibilities. (See Table 4.) For example, half of leaders in emerging countries and 40% of those in developed countries agreed that “the most productive employees are those without a lot of personal commitments.” Additionally, almost three-quarters of leaders in emerging countries and half of leaders in developed countries agreed that the ideal employee

FIGURE 4: The Business Case for Work-Life by Country Type and Level



TABLE 4: Leader Attitudes About Workers' Personal/Family Commitments

	Emerging Countries	Developed Countries
Men who are highly committed to their personal/family lives cannot be highly committed to their work	54%	25%
Women who are highly committed to their personal/family lives cannot be highly committed to their work	57%	26%
The ideal employee is available to meet business needs regardless of business hours	71%	54%
Employees who use flexible work arrangements will not advance very far in this organization	49%	28%
The most productive employees in this organization are those without a lot of personal commitments	50%	40%

TABLE 5: Leaders' Concerns When Evaluating a Request for a Flexible Work Arrangement

	Emerging Countries				Developed Countries			
	Total	Execs	Mgrs	Sprvsrs	Total	Execs	Mgrs	Sprvsrs
Employee won't be accessible to meet an immediate need	49%	32%	54%	49%	35%	40%	33%	38%
Work will fall on others in the group	41%	32%	45%	34%	34%	37%	32%	38%
Service to customers will be negatively affected	38%	37%	38%	38%	28%	23%	31%	25%
I will not know whether the person is getting his/her job done	37%	31%	39%	35%	16%	23%	14%	17%
Additional time will be required of me	32%	30%	31%	35%	19%	12%	19%	21%
Work will fall on me	31%	28%	33%	29%	24%	42%	25%	20%
Other employees will resent it	27%	19%	30%	26%	25%	21%	24%	29%
Other employees will expect it	17%	10%	18%	18%	17%	6%	17%	18%
No concerns	5%	8%	4%	7%	25%	20%	26%	24%

is available to meet business needs regardless of business hours. While the researchers hypothesized that male leaders might endorse a "work dominant" model of the ideal worker at a higher rate than female leaders, this was not borne out. In emerging countries, women leaders were more likely than men to subscribe to these attitudes. In developed countries, no differences were found by gender.

To further understand leader sentiment, respondents were asked about concerns when evaluating an employee's request for a flexible work arrangement. Responses supported the "work dominant" paradigm

of the ideal worker (i.e., the employee who puts work first and can respond to work demands with immediacy). (See Table 5.)

The most common concern, expressed by half of leaders in emerging countries and more than a third in developed countries, was that employees wouldn't be accessible to meet an immediate work need. The second-most common concern was that "work will fall on others in the group," which was voiced by 41% of leaders in emerging countries and 34% in developed countries.

The issue of trust surfaced in emerging countries,

where 37% of leaders expressed concern that they “will not know whether the person is getting his/her job done.” This was of concern to only 16% of leaders in developed countries. No differences were found by leadership role in developed countries, but differences were found in emerging countries for three concerns:

- Employee accessibility
- Work falling on others
- Resentment by other employees.

Managers were more likely than executives or supervisors to hold these views. The only gender differences found on these items surfaced in the emerging countries where female leaders were more likely than male leaders to express concern that work would fall on them and that additional time would be required of them, and that they would not know if employees were getting their jobs done. ■

# Summary and Recommendations

To better understand and interpret the study's findings, WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress (AWLP) convened a group of work-life professionals, corporate leaders, content experts, fathers and observers of work-life trends to discuss the findings and fashion recommendations to address the issues raised. The gathering, which included approximately two dozen people and was predominantly male, took place in New Orleans on Feb. 8, 2011, preceding a larger AWLP National Work-Life Summit. The recommendations for each of the key findings are reported here.

## Finding

The gender stereotype that men derive their identities largely from work, and women largely from family and relationships, was not supported by the study. For the most part, men and women reported comparable work identity and personal/family identity. Work identification appears to be much higher in emerging markets. Both sources of identity were highly correlated with employee engagement in the emerging markets.

## Recommendations

The assumption that a key source of male identity is rooted in work and not in family and relationships, and that the opposite is true for women, is a major impediment to the effective integration of employees' work and personal lives. Men need to take the lead in debunking these myths that are so deeply embedded in our culture. To this end, and toward more effectively mobilizing the voice of men in support of work-life integration, we recommend that additional forums of predominantly men, similar to the AWLP Retreat in New Orleans, be organized on a regional basis

to review study findings and begin to chart a path toward resolving the questions that drove this study.

The findings of very high work identification in emerging markets are a reminder that we must be careful not to superimpose our values and beliefs on the work-life solutions being developed for employees in those markets. It is not that the needs of those in the emerging markets are so much different from our own; it is more likely that they view work through different lenses than employees in the developed countries. Consider, for example, how Americans viewed work after the Second World War, when the middle class was truly emerging, versus our attitudes toward work today. We must understand those lenses as we design work-life initiatives for emerging markets.

## Finding

Employees are deeply stressed about financial issues and they are experiencing the consequences of the time famine.

## Recommendations

Our data are consistent with other studies that have identified financial issues as a major source of stress.<sup>6</sup> Not only does stress affect the employee, but it affects spouses and partners and especially children.<sup>7</sup> A growing number of employees look to their employers for financial advice, particularly assistance with retirement planning and basic financial guidance.<sup>7</sup> Employees who experience financial stress spend part of their time on-the-job addressing their financial concerns.<sup>7</sup> A major way companies now assist employees with financial issues is through employee assistance programs, where utilization has been increasing, but employees are often unaware of

<sup>6</sup> See for example Garman, E.T., Junk, V.W., Kim, J., O'Neill, B.J., Prochaska-Cue, K., et al. (2005). *Financial Distress Among American Workers – Final Report*. Personal Finance Employee Education Foundation; Kaiser Family Foundation. (2008). *Economic Problems Facing Families: Survey Brief from The Kaiser Health Tracking Survey – Election 2008*; and American Psychological Association. (2008). *Economy and Money Top Causes of Stress for Americans*. June 4, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> American Psychological Association. (2010). *Stress in America: Key Findings*. [www.stressinamerica.org](http://www.stressinamerica.org).

<sup>8</sup> MetLife. (2008). *Sixth Annual Study of Employee Benefits Trends: Findings from a National Survey of Employers and Employees*.

<sup>9</sup> Garman, E.T., Junk, V.W., Kim, J., O'Neill, B.J., Prochaska-Cue, K., et al. (2005). *Financial Distress Among American Workers – Final Report*. Personal Finance Employee Education Foundation and Atkinson, W. (2001). *Drowning in Debt*. HR Magazine, 46(8).

the EAP itself and its financial counseling services and resources.<sup>10</sup>

The first recommendation is to substantially increase the visibility of EAP's existing financial services. Second, employers can offer courses and seminars on financial issues and connect employees to local financial counseling services, especially where they can obtain one-on-one advice. Ideally, employers should subsidize those services to the extent possible. Third, to reduce stress, companies should be as transparent as possible about their own financial situations and the level of job security that employees can expect. Finally, there is a variety of tools currently available that address financial stressors. AWLP has developed a "flexible rightsizing" tool that provides guidance to HR and line managers on making the business case to leaders for utilizing flexible work options to reduce costs and retain critical talent. This tool offers flexible rightsizing best practices from several companies and includes a cost/benefits analysis model to determine and compare the cost of layoffs versus flexible rightsizing options. In addition, there are a number of tools aimed at building resilience among individuals and organizations. Resilience, now a major priority of the U.S. Army, aims to make individuals more robust and better able to tolerate stress, and to shorten the recovery time from stress.

While we cannot add hours to the day, we can address the time famine by providing employees with more control over how, when and where they work. Flexibility, tailored to the needs of specific segments of the workforce, is the key to addressing the time famine. Yet, as we see in other study findings, leaders' attitudes and employees' fears stand in the way. We must find new, more robust ways to educate managers on flexibility and encourage leaders to support it.

## Finding

While the business case for work-life has been made, a large number of employees believe they have been punished for using work-life benefits or are fearful they would be. Furthermore, the attitudes of many leaders toward those who utilize work-life benefits are antiquated.

## Recommendations

This set of recommendations focuses on the fundamental contradiction raised by the study: leaders' endorsement of the business case and reluctance to

put it into action. To determine what to do about this conundrum requires an understanding of its causes, and there are many possible candidates. Looking at work-life from the perspective of organizational leaders, there are four, described below, that we believe are the most salient. Since we do not know which of these is driving leadership behaviors, we need to work on all four. We require solutions that minimize the risk, grab the viscera in addition to the mind, push work-life up the chain of priorities, and demonstrate the further ability of work-life to create a competitive advantage in the talent marketplace.

### Managing Risk

We have succeeded in defining the benefits of work-life, we just haven't convinced leaders that the benefits exceed the risks involved in implementation. Perceptions of risk are high because many leaders simply do not have a concrete view of how work-life and, in particular, flexibility and work innovation (redesigning how, when and where work is accomplished), really operate. In our research at WFD, we have observed that managers with deep experience managing employees on flexible work arrangements or redesigning work are much more supportive of work-life and receptive to it than those without that experience. The difference is that for the experienced group, work-life has been operationalized. The challenge, then, is how do we operationalize flexibility and work innovation for those who have not yet had significant experience with them?

- We need to encourage leaders who have experienced and embraced work-life to go on record in a compelling way. Not just executives, but leaders at all levels. This might involve creating a documentary that follows two or three managers and their teams through their flexibility and work innovation learning experiences. Or it might be a video of knowledgeable leaders describing their experience and testifying to its power.
- We have tools that address the fears that leaders harbor, like the concern that employees won't be accessible or that work will fall on the manager or others in the work group. We need to find simple ways to communicate how these tools and processes work and what the payoff looks like.

### Progressing Beyond Facts and Figures

To convince leaders of the efficacy of supporting workers throughout the career life cycle, we have assembled an imposing array of facts and figures.

<sup>10</sup> Employee Assistance Society of North America. (2008). *EASNA Survey Shows Increase in EAP Utilization*.



Yet, judging by leaders' attitudes, although necessary, numbers alone are not sufficient. We need to win both hearts and minds if we are going to engender the support that work-life so richly deserves. To help others truly *feel* the benefits of work-life requires two elements: story and dialogue. Story is the recounting of the benefits of experiencing work-life, of having found a place of integration between work and life or, more profoundly, the suffering of not achieving that integration. Most everybody, at least in white-collar roles, utilizes flexibility, whether it is going to a doctor's appointment or attending a child's athletic or cultural event without taking official time off, and manages their own work-life integration to a greater or lesser degree. Individuals, especially executives, must tell their stories. Telling your story often requires an act of courage. In its worst case, it is the courage to overcome the fear of reprisal and job loss. For executives, it may be about negatively affecting one's image or status. There is a power of the collective when people mutually and courageously tell their stories. A major challenge for the work-life community is how to support and encourage these acts of courage.

But story simply spoken is monologue. Truly compelling monologues can move people to action. Monologue, however, can be a one-way street. By contrast, dialogue invites others into the conversation and can go a long way to generating the courage it may take to tell one's personal story. The basis of dialogue is inquiry and inclusion. It is asking the other person for their story and then inquiring to deepen understanding. It is ensuring that others' voices are heard and listening with an attitude of wonderment.

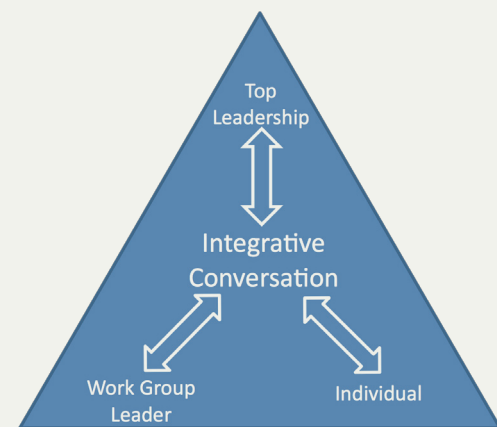
The model displayed in **Figure 5** emerged out of the conversation at WorldatWork's AWLP retreat in New Orleans. It frames story and dialogue as key components of an Integrative Conversation.

- For executive leaders, story is about their experiences of using flexibility. It is about how they are achieving work-life integration and it is about the regrets they have experienced when they have not achieved it. It is inquiring about other's stories and ensuring they are empowered enough to tell their stories.
- For Work Group Leaders it is the same as executives. Plus it is facilitating dialogue with the work group as a whole about how they will raise and consider the needs of all to ensure that one person's benefit is not another's disadvantage.
- For the employee, it is engaging each other in

dialogue, inviting and supporting colleagues to tell their story and finding the courage to tell their own. Creating an employee resource group for men, as has been done at Accenture and other companies, can provide the support for acts of courage.

- Finally, a toolkit for conducting meaningful dialogue needs to be developed.

**FIGURE 5: Developing a Culture That Supports Work-Life Integration**



### Moving Up the Priority List

Given the deep and complex challenges that many executives are facing, it is perhaps surprising that they have time to support work-life at all. Most executives would say they are committed to work-life integration, however, they just might say it is pretty far down the priority list. How do we move up the list? We in the work-life community have not made it easy. We have tended to start from our toolkit and seek ways to employ our tools for the benefit of the business. We need to reverse this. We need to start with the business challenges and then modify and upgrade our toolkit to respond to those challenges. This will take us out of our comfort zone, but it will force us to stretch the boundaries of our toolkit and innovate at a more rapid pace. It is a lot easier and more compelling for an executive to hear how we will help address the critical challenges that the company faces.



### Magnifying Competitive Advantage

The chief human resources officer of a well-known company that had deeply embraced work-life bemoaned a few years ago that work-life was losing its differentiating power in the talent market. His company had invested heavily in work-life innovation and he was observing his competitors, having learned from them, catching up. He implored his team to move to the innovative edge to set the standard even higher and create a competitive talent advantage. Cutting-edge innovation is critical for competitive advantage. In addition, we in the work-life community need to create barriers to entry — we need to make it very tough for our talent competitors to match our work-life programs. That does not mean we should give up the wonderful collaboration that is one of the hallmarks of our community. Right now, it is easy to establish a work-life initiative. There is ample information on the Internet and in books and articles to create work-life initiatives, but that doesn't give you competitive talent advantage. What gives you true competitive advantage is to institutionalize work-life in your organization's culture as SAS Institute has done, earning it the top spot on Fortune's "100 Best Companies to Work For" list the past two years.

### In Conclusion

We began this study in search of data on men's unique identity and work-life challenges. Interestingly, we found that the employed men and women in our study largely share work and personal/family identities. They also share very similar work-life challenges and workplace cultural barriers to managing their work and personal/family responsibilities. Instead of tailoring work-life messaging and programming to men, it seems time for organizations to recognize the very real interests and needs of workers — men and women alike — and implement policies and practices that allow employees the flexibility to manage both of these spheres effectively. The good news is that working men and women seek the same holy grail: success in both their work and personal lives. It's time to lay to rest the notion that these are women's issues only, and focus on individualizing workplaces to support business objectives and personal goals.

The ideas expressed in these recommendations, as in the study itself, are meant to provoke discussion and dialogue. To this end, we have established a group on LinkedIn to facilitate further dialogue. To access the dialogue, just sign in to LinkedIn and look for the Men's Study dialogue. We look forward to your thoughts and ideas. ■

## About the Authors

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**Peter Linkow**  
WFD Consulting

Peter Linkow, President of WFD Consulting, has more than 30 years' experience in research and consulting on achieving competitive advantage through talent, diversity and work-life strategies. He also consults on the dispersed workforce and challenges related to excessive workload. Among Linkow's written works are, "Meeting the Challenges of a Dispersed Workforce: Managing Across Language, Culture, Time, and Location" for The Conference Board; "Winning the Competition for Talent: The Role of the New Career Paradigm in Total Rewards" for *workspan* magazine; and "Is Your Culture Aligned with Diversity?" for *Profiles in Diversity Journal*.

Prior to joining WFD, Linkow consulted with numerous companies on formulating and implementing competitive business strategies and improving their strategic thinking. Earlier in his career, he was CEO of two organizations serving people with disabilities, and a professor of management at Boston University, where he conducted research on strategy and strategic thinking. Linkow received his MBA from Harvard Business School, as well as an Ed.M. in educational policy and an MS in psychology from Harvard and Indiana Universities, respectively. He received his bachelor's degree from DePauw University.



**Jan Civian**  
WFD Consulting

Jan Civian, senior consultant for WFD Consulting, focuses on assessment, including dependent care, child care center feasibility, retention, diversity and employee engagement. A survey research specialist, Civian has expertise in study design, questionnaire construction, and data analysis and presentation. She has particular expertise in women's advancement measurement and strategy, and has developed a mentoring curriculum for early-career women. Civian has conducted several national research studies and co-authored "The New Career Paradigm: Attracting and Retaining Critical Talent," a 2006 study of employee career patterns and preferences. She also is co-editor of the May 2008 special issue of *Community, Work & Family*, featuring papers that draw on WFD's database to examine workplace flexibility.

Prior to joining WFD, Civian conducted research in higher education and was principal investigator of a study on women's retention in scientific careers. She holds a bachelor's degree with honors from Wellesley College, a master's from Stanford University, and a doctorate from Harvard University.



**Kathleen M. Lingle,**  
**WLCP**  
WorldatWork

Kathleen M. Lingle, WLCP, leads WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress (AWLP) to advance work-life as part of an integrated total rewards strategy. AWLP defines and acknowledges best practices and innovation, facilitates dialogue, and elevates work-life thought leadership. Lingle is a member of The Conference Board's Work-Life Leadership Council, for which she served as co-chair for several years. She serves on WorldatWork's AWLP Strategy Board and is a former member of the steering committee of the Boston College Work-Life Roundtable.

Prior to her current position at WorldatWork, Lingle served as National Work-Life director at KPMG LLP where she was the primary architect of KPMG's historic Work Environment Initiative, a multi-year culture change initiative that continues to evolve. She was an organization effectiveness consultant for Watson Wyatt and director of Work-Life Training at the Families and Work Institute (FWI) in New York. While at FWI, Lingle oversaw a three-year evaluation study of Johnson & Johnson's groundbreaking work-family initiative.



**Global Headquarters**

14040 N. Northsight Blvd.  
Scottsdale, AZ 85260 USA

**Washington, D.C. Office  
& Conference Center**

1100 13th St., NW, Ste. 800  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Toll-free: 877-951-9191  
Phone: +1 480 951 9191  
Fax: +1 480 483 8352



135 Beaver St., Ste. 208  
Waltham, MA 02452

Toll-free: 800-447-0543