



**GOOD  
DAY** AT  
WORK

# Making Flexible Working Work:

Moving from Work-Life  
Balance to Integration

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# 1. Foreword

by Sir Cary Cooper and Paul Barrett



**Sir Cary Cooper CBE, Founding Director at Robertson Cooper and Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at the University of Manchester**

As the conversation is shifting from the concept of work-life balance and intensifying towards work-life integration, so do the number of questions it raises from both employees and employers. Research carried out by Robertson Cooper and Bank Workers Charity shows that workers in the banking industry in particular are faced with complex boundaries between personal and work pressures. In a vicious circle paradigm, banking employees, who work typically long hours, are more likely to have to deal with conflicts at home, which then feed back into the work environment, creating more conflicts there.

This literature review, carried out in conjunction with Bank Workers Charity, explores how work-life integration could help to resolve these types of challenges for employees and employers alike across all industries and sectors. It probes the potential risks of harmonious work-life integration and how they can be effectively managed so both parties reap the many benefits.

The key to making work-life integration truly work is personal responsibility and trust. The onus is on individuals to successfully manage all of their commitments, but this is supported by a strong psychological contract between the employer and employee based on a fair, clear agreement of what the employee is expected to deliver. Ultimately, organisations of today need to trust their staff and manage by praise and reward – if employees are clear about what is required of them and are achieving their objectives, why does it matter where, when or how they deliver their work?



**Paul Barrett, Head of Wellbeing, Bank Workers Charity**

Over the last couple of decades change has been endemic in the UK workplace, affecting many things we have long taken for granted. Much of the modern working landscape would be unrecognisable to someone working a generation ago. Gone are jobs for life, the manufacturing economy and the rigid nine-to-five shift. Today the world of work is characterised by portfolio careers, a rise in home-working and a technology-driven, ‘always-on’ culture. There has been a boom in internships and zero hours contracts and the impact of millennials at work is a reminder that we have moved into an era of distinctly disparate generations within the workforce. We’re still absorbing the implications of many of these changes for the way we manage people and structure our work.

One key question arising from all these changes is whether the concept of work-life balance has been superseded by something more congruent with the times – work-life integration. Many organisations are beginning to rethink their approach to the home-work interface. For millennials displaying a more relaxed attitude towards how, where and when they work and sandwich generation carers struggling with the demands of their caring responsibilities – conventional working hours may be less than ideal. Might we actually get the very best out of people by creating greater freedom to determine how work is organised and where it’s carried out? Are the arguments for keeping a healthy separation between our home and work lives now rather fanciful and possibly out of line with modern realities and employee preferences? And it’s not always employees that are looking for more flexible working patterns. In our global economic environment, how successfully could businesses operate across multiple times zones, without making concessions to more flexible work patterns?

Robertson Cooper and Bank Workers Charity have begun to try and answer some of these questions. This paper takes a long look at work-life integration: the risks, the benefits and the challenges. We know that many businesses have an appetite to work differently but are inhibited by a fear of stepping into uncharted territory. At the same time we know from repeated studies, that many employees would like greater flexibility in their work patterns. There does appear to be a convergence of interest here. We hope this paper can inform the debate and at the same time help businesses to plot ways forward around the introduction of work-life integration, that satisfy the needs of employee and employer alike.

## 2. Introduction



The demands for, and acceptance of, work-life balance has been a key driver for many in both academia and business, particularly when considering what influences wellbeing. This has led to a commonplace belief that people need to be able to create and control clear boundaries between work and home in order to be happy and healthy in the long-term.



Reviewing flexible working policies in the UK, with a focus on the banking sector, has shown that for the vast majority the idea of flexible working is established by creating uninterrupted space for 'life' around work, through the provision of part-time contracts or the use of 'core hours' to give people more flexibility in the times they choose to work.

However, change is rapid and aggressive within business, particularly in the banking sector. The years since the 2008 financial crisis have brought increased pressures to not only respond to the market, and changes in technology and the workforce that other sectors have had to contend with, but also to conduct a comprehensive cultural change that responds to the demands for improved risk management and high quality decision-making.

Creating environments that promote the continued emotional health and wellbeing of employees is an important part of what is delivering change in these areas. But carrying this out in a context of continual increase in the level and pace of demands of our 'always on' culture is a significant challenge.

In this report we look at the evolving nature of work, the workforce and the working environment that has led to a movement away from the traditional approach of attempting to balance work and life demands, towards a more blended approach of work-life integration.

We explore how this application of the concept of harmonious work-life integration could help to resolve the challenges faced by organisations and individuals in today's working landscape, as well as looking at the potential risks that may arise.

As part of our joint mission to support the wellbeing of bank workers everywhere, we, along with our partner, Bank Workers Charity, aim to show how organisations may create a working culture that promotes work-life integration to ensure that everybody has good days at work.



### 3. The Evolving Nature of Flexible Working

The term ‘flexible working’ covers a range of different practices, from reduced or compressed hours to home-working or job-sharing, that all range significantly in the degree of flexibility that they allow (Kelly & Moen, 2007). What unites each of these approaches is that typically they are designed to support the goal of ‘work-life balance’ – a metaphor that focuses on achieving equality between distinct work and home roles (Greenhaus et al, 2003).

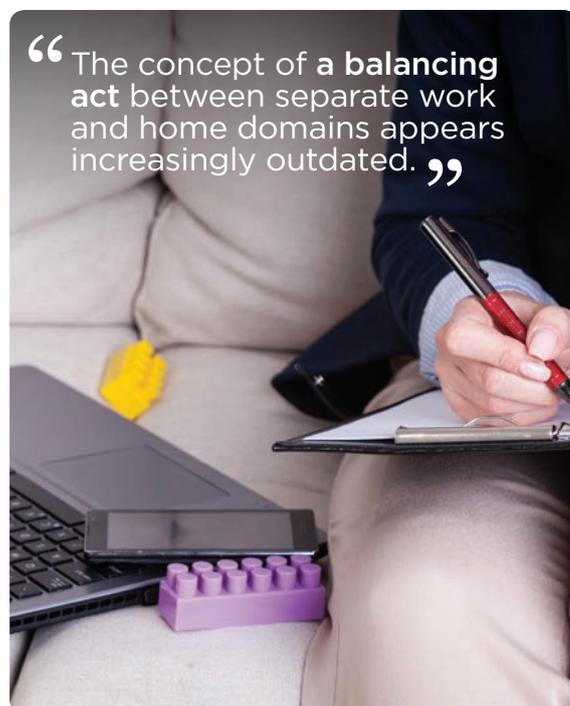
However, research literature and the practices in some pockets of industry are evolving. More recently there has been a move away from this view of work and personal lives being separate, instead moving towards a work-life integration approach. This approach describes “a healthy system of flexible and permeable boundaries that facilitate and encourage equal attentiveness and connection with priorities and valued activities originating in the work-life, family-life and community-life domains” (Morris & Madsen, 2007).

“More workers are faced with increasingly complex boundaries between pressures from their work and personal lives.”

These definitions invite businesses to join up their thinking around seeing the ‘whole person’ rather than just their employee when considering individuals’ wellbeing, and ensure that they consider how their work attitudes and policies can help people to fulfil the range of roles that they hold in life (McMillan et al, 2007). Research in the banking sector supports the need for this, finding that more workers are faced with increasingly complex boundaries between pressures from their work and personal lives (Robertson Cooper & Bank Workers Charity, 2014).

Accordingly, the concept of work-life integration is argued to be a more relevant approach to the modern day interaction between work and life, rather than striving to maintain balance and minimise interference between them (Onj & Jeyaraj, 2014). As opposed to focusing upon the competing priorities of work and personal lives, the two domains are seen as being complementary, with success in one aspect contributing to success in the other (Hill et al, 2007).

As a result of changes, such as more women blending careers and family life, and advances in remote-access technology, the concept of a balancing act between separate work and home domains appears increasingly outdated. It is worth noting that despite the general acknowledgement of work-life balance as a concept of the past, the term continues to be frequently used in research literature, workplaces, politics and the media.



## 4. The Drivers for Changing to Work-Life Integration

**When evaluating the need to challenge attitudes and approaches to flexible working, it is important to consider the context in which our businesses and people are operating.**

The changing nature of work combined with the expectations of the workforce act as drivers for organisations to adapt their approaches to working in the modern environment. Issues such as global competition, government policy changes, socioeconomic and demographic changes, increased complexity of work and family roles, advancements in technology, more dual income couples and more women in the workforce, as well as an increase in levels of occupational stress all play a part (Morris & Madsen, 2007).

This has been referred to as the 'Flex Work Imperative' (Unify, 2014), which has occurred as a result of a 'perfect storm' of the demands of workers, an improving job market and recent changes in flexible working legislation. These changes also have implications for the way in which flexible working is approached, reflected in a shift of focus on research in this area from conflict to balance to integration (Burke, 2004).

Consequently, businesses need to consider the following points as they reflect on and evolve their current approaches to flexible working:



### 4.1 National policy and legislation

In June 2014, new legislation came into force that gives anyone with over 26 continuous weeks of service with an organisation the right to make a written request for flexible working, for reasons other than carer responsibilities. This is a significant step towards formally acknowledging the importance of the whole person approach in work environments. However some echoes of the traditional view of work-life balance are evident in the guidance provided by government agencies around the ways in which to implement the policy.

Notably, the guidance around this legislation puts emphasis on the employee to demonstrate the immediate business benefits. It does little to encourage consideration of the wider gains of productivity, retention and performance associated with an individual who is psychologically healthier due to achieving a level of work-life integration that is suited to them. Also there is a clear suggestion that enabling these requests is something that requires adaptation of a role or compromise between the employee and organisation.

The shadow of the early definitions of flexible working are hard to escape, which means businesses need to consider the tone and ethos of their approaches. Reviewing flexible working policies and benefits promoted by UK banks for this report showed how those historical assumptions around work-life separation and flexible working as a compromise, rather than a right, have influenced the language and focus of the policies and procedures that are currently in place. A report by the CIPD (2012) flagged how ingrained, fixed views could create unconscious inequalities. This indicated that taking a more integrated approach to flexible working may highlight new ways of working that

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can be applied to a wider range of roles, especially as it is suggested that there is disparity in who is allowed to work flexibly, with agreements being in place more often for managers, even when the nature of other roles would lend to it.



### 4.2 Workforce expectations and characteristics

Along with changes in current policy, there have been notable changes relating to the nature of work, and to the characteristics of today's workforce, which contribute to the need to consider a more integrative approach to working in the modern environment. The most prominent of these influences are the age and gender demographics of the workforce and the impact of changing role types and technological advances.

It is clear that for employees the concept of balance or separation between work and home is becoming less practical and attractive. Below we explore these changing needs and perceptions in detail.



#### Changing Age Profile of the UK Working Population

When considering the changing characteristics of the UK working population, the evolving age profile is more important to consider than ever. Changes in legislation around retirement age, timing in relation to the career stage of 'baby boomers', and cultural and technological changes in the last 15 years influencing the needs of millennials entering work are all factors that have created today's complex working landscape. This presents businesses with the challenge of meeting the demands of people with very different values, expectations and needs when it comes to managing their life goals and pressures. Although research suggests that each generation shares a desire for flexible working, the reasons behind this desire, as well as the type of flexibility preferred, may vary.

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It is anticipated that by 2025, 75% of the workforce will be millennials (HR Grapevine, 2015) and over the next 20 years organisations will embrace new ways of working that reflect the expectations of the younger generation (Eversole et al, 2012).

Organisations that fail to address the demands of this generation risk losing out to competitors in terms of attracting and retaining talent and therefore will be impacted by the effect that this has on organisational success.

The age and life-stage of workers accounts for some variations in the way in which they would prefer to work, for example, the increasing retirement age will result in an ageing workforce who are increasingly likely to want to work flexibly towards retirement (CIPD, 2012) and an ageing population is likely to place additional caring requirements upon workers with elderly relatives. Combined with the childcare responsibilities of working parents, this represents increasing demands outside of work

that may impact a higher proportion of the workforce. This is reflected in a significant 'sandwich generation' of workers identified in a recent study in the banking sector, who have caring responsibilities for both elderly relatives and children (Robertson Cooper & Bank Workers Charity, 2014).

Regarding the younger generation of workers, research has found that millennials value autonomy and independence at work, which is often reflected in a desire to work outside of typical office hours, in contrast to the desire for security and structure of older workers (Lee-Anderson, 2015). As 'digital natives,' characterised by freedom of expression and the virtual environment, they are used to staying connected to the world through access to social media via smartphones and tablets at any time or place. This can transfer to workplace expectations to fuse their work and personal lives by working where and when they choose using remote technology (HR Grapevine, 2015). There are also implications for organisational reputation as social media provides a platform for employees to express their views about their employers, as well as an impact on 'employee voice' within organisations, giving workers the opportunity to communicate their demands and expectations in a non-traditional way. Subsequently, the values of younger workers raise the question of how employers can create a psychological contract that reflects their preferences for freedom, status and social involvement (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008).



“The 'sandwich generation' of workers identified in a recent study in the banking sector have caring responsibilities for both elderly relatives and children.”

Looking further ahead, 'Generation Z' (born from the late 1990s onwards), who are already starting to enter the workforce, are reported to differ from millennials by showing more interest in volunteering and making an impact on the world (Wallop, 2014). These values may have implications for future ways of working as increasing numbers of this generation join the workforce. It could also be argued that they will be working for longer due to the increasing retirement age and it may lead to them viewing work as part of their 'whole life', therefore making integration even more important for them.

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### Differing Needs and Expectations Driven by Gender

The traditional view of work and home lives operating independently of each other has stemmed from conventional separations of work, driven from the traditional family model of men as 'breadwinners' and women as 'homemakers' (Campbell-Clark, 2000). In this way, the work-life balance approach treats work and home lives as a 'zero-sum game', where time or energy given to one of these domains is seen to be taking away from the other – a view that Hill et al (2007) suggest presents work and home as 'irreconcilable nemeses'.



“More women than ever are part of the UK workforce.”

Our research suggests that these assumptions create significant challenges for people and organisations trying to harness the benefits of true work-life integration.

The latest figures reveal that more women than ever are part of the UK workforce, with the employment rate for women at the end of 2015 being at the joint highest since comparable records began in 1971 (ONS, 2016). However, women continue to be under-represented at the top level in organisations, with findings showing that, despite decades of increasing numbers of women in full-time employment, an alarmingly high proportion of FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 companies still do not have a woman in the boardroom, leading to calls for action to address this issue (Davies, 2011). This is particularly apparent in the banking sector, which faces a significant challenge in achieving gender equality at senior levels and reaping the benefits in organisational performance associated with it.

Although women account for half of the UK workforce, only 28% of senior executives are female, reducing to 11% in the even more male-dominated banking sector (ILM, 2012). A third of women in this study, and a quarter of men, attributed these figures to family or personal commitments, and both genders felt that banking lacks opportunity for flexible and remote working – an issue they identified as one of the biggest barriers to female career progression. This suggests that flexibility is a critical factor to consider when attempting to increase the number of women progressing to senior positions, particularly in the banking sector.

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These findings imply that it is not only the availability of flexible working that needs to shift within the banking sector, but also attitudes towards it. Organisations need to create situations where their employees will embrace flexible working and make choices without the fear that they will be marginalised or held back from reaching the most senior roles.

The ILM study suggests that these issues are prevalent in banking organisations; the presenteeism culture of rewarding attendance over output is felt to represent a major barrier to flexible working, preventing individuals from pursuing flexible working options due to negative attitudes towards people who do so. ILM did focus their reflections on the impact of women, but in a world where more men are taking on a lead or equal role of caring responsibilities, it is important that we view these attitudes as limiting to both men and women.

Research suggests that different drivers for flexible working exist for men and women at different times during their working lives, with balance between work and home life becoming more important to women at the mid-career stage, whereas this occurs at the late career stage for men (Maniero & Sullivan, 2005). These patterns of take-up of flexible working have been linked to gender disparity in impact, as women typically combine work and caring commitments at a stage that damages their career prospects, whereas men’s careers have already progressed by the time they start to work flexibly (Smithson et al, 2004). This could demand a need to rethink traditional work-life balance policies that appear to be better suited to improving flexibility towards the end of a career, and instead consider how an integrated approach may be more suitable to women combining work and family roles alongside continuing to progress their careers.



### 4.3 The changing nature of work

As well as shifts within the workforce, there have been notable changes in the macro-environment that have created a complex landscape for businesses, with barriers to wellbeing. A study around bank workers’ perception of their roles and wellbeing showed that there was consistent reporting

of unmanageable levels of work intensity, as a result of the rapidly changing working environment brought on by the recession (Robertson Cooper & Bank Workers Charity, 2014).



### Advances in technology

Enhanced technology has redefined the experience of work and life through enabling connectivity regardless of location and time, giving workers access when working remotely or when engaged in non-work activities, allowing work and life to become 'enmeshed' (Ong & Jeyarai, 2014). The flexibility to work from any location and at any time is particularly relevant to the many multinational organisations in the banking sector, in terms of maintaining connections with colleagues or clients globally, without being limited by issues such as distance or time zones. This demonstrates how flexibility over where and when work is carried out can benefit employers as well as employees.



The rise of social media also contributes to a 'blurring' between professional and personal lives, making it easy to connect and share information with colleagues, customers and friends alike (Lynch, 2009). In this way, workers are able to maintain ongoing virtual communication relating to their work and personal lives, allowing improved responsiveness to both.



### The evolving nature of roles

UK businesses are increasingly moving away from a model of work with high numbers of 'dependent' employees reliant upon workplaces to access tools and networks, towards a more 'distributed' model involving multinational coverage and 'independent talent', who are better equipped to provide specialist skills on a flexible basis, as and when they are needed (Mester, 2015). Preference towards this model is reflected in an increasing number of self-employed workers in the UK, with ONS's 2016 figures showing that this year has the highest proportion on record.

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The type of work carried out is also changing, with a decline since the 1970s in the proportion of jobs accounted for in the manufacturing sector and an increase in those accounted for by the service sector, alongside a falling proportion of people employed in the public sector, reaching the lowest level in 2015 since comparable records began in 1999 (ONS, 2016). These figures coincide with a rising number of 'knowledge workers' in today's workforce – those who are employed primarily to handle or use information as opposed to goods (Unify, 2014).

Considering the wide range of job roles that exist across the workforce and within different sectors, it appears that implementing flexible working may be more straightforward in some roles than others. For example it may be easier to achieve for knowledge workers whose roles can be carried out at different times and locations and who are already accustomed to using remote technology in their work (Kelly & Moen, 2007).

Although the right to request flexible working has now been extended beyond those with caring responsibilities, employers are still able to turn down employees' requests on operational grounds. In banking roles this refusal could apply more to roles that involve working during City trading hours or customer-facing roles in bank branches than to call centre or internet banking staff whose operations continue outside of usual office hours (Roberts, 2014).



### Competition

In an improving climate, the UK employment rate has reached its highest level since comparable records began in 1971 (ONS, 2016) and organisations are competing in a 'war for talent' to attract and retain talented staff at a time when more workers are starting to look for new employers (CIPD, 2015). This has implications for organisations that may need to look at ways of adapting to the needs and expectations of workers in order to give themselves a competitive edge in the market. This is to the extent that 92% of UK CEOs say people are their top priority for 2016 and banking chiefs are investing in their talent strategies to remain competitive (Lewis, 2016). It is therefore important that employers understand what employees want in order to inform these strategies.



people say flexible working is the most important employer attribute.

Research consistently reveals that the ability to work flexibly is an important factor for workers in terms of what they expect from employers. Half of the employees in one study reported that they would choose a flexible working arrangement over a pay rise, and almost a third indicated that they would look to change employers if flexible work

was offered elsewhere (Unify, 2014). In another study, one in three workers cited flexible working as the most important employer attribute (HR Grapevine, 2014).

## 5. The Impact of an Integrated Approach

This report has explored how the changing nature of legislation, the working context and workforce expectations are creating a pressure for businesses to consider how they enable and support true work-life integration. It is important, however, to evaluate the impact, both positive and negative, that this can have on the individuals and organisations who are working in this way.



### 5.1 Benefits of work-life integration

Research suggests that there are clear benefits for both individual workers and organisations when flexible working practices are implemented to improve integration between work and personal lives. Flexible working patterns have been associated with increased motivation, job satisfaction and employee engagement (Ahmad et al, 2013), improved staff retention, recruitment, reduced absence, boosted productivity and increased wellbeing (CIPD, 2012) – all of which are likely to appeal to banking leaders as these benefits will ultimately improve the bottom line.

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employee engagement



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Where true work-life integration is enabled by organisations there is a reported increase in perception around trust and greater control for individuals, both of which are linked to positive outcomes. High-trust organisations are reported to provide a greater return to shareholders, whilst giving employees control, helping them to manage their work and home lives more effectively, subsequently improving their performance (Unum, 2013).



Workers view flexibility in when and where work is done to be the aspect of work that is most facilitative to home life (Hill et al, 2007) and feel empowered by working practices and technology that integrate work into their lives in a way that helps them to be at their best, both at work and at home (CIPD, 2015). Contrary to traditional work-life balance views of work and personal lives being separate domains, research reveals aspects of work that facilitate and are facilitated by home life and vice versa (Hill et al, 2007). In addition, when compared with work-

life balance interventions, focusing on harmonious work-life integration was found to have a much more positive impact on creativity at work (Ong & Jeyaraj, 2014).

It is suggested that, rather than experiencing stress as a result of juggling work and personal lives, integration allows workers to experience more optimal work-life situations that enable them to maximise their performance (McMillan et al, 2011), with the result that “integrated individuals have greater opportunity for coherence, unity, fulfilment, happiness, maturity, health and wellness” (Morris & Madsen, 2007).

“Integration allows workers to experience more optimal work-life situations that enable them to maximise their performance.”



### 5.2 Risks of work-life integration

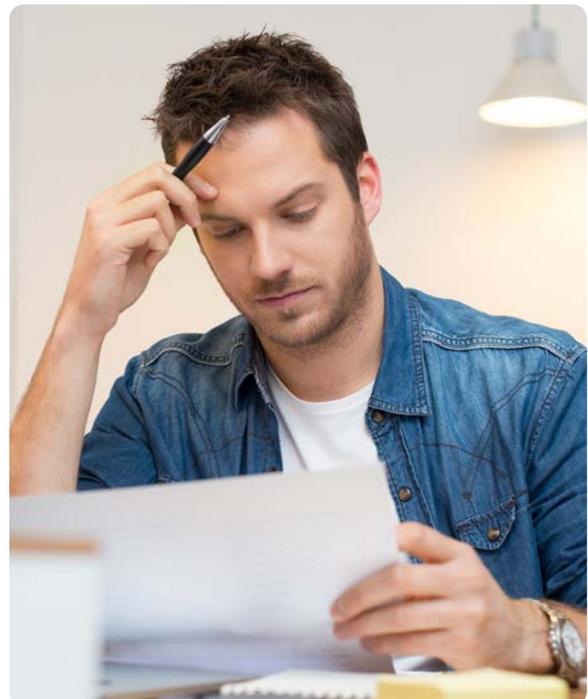
Despite these beneficial effects, for some people, the impact of more integrated life can present potential cause for concern. One of the key issues to address is the risk that practices intended to enhance work-life integration may increase work overload and work-related stress rather than prevent it. Recent work on the impact of introducing an organisational transition to remote working found

“Despite people experiencing an increased sense of control, those who engaged in remote working were significantly more troubled by work-life balance issues.”

that, despite people experiencing very positive outcomes around an increased sense of control if they were eligible to work from home, those who were actually engaged in the activity were significantly more troubled by work-life balance issues (Robertson Cooper, in progress). This suggests that having the option of working flexibly is beneficial for employees, but could indicate a need for more effective implementation and upskilling of employees to ensure they have both the resources needed and the capability to manage the increased access to work that such approaches give them.

Despite the opportunities that today's enhanced technology creates, there may be risk factors associated with increased connectivity. The ability to be constantly connected to work via remote access has the potential to result in workers feeling unable to switch off from work, raising expectations of them to respond at any time and burdening them with a sense of obligation to do so. It is argued that this leads to an 'always on' culture, involving a 'grazing' approach to work that can take a heavy psychological toll on workers (Sheffield, 2016). In addition to this, use of remote technology could raise concerns about data security in terms of where workers are based when accessing confidential or business-critical information and whether they are using personal devices to do this, which could have costly implications for financial organisations. With many banking leaders expressing concern about cyber threats in the coming year (Lewis, 2016), this may contribute to a reluctance to extend the option of remote working to a large proportion of the organisation, which could in turn lead to questions of fairness among employees.

The issue of dealing with interruptions between work and personal lives is another potentially negative impact of work-life integration on wellbeing, as workers are likely to be faced with distractions, such as receiving work email alerts whilst engaged in activities in their personal lives or being interrupted by family when working from home (Unum, 2013). Email has been identified as having negative as well as positive effects on work-life balance, causing workers to struggle to prioritise effectively due to constant interruptions and demands via email, and affecting their productivity and stress levels (Future Work Centre, 2015). On the other hand, feeling overly distant or excluded from the workplace and a lack of social interactions with colleagues caused by working remotely can lead to feelings of isolation, which may make workers feel threatened and affect their wellbeing (Unum, 2013).



Despite the benefits associated with the trust and control aspects of work-life integration, this may be a factor that some individuals and organisations struggle to adapt to. As integration makes it more difficult for employers to track work activity, greater personal responsibility is placed upon workers to manage all of their commitments (Mester, 2015), which is a concept that may require a cultural change across organisations. This may be particularly true in the banking sector, where the culture of presenteeism could act as a barrier to moving towards an outputs-based view of performance in order to effectively implement an integrative approach to working (ILM, 2012).

“Work life integration places greater personal responsibility upon workers to manage all of their commitments.”

## 6. Explaining the Varying Impact and Unlocking the Benefits of True Work-Life Integration

Considering the mixed views surrounding the potential benefits and risks of a work-life integration approach, it appears that the key to achieving success is the way in which both individual workers and organisations manage it in practice.

In this sense, those who effectively implement work-life integration initiatives will have greater access to the benefits it can offer, whereas those who fail to consider the potential pitfalls of poor implementation risk having to deal with a range of unintended negative consequences. Taken together, the findings outlined above have a number of implications for both employees and employers in terms of what can be done to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks of work-life integration.

A factor that applies equally to both parties is the critical role of the psychological contract agreed between employers and employees. The move towards greater choice for staff over when and where they work involves a transfer of control from employer to employee, which requires establishing trust and reaching agreement in terms of expectations. Failure to address this point could severely undermine efforts to implement work-life integration initiatives.

“The psychological contract agreed between employers and employees plays a critical role.”

From the individual worker’s perspective, this increased control requires a greater degree of personal responsibility for choosing the most effective way of working to suit their own requirements. They will need to take responsibility for managing their own time around work and personal commitments, as well as the potential interruptions that are likely to occur when the two domains become more interwoven. The same applies to communicating and managing any boundaries, which will help them to manage flexible working effectively.



For organisations, it is clear that culture change may be required in order for work-life integration to be effectively implemented. In sectors, such as banking, that have a prevailing culture of presenteeism, a significant change in mindset towards an output and impact based model of working will be necessary before new working practices can be embraced. Without this, managers’ judgements of workers’ efforts and colleagues’ perceptions of those working flexibly will continue to deter individuals from exploring options that improve work-life integration.

## 7. Recommendations for Organisations

The banking sector cannot ignore the demands of their workforce and the potential advantages available around work-life integration as they engage in the war for talent, maintain a competitive edge and work to keep their people in a psychological state to ensure the positive steps in culture change become embedded.

It's clear from the research that work-life integration could be a double-edged sword if it is not managed properly and it can create challenges for individual wellbeing and organisational performance. Below we set out our recommendations for organisations that are keen to ensure good days at work for their people by enabling true work-life integration:

- ✓ Explore your current views and expectations of what flexible working is, who 'deserves it' and the impact it can create. Working from an integration and fair/equitable access perspective will help to future-proof any approach you develop.
- ✓ Think about and ask for feedback on the needs of your employee population, what does 'good' look like for them in relation to flexible working? It is unlikely you'll be able to create a single approach that will meet everyone's needs, so the development of a policy that enables discussion around individual requirements and the role, to meets the needs of both parties, will bring the most benefit long-term.
- ✓ Understand current attitudes and contracts around working; effective flexible working often requires a change in the level of trust provided to and accepted by employees. Consider what work you need to do to ensure people are ready for, and understand, their increased responsibility for creating a level of integration that balances their personal needs and work deliverables.
- ✓ Understand the skills and behaviours of your people in this area and use it as a baseline for educating and developing your people:

  - Ensure your managers have the awareness and skills needed to provide the resources, clarity in expectations and the support needed to manage flexible workers.
  - Help your employees to develop the skills they need to manage integration effectively; ensure they are thinking about and developing effective controls that allow them to work in a manner that is helpful to their personal circumstances.
- ✓ Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and consider the needs of different individuals.
- ✓ Ensure the right technology, access and security is available to allow effective remote working. Pilot it and check it is correct before a major roll out to avoid any unnecessary negative impact associated with a transition.



## 7. Recommendations for Organisations



- ✓ Encourage your people to consider and communicate what their boundaries or rules are. If they identify and agree what is acceptable to themselves and others, they will have a much better basis to create positive and mutually acceptable interactions with colleagues outside of traditional hours of work.
- ✓ Create ways for those who frequently work remotely to have social support and contact.
- ✓ Maintain communication about work, expectations and how integration is working, as well as ensuring that remote workers remain connected.
- ✓ Raise awareness and share success stories in the uses of flexible working options to ensure all staff are fully informed.

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