

Workplace Flexibility Ranks High in Job Satisfaction

By: Janine L. Moore

Current world events, including our economic climate are creating stressful conditions for many. We need to look for ways to cope. The opportunity for flexibility in terms of work hours and location can increase productivity and employee satisfaction while reducing stress levels.

So why is workplace flexibility such a hard sell?

The Sloan Center on Aging & Work looked at the benefits of flexibility in the workplace for both employers and employees.

Benefits for employers:

- Improved employee morale
- Better work engagement
- Easier to recruit and retain workers
- Enhanced productivity
- More stable talent pool because people's needs are being met

Benefits for employees:

- Reduced stress on the job
- Better work-life balance
- More time for family, friends and hobbies
- Improved physical and mental health

Workplace flexibility can empower employee's to have more choice and control over when, where and how they do their work. Those who feel they lack control over their own choices tend to feel the most stress.

Benefits for both employers and employees:

- Workplace flexibility options signal to workers that employers understand and care for their needs

- Respect for employee needs increases job satisfaction, attendance and the ability to handle personal responsibilities without interfering with work time
- In particular, female employees see the positive benefits of workplace flexibility as they are often responsible for both eldercare and childcare (grandkids)

In January 2013, the Mental Health Association of Canada released the report, **Psychological health and safety in the workplace**. Some of the recommendations for employers include: consider the mental well-being of employees and identify job stressors, ensure staff feel they are treated with fairness and respect and help employees increase their work-life balance.

Is workplace flexibility important to you?

Dr. Andrew Weil, author of **Healthy Aging**, recommends we minimize our level of stress over the long-term because otherwise it will age us. This is because the stress hormone, cortisol, is toxic to nerve cells. If you are currently feeling stressed, consider a practice of meditation or yoga, or even just remembering to breathe deeply several times a day. These practices can slow you down enough to help you decide if you need to make changes to achieve a more balanced lifestyle.