

Juggle don't struggle! Finding your own balance • Case Studies, real stories of work-life balance situations



# essential guide to work-life balance



## Work-Life Balance – what’s it all about?

Is life getting out of control? Work’s taking you over? Just can’t solve the dilemma of trying to fit 48 hours into a 15 hour day (or more if you’ve the stamina!)? Then this is just for you.

A brief look at **work-life balance** and what it’s all about – and if you’d like to know more, you’ll see how to get your own **Essential Guide to Work-Life Balance**, sent directly to you.

**Work-Life Balance** is something that affects most of us to some extent – and it’s a real problem for many rather than few. But there **are** solutions. And more and more employers and staff are working together to find them – for everyone, regardless of age, gender or personal circumstances.

Read on and you’ll find examples of what other people have done, together with ideas you could build on. Whatever you decide – a win-win-win situation could be a very real possibility, for you, the business and the customer.



## Work-Life Balance – It's official!

The Government launched its **Work-Life Balance Campaign** in March 2000. The aim is to raise employers' awareness of the business benefits of helping employees create a better balance between work and the rest of their lives.

A group of leading employers have formed an alliance, **Employers for Work-Life Balance**, in partnership with

the Government, to promote the benefits of work-life balance to the business community.

**And** there's a new **Work-Life Balance Challenge Fund**, which provides consultancy advice to businesses to help them examine working practices and business objectives and introduce changes to benefit both their business and their employees.

## Juggle don't struggle!


Balancing work with the rest of life is something we all have to do. And there's no doubt that the way our working life is organised makes all the difference to how we cope with our lives. Work-life balance isn't only about families and childcare. Nor is it about working less. It's about working 'smart'. About being fresh enough to give all you need to both work and the rest of your life, without jeopardising one for the other. And it can benefit everyone, whatever stage you are in your life.

## Win! Win! Win!

Everyone benefits from good practice in work-life balance.

- Employees benefit by feeling less stressed and happier both at work and at home. And more people have the opportunity for paid work.
- Businesses benefit from having a more motivated, more productive and less stressed workforce. Staff are more likely to stay with their employer – and return after a spell away (such as maternity or travel leave). And that reduces the costs of recruitment, as well as retaining skills and experience.
- Customers and clients benefit too from a consistent service.

## Sharing the load – one way to shift swap!

 One couple, Deborah Burton and Julian Pinkett, who work for Royal Mail in the Bristol area, have found an unusual work-life balance solution – they do each other's jobs on alternate weeks. One week Deborah does her day shift as a van driver for the West of England Mail Centre at Filton, working from 10.55am till 6.55pm. The next week she swaps with Julian and works his shift from 5.10pm till 2.35am, driving a lorry load of mail from Bath to Bristol Airport and helping load up planes for night-time flights around the



British Isles. Having day times free during alternate weeks gives them more flexibility for other things such as decorating their house and spending time with their daughters.

## The most common reasons for choosing flexibility

- **Childcare**
- **Eldercare and other caring responsibilities**
- **Further education or training**
- **Health (including mental) or disability**
- **Transport/distance from work**
- **Arts and Sports**
- **Voluntary work and other interests**
- **Quality of Life**
- **Approaching Retirement**

## What are the options?

So here are just some of the many ways that working time can be arranged. There is no one solution for all.



**“My department ... has been excellent in supporting me. I had complete choice about my hours”**

Margaret Hill, has MS and works partly from home. She has full support from her employer.

**Flexi-time** gives people choice about their actual working hours, usually outside certain agreed core times.

**Staggered hours** is where employees within a workplace have different start, finish and break times.

**Time off in lieu** is where employees agree with managers to take time off at a mutually convenient time to make up for extra hours worked.

**Part time work** has no legal definition but government statistics define it as less than 30 hours a week.

**Job sharing** involves two people carrying out the duties of a post that would normally be done by one person. Each person is employed part-time but together they cover a full-time post and divide the pay, holidays and other benefits.

**Barry Ashford** is a Packer in the warehouse at Astron in Huntingdon. He works a flexible shift to fit in with studying for a motor vehicle mechanics course:



“Astron require me to work at least 20 hours a week, preferably with an even spread through the week, but leave the timing of those hours entirely up to me,



within the warehouse operating times of 6am to 10pm.”



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*“Job sharing allows us to meet our needs, such as wanting to be with our children as well as working, wanting to be a decision-maker and wanting to have influence. I think that sharing the post has meant that stress levels are much lower. When things go right you have someone to celebrate with and when things go wrong you have someone to share it with. The benefits to the organisation are the energy and innovation we bring.”*

**Sue Osborn**, Joint Chief Executive, Barking & Havering Health Authority




Susan Williams, left, with joint CE Sue Osborn

## **The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW)**

have negotiated a variety of flexible working practices that reflect the needs of employees, both at national and local levels.

At **Littlewoods Organisation plc** Call Centre/Mail Order depot in Crosby, Liverpool, USDAW have worked with the company to develop flexible working and family leave arrangements that balance the needs of the company with the individual needs of the employees. The Centre is open from 7am till 11pm and a variety of shift patterns have been negotiated to reflect both business demand and the personal circumstances of employees. If any changes to the shifts normally worked are required by the company, the manager responsible sorts this out directly with the employees concerned. Where any problems arise, the union will become involved and try and find some leeway so that an acceptable solution for both sides can be reached. A time off in lieu (TOIL) scheme has also been negotiated so that employees who work extra hours can then take time off at a later stage.

USDAW Branch Secretary, **Caroline Riley**, says:

 “We’ve also taken up individual cases where members have particular needs. For example, a single parent was finding that it was difficult working her full hours in the school holidays. She’s now been allowed to work extra hours during term time and this way she can maintain her contracted working hours over the year and her pay isn’t adversely affected. Flexibility can have advantages for both the employer and employees, but it must be a two-way process.”

## **Compressed working hours**

allows people to work their total number of agreed hours over a shorter number of working days.

With **shift working**, employers can extend the use of plant or facilities – in a factory or supermarket, for instance.

**Shift swapping** means employees can negotiate working times to suit their needs and re-arrange shifts amongst themselves or within teams to meet the needs of the business or service.

**Self rostering** gives team members more control over their work times. Numbers of staff and the skill mix required are agreed, then shift patterns are compiled, matching as closely as possible the individual preferences of staff to the agreed staffing levels.

**Annual hours** systems organise working time on the basis of the number of hours to be worked over a year rather than a week – usually used to fit in with peaks and troughs of work.



**“I vary my hours ...  
so I can spend more  
time with my son.”**

Gina Faulkner, a single parent now works Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 3.00pm.

**Term time working** means remaining on a permanent contract, either full or part-time, but having unpaid leave of absence during the school holidays.

**Working at or from home** some or all of the time is increasingly available for people in permanent employment.

**Teleworking** involves using a telephone and a computer to keep in touch with work.

**Temping** or **casual work** involves working for an employer for short periods or less. It gives flexibility without the commitment of a permanent job – for supply teachers or bank nurses, for instance.

You're **self-employed** if you work on your own account. In theory you control the number of hours you work and when you work them – but some people find it difficult to stop!

## Want to find out more?

To find out more information about the Government's campaign and other publications in the series:

Web: [www.dti.gov.uk/work-lifebalance](http://www.dti.gov.uk/work-lifebalance)

For information on employment rights including maternity and parental leave and time off for dependants:

Web: [www.dti.gov.uk/publications](http://www.dti.gov.uk/publications)

Free access to local childcare information:

Web: [www.ChildcareLink.gov.uk](http://www.ChildcareLink.gov.uk)

## **Employers Organisations**

### **Employers for Work-Life Balance**

Web: [www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk](http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk)

## **Flexible Working Arrangements**

### **Equal Opportunities Commission**

Information and advice including publications.

Tel: 0161 833 9244

Email: [info@eoc.org.uk](mailto:info@eoc.org.uk)

Web: [www.eoc.org.uk](http://www.eoc.org.uk)

### **Flametree**

Information and advice, including case studies on flexible working

Tel: 020 7376 0618

Web: [www.flametree.co.uk](http://www.flametree.co.uk)

### **Flexexecutive**

Experts in the field of flexible work for professionals looking to balance their work and personal life

Tel: 020 7636 6744

Web: [www.flexexecutive.co.uk](http://www.flexexecutive.co.uk)

### **New Ways to Work**

Information and advice including publications

Helpline: 020 7503 3578

Email:

[info@new-ways.co.uk](mailto:info@new-ways.co.uk)

Web: [www.new-ways.co.uk](http://www.new-ways.co.uk)

### **Parents at Work**

Information and advice including publications

Tel:

020 7628 2128/3578

Email:

[info@parentsatwork.org.uk](mailto:info@parentsatwork.org.uk)

Web: [www.parentsatwork.org.uk](http://www.parentsatwork.org.uk)

## Want to find out more?

For the **free Essential Guide to Work-Life Balance** or to order information leaflets and other DTI publications:  
Orderline: 0870 1502 500

Fax: 0870 1502 333  
Email:  
dtipubs@eclogistics.co.uk  
Please quote reference number: URN 01/1126

The full Essential Guide to Work-Life Balance is full of ideas on:

- Applying for jobs
- Negotiating change in your current job
- Rules and regulations
- The most frequently asked questions by employers
- Real stories of people who have achieved a good work-life balance
- Details of where to find out more – including contact details of more than 70 sources of information

**dti**

Department of Trade and Industry



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**NEW WAYS  
TO WORK**  
*flexibility, choice and quality of life*