catalyst

A New Approach to Flexibility

W O R K
T I M E

Managing the Work/Time Equation

Catalyst -- Working with business and the professions to effect change for women

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A New Approach to Flexibility: Managing the Work/Time Equation

1998

Foreword

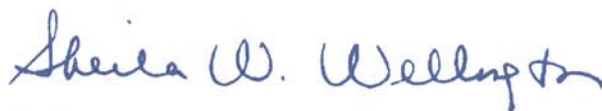*A New Approach to Flexibility: Managing the Work/Time Equation* is the first study to look at the environment in which part-time professionals work, as well as at the part-time employees themselves. At Catalyst, we have always been concerned with flexibility. When women's advancement is your mission, as it is with Catalyst, the work/time equation has to be among your top priorities. It's not only women who need options other than the traditional full-time arrangement; but it is women that generally use these options, sometimes at the expense of their careers. It was in the interest of preventing such a result (negative for the company as well as for the individual) that we embarked on this study.

We interviewed and surveyed not only part-time professionals, but also their supervisors and their colleagues, their clients, and HR professionals in four leading American organizations (a pharmaceutical company, a technology company, a law firm, and a consulting firm). In all, more than 2,000 people participated in this study. We uncovered important data: the extent to which flexible work arrangements permeate the workplace, for instance. Our major conclusions are twofold: (1) Professionals with part-time arrangements are, right now, productive, highly valued members of these companies; (2) on the other hand, the companies themselves need to learn much more about using flexibility to best advantage.

Here we present what we learned about the attitudes and practices in each company, as well as the personal experiences of the people involved, in their own words. Most important, we present a Catalyst plan that can make the flexible workplace a successful workplace for all the participants, and for a company's bottom line as well.

Sheila W. Wellington
President, Catalyst

Introduction

In January, 1995, Catalyst embarked on a comprehensive two-year study, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, to document and evaluate the effectiveness of part-time work arrangements as used by managers and professionals in two corporations and two professional services firms. Catalyst's 35-year history of research provided a rich context for the study, clarifying our belief that alternative arrangements are crucial to the retention and advancement of women, as well as giving us insight into how difficult it has been for organizations to put such work arrangements into effect.

The purpose of this new study was to develop an understanding of successful implementation and management of part-time arrangements and, by extension, flexible work arrangements in general, in a range of work environments. Our findings led Catalyst to develop a new way of thinking about such arrangements and a new approach to implementing and managing them. We believe this new approach will be of great help to leaders in organizations, managers at all levels, and individual employees.

Traditionally, work schedules are defined by a 40-hour workweek, Monday through Friday, typically between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm. At Catalyst, we define alternative or flexible work arrangements as individually negotiated conditions of employment involving adjustments in the timing, scope, and/or place of work. In this study, we came across a wide variation in types of arrangements. There are two major categories:

- Full-time employment that involves such arrangements as flextime or compressed workweeks
- Part-time employment, which may be job-sharing or reduced time schedules structured on a daily, weekly, monthly, or annual basis

Both categories can include telecommuting or working at home for all or part of the scheduled work time.

This study focused on voluntary part-time employment among professionals. However, our findings have broad implications for managing all alternative arrangements. This is of critical importance, because fewer than half of the respondents to our survey described their work arrangements as traditional. Today's work schedules are changing to respond to employee needs, but also to respond to business issues like the need for expanded client service or

interactions across time zones. We expect that this trend will continue and that in the near future, managers will need to learn to supervise employees using a wide range of full-time and part-time alternative work arrangements.

A Range of Perspectives

In a departure from the standard approach to this issue, Catalyst studied not only the professionals using part-time arrangements, but also their supervisors and colleagues. In fact, we focused on understanding the use and effectiveness of part-time work arrangements from a wide range of perspectives beyond these three key groups: professionals using part-time arrangements, senior management, human resources staff members, supervisors, colleagues, new hires, and internal experts. We used focus group discussions, in-person and telephone interviews, and surveys to understand the issues and concerns of the stakeholders involved. Catalyst also spoke with clients or customers to assess whether part-time arrangements affected these relationships. Including this wide range of perspectives on part-time professional arrangements was critical to understanding the impact of these arrangements on the work and the organization. Broadening the study population enriched the data and uncovered nuances and attitudes that have not heretofore been described.

> **Stakeholder Perspectives Included in Study**
>
> - **Part-time Employees**
> - **Colleagues**
> - **Supervisors**
> - **Senior Management**
> - **Human Resources**
> - **Systems People**
> - **Alumni**
> - **Recruits**
> - **Clients**
> - **Other Employees**

Participating Organizations

Catalyst conducted the research in four carefully selected organizations, with a specific focus on professional, exempt-level employees. In particular, we wanted to understand how well part-time arrangements worked for the organization and for individuals—not only for those with these arrangements, but also for their colleagues and supervisors. The two companies and two professional services firms that participated were large, established, well-recognized, geographically diverse, and representative of their industries. One company site and one firm had "emerging" programs or initiatives, having just introduced flexibility into the workplace. The other company site and professional firm had well-established programs and a history of commitment to workplace flexibility.

Senior leadership in all four organizations was committed to making part-time work arrangements available for employees. In all four organizations, employees had expressed increasing interest in these options, either formally or informally. Leaders in all four organizations had created formal alternative work policies and were concerned about how to make them work effectively. In addition,

each had already demonstrated good faith efforts to put policy into practice. Each agreed to long-term involvement in this study because of the organization's desire to improve its initiatives.

Clearly, we could not study the entire workforce in organizations of this size. We asked the organizations to identify targeted segments of their workforce by type of work and/or by location. Focusing on a specific work site or work group allowed us to acquire detailed information about part-time arrangements within specific work constraints and work cultures. Within the two firms, the scope was broad, encompassing all client-service professionals at the consulting firm and lawyers and administrative professionals at three locations at the law firm. Within the pharmaceutical company, which represented an ongoing initiative, we targeted specific work groups at headquarters, where flexible work arrangements had been in place for many years. Finally, we identified a location within the technology company where part-time arrangements were just beginning to be introduced. Characteristics of each organization are summarized below.

TABLE 1: PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Participating Organization	Consulting Firm •Headquarters on East Coast with global offices	Law Firm specializing in commercial law •Headquarters on West Coast with global offices	*Fortune* 100 Technology Company •Leader in development of technological products •Headquarters on West Coast with global offices	*Fortune* 100 Pharmaceutical Company •Leader in the drug industry •Headquarters on East Coast with global offices
Type of Part-time Program or Initiative	Emerging	Ongoing	Emerging	Ongoing
	•Identified as critical issue in 1993 •Policy introduced in April 1994	•Flexible work options offered for over 10 years •Formal policy created in 1990	•Long history of offering flexible work options throughout the corporation •Part-time new at the location studied •Policy first initiated in September 1993	•A wide variety of flexible work options since the late 1970s •Policy revised in January 1995
Focus of Study	Client service professionals •Many locations in U.S. •4,300 employees	Lawyers and professionals •Three offices (two major cities on West Coast and one major city on the East Coast •400 employees	Response Center providing problem-solving expertise to customers via telephone •Located in south-eastern city with some off-site employees •600 employees	Internal staff groups: finance, human resources, computer resources, public affairs •Located at corporate headquarters in the northeast •834 employees

Methodology

Catalyst collected information at each organization over a two-year period in order to accomplish the following:

- Understand and describe each organization in terms of the use of part-time arrangements, the rationale for and attitudes toward these arrangements, and the work constraints specific to the environment
- Document problems encountered and progress made in response to initiatives and implementation strategies

The research process involved extensive focus groups, interviews, and a series of employee surveys:

- The Work Schedule Questionnaire to assess types of arrangements currently used was sent to all employees in the targeted segments of the workforce. It also asked employees to volunteer for a longer, more detailed survey.
- The In-Depth Survey was based on findings from the focus groups and interviews. It was sent to volunteers in three distinct groups:
  - Part-time employees
  - Their full-time colleagues
  - Supervisors of participating part-time employees (allowed a comparison between their responses and those of the part-time people they supervise)

TABLE 2: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Methods	# of groups/ interviews	Total Participants
Focus Groups	**28 total**	**214***
part-time professionals**	9	53
colleagues	8	70
supervisors	7	60
new employees	4	31
In-Person Interviews	**17 total**	**17**
senior management	8	
senior Human Resources representative	4	
targeted company expert	1	
supervisors	4	
Telephone Interviews	**80 total**	**80**
part-time professionals	38	
alumnae	20	
targeted company experts	10	
clients	12	
FOCUS GROUP & INTERVIEW TOTAL		**311**

* Sixteen individuals participated in two focus groups. (Both the baseline and final focus groups of employees working flexibly.)
** In order to include a wide range of employees in the focus groups and telephone interviews, some participants had full-time flexible arrangements (i.e., telecommuting or compressed workweeks) or were very interested in such an arrangement. This was especially necessary in the two organizations with emerging programs.

Overall, approximately 2,000 people participated in the study, through the focus groups and interviews, and/or through the surveys.

With regard to the two surveys, the first (Work Schedule Questionnaire) was sent to a total of 6,134 employees who represented targeted groups within each organization and 2,124 responded (a 35 percent response rate). Of the 2,124 respondents, 1,695 volunteered to participate in the In-Depth Survey. As indicated below, 1,105 individuals completed the In-Depth Survey (a 65 percent response rate).

TABLE 3: WORK SCHEDULE QUESTIONNAIRE & IN-DEPTH SURVEY RESPONDENTS

	Total Targeted Population	Work Schedule Questionnaire Respondents	Volunteers for In-Depth Survey		In-Depth Survey Respondents	
			Part-time Professionals	Full-time Professionals	Part-time	Full-time
Consulting Firm	4,300	1,611 (37%)	93	1,187	67 (72%)	706 (62%)
Law Firm	400	117 (29%)	10	82	9 (90%)	62 (76%)
Technology Company	600	150 (25%)	12	119	6 (50%)	68 (57%)
Pharmaceutical Company	834	246 (29%)	19	173	9 (47%)	129 (75%)

The Participants

In all four organizations, the work groups studied provided service to clients, either internal or external. The responses to the survey allowed us to create a general picture of the full-time and part-time professionals studied. These two groups are similar in terms of some characteristics: they are predominately white, non-Hispanic; they are college-educated; few have elder-care responsibilities. It is important to understand that the part-time arrangements we studied were voluntary arrangements requested by the professionals. For the most part, they worked for the organization full-time prior to the arrangement. Almost all initiated the part-time arrangement themselves.

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TABLE 4: IN-DEPTH SURVEY RESPONDENTS—SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS

	Full-time Arrangements (n=965)	Part-time Arrangements (n=91)
Race	87% white, non-Hispanic 11% people of color	89% white, non-Hispanic 8% people of color
Educational Background	37% with a bachelor's degree 52% with a graduate degree	45% with a bachelor's degree 46% with a graduate degree
Family Responsibilities	6% have adult-care responsibilities	3% have adult-care responsibilities

As can be seen from the profiles in the chart below, however, there are significant differences between the two groups. Part-time professionals are:

- Overwhelmingly women
- Older than their full-time counterparts slightly
- Longer tenured with their organization and with their position
- More likely to be mid-level professionals
- Less likely to supervise other professionals
- Much more likely to be married
- Much more likely to be in a dual-career marriage
- Much more likely to have children

TABLE 5: IN-DEPTH SURVEY RESPONDENTS—STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

	Full-time Arrangements (n=965)	Part-time Arrangements (n=91)
Gender	63% male 37% female	18% male 82% female
Average Age*	39.1 years old	39.7 years old
Average Tenure in Organization	6.4 years	7.2 years
Average Tenure in Current Position	3.1 years	3.8 years
Professional or Managerial Level	27% Entry or First Level 62% Mid-level 11% Senior or Partner Level	15% Entry or First Level 76% Mid-level 11% Senior or Partner Level
Responsibilities for Supervising Professionals	53%	37%
Median Income	$65,000	$49,000
Has Spouse or Partner	76%	96%
Partner's Employment Status	45% work full-time 19% not in paid employment	78% work full-time 5% not in paid employment
Family Responsibilities	59% have children 41% have children under age 18	89% have children 74% have children under age 18

* Range of ages: part-time = 27-76 years; full-time = 21-73 years.

When survey participants are divided along gender lines, stronger differences emerge. The few men with part-time arrangements worked in the professional services firms, primarily in the consulting firm. They were much older than their full-time counterparts, averaging 56.5 years in age in contrast to 40.9 years for women, but they were similar in terms of family composition.

Although the median income for part-time employees is significantly different from that of full-time employees, this difference is appropriate given the reduced work arrangement.

There is a growing interest in and demand for more flexibility and there are clear benefits for organizations that respond effectively to this demand.

Our Findings

Catalyst analyzed the enormous amount of information collected to answer four principal questions. Answers to these four questions are summarized below; they are explicated fully in the text of the report.

1. Are part-time arrangements a critical issue for employers and, if so, why?

    Part-time arrangements are a critical issue for employers. These arrangements, and other forms of flexibility, affect large numbers of people in these organizations right now. There is a growing interest in and demand for more flexibility and there are clear benefits for organizations that respond effectively to this demand.

2. What challenges do organizations face as they implement part-time arrangements?

    Persistent and formidable barriers limit the availability and effective use of part-time arrangements. Organizations have focused their efforts on supporting individual employees. But factors such as policy, internal systems and structures, and workplace values can limit the effectiveness of part-time arrangements. These must be understood and addressed for more widespread, consistent success. Organizations have generally overlooked this critical step.

Factors such as policy, internal systems and structures, and workplace values can limit the effectiveness of part-time arrangements.

3. How do part-time professional arrangements affect those who use them, their supervisors, and their colleagues?

    In many cases, the consequences of a part-time arrangement for these three key stakeholders are positive or neutral. Undesirable consequences arise because part-time arrangements are out of sync with the typical, traditional ways of working for the organization. Such consequences are avoidable.

4. How can organizations use and manage part-time arrangements more effectively?

    For success, the organization must provide the necessary context and support for the arrangements. Key attributes and behaviors of part-time professionals and supervisors also play a critical role. An approach that targets the work itself, the work group, and business motivations is critical. To be effective, an organization's approach to implementing part-time arrangements must include the following activities:

    *   Strengthening and communicating leadership commitment and vision
    *   Articulating a business rationale
    *   Focusing on continuous learning and improvement
    *   Providing guidance and support for professionals with flexible arrangements and their supervisors
    *   Establishing explicit expectations in regard to performance
    *   Providing policies, systems, and structures that support flexibility
    *   Focusing on work productivity

Chapter 1: Why Are Part-Time Arrangements A Critical Issue For Employers?

Are part-time arrangements important? In what ways? For whom? What is the relationship between these arrangements and the business of each organization?

The Impact Of Part-time Arrangements Is Felt Throughout All Four Organizations.

Although the actual number of professionals working part-time at any time may be relatively low, a high percentage of employees are directly affected by part-time arrangements. Over half (57 percent) of 1,056 surveyed employees have direct exposure to some kind of part-time work arrangements. These employees use or have used these arrangements themselves, or they supervise a part-time professional, or they have a part-time professional colleague.

When telecommuting arrangements are added to the mix (meaning that the employee is working off-site full- or part-time), even more professionals—almost seven of every ten (67 percent)—have been directly exposed in some way.

The extent of flexible arrangements revealed in this study underlines how urgent it is that organizations learn how to handle such arrangements effectively. When the number of individuals affected is considered, the cost of poor management of part-time arrangements could be considerable.

A small but meaningful percentage of professionals are actually working in part-time arrangements at a given time. Catalyst sent the Work Schedule Questionnaire, which listed a variety of types of full-time and part-time work arrangements, to 6,134 professional employees in the four organizations and asked employees to check the one that applied to them. An average of seven percent reported currently using a reduced work schedule: 11 percent of the women; four percent of the men.

> Over half (57 percent) of 1,056 surveyed employees have direct exposure to some kind of part-time work arrangements.

> An average of seven percent reported currently using a reduced work schedule: 11 percent of the women; four percent of the men.

**CHART 1: WORK SCHEDULE QUESTIONNAIRE—RESPONDENTS
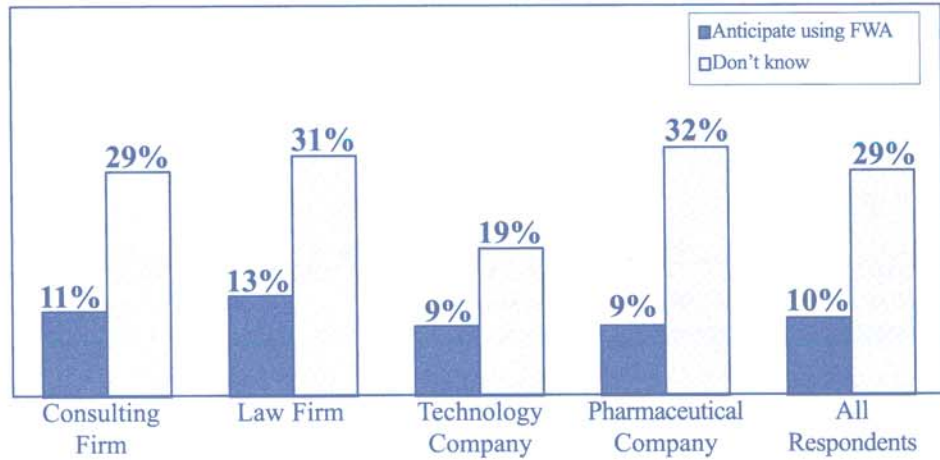USING A PART-TIME ARRANGEMENT (n=2124)**   Catalyst, 1997
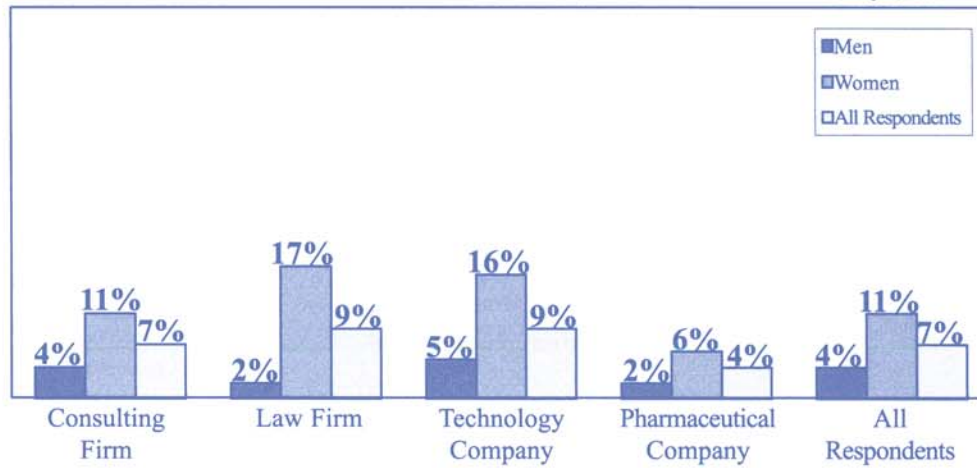
The questionnaire was followed by an in-depth survey sent to 1,695 full-time and part-time employee volunteers (representing 28 percent of the questionnaire population). Because of the nature of the *In-Depth Survey*, part-time professionals were more likely to be interested in responding. Nearly one in four of the women—23 percent—and five percent of men who responded were currently using a part-time arrangement or had used one in the past.

A substantial group of employees anticipate using a part-time arrangement in the future. Ten percent of the full-time employees—17 percent of women and seven percent of men—reported that they anticipate working part-time in the future. More surprisingly, 29 percent of full-time employees—41 percent of women and 22 percent of men—responded "don't know" to that question. In other words, they did not reject the idea out of hand.

CHART 2: FULL-TIME PROFESSIONALS ANTICIPATING USING A PART-TIME ARRANGEMENT (n=965)

Catalyst, 1997

■ Anticipate using FWA
□ Don't know

	Consulting Firm	Law Firm	Technology Company	Pharmaceutical Company	All Respondents
Anticipate using FWA	11%	13%	9%	9%	10%
Don't know	29%	31%	19%	32%	29%

Women do not view part-time arrangements as transitional, but rather as necessary to address ongoing child care responsibilities.

Employees do not view part-time as a short-term, transitional arrangement. Part-time arrangements have often been introduced in organizations as a transitional arrangement for women returning to full-time work from maternity leave or for those phasing into retirement. In Catalyst's 1993 study *Flexible Work Arrangements: Succeeding with Part-Time Options*, we learned that women do not view part-time arrangements as transitional, but rather as necessary to address ongoing child care responsibilities.

Findings from this study confirm that part-time arrangements are not short-term, temporary ones:

- Thirty-two percent reported that they never expect to return to full-time.
- Forty-six percent answered that they didn't know.
- Only three percent of the 91 part-time professionals expected to return to full-time work in less than a year.

In many instances, individuals have ongoing interests and responsibilities requiring that they curtail the lengthy hours typically required of full-time employees.
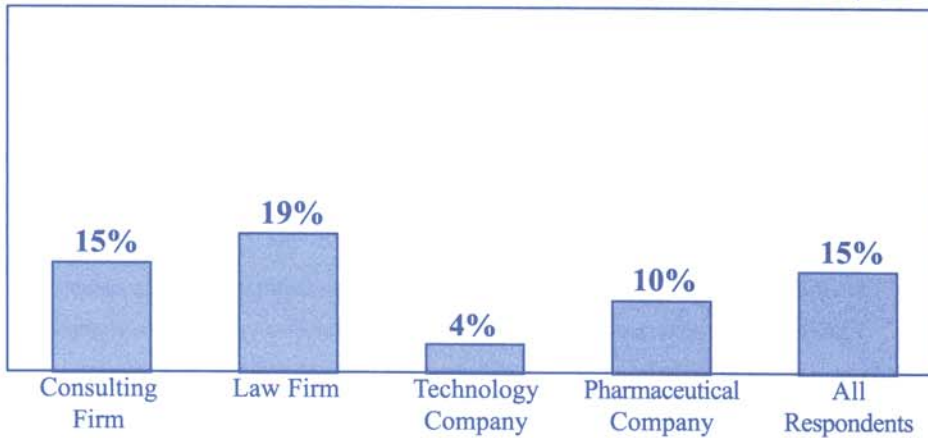
Many of the full-time professionals in our study either supervise part-time professionals or work with them as colleagues. Fourteen percent of the full-time participants supervise part-time professionals. What's more, one in five managers supervise professionals using some type of a flexible arrangement. We can presume, then, that they have discussed these arrangements with employees, negotiated alternatives, and experienced the effects of these arrangements on their own work.

CHART 3: FULL-TIME PROFESSIONALS WHO SUPERVISE ONE OR MORE PART-TIME PROFESSIONALS (n = 965) Catalyst, 1997

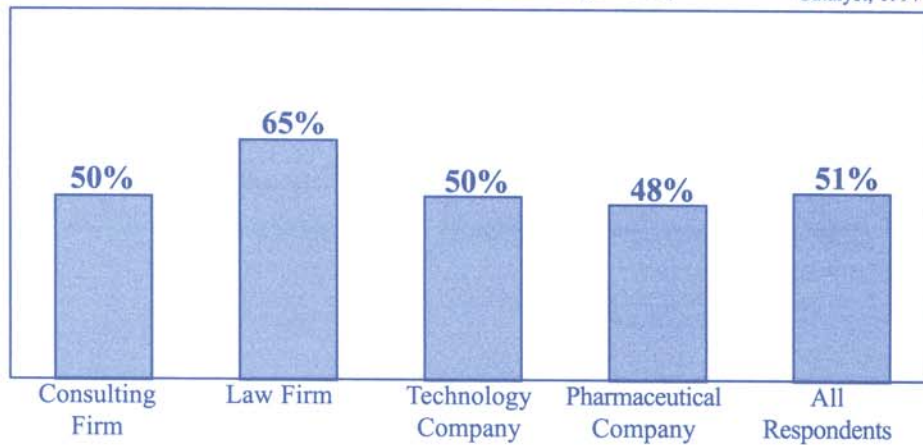| Consulting Firm	Law Firm	Technology Company	Pharmaceutical Company	All Respondents
15%	19%	4%	10%	15%

Fifty-one percent of full-time respondents have experience working with a part-time co-worker.

CHART 4: FULL-TIME PROFESSIONALS WITH EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH A PART-TIME CO-WORKER (n = 965) Catalyst, 1997

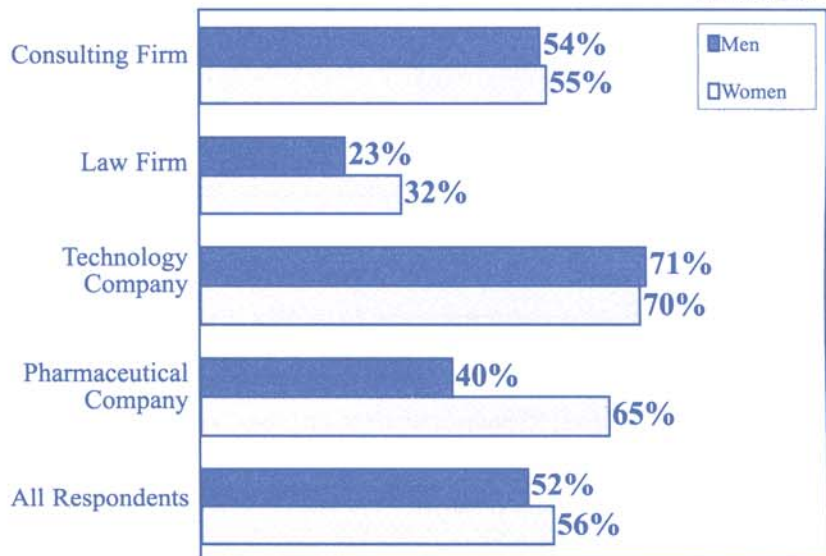| Consulting Firm	Law Firm	Technology Company	Pharmaceutical Company	All Respondents
50%	65%	50%	48%	51%

The Work Environment Is Changing.

Dramatic advances in technology have been matched by the reality of a global economy. Organizations face a growing need to respond to clients at all hours. The use of teams and interrelated group work is on the rise.

In focus groups and interviews in all four organizations, participants described the changing nature of work and the workplace, changes that increase the demand for flexible schedules on the part of both employers and employees.

Traditional full-time arrangements are no longer standard. Less than half of the Work Schedule Questionnaire respondents reported they have a "traditional full-time work arrangement," such as working 9 to 5, Monday through Friday. Fifty-two percent of men and 56 percent of women described their work arrangements as "non-traditional," which means any variation of the standard workweek. Few men use part-time arrangements, but they do use full-time flexible options, such as telecommuting and flextime. These statistics were reinforced by our observations in the four organizations. In focus groups when we expected traditional schedules, Catalyst continually met professionals with some sort of full-time flexible arrangement.

> Participants described the changing nature of work and the workplace, changes that increase the demand for flexible schedules on the part of both employers and employees.

CHART 5: WORK SCHEDULE QUESTIONNAIRE—RESPONDENTS WITH NON-TRADITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS (n=2124)

Catalyst, 1997

	Men	Women
Consulting Firm	54%	55%
Law Firm	23%	32%
Technology Company	71%	70%
Pharmaceutical Company	40%	65%
All Respondents	52%	56%

Advances in technology have created greater opportunities and more interest in working offsite. Almost all of the professionals responding to our survey had technological support that made it possible to work away from the office. The most common forms of technological support were internal e-mail and voice mail, both available to 92 percent of respondents. Technology has made it both more practical and more acceptable to work away from the office; it has also increased options for part-time work.

> *"The ability to support my clients—whether I am in the office or not— is the most critical. I have a modem, computer, and e-mail at home so that I am able to support the system from there 24 hours a day."*
> (Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

Evolving business needs expand work beyond traditional work hours. In all four organizations, participants described the expansion of work beyond the traditional 40-hour workweek. In our survey, full-time professionals reported that they worked, on average, 9.6 hours per day and 50 hours per week.

Full-time professionals reported that they worked, on average, 9.6 hours per day and 50 hours per week.

TABLE 6: WORK HOURS OF FULL-TIME PROFESSIONALS (n = 965)

	Consulting Firm	Law Firm	Technology Company	Pharmaceutical Company
Average	9.6	10.3	9.1	9.7
Average Hours Per Day— Entry-Level Professionals	9.6	10	9.2	9.4
Average Hours Per Day— Mid-level Professionals	9.5	10.1	9.1	9.5
Average Hours Per Day— Senior-level Professionals	10.8	11	No Respondents	10.7

In addition, nearly 50 percent of full-time and part-time professionals reported that they are "usually" expected to change their schedules to accommodate work demands. What's more, 55 percent reported that they "usually" do just that.

The client/customer-service nature of work and the fact that in professional service firms, work hours are billable, have led to the extension of work into hours beyond the traditional. Sixty-eight percent of participants provide service to external clients and 46 percent to internal clients. In all four organizations, customers and clients were often located in different time zones. In both firms and in the technology company, professionals reported an emphasis on responding to customers or clients whenever help is needed.

Nearly 50 percent of full-time and part-time professionals reported that they are "usually" expected to change their schedules to accommodate work demands.

At the consulting firm, professionals work long hours to meet client demands, and because the work often takes place at the client's offices, considerable travel is a normal part of the workweek. At the law firm, professionals described long work hours as part of the culture of the work. They, too, have clients in many parts of the world, and although they may travel less, they find that working with people in different time zones lengthens the workday.

"In law, we are selling our hours. It is a straight one-to-one exchange. Work fewer hours, you make less money. Work more hours, you make more money."

(Partner, law firm)

The group studied at the technology company provided 24-hour, 365-day service for customers. Work teams often included members in different geographic regions and time zones. This did not necessarily lengthen schedules, but it did require that professionals work a wide range of shifts and schedules. Staff groups at the pharmaceutical company worked with internal clients located all over the world, requiring travel in some cases and telephone contact at irregular hours.

In addition, in all four organizations, employees perceived long hours as an important cultural value, critical to being viewed as a good performer: 44 percent of participants rated this factor as high or very high. Since work hours are linked to the organization's profitability, the reason for the emphasis is clear.

Work demands require teaming. Most of the participants in our focus groups and interviews described working as part of a team. Seventy-four percent reported they work as part of a team "to a great extent." Teaming was described as an important business trend in all four organizations, allowing for extended client coverage and participation by staff with varying levels of expertise and experience. In fact, "commitment to the team" was identified as one of the most critical factors to performing well in all four organizations: 83 percent of professionals said that this factor was important to a great or very great extent.

> Teaming was described as an important business trend in all four organizations, allowing for extended client coverage and participation by staff with varying levels of expertise and experience.

To work well, teams require explicit definitions of goals and roles, precise scheduling of team interactions, and clear communication about them. The shared goals and the team roles and schedules of effective teams can make it easier for employees to use alternative arrangements. Teaming is a trend that promises to have considerable impact on the use of flexible arrangements (see Chapter 3).

Outside forces increasingly compel organizations to make work arrangements more flexible. The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act's mandated 12-week leave can be used intermittently, creating a part-time arrangement. The Federal Clean Air Act has forced companies to create a wide range of daily schedules, compressed week arrangements, and options to work at home. Participants also described lengthy commutes and difficult weather conditions as personal motivations for working at home. One employee noted that a blizzard had helped her organization learn that people can work away from the office and still be productive.

Changing demographics require different work structures and responses from employers. Increasingly, women with children are employed: 40 percent of employed women are mothers of children under 18. And fully seven in ten mothers with children under 18 are in the labor force.

CHART 6: MOTHERS IN THE LABOR FORCE Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996
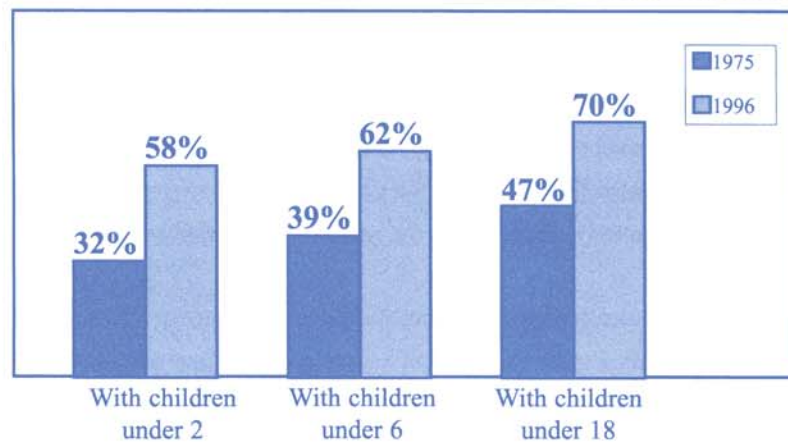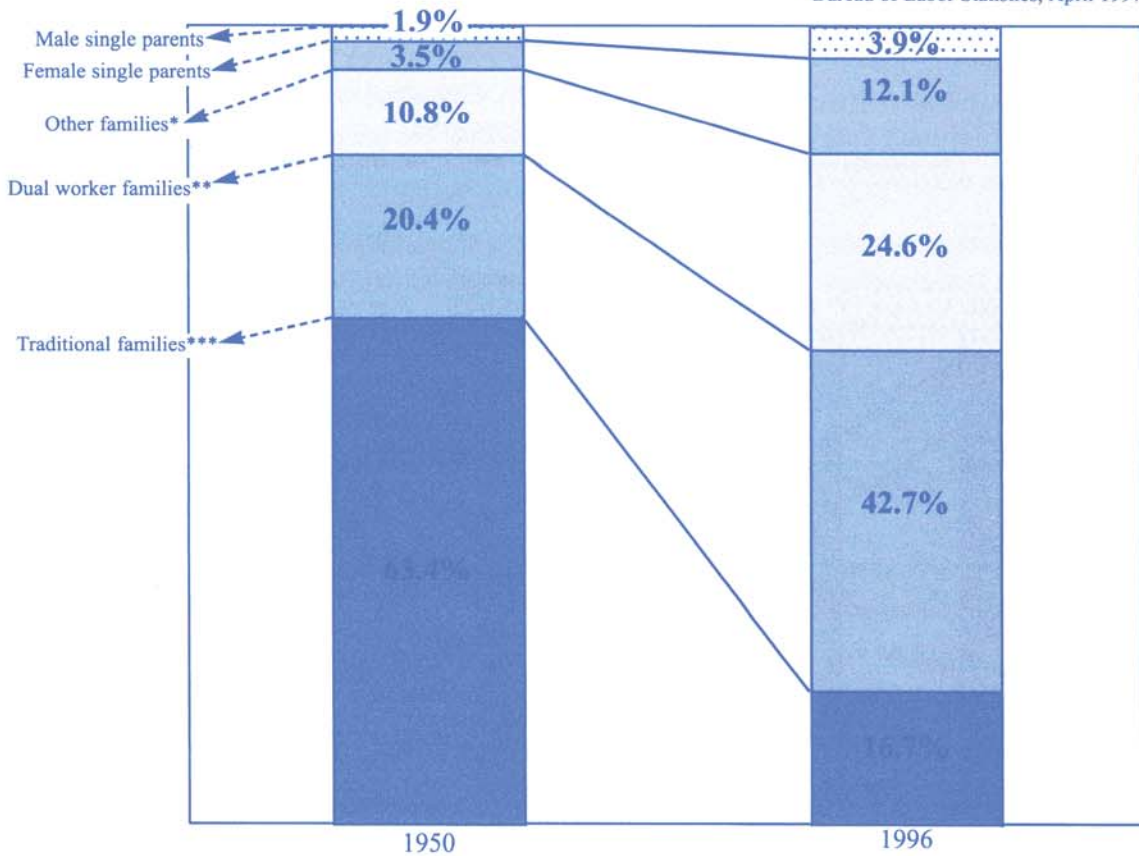

In addition, the composition of families is changing: the Census Bureau reports (1997) that only 17 percent of all families conform to the tradition of a wage-earning dad, a stay-at-home mom, and one or more children.

CHART 7: THE CHANGING COMPOSITION OF FAMILIES
Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 1997

Male single parents
Female single parents

Other families*

Dual worker families**

Traditional families***

1.9%
3.5%
10.8%
20.4%
65.4%

3.9%
12.1%
24.6%
42.7%
16.7%

1950

1996

* Other: the head of the household is not in the labor force; a group of 2 or more people related by birth, marriage or adoption & living together.
** Dual worker families: the husband and wife are in the labor force.
*** Traditional families: the husband, but not the wife, is in the labor force.
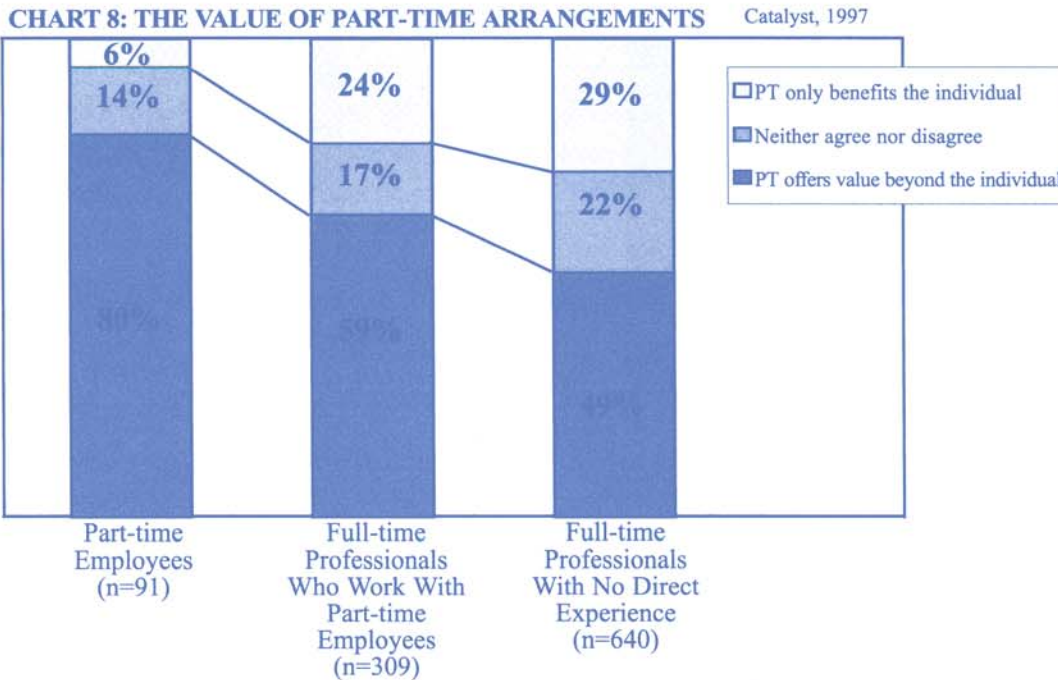
Further, more and more Americans are responsible for the care of adults. The number of households providing elder care for relatives or friends 50 or older has risen from seven million in 1987 to 22.4 million in 1997 (*National Caregiving Survey*, National Alliance for Caregiving/AARP study, June, 1997).

Business Benefits From Effective Flexible Work Arrangements.

The skills needed to make flexible arrangements work well are critical business skills for both managers and individuals. Such arrangements also further the ability to expand customer or client service, increase employee morale, and help retain valued employees with expertise and experience. Flexible work arrangements can also improve productivity.

A majority of the survey participants recognized that an organization's offering flexible work options has benefits beyond the individual involved. There was a statistically significant difference in perceptions about the value of part-time, depending on individual level of experience with flexibility. Still, a majority of the survey participants recognized that offering flexible work options had benefits beyond the individual level.

CHART 8: THE VALUE OF PART-TIME ARRANGEMENTS   Catalyst, 1997

Legend:
- □ PT only benefits the individual
- ▧ Neither agree nor disagree
- ■ PT offers value beyond the individual

Part-time Employees (n=91)	Full-time Professionals Who Work With Part-time Employees (n=309)	Full-time Professionals With No Direct Experience (n=640)
6%	24%	29%
14%	17%	22%
80%	59%	49%

Retention is the critical business reason for offering part-time work arrangements in all four organizations. In the two companies, we heard several examples of situations where a professional resigned because a part-time request was denied, but when employers relented, agreed to remain. We also heard directly from many employees that their flexible work arrangements were why they stayed with their employers.

> *"What we sell are the services of smart, committed people who know their subject matter. If the alternative to a flexible arrangement is having that person gone completely, then it is just plain stupid to have the person go. Because of the competitive environment, we have to have more creativity than this old up-or-out system."*
>
> (Full-time professional, consulting firm)

Many employees said that their flexible work arrangements were why they stayed with their employers.

The survey respondents recognized retention as a major benefit:

- Seventy-eight percent of full-time professionals and 98 percent of part-time professionals agreed that offering flexible work arrangements helps their employer retain valuable employees.
- Thirty-seven percent of part-time professionals said that the arrangement was essential for their continuing with their employers.

Recruitment of valuable talent was also described as an important reason for offering flexible work arrangements of various kinds. We especially heard this at the technology company and the law firm.

> *"It's a question often asked by a candidate, 'Is there any flexibility for an alternative work arrangement?' And if your answer is no, you're probably off the list."*
>
> (Manager, technology company)

Expanded service beyond traditional work hours was another business motivation for offering a variety of flexible arrangements. At the technology company, especially, the need to provide round-the-clock service to customers motivated experimentation with flexible arrangements, from part-time to full-time telecommuting to compressed week arrangements.

> *"Working in my house means that I work whatever hours are best for me and my clients. Often I am up at 6:00 a.m. with a client on the phone. This maximizes efficiency in two ways—one, I can help them during their business day in London, and two, I am not disturbed by anyone else in the office. I was able to continue to be the number one volume performer on my team, and have my total productivity increase by nearly 40 percent—because I became more efficient when I began to work at home."*
>
> (Telecommuting professional, technology company)

> Increases in productivity, consistency of productivity, morale, work quality, and pro-active management were business benefits observed after the part-time arrangements were in place.

Increases in productivity, consistency of productivity, morale, work quality, and pro-active management were business benefits observed after the part-time arrangements were in place. These benefits were not the primary factors in approving an arrangement, but they were observed by managers, professionals with part-time arrangements, and colleagues after arrangements were implemented. Responses to the survey questions confirmed these perceptions:

- Eighty percent reported increases in morale for individuals working part-time or telecommuting.
- Forty-six percent agreed that individuals working part-time realize productivity gains.
- Nearly half (48 percent) reported increases in commitment to the company or firm on the part of part-time employees.

"I really do so much more in three days than I did in five days."
(Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

"Going part-time was a big morale boost to me. I enjoy a much better balance between my work and personal life. A little bit of the best of both worlds."
(Part-time professional, consulting firm)

In the consulting firm, especially, job managers and partners described the positive impact of part-time arrangements on the management of work in general.

"The truth is, the part-time arrangement forced us to be a little more deliberate about how we ordered priorities and what we did.... It has forced us to stop managing by spasm."
(Colleague, consulting firm)

TABLE 7: BUSINESS BENEFITS OF PART-TIME ARRANGEMENTS IDENTIFIED IN FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

	Consulting Firm	Law Firm	Technology Company	Pharmaceutical Company
Retention of Experienced/Valued Employees	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruitment of Talent	✓	✓	✓	✓
Demonstrated Responsiveness to Increased Employee Interest and Need	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improved Morale of Part-time Professional	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increases in Productivity of Part-time Professional	✓	✓	✓	✓
Demonstrated Commitment to Retaining and Advancing Women	✓	✓		✓
Improved Work Quality on the Part of Part-time Professional	✓	✓		
Improved Consistency in Productivity of Part-time Professional	✓			✓
Meeting Best-in-Industry Objectives	✓			✓
Response to Legislation			✓	✓
Increased Employee Commitment to the Organization			✓	
Expanded Client Service Beyond Standard Business Hours			✓	
Encouragement of More Proactive Management Techniques	✓			

Traditional Management Practices Impede Effectiveness.

Managers often consider part-time arrangements costly to their budgets. Catalyst found two reasons for this belief. The first was the systemic practices around billing and measuring performance. In all four organizations, structures were characterized by long-established metrics and reporting systems set up for full-time work. These pre-existing systems were viewed as adversely affecting the integration of flexible work arrangements into the work environment. The second and less tangible reason is the failure of managers to consider the impact of part-time on all stakeholders. In these instances, productivity and morale may suffer. These unfortunate results may be avoided when part-time arrangements are understood to affect not only the individuals using the arrangements, but also managers and co-workers.

Managers are penalized by current systems for reporting productivity. Corporate systems and processes such as head count and cost allocations (benefits, etc.) affect managers. These issues may seem small from the perspective of a corporation where seven percent of a large professional workforce work part-time. Such issues are more difficult for the manager of a small department.

Head count is a major stumbling block when used as the main productivity measure in departmental reports. Managers rarely get approval to increase head count. So the decrease in available staff time that results from a part-time arrangement cannot be replaced or reallocated. Using full-time equivalency to replace head count would allow for a more flexible approach to staffing and reduce the negative impact of part-time arrangements on productivity reports.

> *"Sometimes those same business plans, those same metrics, work against us. With a part-time employee, you get part-time productivity. But it's still full-time head count."*
>
> (Manager, technology company)

Billable hours, the system used by professional service firms instead of head count, is also inimical to making flexibility work. This system equates hours worked with profitability. Thus even a productive professional with a reduced-work arrangement would be viewed as a loss and so denied the part-time arrangement—even if that causes the professional to leave the organization.

Head count is a major stumbling block when used as the main productivity measure in departmental reports.

Personnel benefits for part-time employees are also sometimes described as a cost by managers even when they are not viewed that way by the organization's leadership. Managers reported that job-sharing appears more costly in departmental reports because job-sharers usually have one overlapping day of work, and both employees usually receive benefits. Managers in the four organizations did not quantify the costs, but believed they existed. The benefits of job-sharing, on the other hand, are hidden by the systems in place and cannot be weighed against costs.

Without effective management, part-time arrangements can result in adverse impact on the following:
- Professionals using the arrangement, who lose status in the organization, thus affecting their career mobility
- Co-workers, whose work requirements are often not considered when designing the arrangement
- Supervisors, who take on the task of negotiating these arrangements in the absence of appropriate company policies

Ultimately, this is a cost to organizations. But it is one that can be virtually eliminated by managing the arrangements effectively.

Unsuccessful part-time arrangements contribute to negative assumptions about flexibility. Employees learn about policies and programs from organizational communications, but they also learn from observing the experiences of those around them and hearing the stories disseminated informally within organizations. Unsuccessful experiences create a view of part-time arrangements as "costing" those involved and, in turn, create barriers to implementing part-time arrangements. This leads to the conflict employees see between the promises of their "family-friendly" employers and the reality of the workplace.

> *"Certain people will tell you the company has wonderful flexible policies and show anecdotal situations where flexible situations work. The reality is that 99 percent of managers hate flexibility, ignore the policy, and frown upon employees who dare to even approach the subject."*
> (Professional, pharmaceutical company)

The benefits of job-sharing are hidden by the systems in place and cannot be weighed against costs.

Chapter 2:
What Key Challenges Persist For Organizations?

In each organization in this study, Catalyst found a clear commitment to offering a more flexible work environment. However, the primary focus has been on the individual employee, with little attention dedicated to addressing key organizational factors which influence the success of alternative arrangements. Some factors (such as the policy and systems discussed in Chapter 1) can impede rather than support flexible work arrangements. Others, such as conflicting messages about commitment to flexible work arrangements and perceptions of their viability, point to the importance of providing all employees with the resources and knowledge needed to successfully make use of part-time options. These factors lead to employee concerns about part-time arrangements, particularly that they are incongruous with most jobs and inconsistently available across departments.

Too Often, Part-Time Arrangements Are Viewed As "Accommodations."

They are offered to highly valued employees, primarily women with child care responsibilities. Use by men is limited.

Typically, individual need triggers the request for a part-time arrangement. Supportive managers respond to these individual needs, especially when the request comes from an experienced, valued employee. Not surprisingly, the arrangements are viewed as "accommodations," rather than as integrated, strategic means for managing work and people.

Part-time arrangements are primarily for women with children. The consensus among all participants in our focus groups and interviews was that it is much less acceptable for a professional man to work part-time than for a professional woman. This further narrows the "accommodated" group to valued employees who are women with young children. More than one-fifth (22 percent) of full-time respondents agreed that it was not acceptable for a man to use a part-time arrangement. At the law firm and pharmaceutical company, the percentage, 38 percent and 39 percent respectively, was even higher. Men were more likely than women to hold this perspective.

More than one-fifth of full-time respondents agreed that it was not acceptable for a man to use a part-time arrangement. At the law firm and pharmaceutical company, the percentage was even higher.

CHART 9: NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR A MAN TO WORK PART-TIME - PERCENT AGREEING (n=1056)

Catalyst, 1997
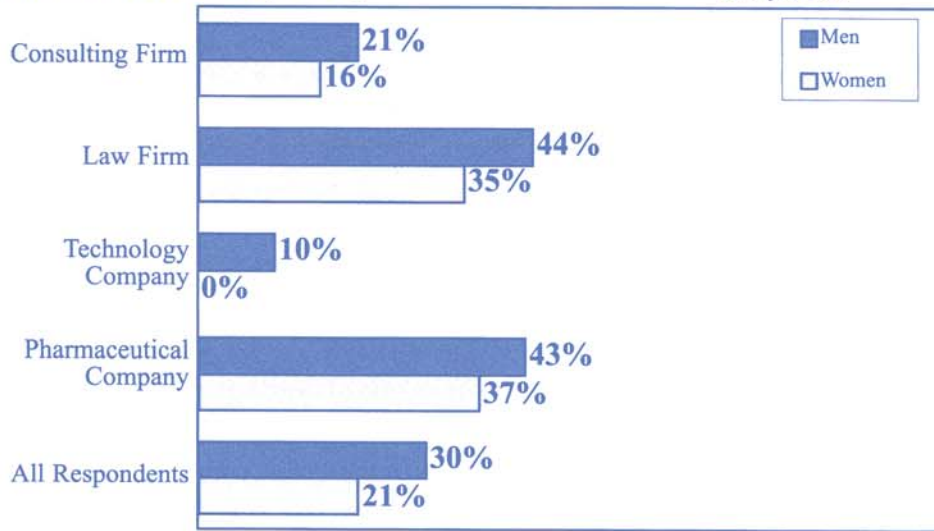
In fact, there were few examples of men with part-time arrangements in these organizations. The majority of part-time professionals—75 percent—were women who did adopt their arrangements to address child-care responsibilities. Many participants reported that part-time arrangements were exclusively for women with children.

> *"I haven't thought of flexibility as being available to me."*
> (Full-time male attorney with two preschool children, law firm)

Men were more likely to use a part-time arrangement to accommodate personal interests unrelated to family.

TABLE 8: MOTIVATIONS FOR PART-TIME ARRANGEMENT (n=91)

Catalyst, 1997

	Men (n=16)	Women (n=75)
Child care	6%	89%
Overwork	25%	13%
Schooling	6%	11%
Personal interests unrelated to family	44%	5%
Health	13%	4%
Adult care	0%	0%

Part-time professional arrangements are for highly valued individuals. Many participants, part-timers and full-timers alike, shared their view that part-time arrangements not only are limited to women, but also are granted only to shining stars. Full-time participants, at the firms in particular, believed that in practice part-time options are offered only to the highest-level performers and only when they threaten to leave.

Some motivations are more acceptable than others. Participants reported that child-care reasons were acceptable for women but not for men, and at the same time, other motivations like schooling were less acceptable in general. The paradox is that men felt restricted from using part-time arrangements because their reasons are not acceptable, while women viewed the success of such arrangements as limited because they are not used by men.

> Men felt restricted from using part-time arrangements because their reasons are not acceptable, while women viewed the success of such arrangements as limited because they are not used by men.

Still, there were successful examples of men using part-time arrangements even when they were not stars, especially at the consulting firm. One manager approved a part-time arrangement for a male consultant who had critical personal interests outside of work. Although his performance was considered marginal, the manager was willing to explore a reduced-hour arrangement. It proved highly successful.

> *"His performance, his reliability, everything just went straight through the roof. He was able to pursue his outside interests, and we scaled back his workload so that he was able to put his best effort on what he was given."*
>
> (Supervisor of male part-time professional, consulting firm)

Perceptions are changing. Many full-time participants, both men and women, came up with a range of reasons why they might need a part-time arrangement in the future. In fact, 45 percent of men cited child care as a plausible reason for adopting a part-time or telecommuting arrangement. Participants, both employees and supervisors, overwhelmingly commented that part-time arrangements were too narrowly defined.

> Forty-five percent of men cited child care as a plausible reason for adopting a part-time or telecommuting arrangement.

TABLE 9: MOTIVATIONS TO ADOPT A PART-TIME OR TELECOMMUTING ARRANGEMENT

	Men n=16	Women n=75	Total n=91
Child care	45%	64%	52%
Health	51%	51%	51%
Adult care	30%	41%	34%
Overwork	33%	36%	34%
Schooling	32%	35%	33%
Personal interest unrelated to family	34%	31%	33%

More employees understand that there are business reasons for retaining specific employees, and more than half of the In-Depth Survey respondents reported that they did not view part-time professionals as receiving preferential treatment.
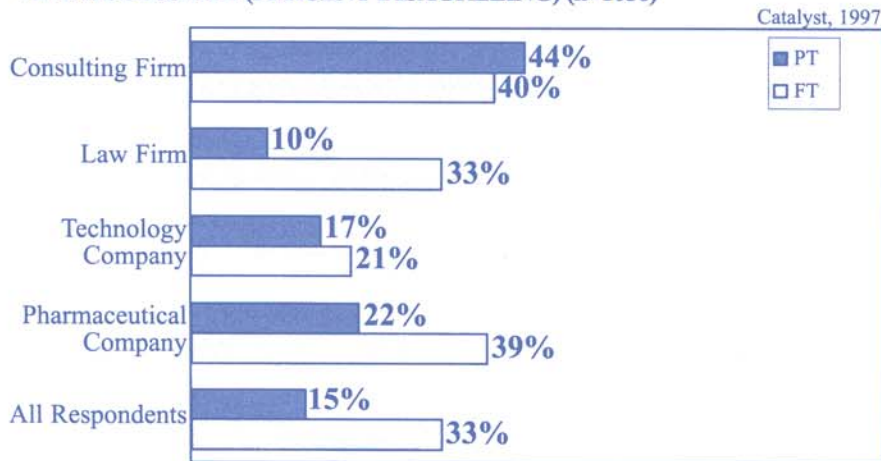
TABLE 10: INDIVIDUALS WHO WORK PART-TIME GET PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT (n=965)

- 67% of full-time participants disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 24% neither agreed or disagreed.
- 8% agreed or strongly disagreed.

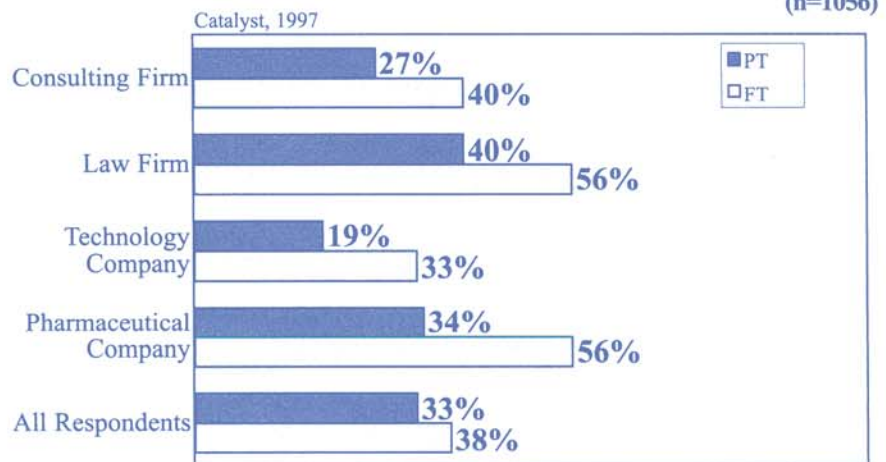## Part-Time Policies Can Be Ambiguous And Lack Critical Information.

Each of the four participating organizations has a formal and widely communicated policy on part-time arrangements, yet participants revealed a continuing information gap. Less than half (45 percent) believed that their company's policy on flexible work arrangements was clearly communicated and accessible to employees; 32 percent disagreed. Even fewer, 37 percent, agreed that advice and guidance about flexible work arrangements were readily available; 37 percent disagreed.

CHART 10: COMPANY'S POLICY ON FWAs CLEARLY COMMUNICATED AND ACCESSIBLE (PERCENT DISAGREEING) (n=1056)

Catalyst, 1997

	PT	FT
Consulting Firm	44%	40%
Law Firm	10%	33%
Technology Company	17%	21%
Pharmaceutical Company	22%	39%
All Respondents	15%	33%

CHART 11: ADVICE AND GUIDANCE ABOUT FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS READILY AVAILABLE (PERCENT DISAGREEING)
(n=1056)

Catalyst, 1997

	PT	FT
Consulting Firm	27%	40%
Law Firm	40%	56%
Technology Company	19%	33%
Pharmaceutical Company	34%	56%
All Respondents	33%	38%

> In the absence of concrete guidelines, supervisors and employees were left to find solutions on their own.

In the pharmaceutical company, participants did not have a consistent understanding of the impact of a part-time arrangement on benefits, systems, and managing workloads. At the management consulting firm, participants reported that their policy offers no guidance about how to manage communications with clients, especially whether clients should know about flexible arrangements. At the law firm, some participants found that the wide policy parameters, designed to give supervisors discretion, resulted in ambiguity. In the absence of concrete guidelines, supervisors and employees were left to find solutions on their own.

> *"Policy seems to be sort of a loose word around here. There is policy and then there's whatever you have to do."*
> (Full-time professional, consulting firm)

> *"My sense is that the reason for there not being clear-cut policy, both for the staff and the attorney side, is so that we have flexibility to work things out on a person-by-person basis that's mutually agreeable."*
> (Part-time professional, law firm)

For example, a focus group of new law firm employees recommended setting up different levels for expected billable hours (enabling attorneys to choose a level of billable hours commensurate with their compensation and career goals), unaware that opportunities such as these were currently in place at the firm.

At the consulting firm, some part-time participants were concerned with compensation practices. They were unaware of the firm's policy, which had changed, and assumed part-time professionals were paid by the hour. The small percentage

of managers who reported that their direct reports were compensated too little were also from the consulting firm.

Part-Time Arrangements Can Appear To Conflict With Profitability.

Catalyst found a conflict between an organization's support of work/life balance in theory versus a competitive, economically driven practice. The conflict was most apparent in the professional firms.

Participants indicated that long hours, demanding workloads, and client service often inhibit opportunities for flexibility. Many commented that certain positions could not accommodate any form of flexibility, let alone reduced-hour arrangements. This concern about the conflict between flexibility and profitability was present in all four organizations.

Organizational structures focus on lean staffing and heavy workloads. Participants in both companies reported that their organizations "run lean," making staffing a critical issue and workload demands high.

> *"The number of accounts I have keeps increasing. I find that I just live for doing the job here and going home and being a daddy. It is increasingly difficult."*
>
> (Full-time professional, technology company)

Within the two firms, participants agreed that heavy work demands create a significant conflict for individuals who need greater flexibility. This complaint was more prevalent at the law firm. Both associates and partners noted that it was difficult for lawyers to successfully work part-time; one described it as "impractical." Working with clients and their demands was described as potentially prohibitive to part-time arrangements, especially at the partnership level.

> *"I really feel that if you play a management role on a case, you do what needs to be done and the client expects to hear from you, the client expects you to take the key depositions, and argue the key motions. It's very hard to say, 'Well, I am working 40 hours this week.' (laughter)."*
>
> (Part-time professional, law firm)

Participants indicated that long hours, demanding workloads, and client service often inhibit opportunities for flexibility.

Systems And Structures Continue To Limit Success.

In addition to using head count as a key metric for productivity, the organizations' payroll and compensation and performance management systems tend to limit the success of flexible work arrangements. Organizations have tended not to address the problem of clarifying and adjusting systems which were designed to support employees who work standard and typical schedules.

Employee tracking systems exclude part-time employees. In three of the four organizations (all but the law firm), computer systems do not handle professional part-time employees effectively. In the pharmaceutical company, conversions to and from part-time are extremely complicated. When we began the study, part-time employees were not included in the computer-generated listing of those eligible for raises.

> *"I show up on the charts as being 60 percent available and 40 percent on maternity leave, which isn't quite appropriate since my oldest is 2 ½ years old."*
>
> (Part-time professional, consulting firm)

Human Resources is often unaware of specific arrangements because of the lack of effective tracking systems and because of arrangements made by supervisors without human-resource involvement. This makes it difficult for Human Resources to provide support to managers or employees.

Compensation systems create challenges. For the most part, part-time professionals reported that their reduced compensation matches their workload. Controlling for a range of variables, full-time and part-time are equitably compensated given the hours they work. Nor were there significant differences between men and women. The significant predictors of salary were hours worked per week, level, age, tenure, and education. However, one out of five of the part-time professionals did not believe their compensation appropriate.

The organizations in this study typically pro-rate benefits, and this approach is effective for the most part. However, at the pharmaceutical company, where company policy states that bonuses should be pro-rated, a compensation specialist emphasized the administrative challenges of tracking individual situations in such a large company. Here managers use their own discretion to divide the division's aggregate pool to provide awards to part-time employees. Problems tend to arise in small units where a small head-count difference can swing the size of the pool, or in units where management has not made an effective transition from the detailed allocation systems of the past.

Organizations have tended not to address the problem of clarifying and adjusting systems designed to support standard and typical schedules.

Performance rating systems can put part-time employees at a disadvantage. Both companies currently use a forced distribution performance-rating system, which limits the number of people who receive excellent ratings. When given the choice between two high performers, one full-time and one part-time, managers inevitably give the higher rating to the full-time professional.

> *"We are a pay-for-performance company and maybe we don't give part-time employees as high a rating as our full-time employees because we can only have so many high ratings and we don't want to waste them on part-time employees. I'd much rather give my high rating to someone I have to look at eight hours a day versus four hours a day."*
> (Compensation specialist, pharmaceutical company)

Productivity measurements need to be examined. The two companies continue to use head count rather than full-time equivalency as a way of allocating human resources. Through this practice, one person is counted as one employee regardless of the time worked and managers are limited to a specific number of employees. For this reason, especially in the pharmaceutical company, managers were reluctant to approve part-time arrangements, because while head count would remain constant, actual work hours would decrease. In addition, participants were concerned that the head count allotted to departments did not reflect work to be done, resulting in too much work for even full-time employees and therefore making it difficult for managers to approve reduced schedules.

Within both firm environments, hours billed are a primary measure of performance and individual value. Those who bill the most hours are seen as the most valuable. Some law firm participants explained that part-time professionals were in some sense less valuable to the firm because of this structure. Sixty-five percent of full-time law firm respondents indicated that "long hours" was a highly important part of performing well, compared with only 43 percent of other full-time respondents.

> *"There are competing realities. Compared to some firms, I think we're really great. But would I prefer to have everyone working 50 hours a week? Well, yeah, frankly, it's just the nature of our work. You could be here all the time. Just for myself and the group that I manage, I really want to be flexible. But I have to admit my heart sinks when they come to me, because it's a challenge in this kind of place."*
> (Partner, law firm)

When given the choice between two high performers, one full-time and one part-time, managers inevitably give the higher rating to the full-time professional.

Sixty-five percent of full-time law firm respondents indicated that "long hours" was a highly important part of performing well, compared with only 43 percent of other full-time respondents.

Lean infrastructure has created pressure. Participants also questioned the practicality of and commitment to workplace flexibility given other organizational decisions on staffing. Participants shared concerns about downsizing and about the organizations' being *too skinny* to support part-time work options. Only 16 percent of full-time participants reported that they "always have sufficient clerical/secretarial support"; 28 percent said they rarely or never do. Participants believed strongly that without additional resources to support infrastructure flexibility, flexible arrangements are difficult to accommodate. This was especially a concern at the consulting firm.

Lack of career alternatives may result. In the firms with a tradition of up-or-out, professionals were concerned about the impact of a part-time arrangement on their advancement to partner. Participants in one firm supported recent efforts to establish a legitimate alternative to the up-and-out system. Nonetheless, traditional values persist. One male associate explained how it can hurt your career to be perceived as not interested in partnership:

> *"I think the up-and-out structure of the partnership is changing now. There are going to be more positions where people who do not want to be partner will be satisfied with less money. But if people perceive you as not being serious about the partnership track that is detrimental to your career. You won't get the good deals, you won't get the premium work."*
>
> *(Professional with flexible arrangement, law firm)*

Management Of Part-Time Arrangements Is Inconsistent.

Participants repeatedly cited inconsistency among managers as the primary challenge to the effective use of part-time arrangements. Stakeholders (part-time professionals, colleagues, managers, as well as new employees) in all four organizations raised concerns about the wide variability in implementation and management of flexible arrangements, including part-time options.

> *"There seem to be communications coming from the highest levels of the company that say, 'We make alternative arrangements work, part-time work.' Then there are people that want to do it and first-line managers that are supportive of it. Somewhere in the middle, some management is not supportive of it at all. I've gotten bad vibes when I've proposed it about various people: 'We have our token part-timer, we can't afford another.'"*
>
> (Supervisor of full-time professionals, pharmaceutical company)

Participants in one firm supported recent efforts to establish a legitimate alternative to the up-and-out system.

Participants repeatedly cited inconsistency among managers as the primary challenge to the effective use of part-time arrangements.

> *"Each practice manages differently, each practice has a partner who does things differently. Each of us has different clients who demand different things: there are task contracts, fixed price contracts, cost-plus contracts. It is difficult to sit up in the ivory tower and say, 'This is the way we are going to manage flexible people.'"*
>
> (Full-time professional, consulting firm)

Some supervisors in Catalyst focus groups described their personal dedication to the concept of workplace flexibility, while others were thoroughly resistant. Regardless, their descriptions often shared one element: a culture and work environment which offers only intermittent support to their efforts, making managing these arrangements costly and/or difficult.

Two barriers predominate: (1) the approval and negotiation process can be difficult and lengthy, and (2) changes in management can uproot an arrangement or require renegotiation.

> *"I've had three managers over the last 2 ½ years, and it's been like windshield wipers—from one extreme to another and back again."*
>
> (Full-time professional, technology company)

> *"Any organization is going to have a range of managers, skills, and understanding. You're going to have someone who is very empathic to his or her people, and others that aren't. That's just life."*
>
> (Part-time professional, law firm)

Participating professionals and their supervisors reported they received little education and guidance on the effective management of alternative arrangements.

Managers expressed eagerness for help in managing the following:
*   The negotiation and the approval process
*   The implications of an alternative arrangement for the entire work group and how to mitigate needless impact on colleagues and managers
*   Realistic and appropriate management of workload and job responsibilities for individuals with part-time arrangements

Participants in the survey confirmed the existence of varying levels of organizational effectiveness and managerial facility with these arrangements, an unevenness that also exists across the four organizations.

TABLE 11: ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT
(1=Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5=Strongly Agree) (n=1056)

	Consulting Firm Mean	Law Firm Mean	Technology Company Mean	Pharmaceutical Company Mean
	3.2	3.2	3.8	3.0
Attribute: Attitudes About Effectiveness and Commitment	• My organization has been effective at implementation. • My organization is highly committed, compared to others. • My organization's policy is accessible. • Managers have adequate tools for implementation. • Managers are willing to implement FWAS. • Managers are supportive of worklife commitment. • Guidance is available. • Senior management is supportive.			

The managers who do not supervise employees with flexible arrangements may avoid such arrangements because of the lack of appropriate guidance. They are unsure about what they can and cannot do in terms of approving or implementing such arrangements. Without support, supervisors adapt and implement flexible arrangements in widely different ways, ranging from effectiveness to resistance to mishandling their management. This variability has resulted in a wide range of experiences on the part of the professionals using part-time work arrangements.

A lack of emphasis is placed on management in general. Some participants commented that ineffective management of flexible work arrangements was symptomatic of more general problems. Some believe that more of an emphasis should be placed on mastering managerial skills.

"Ultimately [good management] is what it gets down to. The problem is that people are elevated to management positions because they do good work, not because they are good managers. And because they do good work, it means they are busy doing their work, which means that they don't have time for management or particularly care about it."
(Supervisor, law firm)

"We are not studying how people really manage and that is kind of surprising. I haven't seen any fundamental change in the techniques that we employ in management. It is amazing that flexible work arrangements are working all that well."
(Full-time professional, consulting firm)

Without support, supervisors adapt and implement flexible arrangements in widely different ways, ranging from effectiveness to resistance to mishandling their management.

Managerial commitment varies widely. Participants described some managers as having a traditional line-of-sight approach to management that precludes approval of flexible alternatives. They noted that, in some cases, managers see flexible work arrangements as simply a means for employees to slack off.

> *"I have nine managers and one or two are pretty much intolerant of part-time work. It's the mentality of 'I like to see the people come in at 8:30 a.m. and be here at least until 5:30 p.m.' They don't believe that work is getting done if they don't physically see the person."*
> (Supervisor of professional with flexible arrangement, pharmaceutical company)

Some managers have strong feelings about when and for what reasons part-time work is acceptable, reinforcing a narrow view.

> *"I would prefer that they took flexible work for family reasons rather than school reasons because school is such a competitive interest and so demanding. Family things are containable—they take time as opposed to the intellectual energy so you're not draining a somewhat limited resource."*
>
> (Full-time professional, consulting firm)

Managerial ease varies widely. Managers' commitment to part-time arrangements is also influenced by the environment in which they work. In the pharmaceutical company, for example, managers were less comfortable experimenting with flexible arrangements because of heightened competitiveness in a downsized environment.

Because managers play a critical role in ensuring an individual's ability to perform effectively in his or her role, individuals working flexibly can "take a hit" if the lead person does not protect them. For example, a lack of communication among team leaders about a part-time professional's availability can lead to unfavorable consequences for the part-time individual.

> *"One problem arises if a part-time person is supporting multiple teams. If a manager responds to a client demand without checking the part-timer's availability, then it's the manager's fault, but the damage is done to the individual, who is seen as not responsive."*
> (Supervisor of professional with flexible arrangement, consulting firm)

Some managers have a traditional line-of-sight approach to management that precludes approval of flexible alternatives.

False deadlines and false emergencies are common. In three of the four organizations (the law firm, the consulting firm, and the pharmaceutical company), participants described a lack of planning that clearly affects the success of part-time arrangements. Many participants, particularly those within the firm environments, noted that managers had control over and influence on the work lives of employees and lacked the motivation to plan ahead. While participants acknowledged the reality of unexpected emergencies, the consensus was that many "emergencies" resulted from poor planning.

"You have 30 days to get a motion done and yet people are up all night the day before getting it done. To me, that's just poor planning or organization."

(Partner, law firm)

Forty-five percent of participants believed that, compared to other employers, their company or firm was highly committed to work/life balance.

There Is A Gap Between Intention And Practice In Terms Of Making Part-Time Arrangements Work.

Within each of the four organizations, flexible work arrangements have been introduced primarily to address the work/life balance needs of employees. In some ways, the innovation has been successful. Forty-five percent of participants believed that, compared to other employers, their company or firm was highly committed to work/life balance.

CHART 12: COMPARED TO OTHER EMPLOYERS IN MY FIELD INDUSTRY, MY COMPANY/FIRM IS HIGHLY COMMITTED TO THE ISSUE OF WORK/LIFE BALANCE—PERCENT AGREEING (n=1056)
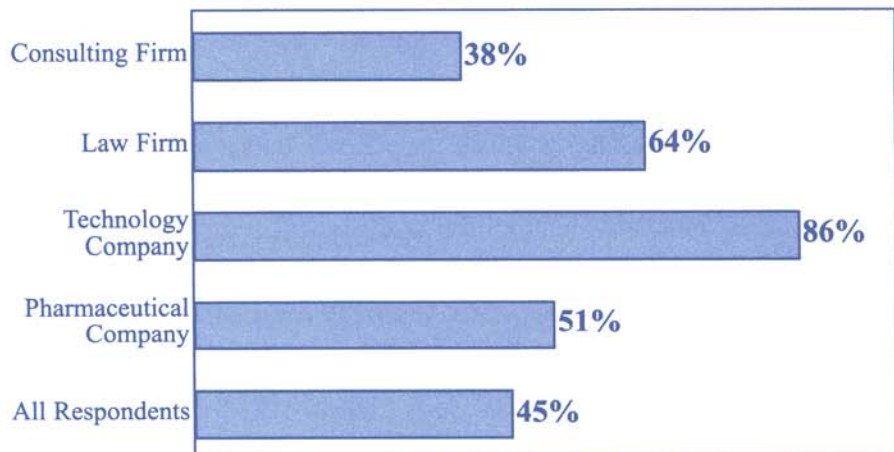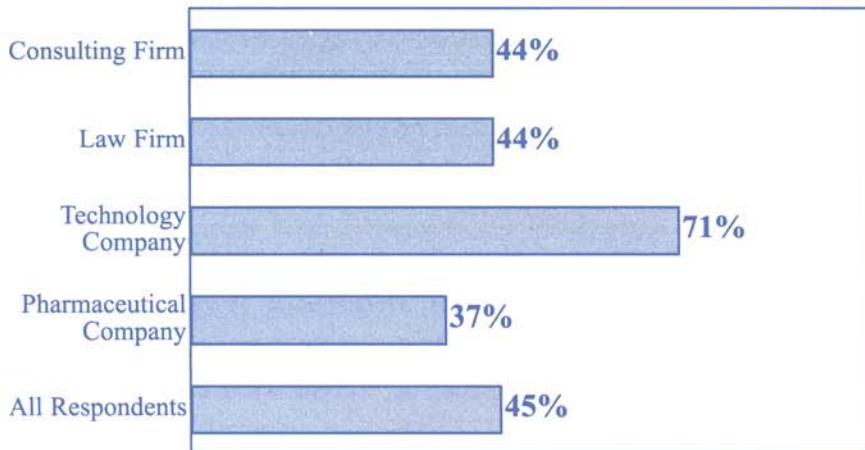
	Percent Agreeing
Consulting Firm	38%
Law Firm	64%
Technology Company	86%
Pharmaceutical Company	51%
All Respondents	45%

Catalyst, 1997

Why flexible work arrangements are implemented. Recruitment, retention, productivity, morale, and customer service were cited as key motivations for introducing flexible work arrangements; many participants recognize and understand these rationales. In addition, almost half of our survey participants (45 percent) reported that senior management is supportive of workplace flexibility.

CHART 13: SENIOR MANAGEMENT SUPPORTS WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY—PERCENT AGREEING (n=1056)

Catalyst, 1997

Consulting Firm — 44%
Law Firm — 44%
Technology Company — 71%
Pharmaceutical Company — 37%
All Respondents — 45%

Flexible arrangements are still often seen as second-best. Both firm leadership and employees recognize business motivations for part-time arrangements, yet they have not been established as a business imperative. In theory, flexibility is a viable and effective approach to managing work and teams, yet in practice it has come to be perceived as an accommodation at best and a nuisance and liability at worst.

> *"Even though flexibility is heavily emphasized during recruitment, once you join the firm everyone tells you, 'It's only in theory.' The whole concept of flextime doesn't apply to attorneys."*
> (Female full-time attorney, law firm)

> *"You've got two things going on. The supervisor is not saying, 'Hey, if you have a problem, I want you to come and talk to me.' And then the person on the other side is saying, 'I'm not sure I want to be the first one to step up to this.' I think the policy is there—I think we mean it. But I don't think it's credible yet. What we need is some successes spread around the corporation."*
> (Senior manager, pharmaceutical company)

Nevertheless, participants from all four organizations voiced philosophical commitment to the issue of workplace flexibility.

A clear majority believed that flexible work arrangements help their employer retain valuable employees.

- Just over half (51 percent) of survey respondents agreed that, "from a management perspective, part-time is an important option for my company/firm."
- At the same time, a clear majority, 79 percent, believed that flexible work arrangements help their employer retain valuable employees.
- Nearly two-thirds, 63 percent, reported that flexible work arrangements help their employer achieve its business objectives.

While far from unanimous, these percentages are a significant and encouraging finding. They suggest that people are supportive of the flexibility concept even when they lack the resources or know-how to make it viable. By failing to present flexibility as an integrated business strategy and to provide sufficient guidance to make it work, organizations have inevitably fallen short of their intention to achieve two inter-related goals: fulfilling the demands of the workplace and enabling employees to realize an effective balance. To reach these goals, organizations must first reconcile their commitment and their practice. Only then can they communicate, clearly and consistently, effective strategies for the implementation of flexibility policies.

Chapter 3: How Do Part-Time Work Arrangements Affect Key Stakeholders?

Chapter 2 documented the belief that organizations generally view and evaluate part-time work as special arrangements for specific individuals, successful if it meets their individual needs. This chapter reports findings on the effects of part-time work on the three key stakeholders: the part-time professionals, their colleagues, and their supervisors.

Catalyst investigated three major aspects of the working life: job performance, job attributes, and personal and work life. As might be expected, we found some instances where part-time arrangements had a clearly favorable impact and others with undesirable consequences. The ability of the supervisor and the individual to manage the arrangement—as addressed in the previous chapter—is key to a favorable outcome.

I. The Impact of Part-time Arrangements on Those Who Use Them

Participants in the Catalyst focus groups at all four organizations identified four key sets of criteria that are critical to good performance for all professional employees:

- Expertise, quality work, and responsiveness
- Team focus
- Time and travel
- Social issues and relationships

TABLE 12: IMPORTANCE OF KEY PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
(1=Very Low Extent 3=Moderate Extent 5=Very High Extent)   Catalyst, 1997

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Full-time Supervisors Mean Score (n=483)	Full-time Non-Supervisors Mean Score (n=378)
Expertise, Quality Work & Responsiveness • High quality work product • Taking initiative • Providing fast turnaround on requests • Working on critical projects • Functional expertise • Non-substitutable expertise	4.2	4.2	4.1
Team Focus • Commitment to team • Support from team • Frequent communication with team	3.6	3.8	3.6
Time and Travel • Long hours • Committing to unanticipated overtime • Ability for planned travel • Ability for unplanned travel	2.7	3.4	3.1
Social Issues & Relationships • Face to face interaction with colleagues • Work-related socializing during work hours • Work-related socializing after work hours • Having mentors • Being visible at work	2.8	3.2	3.1

Expertise, Quality Work & Responsiveness was the category given the highest importance by all key stakeholders. Essentially, there were no statistically significant ($p<.01$) differences in the responses. Team Focus was also rated as highly important by a majority of professionals.

However, there were statistically significant ($p<.01$) differences in opinions about the importance of the other two categories: Time and Travel and Social Issues and Relationships. Full-time professionals see the two categories as more important than part-time professionals do, and supervisors see them as even more important than full-time non-supervisors do. In fact, because they viewed these criteria as critical to job performance, full-time employees in our focus groups were hard-pressed to understand how part-time arrangements could work well.

Of course, part-time professionals reduce the time they spend working. Yet, as we disclose later in this chapter, their work responsibilities and assignments are sometimes not appropriately adjusted. Often, then, part-time professionals are forced to choose the strategy of limiting the less central aspects of their jobs, such as social interactions.

PERFORMANCE

Catalyst evaluated the effect of part-time work on performance. Part-time and full-time professionals diverged slightly but significantly in their evaluation of the impact of working part-time on performance. Full-time professionals were more likely to perceive a negative impact of working part-time on their part-time colleagues' performance than were part-time professionals themselves. This conclusion was consistent even when controlling for company differences.

Clearly, some decrease is inevitable for part-time professionals in such areas as daily availability, scope of work, and number of clients. But full-time and part-time employees differed on the impact of criteria that are critical to performance, such as the ability to get the information needed to perform the job or to advance. It is important for managers and part-time professionals to manage these factors.

TABLE 13 : IMPACT OF ARRANGEMENT ON PART-TIME INDIVIDUALS
(1=Decreases Substantially 3=No Change 5=Increases/Improves Substantially)

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Full-time Mean Score (n=965)
Effect of Part-time on Key Job Characteristics, Affecting Performance & Advancement • Commitment to advancing to top management • Scope of work • Relevance of work to company/firm • Number of clients • Importance of assignments • Ability to get the information to perform job • Availability on a daily basis • Relationship with manager • Providing outstanding external client service • Providing outstanding internal client service • Providing fast turnaround on requests • Availability for planned travel • Availability for unplanned travel • Ability to manage others • Career advancement	2.8	2.5

Part-time and full-time professionals' views of the effect of a part-time schedule on performance differed dramatically, except in terms of availability for travel. For example, two in three (64 percent) full-time professionals believed that part-time arrangements decreased an individual's ability to manage others. Only 18 percent of part-time professionals agreed.

TABLE 14: PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT OF PART-TIME ON PERFORMANCE ABILITIES AND KEY JOB ATTRIBUTES

	Part-time Respondents Noting Decrease (n=91)	Supervisors Noting Decrease (n=49)	Full-time Respondents Noting Decrease (n=965)
Availability for unplanned travel	48%	49%	63%
Availability for planned travel	40%	39%	54%
Scope of work	26%	20%	54%
Ability to manage others	18%	16%	64%
Importance of assignments	15%	8%	44%
Number of clients	13%	12%	55%

Strikingly, however, part-time professionals and their direct supervisors were closely aligned in their responses to the effect of part-time on performance. The two groups agreed on the percentages of decreased abilities on most criteria. This may indicate that the observations of full-time colleagues were too peripheral to be accurate.

JOB ATTRIBUTES

Full-time and part-time professionals described their jobs in significantly different ways. For example, full-time professionals were more likely to work in the office on a daily basis and travel for work. They were also more likely to provide external client service, work at a client site, and have significant management responsibilities.

TABLE 15: STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN JOB ATTRIBUTES (1=To A Little or No Extent 3=To A Great Extent)

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Full-time Mean Score (n=965)
Management Duties & Skills, Line Responsibilities • Manage multiple projects • Impact revenue/profits • Travel • Supervise professionals • Place a strong emphasis on communication • Manage the expectations of the people with whom I work	2.0	2.2
Provide external client service	2.4	2.5
Work at a client site	1.7	1.9
Work in the office on a daily basis	2.3	2.6
Have considerable flexibility in terms of where and when I work	2.2	1.8

TABLE 16: STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN JOB ATTRIBUTES

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Full-time Mean Score (n=965)
Travel Responsibilities • On average, number of days per month out of the office on business	.8	2.9
Management Responsibilities • ☐ Mean number of professionals supervised • ☐ % who supervise professionals with flexible work arrangements	1.8 10%	4.7 20%

No statistical differences were found in the way full-time and part-time participants described two crucial aspects of their jobs: offering task expertise or working independently.

TABLE 17: POSITION ATTRIBUTES—SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME PROFESSIONALS

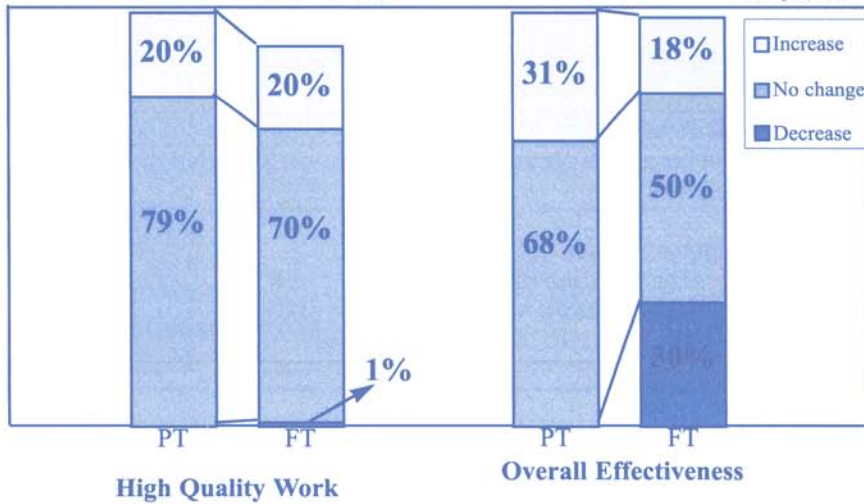|	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Full-time Mean Score (n=965)
Offer specific, task-relevant expertise	2.8	2.7
Work independently	2.3	2.3

The majority of both part-time and full-time participants agreed that working part-time had little or no effect on high-quality work or effectiveness.

The majority of both part-time and full-time participants agreed that working part-time had little or no effect on high-quality work or effectiveness. In fact, a substantial percentage (20 percent) of full-time and part-time participants reported that a part-time schedule increased the ability to turn out quality work. Eighteen percent of full-time participants believed they observed an increase in effectiveness on the part of their part-time colleagues, while a full 31 percent of the part-timers themselves noted such an increase.

CHART 14: IMPACT OF PART-TIME ARRANGEMENTS—WORK QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS (n=1056)

Catalyst, 1997

High Quality Work — Overall Effectiveness

Legend: Increase, No change, Decrease

PT: 20%, 79% — FT: 20%, 70%, 1% (High Quality Work)
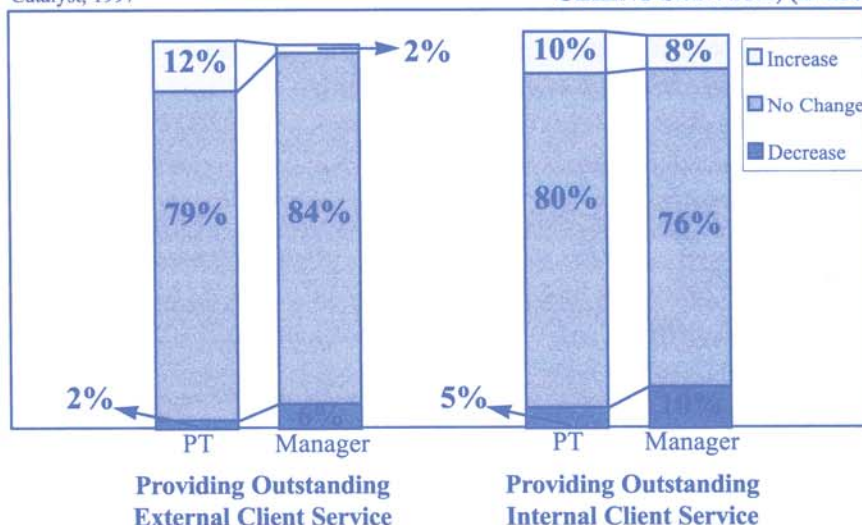PT: 31%, 68% — FT: 18%, 50%, 30% (Overall Effectiveness)

The Client's Viewpoint. Catalyst also interviewed clients of part-time professionals. A majority indicated that they had a high degree of comfort with and confidence in the part-time professional's responsibility and availability. In all cases, clients believed that the presence of a part-time team member had no noticeable impact on projects. Clients reported that the part-time professionals serving them took responsibility for arranging coverage when they were unavailable, adapted their schedules when necessary, and responded appropriately to work demands.

> *"The project would not be where it is today if she hadn't done her work so well. I've been so appreciative of her work, I gave her an award for excellence. She went above and beyond the call of duty."*
>
> (Client, pharmaceutical company)

In all cases, clients believed that the presence of a part-time team member had no noticeable impact on projects.

CHART 15: EVALUATION OF IMPACT OF PART-TIME ON PROVIDING CLIENT SERVICE; (n=150)

Catalyst, 1997

	Increase
	No Change
	Decrease

12% — 2% — 79% — 84% — 2% — 10% — 8% — 80% — 76% — 5%

PT   Manager   PT   Manager

Providing Outstanding External Client Service   **Providing Outstanding Internal Client Service**

Supervisors of the participating part-time employees also generally reported no difference in the part-time professional's ability to provide outstanding client service. Their supervisors' evaluations were consistent with those of the part-time professionals.

Full-time respondents, however, told a different story. While the majority reported no change in performance level or, in a few cases, improvements, a substantial number of full-time respondents reported a perception that part-time arrangements resulted in a decrease in ability to provide outstanding client service, whether outside the organization or inside. Just over one-quarter (29 percent) believed that the ability to provide outstanding external client service declined when part-time employees do the work. More than one-third (36 percent) believed that the ability to provide that service internally decreased. The full-time participants may be describing actual experience working with part-time professionals (who may or may not be included in our sample), or they may be reporting assumptions.

Difficulties. During this study, we came across many examples of undesirable and unintended consequences for professionals working part-time. Workloads are not always reduced for part-time employees. Boundaries between work and home are blurred. Some part-time professionals believe that their compensation is inappropriate. Full-time professionals have misconceptions about part-time professionals and may harbor resentment. Often the cause of these problems is an ineffective arrangement—one poorly designed or negotiated.

Many part-time employees reported that their work responsibilities stayed the same when their work hours and compensation were reduced. They believed they were actually performing a full-time job in part-time hours. This may explain the gains in productivity that were reported.

> *"I have known attorneys who have been ⅔ time and have worked 1900, 1950 billable hours per year, which makes me wonder, 'Why even bother?' You are compensated two-thirds for what is essentially a full-time job."*
>
> (Manager, law firm)

> *"No responsibilities were taken away. So you were expected to do full-time work in a part-time arrangement."*
>
> (Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

This finding was confirmed by survey data in all but the technology company, where part-time professionals were more likely to report that their workload decreased when they went part-time. Interestingly, almost half of direct supervisors at the other three organizations seemed to be aware that workloads of part-time employees had not decreased, although somewhat less so than the part-time professionals themselves.

TABLE 18: HOW WORKLOAD OF INDIVIDUAL IS AFFECTED BY PART-TIME

	Part-time (n=91)	Supervisors (n=49)	Full-time (n=965)
• Decreases in workload for part-time professionals	37%	47%	50%
• No change in workload for part-time professionals	49%	43%	34%
• Increases in workload for part-time professionals	12%	6%	14%
• Total no change/increases in workload of part-time professionals	61%	49%	48%

As reported earlier, part-time professionals acknowledged that they reduce time spent on work-related social activities. This may be the only aspect of their work they feel comfortable about reducing. Many part-time professionals noted that extensive time demands were real challenges to the success of their arrangements. A number of people we interviewed indicated that this was the issue that ultimately led to failure of the part-time arrangement.

> *"I ended up working as many hours anyway. I started feeling taken advantage of...I felt that I was doing my token 'above the standard week' and then more. That's why I went ahead and went to technical full-time."*
>
> (Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

Many part-time employees reported that their work responsibilities stayed the same when their work hours and compensation were reduced.

PERSONAL AND WORK LIFE

The greatest advantage noted for part-time professionals was improvement in the ability to juggle work and personal responsibilities. Not surprisingly, part-time professionals were more likely to note this gain, as it is most apparent to them: 93 percent of part-time professionals noted that their arrangement had a favorable effect on balancing work and family, compared to the 74 percent of full-time professionals who noted those improvements for their part-time colleagues.

Participants in the focus groups and interviews shared this view.

> *"My relationship with my son has improved tremendously and my productivity at work has improved. I feel a new sense of balance and want to be able to share my experience with others and help them to have the same."*
>
> (Part-time male professional, technology company)

> *"[A new mom is] more committed to the work environment today as part-time than when she was a full-time employee. We see a difference in performance now. We think she's actually more productive."*
>
> (Manager, consulting firm)

CHART 16: IMPACT OF PART-TIME ARRANGEMENTS: ABILITY TO JUGGLE WORK AND FAMILY (n=1056)   Catalyst, 1997

Morale, productivity, and commitment. The majority of both full-time and part-time professionals reported no change or an improvement in these areas. However, there is a statistically significant difference between experience and observation: part-time professionals reported that they experienced a significantly greater increase in morale, productivity, and commitment than their

The greatest advantage noted for part-time professionals was improvement in the ability to juggle work and personal responsibilities.

Part-time professionals reported that they experienced a significantly greater increase in morale, productivity, and commitment than their colleagues or supervisors observed.
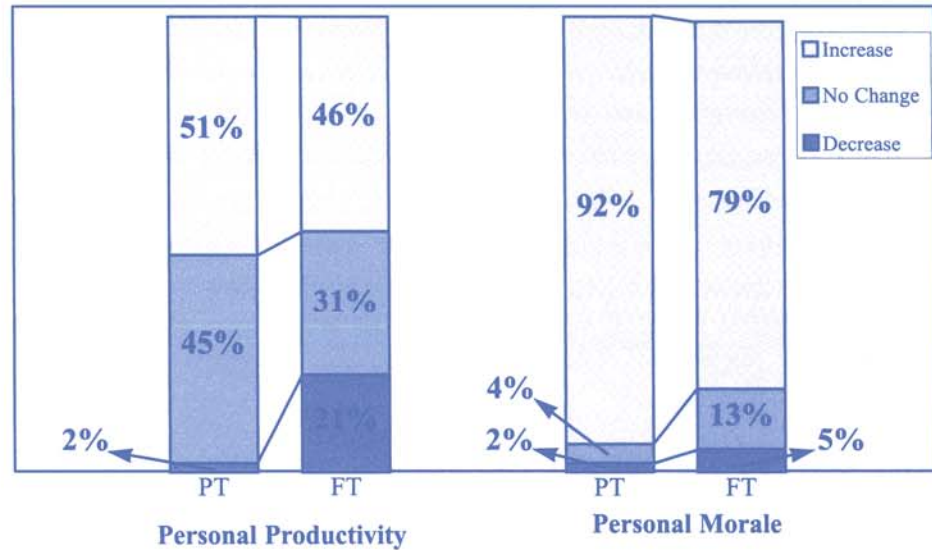
colleagues or supervisors observed. This difference may result from the fact that individuals may prefer to report their own experiences favorably or that these qualities are to some extent personal and subjective.

TABLE 19: IMPACT OF ARRANGEMENT ON PART-TIME INDIVIDUALS (1=Decreases Substantially 3=No Change 5=Increases/Improves Substantially)

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Full-time Supervisors Mean Score (n=965)	Full-time Non-supervisors Mean Score (n=378)
Personal Benefits, Productivity & Commitment • Ability to juggle work & personal responsibilities • Personal morale • Personal productivity • Commitment to job • Commitment to company/firm	4.0	3.4	3.7

Many study participants saw the part-time arrangement as resulting in tangible productivity gains. Across all four organizations, part-time professionals, their supervisors, and their colleagues noted that individual productivity improved under a part-time arrangement: 51 percent of part-timers and 46 percent of full-timers reported increases in productivity for part-time professionals. Personal morale also increased.

CHART 17: IMPACT OF PART-TIME ARRANGEMENTS: PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY AND PERSONAL MORALE (n=1056)

mCatalyst, 1997

Personal Productivity — PT: 51%, 45%, 2%; FT: 46%, 31%, 21%

Personal Morale — PT: 92%, 4%, 2%; FT: 79%, 13%, 5%

Legend: □ Increase ▨ No Change ■ Decrease

Direct supervisors reported no change—or an increase—in the productivity of the part-time professionals supervised.

Direct supervisors reported no change—or an increase—in the productivity of the part-time professionals supervised. These 49 managers, on average, reported some gains in the productivity of the part-time professional. This finding adds credibility to the part-time professionals' self-reports.

TABLE 20: EVALUATION OF PART-TIME PRODUCTIVITY
(1=Decreases Substantially 3=No Change 5=Increases Substantially)

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Supervisor Mean Score (n=49)
Evaluation of Performance • Productivity • Overall effectiveness on the job • Producing high quality work	3.5	3.2

Part-time professionals attribute their enhanced productivity to three factors: first, an increased ability to focus on work when at work; second, close attention to prioritizing and organizing work; and third, fewer interruptions when working off-hours.

"It helps to be more organized, more flexible at home and at work. It really puts your management skills to the test."
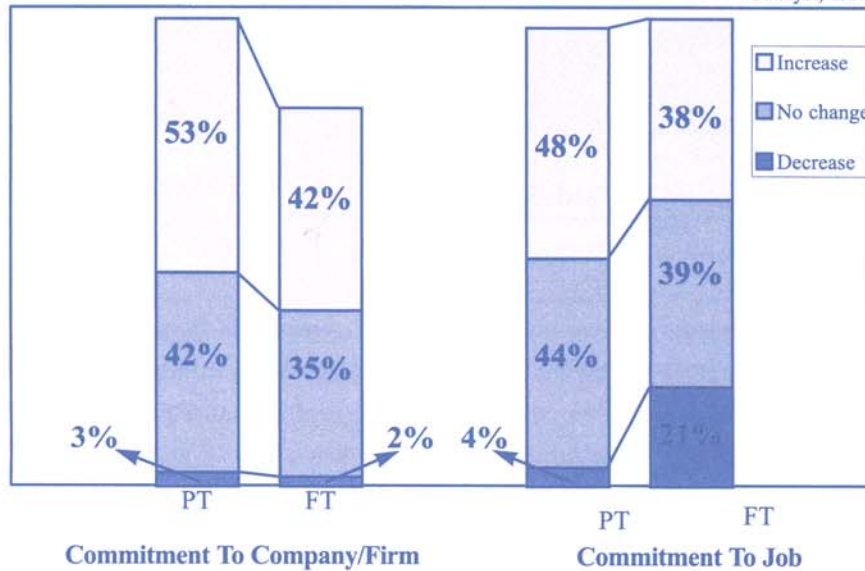(Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

Commitment to job and organization. A large majority of the participants in the survey reported that part-time professionals' commitment to employer and job either did not change or increased. In view of previous research (*Flexible Work Arrangements II: Succeeding with Part-time Options*, Catalyst, 1993), when Catalyst reported that part-time professionals were viewed as less committed to their jobs and employers than full-timers were, this is an extremely important finding.

Part-time professionals' commitment to employer and job either did not change or increased.

CHART 18: IMPACT OF PART-TIME ARRANGEMENTS— COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYER AND JOB: (n=1056)

Catalyst, 1997

Legend: Increase / No change / Decrease

Commitment To Company/Firm: PT — 53%, 42%, 3%; FT — 42%, 35%, 2%

Commitment To Job: PT — 48%, 44%, 4%; FT — 38%, 39%, 21%

Impact on career. Employees with part-time arrangements agreed that they had limited opportunities for high-profile assignments and advancement. In the main, they expected and accepted these limitations.

Employees with part-time arrangements...had limited opportunities for high-profile assignments and advancement.

> "If you're on-site and you're working full-time, you're more likely to be afforded the better opportunities and more visibility."
>
> (Part-time professional, consulting firm)

> "It aggravates me that I am not eligible [for a promotion] and it doesn't do a great deal for my self-esteem. But I figure, I have to give up in order to get."
>
> (Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

Both part-time and full-time professionals agreed that full-time employees had advantages on a number of key performance criteria critical to career mobility. There was no significant difference in the responses of part-time and full-time individuals.

One critical question for many part-time professionals is "Will I be promoted?" It is not surprising that in the cases where part-time participants highly rated their companies' success with part-time arrangements and their managers' clarity on performance standards, they had higher expectations of promotion. Among the participants surveyed, women were more likely to have been promoted and to anticipate promotions than men were. In fact, no men had been promoted and only one anticipated a promotion. What we have learned is that part-time does not inherently translate into a stagnated career. Fifty-one percent of the women responding to the survey have either been promoted or expect to be promoted.

TABLE 21: PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIVE ADVANTAGE THAT FULL-TIME RESPONDENTS HAVE (1=PT At a Strong Advantage 3=PT & FT About Equal 5=FT At A Strong Advantage) Catalyst, 1997

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Supervisor Mean Score (n=49)
Evaluation of Performance • Gain visibility with senior management • Getting job-related support from co-workers • Advancing/getting promoted • Getting key developmental assignments and opportunities • Being included in informal social activities	3.7	3.8

In the focus groups, several part-time professionals described receiving high performance ratings, yet not being considered for promotions. Some part-time professionals recognized the limited opportunities as inevitable, while others reported feeling discrimination.

> *"If you are on a flexible work arrangement, you are a second-class citizen who is not informed about things taking place in the department and who is passed over for promotions."*
>
> (Part-time employee, pharmaceutical company)

> *"When you don't see them [working], there's a total lack of visibility, and that can have an adverse effect. There are situations when things come up on an ad hoc basis which require immediate attention. When you're comparing Engineer A, who's in the office, to Engineer B, who's at home, you rely on someone whose shoulder you can tap. And it can have an adverse effect ranking-wise."*
>
> (Manager, technology company)

Some part-time professionals pointed out that they do less interesting and sophisticated work than their full-time counterparts. They also felt "left out of the loop" on communications, when management meetings were scheduled for times they're not present, for example, or when their time seemingly could not be stretched to attend meetings.

> *"You can't be a whole player because you're not there to sit in on the meetings. I have been relegated to stay behind because the full-time person, although junior to me, was the legitimate person and I was the part-time person. It was not good."*
> (Part-time professional, consulting firm)

TABLE 22: PERCEPTION OF IMPACT OF PART-TIME ON CAREERS— PARTICIPANTS NOTING DECREASE

	Part-time Respondents (n=91)	Supervisors (n=49)	Full-time Respondents (n=965)
Career advancement	46%	27%	74%
Commitment to advancing to top management	32%	27%	62%

Invisibility or seamlessness. Many part-time professionals described the need to have "invisible" arrangements. This is an arrangement that avoids any impact on colleagues, clients, or supervisors. However, it is also an effort to be viewed as a committed professional, avoiding the negative perceptions associated with part-time options.

> *"I will say that most of the partners in my group that I deal closely with don't know that I'm part-time. They have never seen any indication that I am part-time; when they want to have a meeting, I'm there."*
> (Part-time professional, consulting firm)

> *"It is essential that the job gets done. Managers don't really want to think about it. That's the way the part-time arrangement should be."*
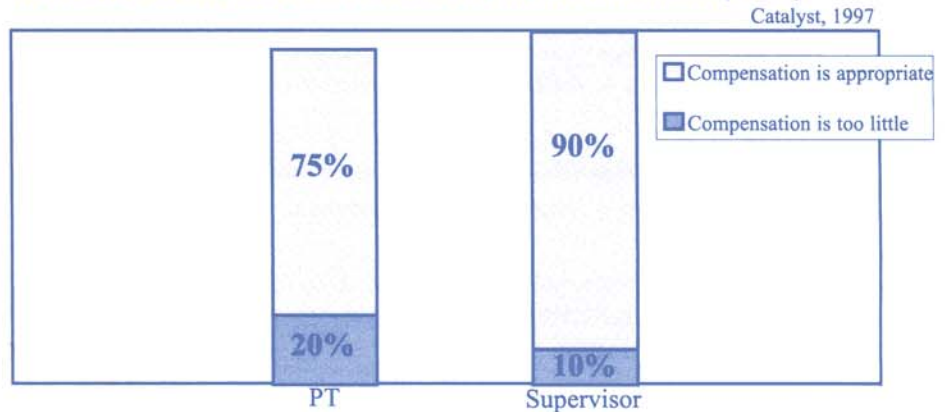> (Part-time professional, law firm)

Compensation. Part-time professionals expect to have their compensation reduced when they reduce their work schedules. However, one in five part-time professionals (compared to only one-tenth of their supervisors) considered that the compensation did not appropriately reflect work commitments. This may well be related to our earlier finding, that work responsibilities are not reduced when hours are.

CHART 19: WHETHER PART-TIME RESPONDENTS' COMPENSATION APPROPRIATELY REFLECTS AMOUNT OF WORK DONE (n=140)

Catalyst, 1997

| | Compensation is appropriate |
| | Compensation is too little |

PT: 75% / 20%
Supervisor: 90% / 10%

Full-time professionals confirmed stories of situations where part-time employees were left off the automatic pay schedule and salary reviews were forgotten for months. Another concern involved diminished compensation resulting from diminished status. Several employees described having to accept demotions in order to get approval for a part-time arrangement.

Length of arrangement as a function of career advancement. As noted earlier, many part-time professionals (32 percent) reported that they never expect to return to full-time. Even more (46 percent) did not know when or if they would. Those who have chosen to work part-time on a permanent basis in order to have a balanced life—all of whom were women—run a risk of being marginalized. Choosing to work part-time permanently is in effect a decision to leave the career track. In each organization, part-time professionals, their colleagues, and their supervisors reported that working part-time sends a strong message about commitment or lack of it. There is a distinction, however, between working part-time permanently or temporarily. Using the survey results, we found that the length of the part-time arrangement was a strong predictor of managers' evaluation of the part-time employee.

Blurred boundaries and stress. Workload challenges lead to personal challenges in establishing appropriate boundaries between work and home. Some individuals will do whatever it takes to make their arrangement succeed because they are grateful for the opportunity. Some feel tremendous pressure to demonstrate increased productivity.

The length of the part-time arrangement was a strong predictor of managers' evaluation of the part-time employee.

> *"I was willing to work until midnight at home and work weekends and all that just to make the arrangement work. My manager was saying, 'Hey, I'm giving you the flexibility, but the work still has to get done.' And I took a pay cut."*
>
> (Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

Moreover, a substantial percentage of part-time professionals noted increases in work-related stress. Their full-time colleagues agreed.

TABLE 23: PART-TIME WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND DEGREE OF WORK-RELATED STRESS (n=1056)

- 37% of part-time professionals noted an increase in work-related stress after moving to part-time.
- 36% of full-time professionals agreed that part-time professionals realize an increase in stress.
- There is a significant correlation ($p < .05$) between stress and workload.

Colleagues' misconceptions and resentments. Despite the positive attitudes toward the work of part-time professionals and the part-time concept, some part-time professionals described consistently having to address the negative and, they felt, inaccurate attitudes of their colleagues.

Some negative attitudes toward those working part-time result from misunderstandings about commitment to work. Others have to do with gender. In interviews and focus groups, a number of women part-time professionals expressed the belief that they are perceived negatively, less because of their arrangements and more because they are mothers with responsibilities outside of work.

> *"When you are on the 'mommy track' they act like you don't count. So, I knew this wouldn't help my career. I decided that, in order to prevent anyone from thinking of me as not serious about my job, I would stop working for a while and return at a later date."*
>
> (Alumna, pharmaceutical company)

The part-time participants in our focus groups reported that full-time employees experienced some degree of resentfulness toward those with part-time and other flexible arrangements because the full-time professionals continued to have heavy workloads.

Some negative attitudes toward those working part-time result from misunderstandings about commitment to work. Others have to do with gender.

"The people I work for have accepted my arrangement, and I do very well, and no one's ever told me that they have a problem with it. It's something more subtle. When people are here very late at night, it's probably natural to be resentful that they're here and you're not."

(Part-time professional, law firm)

And, full-time professionals did describe their frustration and resentment toward colleagues with flexible arrangements.

"I think a lot of the reasons for working at home are selfish: you don't have to drive in, shave, you can be home as soon as your shift is over."

(Colleague, technology company)

In the firms where billable hours are a gauge of commitment, the view that part-time professionals were less dedicated and less meaningful contributors was prevalent.

"There are definitely partners here who think that if you work part-time, you're just not pulling your fair share, no matter how hard you work while you're here, or how good a work product you put out."

(Part-time professional, law firm)

II. The Impact of Part-time Work on Supervisors

For the most part, supervisors reported positive experiences with the part-time professionals they manage. Even in situations where managers experienced increased responsibilities, they believed the tradeoffs were worthwhile for both the part-time individuals and themselves.

For the most part, supervisors reported positive experiences with the part-time professionals they manage.

"It's more work for us, but I wouldn't want to lose either one of these people, because of their maturity and knowledge of the product and client."

(Manager, consulting firm)

Some managers noted that part-time work arrangements do not impose significant management challenges, particularly in team-based environments that already require creative management strategies. In the small set of 49 pairs of part-time professionals and their direct supervisors, there was considerable agreement on the lack of impact of a part-time arrangement on the part-time employees' supervisors' performances. Consistently, the majority reported no change—a desirable outcome. There were no statistical differences in the perceptions of supervisors and part-time professionals about management of the department's work.

## CHART 20: IMPACT OF PART-TIME ARRANGEMENTS ON SUPERVISOR'S PERFORMANCE

Catalyst, 1997
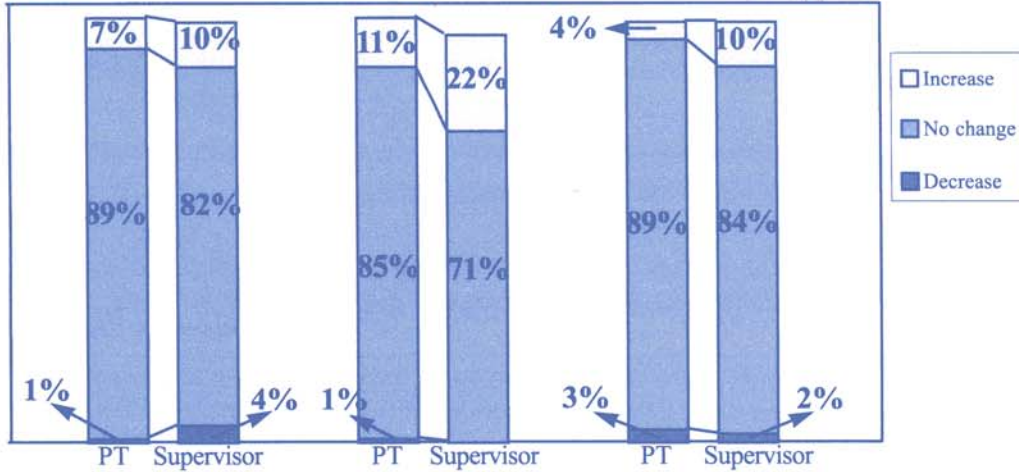
Similarly, both groups agreed on the effect of managing part-time professionals on the supervisors' work lives. For the most part, they reported no change. While supervisors were more likely to note increases in their work, there was no statistical difference in their response.

CHART 21: IMPACT OF PART-TIME ARRANGEMENT ON WORK

Catalyst, 1997
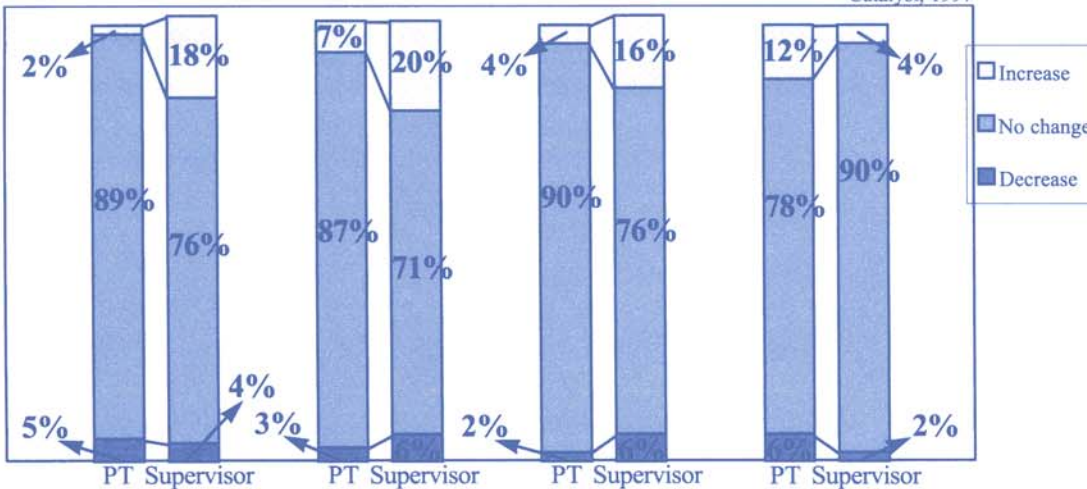
The supervisor's critical function related to part-time arrangements is negotiating the reduced work responsibilities and tasks and determining how leftover tasks are allocated. The supervisor, then, is key to the success of the arrangement.

Since managing part-time professionals poses new challenges for supervisors, the fact that both groups see the effect on supervisors as neutral, and in some cases an improvement, is an important finding.

Other challenges add to the supervisor's workload. The challenges involved in managing part-time professionals include planning and scheduling when complications occur, increased attention to communication, and a lengthy approval processes.

Part-time professionals and supervisors agreed that part-time work arrangements can be stressful for supervisors. While many supervisors reported *no change* on the factors listed in the previous section, one in five did report an increase in workload and almost as many reported an increase in their job responsibilities and stress. The reasons for these increases were clarified in our discussions with managers:

> *"There's a lot of time spent that I wouldn't have had to spend on schedules, just making sure that you have appropriate coverage. Training has been another obstacle."*
> (Manager, pharmaceutical company)

> *"You just have to think a little bit more ahead of time about what discrete projects can be handled by someone who is part-time and what needs to be handled by someone who has the flexibility to be there."*
> (Manager, law firm)

> *"There is resistance to having to spend time thinking about allocating things. Most people just want to say 'Here's the project, get it done by Friday; I just want it done.'"*
> (Manager, consulting firm)

Participants believed that managers played an important role in ensuring smooth relations among team members when a member is working part-time. The manager must monitor the arrangement's impact on others, as well as on the individual's career.

> *"While you're making sure the individual is doing well and getting good work, you also want to make sure that it's not having any sort of negative impact on other people who work around that person, who depend on that person. If it is, then you want to address that."*
> (Manager, pharmaceutical company)

Participants believed that managers played an important role in ensuring smooth relations among team members when a member is working part-time.

Lengthy approval processes. In some instances, the process required that immediate supervisors convince the reluctant and resistant managers above them of the efficacy of the arrangement. In others, despite the presence of company policy, getting approval for unprecedented arrangements was time-consuming. Some participants reported that the "formality" of the process was prohibitive.

> *"I am a pushy person and I have been going through this for a long time. I have been working with personnel over and over and had to go through two levels of management to get approval for that. Then the manager changes and personnel makes you back up and go through it again."*
>
> (Part-time professional, technology company)

Because procedures are not familiar, streamlined, and integrated, managers and employees alike find themselves creating something new when situations arise. Even within the organizations that have offered flexible arrangements for many years, there is little shared history or knowledge about how to implement arrangements more seamlessly.

> Even within the organizations that have offered flexible arrangements for many years, there is little shared history or knowledge about how to implement arrangements more seamlessly.

III. The Impact of Part-Time Work on Colleagues

Catalyst explored the impact of part-time arrangements on the work responsibilities and performance of the part-time employees' colleagues. Nearly half (48 percent) of full-time respondents to our survey have direct experience as colleagues of part-time professionals. The differences in perceptions of the three key stakeholder groups about impact of part-time arrangements on colleagues are statistically significant. Colleagues are more likely to report an impact on their work responsibilities and performance than are supervisors. One in four colleagues reported a decline in their team's overall productivity. It is interesting to note that few supervisors (4 percent) shared this perception.
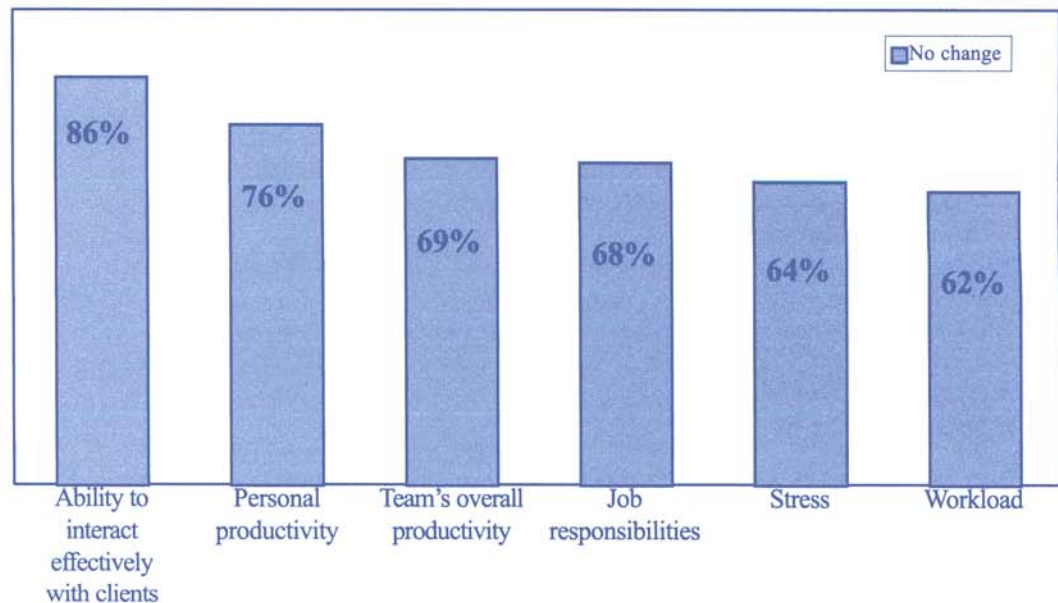
TABLE 24: IMPACT OF PART-TIME ON COLLEAGUES' WORK & PERFORMANCE
(1=Decrease Substantially 3=No Change 5=Increased/Improved Substantially)

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Full-time Supervisors Mean Score (n=965)	Full-time Non-Supervisors Mean Score (n=378)
Colleague Work Responsibilities & Experiences • Job-related responsibilities • Work load • Stress	3.0	3.3	3.2
Colleague Performance • Ability to interact effectively with clients • Productivity • Team's overall productivity • Part-time relationships with colleagues* • Part-time ability to be a team player*	3.3	2.9	3.0

*A significant proportion of full-time respondents also have supervisory responsibilities.

Despite these important concerns, a majority of colleagues (approximately two-thirds) cite no adverse consequences.

CHART 22: PERCENT OF COLLEAGUES REPORTING NO CHANGE IN THEIR OWN ABILITY
Catalyst, 1997

- No change
- Ability to interact effectively with clients: 86%
- Personal productivity: 76%
- Team's overall productivity: 69%
- Job responsibilities: 68%
- Stress: 64%
- Workload: 62%

Part-time professionals' high productivity and skills compensate for any possible negative impact on their colleagues, according to their direct supervisors.

> *"They are the most dedicated people I have ever seen. They will work their 80 percent and then they'll go home and work some more. And they are not getting paid for it. It is not working well for them, but that works well for us."*
>
> (Colleague, consulting firm)

In situations where colleagues reported adverse effects of part-time, increased work responsibilities and heightened attention to scheduling and time issues were the most common complaints.

Scheduling and communications. Some colleagues reported that scheduling and effective communications were sometimes frustrating.

They also noted that part-time arrangements often required increased attention to personal organization and timing of work so as to interface successfully with colleagues, or in some situations, with their managers who worked reduced schedules.

> *"You have to make the time when you are face-to-face really count. You have to make sure that person knows what is going on when not there. I have been working for a partner who is working part-time. It requires me to be more organized on using her time when she is here and to keep her up-to-date on what is going on when she is not here."*
>
> (Colleague, law firm)

When colleagues noted negative consequences, they attributed them to limited involvement in discussing part-time schedules, inflexibility of those schedules, and lack of availability of the part-time professional.

> *"It is incredibly frustrating, because she is working with someone who is rigidly sticking to this part-time plan. As a result, all the other people who are working around this associate are paying the price. In practice, it creates a lot of stress."*
>
> (Colleague, law firm)

> *"You can either be work-at-home or on some off-hour shift, basically out of contact with everything that's going on; ensuring that you are part of the team has been very difficult, and that's been a common complaint among team members."*
>
> (Manager, technology company)

Increased workloads. Some participants, almost exclusively colleagues, reported that part-time arrangements can be a burden to other people on the team. About one-third (35 percent) of colleagues reported an increase in their workloads. Part-time professionals were far less likely to recognize adverse impact of their schedules, although some acknowledged small accommodations made by others.

Part-time professionals' high productivity and skills compensate for any possible negative impact on their colleagues, according to their direct supervisors.

> *"For lawyers and legal assistants, I don't think there is such a thing as working part-time without an impact on the lives of the people that you work with. So, if you're not really, really good and really liked, people are going to resent it and translate it into closer scrutiny of your performance. The bottom line is you do place a bigger burden on the people you work with."*
>
> (Manager, law firm)

The part-time arrangement had heightened managers' awareness and sensitivity to important management practices, like managing work and client expectations.

Improved processes. On the other hand, Catalyst found that colleagues may benefit from part-time arrangements as a result of the increased attention managers give to scheduling and communication. Many participants, particularly colleagues and managers, believed that the part-time arrangement had heightened managers' awareness and sensitivity to important management practices, like managing work and client expectations, planning and scheduling, and emphasizing communications. This outcome, encouraged by the need to manage a part-time arrangement, has tangible benefits for the entire team.

> *"We are not less effective, we are not making less money, the clients are not less satisfied than they were. And yet, the actions we are taking are a little more structured, they are higher quality, they represent a better employee consideration of all the facts. It has, in fact, improved the team's overall performance."*
>
> (Colleague, consulting firm)

> *"We have a team web page which includes team schedules so that people know what each others' schedules are and they all work together to make that happen. It almost doesn't matter where you are."*
>
> (Manager, technology company)

When asked to assess the effect of part-time arrangements on team and colleague productivity, managers tended to rate the outcome as neutral.

Productivity gains. When asked to assess the effect of part-time arrangements on team and colleague productivity, managers tended to rate the outcome as neutral. In some instances, supervisors perceived tangible benefits for colleagues.

TABLE 25: SUPERVISOR PERSPECTIVES—TEAM PRODUCTIVITY

- 80% noted no change in their team's overall productivity
- 12% noted an improvement in their team's overall productivity

- 73% reported no change in colleague productivity
- 16% reported increase in colleague productivity

Chapter 4: What Individual And Supervisor Skills Are Critical For Effective Arrangements?

There are key skills that professionals need to create part-time arrangements that are seamless—almost invisible—to colleagues and managers. These skills enable successful part-timers to adjust their schedules, prioritize and manage time well, communicate effectively, develop trusting relationships, and take initiative.

Individual Attributes Play A Critical Role.

As we have seen, part-time arrangements are primarily extended to "shining stars" in order to retain valuable talent and expertise, so it's not surprising that these individuals exhibit strong personal and professional skills.

> *"High performers are going to be high performers wherever they go, whatever their arrangement."*
>
> (Manager, technology company)

In exploring success criteria for part-time arrangements, many participants identified specific individual attributes and qualities. These professionals typically have strong performance records, trusting relationships with their supervisors and colleagues, and a high degree of professional maturity. Since these qualities are significant for all employees, successful part-time professionals can serve as role models at the organization.

In the survey, Catalyst found a statistically significant ($p<.01$) correlation between the supervisor's evaluation of the part-time professional's performance and each of the following individual attributes:

- Doing projects beyond the job description
- Ability to be a team player
- Relationship with the manager
- Providing fast turnaround on requests

Many part-time professionals and their supervisors believed that it was essential to have arrangements that are invisible to those outside the arrangement. Establishing such arrangements helps to ensure that part-time employees' shorter hours have minimal impact on colleagues, managers, and clients. Therefore, part-time professionals and their managers must engage in active strategies to ensure invisibility, using a specific set of skills and activities which parallel those identified in Chapter Three as critical performance criteria:

- Personal flexibility and ability to adjust schedules
- Ability to prioritize tasks and manage time effectively
- Responsiveness through active communication
- Ongoing attention to relationships with colleagues and managers
- Taking initiative and working independently

> *"You don't have to tell the clients, 'I only work Tuesdays and Thursdays from x to x.' Conceivably you could set up something where the client doesn't have to know."*
>
> (Part-time professional, law firm)

> *"A lot of people don't even know that I work part-time. And it only works because I have a buddy who covers for me. She's agreed and we cover for each other. But on a daily basis she watches out for me between 2 and 5 in the afternoon. Some of my customers know that I'm not available in the afternoon and others don't know—and don't really have a need to know. And between the two of us we take care of everything."*
>
> (Part-time professional, technology company)

Personal flexibility. The most critical characteristic identified in all four settings was individual flexibility, the willingness to accommodate one's schedule to work demands, sometimes remaining accessible and available even during non-work periods. For professionals with a consistent commitment to specific work outcomes, this flexibility may mean working long hours when necessary. Personal flexibility is defined as being responsive to the typical fluctuations in workload responsibilities, but not assuming responsibilities that are beyond the realistic parameters of a reduced hour arrangement.

> *"If you have that high level of commitment, if the case requires you coming in for a marathon for three weeks, then you do it. You are flexible with your flexibility."*
>
> (Part-time professional, law firm)

Supervisors of part-time professionals agreed that personal flexibility and commitment were crucial.

"I have one woman who works four days a week but it's variable depending on our needs. She sets it herself and it centers on the work she needs to get done. She also checks her messages three to four times. She has a commitment to go a step beyond and follow-up on something left on her voice mail on her day off."

(Manager, consulting firm)

Managers also believed personal flexibility demonstrated a "professional attitude," taking responsibility for getting the job done.

On the other hand, participants described certain problem individuals who viewed their schedules as rigid, were unwilling to expand their hours as work demands arose, and lessened their commitment to the organization. Employees with this "part-time mentality" were viewed as imposing on their colleagues and supervisors. They were unlikely to receive support for their arrangements.

In the survey, Catalyst asked several questions of part- and full-time employees about willingness to alter schedules to accommodate the demands of work.

TABLE 26: PERSONAL FLEXIBILITY
(1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Sometimes 4=Usually)

Catalyst, 1997

	Part-time Mean Score (n=91)	Full-time Mean Score (n=965)
I am willing to change my work schedule to accommodate the demands of work.	2.9	3.3
I am expected to change my work schedule to accommodate the demands of work.	3.2	3.5
I alter my schedule to accommodate the demands of work.	3.5	3.7

Catalyst found no statistically significant relationship between the measures of personal flexibility and the supervisor's evaluation of performance.

Especially at the law firm, part-time professionals described the importance of learning about what sort of flexibility worked effectively for the work group and the clients. They cautioned that it took time to develop this understanding and described different ways to be flexible: taking a different day off each week, going home at a predictable time and working from home, refining the schedule to fit different project phases.

Especially at the law firm, part-time professionals described the importance of learning about what sort of flexibility worked effectively for the work group and the clients.

Prioritizing tasks and managing time effectively. Employees with flexible arrangements emphasized the importance of being able to make decisions about priorities and get the most important tasks done first. These employees say that they have to be more disciplined than when they work full-time, partly to achieve their work goals and partly to avoid jeopardizing the arrangement.

Responsiveness through active communication. Participants noted that for part-time professionals in particular, it was critical to be seen as accessible through voice mail, e-mail, and faxes. This was reiterated by part-time professionals, their full-time colleagues, supervisors, and clients.

> *"Responsiveness is important. I know that if she is aware that I need something right away, she will get it to me. Even if it is a day when she is scheduled to be off work, she will arrange for it to be taken care of. If an emergency pops up, I feel her partner would do what she could to handle it."*
>
> (Client, pharmaceutical company)

Participants representing all perspectives also emphasized the importance of open communication about schedules, workload, expectations, deadlines, pace and timing of work. They described the importance of keeping clients informed and aware of work status. They emphasized communicating the aspects of the arrangement that were relevant to completing the work. Both part-time professionals and their supervisors agreed that part-time professionals place a strong emphasis on communication.

Part-time professionals place a strong emphasis on communication.

TABLE 27: EMPHASIS ON COMMUNICATION
(1=Little or No Extent   3=Great Extent)

Part-time Professional Mean Score (n=91)	2.8
Supervisor Mean Score (n=49)	2.7

Relationships with clients, colleagues, and supervisors. Part-time professionals place only moderate emphasis on the social aspects of their jobs, but most participants viewed the development of good working relationships with clients, colleagues, and supervisors as essential to their arrangement's success. Investing time in this way was seen as critical to building trust. Indeed, to build trust involves educating colleagues and clients about how the part-time arrangement works and the rationale behind the organization's commitment to it.

To build trust involves educating colleagues and clients about how the part-time arrangement works and the rationale behind the organization's commitment to it.

> *"It took time for my customers to feel okay about calling me at home and not feel like they were disturbing me—but they learned."*
> (Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

Part-time participants reported in the survey that they had strong relationships with colleagues, both before working part-time and while working part-time. Their evaluations were confirmed by their supervisors. There were some statistical differences between part-time and full-time professionals on their assessments of relationships with colleagues. Part-time individuals were more likely to agree, or agree strongly, that they have strong relationships.

TABLE 28: I HAVE STRONG PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY COLLEAGUES (1=Strongly Disagree 3=Neutral 5=Strongly Agree)

Part-time Professional Mean Score (n=91)	4.2
Supervisor Mean Score (n=49)	3.9

TABLE 29: BEFORE GOING FROM FULL-TIME TO PART-TIME, PART-TIME PROFESSIONALS HAD A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH COLLEAGUES (1=Strongly Disagree 3=Neutral 5=Strongly Agree)

Part-time Professional Mean Score (n=91)	4.2
Supervisor Mean Score (n=49)	4.2

Arrangements are most successful if the individual is able to work independently and is self-motivated.

Initiative and working independently. Across the organizations, participants who work part-time and their managers noted that arrangements are most successful if the individual is able to work independently and is self-motivated. These professionals are creative in finding ways to restructure their work or respond to a misconception. They take the initiative to handle a problem or concern.

> *"I try to drive most of my business to happen between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m."*
> (Part-time professional, technology company)

> *"Last year I had an idea for my performance appraisal. I sent e-mails to my clients and said, 'Performance appraisals are coming up and, if you would like to put in a good word for me with my boss, would you mind e-mailing him?' He was flooded with calls."*
> (Part-time professional, consulting firm)

This quality was demonstrated initially in establishing the arrangement. Most participants with part-time arrangements took the initiative in making the arrangements. Eighty-five percent proposed the arrangement themselves and nearly half (47 percent) were the first in their group or department to establish an arrangement.

> *"We started researching pairs who job-shared in management positions. Through word of mouth we were able to find five such pairs. We spoke with them for background, "best practice" ideas, etc. As a team, we then wrote a proposal and brought it to our manager. The proposal was very detailed in nature, responding to many of the questions which we expected would be asked of us. Our proposal was approved before I went on maternity leave, and thus I knew that I would be returning to [the company]."*
>
> (Individual job sharing, technology company)

Most participants with part-time arrangements took the initiative in making the arrangements.

Supervisor Behaviors Are Crucial.

Managers can help the success of part-time arrangements if they focus on work productivity (rather than time in the office), plan schedules, facilitate communication, and help to manage expectations. Most important, they can be receptive to a part-time arrangement and supportive as it is implemented.

Effective managers make a difference. Catalyst learned that supervisors with specific skills were integral to the success of the part-time arrangement. Some managers indicated that their role was one of support and oversight, ensuring that their employees, regardless of arrangement, were protected against burnout and able to balance commitments outside of work. Managing team dynamics and clients was also identified as a critical managerial role.

Supervisors with specific skills were integral to the success of the part-time arrangement.

In fact, we found a statistically significant and positive ($p<.01$) correlation between the supervisor's evaluation of the part-time professional's performance and the supervisor's opinion of the effect of the arrangement on the following:
- The supervisor's own relationship with colleagues
- The supervisor's own managerial skills
- The supervisor's own ability to establish clear standards of performance

Focusing on work and productivity. Managers described the importance of learning to focus on the work at hand, to conceptualize and divide tasks in new ways. This becomes especially important when part-time arrangements are incorporated into the work group, so that there will be no negative impact on part-time professionals or their colleagues. Managers who objectively examined

work responsibilities, rather than time in the office, helped establish effective arrangements.

> "We had to re-look at how we're doing our work. I brought the group together and said, 'What are your ideas about how we can make this work?'"
>
> (Manager, pharmaceutical company)

> "[My manager and I] had basically taken a look at the call volume and what times and days were most likely for a customer to call. So the fact that I wanted to work from 8-7 really worked out. And Wednesday was kind of an odd day with lower call volume for my group."
>
> (Part-time professional, technologyl company)

Planning and foresight about schedules. Managers and other participants also noted that success with part-time arrangements necessitates greater attention and forethought to staffing work and projects.

> "I would say in a service situation, the department should have a contingency plan so there's back-up. If you have a full-time person and that person is out sick, you have a backup that day to get that problem resolved. If there are contingency plans for a full-time person, there's no reason you couldn't come up with some kind of contingency for a part-time person."
>
> (Manager not supervising employee with flexible arrangement, pharmaceutical company)

> "You just have to think a little bit more ahead of time about what discrete projects can be handled by someone who is part-time and what needs to be handled by someone who has the flexibility to be there."
>
> (Manager, law firm)

Structured planning can have positive consequences for the entire work group.

> "The actions we are taking are a little more structured; they are of higher quality; they represent a better employee consideration. It has, in fact, improved the team's overall performance."
>
> (Colleague, consulting firm)

Facilitating communication and building support on the team. Participants believed that managers play an important role in the success of their arrangements, particularly in ensuring smooth relations among team members. They stressed that the manager of a person working part-time must monitor the arrangement in terms of its impact on others, especially when work teams have members who work varied schedules. Suggestions included ensuring everyone's attendance at regular staff meetings, as well as explicitly discussing schedules, availability, and problems that have arisen. In addition, participants emphasized the importance of clearly stating communication expectations.

71   *A New Approach to Flexibility: Managing the Work/Time Equation*

Sidebar quotes:

"We had to re-look at how we're doing our work. I brought the group together and said, 'What are your ideas about how we can make this work?'"

Managers and other participants also noted that success with part-time arrangements necessitates greater attention and forethought to staffing work and projects.

The manager of a person working part-time must monitor the arrangement in terms of its impact on others.

> *"We can be flexible and still meet our business needs, and our job as managers is to recognize what those business needs are and to communicate that to our teams. We should be able to accommodate this policy."*
>
> (Manager, technology company)

Participants emphasized the importance of team support for a flexible work arrangement; otherwise team members may resent shifts in work responsibilities. They noted that effective managers help provide this support.

Communicating clear performance standards. To facilitate communication with colleagues and clients, it is critical to clarify any ambiguity about performance criteria. For example, participants emphasized that responsiveness is a key attribute of excellent performance, yet provided highly varying definitions of what this means. This ambiguity did not exist in the technology company, where clear standards for responding to clients have been articulated. In the other three organizations, there was a sense that a professional has to be available to respond to any request at any time, and there appeared to be little discussion about when or why a response is needed.

> *"Instead of automatically saying 'yes,' we need to be able to say, 'We need to schedule it when we can have the people there who can give you the best support.' It's difficult and I don't think we train people well enough in how to handle this situation. It's not just people on flexible schedules. Sometimes we have people on five teams."*
>
> *(*Manager, consulting firm)

Managing expectations. Within the firms and the companies, participants viewed managing expectations—whether they be those of clients, the team or both—as important managerial skills. Full-time professionals noted that the presence of a part-time professional often underscored the need for this skill. In particular, participants stated that managers need to make expectations about responsiveness explicit. In client relations, this was viewed as an imperative. An important aspect of managing client expectations is building trust that work will be accomplished within the promised time frame. At the consulting firm, this responsibility was described as the same as handling vacation, leaves, or illness.

> *"The way you present it to the client is very critical. If you're proactive and you look ahead and try to solve things before they become problems, you aren't dealing with all of these fire drills. You're only dealing with true emergency situations. We can manage more efficiently."*
>
> (Manager, consulting firm)

Sidebar quotes:

"We can be flexible and still meet our business needs, and our job as managers is to recognize what those business needs are and to communicate that to our teams. We should be able to accommodate this policy."

Managers need to make expectations about responsiveness explicit. In client relations, this was viewed as an imperative.

Supporting part-time options. In Catalyst's analysis of the problems or concerns of participants, we found participants reported great inconsistency in managerial support for these arrangements. Some part-time professionals changed departments in order to get approval for their arrangement. Others resigned, to return only when the arrangement was approved. Still others described problems with their arrangement that arose from lack of support. These professionals wanted to approach their supervisors in comfort when they propose an arrangement, and to be free to discuss issues and concerns as they use an arrangement.

Some part-time professionals changed departments in order to get approval for their arrangement. Others resigned, to return only when the arrangement was approved.

Chapter 5: A New Approach For A Partnership Among Individuals, Supervisors And Organizations

Catalyst finds that the effective use of part-time arrangements requires an approach that targets both individuals and the organization. An analysis of the data gathered for this study has enabled Catalyst to delineate the specific skills needed by part-time professionals, their colleagues, and their supervisors, as well as the specific behaviors required of organizations to make such arrangements a success.

To implement and manage alternative arrangements successfully, an organization must clarify the key attributes and responsibilities of the individual players. But organizations cannot stop there. Catalyst finds that an effective approach to flexibility—one that addresses the needs of all stakeholders—requires mechanisms that support and guide managers and employees as they implement alternative arrangements. An effective approach also requires important adaptations within the work environment to respond to constraints that currently exist.

The effective approach to part-time arrangements and workplace flexibility in general includes certain key elements:

- The organization understands and communicates that part-time arrangements both accommodate individual needs and address business objectives.
- The organization clearly articulates performance expectations.
- The organization ensures that key structures and systems support these arrangements.
- The organization acknowledges and addresses the implications of the arrangement, ensuring that job responsibilities and workload are appropriately managed across individuals.
- The organization ensures that implementation and management of flexibility is a partnership among all the key stakeholders: the individual, the manager, and full-time colleagues. Each must demonstrate facility and commitment to sustaining a mutually beneficial arrangement.
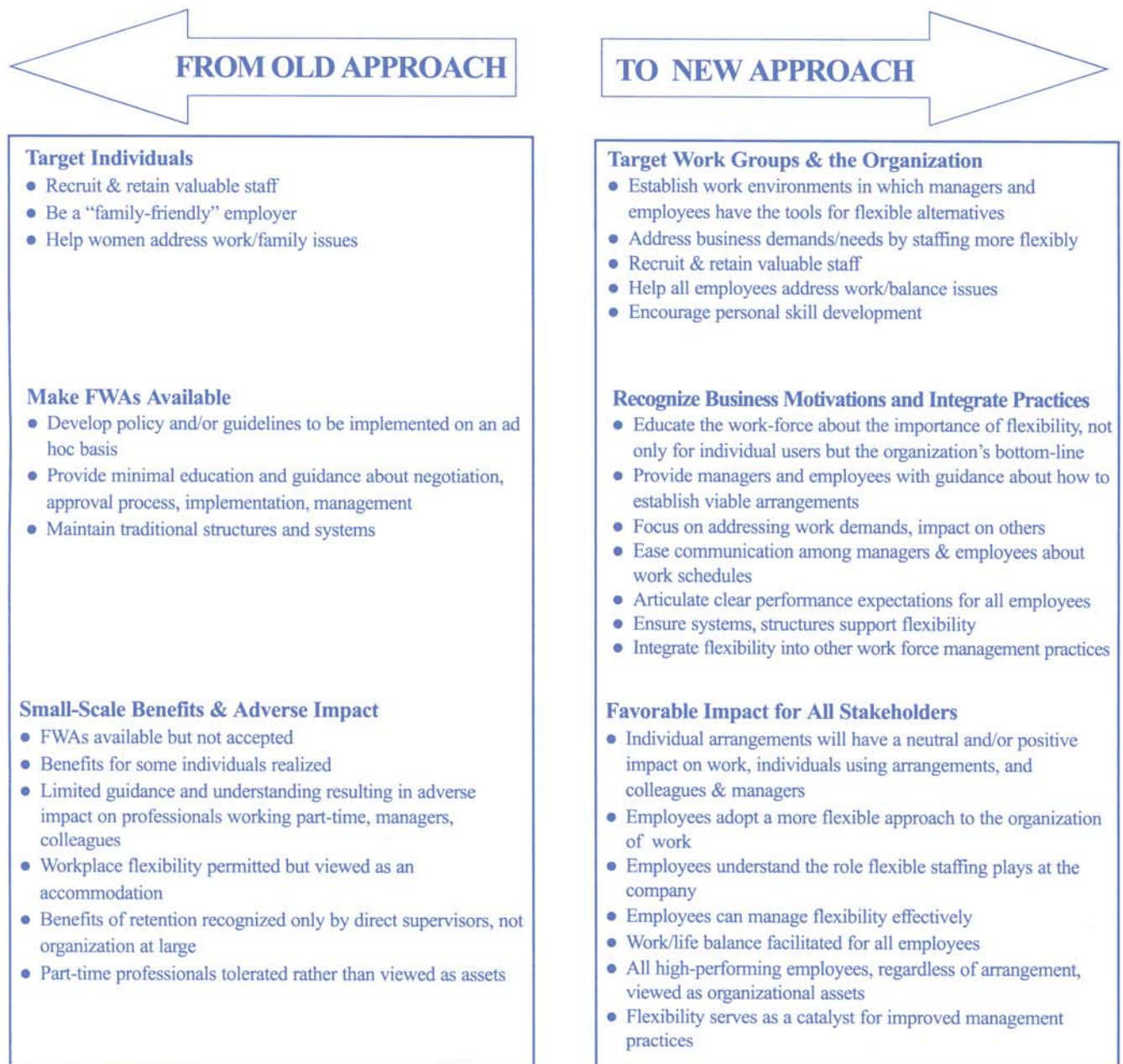
An effective approach to flexibility—one that addresses the needs of all stakeholders— requires mechanisms that support and guide managers and employees as they implement alternative arrangements.

New Approach Requires A Shift In Focus.

Catalyst's new approach to part-time arrangements in particular and flexible arrangements in general offers a useful framework that emphasizes the individuals and the organization as partners. Principally, the new approach involves a shift in focus from the individual to the work, the teams, and the organization. It also involves an adjustment in process. Both will help organizations realize wide-scale benefits from workplace flexibility, and at the same time, minimize undesirable consequences.

Catalyst's Approach To Effective Implementation and Management of Workplace Flexibility

FROM OLD APPROACH

Target Individuals
- Recruit & retain valuable staff
- Be a "family-friendly" employer
- Help women address work/family issues

Make FWAs Available
- Develop policy and/or guidelines to be implemented on an ad hoc basis
- Provide minimal education and guidance about negotiation, approval process, implementation, management
- Maintain traditional structures and systems

Small-Scale Benefits & Adverse Impact
- FWAs available but not accepted
- Benefits for some individuals realized
- Limited guidance and understanding resulting in adverse impact on professionals working part-time, managers, colleagues
- Workplace flexibility permitted but viewed as an accommodation
- Benefits of retention recognized only by direct supervisors, not organization at large
- Part-time professionals tolerated rather than viewed as assets

TO NEW APPROACH

Target Work Groups & the Organization
- Establish work environments in which managers and employees have the tools for flexible alternatives
- Address business demands/needs by staffing more flexibly
- Recruit & retain valuable staff
- Help all employees address work/balance issues
- Encourage personal skill development

Recognize Business Motivations and Integrate Practices
- Educate the work-force about the importance of flexibility, not only for individual users but the organization's bottom-line
- Provide managers and employees with guidance about how to establish viable arrangements
- Focus on addressing work demands, impact on others
- Ease communication among managers & employees about work schedules
- Articulate clear performance expectations for all employees
- Ensure systems, structures support flexibility
- Integrate flexibility into other work force management practices

Favorable Impact for All Stakeholders
- Individual arrangements will have a neutral and/or positive impact on work, individuals using arrangements, and colleagues & managers
- Employees adopt a more flexible approach to the organization of work
- Employees understand the role flexible staffing plays at the company
- Employees can manage flexibility effectively
- Work/life balance facilitated for all employees
- All high-performing employees, regardless of arrangement, viewed as organizational assets
- Flexibility serves as a catalyst for improved management practices

Following are the seven critical activities for translating the Catalyst model into workable flexible arrangements:

I. Strengthen and communicate leadership commitment and vision. A clear, articulated commitment from senior management must be made to the organization. Throughout focus groups and interviews, Catalyst asked participants to discuss their organization's vision for a flexible work environment. Few had answers. Many responded that not many senior managers use flexible arrangements of any type, either formally or informally, so there are few role models. This deficit not only holds true for participants, but also in work life in general where there are few role models for how to lead a balanced professional life. It is therefore up to senior management to define the workplace they envision and share that vision in words and actions.

> *"Division heads have to make it clear in their staff meetings with employees and the management of their division that managers are to take these requests seriously. They've got to enter into discussions on flexible arrangements in good faith with the idea, 'Let's make this work. Let's figure out what are the tests to make sure an arrangement is working right and let's start doing some of these things.'"*
>
> (Senior manager, pharmaceutical company)

An exception is the technology company, where managers at every level create strategies, tactics, and matrices to address corporate goals. Where corporate goals include commitment to work/life balance, part-time professionals and managers reported support for their implementation of various flexible options.

> *"There's no doubt in my mind that less than 100 percent management support would make this a much less successful program."*
>
> (Professional with flexible arrangement, technology company)

II. Articulate a business rationale. Chapter 1 described the wide range of business reasons for creating more flexible workplace environments. Each of the four organizations studied has learned the benefits of providing part-time options to professional employees, including retention of experienced employees, recruitment of valuable talent, improved employee morale and commitment, expanded client service, realization of "best-in-industry" standards, and increases in work productivity and quality. However, supervisors and full-time colleagues often do not readily understand these benefits, and such understanding is critical to their acceptance and support. This is especially true for managers who operate against cultural norms when they are the first to agree to these options. Therefore, the organization that will succeed with flexible arrangements is one that clearly relates their importance to the bottom line.

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> *"It used to be considered a privilege to be working a flexible schedule, whether you were working part-time, working at home, or working 4x10 [compressed work-week]. It's no longer as much as a privilege as a business need."*
>
> (Part-time professional, technology company)

III. Focus on continuous learning and improvement. Participants with varying perspectives across the four organizations studied explained that these arrangements are still, in effect, new. And, at this stage, they continue to find that each arrangement is viewed as a special case more than as a learning opportunity.

> *"Everyone I work with directly understands that it's worthwhile to have a flexible work arrangement."*
>
> (Professional with flexible arrangement, law firm)

Managers expressed interest in learning from other managers. Professionals with flexible arrangements wanted to be connected with others with similar arrangements. Suggestions included using technology, such as web sites and intranets, to create networks and employee groups and provide greater access to information about these options. At the technology company, technology works effectively to share information. There, the corporate website provides general information about flexible options, and work group websites share information about goals, deadlines, and work schedules.

IV. Provide guidance and support for professionals with flexible arrangements and for supervisors. Over and over again, participants described the lack of clarity about the following:
- Policy in terms of eligibility
- Process for proposing an arrangement
- Guidelines regarding benefits, compensation, and advancement when using a flexible option
- Technology to support the arrangement and how to acquire it
- Skills and activities the professional with the flexible arrangement has and the supervisor's need for the option to succeed

In addition, participants want centralized and easily accessible information to reduce the amount of research for each individual arrangement. They also want a centralized source of support.

> *"It's a fishing expedition to find out who the current person is who knows the most about it."*
>
> (Professional with flexible arrangement, technology company)

"There are a lot of differences depending on where you work. Every time someone makes a request for a flexible work arrangement, it really has to be the decision of the manager. But there really has to be someone from HR whose role it is to be the ombudsman and to make sure that certain managers aren't just dismissing it because they don't think it will work."

(Part-time professional, consulting firm)

Many managers and part-time professionals also suggested that they be included in discussions for designing policy and guidelines so that their experience can inform decisions.

V. Establish explicit expectations regarding performance. Many participants described the lack of clarity that surrounds performance expectations. All understood the importance of competent, skilled performance, and in all four organizations, participants identified beyond-competence criteria as critical to performing well, as well as to compensation and advancement. These beyond-competence criteria were clearly and consistently identified, but not clearly defined. The lack of definition can result in full-time employees connecting part-time work with poor performance. The lack of discussion about important performance criteria between part-time professionals and their supervisors leads to unsuccessful arrangements.

For example, participants consistently understood the need to be responsive. In our focus groups and interviews, however, participants did not share an understanding of expectations about how to be responsive and within what time frame. They did not consistently understand their ability to manage that responsiveness proactively.

Without clear expectations, flexibility founders. Clear expectations help to resolve the key dilemmas faced by part-time professionals. Part-time employees need to be responsive and flexible, adjusting and expanding their work schedules to accommodate work peaks and client requests. Yet they must be wary of being overly flexible, especially to the inflexible or unplanned requests of others, as this can result in a part-time arrangement with a full-time workload. Arrangements should be seamless and integral, avoiding adverse impact on co-workers, supervisors, and clients. At the same time, the focus on invisibility can also result in an inequitable workload and obscure success stories and models.

> Part-time employees need to be responsive and flexible, adjusting... work schedules to accommodate work peaks and client requests. Yet they must be wary of being overly flexible...as this can result in a part-time arrangement with a full-time workload.

"There is an irony in talking about workplace flexibility in a place where, frankly, the only flexibility going around is how flexible you are in altering your life to meet the demands of the job. Flexibility means that if you have weekend plans, you cancel them."

(Manager, law firm)

VI. Provide systems and structures that support flexibility. This report describes the ways in which current systems and structures continue to limit the success of these arrangements; in other words, the systems must be changed to serve the business rationale that supports flexibility. These systems and structures must be reevaluated and restructured to create the support necessary for successful flexible arrangements. Head count and billable hour systems, performance ranking and rating systems, career path criteria, and the accountability programs designed to track those systems all currently create problems for part-time professionals and their supervisors. These systems are one of the reasons supervisors find flexible options so difficult to manage and a major reason they view part-time arrangements as problems. No matter how philosophically committed to the issue and to the employee, these organization-wide systems perpetuate the perception that these arrangements are in opposition to the way work is handled and evaluated at the organization, and supervisors will not have to respond.

Changes in organizational culture already require changes in systems and structures. Several participants noted how much work in their organizations is changing. The trend toward teamwork, for example, is altering the ways performance is evaluated, and these changes provide substantial opportunities for flexibility.

> *"I don't look at individual performances day-to-day. I look at the team's performance day-to-day. If we're successful, I know it. And I can use the team as a feedback mechanism for individual performance."*
> (Full-time professional, technology company)

The increasing impact of flexible work arrangements requires changes in systems and structures. In Chapter 1, we described the wide-ranging impact of part-time arrangements specifically, and flexible arrangements in general. When almost seven of ten professional employees are directly exposed to part-time and telecommuting arrangements, and when 23 percent of women are using or have used part-time, organizations must adapt and adjust the systems that are now making those arrangements difficult.

VII. Focus on work productivity. In response to our question about a vision for the organization, many participants described a workplace with a focus on productivity instead of face-time, one where professionals were trusted to have some discretion and control over their schedules.

> *"The ideal is that you are expected to put in a certain number of hours and complete a certain number of tasks. As long as you do this, your work is fine. This gives employees flexibility on a day-to-day basis to respond both to the needs of their job and their needs at home. This requires a high degree of trust, but one which would be invaluable to*

The systems must be changed to serve the business rationale that supports flexibility.

When almost seven of ten professional employees are directly exposed to part-time and telecommuting arrangements, and when 23 percent of women are using or have used part-time, organizations must adapt and adjust the systems that are now making those arrangements difficult.

both partners, the employer and the employee."

(Alumna, technology company)

"I can envision a company that is less concerned about everyone coming into the office every day and the number of hours they put in, and more concerned about the work they accomplish."

(Part-time professional, pharmaceutical company)

"I am much happier at work and at home. My child is happier. My marriage is stronger. My colleagues appreciate my new outlook on life. I was too stressed previously. Now I love working."

(Part-time professional, consulting firm)

Conclusion.

The results of this study are clear: Over half the respondents in our study have direct exposure of one kind or another to part-time work arrangements right now.

Seven percent of all respondents are using or have used part-time arrangements, and ten percent anticipated using such an arrangement in the future. For women, the figures are much higher: 23 percent are using or have used part-time arrangements, and 17 percent would anticipate using them. This is an important finding, considering that women currently make up nearly 47 percent of the workforce. Indeed, fewer than half of questionnaire respondents reported that they had a "traditional full-time work arrangement." In other words, the workplace has changed.

It is now necessary for the work environment to catch up to this new reality. Given a global economy where business continues 24 hours a day across time zones, and given the well-established place of women in the workplace, and given the ever-growing trend of dual-career couples with the shared responsibilities for both workers that implies, Catalyst concludes that organizations will be compelled to change the way they deal with part-time work and flexible work arrangements. Organizations that want to remain efficient and competitive must understand the issues and plan how to deal with them. Whether flexibility is forced on an organization by default or welcomed and integrated into the organization's strategy for the future may make the difference between success and failure for the 21st-century corporation or firm. It is our hope and belief that the information in this study can help companies succeed in this changing workplace.

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Acknowledgments

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