The Flexible Work Place: 
What Is It and How Can It Work in YOUR Office

July 21, 2014

Part of the “Life in Congress” Research Series by

SHRM
SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION
Presenters

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Agenda

• About the “Life in Congress” Research Project
• Results of “Life in Congress” Staff Survey
  ▪ What did staff have to say about their work-life?
  ▪ How can congressional work-life be improved?
• Defining WorkFlex
  ▪ Why is workflex important?
  ▪ What does it look like in the private sector?
“Life in Congress”
A Research Series Examining Congress As a Workplace
“Life in Congress” Project Goals

1. Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Congress

2. Enhance the public’s understanding of America’s premier democratic institution
“Life in Congress” Research

• *Life in Congress: Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate* (October 2012)

• *Life in Congress: The Member Perspective* (March 2013)

• *Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff* (September 2013)

• 2014-2015: Research & Training Series for Congressional Offices on Enhancing Work-Life
Life in Congress:
Aligning Work & Life in the U.S. House and Senate
Report Overview

• *Life in Congress: Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate*

• An inside look at the workloads of staff and the difficulties of managing work, family and personal responsibilities

• Based on survey of over 1,400 staff in the House and Senate
# About the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacted to Participate</th>
<th>10,983 personal office staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses Received</td>
<td>1,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15% response rate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>72% House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28% Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>55% Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43% Republicans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2% Independents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>August 8 – October 4, 2011</td>
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</table>
Work Schedules
“Congressional employees work harder than ever when the need is greatest for their constituents—longer hours, more calls, more cases, and more opinions to sort through—and yet the public thinks we should not be paid adequately or get raises despite the increased workload—very frustrating.”

—House Regional Director
Staff Hours Worked on Average

- **District/State Staff**
  - Hours per week when your chamber is in session: 45
  - Hours per week when your chamber is out of session: 47

- **Washington, DC Staff**
  - Hours per week when your chamber is in session: 53
  - Hours per week when your chamber is out of session: 43
Staff Perception of Hours Worked per Week Compared to Private Sector

- 41% of staff believe they work far more hours.
- 39% believe they work about the same number of hours.
- 4% believe they work a few less hours.
- 1% believe they work far fewer hours.
- 15% believe they work a few more hours.
Importance and Satisfaction with Work-Life Aspects of Their Job
“As the primary care-giver for a toddler, I have the ability at my office to **work from home** most days. That option enables me to be a **more effective employee and parent** by allowing me **flexibility** in my work hours.”

—House Caseworker/Constituent Services Representative
Importance of and Satisfaction with “Overall Office/ Corporate Culture”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level</th>
<th>Congressional Staff</th>
<th>U.S. Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance of and Satisfaction with “Flexibility to Balance Life and Work Issues”

- Very important:
  - Congressional Staff: 55%
  - U.S. Employees: 38%

- Very satisfied:
  - Congressional Staff: 26%
  - U.S. Employees: 33%
## Staff’s Level of Satisfaction with Work-Life Aspects - Part I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall office culture</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid time off</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility to balance life and work issues</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical working conditions</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the amount of work-related stress</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staff’s Level of Satisfaction with Work-Life Aspects - Part II

- **Family-friendly benefits**: 37% Very Important, 25% Very Satisfied
- **Predictability of weekly schedule**: 34% Very Important, 31% Very Satisfied
- **Predictability of daily work hours**: 34% Very Important, 28% Very Satisfied
- **Number of hours worked per week**: 32% Very Important, 29% Very Satisfied
- **Onsite fitness centers/discounted gym membership**: 29% Very Important, 18% Very Satisfied
- **Employee assistance and wellness programs**: 22% Very Important, 15% Very Satisfied
Staff Views on Work-Life Aspects of Working in Congress

- I usually have enough time to get everything done. 54% Strongly Agree/Agree, 33% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
- I have adequate time for my personal life. 48% Strongly Agree/Agree, 32% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
- Job burnout is a significant problem in my office. 32% Strongly Agree/Agree, 37% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
- I have too much to do to do everything well. 28% Strongly Agree/Agree, 45% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
Staff Opinions about Working in Congress
“I have learned to not make plans Tuesday–Thursday nights, or before key legislative deadlines. It’s very hard for friends/family to understand why I am expected to be at the office if nothing is happening ... sometimes it’s hard for me to understand that as well.”

—Senate Legislative Director
Staff Views by Position Category: “I Usually Have Enough Time to Get Everything Done”

- **Administrative/Support**
  - Strongly Agree/Agree: 65%
  - Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 27%

- **State/District**
  - Strongly Agree/Agree: 59%
  - Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 27%

- **Press/Communications**
  - Strongly Agree/Agree: 53%
  - Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 32%

- **Management**
  - Strongly Agree/Agree: 47%
  - Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 41%

- **Policy/Legislative/Research**
  - Strongly Agree/Agree: 48%
  - Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 40%
Staff Views by Position Category:
“I Have Adequate Time for My Personal Life”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Category</th>
<th>Strongly Agree/Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree/Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State/District</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Policy/Legislative/Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press/Communications</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- State/District: 57% Strongly Agree/Agree, 23% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
- Administrative/Support: 45% Strongly Agree/Agree, 38% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
- Management: 38% Strongly Agree/Agree, 42% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
- Policy/Legislative/Research: 36% Strongly Agree/Agree, 44% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
- Press/Communications: 32% Strongly Agree/Agree, 50% Strongly Disagree/Disagree
Staff Views by Position Category:
“I Have Too Much to Do to Do Everything Well”
Reasons for Leaving Employment
“My biggest frustration is the lack of public support for public servants. Staffers are increasingly treated poorly by the public who don’t understand our role. If my benefits were not as good as they are, I would probably work in the private sector.”

—House Casework Supervisor/Director of Constituent Services
Staff Reasons for Leaving Job/Office or Congress Altogether

- Significant factor in decision to leave Congress
- Significant factor in decision to leave my job or office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Leave Congress</th>
<th>Leave Job/Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To seek a better balance between your work and your personal life</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for a less stressful job</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to work less hours per week</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for more predictable work hours</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory leave benefits (e.g., vacation, parental)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If work-life in Congress is a problem, what is the solution?
What is workplace flexibility or workflex?
What is workflex?

• Way to define how, when and where work gets done
• How careers are organized
• Effective flexibility works for both employer and employees
What does workflex look like?

- **Time Off**
  - Paid vacations & sick leave
  - Time off for caregiving

- **Choices in Managing Time**
  - Self-scheduling & shift trading

- **Reduced Time**
  - Reduced time and part-year work

- **Choices Managing Time**
  - Self-scheduling & shift trading

- **Flex Time & Place**
  - Regular or short-notice flex time
  - Compressed workweeks
  - Telecommuting

- **Flex Careers**
  - Sabbaticals
  - Dialing careers up & down
  - Phased retirement
Why is workflex so critical?

• Time Famine
• Increasing eldercare responsibilities
• Dual-earner households
• More male work-life conflict
• Diverse, multi-generational workforce
About the 2014 National Study of Employers (NSE)

• **Sample**: U.S. employers with 50 or more employees drawn from the Dun & Bradstreet database

• **Study questionnaire**: created by Families and Work Institute

• **Interviews**: conducted by Harris Interactive between September 13, 2013 and January 31, 2014

• **Sample size**: 1,051, weighted to reflect reliable population estimate for employers of all sizes

• **Response rate**: 40%
NSE Background

• Most comprehensive study of the practices, policies, programs and benefits provided by U.S. employers to address the changing needs of today’s workforce and workplace


• The NSE serves as the benchmark for the Sloan Award for Excellence in Effective and Flexible Workplaces
This report compares data from 2008 and 2014.

These past six years have been marked by the economic instability of the Great Recession and the slow recovery which has maintained high unemployment rates (4.6% in 2008, spiking to 10% in 2009, and 6.9% at the time of the study).
Employers have increased options that allow employees to better manage times and places where they work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Benefit</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change starting and quitting times on a daily basis</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work some of their regular paid hours at home on an occasional basis</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have control over when they take breaks</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have control over their paid/unpaid overtime hours</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take time off during the workday to attend to important family or personal needs without loss...</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employers have reduced options that involve employees spending significant time away from full-time work.
Employers allowing (at least some) employees to...

- Take a career break for personal/family responsibilities: 2014 - 52%, 2008 - 64%
- Receive special consideration after a career break for personal/family responsibilities: 2014 - 20%, 2008 - 45%
- Take sabbaticals: 2014 - 28%, 2008 - 38%
- Work part year on an annual basis: 2014 - 18%, 2008 - 27%
- Share jobs: 2014 - 18%, 2008 - 29%
Small employers are emerging as leaders in flexibility.
Organizations allow all or more employees to...

- Work some regular paid hours at home occasionally
  - Large (1,000+): 4%
  - Small (50-99): 11%

- Take time off during the workday to attend to important family or personal needs
  - Large (1,000+): 36%
  - Small (50-99): 52%

- Return to work gradually after childbirth or adoption
  - Large (1,000+): 37%
  - Small (50-99): 53%

- Have control over when to take breaks
  - Large (1,000+): 52%
  - Small (50-99): 66%

- Periodically change starting and quitting times within some range of hours
  - Large (1,000+): 20%
  - Small (50-99): 33%
NSE: Top 10 Obstacles for Implementing Workflex

- Costs too much/limited funds: 21%
- Job requirements and workload: 15%
- Potential abuse (absenteeism): 12%
- Hard to supervise employees: 12%
- Pressure to satisfy the customer: 9%
- Need to treat all employees equally: 9%
- Potential loss of productivity: 9%
- Lack of staff to implement: 9%
- Manager resistance: 6%
- We are a small organization: 6%
NSE: Top 10 Reasons Employers are Offering Workflex

- Retain employees in general: 35%
- Help employees manage work and...: 19%
- Recruit employees in general: 14%
- Increase productivity: 12%
- Mandated by law: 11%
- It is the right thing to do: 11%
- Improve morale: 10%
- Support/meet employee’s needs: 10%
- We are a caring organization: 8%
- Provide job satisfaction: 8%
Workflex Delivers Bottom Line Business Results

- Attract talent
- Employee loyalty
- Employee engagement
- Customer satisfaction
- Customer retention
- Customer service levels
- Continuity/disaster readiness
- Productivity
- Profitability
- Employee health and wellness

- Absenteeism
- Turnover
- Real estate costs
- Utilities
- Expenses
Bottom Line Business Result: Cost Savings

Companies can reduce operating costs by more than $6,500 for every person who telecommutes just once a week.

Source: Global Workplace Analytics

a project of Families and Work Institute & Society for Human Resource Management
Bottom Line Business Result: Cost Saving

• Through telecommuting, Aetna cut 2.7 million square feet of office for about $78 million in cost savings a year including utilities, housekeeping, mail service and document shredding

• In February 2010, remote work policies saved over $150 million over the five snow closures in December 2009 and February 2010
Bottom Line Business Results: Increased Productivity and Engagement

Flex Matters
WHEN EMPLOYEES HAVE A HIGH DEGREE OF WORK-LIFE FIT...

- Almost 2x as many want to stay in their current jobs* (79% to 44%)
- 4x as many are highly engaged at work* (43% to 11%)
- And 2x as many are in excellent health* (35% to 19%)

*when compared to employees with low work-life fit.

- In 2011, Deloitte saved more than $45 million a year by reducing turnover
- From 2000 to 2009 1-800-CONTACTS reduced turnover from 140% to 35%
Overcome Resistance

We’re too small

Our CEO will never go for it

We’re too big

How Do I know they’re working if I can’t see them.

We’re a service business, my customers need attention immediately

I couldn’t possibly hire someone flexibly I need to know I can trust them first

We tried it and a few ruined it for all

It’s just not our culture
Next Work-Life Program:

September
September: What does workflex look like in Congress?

• Hear from House and Senate Chiefs who have made a commitment to better work-life in their offices

• Join us to learn about workflex arrangements, share concerns, and discuss obstacles to enhanced workflex in Congress
Other Upcoming Programs

• **Crisis Communications Webinar**
  - *When:* August (TBD)
  - *Who:* House Senior Staff for Freshmen & Sophomores; Senate Legislative Directors

• **Effective Constituent Correspondence - Beginner**
  - *When:* Thursday, August 21, 1:30-4:30 pm
  - *Who:* House staff and interns

• **Effective Constituent Correspondence - Advanced**
  - *When:* Thursday, August 28, 9:30am-12:30 pm
  - *Who:* House staff and interns

• **Managing Stress**
  - *When:* Tuesday, September 2, 12:00-2:00 pm
  - *Who:* House Chiefs of Staff