

WORK-LIFE CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The idea of “work-life” revolves around an employee’s ability to navigate many shifting demands and priorities, both in the short term and long term, inside and outside of work. At its best, work-life enables both organizations and individuals to question traditional assumptions about how and where work gets done and recognizes variations in employee needs. Based on over 50 years of research and consulting experience, Catalyst has identified a number of core concepts related to work-life that will be used throughout this course. However, it is important to note that specific work-life concepts and definitions may vary around the world and in different organizations.

Work-Life Effectiveness	A workplace strategy that challenges the status quo and focuses organizations and people on the right work at the right time with the right talent. Through Work-Life Effectiveness, businesses actively manage people, scrutinize current processes, enhance agility, fulfill priorities, and drive mutually beneficial solutions. ¹
Work-Life Balance	The most popular and widely used term globally, work-life balance has been in use since the late 1980s ² and refers to the juggle between work and personal life responsibilities. However, “balance” implies that individuals should strive to find equilibrium between work and life. In reality, the extent to which one is a priority over the other shifts over the course of an employee’s day, week, month, year, and even lifetime. ³
Face Time	When employees spend time at work—usually in person and often more than is required—to communicate their organizational commitment and productivity. It is often performed to meet actual or presumed expectations from others; also known as <i>presenteeism</i> . ⁴
Flexibility	The ability to define how, where, and when work gets done, as well as how careers are organized and crafted. Flexibility goes beyond telecommuting or flextime and encompasses many flexible work arrangements. (Note: This is an umbrella term we will use to cover the many ways people implement Work-Life Effectiveness strategies). ⁵
Flexibility Stigma	The fear of negative career repercussions as a result of using organizational flexibility policies. It is corroborated by findings that in some workplaces, the use of flexibility policies has been shown to result in lower performance evaluations, reductions in pay, and fewer promotions—indicating a failure of the workplace to successfully adapt to the realities of the workforce. Flexibility stigma tends to differ by gender and class. ⁶
Virtual Work	Also referred to by some as <i>remote work</i> . The term <i>virtual</i> conveys the status of being outside of the physical workspace while remaining a contributing employee, rather than the insular and non-inclusive connotation of the term <i>remote</i> . ⁷
Agile Working	A combination of people, processes, connectivity, and technology that enables the completion of a task more effectively. ⁸

Flexible Work Arrangement

One of a variety of work structures that support workplace flexibility through adjustments in the timing, scope, and/or place that work gets done.⁹

- **Career Lattice:** Maintaining a long-term career goal while taking positions with more, fewer, or lateral responsibilities.¹⁰
- **Compressed Work Week:** Working some longer days in exchange for a full or partial day off each week (e.g., working four 10-hour days Monday through Thursday, with Friday off).¹¹
- **Flextime/Flexible Scheduling:** Varying the start and ending times of the workday; may differ from the organizational norm (e.g., arrive at 10:00 a.m./10:00 and leave at 6:00 p.m./18:00).¹²
- **Job Sharing:** A form of part-time work where multiple employees share one full-time job, with salary and benefits pro-rated for each employee.¹³
- **On Ramp/Gradual Return to Work:** Following a leave, returning to work on a less than full-time schedule.¹⁴
- **Phased Retirement:** When employees work part-time while drawing retirement benefits; also refers to part-time, seasonal, or project-based work by older employees.¹⁵
- **Reduced Hours/Part-Time:** Working less than a full-time schedule.¹⁶
- **Self-Scheduling:** When employees can select their shifts using scheduling software, based on defined criteria.¹⁷
- **Shift Trading:** When employees are allowed to trade work shifts with coworkers, either directly or in a shift pool; predominantly for hourly workers.¹⁸
- **Telecommute/Telework/Flex Place:** When employees work remotely from home or another location; employees are connected to the central office and colleagues via technology.¹⁹
- **Uninterrupted Time:** Designated days or times with no interruptions (including meetings) to increase productivity.²⁰
- **Work Sabbatical:** A leave from work, often with the goal of recharging or exploring other interests.²¹

Endnotes

1. Lisa D'Annolfo Levey, Meryle Mahler Kaplan, and Aimee Horowitz, *Making Change—Beyond Flexibility: Work-Life Effectiveness as an Organizational Tool for High Performance* (Catalyst, 2008).
2. Tom Brown, "Time to Diversify Your 'Life Portfolio'?" *Industry Week*, November 10, 1986.
3. Catalyst, *Flex Works* (2013): p. 2.
4. Bill Munck, "Changing a Culture of Face Time." *Harvard Business Review*, November 2001, p. 125-131; Ruth Simpson, "Presenteeism, Power and Organizational Change," *British Journal of Management*, vol. 9 (September 1998): p. S37-S50.
5. D'Annolfo Levey, Mahler Kaplan, and Horowitz.
6. Joan Williams, Mary Blair-Loy, and Jennifer Berdahl, "The Flexibility Stigma: Work Devotion vs. Family Devotion," *Rotman Magazine*, Winter 2013.
7. Emily Jasper, "Women Finding Balance in Remote Work Arrangements." *Forbes*, January 17, 2012.
8. Paul Allsopp, "What is Agile Working?" *Personnel Today*, July 15, 2010.
9. Catalyst, *A New Approach to Flexibility: Managing the Work/Time Equation* (1997).
10. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
11. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
12. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
13. Dana E. Friedman, *Workplace Flexibility: A Guide for Companies* (When Work Works, 2008).
14. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
15. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
16. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
17. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
18. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
19. SHRM, "Briefly Stated: Telework," *SHRM Briefly Stated*, May 1, 2003.
20. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).
21. When Work Works, *Workflex Employee Toolkit* (2012).

catalyst.org



CATALYST
Changing workplaces. Changing lives.