

## Flexible Working

In February I invited a group of successful CEOs to chat about how we, as men, could contribute to the debate on women's equality in the workplace.

During the discussion it became clear we are seeing a dramatic change in what is regarded as work. When I started in business in the 1960's we all clocked in and stuck to rigid office hours. Men were paid more money for the same job and few women had a management role. A lot has already happened but few companies realise how much more the nature of work is about to change.

For a lot of jobs it is no longer essential to turn up at an office or work regular hours. Technology makes it possible to work almost anywhere at any time. The future is flexible working, in 25 years time we will wonder why we ever worked in a rigid 9 'til 5 way especially when we have discovered that the freedom to fit work around our lives is of great benefit to our well-being.

This is all about company culture and much depends on the CEO, but in many big businesses bosses stay as little as 3 years - enough time to fix the strategy but not long enough to change the culture. Much of today's business is dominated by process, rules and regulations, but rigid rules can't create a flexible workplace.

Forward thinking companies have already realised that flexible working is a great way to run a business and attract the best talent. It brings benefit to men as well as women. In tomorrow's world it won't be necessary to work extra-long hours to be given a top job.

Career breaks are a defining issue. Prejudice against promoting people who have taken time off, particularly to have children, is probably the biggest barrier to providing the right balance between work and family. Clever companies already recognise that a gap year or time taken to raise a family builds peoples' character without taking anything away from their talent.

More men will champion the cause of women in business when they realise how it can produce a competitive advantage.

The case for flexible working is overwhelming. It is the way to attract the best people and help employees to be happier in their work. It is the most effective way to help women in business while bringing benefits to men at the same time.

Once I realised how much flexible working will feature in our future I wrote a book about it. While stocks last you can obtain free copies by emailing [john@timpson.com](mailto:john@timpson.com)

