



# **'BETTER BALANCE... BETTER BUSINESS'**

**Leading a workplace revolution**

**2007  
Conference  
Report**

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# Introduction

## **Better Balance Better Business**

Chwarae Teg's inaugural 2007 'Better Balance Better Business' Conference provided the opportunity to hear evidence of how embracing smarter working methods produces tangible business and wider economic benefits.

The aim of the event was to help delegates build a flexible, profitable and balanced business fit for 21st century economies and brought together top figures from the Institute of Directors Wales, Federation of Small Businesses Wales, Welsh CBI and TUC Wales to endorse smarter working as a way to improve productivity and competitiveness of Welsh business. They all agreed that more balanced, diverse, satisfied and productive workforces can be achieved through smarter working methods and that the broader use of flexible working strategies will provide a much larger pool of the kind of human resource needed to create a Welsh economy of the future. The consensus view is that, if Wales is going to compete



successfully with other countries, businesses must harness and better manage a diverse 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, and a more flexible working environment is a key tool in that process. They are keen to see all employers realise the business benefits of choosing to adopt a balanced position on flexible working and work life balance (WLB) and do so on this basis rather than be forced through legislation.

This conference report draws together key points from contributors with questions and challenges posed by delegates for further progress, and outcomes for the future.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of the Conference:

**Speakers** - Sir Digby Jones, Ann Beynon, Carolyn Woolley

**Workshop facilitators** - Suzan Lewis, Philip Lenz, Hayley Dunne, Peter Knowles and Helen Thornton

**Sponsors** – Welsh Assembly Government, BT, Admiral, Opportunity Wales, EOC, Cardiff Council, Hilton Cardiff, Marble and Wales TUC

**Host** - Sarah Dickins

**Event organisers** – Cazbah

**Staff of Chwarae Teg**

**The delegates** without whom the conference would not have been the resounding success it was.

The collective input contributed to a rich and interesting debate, bringing together latest thinking and vision, which will assist us in driving this important agenda forward.

## **MARCELLA MAXWELL**

Chief Executive  
Chwarae Teg

## **Key Messages from speakers**

Sir Digby Jones, Ann Beynon, Marcella Maxwell

- Developing innovative ways of working presents one of the greatest issues for Wales, the UK and the developed world. It's absolutely time for this – without flexible working, business won't succeed.
- Economic and social trends are imposing new challenges for the successful management of companies. The effective navigation and integration of work and private life is important. Demographic factors include an ageing population with an incremental decrease in labour.
- The workplace revolution is based on the principle of smarter working and challenges both the long hours' culture and the traditional 9-5 structure which is becoming outdated in an increasingly complex and diverse economic and social environment.
- There are legislative drivers and issues of compliance such as the extensions to the Work & Families Act. However, more importantly, it is recognition by employers that flexible working can actually help in accessing and retaining a skilled and diverse workforce and boosting efficiency and bottom line profits.
- The world has changed – job security has changed – energy and passion needs to go into securing work for the rest of our lives not securing a job for life. Retraining is vital.
- Legislation can only provide a framework for flexible working. It calls for trust between employers and employees and is different in each workplace - one size does not fit all.
- Business needs to concentrate on the output of employees rather than input.
- Flexible working continues to deliver through increased productivity, a happier workforce, reduced absenteeism, access to a reservoir of skilled labour.
- Good quality management is needed to attract and retain talented staff.
- We need to “Do it! Parade it! Monitor it! Publicise it! If it doesn't work, deal with it and deal with it on Day 1!”
- By 2012 the workforce will lose 2 workers for every 1 gained – 62 countries face shrinking populations.
- In the USA in the last 20 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 25m new workers entered the economy. In the first 20 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century there will only be 3 million new workers. The situation in Europe is likely to be far worse as we shall only just keep our heads above water by means of migrant workforces.
- This is about society for the next 100 years – our kids will never forgive us if we fail!

## **Key messages from workshops**

### **Managing Change for an Effective and Flexible Workplace – Suzan Lewis, Professor of Organisational Psychology, Middlesex University Business School.**

- WLB is a win-win solution for businesses
- WLB policies alone are not sufficient and do not offer any quick fix solutions
- All decisions relating to the development and implementation of policies need to take account of the dual agenda i.e. the business and the employee
- Challenge the assumption that those who work long hours are more productive and more valuable than those who work less hours
- Challenge the assumption that those who work flexibly are staff who are not committed
- Managers need to lead by example by taking up WLB initiatives themselves

### **Workforce Planning: Flexibility in Action – Philip Lenz, Chief Officer Human Resources, Cardiff Council and Hayley Dunne, Business Development Manager, Chwarae Teg.**

- Business should focus on the output of employees rather than input
- Challenge for businesses in Wales is to make flexible working and other WLB initiatives available for all occupational groups, across all sectors
- The benefits of working flexibly and WLB needs to be recognised as a business tool
- With some thought and innovative thinking, any job can be worked flexibly
- Essential to keep WLB a living entity and not to create a policy which sits on a shelf
- For there to be a culture change, commitment must come from the top and middle managers – training is essential

### **Agile Working, The Inside Track! - Peter Knowles JP Chartered MCIPD, Business Development Director, BT Workstyle**

- When flexible working policies and other WLB initiatives are implemented there has to be transparency and openness
- Staff morale improves when people are able to work flexibly
- Regular contact with the team is a key issue when they are working different patterns
- Be clear about what your drivers are
- Cost can be a challenge especially for SMEs

### 3-Day Week and Liberty.....Helen Thornton, Self Employed Marketing Consultant

- Everyone has times when they work best, maximising this will mean you get the best from your staff
- No one working pattern will appeal to all
- Conventional working culture can stifle innovation and re-invention and make employees feel guilty

### All workshops touched on the stumbling blocks to the implementation of flexible working and other WLB initiatives:

- **Ideal worker myth-** The ideal worker is one that is always present at the office works long, often unsocial hours
- **Part-time workers-** Idea that part-time workers are not as committed as full-time workers
- **Managers-** Managers are often not as flexible with their staff and make it difficult for employers to approach them about flexible forms of work.
- **Assumptions-** The idea that unless you clock in and out you can't be trusted



Managing Change for an Effective and Flexible Workplace – Suzan Lewis



Workforce Planning: Flexibility in Action – Philip Lenz



Agile Working, The Inside Track! – Peter Knowles



3-Day Week and Liberty..... Helen Thornton

## **Key messages from Panel Session**

**(Questions & Answers put to the panel by the delegates)**

**Panel: Sir Digby Jones, Ann Beynon, Lisa Medhurst, Marcella Maxwell, Suzan Lewis**



**Q. *How would you prepare young people for the future and instil the mindset for flexible working and a healthy WLB?***

**A.** Abandon the Clapham Junction (all change) approach at 16. If by the age of 14 a child is not suited to school provide experience of work alongside education providing the discipline of work, co-existence with other people, team working, getting the soft skills right (which is the hardest thing). Get teachers on message – literacy, numeracy & ICT are key. Create links between schools and businesses. We need lots of graduates but we also need other skill sets – a greater blend to progress society.

**Q. *An industry with a small number of women who work different patterns to their male peers often encounters resentment from a majority male workforce – how would you deal with that?***

**A.** Most problems in the workplace occur at peer level – it's a challenge to Trade Unions to ensure that this is eradicated. Middle managers often act in a similar way and won't put their heads over the parapet. We need stronger management. Legislation and unions could help. Culture change. Embrace and face realities. A world where we maximise the talent in human beings. Media has a role. We need pioneers who are supported.

**Q. *What importance do you place on leadership & management in improving quality?***

**A.** On a macro level – Wales is a small economy – do things together – business and society sharing best practice, learning from each other – include other sector e.g. voluntary sector, learn from them. On a micro level – lead from the front & the top – example is so important – bosses deal with issues openly, transparently and loudly – praise should be public.

**Q. *How does working differently help us as customers?***

**A.** Technology is only a small part of the picture and not the most important part. Good systems are only as good as those who manage them. We must concentrate on outputs not inputs. Remote management, trust & people engagement are key management skills. All of this improves our business and enables us to provide a quality service to our customers.

**Q. *How does WLB apply to manual workers?***

**A.** We need to challenge the way that we traditionally work. 24/7 working needs people and flexibility because of shift patterns; we have examples of employees who only work a few hours per week. Rotas are the managers' responsibility, and they manage them to ensure that the business is delivered. It's about attitude not sector. Let's challenge the way things were done in the past. The challenge is getting employers to understand that work can be done in a different way to the way it's always been done. There are currently 2m unskilled jobs in UK this will reduce to 50,000 in 10 years equating to 1.95m people being out of work. More public services for less tax or making products using fewer people are the way forward. To enable people to accept these changes we must prepare them to see that there are new jobs down the road.

- Q. *Flexible working in the NHS – does self-rostering mean giving up control?***  
**A.** We hang onto our way of life and the idea of a job for life. Some public service sectors have no impetus for change because there is no pressure to do so – we all know we cannot relocate the health service to France. The NHS, Ministry of Defence and Local Authorities are the biggest employers of unskilled labour in UK. Middle management is key to change and we need to give them the tools to manage a flexible workforce.
- Q. *Should change be technology or management driven?***  
**A.** In the flexible working debate, change needs to be management driven, everyone in the organisation and particularly middle managers need to understand the business drivers for change. Technology is of course a key tool enabling flexibility however it should not be used in isolation.  
The Dual Agenda is about involving employers and employees at all levels in change.
- Q. *Is (the lack of affordable) childcare a barrier to employment?***  
**A.** Lack of affordable childcare is still a big barrier. The lack of access to flexible working and other WLB initiatives is also a major barrier. The concept of the Workplace Revolution was discussed as far back as the 1980's and has been slow to materialise. Too often WLB is seen as an issue for women and assumes that men and single people still want to and are able to work in the 'old fashioned way'. We need to remember that child and eldercare cannot be off-shored; the only option to employers to attract and retain talent is to work differently.
- Q. *There is an absence of risk and reward from the Public Sector. Is this a problem?***  
**A.** Different sectors and employers have different drivers. However, they all share issues relating to retaining employees and the associated loss of skills. Changing culture and practice is important for both. The public sector is also about productivity. Both private and public sectors have to have the same agenda otherwise we risk a divisive society.

# **Case Study – City of London Police**

## **Summary of presentation by Carolyn Woolley**

In 2003 City of London Police carried out a Quality of Work Life Survey amongst their staff in support of the Healthy Police Force initiative. Staff were asked to comment on the following areas:

- Resources/Performance Management/Change/Flexible Working/Diversity/ Learning & Development



As a result of the findings of the survey an holistic approach was adopted, looking at patterns of work and leave, communication and leadership, organisational culture, understanding and supporting diversity, management development, review of recruitment & retention and learning & development. The Pros and Cons of flexible working and WLB were identified as:

### **Pros**

- Encourages retention, maintains skills and experience/Flexible resources/A fresher, happier workforce/Part-time productivity

### **Cons**

- Perceptions/Availability of resources/Social and team dynamics/Challenge for managers

It was recognised that there was reluctance across police forces in general to introduce flexible working because of operational influences. City of London Police started from a premise that all jobs are suitable for flexible working.

City of London Police recognises that there is still more to do, eg:

- liP/Work Activity Reviews;
- Leadership & Diversity Agenda;
- Remote Working project;
- Continuing to evaluate the impact of WLB initiatives

Promoting and developing a WLB agenda for us has equated to improved commitment and higher performance.

## Outcomes for The Future



Better Balance Better Business was a ground breaking event. Chwarae Teg's experience in all aspects of WLB over the past 5 years is that it has reached a pivotal point where awareness and implementation of flexible working patterns, and other WLB initiatives, amongst employers across the sectors has significantly increased

The event reflected the shift in awareness of WLB issues and significantly, the recognition by business that a flexible workforce has the potential to bring real economic benefits. It is acknowledged that one size does not fit all and that a balanced approach is required that takes account of the needs of business, the customer and the individual.

The consensus at the end of the event was that working differently is not a choice but the ONLY way forward if Wales is to survive in a competitive European and worldwide market.

This conference and the work undertaken over the last five years by Chwarae Teg, has progressed the WLB agenda from an awareness raising exercise to one of real and sustainable culture change.

The drivers for change in this agenda remain:

- Economic and social trends
- Demographic factors
- Pay increasingly not the top priority
- Recruitment and retention of a skilled and talented labour force
- The need for business to remain productive in an increasingly global and competitive economy
- Inflexibility as a barrier to participation in the labour force
- Long hours culture in some sectors and amongst some individuals
- The need to cut congestion and carbon omissions
- Increasing property and rental prices on office accommodation

With ever changing legislation, businesses are encouraged to look beyond compliance, which does not provide innovative tools for actual change, towards critical assessment of the potential a creative WLB approach has, and how it can be utilised as a positive tool in the business, and workforce planning process. Evidence suggests that key business benefits include:

- **Improved productivity** - BT introduced flexible working for 80% of its staff in 2001, since this date they have seen an increase in productivity by 20%
- **Reduced sickness absence** - CBI estimates the cost of absenteeism as £13bn (2005): Unison found that introducing flexible working practices reduced sickness absence from 12% to 2%
- **Improved recruitment and retention** – according to recent research by the British Chambers of Commerce, 60% of employers reported some or a significant improvement in staff retention following the introduction of flexible working or flexible leave arrangements (Work & Life: How business is striking the right balance, BCC, 2007)

Chwarae Teg's expertise on WLB in Wales, both at practitioner and policy level, brings together over 5 years experience of working across all sectors and businesses in Wales.

Chwarae Teg's strategy has involved a hands-on approach working directly with clients to guide them through the process of implementing effective initiatives.

Our next step is to critically evaluate work to date drawing on the wealth of experience and data gathered over the last five years, culminating in the Better Balance conference, to develop the future strategy for 2008 and beyond.

**Key challenges to:**

- Continue to raise awareness of WLB issues through a targeted and powerful marketing campaign;
- Target specific sector/market segments;
- Provide timely information, advice and expertise on all aspects of WLB and flexible working;
- Advise government on policy matters of relevance to the WLB agenda;
- Encourage Welsh employers to go beyond compliance and embed flexible working and WLB into all aspects of their organisations' business and workforce planning.

**Target areas identified for further development include:**

- Managers at all levels;
- Remote working from both a management and employee perspective ;
- The Manufacturing Sector;
- Manual and Craft Workers;
- SMEs;
- NHS operational sectors e.g hospital wards.

**Work is still very much in progress and Chwarae Teg's priority remains to establish Wales as a modern economy based on flexible working practices.**

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