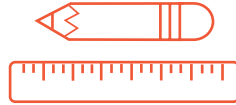


# HOW WE



FILEX

THE WORKING MOTHER REPORT



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## HAPPY NATIONAL FLEX DAY!

I believe that flexible work arrangements are to the 21st century what the five-day workweek was to the 20th century. While the five-day week seemed revolutionary when employees were fighting for it, it became the norm over time and we stopped arguing about whether or not it was a good idea. It just became how we all worked.

The flex revolution is still at the beginning stages, with battles being fought over how and why we need this dramatic change. But the normalization of flex is already beginning, and companies will find themselves becoming the odd man out if they don't keep ahead of the cultural shift. Working mothers are leading the way on flex—flexing our schedules is the solution that we can apply to a multitude of problems. I am proud of the leadership role working mothers are playing, but many groups of employees are marching right beside us in our quest for flex: millennials, sports enthusiasts, adult students, differently abled employees, people involved in their communities, employees caring for elderly parents. You name it, they want it—flex is the answer for nearly every work life need for today's high-tech, highly committed workforce.

This survey and paper are part of a large Working Mother Media initiative to advance flex in the workplace. We are launching National Flex Day on October 15, 2013, to put a spotlight on flex and to further the national dialogue that has been at a high pitch all year. But rather than just talk about it, we wanted to dig into this subject and find out much more about what flex means to the original flexers—working moms: how they are using flex, how they feel about flex, what's working for them and what's not.

*How We Flex: The Working Mother Report* is supported by McGladrey, which has been a Working Mother 100 Best Company for seven years. This assurance, tax and consulting services firm knows all about the value of flex: The majority of its employees use flextime and/or telecommute on a regular basis. We thank McGladrey for its commitment to supporting research that benefits all working moms, dads and businesses.

We invite you to study this Working Mother Research Institute report to learn the ins and outs of how workplace flexibility works in the real world and, on October 15, to celebrate National Flex Day with us!



Carol Evans

**President**

*Working Mother Media*

McGladrey is proud to sponsor the Working Mother Research Institute's *How We Flex* study, which sheds light on the flexibility working parents, specifically working mothers, need to be successful at work and at home.

The topics of women in business and flexibility have commanded tremendous attention during the last 12 months. At the same time that women leaders have started an open dialogue about what it takes to be successful in business and as a parent, a few high-profile U.S. companies have chosen to scale back on their workplace flexibility options in an effort to boost competitiveness. It seems a particularly opportune time to research what working mothers really want and get some facts about how they are actually using flexibility and how their companies benefit.

*How We Flex* shows that while great progress in enhancing workplace flexibility has been made, some challenges still remain. I encourage

you to listen to the concerns and aspirations raised by the mothers who participated in this study. More importantly, I hope you will learn from some of the facts and best practices uncovered.

Like many of you, McGladrey has been on a journey to create a more flexible work environment. We have evolved over the last 10 years from formal flexibility programs to a culture where many of our team members flex informally to meet client, personal and business needs. We've found it to be the right solution—not only for our workforce but also for our clients—and we will continue to evolve as we learn more from studies like these.

We thank Working Mother Media for its leadership in advancing research on how we can help talented women succeed in the workplace and for inviting McGladrey to participate in this ongoing conversation around flexibility.



Richard J. Caturano, CPA  
**National Leader for Culture,  
Diversity and Inclusion**  
*McGladrey LLP*



## HOW WE FLEX

For working mothers, flexibility makes the world go round. It's that extra *strrrrrrretch* that allows us to deliver: for a manager, a child or a partner. Working moms don't just value choices in how to manage our time—we rely on them.

To celebrate the inaugural National Flex Day on October 15, the Working Mother Research Institute—with support from McGladrey, a 2013 Working Mother 100 Best Company—surveyed more than 1,500 moms about workplace flexibility. This Working Mother Report builds on our recent research, including 2010's *What Moms Think*, which found that women who see their work as a career—regardless of their professional level or salary—are more satisfied with both their work and home lives than those who work simply for financial reasons. In 2011's *What Moms Choose*, we investigated the reasons mothers give for deciding whether to stay home or go back to work after having babies and found that the difficulty of meeting their children's needs while working and the cost of child care still force too many women to leave the workforce. How can these moms balance their need for satisfying, career-oriented work with spending time with their families? The answer is flex, which is why, this year, we sought to uncover who has it, who wants it and how it gets used.

We were not too surprised to find that flexibility is among the top three factors working moms consider when choosing a new job—right behind job security and pay. It's more important to mothers than a job's prestige or its long-term career prospects and sexier than a fun work environment. But we were surprised to find that flex is becoming so pervasive that most respondents' managers and co-workers (about 80 percent of both groups) are now comfortable with them flexing. It's a sign of real culture change.

But despite its popularity, flex hasn't had a good year: High-profile employers Yahoo, Bank of America and Best Buy each announced plans to shutter or scale back some flexible work initiatives. Indeed, it's a troubling signal that when business becomes difficult, some employers make an early cut to flexibility. Yahoo's move to ban telecommuting, for one, implies that a successful workplace culture is built on "face time" and employees working in lockstep.

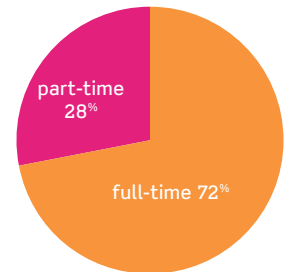
But our data suggest otherwise. In our survey, 80 percent of respondents say that having flexibility increases their productivity, while three quarters say it boosts their morale and motivation and raises their commitment to their employer. And when respondents' managers work flexibly—suggestive of an organization with a broader engagement in flex—the benefits are magnified. These "double-layer" flex workers are more positive on a significant number of measures versus the total survey population.

Our findings suggest that, if anything, when business conditions get tough, the tough should think flex.

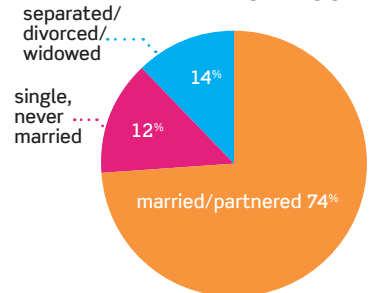
## WHO RESPONDED

A snapshot of the working moms who answered our survey questions.

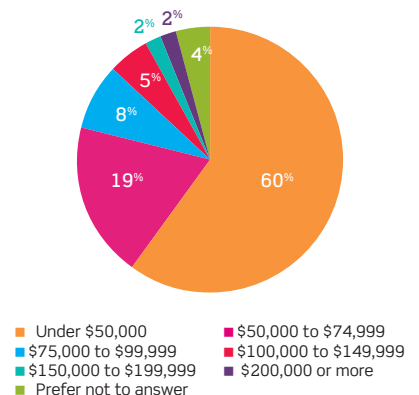
### EMPLOYMENT



### MARITAL STATUS



### ANNUAL INDIVIDUAL INCOME



## FLEX FOR THE FUTURE

Yet many U.S. companies still don't implement flexibility broadly. They use it as a special privilege, a retention tactic for top performers, says Ellen Ernst Kossek, professor of management at Purdue University's Krannert School of Management and associate director of the Center for Work-Family Stress, Safety and Health, which focuses on research to reduce work life conflicts and workplace stressors. Even when flex is offered, it often remains the policy that dare not speak its name—many people work at companies where flexible schedules exist but are never spoken of publicly.

Instead of being considered a perk, flexibility needs to be applied as “a worksite initiative, just like health or safety,” Kossek says. “We should be looking at how to distribute it across entire work groups and job roles.”

At present, a slim majority of U.S. employers—53 percent, according to the Society of Human Resource Management—even offer flextime, a basic form of flexibility that allows workers to change their start and stop times as needed. But more unfortunate is the reality that even if flexibility is officially on the books, “workers have to first earn the right to ask for it,” observes Stephanie Coontz, director of research and public education for the Council on Contemporary Families and a professor at Evergreen State College. “What we need is to assume that all workers need flexibility”—whether it's to raise children, serve as a caregiver or to pursue personal goals.

## DOUBLE-LAYER FLEXIBILITY

So what happens when, as Kossek proposes, flexibility is used broadly—

when it's not just an accommodation for select individuals? Our survey reveals powerful benefits: Women who are managed by someone who often or always works from home report feeling more supported at work and happier at home. Compared with the survey participants as a whole, these double-layer workers are more likely to say that flexibility helps them develop their skills (10 percentage points higher), improves team communication (11 percentage points higher) and helps with advancement (10 percentage points higher.)

These double-layer flex workers seem to have a results-oriented view of work rather than one bound by set hours. For instance, they are more willing to say that taking work calls outside of traditional hours (early or late in the day) is attractive versus the

## IT'S BETTER WHEN MANAGERS FLEX

Women who work for a manager who often works from home are more satisfied in all aspects of their lives and are more likely to take advantage of a variety of flex programs at work.

CRITERIA	% OF ALL RESPONDENTS	% OF RESPONDENTS WHOSE MANAGERS WORK FROM HOME
My employer allows flexibility in when work is done	59%	76%
My employer allows flexibility in where work is done	53%	75%
I can use flex without fear of negative consequences	60%	74%
I'm satisfied with my job security/stability	65%	71%
I'm satisfied with the support I get from my manager in meeting family/home demands	63%	71%
I'm satisfied with my relationship with my spouse/partner	61%	70%
I'm satisfied with the opportunity I get to develop my skills	59%	69%
Working flexibly (taking early or evening calls in exchange for free hours during the day) is attractive	48%	66%
I'm satisfied with how much my opinion counts at work	58%	64%
I'm satisfied with my compensation	52%	58%
I'm very satisfied with my current work arrangement	37%	55%
I have taken advantage of leave-of-absence or sabbatical programs	23%	45%
I have taken advantage of compressed workweeks	15%	43%
I have taken advantage of on/off-ramping	14%	40%
I am aware of top-level executives who openly discuss flex	15%	38%
I have taken advantage of job-sharing	14%	37%

rest of their survey peers—a view of work that is more aligned with global business and an agile workforce. And despite this willingness to let work happen on personal time (and vice versa), 64 percent of double-layer flex workers view their life as in balance, compared to only 36 percent of respondents who don't use flex.

Erin Peterson, an assurance director at survey sponsor McGladrey, can vouch for the magic of having a boss who uses flex himself. Her team leader, Jim Smith, has flexed his schedule off and on since Erin started at the company five years ago. “He used to coach for his kids, but now that they're in college, he often works out at 3:30 and is back online in the evenings,” says Erin, who's followed his example by leaving early enough to pick up her kids—3-year-old Katelyn and 1-year-old Jake—from child care in the afternoons and who usually works one day per week from home. “We all have weeks where we have to roll up our sleeves and work late, but I'm willing to do that because of the flexible environment,” says Erin, adding that having flex integrated into the corporate culture makes it acceptable to everyone on the team. “When I have to leave early, others understand and support me.”

## FAB FLEX

Previous studies have found that staffers in flexible workplaces report higher job satisfaction, greater engagement in work and better mental health. In our study, women who work flexibly report that:

- They're satisfied with how much their opinions count at work (67%).
- They have influence over their work schedules (78%).
- They have balance between work and life (61%).
- They are satisfied with their compensation (60% versus 45% of respondents who don't flex).
- They are happy with the amount of time they spend with their kids (76%).



## THE WHERE AND WHEN OF WORK

Commute times are getting longer, workforces more dispersed, and work hasn't been a strictly face-to-face operation for years. Indeed, plenty is already being accomplished via email, instant message and video.

In our survey, 59 percent of women say their employer allows for flexibility in when work is done. Slightly fewer, 53 percent, say their employer is flexible on *where* work gets done.

Our study investigated telecommuting—a form of flexibility that impacts both where and (often) when women work. We looked at telework's effect on health, well-being and productivity. Overall, the impact appears positive. The majority of telecommuting moms (67 percent) say they are satisfied with their arrangements. In an era where the expectation is 24/7 availability (via smartphones), our survey suggests telecommuting may be a relief valve—a way to swap commute time for work life “catch-up time.” It is a prized option: 10 percent of respondents even say they'd take a 1 percent pay cut for an extra work-from-home day.

The majority of survey moms who work from home—57 percent—do so on a regular schedule, as opposed to only when needed. Of that group, the biggest sector is home full-time (five days per week.) That's a less-than-ideal model, according to Kossek, because telecommuters who aren't regularly in the office often miss opportunities for advancement and struggle to remain connected to the organization. (In our survey, 41 percent of flexible workers say they feel isolated.) A better solution, says Kossek, is a mix of home and office time, with flexibility to match the day's requirements to the work location. Thirty-six percent of women in our survey say they work from home on an “as needed” basis.

## REAL-LIFE ROLE MODELS

If your manager “leads by flex,” then you are more likely to be attuned to the power of flexibility as well as innovative ways to build a career.

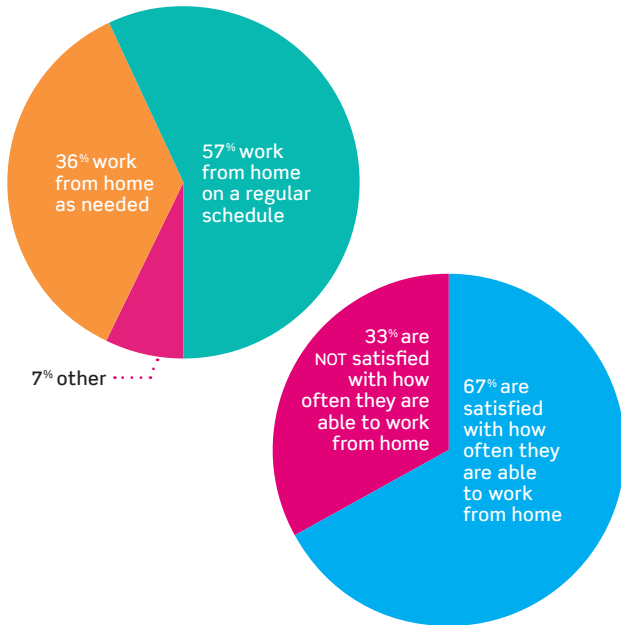
“Study after study has shown that written policies are far less good predictors of how supported people feel integrating work and family than seeing role models—other people working flexibly,” says Evergreen State College's Stephanie Coontz. Among flex users in our survey, 72 percent have a direct manager who also flexes. Also notable, workers who have managers working flexibly report significantly higher participation rates across a range of work life programs, including job-sharing, on/off-ramps, compressed workweeks and sabbaticals.





## HOW WE WORK FROM HOME

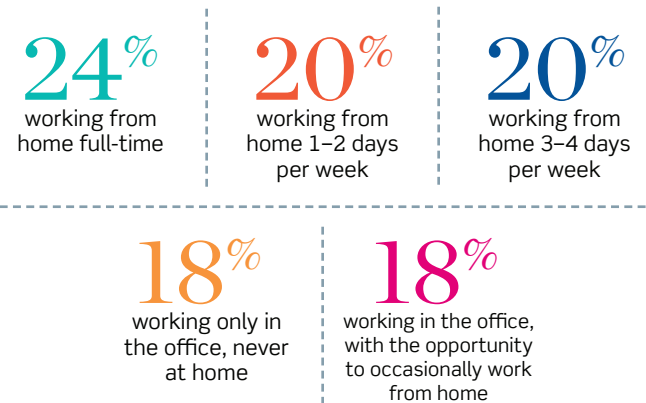
Here's how schedules work for survey respondents who telecommute—and how they feel about it.



## HOW WE'D LIKE WORK TO LOOK

Our survey shows lots of women working traditional hours, but not necessarily happy about it—46% always work in the office, but only 18% say that's an ideal situation. In fact, nearly a quarter would prefer to work from home all the time, while 40% think the best schedule would include some days at home and some in the office every week.

### Arrangements that respondents call ideal:



## WHEN WE'RE WORKING AT HOME...

We get a lot done—on both sides of our lives. Our research shows women catching up on family responsibilities and making healthier choices on their work-from-home days. Exercise, for example, is a big gain: 26 percent of women we surveyed work out when they work from home. Only 14 percent of women find time to work up a sweat on the days they go into the office. Women also use at-home break time to cook, presumably leading to healthier eating.

Take Mo Carranza, a senior information systems analyst with Takeda, another 2013 Working Mother 100

Best Company. On the days she works in the office, Mo goes from pre-dawn until dark, when she arrives home with pizza she's picked up for dinner. On the days she works from home, she salvages three hours of commute time. That means there's time for a decent night's sleep, a morning exercise walk and the chance to do a little dinner prep during her lunch break. And she still easily logs eight hours at her desk. When companies tally up cost savings of flexible work arrangements—office space, fuel costs, time, reduced worker turnover—perhaps health care savings deserve a line item, too?

## FIDDLING ON FACEBOOK?

Working from home doesn't tempt people to procrastinate online any more than they're already inclined. Whether they're in the company office or a home office, fewer than a quarter of respondents regularly take breaks during the day to go online or use social media.

HOW DO YOU SPEND BREAKS DURING THE WORKDAY?	WHEN I WORK FROM HOME	WHEN I WORK IN THE OFFICE
Be with my family	52%	—
Cook/prepare food	44%	—
Clean my house/laundry	36%	—
Personal time	27%	30%
Exercise	26%	14%
Be online/social media	22%	23%
Watch TV	18%	—
Shop	18%	12%
Other	5%	—

## TELECOMMUTING MOMS ARE NOT CHANGING DIAPERS

Working at home means, yes, more time with the kids. But it doesn't mean that women are simultaneously juggling child care and work. The majority of telecommuters (68 percent) have their kids in child care, in school or with a sitter while they work. For the 32 percent whose kids are at home at some point during work hours, 73 percent of their children are school age—meaning they're more likely to be independent.



### THE HAVES AND HAVE NOTS

Flexibility makes a balanced, busy life possible. So who has it? Our survey confirms a pattern that other studies have established. Higher earners—respondents who earn more than \$50,000 per year—are 12 percentage points more likely to be using a flexible work arrangement than those who earn less. Our survey suggests that the higher up the ladder they go, the more women participate in flexibility programs. White-collar professionals such as executives (66 percent), professional/technical workers (48 percent) and managers (47 percent) report the highest usage rates of flexible work arrangements in our survey. (See “Who Gets Flex,” below.)

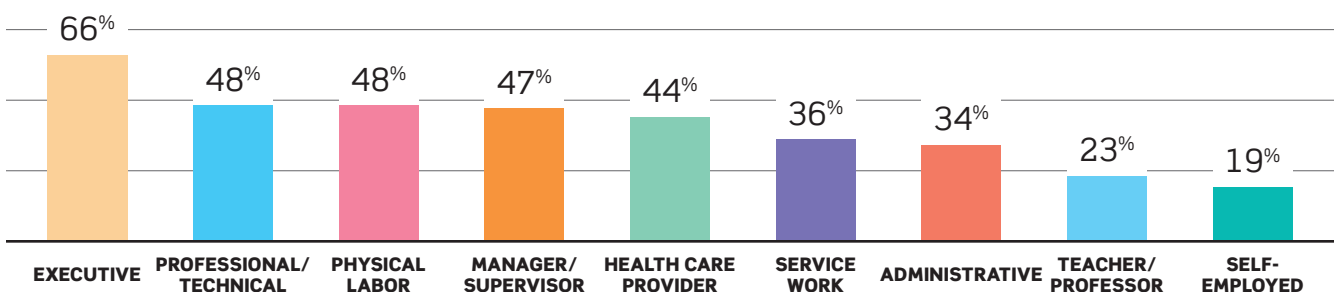
Darcey Livingston Rhoades, an attorney in Bayer's corporate compliance department, for example, says she would not have taken her current role without flexibility explicit in the job offer. The mom of two telecommutes Fridays and works non-traditional hours (6 a.m. to 3 p.m.) the other four days.

In our survey, career-oriented women like Darcey are 10 percentage points more likely to have responsibilities that can be done flexibly (72 percent of them do) than the survey respondents as a whole (62 percent). Administrative employees, teachers, single parents and service workers are among those least likely to be working flexibly. (See “Career Power,” page 9.)

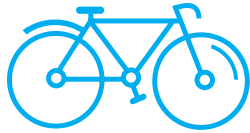
“That's one of the great ironies,” says Coontz. “Women who would rather be at home and are working just for financial reasons often choose work that's less career-oriented, thinking it will be less demanding. But those are often the jobs that are more rigid and less flexible.” And ultimately harder on family life.

## WHO GETS FLEX

Thirty-seven percent of survey respondents say they do participate in a formal flexible work arrangement, including reduced work schedules, telework, compressed workweeks and variable shifts. Executive, professional and technical employees are most likely to use formal flex. Here are the percentages of moms who use flexible work arrangements in different job categories:



## IN SERVICE



In our survey, only slightly more than a third of service workers say they work flexibly. This is a job sector that is predominantly female, is paid by the hour—and gets precious little support on work life issues.

“‘Flexible’ for these kinds of jobs usually means flexible only for the employer,” says Evergreen State College’s Stephanie Coontz. “They expect their workforce to be on call for them.” Service workers face shifts that rotate unpredictably as well as irregular hours (piles of overtime one week, a dearth of hours the next.) This makes life extraordinarily difficult for working families trying to plan child care or get kids to activities.

“What these workers need is flex-stability,” Purdue University’s Ellen Ernst Kossek notes. “Predictable hours with an ability to make adjustments.” A 2009 study by the advocacy group Corporate Voices for Working Families found that when hourly workers are given this kind of flexibility, engagement rises 55 percent and turnover drops by almost half.

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### MIND THE GAP

We know there’s widespread desire for flexibility. And we also know that usage lags availability. In our survey, 65 percent of working mothers report that they can influence their work schedules, but only 37 percent actually participate in flexible work arrangements.

What causes the gap? While many workers adjust their hours on an ad hoc basis rather than making formal arrangements with their managers, another factor may be job security. Amid a slow economic recovery, 62 percent of survey respondents cited job stability as one of the most important factors in choosing a new job. It’s very possible that workers still worry that working a non-traditional workday will make them more vulnerable to layoffs.

In addition to fears about job security, bias and stigma continue to play a

role. In our survey, 61 percent of moms say they can use flexibility without fear of negative consequences, but that’s hardly a ringing endorsement. Here are some troubling findings:

- Forty-four percent of moms who use flexibility say their commitment to work is challenged.
- More than a quarter of moms say part-time work is looked down upon at their company.
- Seven percent say they believe their chances of advancement are hurt by using a flexible work arrangement.

There’s a real workplace bias against caregivers and flexibility, says Coontz, who has researched the issue. “The minute they become mothers, women are seen as warmer, but less competent. And part of that is the assumption that they will put family first and ask for workplace accommodations.”

For men, the flexibility stigma is also problematic. A study published

## CAREER POWER



The 2011 Working Mother report *What Moms Choose* found that career-orientation isn’t just powerful for women—it also makes a big difference to their employers. In a survey of more than 3,700 women, we discovered that women who described themselves as “career-oriented” scored 11 percentage points higher on our engagement index (which factored in elements like pride in their company, loyalty and job satisfaction) than moms working primarily for financial reasons. Career-oriented moms also logged four more hours of work each week than their financially oriented counterparts and were more likely to be juggling travel or elder care. But despite being busier, these career-oriented working moms were more likely to describe their lives as balanced, healthy and fulfilled. They were also more optimistic about their long-term prospects, both for themselves and their kids.

this past summer in the *Journal of Social Issues* found that managers are more likely to agree to flexible work arrangements for men who want to accommodate professional development activities than for those who need flex because of family responsibilities. (And yet men are generally more likely than women to be granted flex arrangements for either reason.)

“I have had fathers in my research tell me that they will make up any excuse to avoid telling their boss they have to leave early because it’s their turn to pick up the baby from day care,” Coontz says.

### **FLEXIBILITY FORWARD**

There’s little doubt the modern workplace is moving toward flexibility. Technology—rather than policy—is taking us there. Workers respond to emails anywhere and everywhere, even on vacation; teams work scattered across time zones. If a working mom is “clocking out” at 5 p.m., it’s often because she’s sitting back down to the computer after the kids have gone to bed. In a nation of overwork, flexibility may be a way to bring some sanity (or at least control) back to the conversation.

But it can’t be a narrow solution—a temporary fix to get women through the pre-K years or a prize that’s earned by star performers. Our survey illustrates there’s no one kind of flex user. The women using flexibility in our survey, for instance, are evenly split between people newer to their careers and more established. Right now only 53 percent of U.S. employers even offer flexibility. That leaves tens of thousands of employees using flex furtively—sneaking out early to pick up a child, coming in late, taking their own sick day (often unpaid) to care for an ill child. It’s stressful, and yet they have no choice. Flexibility of the future needs to be broad, comprehensive and, frankly, *flexible*.

## SEVEN STEPS TO FLEX FOR EMPLOYERS

Companies that create cultures where employees feel comfortable having some control over their own work hours reap the benefits. Here’s a basic template for creating your own flex-friendly workplace:

### **1.**

Conduct an employee survey to assess your workforce’s most pressing flex needs and gain internal support for your initiative.

### **2.**

Appoint a top-level planning group to develop draft goals and guidelines for executing flexible work arrangements as well as defining the scope of the initiative.

### **3.**

Create flex guidelines and resource materials for both employees and managers, outlining roles and responsibilities.

### **4.**

Promote the initiative.

### **5.**

Educate managers on how to evaluate, execute and manage flexible work arrangements.

### **6.**

Educate employees on how to assess their needs and the business’s needs to negotiate terms for flex.

### **7.**

Re-evaluate and fine-tune flex policies, both in terms of eligibility and implementation.

(Adapted from *Flex Primer for the New Future of Work*, by Karol Rose and Lori Sokol, PhD, Working Mother Media, 2011.)

# METHODOLOGY

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The Working Mother Research Institute developed the national survey and fielded it through a series of email blasts sent by Survey Sampling International (SSI) in June 2013. A total of 1,516 individuals submitted online questionnaires. Bonnier Custom Insights (a division of Bonnier Corporation) received and tabulated the responses, which were then analyzed by Maria S. Ferris Consulting LLC. The final results are documented in this report, which was written by the Working Mother Research Institute.



McGladrey LLP is the leading U.S. provider of assurance, tax and consulting services focused on the middle market, with more than 6,700 people in 75 cities nationwide. McGladrey is a licensed CPA firm and serves clients around the world through RSM International, a global network of independent assurance, tax and consulting firms. McGladrey uses its deep understanding of the needs and aspirations of clients to help them succeed. For more information, join our Facebook fan page at McGladrey News, follow us on Twitter @McGladrey and/or connect with us on LinkedIn.

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The Working Mother Research Institute (WMRI), a division of Working Mother Media, is home to the Working Mother 100 Best Companies, the Working Mother Best Companies for Multicultural Women and the National Association of Female Executives' Top Companies for Executive Women, among other initiatives. WMRI produces insightful benchmarking reports as well as important research papers studying work life and the advancement of women and conducts surveys, such as *How We Flex: The Working Mother Report*, to further corporate culture change nationwide.

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