SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT FLEXITIME:
A RE-EVALUATION OF SUPERVISORS' ATTITUDES
AT PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY

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ABSTRACT

Flexitime is an Alternative Work Schedule that has been widely adopted throughout the U.S. to address many of the domestic and work related problems encountered by employees and employers. Recent testimony of the Office of Personnel Management (1985) indicates problems in government agencies regarding the management of flexitime. To determine if flexitime retains its initial popularity or if management problems exist in other organizations as well, 35 supervisors at Pacific Gas and Electric Co. completed a questionnaire regarding the management and benefits of their flexitime program. A comparison was then made with a survey completed by PG&E in 1975. Results show that the attitudes of supervisors have changed indicating that serious management problems have arisen.

Organizations need to take certain steps such as the training of supervisors and the structuring of their flexitime program so that particular organizational needs are accommodated. In this way, potential problems may be eliminated and the future of flexitime as an important management system can be assured.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Flexitime, a type of Alternative Work Schedule (AWS), which gives an employee some discretion as to when he will begin and end his work day, was adopted in the '70s by management as a way to motivate workers by improving their morale.

In the late '60s and '70s production levels were falling as industry was faced with a worker who, coming out of the turmoil of the Civil Rights and Vietnam Era, was no longer motivated by the same work ethic of earlier generations. This "New Worker" was no longer content to just work for a decent wage. He wanted more meaningful work, more freedom on the job, more responsibility, and a better working environment.[1]

This worker had also come to view his personal life differently. He was no longer willing to subordinate his personal life to his job, demanding more time to pursue recreational and educational activities.[2] Therefore, to motivate this "New Worker," industry turned to flexitime as a humanistic work system which would address both work and personal demands.

As a result of the incorporation of flexitime into

employees' lives, certain other social and economic advantages of the system became apparent that made flexitime increasingly popular.

For example, as the work force became comprised of more and more women, working outside the home resulted in conflict with family responsibilities. Flexitime eases the scheduling demands of providing for child care. Therefore it has become increasingly popular, and in many cases it is a necessity, particularly with families who have to juggle child care schedules with work schedules.

Other aspects of daily life, educational and leisure opportunities, the relief of traffic congestion and the easing of the daily commute, were all thought to be enhanced by flexitime.

During the 1970s flexitime spread rapidly throughout the private and public sectors. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that there are now 10 million workers working under some type of alternative work schedule (AWS).[3] Flexitime is the most prevalent AWS.

The research in both the public and private sectors has shown that flexitime has been viewed very favorably from both an employee and an employer's perspective. Employees find that child care scheduling problems are eased, they have more time for leisure and educational pursuits, commuting is easier and a more positive attitude towards the job is experienced as employees feel they are treated more

professionally. Employers find that production levels are up, morale is improved and that absenteeism and tardiness are reduced or eliminated. Flexitime appears from the research to be a popular program from both perspectives, and an increasingly popular and necessary employment option for society in general.

The U.S. government was an early supporter and adopter of flexitime and sponsored legislation in 1978 and 1982 to implement and extend flexitime into the federal system.[4]

However, in reviewing the testimony of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in '82 and '85, a trend of program terminations, initiated for the most part by the management of various agencies, is in evidence.

The question is: Why, if, as the research states, flexitime is such a popular program with both management and employees, are programs being terminated?

Some say that programs were adopted based on inadequate research which may have given a superficial view to management that flexitime is a low-cost program requiring little organization effort to install, but which would correct serious organizational issues of low employee morale, etc.

Now that programs have been in place for a significant length of time management may be finding few advantages. In fact, flexitime may even seem counterproductive when viewed in terms of supervisory energy expended.

This may be the situation observed in the federal

system as evidenced by OPM testimony which shows that flexitime now is not an expanding program but a diminishing one.[5]

Another suggested reason for the reduction in programs is that the current Administration has not been supportive of flexitime programs and has therefore not provided the necessary support for the training and educational programs that are important for management to make flexitime successful.[6]

If this is true, then many supporters of flexitime believe that its demise will have serious implications for society in general. Representative Pat Schroeder of Colorado in commenting on the economic and social position of the family and the importance of flexitime believes that the family today is under tremendous stress and states that: "It is in the self interest of all to understand this stress and to relieve it in any way possible." She continues by stating that: "AWS is a proven way to reduce the burden on the worker, the commuter and the consumer, and needs to be supported."[7]

Another cause for the demise of flexitime programs might be found in the role played by the first-line supervisor, that is, the supervisor just above the rank and file worker. The early research ignored the importance of the role of this supervisor, not attending to the fact that he is more or less responsible for the success of the program and his job can be changed substantially because of it.[8]

Since the role of the first-line supervisor is considered to be the key to success of a flexitime program, this paper proposes to look at flexitime from a supervisor's perspective at Pacific Gas and Electric Co. to ascertain if the positive attitudes determined by earlier research have changed toward the program, and if they've changed, why.

PG&E was selected for this research because it has signficant flexitime experience, and because of its position as a quasi-public agency. As an agency with functions similiar to both public and private sectors, research on its experience may allow one to surmise that the flexitime experience on the federal level can be found in many other organizations as well.

After a review of prior research this essay outlines an approach to determining the attitude of first-line supervision at PG&E regarding their current program.

An analysis of this data will be compared to results of a previous study conducted by PG&E a year after flexitime was installed. This will permit an assessment of the changes in attitudes toward flexitime among first-line supervisors, which in turn will provide the basis for recommendation.

CHAPTER 2

IMPLEMENTATION AND CONSEQUENCES

There are many variations, but the basic mechanics of a flexitime system consist of a fixed daily schedule during which everyone is expected to work a designated "core time." This core time can vary depending on the organization, but it generally means a time period of 4 to 6 hours in length in the middle of the day during which everyone is expected to be at work.

A "flexible band" on either side of this "core time," usually two hours, are hours within which the employee can decide his starting and stopping time. Since most programs contract with employees to work an eight hour day, the starting time determines the employees' stopping time.

Some programs do allow workers to carry forward a surplus or deficit of hours worked. This variation, known as "banking", gives an employee more flexibility as long as he fulfills the number of contracted work hours each week or month depending on the flexibility of the system. "Banking" is a feature in less than 10% of flexitime programs. Most programs are based on eight-hour days with no carry over.[9]

An example of a typical flexitime schedule would be one with a flexband between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m., a core time

between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m., a flexband between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. A core time between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. and a flexband between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.

This schedule would require a mandatory core time of five hours. It would be up to the employee to work another three hours during the flexband hours to work a required eight-hour day.

A time recording system is necessary to keep track of the hours worked for both management and employee.

Some flexitime systems only require a log-in sheet if the system is simple, with a set lunch hour and no banking provision.

The more complex flexitime programs do require some mechanical time keeping device, either punching a time clock or logging in on a computer. This has been a source of hostility and resentment for some employees who feel the time clock is an invasion of privacy, and signals distrust between management and employees.

Most organizations feel a time keeping method is not just necessary for monitoring employees but serves also as a source of information for planning and scheduling.

The degree of flexibility an employee has in the "core time" and flexible bands depends upon the amount of control management is willing to transfer to its workers, the inter-dependence and isolation in which a worker functions, and the constraints imposed by laws and collective bargaining

agreements.

In Europe, where regulations regarding overtime are less restrictive, employees have far greater flexibility in their flexitime programs. Many firms in Germany, Switzerland and Great Britain, for example, allow credit and debit hours to be carried over from one week to another and from one month to another. An increasing number of firms in West Germany are now experimenting with a flexiyear system. According to West German economist Bernhard Teriet, companies using flexiyear programs can make employment plans with a broad time reference, taking into account the seasonal economic fluctuations of their businesses.[10]

In West Germany the chief group of employers who are using flexiyear work with part-time employees in the retail industry. The firms and the employees negotiate the number of hours and the way these hours will be worked to meet the organization's busy and slow times. Employees have the security of knowing how many hours they will be employed throughout the year, and employers have on hand trained workers to meet the demands of their business.[11]

In the United States such variations from the flexible week do not seem to be forthcoming.

Flexitime Adoption in Europe

Flexitime was first introduced in West Germany in 1967 by a personnel officer of the Ottonbrunn Research and

Development Co., who conceived of the idea of staggering working times to help reduce the heavy traffic in the area so that employees would be able to arrive at work on time.[12]

Flexitime was successful in not only reducing traffic congestion around the plant but in reducing tardiness and lessening the stress workers had been experiencing from the commute as well.[13]

The successes of flexitime soon caught the attention of the West German government, which not only saw flexitime as a program which would alleviate worsening traffic problems, but as a system that could be applied to help solve serious labor problems as well.[14]

In the early '70s West Germany was faced with a shortage of skilled workers and was unable to adequately meet its production demands. By employing flexitime, industry brought into the labor market large numbers of women who, because of having their children to care for, had previously chosen to remain at home. Now with flexitime women could both work and meet family responsibilities more easily. Industry, by tapping into a large pool of productive workers who were previously unavailable, was able to meet labor production needs.[15]

In addition to providing the economy with a larger labor pool, reports noted flexitime's effectiveness in boosting employee morale, reducing absenteeism and tardiness, and favorably affecting production.[16]

Interest in the system spread, and flexitime was rapidly adopted throughout West Germany and Western Europe as economic and social conditions throughout the continent resulted in a strong demand for a skilled workforce. The rapid rise of flexitime was also due to the fact that industry in Western Europe was not hampered from experimenting with new working patterns by restrictive labor regulations regarding overtime and hours worked. Flexitime could be quickly adopted because involved negotiations with labor unions were not required.[17]

The arrival of flexitime onto the economic scene was timely, as it had no competition from other AWS: e.g., the compressed work week. Employees had by this time generally discarded the compressed work week, as the 10-hour day had proved too tiring, and so were looking for new ideas in regards to scheduling.[18]

Flexitime is considered a success in West Germany and in Europe. Today approximately 30 percent of the West German labor force and 40 percent of the Swiss labor force use some form of flexitime. France, Austria, England, and the Scandinavian countries, and to a lesser extent Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the Benelux countries have adopted the system widely. Even the Soviet Union has now granted official approval for the adoption of flexitime in industry.[19]

Flexitime Adoption in the U.S.

In the U.S. the adoption of flexitime did not occur as rapidly as in West Germany for a number of reasons. It was competing here with other forms of AWS, mainly the compressed work week which was, in the late '60s and early '70s, strongly favored by labor since it did not interfere with overtime regulations. Any AWS that did threaten the 40-hour week overtime regulations was strongly resisted by labor organizations. This made it difficult for industry to experiment with new ideas without a great deal of effort.[20]

By the mid '70s however, enthusiasm for the compressed work week waned as more unions saw it interfering with workers' overtime benefits. Furthermore, employees had come to consider the 10-hour day of the compressed work week too fatiguing and preferred the freedom of arranging their own hours under flexitime to the fixed schedule of the compressed work week.[27] Secondly, U.S. industry was not experiencing a boom economy in the early '70s, but rather high unemployment, and did not have an immediate need to use work incentives to attract workers to the workplace as did West Germany.[28]

In the U.S. while the advantages of flexitime for industry and society were the same, the motivations for adopting flexitime had a different focus in that it was employed more to address social and psychological needs, ranging from improving the morale and production of

employees, aiding the life style of the family, and giving important environmental advantages rather than as a solution to pressing unemployment.

The following aspects of flexitime provide the motivating factors behind adoption of flexitime in the U.S.

Worker Motivation

Industry in the '60s and '70s was faced with a "New Worker", as defined by social researcher Daniel Yankelovich, who began questioning the quality of American working life.

This worker was expressing less loyalty to the organization, showing less dedication to work, less willingness to accept routine jobs, less willingness to subordinate his personal life to the job, and more of an inclination to look to alternatives to the large hierarchical organizations of American Industry.[22]

The growing dissatisfaction of the American worker with the structure and values of American business was manifested by poor workmanship, low levels of productivity, tardiness, high turnover, absenteeism, and drug and alcohol abuse.[23]

To motivate workers and to combat growing dissatisfaction and alienation, industry and government turned to flexitime as a humanistic reform which would give employees more control over their lives, provide them with more responsibility, and increased control over how they would structure their day. It was thought that by improving an

employee's morale, through improving the quality of his working life, he would become a more productive motivated employee.[24]

Benefit to Employees' Work Life

Proponents of flexitime argue that improvements in an employee's job as a result of flexitime seem to come from the fact that employees feel like they are treated more professionally, given more freedom and responsibility and offered a chance to learn new skills.

Flexitime, according to the research, brings about these changes in the following ways. By determining his own schedule, to some extent an employee can come to work at a time that is more suited to his biological clock. At work he is in a better mood and more efficient. This freedom to choose his own starting time gives a worker more sense of control and responsibility over his own life. He is not penalized for getting caught in heavy commute traffic, or for being out late the night before. He does not have to account to a supervisor for his whereabouts. Employees report that flexitime puts them in a more professional, adult position.[25] Also by coming in early or staying late employees are subject to fewer distractions; they have more quiet times in which to be more productive. The focus under flexitime changes from punching a clock and putting in one's time to one of task completion. Also, flexitime by its very

nature seems to require more teamwork and planning (depending on who is doing the scheduling). If employees are allowed to participate in this, then a spirit of cooperation and teamwork develops. Employees come to feel part of a identifiable work group and not just a "cog in the machine."[26]

Teamwork and increased scheduling responsibilities can also lead to the acquisition of new skills. To maximize scheduling flexibility many employees will agree to cover for one another. This can happen both horizontally and vertically within the organization. Exchanging roles enables employees to develop more new skills and abilities than otherwise.[27]

By increasing skills and enlarging an employee's role he can acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the organization's functioning and possibly a greater appreciation of the organization's problems.

Also, by enlarging an employee's role, he has a chance to establish communication with other workers. This serves to facilitate the exchange of ideas within an organization and provides the worker with valuable informal on-the-job training.[28]

Benefits to Employees' Personal Life

Flexitime was adopted not only because it improves morale at the work place but also because it is viewed

favorably by employees who find the flexibility it offers to be more in harmony with their domestic non-working life style than the traditionally structured working schedule.

Changes in family life, increased traffic congestion, new views concerning leisure time, and changing educational values, have occurred in American society in the last two decades. Flexitime complements these changes in the following ways.

Family Life: With 56 percent of the work force being women, the traditional family is no longer one in which the father goes to work, with the wife staying home raising the children.[29] Now the norm is two wage earners or the single parent working out of necessity. With both parents working, making child care arrangements and scheduling work hours to fit school and baby-sitting schedules is stressful and difficult.[30]

Flexitime helps ease this somewhat by allowing parents some latitude in meeting their various schedules. A parent can change his work schedule so child care might only be needed at one end of the school day. Or with both parents on flexitime, it is possible to arrange schedules so that one parent could be home when the children depart to or arrive from school.[31]

Flexitime also gives families latitude in dealing with family emergencies better. For instance, taking a sick child to the doctor would no longer necessarily mean a day

missed from work as so often happens when employees are working a traditional schedule.[32]

Leisure: Employees also see their time for leisure activities and their educational opportunities enhanced under flexitime.

According to Yankelovich people now attach greater importance to leisure activities. With flexitime, employees can arrange for larger blocks of time for hobbies, social clubs, community activities and sports. By going to work earlier, employees can leave for weekend trips earlier, avoiding peak traffic hours. By taking time off early, employees can use recreational facilities during midweek, avoiding crowds and getting midweek price reductions.[33]

Education: The way people perceive education has also changed. Education, to learn or improve skills, to keep up with changes in a field or learn a new technology, or education as an end in itself is now considered an alternative for anyone, not just, as in the past, an activity reserved for young people.

Flexible scheduling can increase educational opportunities by allowing employees access to courses that would otherwise be unavailable to them.[34]

Traffic and Commuting: As mentioned earlier, flexitime first originated as a solution to traffic congestion and was supported by private and public officials in Germany, and by officials in the U.S. who believed that the installation of

flexitime would help solve traffic and related environmental problems that communities were struggling with.

It was thought that by allowing employees some leeway in setting their own hours, they would avoid driving at peak traffic times. This would, in turn, lessen traffic flow, ease congestion, and reduce emissions from stalled or slowly moving lanes of traffic. This would result in less pollution, and less noise, and bring about significant fuel savings, and tax savings, due to less freeway construction.[35]

The potential of flexitime to reduce traffic congestion and effect a positive change on other environmental problems has not been observed in the U.S. as too few firms in any one area have adopted flexitime to produce any observable results.[36] However, in Europe where a large proportion of the work force has flexitime, in Winterthur, Switzerland, for example, flexitime has significantly eased traffic congestion.[37]

Flexitime's major advantage in terms of solutions to traffic problems has occurred not on a large environmental level, but instead on a personal level. An overwhelming number of employees report that their commute to and from work is eased and that their mood and efficiency at work is improved.[38]

The research shows that employees do choose a new arrival and departure time and report that they get to work

faster and feel safer with fewer cars on the road. Those employees taking public transportation, travel on buses and trains that are less congested, and report a more pleasant and more convenient commute since they do not miss as many connections due to missed, delayed or overcrowded trains or buses.[39]

Adoption By The Federal Government

One of the early adopters of flexitime was the federal government, which took an early interest in flexitime as a way to address many work and societal problems such as low employee morale, low worker productivity, extensive commuting, and child care difficulties in the early '70s.

After considering the favorable reports from Europe, the federal government decided in 1973 to try a flexitime pilot study in the headquarters of a large bureau of the U.S. Social Security Administration, in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Bureau was composed of about 6,000 employees. Sixty-three percent of the work force were women and a majority were black, with small children. Absenteeism and tardiness were becoming serious problems for management due to the fact that public transportation to the area was limited, the parking lot was overcrowded, traffic in the area was heavily congested and many of the women were having difficulties getting their children off to child care or school and arrive at work on time.[40]

Flexitime was introduced to determine if absenteeism and tardiness could be reduced. A general improvement in morale was also hoped for.

At the end of the pilot study the Bureau found that employee satisfaction with jobs and working conditions were improved, production seemed to be up, and tardiness was virtually eliminated as a point of contention between supervisors and employees.[41]

Flexitime was gradually extended, until by November 1977, the entire Bureau went on flexitime.

After reviewing the production reports and the reports of improved morale at the end of the first nine month experiment, recommendations were made by the General Accounting office in 1974 to amend hours of work and premium pay laws to permit experimentation with flexible work schedules in the federal government.[42]

The Civil Service Commission, now the OPM, subsequently submitted a proposal which became Public Law 95-390, The Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act of 1978. This law allowed for a three year, government wide experiment with alternate work schedules for employees in Executive Branch agencies to determine whether and in what situations alternate work schedules could be successfully used by federal agencies on a permanent basis.[43]

By the end of the first experiment (1982) 1,500 organizations with more than 325,000 employees covering the entire

spectrum of federal agencies had been involved.[44]

The federal government's early adoption and support of flexitime system contributed to flexitime's rapid adoption by organizations throughout the United States. Flexitime is found now on a widespread basis throughout public and private sector work situations compatible to its use.

Because of its rapid rate of adoption it is difficult to estimate exactly how many employees are in organizations currently using it. A rough estimate by the U.S. Department of Labor reported close to 10 million employees in the U.S. use some version of flexitime scheduling.[45]

The OPM reported that by 1985 forty-one federal agencies were using some form of alternative work schedules, involving 308,000 employees. The U.S. Department of Labor estimated in 1981 that 13 percent of all nongovernment organizations had some type of flexitime program for 50 or more employees and a national usage rate of 17 percent was projected for the mid '80s.[46]

The Effects of Flexitime Research

At this point the specific research as to the effects of flexitime will be considered.

The research experience of the federal government will be looked at first since the support of the federal government, as stated earlier, was important for the rapid adoption of flexitime, and will likely have an important

bearing on flexitime's continued use. Also the impact areas that the federal government considers in evaluating federal programs serve as a guide to both public and private sector research.

Research by Office of Personnel Management

In 1982, and in July 1985, the OPM reviewed the status of flexitime in federal agencies in hearings before Congress. Based on the 1978 experiment the OPM reported to Congress that AWS were successful and could bring about improvements in productivity, improvements in service to the public and savings in costs. As a result of this favorable recommendation Congress passed Public Law 97-221, The Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act of 1982. This Act continued temporary authorization for AWS in the federal government until July 1985.[47]

In testimony before Congress, in July 1985, for consideration of a measure that would make AWS a permanent part of the federal system, the OPM again reported to Congress that AWS are favorable to agency operations and to an employee's work life.[48]

The OPM based its recommendation to Congress on a comprehensive array of statistical information provided by the various agencies. The OPM paid particular attention to six impact areas: Efficiency of Agency Operations, Mass Transit and Traffic, Energy Consumption, Service to the

Public, Employment Opportunities and Employee Satisfaction.

These impact areas are considered in some detail as they provide the backbone for the OPM report to Congress and are essentially the areas of impact that other public and private operations consider in evaluating flexitime.

Efficiency of Agency Operations: This was considered to mean impact on productivity and costs of agency operations. Survey results found that agency costs were basically unchanged in the majority of agencies and cost savings that were reported were attributed to reductions in sick leave and overtime, and, in the case of field units, savings came from reduction in transportation costs to and from the work site.[49]

Productivity was found to be difficult to measure, however. This fact is mentioned in most studies in both public and private sectors. Agencies did report that the flexibility that allowed for later working hours did improve productivity in some operations. Employees who work with flexitime report that by coming early or staying late they have quiet times, free of distractions, during which to concentrate. Also, choosing to some extent an early or late work time puts employees more in sync with their biological clock and enables them to work more productively.[50]

Mass transit and traffic: Few agencies could offer specific data but, perceived, on the whole, that the staggered work hours did shorten the commuting time.[51]

Energy consumption: This did not appear to be significantly affected but some agencies did report an increase in utility costs because of longer hours of operation.[52]

Service to the public: A majority of agencies reported that this was either unchanged or improved by the fact that the extended hours of operation gave the public more accessibility to the agency. Also more telephone contact across time zones was reported.[53]

Employment opportunities: The OPM reported that because of flexitime some agencies were able to retain some valued employees in hard-to-fill positions who would otherwise have quit because of conflicts of child care, schooling or other outside commitments. Consequently, training and recruitment and start up costs were saved.[54]

Employee satisfaction: The OPM had asked agencies to survey employees on both job satisfaction and their personal lives. Employees were generally very enthusiastic about the changes flexitime had brought to both areas of their lives. Job satisfaction was increased because of easier commuting, a greater sense of control over the work situation, the ability to schedule appointments on work days rather than using leave time, and a greater ease in making child care arrangements.

The most common reasons given for increased satisfaction with non-worklife was that family responsibilities were easier to meet, educational and training opportunities could

be taken advantage of more readily, and there was more opportunity to participate in community activities.[55]

Overall, employee morale in regards to work and non-work life was thought to be significantly improved by flexitime. This fact was of particular interest to the OPM and to the management of the various agencies because of the expectation that through improved morale would come an increase in worker productivity leading to improved organizational efficiency. Therefore, based upon enthusiastic reports from employees, and favorable reports regarding the other "impact areas," the OPM was supportive of flexitime legislation.

Public Sector Studies

An employee's personal life along with his commute to work and his attitude on the job are all considered to be the domain of an employee's morale.

In the studies listed, morale as a result of flexitime, has been substantially improved. No studies showing that employees' morale has been negatively affected were found in the research.

Simcha Ronen and Sophia B. Primps, in a study that reviewed flexitime experience in 25 public agencies, considered changes in employees' attitudes from two points of view; morale/job satisfaction and attitudes towards flexitime itself.

They found that all the studies reported (with the exception of one inconclusive study) a positive attitude towards the flexitime program itself and a positive change in attitude in how employees viewed their jobs.[56] Twelve of the twenty-five studies reported on transportation. This included information on the use of carpools, fuel consumption and changes in the ease or difficulty in getting to work. All, with the exception of one inconclusive study, showed that employees were beginning to realize benefits in terms of decreased commuting time and fuel costs.[57]

Robert T. Golembiewski and Carl W. Proehl looked at 32 public sector studies involving 74 applications of flexitime. In summarizing flexitime's major effect on employee attitudes they found "profound and positive shifts in attitudes following flexitime applications."[58]

An overwhelming majority of respondents in all the studies wanted flexitime to be continued. Morale was significantly improved and employees felt they had more control over their work and their personal life. All studies, with a few exceptions, showed that flexitime had favorable effects on commuting.[59]

Many agencies report similar findings. Among these reports are: Crowley and Fiss in a summary of information in a U.S. Civil Service Commission report; Mueller and Cole in a report of the U.S. Geological survey; a report by the National Commission on Productivity and Work Quality which

queried 41 state governments; a report by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey which looked at the results of an eight-month experiment among 850 headquarters staff of the Port Authority in New York and research by Rainey and Wolf who presented an analysis of data generated during the pilot study of the U.S. Social Security Administration in Baltimore, Maryland.[60]

The studies above echoed the Ronen and Primps and the Golembiewski studies which showed that employee morale may be very positively affected.

Private Sector Studies

A study of Control Data Corporation's flexitime program three years after implementation showed that morale in all areas studied was positively affected, with 85 percent of employees noting improvement. Forty-five percent said their attitude towards the company improved. Fifty-nine percent said leisure time increased and 57 percent found that driving time decreased. Seventy-three percent of employees reported that the pressures and frustrations of trying to get to work at a certain scheduled time lessened.[61]

Schein, Maurer, and Novak looked at the opinions of 63 supervisors in the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company after a 14 week experience with flexitime. Ninety-three percent of the supervisors found that employee morale had improved, while 91% felt that there was less commuting pressure.[62]

Zawacki and Johnson, in reporting on the flexitime experiences of Hewlett-Packard Corp. after a one year implementation, found that 93 percent of employees reported morale had improved, and that 93 percent reported commuting pressure was lessened.[63]

Similar results reporting on improvements in employee morale, commuting and personal life are reported in the following studies: Golembiewski and Hillis, in an analysis of flexitime at Smith/Kline Corporation; Frank T. Morgan in an analysis of Berol Corp.; Nollen and Martin in research of organizations belonging to the American Management Association; and Cynthia Fields reporting on the clerical experience of employees at Mutual Life Ins. Co. of New York.[64]

Organizational Benefits

Flexitime was considered and adopted because it was thought that improved employee morale would favorably affect an organization's overall efficiency by increasing productivity, and decreasing absenteeism, tardiness, and use of sick leave.

The research review of both the public and private sectors does show that organizations do experience improvements in these areas.

Public Sector Studies

Productivity: In discussing improvements in

productivity, organizations include under this topic all related measures such as quality of work, quantity produced, accuracy, efficiency, ability to meet schedules, improvements in organizational communications and improvements in serving the public.

Assessing gains in productivity was the most difficult of the researchers' tasks. Most data is based upon the subjective observations of the employees and/or supervisors. It is difficult to draw any clear conclusion since the criteria and methodology in all studies varied, but it appears that the data is consistently positive and does indicate that production does generally improve.

Nollen and Martin in a report of a survey of 196 managers in both public and private sectors reported that 48 percent of the supervisors polled experienced improved performance, while 48 percent experienced no change. The reasons given for improved performance were: more quiet times with fewer interruptions in which to complete tasks, less idle time while at work, increased job satisfaction, and working time better suited to workers' biological clock.[65]

Ronen and Primps in their review of 25 public agencies found no reports of decreased productivity.[66]

Golembiewski and Proehl, in reviewing 74 applications of flexitime, found it difficult to make a statement about flexitime's effect on productivity except to say that both

employees and first-line supervisors often report that productivity does not decrease under flexitime. They conclude that since productivity did not decrease in any of the cases and since it is no-cost or a low-cost program, then given the effects on employees' attitudes, flexitime programs should be maintained.[67]

Absenteeism: This includes all forms of absence that organizations report; sick leave, short-term leave and personal leave. The type of absence that flexitime most significantly affects is short-term leave -- absences of one day or less. Employees no longer have to call in sick for personal or family business, but instead can often schedule this business during flexbands and take only the time that is required.

Nollen and Martin reported that executives in three-quarters of the firms polled experienced reductions in absenteeism. The change varied from a small amount to almost 50 percent in some cases.[68]

Tardiness: Reduced tardiness, according to Nollen and Martin, is one of the most consistently reported benefits of flexitime. Traditionally many firms are tolerant of occasional lateness because of late trains or traffic jams. Usually if employees arrive during a certain grace period, they are paid without having to take the time off vacation or leave allowances. This usually amounts to 12-20 minutes per accounting period. Considerable costs may accrue over a

period of time because of lost hours. Under flexitime, research shows that tardiness virtually disappears since an employee's day begins when he arrives unless he arrives at work during core times. Nollen and Martin noted that none of the organizations reported any problems with employees arriving after core time had begun. Nollen and Martin reported that 84 percent of all executives polled reported that tardiness was reduced.[69] These favorable results for both reductions in absenteeism and tardiness found by Nollen and Martin are confirmed by other studies.

For example, Ronen and Primps reported that out of 18 cases, 13 were affected positively for reduced absenteeism. For tardiness, out of 14 cases, all reported a positive change.[70] Golembiewski and Proehl report that absenteeism and tardiness were positively affected. All studies showed a reduction, or in the case of tardiness, elimination altogether.[71]

Private Sector Studies

Productivity: Private sector studies on productivity are even more positive than public sector studies.

In the study of Control Data Corporation by Gomez, Hopp and Sommerstad, 66 percent of the 286 employees responding felt that their productivity had increased; 46 percent felt that the need for supervision of employees had decreased. Forty-one percent felt there was more cooperation and

coordination between departments, and 49 percent noted more cooperation and coordination between shifts.[72]

Schein, Maurer and Novak reported that productivity was measured in physical terms in the Metropolitan Life Ins. Co. study (e.g., number of claims processed, percentage of work completed). They found that productivity increased 13 percent in a four month period compared to the same period a year before.[73]

In a companion study on supervisory attitudes by Schein Maurer and Novak; 57 percent of supervisors polled said that flexitime affected production favorably; 87 percent felt that employees were working satisfactorily with decreased supervision and 89 percent felt that flexitime impact on work flow was favorable.[74]

Zawacki and Johnson in their survey of 390 Hewlett-Packard employees found that 58 percent reported productivity to be positively affected.[75]

Golembiewski and Hilles in their study of Smith/Kline Corp. reported that 64 percent of new supervisory employees felt flexitime had a very favorable effect on productivity, while 29 percent felt flexitime had a favorable effect. Seven percent felt their rate was the same.[76]

Absenteeism: Private sector studies on absenteeism and tardiness report results similar to public sector studies.

Control Data reported that 47 percent of managers noted a decrease in tardiness, though could see no change in

absenteeism.[77]

Zawacki and Johnson in their study of Hewlett-Packard reported that 81 percent felt that tardiness was positively affected. Fifty-nine percent felt that absenteeism was reduced.[78]

Golembiewski and Hilles in reporting on Smith/Kline Corp. found that decreases in single-day sick absences did occur.[79]

Other studies reporting significant reduction in absenteeism and tardiness were: Fields, Martin, Morgan, Mueller and Cole, and Owen.[80]

Overtime Costs: Many firms have reported significant decreases in overtime costs. A number of reasons are given for this. Flexitime tends to shift the emphasis at work to one of task completion instead of time put in on the job. Studies show that workers then will schedule their work to coincide with heavy workload periods on the job, as under flexitime they are not rewarded for waiting.

Secondly, employees are available to work a longer period during the day. A memo that is assigned at 4:00 to be out at 9:00 the next day does not necessarily require someone staying overtime.

Studies reporting overtime cost decreases are: Mueller and Cole, Hopp and Sommerstad, Golembiewski and Proehl, Ronen and Primps, Nollen and Martin, and Owen.[81]

Program Costs: The fact that flexitime is a no or low-

cost program is one of its major selling points. However, there is little measurement of cost in the literature with the exception of Nollen and Martin's data.

In considering the cost of a program, energy consumption, machine usage, support services such as security personnel, cafeteria facilities, elevator and switchboard operators and start-up training costs all need to be balanced against the savings in overtime, absenteeism, tardiness and turnover costs.[82]

Nollen and Martin found that 18 percent of the firms surveyed had to provide more support services and 26 percent had higher utility costs. This was balanced out against the savings in overtime, absenteeism, tardiness and turnover costs. After considering no significant changes in training and personnel costs the firms surveyed concluded that the impact of flexitime was not associated with significant cost increases. Golembiewski, Hilles, and Kagno concur with the fact that utility costs and support service costs are small, but also comment that the data on cost is sketchy and insufficient.[83]

The Impact on Supervisors

One aspect of a flexitime research that has been largely ignored has been the role played by the first-line supervisor.

Golembiewski in his review of 20 public sector studies

involving 79 separate flexitime applications found that one-third of the studies failed to provide any data at all about the impact of flexitime on the supervisor's role. The other studies dealt with the topic in general terms focusing only on one or two supervisory issues.

It is now believed that the attitudes and behaviors of first-line supervisors are a critical factor in the success of flexitime, and that management must recognize this and prepare supervisors adequately for the managerial changes they must make if flexitime is to be successful.[84]

Changes in a Supervisor's Job

Graff, in analyzing 22 organizations with regards to the impact of flexitime on the job of the first-line supervisor, provides the most comprehensive research to date. Graff selected five management functions which he judged to be important aspects of the first line supervisor's job: planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling and found that each of these major areas were significantly affected by flexitime.[85]

For example, since one aspect in a supervisor's job is to see that work flow or services are not interrupted, it was found that flexitime supervisors must spend more time scheduling and organizing employees so that the supervisor's presence is not required at work the entire working day and so that employees have a clear idea of their duties. To do

this, supervisors found significant increases in the number of rules and policy statements issued, an increase in both short and long term planning, and an increase in the volume of written and oral communication.[86]

Under flexitime it was found that employees made more job-related decisions. Consequently supervisors found more time was spent keeping abreast of a more dynamic work environment and in coordinating various changes with various work groups. Supervisors, in a sense, spent more actual time supervising. Supervisors also reported an increase in the number of employees they managed, and they felt their responsibilities were greater.[87]

Employees working under flexitime are seen to take on more responsibility, have a better working relationship with their supervisors, need less motivating and have more self direction. Even so, supervisors report significant increases in the amount of time monitoring employees.[88]

In considering staffing changes, Graff found supervisors reported an increase in the use of employee performance and appraisals reports. There was also an increase in the influence supervisors had in the promotion and demotion of their staff.[89]

This increased involvement could derive from the fact that supervisors can not be on the job at all times to see who is actually doing the work. Therefore to maintain their awareness of the activity of the work group, supervisors

become more communicative and more responsive to the interactions of their employees. This involvement in turn gives them more insight and competency in performing staffing functions.

No other staffing changes were reported in the time supervisors spent interviewing, hiring, training or orienting new employees.

Attitudes of Supervisors

Since flexitime does make the supervisor's job more complicated, what do supervisors think about flexitime? Do they believe that the adjustments they must make in planning, supervision and communication are offset by improvements in employee morale and productivity?

According to Golembiewski this is so. Golembiewski's extensive review of public sector studies found that at first positive attitudes of first-line supervisors towards flexitime lagged behind those of employees, but after six months supervisors were as optimistic as employees. This lag in enthusiasm is explained by the fact that supervisors must make managerial changes and possibly attitudinal adjustments to implement the program. Once they make these changes the research shows they are enthusiastic. Golembiewski found that at least 70 percent of supervisors in each organization studied wanted flexitime to continue, with the average in each organization closer to 90

percent.[90]

Golembiewski does suggest, however, that longitudinal studies are rare, and that very real questions can be raised about the validity of these studies. He states that while almost all studies used a pre/post or a post only research design, in the case of most pre/post studies, observations were made usually no later than a few months after the first observation. In the post-only studies respondents compare their feelings about flexitime with how they remember their job to be before flexitime was installed. Golembiewski concludes these studies are rough estimates at best.[91]

To correct for the fact that there were no long-term studies about supervisory attitudes, Golembiewski turned to the Smith/Kline corporation which had nearly three years experience with flexitime.

Since no preliminary attitude surveys could be or had been performed, sensing groups (small discussion groups) were used to gather information.

It was discovered through these sensing groups that 25 percent of the supervisors noted a need for increased planning, but almost all found this easy to manage. About 8 percent felt a loss of managerial authority or control but most reported no difference.[92] One of the most important problems was making exclusions from the flexitime program based on temporary work needs. Fifteen percent of the supervisors noted that it was very difficult taking

flexitime away from employees even temporarily. Also resentment arose among those employees (i.e. security personnel) who were permanently excluded from flexitime. Flexitime created a status division.[93]

Golembiewski concluded from these groups that while supervisors gave evidence that substantial adjustments to flexitime were necessary, these adjustments were made by supervisors shortly after flexitime's installation.

Once things were going smoothly flexitime provided definite positive results that made the extra managerial effort worthwhile. For example, supervisors saw improvement in productivity and morale. Seventy percent believed productivity had increased. This was thought to come about from more teamwork and from the fact that equipment was better utilized.[94] Eight out of ten supervisors felt that flexitime had a positive effect on morale. Some supervisors felt this was because employees had greater control over their schedules and others felt that flexitime made people feel more like professionals and that this boosted their performance and morale.[95]

The overwhelming conclusion of the research was that a large majority of supervisors, 86 percent, wanted to keep flexitime. They felt that the benefits of the program compensated for the adjustment they must make.[96]

Golembiewski does however caution management from being overly enthusiastic in adopting flexitime without first

giving supervisors training and support in preparation for the management and behavioral change they must make to make the program work.[97]

Changes in Management Style

Graff found that supervisors who are happy working with flexitime do make some behavioral changes to accommodate work changes. They become more "forward-looking" than when managing employees in a regular fixed hour environment. This comes about, Graff suggested, because supervisors do not know when employees will be coming to work or when they will be working on various tasks. To manage effectively, supervisors must anticipate the needs and potential problems of the work groups and arrange for solutions in the event of the supervisor's absence.[98]

Graff also found supervisors adopted a more participative management style. This comes about, Graff believes, because supervisors cannot be at work to monitor employees throughout the entire work day. Supervisors, in their absence, need to rely on their employees to take responsibility to complete tasks and to follow the procedures of the work group independent of close supervision. This brings forth an increase in communication between supervisor and the work group to discuss and resolve problems.[99]

Reduced supervisory control, more employee self-control, and more decision making on the part of employees,

along with an increase in communications, seems to bring about closer working relations between supervisor and employee in which both participate in the common goals of the work group.[100]

On the other hand, supervisors who did not trust their employees to act responsibly, who were threatened with a loss of control over the work group, or who did not want to share any of their managerial prerogratives found it difficult and frustrating under flexitime to do their job.[101]

Suggestions For Implementation

Since flexitime does impact the supervisor's job in many ways, Golembiewski emphasizes that before flexitime is adopted management should consider the following points to ensure a successful transition and experience with flexitime.

First, management should look carefully at the work site, and using suggestions from supervisors, try to adopt a variant of flexitime that would best suit the working demands of the group.[102]

Second, management could familiarize supervisors with the kind of problems and behavioral changes they can likely expect and help them to formulate reasonable solutions to problems if and when they do occur.[103]

Third, since flexitime can threaten supervisory control, many supervisors find that to compensate they begin

overcontrolling; distrusting employees, misjudging employee performance, or working longer hours to keep the control of the group. It is important that management evaluate the performance of supervisors often when flexitime is first installed to safeguard against inappropriate supervisory practices such as supervisors working long hours.[104]

To extend this idea, a periodic sensing of the flexitime program could be undertaken to correct for problems that might arise so that the program remains viable and enthusiasm on the part of supervisors is maintained.

Summary

At present a large body of research exists that is overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the benefits of flexitime to both employer and employee alike.

Employees find that because of the freedom and flexibility of flexitime they have the opportunity to learn new skills, take on new responsibilities, make more decisions, and generally to become more productive and satisfied with their work.

Personal lives are benefitted in that employees find more flexibility in meeting family and other personal responsibilities and have increased opportunities for educational and leisure persuits.

Improvements in morale were thought to improve the productivity of employees, and early research shows that

this was the case. All public and private studies show substantial improvements in employee morale companioned with improvements in measures of organization efficiency and decreases in incidences of absenteeism and tardiness.

On the basis of this research flexitime has been adopted by hundreds of organizations throughout the public and private sectors. Now, however, there has been some rethinking on the part of management about the feasibility of flexitime which may affect its continued use.

Early research while focusing on the benefits to employees and on organizational performance indicators failed to consider the role of the first-line supervisor and the impact flexitime has had on his job.

There is evidence arising from program termination in federal agencies that many supervisors may not be that happy with flexitime and want programs discontinued.

Furthermore, there are recent studies that question earlier flexitime research for failing to employ rigorous research methods, relying instead on primarily anecdotal measurements. It is suggested that these soft or attitudinal measurements do not give an accurate perspective regarding the advantages and disadvantages of flexitime.

The following discussion presents a criticism of the existing research and provides a basis for the argument that there may be problems with the management of flexitime, as evidenced by program terminations on the federal level, that

was not apparent earlier because of limited or inadequate research.

CHAPTER 3

SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT FLEXITIME

Discussion of Research

According to V.K. Narayanan and Raghu Nath in their review of past flexitime research, only three studies have investigated flexitime in an experimental fashion. They are: Evans, who used an "ex post facto longitudinal design" in reporting the impact of flexitime on non-supervisory employees in an insurance firm over a five month period: Golembiewski, who based his research on pre- and post-test data from a research and development organization over a one year period: and Schein et al., who used control groups to assess the changes in productivity of five groups of clerical workers in an insurance company.[105]

Aside from the studies mentioned above, Narayanan and Nath found flexitime research to be "primarily descriptive in nature and to lack scientific rigor."[106]

Rainey contends that even those studies that have made an attempt at a methodologically rigorous research design "...have largely ignored key variables associated with task structure, and organizational design, managerial style, socio-economic status of subjects and related work values and attitudes."[107]

Rainey argues that even if the studies met rigorous research standards they could still be criticized on the basis that the gains could reflect the "Hawthorne Effect" -- the desire of subjects to do well because they are participants in a study. When the interest of the participants wanes, flexitime may not be viewed as enthusiastically as much of the literature states. Rainey believes what is needed in flexitime research is a variety of long-term studies encompassing a variety of work situations.[108]

Golembiewski and Proehl in their report on public sector flexitime studies were critical of much of the existing research on technical grounds. They report that few flexitime studies used control or comparison groups. Few studies provide a longitudinal perspective and many studies were devoid of any statistical analysis.[109]

While Golembiewski was critical, he also encouraged organizations to adopt flexitime as he sees the trend in the data as being so "monolithic" that the general positive effects of flexitime, he believes, could not be questioned.[110]

A possible explanation, according to Rainey, for the overwhelming body of positive research is that the organizations that have adopted flexitime may not be representative of all organizations but may be "early adopters." An interest in, and acceptance of innovation makes these organizations exceptional in themselves and not necessarily

typical.[111]

Flexitime, Rainey argues, may not be so successful when it is adopted into organizations for which it is not appropriate or by those organizations who have adopted flexitime because it is the new, popular management thing to do.[112]

Terminations In Federal Agencies

The OPM testimony regarding the status of flexitime in the federal system, shows how strengthening agency control over flexitime programs through changes in the Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act has meant a reduction in flexitime programs in the federal system.

This could indicate that flexitime is an unpopular system with management having determined, after significant involvement, that flexitime is basically unworkable. Or it could indicate that flexitime is experiencing difficulty with management because, as claimed by Representative Schroeder, the support from the Administration necessary for the program to function smoothly has been largely withdrawn.

While the underlying reason for program terminations is unclear, OPM testimony shows clearly that this is in fact happening at an increasing rate and that the impetus for ending these experiments has come largely from management.

The fact that programs were being terminated became evident in OPM testimony before Congress in 1982. While OPM stated that flexitime experiments were generally successful

and recommended that flexitime be allowed to continue, it also pointed out that 93 programs had been terminated and that others would have ended if it were not for labor agreements or for rulings by the Federal Labor Relations Authority which kept the programs in place.[113]

The three main reasons given by management for ending these experiments were: Decline in productivity or performance, decline or delay in service to the public, and work scheduling difficulties.[114]

OPM testimony in 1985 reported a continuation of this trend, stating that 122 program terminations occurred between August 1983 and July 1985 which affected 13,523 employees. Eighty-seven percent of the terminations involved programs that were established unilaterally by management not subject to the collective bargaining process, indicating a rising dissatisfaction on the part of management with flexitime.[115]

A review of flexitime legislation shows how the law has changed to strengthen management's authority while diminishing the role and influence of the OPM, which was initially solely responsible for establishing and evaluating AWS programs. This legislative trend of increasing agency control of flexitime could indicate that management has experienced adverse effects from flexitime and wants the freedom to authorize or shut down programs as it deems necessary.

When AWS legislation was first enacted (Public Law 95-

390, Sept. 29, 1978) the Civil Service Commission was given substantial control regarding flexitime programs. It was up to the discretion of the Commission to decide which agencies were suitable for AWS experiments and to establish operational guidelines and criteria for their evaluation.[116]

Each agency program was subject to the regulation of the Commission regarding termination. If the head of an agency wanted to end a program he would make a request to the Commission. If the Commission determined the experiment was not in the best interest of the public, the government, or the employees, the Commisssion could exclude the agency from using flexitime. But final determination in any case as to an agency's exclusion was up to the Civil Service Commission.[117]

With flexitime legislation up for review in 1982 there was a concerted effort made on the part of the Administration and the agencies to limit the role of the OPM and to give the agencies greatly increased authority over control of their programs.

The Administration proposed (S 2156) to give complete control over establishing or terminating flexitime programs to the agencies. For example, the head of an agency could decide to use flexitime if its use would improve productivity, provide greater service to the public, or not add to the cost of agency operations. These areas of operation are difficult to quantify and an agency head would never be

forced to use flexitime if he didn't want to.[118]

In addition any AWS could be terminated immediately if the agency head or the OPM decided that the program was no longer fulfilling those criteria. Also the right to decide not to begin an AWS or to terminate an existing schedule was also to be the exclusive right of management.[119]

House Bill 5366, which was under consideration by Congress at the same time, stipulated that the decision to use or terminate AWS be subject to the regular collective bargaining process.[120]

A compromise decision, Public Law 97-221, which took four months to reach, seems to give agencies more authority than Labor in controlling flexitime programs. For example, agencies were given 90 days from the enactment of the legislation (Public Law 97-221) to end existing programs without negotiations or third party review if they met the adverse impact criteria mentioned above. This was the case even if an AWS schedule was established by collective bargaining. If collective bargaining was involved in setting up the original AWS program then the union could initiate new negotiations within 90 days after the end of the first 90 day period. Fifteen agencies reported that 59 AWS covering 4,800 employees were terminated under this 90-day provision.[121]

The agreement goes on to state that programs not subject to collective bargaining agreements may be established

or terminated as management deems necessary. However, if an AWS was set up through negoitations with the union then the formal labor process applies.[122]

The role of the OPM was greatly restricted in the 1982 legislation to one of mainly providing training and education and technical assistance to the agencies to help them maintain their programs.[123]

The easing of restrictions to disband programs resulting from 1982 legislation probably accounts for the higher number of terminations in management sponsored programs between 1982 and 1985. This can be compared with the program terminations occurring in programs established through labor negotiations. Between 1983 and 1984 only 13 percent of these programs were terminated. Program survival in the federal system increasingly seems to depend on the presence or intervention of a collective bargaining agreement.[124]

The same lack of enthusiasm for flexitime on the part of management can also be seen in the fact that management does not now provide the impetus for establishing new programs. In 1982, of all the employees in flexitime programs, (175,000), 25 percent were in programs established as a result of collective bargaining agreements, but the majority had been initiated by management. However, by 1984 of the 689 new programs established between 1982 and 1984 the majority of the programs were established through negotiated agreement. Employees covered by these agreements now

comprise 90 percent of all employees in flexitime programs in the federal system.[125]

The incidence of rising numbers of program terminations and the fact that there are, statistically speaking, fewer employees using AWS now than there were six years ago is viewed by many supporters of flexitime as having serious implications for society.

Representative Schroeder, in her testimony before Congress regarding AWS legislation, claims that the failure of flexitime is due to the lack of support on the part of the OPM and the Administration, which she claims sends a negative signal about the benefits and feasibility of flexitime to management. She believes that if careful study were given to each AWS program initially so that well-constructed programs were set up there would be a much higher success rate.[126]

Representative Schroeder stresses the fact that if flexitime programs are not encouraged to spread throughout public and private sectors than stress on today's worker will continue having serious negative implications for society.

Similar views on the importance of AWS are stressed in OPM testimony by Rosslym S. Kleeman, Associate Director, General Government Division, GAO; Representative Stan Parris; and Senator Mervyn Dymally.[127]

It may be that the difficulties with flexitime at the

federal level are occurring as a result of lack of support as representative Schroeder indicates, or because of serious dysfunctional aspects inherent in managing a flexitime program that are not apparent at the federal level because of a lack of available research. At present H.B. 1525 to reauthorize existing law so that AWS would be established on a permanent basis in the federal system is currently in the House Committee on Governmental Affairs. Based on previous controversy surrounding passage of AWS legislation, the issue of stronger management controls is very likely the point of contention.

At this point, considering program termination in the federal system, criticism of the research for failure to employ rigorous research standards and to account for certain psychological factors such as the "Hawthorne Effect," it is necessary to reassess the evidence regarding flexitime in order to arrive at a more accurate picture regarding its feasibility as a management system.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

To determine if flexitime maintains its original popularity with management as a beneficial and viable program or if the experience at the federal level is found in other organizations as well, a survey instrument was developed to analyze the attitudes of supervisors who have been working with flexitime for a significant period of time.

The survey instrument was designed not to focus on specific management components of the supervisor's job but to ascertain the supervisor's views on overall benefits and problems of the program.

Three general areas of questioning were decided on:

(1) Has the program been beneficial; what are the benefits?

(2) What are the problems managing the program, and are the problems of managing off set by the advantages received?

(3) Should the program continue?

Pacific Gas and Electric Company, the nation's largest "investor-owned" electric and gas utility, was selected for this research. PG&E provides electricity and natural gas to nearly 3.8 million customers throughout a service area which includes 48 of California's 58 counties. The Company has an

annual net income over 1 billion dollars, and employs 29,600 workers. Headquarters are in San Francisco.

The Design Drafting Department of PG&E which serves as the sampling unit adopted flexitime in 1974 after a 10 week trial period proved successful. The motivation to adopt flexitime was a combination decision of both management and labor to allow for more employee flexibility and to enhance morale and productivity. This Department was considered suitable for flexitime because of the nature of the work performed. The Department employs 600 people composed of engineers, technicians and support staff who work on engineering projects which are complex and long term. The focus of the work is on the task to be completed rather than on the hours put in on the job. There is no public contact, and little need to travel. The Department is relatively independent and it was thought that flexing would not impact service to the public or interfere with the work of other departments who need to interact with Design Drafting.

The structure of the program is typical. The basic work day is from 7:00 a.m. to no later than 5:30 p.m. Core times extend from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 1 to 4:00 p.m. Lunch must be at least one-half hour long ending no later than 1:00 p.m. Employees working 37.5 hours are paid for a 40 hour week. There is no overtime unless specifically authorized by one's supervisor. A time clock is used. This was a new addition to the Department and has caused

some controversy. However management feels that use of a clock provides more accuracy than the manual posting method and provides employees with a needed structure to their day.

Flexitime is now a negotiated benefit covered by the bargaining unit and applies to engineers, draftsmen and some clerical staff. The program can be cancelled by management with a 30 day notice, but this depends upon a unanimous decision on the part of all management employees in the Department. The union can also cancel flexitime with a 30 day notice. Supervisors are not on flexitime.

The Design Drafting Department was selected for my research because: (1) Flexitime had been employed by this Department for a significant amount of time. (2) Early Department research results were available which indicated positive results with the program. The availability of a pre-study would enable me to determine to some extent supervisory attitude changes over the long-term and get an idea of flexitime's current popularity with management. (3) The flexitime program is traditionally structured and can be compared to other programs mentioned in the literature, and was adopted for the same reasons other companies had adopted their flexitime programs, to enhance morale and productivity. (4) Finally, the Design Drafting Department was interested in the results of my research and willing to provide assistance to me.

The Sample:

Data on age, sex, work experience, and management style of supervisors was collected in order to characterize the work group and for consideration as independent variables which might affect a supervisor's attitude towards flexitime.

The sample is a fairly homogeneous group composed of 45 first-line supervisors. All are graduate engineers and all but one are men. Forty-two percent of supervisors are between 40-50 years of age with 37 percent between 50-60.

Work Experience: All but one of the supervisors came into management positions by working up from non-management positions in PG&E. Over half of these supervisors (54%) had worked as bargaining unit engineers with flexitime before being promoted into management, and have worked with flexitime in the Design Drafting Department an average of six years. Forty-six percent have come from other departments in PG&E from management or non-management positions that did not have flexitime. These supervisors have an average tenure of 13 years in the department.

Employees Supervised: The average number of employees supervised is 18, with the exception of the Chief of Design Drafting. The range of employees supervised is from three to 118 people.

Management Style: Supervisors were also queried as to whether their management style was either participative,

authoritarian, or permissive. This was done because according to Graff's research, supervisors who like and are successful with flexitime are or become participative managers. Eighty percent indicated that they were participative managers.

The Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was distributed through company mail to the 45 first-line supervisors of the Design Drafting Department who work directly with 600 member bargaining unit engineers and support staff. Each supervisor received a cover letter, a survey, and a preaddressed postage paid return envelope. Susan Solat, Personnel Analyst for the Company, also included a letter stating that PG&E was interested in the results and would like the surveys returned. Thirty-five out of forty-five surveys were returned, which compares favorably with the returns (37) of an earlier survey conducted by PG&E in 1975 and is considered to be a favorable response rate.

The survey, which is referred to as the Flexitime Management Survey, asked supervisors to select the most important benefit of the program from the following: improved morale, productivity and decreased absenteeism and tardiness. A heavy workload, scheduling, management control and communication difficulties were areas presented for choice as the most difficult to managing a flexitime

program.

The benefits and the areas of managerial concern listed above were selected since these areas were most mentioned in the literature as being the most affected positively and negatively by flexitime.

Besides specific responses concerning management components or program benefits, supervisors were asked to give a general response as to whether flexitime was advantageous and if it should continue. (See Appendix A).

The results were then compared to a study conducted by PG&E one year after flexitime was adopted. This study is referred to in this paper as the PG&E Flexitime Survey. Since the PG&E Flexitime Study is used as a basis for comparison in my analysis, a description of the Study and its correlation with the Flexitime Management Survey of this research follows.

After a year of operation the PG&E Flexitime Survey was prepared to determine the effects of flexitime on departmental operation. Results were obtained from payroll records, opinion surveys, and personal observations. The following areas were covered in the report: Employee attitudes and perceptions, Supervisor's Reactions and Observations, Productivity, Sick Leave, Time Off for personal Business, Effect on Department Operations, Use of Building Facilities, Commuting to Work, Alternatives to Flexitime Administrative System, Conclusions and Recommendations.

The attitudes of employees and supervisors were obtained from two separate surveys that used a scaled response format which asked how flexitime was affecting work, non-work life, and Company operations. Four hundred and fifty-eight employees and 37 supervisors responded.

The PG&E report discusses effects of flexitime on each of the areas mentioned above and provides supporting data and tabulations for the "Supervisor's Reactions and Observations," Employee Attitudes and Perceptions," "Sick Leave," and for "Personal Time Off With Pay." The Study concludes that flexitime is a very favorable program; advantageous to supervisors, employees, and production levels, and has no adverse impact on costs.

In comparing the two studies (PG&E Flexitime Study and The Flexitime Management Survey) to determine attitude changes, "Supervisor's Reactions and Observations," "Employee Attitudes and Perceptions," "Productivity," and "Effects on Department Operations" were selected from the PG&E Flexitime Study for analysis.

The "Supervisor's Reactions and Observations" survey asked supervisors to compare their work situation after a year of flexitime to their work experience before flexitime. Questions of "Should flexitime continue?" and "What is flexitime's overall benefit to the Company?" were selected from this survey and compared to questions one and two of the Flexitime Management Survey which attempts to determine

current supervisory attitudes concerning the benefits and problems of flexitime and attempts to determine if supervisors feel the program should continue.

Those questions dealing with internal and external communications, ease of planning and scheduling, group productivity, employee morale, effectiveness of and amount of time spent supervising were compared to questions three and four of the Flexitime Management Survey which deals with the problems of flexitime management.

Employee attitudes are determined by the "Employee Attitudes and Perception Survey" of the PG&E Study which asks employees directly how happy they are with the flexitime program. This is compared to question six of the Flexitime Management Survey (FMS) which asks supervisors for their perceptions of how employees view flexitime. This is not a direct comparison but does give some idea of how employees view the program today, and can serve to point out the possible tensions that might exist between management and labor over the continuation of the Company's flexitime program.

Productivity was difficult for the Company to measure since Design Drafting does not perform short-term, repetitive work tasks that lend themselves easily to productivity measurements. Information was gathered based on opinions survey results which stated that work group and personal productivity were up. Based on the 1974 direct payroll cost

for Design Drafting of $9,680.000, each one percent gain in productivity is worth $127,800. Estimates of productivity gain were in the range of two to three percent which amounted to a gain to the Company of over $250,000/year.

The attitudes of supervisors regarding current gains in productivity are dealt with in question two of the FMS. Although a direct comparison cannot be made as the question asks for a supervisor's perception of an increase in work group productivity as one of a series of choices regarding benefits of flexitime, an indication of the effect of flexitime on this area can be arrived at when compared with the other responses.

"Effect on Department Operations" deals with the effect of Design Drafting's program on the operation of other departments who need to coordinate their work with Design Draftings personnel. The impact on external communications between departments was one of the concerns of many supervisors before flexitime was enacted, but was not expressed as a problem in the PG&E Study.

External communications as a problem of managing flexitime was not specifically listed in the FMS as a management choice. However information regarding this was received in the comments attached to the survey, so that a comparison can be made to some extent regarding the effect of flexitime of Departmental operations.

While it has been mentioned that even though the two

surveys are different in design, there are enough similarities between the two in regards to certain basic questions that a comparison can be made as to overall attitude change.

Finally, in addition to the survey questions of the FMS, over half of the supervisors responded by adding comments to the various items. Some of these responses were very lengthy and are used in the analysis to give additional insight into the current status of Design Drafting's flexitime program.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATING FLEXITIME

The current trend towards a rising number of program terminations experienced by federal agencies, especially between 1982-1985, as reported by the OPM is of concern to many who view the demise of flexitime on the federal level as a signal to management throughout public and private sectors that flexitime is not a workable or an important program in the long term.

It may be that flexitime programs are as popular with management now as they were in the early days of their adoption and that the rising number of program terminations among federal agencies have occurred because of the disinterest and lack of support of this particular Administration. Or the rising number of program terminations may indicate a general dissatisfaction with flexitime in many management situations which is surfacing now that programs have been in place long enough for problems to become evident.

The analysis below provides a partial test of this expectation by describing supervisor's attitudes and comparing them with those found in the PG&E Flexitime Survey. Attitudes are then correlated with the demographic data of

supervisors to provide further insight into the components which contribute to the current status of flexitime within the Department.

Benefits of Flexitime

Overall Benefit of Flexitime

The first aspect considered is: Do supervisors view flexitime as beneficial for the Company? Twenty percent of the respondents indicated that flexitime was very beneficial. Thirty percent were not quite as enthusiastic but indicated that flexitime was, generally speaking, a beneficial program. Both categories combine to indicate that 57 percent of supervisors felt that flexitime has been beneficial for the company.

Opposing this view, 31 percent indicated that flexitime had benefitted the company very little and 11 percent indicated that flexitime had no benefits for the company whatsoever. Combined, both categories total 43 percent. (See Table 1).

Comparing the results discussed above with the results of the same question asked in the PG&E Flexitime Survey of 1975 there is a general trend towards a negative view of flexitime. The earlier PG&E survey showed that in 1975, 77 percent of supervisors rated the overall benefit to the company as significant with only two supervisors perceiving

no benefit. Now results indicate positive findings of 57 percent. This lessening of enthusiasm for the flexitime program is expressed by survey results throughout this study and provides a direct contrast to the earlier results.

Table 1. Perceived Level of Benefits of Flexitime Among Supervisors

"Do you think flexitime has been beneficial for the Company?"		
Responses	%	N
Very much so	20.0	7
Generally speaking, yes	37.1	13
Very little	31.4	11
Not at all	11.4	4
Totals	99.9	35

Most Important Benefit

In commenting on flexitime's most important benefit to the Company, respondents chose between improved employee morale, increase in work group productivity and decreases in absenteeism and tardiness. Of 35 responses two surveys were not included since they were incorrectly marked.

Forty-five percent of the supervisors chose a decrease in absenteeism and tardiness as the most important benefit to the company. Thirty-three percent of supervisors indicated improved employee morale; one supervisor chose increased work group productivity; 12 percent felt there were no benefits and six percent indicated other benefits

besides the ones listed. For example, congestion at the elevators was relieved by people leaving work at different times, and employees could better schedule commuting arrangements. Two supervisors commenting on morale felt that flexitime may have improved morale among employees at one time but now employees consider flexitime to be a right and they felt that it does not especially improve employee morale at this point. (See Table 2).

Table 2. Attitude of Supervisors Regarding Benefit of Flexitime

"What do you think is flexitime's most important benefit?" Responses	%	N
Improved morale	33.3	11
Improved productivity	3.0	1
Decrease in absenteeism and tardiness	45.5	15
Other	6.0	2
No benefits	12.1	4
Totals	99.9	33

In the PG&E Flexitime Survey all of the supervisors with the exception of two felt that flexitime had improved employee morale significantly. Company time used for personal business (a form of absenteeism) was felt by all of the supervisors with the exception of two to have decreased significantly.

Productivity was least affected with 13 percent of the 35 respondents noting no change with one supervisor noting a

decrease in productivity while the remaining 60 percent noted productivity had increased.

While the results of the two surveys can not be directly compared, as supervisors in the PG&E Flexi-time Survey were asked to respond to every question on morale, productivity, and absenteesim, the trend of general disaffection towards flexitime is evident. For example in 1975 there is general enthusiasm expressed for improvements in morale and decreased in absenteeism were noted by all supervisors, whereas in 1986 when given an opportunity to indicate an area of improvement resulting from flexitime, 12 percent of supervisors indicated flexitime has no benefit to the company at all.

Management of Flexitime

Graff's research (1978) states that flexitime does have a significant impact on many of the management components of the supervisor's job increasing the time spent planning, scheduling and monitoring employees; but that supervisors adjust within six months to the changes they must make and become enthusiastic about flexitime. Supervisors feel that the extra effort managing is well spent considering improvements in employee morale and productivity. Ninety percent of supervisors in public sector studies surveyed by Golembiewski (1980) wanted flexitime to continue after they became adjusted to program demands.

The PG&E Flexitime Survey (1975) supports the finding of Golembiewski showing supervisors overwhelmingly in favor of flexitime continuing, with managerial functions not seriously affected. (Supervisors could have made the necessary adjustments by the time of the survey.)

In reviewing these effects on management functions in 1975, 22 of 33 supervisors (69%) felt that the ease of internal and external communications hadn't changed whereas twenty-one percent felt communications had improved. Nineteen of 37 supervisors (51%) indicated that the ease of planning and scheduling hadn't changed. Thirty-two percent said the ease of planning and scheduling had improved. Supervisory time was the most affected by flexitime with 32 percent indicating that time spent supervising employees had increased. However, 48 percent indicated no change whereas 21 percent said supervisory time had actually decreased.

Responding on whether or not flexitime should continue, 36 out of 37 supervisors said yes. According to the report, a high percentage of the supervisors noted that improved employee morale and a feeling of employee independence were important consequences of flexitime along with improved productivity and improved relationships between employees and supervisors.

The greatest areas of concern of supervisors before flexitime was enacted; increases in supervisory time, being available to employees, and greater planning and scheduling

responsibilities were, according to the survey, either improved somewhat or not significantly affected. Flexitime from the supervisor's perspective was a popular, productive, and non-impacting program.

Twelve years later the results of this survey (Flexitime Management Survey 1986) finds supervisory attitudes towards the effects of flexitime to be significantly changed.

The following questions which attempt to determine how supervisors view managing a flexitime program were asked: What is the toughest problem in managing flexitime? Do the advantages of the program outweigh the disadvantages? Do you want the present flexitime program to continue? (See Appendix A).

In responding to the question on continuation of flexitime, 57 percent of supervisors indicate that yes, they want the present flexitime program to continue, whereas over one-third of the respondents (36%) do not want the present program to go on. An additional six percent of supervisors want the flexitime program to continue but with changes. These findings, which contrast with the earlier survey showing 99 percent in favor, indicates that the program is not nearly so popular or well-received as a management system with a significant number of supervisors. (See Table 3).

In considering the most difficult aspect in managing the flexitime system, 22 percent indicated difficulties with

Table 3. Attitudes of Supervisors Regarding Continuation of Flexitime

"Do you want the present flexitime program to continue?" Responses	%	N
Yes	57.6	19
No	36.4	12
Yes, but with changes	6.1	2
Totals	100.1	33

communications. This contrasts with the earlier PG&E Survey in which 90 percent viewed internal and external communications as either not being adversely affected by flexitime or even improved.

The next problem area selected as a management problem was "loss of management control" chosen by 13 percent of supervisors. However, this 13 percent figure if combined with some of the "other comments" which discussed employee abuse of flexitime would, when combined with loss of management control, suggest that loss of management control is a more significant problem than indicated.

Sixteen percent of respondents listed "other" problems and commented on them. Employee abuse of flexitime was the greatest area of concern mentioned by supervisors, followed by the issues of coordinating Design Drafting hours with other non-flexing groups, and with loss of professional attitude in the Department.

Difficulties in scheduling chosen by six percent of supervisors and heavy workload chosen by three percent of supervisors were not as significant as other management problems just discussed. Thirty-nine percent of supervisors felt that they had no additional management problems using flexitime. (See Table 4).

Table 4. Attitude of Supervisors Regarding Management of Flexitime

"What is the toughest problem in managing the flexitime system?"

Responses	%	N
Heavy workload	3.2	1
Complicated scheduling	6.5	2
Management control	12.9	4
Difficulties with communications	22.5	7
Other	16.1	5
No problems	38.7	12
Totals	99.9%	31

Advantages vs. Disadvantages:

In considering that flexitime has certain managerial problems associated with the system, supervisors were asked if they felt the advantages of the system outweigh the disadvantages. Thirty percent agreed stongly that advantages outweighed disadvantages. Thirty percent agree somewhat that advantages outweighed disadvantages. Eighteen percent felt that disadvantages outweighed advantages. Twenty-one percent felt strongly that disadvantages did not

make up for the advantages of the system. Essentially there is a 60/40 split with advantages of the system outweighing disadvantages. This difference is consistent with the results obtained by previous questions. There is a fairly consistent 60/40 discrepancy expressed throughout the survey indicating that while the majority of supervisors are supportive of the flexitime system, there is a strong minority who are critical of the program. This is in contrast to the results obtained by the PG&E Flexitime Survey of 1975 which indicated almost complete supervisory support for the program. (See Table 5).

Table 5. Attitudes of Supervisors Concerning Advantages vs. Disadvantages in Managing Flexitime

"Do you agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?"

Responses	%	N
Strongly agree	30.3	10
Agree somewhat	30.3	10
Disagree somewhat	18.1	6
Disagree strongly	21.2	7
Totals	99.9	33

Supervisors' Comments

Supervisors, in commenting on changes needed, or in pointing out other problems that were not covered by the questionnaire, noted the following management areas as significant to the functioning of the flexitime program.

The issue of "employee abuse" of flexitime was most often mentioned by supervisors as an issue relating to the toughest problem in managing flexitime. This is related to the issue of management control in that supervisors are unable to be at work from 7 in the morning to 6 at night and are unable to monitor employees throughout the entire work day unless they work unreasonably long hours. It was suggested by some supervisors that some employees who arrive earlier in the morning were not performing their work, but instead were reading newspapers and "goofing off." Not being present to monitor employees at all times resulted in some supervisors commenting that they experienced feelings of loss of control of their work group and that because of lack of supervision employees were not acting professionally in the use of their time on the job.

Coordinating the work of Design Drafting with other work groups was the second area of concern receiving the most comments.

The problem is that Design Drafting engineers who work with other engineers in other departments are often not available at critical times.

One supervisor, in commenting on this problem, stated that at PG&E "people don't flex as much as maintain different hours." It was mentioned throughout the survey that design Engineers aren't available after 3:30 to help resolve the problems that may arise. Problems from another group

that needs the attention of an engineer in Design Drafting must wait until 7 a.m. no matter how critical the problem is. This supervisor found that while employed at another company with flexitime, an employee would stay late to answer questions, but at PG&E no one does this, and no explanation could be found for this. This same supervisor mentioned that since other departments do not flex, a "team spirit" can't develop on projects. A number of respondents mentioned that the "flexing" of other departments would help the flexitime program in Design Drafting.

Related to the issue of coordinating Design Drafting with other departments is the issue of the scheduling of the flexitime program itself. This is different from the management function of scheduling dealt with in the survey and referred to as the arranging of an employee's time so that tasks are completed and the work area is covered. Supervisors in their comments were concerned with the actual time structuring of flexitime itself.

One supervisor wanted fixed lunch and coffee breaks possibly indicating that supervision of employees is difficult, and a more rigid schedule would make this easier for him. On the other hand several other supervisors mentioned that lunch times should be more flexible. They suggested that lunch be expanded back to 11:00 from 11:30 to allow for expanded flexibility of the program. As it stands now, lunch must be of one-half hour duration starting at 11:30

and ending no later than 1:00 p.m. One respondent commented that why should management care if a person took a 15 minute lunch break or a 30 minute lunch break. The implication was that as long as the task was completed and an 8 hour day was worked, why not give employees this freedom.

In addition to the fact that supervisors are finding that employees are not using their time as intended with newspaper reading in the morning; there seems a belief among some supervisors that engineers have lost their "professional attitude" towards their work.

Apparently before flexitime was instituted engineers would work late or come in early as the task demanded. The emphasis was on the task to be completed not on the time put in on the job. The fact that overtime could be accrued as necessary depending on the nature and completion schedule of the task probably contributed to this attitude. Supervisors were not penalized for working more hours.

When flexitime was adopted, time clocks were installed. Now engineers are said to constantly pace themselves checking the clock and observing their weekly time so that by Friday they have exactly 37.50 hours. The comparison was made between PG&E and other companies which allow workers to register over 40 hours a week without a prior permission from one's supervisor. It was suggested that if the emphasis is taken off the clock by allowing workers more flexibility to work overtime then the emphasis would be put

back on the task resulting in a more professional and productive employee.

Employee Attitudes

In addressing the issue of the popularity of flexitime among employees, The PG&E Flexitime Survey in 1975 showed 98.9 percent of the employees wanted flexitime to continue. The reasons cited were: flexitime allows time for personal business and family, no worries about being late, the commute is more convenient and takes less time, I can plan my own schedule, I feel more independent and can take classes in the evening. The results of this survey are comparable with survey results expressed throughout the literature, showing flexitime to be a very popular program with employees.

The Flexitime Management Study (1986) polled supervisors as to how much discontent they felt there would be among employees today if flexitime were discontinued. Results were more or less consistent with earlier findings. Seventy-one percent of supervisors felt there would be a great deal of discontent, 29 percent indicated there would be a moderate amount of discontent, while the categories of very little and none received no responses. (See Table 6).

One supervisor who did not comment on whether or not flexitime should be continued wrote that while the company gains nothing from flexitime it costs nothing either and

ending the program would cause too much resentment among bargaining unit employees. Several other supervisors in commenting on employee morale suggest that morale may have been favorably affected at one time but this is not the case now as employees no longer view flexitime as a privilege but as their right. (See Table 6).

Table 6. Perceived Level of Employee Discontent Regarding Continuance of Flexitime by Supervisors

"How much employee discontent would there be if flexitime were discontinued?"

Responses	%	N
A great deal	71.4	25
A moderate amount	28.6	10
Very little		0
None		0
Totals	100.0	35

A comparison between the two studies shows that flexitime seems to be losing favor with management in all areas.

In reviewing the two studies the PG&E Survey of 1975 showed supervisors unanimous in wanting the program to continue whereas now (1986) only 57 percent of supervisors are in favor of the program continuing.

The earlier survey showed flexitime to be beneficial in all respects and the problems which supervisors thought might occur in terms of managing the program were not an issue one year after the adoption of flexitime.

Now only 57 percent of supervisors can see any benefits and 43 percent see little or no benefit at all from the program. Instead of few or no management problems supervisors have major concerns: Difficulties with communications, the availability of Design Drafting Engineers to interact with other engineers in other departments, loss of management controls and abuse of flexitime and loss of professional attitude among engineers.

Fifty-seven percent in favor of flexitime could indicate that there is not enough support for the program to function well or to be considered a success.

Or an explanation for this loss of enthusiasm may be as Rainy suggests a result of the Hawthorne Effect and not an accurate figure to use in comparing and evaluating the two surveys. In fact, 57 percent could be viewed as positive taking into account that the novelty has waned and that the problems of the system are now more apparent.

Depending on how this 57 percent figure is interpreted, whether it indicates strong positive support, taking into account the time factor and the lack of novelty of the program, i.e. Hawthorne Effect, or indicates a significant eroding of support for flexitime, current data when compared with earlier survey results shows a marked difference in how supervisors view the benefits of flexitime.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic data was analyzed to determine if there was any correlation between work experience, age, etc., and the attitudes of those supervisors towards continuing the flexitime program. Three items of interest arose from this analysis.

A correlation was found between an enthusiasm for the flexitime program and length of service, the number of employees supervised, and a supervisor's previous non-management flexitime experience.

Years of Service:

Since the program has been going on for 12 years, a division was made considering those supervisors who had worked as flexitime supervisors six years or less, as one group with an average time worked of three years. Those who had worked seven years or more were considered another group with an average time worked of 10 years.

It was found that those supervisors who had worked with the system less were generally more favorable towards flexitime (75%) when combining both 'yes' categories than those in the 7-12 year group who were only 55 percent positive towards the program. (See Table 7).

This relationship may be explained in view of the previous management question (Table 4) that finds difficulties with communications and control of one's work group two of

the major management problems encountered by PG&E supervisors. Based on this, it seems reasonable to expect that the more years a supervisor is involved in providing for control and communications in a dynamic, changing work environment, the more fatiguing managing flexitime would become in the long term, thereby giving rise to a more negative attitude towards the program.

Table 7. Attitude Toward Flexitime by Years of Experience as a Supervisor

"Do you want the present Flexitime program to continue?"					
0 to 6 years	5.63	18.8	25.0	100.1	16
7 to 12 years	50.0	5.6	44.4	100.0	18

Number of Employees Supervised:

The number of employees supervised seems to affect a manager's attitude towards the program. This conclusion is tempered by the fact that only a few respondents (8) manage more than 30 employees. However, of these eight supervisors, six or 71 percent do not want the program to continue, whereas 77 percent of the 27 managers who manage an average of 15 employees are in favor of the program.

A more balanced sample with more supervisors managing a greater number of employees is needed before a firm conclusion can be made about number of employees managed and

attitude towards flexitime. However there does seem to be some indication that the more employees a supervisor is responsible for, the more difficult it is to manage with flexitime. (See Table 8).

Table 8. Attitude Toward Flexitime by Number of People Supervised

"Do you want the present flexitime program to continue?"					
Supervisory experience	Yes, fine as is	Yes, but with changes	No, too much trouble	%	N
30 or more	29%	--	71%	100.0	8
25 or less	77%	--	23%	100.0	27

A more positive attitude found by supervisors who manage fewer employees would generally be expected in most management situations as the fewer employees supervised, the less complicated the task.

Again, as mentioned in the discussion regarding flexitime attitudes and years of service, a flexitime environment is usually more dynamic with internal communications, and employee control more difficult to maintain. Having fewer employees would ease a supervisor's task regarding these and other management functions, and could explain the correlation between fewer employees to supervise and the positive attitude towards flexitime.

Flexitime Experience:

Another correlation was found between those supervisors who had previous work experience with flexitime as non-bargaining unit engineers and a positive attitude towards flexitime continuing.

Previous work experience of the supervisors in the sample group were evenly divided between those who had worked with flexitime as non-management employees and those who had no prior flexitime experience outside of their supervisor position. (See Table 9).

Table 9. Flexitime Experience by Supervisors as Non-Management Employees

Responses	%	N
Non-management flexitime experience	51.5	17
No previous non-management flexitime experience	48.4	16
Totals	99.9	33

Those supervisors who had flexitime experience indicated by 70 percent when both "yes" categories were combined that they were in favor of flexitime.

In contrast, those supervisors who had no previous flexitime experience were in favor of the program by 56 percent (no one indicated the middle choice of flexitime continuing but with changes). On the negative side 43

percent indicated that flexitime was too much trouble.

When the negative choices are compared for both categories (29%/43%), those who have had no previous experience with flexitime in a different employment capacity are more negative towards flexitime. (See Table 10).

Table 10. Attitude Towards Flexitime by Flexitime Experience as Non-Management Employees

"Do you want the present flexitime program to continue?"

Supervisory experience	Yes, fine as is	Yes, but with changes	No, too much trouble	%	N
Non-management flexitime experience	52.9	17.6	29.4	99.9	17
No previous non-management flexitime experience	56.2	--	43.8	100.0	16

No other relationships were found between the demographic data in terms of sex, age, or management style and attitudes of supervisors towards flexitime.

There has been discussion among some supervisors at PG&E to work to retire the program. However, considering that flexitime is so popular among employees as a help in meeting daily responsibilities, a number of options will be presented in the following chapter which could make the system more workable.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Flexitime is an innovation that seems as appropriate now for an employee's working and personal life and for its potential to positively affect environmental problems as in the early 70s when it was first adopted.

In fact, according to Representative Schroeder, flexitime is even more necessary now as stress in all areas of an employee's life has increased. She states that if innovations like flexitime which can help alleviate stress on the family are not encouraged, then society will experience serious dysfunction in the future.

Certainly with an increasing population, more cars on the highways and less federal dollars for new road building and improvements, flexitime is needed more than ever to relieve traffic congestion and serious environmental problems that come from this.

The fact that flexitime is experiencing difficulties with management on the federal level, indicated by rising numbers of terminations, probably indicates that other organizations are also having some difficulties with the program. The fact that this is not expressed in the literature or well-known could indicate that there are not enough

terminations throughout the public and private sectors to show an actual decline in U.S. Labor statistics. Or, since few studies presently focus on flexitime because it is no longer an exciting innovation, new information about the problems of managing flexitime are not being published.

The flexitime survey of this research bears out federal experience that flexitime is losing popularity, as evidenced by the responses of first-line supervisors in the Design Drafting Department at PG&E. In 1975, 99 percent of supervisors felt the program was beneficial and wanted the program to continue versus 42 percent in 1986 who felt flexitime benefitted the company very little and did not want the program to continue.

Forty-two percent of supervisors not in favor of flexitime continuing could be interpreted to mean that flexitime has serious program flaws, and because it affects many important management functions and could have serious effects on management/employee relations should be discontinued. On the other hand 42 percent of managers having reservations or difficulty with flexitime could be considered within an acceptable range of program success when viewed in light of Rainey's discussion of the Hawthorne Effect; from the knowledge that supervisors were so poorly prepared for managing flexitime; and from the view that management had such unrealistic expectations regarding program effects.

Now the fact that problems are becoming apparent does not necessarily mean that flexitime is a dysfunctional system, but that, according to the view of Representative Schroeder, difficulties with the management of flexitime are more a result of inadequate training and unrealistic expectations.

This could be the case with the PG&E program. While engaging supervisors in a pilot study, PG&E did not provide them with any special training regarding managing a flexitime program. This is the situation today. There are no management training classes for managers to specifically acquaint them with the special demands of flexitime, and could be the reason the program is experiencing difficulties.

As stated by the research, management is experiencing increased problems with internal communications, coordinating work with other departments, loss of management control leading to incidences of employee abuse of the program, and a lessening of professional attitude as employees seem more intent on the hours worked than on the task to be completed.

Congressional testimony regarding flexitime legislation refers to the fact that inadequate training and lack of OPM support has also been responsible for program failure on the federal level.

Since popular opinion and supporting literature agree that flexitime is felt to enhance the quality of the lives

of employees, it would seem to be advantageous to companies who employ flexitime to reexamine their programs and provide training to supervisors so that they will know how to manage flexitime effectively.

Also, now that companies have had significant experience with flexitime and know what to reasonably expect, a commitment should be made to actively support the program and remove flexitime from its adversarial position as part of a bargaining item in negotiations. Instead, flexitime should be supported by management and considered an inherent right of an employees' work life since the importance of flexitime goes beyond the confines of the organization.

If flexitime becomes widespread and accepted then management techniques and styles successful with flexitime will hopefully become the norm, and flexitime can be secured as a work reform without the accompanying problems that supervisors are now experiencing.

Eventually, other forms of flexitime, fleximonth, and flexiyear could follow which will give additional advantages to the individual and to society.

The recommendations presented below address specific management concerns at PG&E but would be applicable to other situations as well since the problems they address are characteristic of other organizations employing flexitime.

1. Through the use of discussion groups, supervisors should review problems and discuss solutions to arrive at a

more workable program.

2. To solve for the issues of difficulties with communication loss of management control and flexitime abuse small management groups could be set up. Supervisors would have a more direct involvement with each employee. This would foster better internal communication between employee and supervisor, and would enable supervisors to have a better understanding of the activities of their employees without more restrictive time controls. This could free supervisors from working longer hours and would lessen some of the anxiety of not knowing what employees are doing in the supervisor's absence.

3. Overtime regulations should be renegotiated with the bargaining unit so that there is more flexibility for employees to work overtime as the situation requires. This would return the focus to the task itself and away from the hours worked. More employees working later would also enhance communication with other departments who need to work with Design Drafting engineers.

4. Make arrangements within each management group so that some employees stay late to provide coverage for the entire working day.

5. Reexamine management's philosophy that employees need "a reasonable degree of imposed structure and discipline" to work responsibly. Easing structure through flexitime accounts for a more professional attitude on the

part of employees. Consequently the lunch time and break requirements should be eased or eliminated so employees have more discretionary time in which to structure their own day depending on work demands. The focus should be continually task not time directed.

6. In considering the demographic data and attitudes of supervisors, it would seem reasonable to expect that if the recommendations discussed above were enacted then the demographic base for acceptance of the program would be broadened.

For example, those supervisors who had spent more years managing flexitime were not as enthusiastic about flexitime as those with less time. This attitude may come from the fact that the dysfunctions of the system become continually more wearing and stressful the more years a supervisor has to cope. A restructuring to improve the system should alleviate this stress and create a more favorable attitude among these supervisors.

Similarly, reducing the numbers of employees in the various management groups and the use of group discussions would help sensitize those supervisors who had not worked with flexitime, as non-management employees to another perspective regarding the importance of flexitime.

FOOTNOTES

1. Daniel Yankelovich, New Rules: Searching For Self Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down (New York: Random House, 1980), pp. 117-122.

2. Ibid., pp. 21-25.

3. Simcha Ronen, Alternative Work Schedules (Illinois: Dow Jones -Irwin, 1984), p. 9.

4. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, Hearings on Federal Flexibile and Compressed Work Schedules Act before the Subcommittee on Human Resources, 99th Congress, June, p. 54.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 32.

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APPENDIX

Flexitime Management Survey

"Attitudes Towards Flexitime"

1. Do you think flexitime has been beneficial for the company?

   (a) ___ Very much so
   (b) ___ Generally speaking, yes
   (c) ___ Very little
   (d) ___ Not at all

2. What do you think is flexitime's most important benefit to the company? Check one.

   (a) ___ Improved employee morale
   (b) ___ An increase in work group productivity
   (c) ___ Decreased absenteeism and tardiness
   (d) ___ Can't see any benefits to the company
   (e) ___ Other, please comment.

   _____
   _____
   _____

3. What is the toughest problem for you in managing the flexitime system?

   (a) ___ Heavy or increased workload
   (b) ___ Complicated scheduling
   (c) ___ Loss of management control
   (d) ___ Difficulties with communication
   (e) ___ No additional problems in administering flexitime
   (f) ___ Other, please comment.

   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Do you agree or disagree that the advantages of flexitime outweigh the disadvantages?

   (a) ___ Strongly agree
   (b) ___ Agree somewhat
   (c) ___ Disagree somewhat
   (d) ___ Disagree strongly

5. Do you want the present flexitime program to continue?

   (a) ___ Yes, Its fine as is.
   (b) ___ No, It's too much trouble for the benefits to received.
   (c) ___ Yes, but with changes. Please comment on the changes you would like to see.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. How much employee discontent would there be if flexitime were discontinued?

   (a) ___ A great deal
   (b) ___ A moderate amount
   (c) ___ Very little
   (d) ___ Not at all

7. In order to help us determine the type of work situation in which flexitime seems to work best, please indicate which of the following <u>most closely</u> describes your own day-to-day management situation.

   Please circle your choice:

   (a) You can be more a facilitator of group efforts than a leader or director. Decision making can be shared with employees, and reaching consensus among the employees is more important than controlling their behavior.

   (b) Close supervision is not normally necessary. You can be flexible on the rules, taking advantage of new ideas, and delegating some authority to the employees.

   (c) You have to maintain close supervision of work groups, retaining all or most decision making authority, holding employees accountable to the rules and official procedures.

"Work Experience"

8. How many years have you worked as a supervisor at PG&E? _____

9. How many years have you worked as a supervisor with flexitime at PG&E? _____

10. How many people do you supervise? _____

11. Have you worked with flexitime as a non-management employee at PG&E? Yes _____, No _____

12. How did you enter management at PG&E?

    (a) _____ Upon completion of an academic degree
    (b) _____ By promotion from the employee ranks
    (c) _____ From an outside management position

"Demographic Data"

13. Sex: Female _____, Male _____

14. Age: 30-40 _____, 40-50 _____, 50-60 _____, 60+ _____