

SELECTED REFERENCES

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SECTION
No. 279*

Princeton, NJ 08544

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
July 1996

FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES: AN UPDATE**

The changing workplace: new directions in staffing and scheduling. Washington, DC 20037. BNA Plus (1231 25th St. NW). 1986. 140 pp. \$35.00.

This report discusses various staffing and scheduling options and describes both business and employee support and opposition to new work arrangements. It is based on a BNA survey in which 442 human resources executives (a 55% response rate) from manufacturing, non-manufacturing and health care organizations were asked about their use during 1985 of agency temporaries, short-term hires, on-call workers, and contracting out. Ninety-six percent of the organizations reported some use of at least one method; three of the four arrangements were used by a majority of the respondents, with agency temporaries being used most often (77%). Variations in flexible staffing were determined by the size of the facility, the location (urban vs. rural), and the presence of a union. Organizations limited their use of flexible staffing because of quality control problems (45%), higher costs (32%), union contract provisions (26%), and difficulty in coordinating work (21%). These case studies are updated in another BNA report, *Alternative work schedules: changing times for a changing workforce* (1988, 32 pp., National report on work & family, special report #5, \$35.00).

Dalton, Dan R. and Debra J. Mesch. "The impact of flexible scheduling on employee attendance and turnover." *Administrative Science Quarterly* (20 Thornwood Dr., Suite 100, Ithaca, NY 14853). June, 1990. pp. 370-387. \$12.00.

A one-year experiment in flexible scheduling in a large public utility company provided the researchers with the opportunity to study the outcome variables regarding the program's impact on employee absenteeism and turnover. The subjects included an experimental group to which flexible scheduling was offered and a control group. The results indicate gross reductions in employee absenteeism for the experimental group with flexible scheduling, but not for the control group. Absenteeism returned to its previous levels in the two-year period after the program ended. The rate of employee turnover was unaffected by the intervention. In an earlier study by Jean B. McGuire and Joseph R. Liro ("Absenteeism and flexible work schedules," *Public Personnel Management*, International Personnel Management Association, 1617 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314, Spring, 1987, pp. 47-59, \$20.25), the authors compare the effect on absenteeism of two forms of flexible work scheduling, "true flextime," in which workers vary their hours on a daily basis, and "staggered fixed time," in which

* Prepared by Linda Oppenheim, Social Sciences Reference Librarian. Additional items will be found in Selected References no. 200, *Recent Material on Alternative Work Schedules*, January, 1980.

** Items on this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.

individual workers design quarterly schedules. Results show lower rates of absenteeism under staggered fixed time, but no reduction in absenteeism in the true flextime group.

Flexible work arrangements: establishing options for managers and professionals. New York, NY 10003-1459. Catalyst (250 Park Ave. South). 1989. 101 pp. \$85.00.

The report includes an extensive literature review and interviews with human resources representatives, employees, and managers from forty-seven companies and professional firms that use flexible work arrangements. Focusing on three flexible work arrangements—part-time, job sharing and telecommuting—researchers found that: companies are motivated to offer alternative work schedules to professionals and managers in order to retain them; most employees who use these arrangements have been at their companies for more than five years; in most companies only a handful of employees use flexible work arrangements; flexible schedules contribute to employee productivity, morale and retention; few companies have written policies or keep track of employees using these arrangements; and alternative work schedules do not reduce the cost of child care, since many part-time workers find full-time care more reliable. A 1993 follow-up report, *Flexible work arrangements II: succeeding with part-time options*, describes flexible work arrangements from the perspective of the employees who use them. It is the product of a longitudinal study during which participants from the 1989 study were interviewed at regular intervals. The more recent findings include: formal policies for flexible work arrangements are more common; family issues continue to motivate employees' decisions regarding the arrangements; major obstacles to the implementation and success of flexible scheduling include middle management opposition, policy limitations, and corporate culture; and the arrangements allow for the maintenance of career momentum.

Galín, Amira and Ozer Carmi, eds. "Special issue: Flexible work patterns and their impact on industrial relations." *Bulletin of Comparative Labour Relations* (Kluwer International, 675 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139). Bulletin 22. 1991. 159 pp. \$66.00.

Flexible work patterns are regarded as one of the best ways to cope with the problems resulting from recent economic changes, the rapid pace of technological innovation, and changes in the composition and attitudes of the labor force. The contributors to this volume analyze the functions and effects of these patterns: applications of flexible work patterns, the impact of flexibility on collective bargaining, trade unions, employers' associations, individual employers and governments, and trends in legislation.

Kopelman, Richard E. "Alternative work schedules and productivity: a review of the evidence." *National Productivity Review* (John Wiley & Sons, Attn.: Subscriptions, 605 Third Ave., New York, NY 10158). Spring, 1986. pp 150-165. \$55.00, prepaid.

Kopelman finds that flexible work schedules are generally better than compressed work weeks by the following measures: flexible work hours produce 1% median increase in productivity change, 5.3% reduction in overall absenteeism, and 95% positive effects on employee attitude compared to no change in productivity or absenteeism and 60% positive effects on employee attitudes for the compressed work week. He emphasizes that the primary benefit resulting from flexibility in the work schedule is improved quality of work and life, not productivity. Among his suggestions for the successful implementation of flexible work hours are: deciding whether banking of hours will be allowed; carefully considering legal and contractual obligations; holding orientations

with staff, high level managers, and first-line supervisors to promote the system and allow them to express their concerns; continuing consultation with union representatives; and implementing the program in stages.

Mazur, Laura. "Coming: the annual workweek." *Across the Board* (The Conference Board, 845 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022). April, 1995. pp. 42-45. \$5.00.

Mazur describes the concept of annualizing hours that averages working time across a year, so that employees work a given number of hours over twelve months, rather than a specified number of hours per week. Payment changes from daily-weekly wages to a regularly paid annual salary. Benefits include: improved operating efficiency by matching employee hours more closely with production or service requirements; absorbing reductions in the working week without big jumps in labor costs; avoiding payment of premium overtime rates to meet demand; and stimulating other changes in the company organization. Annualized hours have been used in the United Kingdom for over a decade (and since the 1970s in Scandinavia) because of decreasing regulation of its labor market (compared to other European Union countries) and poor productivity, with higher levels of overtime and absenteeism. The author describes the successful implementation of the system in the British Shoe Corporation.

Olmsted, Barney and Suzanne Smith. *Creating a flexible workplace: how to select & manage alternative work options*. Saranac Lake, NY 12983. AMACOM (P.O. Box 169). 2d ed. 1994. 402 pp. \$59.95.

This comprehensive handbook examines different work schedule arrangements and includes chapters on: flextime (flexible starting and quitting times), the compressed workweek (workweek condensed into fewer than five days), flexplace (working at home), regular part-time employment (part-time employment that includes job security and all other rights and benefits available to full-time workers), job sharing (two people sharing one full-time position, with salary and benefits prorated), phased retirement (retirement by gradual reduction of full-time employment over a set period of years) or partial retirement (part-time employment for senior employees), voluntary reduced work time programs (temporary reduction in work hours with a corresponding reduction in compensation), leave time (authorized periods of time away from work without loss of employment rights), and work sharing (alternative to layoffs in which all or part of a work force temporarily reduces hours and salary to cut operating costs). Each chapter includes examples of work sheets, schedules, guidelines, and organizational experiences with each program.

Rebitzer, James B. and Lowell J. Taylor. *Do labor markets provide enough short hour jobs? An analysis of work hours and work incentives*. Cambridge, MA 02138. National Bureau of Economic Research (1050 Massachusetts Ave.). October, 1991. 23 pp. (NBER working paper series; working paper no. 3883) o.p.

This paper examines the role work incentives play in the determination of work hours. The authors analyze the determination of wages and work hours when firms use dismissal threats to motivate a homogeneous group of workers and examine the case where workers have different hours of work preferences. They suggest that in a setting in which firms rely on work incentives to regulate employee effort, employers will generally not be able to elicit accurate information about hour preferences from employees which in turn may lead to the under-provision of short-hour jobs, particularly in the high wage range. In Rebitzer and Taylor's model, because workers who prefer long hours will be more responsive to dismissal based incentives, employers will not favor job seekers who prefer short hours. Employees, in turn, are motivated to portray themselves as wanting

long hours. The authors feel the labor market will require some intervention to adjust smoothly to the changes brought about by the rise in female labor force participation and the need of both male and female employees for short hour jobs to balance job and family responsibilities.

Wood, Stephen G. and Alan B. Sevison. "Flexible working hours: a preliminary look at the phenomenon of flexibility in the American workplace." *The American Journal of Comparative Law* (American Society of Comparative Law. Order from: Fred B. Rothman, 10368 West Centennial Rd., Littleton, CO 80123). V. 38 (Supplement), 1990. pp. 325-340. \$25.00.

The authors examine the federal and state statutory and regulatory frameworks governing hours of work. There have been two generations of statutes. The older generation, initially enacted in the 1930s and 1940s and aimed at broadening employment and increasing overtime compensation, were created within the traditional context of a 40-hour week and 8-hour day. Major examples of these federal provisions include the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, Chapter 61 of the Government Organization and Employees Act of 1966, the Contract Hours and Safety Standards Act, and the Walsh-Healy Act. A newer generation of statutes was enacted in the 1970s and 1980s to reflect the new trends in flexible work schedules. These newer comprehensive statutes and regulations exist only at the federal level (such as the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act of 1978), though some states are beginning to address these issues. The authors analyze some of the problems that have arisen in the areas of collective bargaining, characterization of workers, and policy issues.

Working time in transition; the political economy of working hours in industrial nations. Edited by Karl Hinrichs, William Roche, and Carmen Sirianni. Philadelphia, PA 19122. Temple University Press (USB, Room 305, 1601 N. Broad St.). 1991. 277 pp. \$49.95.

The contributors to this volume review the development of the standardized work schedule in Germany (West), France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United States, Japan, and Sweden, and consider how this structure is now being eroded. Employees are trying to increase their "time sovereignty" and employers, in the service industries in particular, are compelled by market forces to create an ever-available work force. The unions' dilemma is how to retain the benefits of standardization while accommodating both employees' concerns and employers' demands. The authors point out that, with the exception of the United States and Japan, employees in Western countries enjoy more leisure time than they did at the start of the postwar period. One consequent issue is at what time of the day or week or year is that free time available? Another problem is that benefits of increased leisure and enhanced job security are enjoyed by young and prime-age workers at the expense of older workers who may face premature exits from the labor market and reduction of income during retirement. The main tendency for Western governments is to relax their regulation of working time, as is apparent in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands. In Japan, on the other hand, government policy supports flexible work schedules by making leisure expensive, both in itself and in terms of loss of income. The article "Working time and employment: new arrangements" (*International Labour Review*, ILO Publications Center, 49 Sheridan Ave., Albany, NY 12210, v. 134, no. 2, 1995, pp. 259-272, \$22.50) looks at methods of reducing actual working time in several European countries and examines whether such a reduction would help decrease unemployment. The idea of "work-sharing" and the related question of either sharing pay or continuing the same wage level as a "citizenship allowance" is discussed.