



Few organizations roll out flexibility without at least alluding to "Senior Management support." And yet even fewer say they can actually count on such support in a sustained, informed, genuine manner. What has to happen for leaders to really "get" and champion a more flexible workplace? Three recent client experiences suggest effective answers to this question.

Regardless of the levels of leadership, successful persuasion in each example required:

- A comprehensive flexibility system that can serve as a platform for implementation
- An appropriate set of decisions for leaders that drive solid discussion and allow sign off
- Guidance by an external expert who challenges assumptions and knows the field

### **Engaging the Executive Team**

A large, fairly traditional service company wanted to roll out FWAs to 30,000+ managers. As our client said, it could not be "just another flavor-of-the-month - it meant initiating significant cultural change in the organization." And that meant genuine leadership engagement.

The company chose our [FlexWise™](#) online guidance system to provide a comprehensive framework for implementing FWAs. The senior staff champions took the central principles of this approach to the Executive Team for review and approval. They in turn directed that a series of operating leader meetings have similar presentations and discussions. We helped interpret our system and offered just-in-time benchmarking for these discussions.

According to the flexibility champions "at the highest levels of the organization, we got the buy-in at the top that made the program succeed."

### **Persuading a Partnership**

Professional service firms have senior leaders in abundance. One large national client understood the importance of engaging them all. Meeting with the leadership to review an approach and tools and having us play the advocate role resembled our corporate approach - to a point. But leadership sign-off in this firm did not assure dispersed office acceptance. The larger partnership mattered.

A central feature of implementation became rolling leader persuasion - a two-year national tour of offices presenting to partner groups the positive argument for change. The internal champion and Rupert & Co. brought an effective internal/external perspective to these sessions.

According to our client, "Rupert gets a lot of respect from the leaders in our company. They are seasoned. They don't just think about flexibility but also about how a business functions...The guidelines and tracking system were absolutely helpful. They let everyone know what we're striving for. Without the tool, we wouldn't be as far along in our work-life effort."

### **Aligning HR Leadership**

HR leaders play a wide range of roles in implementing flexibility. For a large biotech client, HR was a major force in culture change efforts whose senior leadership became deeply engaged in flex design and development. They in turn kept the CEO staff involved in the process. According to our client, "Rupert & Co. came with a how-to kit, the expertise, the tools and resources. They had a user-friendly system on

implementation and execution and how to educate managers and shift their minds to embrace the initiative."

Intervening at this level of leadership meant an ongoing consultative relationship with a knowledgeable team that, according to our client, "wanted to vet everything - principles, practices and so on." A result of this approach in this organization was a deep commitment to implementation that reached up into the senior executive team and down into the business leaders and full HR team.

*Every company has its own architecture and paths to success. If you are contemplating a flexibility initiative and would like to discuss strategies for engaging your leadership, we would be happy to discuss options with you.*

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