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## **EXPECTATIONS AND ALTERNATIVES PROSPECTIONS CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF EXECUTIVE WORK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Lately, society has experienced a number of cultural and behavioral changes which nevertheless have scarcely driven reflexes in corporate labor relations. Regardless of the outstanding evolution of technology, work continues to primarily be conducted within the same, century old framework. This study surveys expectations and alternatives concerning the future of executive work and poses to assess both benefits and prerequisites, for the adoption of differentiated working relationships, so as to reconcile the interests of professionals, organizations and those of society. Methods employed include a quantitative survey with executives and in-depth interviews with experts. Major conclusions comprise the fact that, in the near future, executive work will undergo profound changes, presenting as most relevant difference, the flexing of working hours and sites, promoting greater autonomy and demanding from professionals and companies, new self-motivation, discipline, non-presential communication skills, clarity of purpose and value thresholds. This transformation shall gradually come about and companies that cut the edge in adopting processes and competences supporting differentiated relationships shall earn competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** Future of work. Executive work. Differentiated relationships. Competitiveness.

## **PROSPECÇÕES SOBRE EXPECTATIVAS E ALTERNATIVAS PARA O FUTURO DO TRABALHO EXECUTIVO**

### **RESUMO**

Muitas mudanças culturais e comportamentais ocorreram na sociedade nos últimos anos, porém com pouco reflexo nas relações de trabalho corporativas. Apesar da grande evolução tecnológica, trabalha-se majoritariamente nos mesmos moldes de um século atrás. Este estudo realiza prospecções sobre expectativas e alternativas para o futuro do trabalho executivo e tem como objetivo avaliar os benefícios e pré-requisitos para adoção de relações diferenciadas de trabalho a fim de conciliar interesses dos profissionais, das organizações e da sociedade. Os métodos utilizados foram uma pesquisa quantitativa com executivos e entrevistas em profundidade com especialistas. As principais conclusões a que se chegou foram de que o trabalho executivo vai sofrer profundas alterações em um futuro breve, tendo como principal diferença a flexibilização dos horários e locais para o trabalho, gerando maior autonomia e exigindo de profissionais e empresas um novo patamar de automotivação, disciplina, capacidade de comunicação em meios não presenciais, clareza de propósito e valores. Esta transformação será gradual e as empresas que se adiantarem na adoção de processos e competências que suportem relações diferenciadas obterão vantagem competitiva.

**Palavras-chave:** Futuro do trabalho. Trabalho executivo. Relações diferenciadas. Competitividade.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 CONTEXT AND OBJETIVES OF THE STUDY**

Ever since the industrial revolution when workers no longer were owners of production goods and right up to present days, corporate work relationships, irrespective of standing or market segment, have hardly been subject to structural change.

Transformations and benefits such as the right to vacations, additional salaries and others effectively did come about but basically, for the most part, executives follow a standard workload of 44 weekly hours, under set working hours and physical presence requirements, at the work site.

The workload and activities of managers, directors and presidents still invariably far exceeds this limit and, in some cases, comprise as many as 12 or 14 hours per diem, under the assumption executives devote integral and exclusive dedication, to work. Consequently, aspects of importance to a balanced life such as sleep, health, family relations, exercising, knowledge updating or even personal projects, are overlooked.

Society has undergone many cultural and behavioural changes, however, with scarce implications in corporate work relations. Notwithstanding major evolution in technology, work is primarily conducted along the very same lines as those of a century ago.

Given this context, this study poses to prospect the future of work itself and proposes differentiated, executive level, work relation modalities, with views to reconciling professional, corporate and society's interests.

## **2 THEORETICAL REFERENCE**

### **2.1 WORK RELATIONS HISTORICAL EVOLUTION**

Work as known today and which closely relates to executive positions arose in the midst of the industrial era when, in addition to the operation of machines, the need to control the entire productive system sprung. A new class of administrative personnel thus emerged: the so-called white collar workers. During the XX<sup>th</sup>. Century, corporate organizations expanded, acquired organizational complexity and hired on an increasing basis, administrative workers.

As of the Second World War, the industrial society which centred in the mass production of material goods, paved the way for post-industrial society's takeover, thereafter centred on the production of non material goods (services, information, symbols, aesthetics, values, etc.).

Aspects till then valued by the industrial society such as standardization, efficiency and productivity, are thus replaced by creativity, subjectivity, emotiveness and life quality in the post-industrial society (De Masi, 2003, p. 23).

Furthermore, communication and data processing technologies experience rapid evolution, changing in an irreversible manner the way business is conducted. Thomas W. Malone (2006) states that the new information technologies enabled a revolution since, despite being physically dispersed, workers remain connected via technology and, on a previously unimaginable dimension, are able to take their own decisions using information collected from many people and places.

The fundamental issues of this study were extracted as of basic findings deriving from the analysis of the historical evolution of work itself, namely:

- executive/administrative work does not depend on the employer's capital productive goods but is still broadly ground on the physical presence of employees at the same working site;
- quality of results obtained as of work at the managerial level is not directly proportional nor dependent of long working hours, but rather of creativity, connections and incentives (Malone, 2006, p. 118);
- technological tools available have been incorporated at organizations. Their effects change the way people relate and execute projects and tasks within the company but as yet has not greatly impacted existing work relations.

As De Masi (2003, p. 24) notes, "machines change at a faster pace than habits, mentalities and norms."

## **2.2 POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF BRAZIL'S LABOUR LEGISLATION**

With views to understanding possible barriers towards change in work relations, given the tremendous alteration in the social and technological context, one cannot refrain from analysing the legal environment.

The Consolidation of Labour Laws, known as *CLT* - the Code that determines legal work relations in Brazil - provides evidence that, from a legal standpoint, there has been but few changes, primarily as to behavioural issues rather than those of regulatory nature, to the current model of executive level work relations.

*CLT* establishes a maximum workload regime of 40 weekly hours and in its 6<sup>th</sup>. article, also foresees that work may be conducted remotely, inclusively at the workers residence: "Art. 6<sup>th</sup>. - No distinction is made between work conducted at the employer's premises and that performed at the employee's residence as long as the employment relation is characterized".

The only limitation is the possibility of reducing hours of already existing contracts with a proportionate reduction in compensation given that this might be characterized as prejudice to the employee.

*CLT* further rules some values in the form of laws, such as balance between personal life, work and health which, given the need for rapid economic growth and the social ascension desire of the post-war generation, were ignored and also borne as exception in the current legislation in as such as executive positions are concerned: "Art. 62 – The regime foreseen in this chapter does not comprise: II – managers, thus deemed those exercising management positions, to who, for the purpose of the laid firth in this article, remain paired, directors and heads of department or branch offices".

Therefore, one may conclude that for executive positions and entrusted functions, *CLT* does not qualify as an impairment to the adoption of more flexible models, whether in as much as workload or physical site for the performance of work is concerned.

## **2.3 ALREADY EXISTING DIFERENTIATED MODES OF WORK**

### **2.3.1 IN THE CORPORATE MARKET**

In the corporate market, the alternative models that follow have been observed.

#### **2.3.1.1 Virtual work / home office**

Common practice at large corporations, this model was initially adopted by technology companies but may currently be noted at various segments. Some activities are more prone to adopt home office arrangements, such as sales teams and software developers.

Although most commonly observed in developed countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and European Union countries, in Brazil there are companies, such as Siemens and Nokia, that encourage home offices in alignment with their headquarters.

Another example is Genzyme, one of the leading biotechnology companies in the world. According to its CEO in Brazil, A. Gabaldi (personal communication Executive MBA, 2010), the company includes in its HR policies, two days so that employees may work at home on specific projects or plans that require concentration.

#### 2.3.1.2 Reduction of workload on specific days

Overseas one already comes across part-time work and even on alternate days, involving more administrative functions. In Brazil, findings relate to the flexing of Friday hours, most often closing working hours at noon or early afternoon, at all levels, the respective compensation of hours taking place along the remaining days of the week. Unilever and Bayer may be mentioned as corporations which adopt this practice.

#### 2.3.1.3 Alternative possibilities still undergoing maturation

According to Thomas W. Malone (2006) some companies are setting up work markets within their structures to assign employees to projects. The author mentions that companies are noticing that worker segmentations based on the market might help ensure that talents are more efficiently and flexibly distributed than would be possible under traditional hierarchies, whereby people are connected to specific units.

Malone (2006) states that at large companies, professionals – marketing specialists, engineers, consultants and even managers - are increasingly becoming internal freelancers, working in small teams which dissolve as projects come and go. Internal freelancers are ultimately responsible for selling their work within the company, finding places where they might add

value and build a reputation that will make other employees wish to work with them.

Malone (2006) illustrates his standing with Hewlett-Packard's case, whereby initiatives are published in an internal network and whoever is interested in working at a given project may apply and thereafter, the leader talks to all the candidates and sets up his team.

This new modality enables professionals to decide when they will devote themselves intensely to projects and when they will take breaks which may be used for professional recycling, entrepreneurial, academic or even family related initiatives.

#### 2.3.1.4 Possibility of temporary leave of absence without breaching the work contract

Not as yet common practice, but one which may already be observed at some companies, is that whereby the employee may take non-paid leaves of absence, for a predetermined period of time – usually from three months to one year – for varied purposes. Unilever, IBM and Whirlpool allow collaborators to go on a trip, take a course abroad, take care of a young child or even take on a sabbatical.

#### 2.3.1.5 Anticipated retirement and flexibility in the weekly work calendar

Semler (2006) describes other interesting examples pertaining to the corporate environment. He notes that with new technologies, work has ever increasingly infiltrated our personal lives, whether at home, on the beach, in the evening, on trips or during weekends. On the other hand, people have not as yet learnt to disconnect from the formal working hours and engage in leisure, idle or personal activities during week days, thus giving rise to a major unbalance. Semler (2006) proposes that the week thus be reorganized and that the seven days be divided into work, time for oneself



and idleness, setting aside the traditional notion of week days and weekends.

Furthermore, the author notes that to date those who worked most, escalated to the top of corporations; people who were willing to make major personal sacrifices and also demanded this attitude from others. "For this reason, sensitive men and emotionally intelligent women leave power at organizations to those who are warriors" (Semler, 2006).

However, the author warns readers that, in the future, successful leaders shall be those who allow their people to avoid traffic, take their children calmly to school, read at ease a book on a sunny Tuesday and work on a Sunday during the *Fantástico* TV show or on a rainy Saturday.

It was with this mindset that Semler (2006) conducted several changes at SEMCO, the industrial equipment manufacturer he inherited from his father. Currently, it is a holding company - comprising several others that range from the original industrial equipment factory to an investment fund management company - which gave rise, for instance, to flexible work hours, inclusively at the factories, with programs such as "Retire gradually" whereby employees may choose a week day for leisure or personal project activities which, under the traditional perspective, they would only be able to conduct upon retirement.

However, even within SEMCO, when proposals concerning changes in work organization were made, there were resisting barriers from both employees and the Metallurgical Syndicate.

Impairments such as those mentioned by Semler (2006) reinforce the argument that resistance to changes in work organization models take place mostly by habit and culture than due to legal or technological limitations.

2.3.1.6 Possibility of using corporate resources in qualification, investigation and social projects

It was found that it is common practice for companies to sponsor executives to take on continued education and post-graduate courses for qualification purposes, however, some go far beyond. Google, for instance, offers 20% of employee time and also its laboratories so collaborators may conduct investigations and experiments which may or not pose to address the company's business.

3M is also an interesting case. It encourages collaborators to take part in social projects, inclusively allowing them do use one half day per week of their working hours to devote themselves to these projects.

## **2.4 TRENDS THAT SHALL INFLUENCE WORK RELATIONS**

### **2.4.1 TECHNOLOGICAL**

Widespread and extensively employed as means and tools at work, new technologies are so powerful that they impact the mode and speed of task execution. More importantly, in every aspect, they change relations between people and of people with their work.

Marcus Rocha (2009), a systems analyst, identifies five technological macro trends generally believed to remain impacting technology work relations, namely:

- 1) Omnipresent computing: almost everything shall be automated and devices shall have great processing capacities. From refrigerators to showers, through clothes and mobile phones, all shall be developed so as to offer more information and better address the needs of each user;
- 2) Mobility: communication technology companies indicate that all, absolutely everything, that can be mobile, in the future, shall so be;

- 3) Convergence to internet: in the coming years, some trends are pretty clear in terms of telecommunications. There will no longer be a distinction between telephony and internet;
- 4) Artificial intelligence: equipment we use shall "learn" user preferences and may inclusively "learn the best way to teach us";
- 5) Virtual reality and new man-machine interfaces: voice and writing recognition are still at the development stage but present major advancement promises; alongside the same, one may add on virtual reality environments. These technologies shall enable easier use of technological resources in addition to the "humanization" of the use of equipment.

## **2.4.2 SOCIOCULTURAL**

### 2.4.2.1 Behavioural

Popcorn and Marigold (1996) describe some socio-cultural trends that are already impacting the way people relate to life and careers.

One of the trends identified, named "99 lives", places emphasis on the multiple aspirations of today's executives, highlighting frenetic pace and lack of time which end up forcing people to take on several roles so as to deal with a fast paced and highly technological life.

Simultaneously, there is a quest for balance, evidenced in the "anchorage" trend whereby one rescues from the past, sources of security, such as a return to spiritual roots so as to prepare oneself for the future.

"Feel alive" is yet another trend identified by Popcorn and Marigold (1998), since more than ever humanity is conscious that sound health brings longevity and consequently, leads to a new way of life, as opposed to the

excesses indulged in by the previous, baby-boomer generation, for instance.

At the extreme of this trend lies what Popcorn and Marigold (1996) call the "get out" trend which arises when people who work too hard, upon questioning the intrinsic value of a position of power, decide to take on a more simple, quieter and satisfying life. This is the not so uncommon case of the executive who quits his career to set up a hostel in the mountains. It thus becomes apparent that the current corporate world seems not to offer a feasible option for executives who seek a more balanced life.

The "cocooning" trend has been active in a more accentuated manner over the last decades: reduced socialization of individuals, big city chaos and urban violence drive people to spend more time at home. The advent of new entertainment and remote connectivity technologies nurtured the ideal environment for cocooning, as it brought home theatres (home theatres), communication (domestic computers, PDAs, mobile phones) and the possibility of working at home at practically the same productivity level as that of before.

In parallel to cocooning, in the words of Popcorn and Marigold (1996), there is a latent desire to belong to a group or clan which shares common opinions and feelings in relation to a cause or an ideal. In a certain way, the company today may play this role should its values, mission and vision be clear and it master the recruitment of professionals who identify themselves with the cause.

#### 2.4.2.2 Virtualization of relations

As per De Masi (2003), there are many people who can claim to be extraordinarily familiar with computers and the digital world and believe that living in a virtual mode, intense relations (intellectual, creative and even erotic) is in fact entirely normal, even if one considers people are distant, in both space and time.

#### 2.4.2.3 Disappearance of the frontier between work and personal life

One of the major challenges in people management, as pinpointed by the research *Managing Tomorrow's People*, PWC (2009 mentioned by Colpo, 2009) is the disappearance of frontiers between work and personal life.

For this generation, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish activities claimed to relate to work, from those perceived as leisure.

#### 2.4.2.4 Arrival of the X generation at corporate command positions and entry of generation Y at companies

According to Ray B. Williams (2009), until a couple of years ago, the current work model was widely accepted and subject to few queries. The post-war generation of baby boomers remained focused in re-establishing its life standards and played an important role in the economic recovery of countries - primarily in the United States - during the post war period.

This focus reflected on the greatly emphasized priority assigned to the generation of richness and to work, directly influencing the corporate model in the entire world. Since in the most part, corporate leadership is still made up of baby boomers, this authoritarian and inflexible model is still quite common and found to be acceptable at most corporations.

However, according to Williams (2009), with the increasing ascension of X generations - individuals born between 1960 and 1980 - occupying leadership positions and with the Y generation entering the work marketplace, the model as built by baby boomers began to be criticized and most of all, to crumble in terms of efficiency.

Those that are deemed as belonging to X generation grew up at a time when economic issues had already been tackled and lived with workaholic, absent parents who devoted most of their lives to work or to an

organization. At the end of their careers, often set aside by the market, these parents carried a great sense of dissatisfaction and even of, regret.

Generation X - possibly today's largest contingent of the active labour force - having been raised under this context, brought to the workplace a new set of values which immediately conflicted with the model in force.

For those who are part of the X generation, company loyalty is no longer of great relevance whilst the balance between the professional and personal schedules earned the spotlight. Another value that came to be questioned by this generation was that of authority. Thus, the choice and permanence at the organization relation occurs far more due to the significance of the assignment at hand and the possibility of reconciling professional and personal schedules, than because of a relation of stability, trust or loyalty (Williams, 2009).

Furthermore, X's seek in their work relations possibilities involving self fulfilment and constant challenges. Therefore, they take into account a more varied and challenging career as opposed to one which is linear and safe, and better adapt to more participative organizations than to those with authoritarian models, given that, in the former, they contribute to bring significance to work.

This does not imply that the market has rapidly transformed itself, but rather that there is a conflict between organizations that still operate under a model that already provides evidence of being out of date, and workers with a new set of values who, consequently, are dissatisfied.

These conflicts and the need for change are reinforced when members of the Y generation start to enter the workplace market.

Even if the effects of this transformation are not immediate, in a couple of years the same phenomenon shall probably occur in various regions, inclusively in Brazil, or at least, the influence of the behavioural reflexes of this phenomenon in the workplace, shall be perceived.

If one brings together the facts of a market in need of professionals and that concerning Y generation members - brought up by parents that already held these new values and behaved more like friends or mentors than as authoritarian figures - this generation enters the workplace market with unprecedented self-confidence, argumentative capacity and negotiating power as to choosing the type of organization where they wish to work. This shall demand from the market and organizations increasingly urgent and in-depth change in terms of work relations.

According to Cathy Benko (2007), Deloitte's co-chairman, the current work model - mostly driven by corporate interests - shall be replaced by a model which shall be primarily directed by each employee's the set of objectives and personal aspirations.

Values such as challenging and meaningful work, the possibility of personal and professional development, flexible work hours and sites which enable professionals to reconcile work activities and which value their family relations, teamwork and more participative, less conflicting relations, are values that motivate these generations and ought to be increasingly present in successful corporate work relations, hence forth.

An example of these new values is that of Sun Microsystems, where over half of the employees work remotely.

#### 2.4.2.5 Extreme customization

Kotler (2006, p. 151) defines mass customization as being "the capacity a given company has to prepare mass products, services and projected communications to address each customer's individual needs".

Nowadays people are increasingly used to a customized world, shaped to reflect their life style and preferences. Each person carries their own I-Pod and, at a click of a single button, only listen to the songs they effectively want to. On an individual basis, one designs their own grid on virtual radio stations, watches TV shows and films where and when desired via Apple TV,

may customize the colours and models of their sneakers at Nike and even customize optional items in their Fiat or Mini BMW cars, over the internet.

This possibility of conducting things in an increasingly private manner has also lead to significant transformation of workers expectations concerning corporations, to the effect that they come to desire freedom of action and behaviours and far more autonomy. "If in my relations and consumption I may do things my way, why should I submit myself to a sealed work model that is being proposed by someone else?"

#### 2.4.2.6 More volatile and less lasting relations

Currently one notes that in an assortment of contexts, the duration of relations has decreased. This can be observed in the workplace, in marital relations and even in those relative to consumption. Civil Registry statistics demonstrate that, between 2004 and 2005, divorce rates in Brazil rose from 1,2 to 1,3 per thousand people of 20 or more years of age and reached the highest peak since 1995 (IBGE, 2005).

Furthermore, the average time spent at the same job is of only two years in Brazil, according to research conducted by the syndicate *CUT*, presented to the Deputy Chamber 's Work and Public Service Committee.

One may conclude that individuals are increasingly less willing to invest time in relations, whether personal or work related, which are not producing the targeted fruits.

### **3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

#### **3.1 QUANTITATIVE SURVEY WITH EXECUTIVES AND INTERVIEWS WITH SPECIALISTS**

##### **3.1.1 OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this study was to analyse the expectations and readiness of executives as to adopting differentiated work models and pinpoint the most feasible alternatives, required competencies, corporate profiles, persons



most capable of adopting alternative models and the corresponding benefits for individuals, companies and societies.

### **3.1.2 SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE PROFILE**

For the purpose of the quantitative survey, 55 interviews were conducted by means of filling in questionnaires in hard copies or over the internet, with executives, mostly students of FIA's International and International Executive MBA.

Interviews with specialists took place between September and December 2009, utilizing as supporting resources, audio and video recordings. The following professionals were interviewed:

- 1) Prof. Robert Wong – Partner at Robert Wong Associated Consultants, a company which focuses on intellectual consulting by means of conducting lectures, professional coaching and special projects. Senior Client Partner and former member of Korn Ferry International's Executive Committee.
- 2) Prof. Alfredo Behrens – Economist with a University of Cambridge Ph.D and professor of Cross-Cultural Management at FIA's MBA.
- 3) Prof. Jacques Marcovitch – Professor of Corporate Strategy and International Relations at the University of São Paulo. Dean of the University of São Paulo from 1997 to 2001.
- 4) Prof. Joel Souza Dutra – Full Professor at USP's Administration and Economics Faculty (FEA-USP), coordinator of the People Management Program (PROGEP / FIA) and Vice-coordinator of the HR MBA Course.
- 5) Prof. Washington Mathias – Master and doctor in Administration by FEA/USP and Doctorate Professor at FEA/USP's Administration Department for Negotiation and New Business Development disciplines.

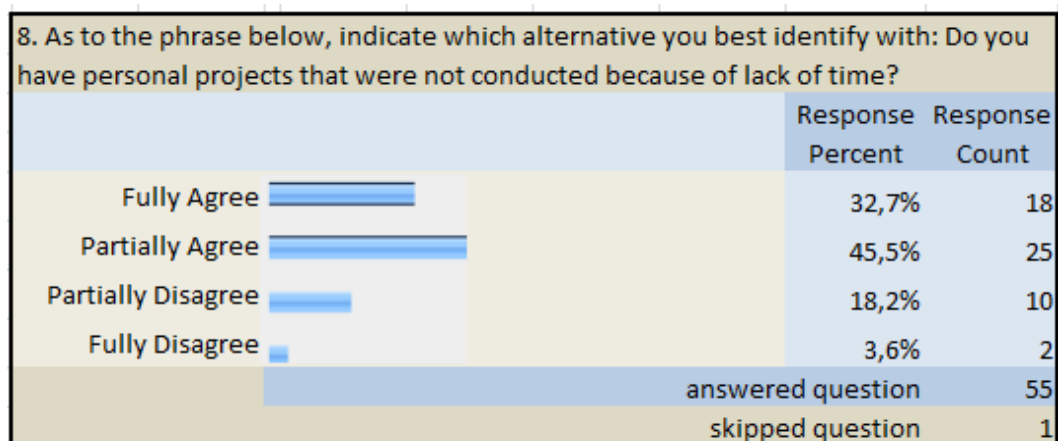
6) Muna Hammad – Human Resources Manager at International Paper.

## 4 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

### 4.1 ANALYSIS OF THE EXECUTIVE SURVEY RESULTS

Upon analysing the results of the survey, it becomes apparent that the concept of a work model presenting greater flexibility as to working hours and site, a reduced workload and improved quality of life, is widely accepted and even desired by interviewed executives.

Of the total, 78,2% fully or partially agree that they did not conduct personal projects due to the lack of time, per the hereunder described:

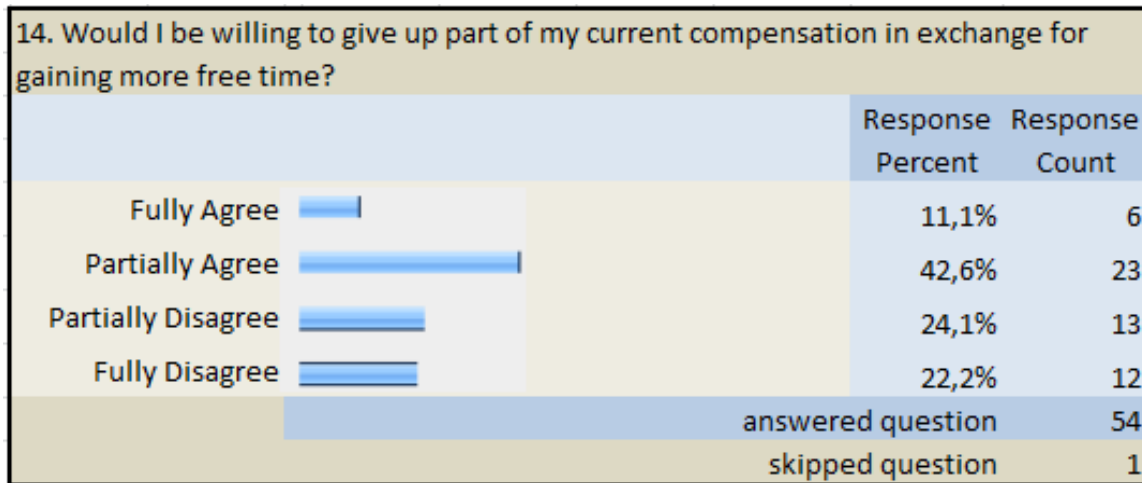


**Graph 1: Question 8 results –Do you have non conducted projects given lack of time?**

**Source: authors**

Amongst interviewed executives, 83,6% understand their presence is necessary at the workplace so as to conduct their work, however 63,6% agree that working hours could be more flexible. Another 60% state they still feel attracted by companies offering more flexible working hours even if compensation remains equivalent to that currently earned.

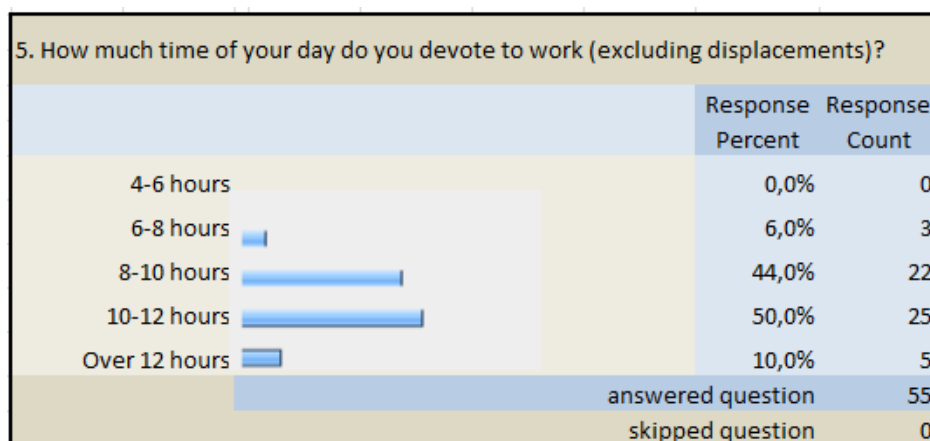
Of far greater relevance is the fact that 53,7% fully or partially agree to swap a portion of their current compensation for more free time, as per replies to the survey’s question 14 (Graph 2).



**Graph 2: Question 14 results – Would I be willing to give up a portion of my current compensation in exchange for gaining more free time?**  
 Source: authors

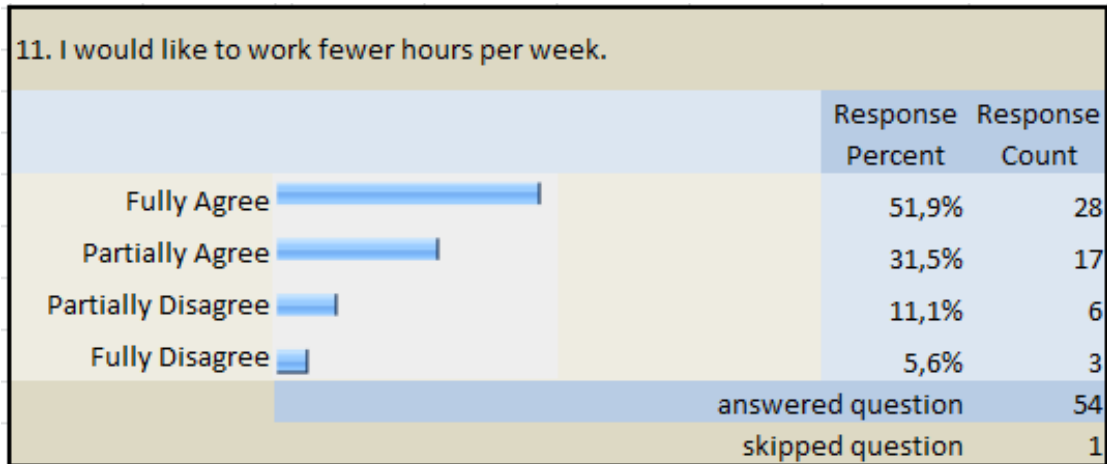
On average, interviewees would give up to, at most, 15% of their compensation, in exchange for an average 9,26 free hours per week.

In as much as workload is concerned, it is clear that the workaholic model worshipped by baby boomers is increasingly out of date. In response to the interview’s question 5 (Graph 3), only 9,1% of interviewed executives claim to work over 12 hours per day.



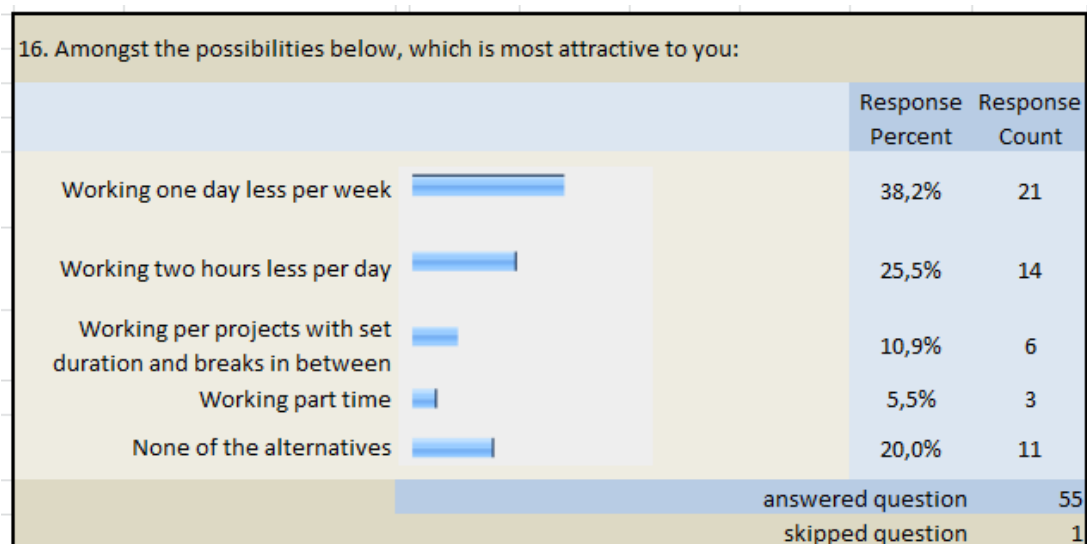
**Graph 3: Question 5 results – How much time of your day do you devote to work?**  
 Source: authors

In reply to question 11, 83,4% of interviewees either fully or partially agree that they would like to work fewer hours per week (Graph 4).



**Graph 4: Question 11 results – I would like to work fewer hours per week.**  
 Source: authors

Amongst the proposed models, those that captured the greatest interest included working one day less per week (38,2%) and working two hours less per day (25,5%).



**Graph 5: Question 16 results – Which work alternative is most attractive to me?**  
 Source: authors

## **5 KEY POINTS FOR THE ADOPTION OF DIFFERENTIATED WORK RELATIONS**

### **5.1 EXECUTIVE PROFILE AND CHARACTERISTICS**

As of this survey, it was found that differentiated work relations, with greater flexibility and autonomy, require the professional to likewise present a differentiated profile.

#### **5.1.1 SELF MOTIVATION**

To adapt and reap results under this new environment, the executive must present a higher self-motivation level than that usually required. Third party activity control practically disappears and what remains is the professional's commitment to performing his responsibilities with excellence.

#### **5.1.2 DISCIPLINE**

Under the current model, it is the work contract and the company's organizational culture that rules where people come together for work and at which hours. New organization possibilities leave it up to the professional to decide as to these two aspects. In the environment that is external to the office, infinite distractions may arise and the driving force, capable of maintaining the professional focused on his work, is discipline.

Not that discipline is not important for the performing of today's executive work, but it will be even more critical when this professional is no longer limited to four walls of an office's floor, obliged to there remain during fixed and predetermined hours.

#### **5.1.3 TIME MANAGEMENT**

Nowadays, with the advent of mobile phones, Black Berries, notebooks and wide bandwidth internet, information gains real time and tremendous mobility, narrowing frontiers between personal and professional activities and remaining present in peoples' lives anytime, anywhere.

Given this possibility, technology may promote freedom once that it enables tasks to be conducted at the most adequate moment and at the executive's choice, but can also become oppressive, since there no longer is a technological barrier that limits the expectation of the counterpart.

Prof. Jacques Marcovitch (interview November 2009) points out that professionals who work under differentiated models and with access to these technologies, shall thus have to develop new competencies regarding time management and counterpart expectation negotiation, by means of formal or informal agreements, to obtain a balance between their personal and professional lives, and establish with organizations, a productive relation of freedom with responsibility.

Ever increasingly, multiple subjects are conducted simultaneously and the ability to strategically lead ones schedule, identifying relevant and non relevant activities, shall certainly be another pre-requisite for this executive, ponders Prof. Washington Mathias (interview November 2009).

#### **5.1.4 SHARED VALUES AS COMMITMENT GENERATORS**

As more differentiated organizational structures come to be practiced – more volatile relations, changes at increasingly faster paces and the world becomes more customizable – shared objectives and values gain importance since they take on the role of a link between organizations and stakeholders, particularly employees, agglutinating people with common values and objectives and thus presenting greater possibility of bringing about a more cohesive team.

Furthermore, an organization's clear values and conduct policies, shall take on an important role in the professional recruiting process, attracting those

who naturally identify themselves with the proposal and posing as a barrier to those who eventually have reservations as to the organization's mission and vision.

Companies which had clearly communicated and above all, practiced values, shall have greater chances of recruiting more adequate professionals and a greater possibility of granting autonomy to their employees, since the expected behaviour before a given situation, is publicly known.

#### **5.1.5 FOCUS ON RESULTS**

In remote and more flexible work, controls tail off and are replaced by management based on facts and data, that is, the setting of clear, measurable targets, and compliance of objectives.

A previously relevant metric - level of effort - is now replaced by performance logics, team commitment and target achievement.

#### **5.1.6 ABILITY TO COORDINATE AND MOTIVATE PEOPLE**

One must change the way leadership is exercised at managerial levels, by means of differentiated work models.

Command and control give in to coordination, communication capacities and motivation to organize work and the team so that results may be attained, whether the manager is physically present or not.

Another fundamental point is to promote focus on people, understand their potentialities and bring them together so as to shape a cohesive and high performing team, whereby individuals may help each other and apply their very best.

In the new work models, it becomes vital to coordinate, to be accountable for proposing activities and to lead people in such a manner that desired results may come about.

In differentiated models, links between people become even more crucial since it is very likely that horizontal connections between the company's departments, condition good results to a greater extent than those of vertical nature, determined by hierarchical subordination and reporting relations.

### **5.1.7 ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE IN NON PRESENTIAL MODES**

Direct communication is an executive's core competency since they must transmit their ideas and positions to counterparts, who often present distinct knowledge and socio-cultural experiences, including diverse nationalities.

In alternative models, moreover in those where physical presence at the work site is not constant, assertivity and credibility in communication have likewise to be mastered by the executive, over virtual modes of communication such as e-mails, conference calls, videos, phone calls, etc.

The professional that adopts differentiated work relations must improve and develop this ability, ensuring high levels of understanding between members of the organization, of a project team or of an internal team.

## **5.2 CORPORATE PROFILE AND CHARACTERISTICS**

### **5.2.1 EXPLICIT PURPOSES, TARGETS AND CLEAR OBJECTIVES**

According to Hitt (2008), corporate vision is a picture of what the company intends to be in terms of what it intends to do. Consequently it shapes the intended future by thinking about the overall picture with a passion that helps people feel what they ought to do.

Missions, on the other hand, specify the business in which the company intends to compete and the clients it intends to address. Therefore the



mission must define corporate individuality and be inspiring and relevant to all stakeholders.

Together, mission and vision form the grounds that the company requires to select and implement its strategies.

In future work relations, mission and vision shall also serve to select and attract the right professional, who feels passion for the organization's business, which in turn increases the chances of this individual coming to feel part of the team and of contributing in a creative and enthusiastic manner.

Furthermore, clearly set and shared values, targets and objectives indicate which behaviours are deemed acceptable, non-acceptable and expected before infinite situations. Thus, the corporation may grant greater autonomy to its collaborators, achieving efficiency and agility in the decision process and consequently, competitiveness.

### **5.2.2 FORMALIZATION AND LEADERSHIP BY SETTING THE EXAMPLE**

So as to ensure adoption of differentiated work relations, corporate upper management has to believe and support the proposal, leading by means of setting the example.

This field survey demonstrates that although still to a minor extent, working hours and sites are gradually becoming more flexible than before the advent of the internet and of mobile telephony.

However, in non official initiatives and without clearly stipulated rules, professionals that make use of this flexibility feel uncomfortable and fear being ill perceived by colleagues.

Even at companies that adopted free Friday afternoons, some employees barely partly enjoy the benefit. "If peers and leaders continue working, the

professional often feels intimidated to take an early leave”, states Muna Hammad, a Human Resources executive (interview December 2009).

### **5.2.3 HIGH LEVEL OF TRUST AMONGST EXECUTIVES INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS**

An immature team may call for a greater number of presential meetings, interactions, meetings and controls, requiring professionals to be physically present at the work site most of the time.

So that virtual and more flexible work comes about, professionals must share both trust and maturity in addition to the commitment that agreed to actions are in course, objectives are clear and results are each individual´s direction.

### **5.2.4 EVALUATION AND INCENTIVES**

In more flexible models, the most competent shall be chosen and promoted according to their progress and accomplishments. Under this system, personal merit bears greater influence in the hierarchy.

In much the same way, financial incentives shall continue to be of relevance but other variables, such as the opportunity to work with greater freedom, autonomy in a comforting environment with quality of life, shall become more relevant than ever.

### **5.2.5 NATURE OF THE ACTIVITY**

In some cases, more flexible relations, whether in terms of working hours or the worker´s physical presence, are less likely to be successfully applied.

This takes place when decisions are primarily collegiate or when major changes are in course over a very short period of time, whereby decisions have to practically be taken and communicated in real time. Call centres, short term implementation projects and emergency situations fit this

definition whereupon decisions have to be made in an extremely agile manner.

On the other hand, there are activities which given their very nature tend to be prone to more flexible and decentralized work, as is the case of organizations focused on ideation and planning, or even sales teams which, so as to ensure proximity with clients, are often physically distant or from their organization's headquarters' working hours.

## **6 BENEFITS OF ADOPTING DIFFERENTIATED WORK RELATIONS**

### **6.1 FOR THE INDIVIDUAL**

#### **6.1.1 ACHIEVEMENT POTENTIAL AND EXTENSION OF KNOWLEDGE**

As demonstrated in this study, many professionals have personal projects that have not been conducted given lack of time. Differentiated models which offer more time for individuals to devote themselves to other interests shall give rise to more satisfied and even in all aspects, fulfilled beings.

Work experiences are applied to other fields (such as an executive wanting to be part of an NGO's counsel). The inverse also holds true, whereby a professional may chose to become an entrepreneur in a new business without having to this effect, to give up his work and later takes such learning, as an entrepreneur, to the corporate environment he belongs to.

When the individual has the opportunity to satisfy himself in numerous fronts, he may finally achieve fulfilment.

#### **6.1.2 QUALITY OF LIFE**

Greater freedom and autonomy over one's schedule and commitments enable improved quality of life for professionals who shall find ways of

balancing professional and personal interests, work and family, amongst others.

### **6.1.3 PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY AND MATURITY**

Executive level professionals often manage resource in terms of millions and millions of dollars, under a certain level of autonomy concerning decisions as to the destination of these resources. The need for the same to take place as to their autonomy in the management and organization of their own time is thus, more than evident.

When flexing of work hours is at hand, it is not only about the professional choosing at what time activities start but also as to the quantity of hours chosen to weekly devote to the company.

Paths which previously were difficult to reconcile with relative success appear, such as an academic career in conjunction with an executive position, employee and employer or consultant, executive and mother.

## **6.2 FOR COMPANIES**

### **6.2.1 TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION**

Executive desire for more free time is latent. Furthermore, there is the rise of a new Y generation entering the work marketplace with new time, life quality and value standards. Therefore, work under differentiated regimes shall be a requirement so as to attract and retain the most talented professionals.

Furthermore, these new models enable the retention of senior professionals who accumulate tremendous knowledge and experience loads and who often, once having a stable financial situation, abandon the corporate career to devote themselves to personal projects or become entrepreneurs.

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## **6.2.2 FAVOURING OF CREATIVITY, INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS**

A free environment fosters creativity and innovation, currently deemed key characteristics for achieving competitive advantage at marketplaces.

For sure, companies that depend on the launching of new products, services and innovative processes have much to reap from adopting differentiated work models.

## **6.2.3 COSTS: LESS NEED FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DISPLACEMENT EXPENSES**

At increasingly more chaotic cities, with heavy and unsafe traffic, the possibility of reducing employee displacements brings measurable gains to corporations. In addition, physical office space represents high corporate expenses and might eventually be reduced given the flexing of work relations.

## **6.3 FOR SOCIETY**

### **6.3.1 REDUCING DISPLACEMENTS, TRAFFIC AND POLLUTION AT CAPITALS IMPROVES**

Urban space at capitals is currently taken up by major traffic jams of people going from one place to another, at the same time, to their work sites. Flexible models promote the reduction of displacements and de-concentrate peak hours, bringing about major public improvements to cities. Likewise, upon reducing traffic, one reduces carbon emissions and contributes with the achievement of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets.

### **6.3.2 PROFESSIONALS HAVE ADDITIONAL FREE TIME TO DEVOTE TO PUBLIC AND SOCIAL CAUSES**

Seasoned in management executives, once having some free time, may devote themselves to social causes by means of NGO's and participate in public policies, using their expertise in favour of society.

Finally, happier people produce a healthier public environment whereby all experience benefits.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

Flexing work in terms of hours and site where tasks are deployed is a trend. It is part of the aspirations of executives, and technology, to this effect, is widely available.

Therefore one can state with a high level of certainty that it shall sooner or later come about, depending on the level of corporate openness and the nature of businesses.

However, specialists are divided in their opinions as to how this shall take place. Some defend this change shall come about as a silent and gradual revolution, by means of an increasing number of executives little by little practicing this flexing, even if not in an open and explicit manner.

Others nevertheless believe that, so changes may take place in an effective manner, with greater benefits for the organization and less strain on individuals, it ought to spring in a formal manner, comprise work contracts and be validated by companies that adopt clear differentiated relations policies, which enable their executives to chose under which weekly workload and physical space conditions they wish to conduct the responsibilities assigned to their positions.

Early adopting corporations of such differentiated models potentially present greater prospects of reaping the benefits of attracting and retaining talents, of developing a corporate image, reputation, greater creativity and innovative power, much like that which takes place with companies

launching innovative products before competition and taking ownership of the vanguard position, which in turn, reflects in competitive advantage.

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