

Flexible Work Arrangements for Managers-Gender Diversity and Organizational Development in German Firms

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Abstract : While workplace flexibility provides opportunities to better balance work and family care, careers in management are still predominantly based on physical presence, blurred boundaries and a culture of availability at the workplace. Thus, carers (mostly women) still experience disadvantages and stalled careers. In a multi-case study, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, success factors and barriers of flexible work arrangements in five big organizations, including three of the largest German companies, have been identified. Using qualitative interview methods, the working models of 10 female and male users of flexible work arrangements like part time, home office and job sharing have been studied. The study group applied a 360-degree approach with focus groups, covering the users' themselves, their superiors, colleagues and staff as well as in-house human resource managers. The group interviews reveal that success of flexible models is mainly built on three factors: (a) the inclusiveness of the organizational culture, (b) the commitment of leaders and especially the supervisors, and (c) the fitting of the model and the user(s). Flexibilization of time and space can indeed contribute to a better work-life balance. This is, however, not a necessary outcome, as the interviews suggest, but depends on the right implementation of the right model in the particular work environment. Beyond the actual study results, the presentation will also assess the methodological approach.

Keywords : flexible work, leadership, organizational culture, work-life balance

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