



success through diversity
Ahakoa whakaaro kē, ka puta a ihu

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He Pānui mō ngā Take Mahi me ngā Take Oranga

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Work, love and friendship - getting it right at work and home

The EEO Trust has recently completed a comprehensive research project to find out more about the links between paid work and people’s relationships with their partner or spouse and their friends.

The project included an international literature review and an on-line survey, completed by 1,324 people, to find out more about the experiences of New Zealanders.

The research confirmed that paid work does have a beneficial effect on personal relationships for most people and that healthy relationships and friendships positively affect performance at work.

Eighty-two percent of respondents said paid work had a positive effect on their relationships, while 75% believed that they did not work as well if they were having problems in their relationships.

The impact of paid work was a contributing factor in spouse/partner break-

up for 39% of respondents and 38% said they or their partner had turned down a job, promotion or transfer because it would impact badly on their relationship

Work pressure/exhaustion/stress was the main reason given for a work-related relationship break-up, followed by long hours. (See graph)

When asked how good relationships help them perform better at work, 81% said they were more productive because they felt better, 71% said the emotional support from relationships helped them cope with work stress and 63% said they got along better with workmates/colleagues.

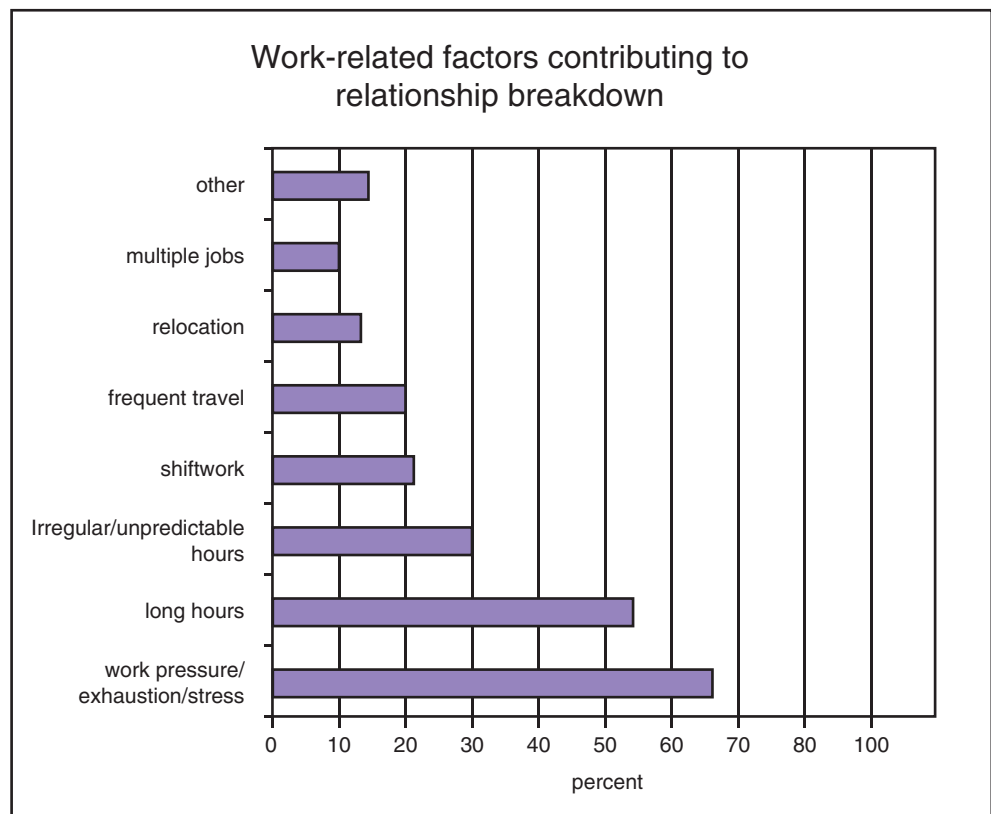
One respondent said, “I find that if I am having relationship problems it can be hard to focus at work and if I am having major work problems it can impact negatively on relationships if it’s on-going.”

If you would like information about the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust services or resources, please contact:

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Effects on amount and quality of time

For two-thirds of respondents, paid work affected the **amount** of time they spent with their partner and for just over half it affected the **quality** of time they spent.

The perceived negative impact of paid work on relationships increased with the number of hours worked.

One respondent wrote about making a choice to prioritise his relationship, "I just resigned today in order to strengthen my relationship. And I do not have another job to go to. I will become self employed because in my experience no employer will let you put your life and relationship first."

Another wrote about their regret that they had not been able to put their relationships first in their 30 years of working life. "I have the 'work ethic' and have always felt that work demands have these negative consequences on my life and relationships."

How do workplaces help

Most respondents (60%) were positive about the value and support their workplace gave their relationships with friends and spouse/partners.

When asked how their workplace helped them form good relationships with workmates/colleagues, 49% ticked "tasks that require interaction with other staff members" while 46% ticked "social club".

One respondent wrote about the strength of friendships at work. "My workplace(s) have always been a major component of my social circle. Many of my closest friends are either current or former workmates."

For four out of five respondents the most helpful initiatives that workplaces could take to support their personal relationships were:

- providing flexible work hours,

- training managers in awareness of work practices that impact on relationships,
- providing a secure permanent job, and
- consulting staff to determine what these practices should be for their particular workplace.

Around one out of six respondents (17%) were happy with the support their workplace provided for having good personal relationships and 3% felt there was nothing their workplace could do to support their relationships.

Overwork and shiftwork

A large number of respondents commented on how overwork affected their relationships. For example, "My husband works a 40-hour week, but sometimes has to work overtime for a few weeks which puts a lot of stress on the relationship, but it gets back to normal afterward."

Or, "More staff needed. No cover when anyone is away so frequently short-staffed. It is impossible to work at a high standard without something giving. Unfortunately it then flows into home."

One in ten respondents wanted to have adequate time as a shiftworker for evening and weekend socialising. Given that approximately one in five workers are shiftworkers, this is a high response from shiftworkers.

One respondent wrote about the challenges she faced with a partner doing shift work, "We have problems with the amount of time that we spend together as a couple as he works from 3am to 11am and I work from 8.30am to 4.35pm."

Another shift worker wrote, "There needs to be a lot more flexibility in shift-work to compensate and allow employees to carry out their work on a long-term basis, instead of putting up with it until breaking point then leaving a job."

Who completed the EEO Trust survey

More women than men responded to the survey, suggesting that women may be more aware of and concerned about these issues, although women are often more responsive to surveys.

Respondents covered a broad age range with the over 50s being least well represented.

White collar occupations were over-represented in the survey.

More than two out of five respondents were in paid work for 30-40 hours per week, with men more likely than women to be working longer hours. Hours worked were similar across age groups.

Different issues for different people

The EEO Trust's international literature review showed that work and relationship issues are different for different people. For example, for low income workers, long hours at work are required to meet basic income needs so they often don't have time to create or maintain friendships and relationships.

Young people handling the dual challenges of study and work or working long hours to build their career can face the same problem. One of the respondents to the EEO Trust survey said, "Currently my partner and I are both working in excess of 50 hours per week and it's ruining our lives. We have little time together and when we do we are both shattered from the amount of work we're

doing. We are both 24, we are too young for working such long hours for very very low salaries."

US research found that the issues may be different for professional women as they are less likely than men to attract a partner prepared to tolerate or support their lifestyle. This was echoed by some of the respondents in the EEO Trust survey. One woman said, "Marriage break-up due to husband feeling insecure about my professional growth compared to his need for a partner up to three to four times a week for social activities."

Another woman wrote about her marriage breaking up because her husband wasn't happy with her salary being higher than hers.

For a toolkit for workplaces and the full research report go to www.eeotrust.org.nz

Gender and age differences

While there were some differences between men and women respondents to the EEO Trust survey (eg women were more likely than men to think that doing paid work had positive effects on relationships), the amount of similarity in their responses was striking.

Differences by age group were not great but did confirm some expected patterns. The 30-49 age group is generally most affected by the impact of paid work on personal relationships and this is the group who were most likely to want workplace initiatives to help them manage their work and relationships better.

Those aged under 30 were generally more similar to those aged 30-49 than to those aged 50 plus. They are less likely than the 30-49 age group to be parenting but they are concerned about the impact of paid work on the amount of time they can spend with their partner and more likely to want de facto partners recognised in workplace benefits that apply to married partners.

Government extends paid parental leave

International Women's Day, March 8, saw the announcement of extensions to the government's paid parental leave provisions.

The leave period will be extended from 12 to 14 weeks, phased in over two years. Parents will also be able to take paid parental leave if they have been in the same job for at least six months, rather than a year as at present.

Prime Minister Helen Clark and Womens Affairs Minister Ruth Dyson said an evaluation of the paid parental leave scheme showed it had been a resounding success.

"Although business groups had voiced some concerns prior to the scheme's introduction, a third of employers surveyed last year cited a positive or very positive impact on their businesses, half said it

had no real impact, and only nine percent believed the overall impact of paid parental leave had been less favourable.

"From the employers' perspective, the most frequently cited benefits of the scheme were that: staff were happier and more satisfied, workplaces were more likely to retain experienced staff, and the scheme stopped mothers returning to work too early or before they were ready."

Eligible parents will get 13 weeks of paid parental leave from 1 December 2004, and 14 weeks from 1 December 2005. The two-phase introduction will bring New Zealand into line with International Labour Organisation standards.

Further work will be carried out this year on the feasibility of extending paid parental leave to self-employed people.

Work-life jigsaw taking shape

The government's work-life balance project's public consultation exercise is drawing together a picture of a wide range of work-life issues and how they affect individuals and organisations throughout New Zealand.

Submissions received to date highlight issues around childcare and working parents, the need for part-time work options, handling work stress, workplace culture and the need to improve flexibility at work.

The public consultation runs until the end of March when all the submissions will be analysed and a report prepared for government.

Around 5,000 discussion packs and information sheets have been distributed to organisations and individuals, and members of the project team are talking to many organisations, meetings and conferences.

The Department of Labour, which is managing the project, says the debate is healthy. "The overwhelming view is that it is an issue - but not everyone agrees that more

can be done.

"Some people believe there are far more pressing issues to be addressed than work-life balance. Others feel it is already evolving in workplaces and should be left to individuals and organisations to work out for themselves."

Submissions received by the project suggest that at least some people are struggling to get the right balance.

"At my work, there's a little undercurrent of resentment from colleagues with no children. They think the parents get more time off, or aren't so focussed. I think the organisation I work for has to attack this culture of resentment head on. They've got to find more ways to help parents work and not totally stress out, and they've got to help every colleague see that it's not about privileges for some, but necessary fine-tuning to keep the organisation running."

www.worklife.govt.nz

Helping Families Change: home, workplace and community

Work-life issues were on the agenda at the Helping Families Change Conference in Auckland last month. The conference was organised by Healthy Families Limited and Triple P Positive Parenting Programmes.

Professor Matt Sanders of the University of Queensland presented the newly developed Workplace Triple P programme for parents. The programme focuses on the morning transition from family to work, and the evening transition from work to family. It aims to teach skills and practices that will minimise the transfer of home stress to the workplace, and work stress to the home.

The development and evaluation of the programme involved two randomised controlled trials to illustrate both the benefits and limitations of parenting programmes targeting the workplace. The research showed positive work outcomes from running Workplace Triple P at lunchtime in the workplace.

Further information on the Triple P Workplace programme is available from

triplep@xtra.co.nz.

The crucial role of senior management support and role modelling in ensuring work-life policies are effective was the subject of Professor Mike O'Driscoll's paper entitled *Work-Family Conflict and Facilitation: Individual and Organisational Implications and Strategies*. Professor O'Driscoll is from Waikato University.

Other presenters in the work-life stream were Dr Mervyl McPherson of the EEO Trust on the two-way relationship between paid work and personal relationships, Stuart Forsythe of FX Consulting on the business case for work-life balance, and Dr James Buwalda, CEO Dept of Labour on the government work-life steering group research project.

Last year's winners of the Walk the Talk category in the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards, Phil and Glenys Ker of AUT, also presented a session on how they manage their own work-life balance and how AUT supports other staff to do the same.

HRINZ HR Awards 2003 - Work-life initiatives amongst the winners

Among the winning workplaces in the HRINZ HR Awards announced last month were several whose understanding of the value of work-life balance underpinned their entry.

Winner of the HR Initiative of the Year for the central North Island region was DPA & Associates, a chartered accountants firm, which employs a nanny to look after the children of workers – last year there were 11 children under five.

The new nanny is employed 35 hours per week and, when not minding children, she helps with filing. Staff members pay a subsidised childcare amount for the childcare they use. The nanny is a part of the DPA team, sometimes attending monthly staff meetings (with or without children) and attending staff social functions.

McDonalds Restaurants (NZ) Ltd also looked at the bigger work-life picture with its initiative which made it the national awards winner.

The initiative grew out of their new global marketing campaign. On the basis that the campaign would only be successful if front-line workers (most of whom are under 20) were actively involved, McDonalds asked workers about their key priorities. Amongst other things

they learnt that cellphones are the modern currency of the young.

As a result McDonalds provided cellphones to all front-line staff. In the four months since employees were given a mobile phone, staff turnover had reduced; restaurant managers were finding it easier to roster replacements for sick staff by putting out text calls via web-based eTXT, and text-based internal competitions were attracting thousands of entries.

More information at www.hrinz.org.nz.



David Steele and Paul Wilson, directors of DPA & Associates, receive their award.

Please Read On...

The business case for work-life balance

This report by the government's work-life balance project reviews the international and New Zealand literature on the business case for adopting work-life balance policies.

It looks at the benefits of adopting work-life policies, the costs of adopting them and the costs of not adopting them. It says there is clear evidence of strong business benefits in the case studies, but these conclusions are context specific, and not necessarily generalisable but "the evidence of the business benefits of work-life balance policies is reasonably strong, and increasing."

Amongst the benefits are:

- improved recruitment and retention rates, with associated cost savings;
- reduced absenteeism and sick leave usage;
- a reduction in worker stress and improvements in employee satisfaction

and loyalty;

- greater flexibility for business operating hours;
- improved productivity and
- an improved corporate image.

The costs include direct costs, such as parental leave payments and indirect costs associated with temporarily filling the posts of absentees and temporary reductions in productivity arising from disruptions.

The review says that workplaces may have difficulties in assessing the net impact of work-life balance policies as the costs are easier to identify and measure than the benefits. Some employers use cost-benefit analysis and others decide to implement work-life balance policies because they intuitively make sense.

Not adopting work-life policies can cost workplaces, as well as individuals, as a result of unresolved conflicts between work and personal lives.

For the full report go to www.worklife.govt.nz

The Work/Life Collision

This book by Barbara Pocock explores the conflict between “work and care” and its consequences for life in Australia. Her sources include quantitative and qualitative research, particularly interviews with 163 mainly women living in South Australia and interviews with workers and their partners in 12 industries or occupations across Australia.

For Barbara Pocock, “care” includes care of ourselves, each other, households, families and communities.

She argues that workplaces and other institutions have changed too little in response to the radical changes in households and society with the result that quality of life is declining, there is a loss of community, and people, especially women, are experiencing rising levels of guilt.

Her agenda for easing the work-life collision includes cultural changes and changes in workplaces, homes and communities. She says current arrangements need to be shifted from a collision between work and care towards “those that foster integration of care with paid work, interspersed of the two, and opportunities for intensive care without penalty over the life-cycle.”

***The Work/Life Collision – What work is doing to Australians and what to do about it.* The Federation Press, 2003.**

Relocation for dual-career couples

US research has explored why there are so few women with global assignments and the dual-career issues associated with international relocation. In 2001, Catalyst senior associate, Meredith J Moore wrote a summary of the research, including recommendations for employers, entitled *Same ticket, different trip: supporting dual-career couples on global assignments*.

She says that most US organisations are missing out on half their global talent pool by not capitalising on the women within their ranks. “Women comprise only 12% of expatriates, while women are virtually equally represented in the middle management ranks from where expatriates are traditionally drawn.”

According to Moore, one of the most pervasive assumptions in corporate America is that dual-career issues hinder women’s willingness and ability to relocate. “This assumption is applied universally to women regardless of personal situation and discounts how men are also in dual-career relationships.”

Meredith Moore says employers can better support dual-career couples and increase the number accepting and succeeding in expatriate assignments by:

- Offering career path flexibility (not offering only one chance of accepting an overseas assignment)
- Providing meaningful career support (for spouses)
- Addressing issues of assimilation and loneliness for spouses in the host country
- Facilitating re-entry for spouses and partners.

Available from www.emeraldinsight.com/0964-9425.htm

Research Forum

Government research on work-life balance

Research conducted for the Government's work-life balance project last year explored how a wide range of New Zealanders felt about work-life balance.

The key findings included:

- Most people (both employers and employees) claimed their work and life was out of balance.
- Most employers felt that the work-life balance of employees was better than their own.
- Employers saw the key benefits of implementing work-life balance initiatives as being able to attract and retain quality staff.
- Barriers to employers implementing work-life balance initiatives were the perceived cost, the time and resources to manage the initiatives, and a lack of expertise and knowledge, both in terms of the best initiatives to implement and how to actually set them up.
- Most employees felt some reticence about raising work-life balance issues with their employer.
- There was a strong belief that work-life balance initiatives would have a positive and noticeable impact on the workplace.

Available from www.worklife.govt.nz

Upcoming Events

EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2004



Entries close for this year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards on May 27. The categories for this year's awards are the same as in previous years but the entry criteria have been changed slightly to emphasise the importance of employee input into the development and monitoring of work-life initiatives



Winners of last year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards included organisations as diverse as Auckland City, the Muscular Dystrophy Association and Westpac Banking Corporation. Joint winners of the Walk the Talk category last year were Phil and Glenys Ker from Auckland University of Technology and Gagau Annandale-Stone from ANZ Banking Group.

Acting Chief Executive of the EEO Trust, Philippa Reed, says the ability of a workplace to field an entrant in the Walk the Talk category, let alone win it, is a good indication of its commitment to work-life balance at all levels of the organisation. "No matter how innovative and comprehensive an organisation's work-life policies are, without the commitment of senior managers they'll have little effect on employees."

IBM New Zealand Ltd is supporting the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards this year and for the following two years. On announcing IBM's support, managing director Nick Lambert said IBM was a world leader in developing and implementing work-life balance initiatives across its worldwide workforce. "IBM works to ensure that management and staff in all parts of the business are aware of, and strive for work-life balance. Given IBM's leadership in the development of proactive work-life balance programs, there is a strong synergy with the work of the EEO Trust," he said.

IBM's Australian arm won the Australian Work & Family Awards in 2002. More details of IBM's commitment to work-life balance can be found at www-8.ibm.com/employment/nz/life/balance.html.

Annual Australian Work/Life Conference

Managing Work | Life Balance and Families At Work is holding its Annual Work/Life Conference in Sydney on April 1st, Melbourne on April 2nd and Brisbane on April 5th from 10am until 2pm at each venue. The theme of the conference is "Fulfilling the Leadership Vision – Making the Link between Work & Life".

Details at www.worklifebalance.com.au.