

"Brower sharpens our grasp of this elusive though vital topic, offering pragmatic, accessible solutions." —CATHY BENKO, vice chairman and managing principal, Deloitte LLP, and best-selling author of *Mass Career Customization* and *The Corporate Lattice*

Bring Work to Life by Bringing Life to Work

**A GUIDE FOR LEADERS
AND ORGANIZATIONS**



**TRACY
BROWER**

Foreword by BRIAN C. WALKER,
president and CEO, Herman Miller, Inc.

*Bring Work
to Life
by
Bringing Life
to Work*

**A GUIDE FOR LEADERS
AND ORGANIZATIONS**

TRACY BROWER



bibliomotion
books + media

First published by Bibliomotion, Inc.
39 Harvard Street
Brookline, MA 02445
Tel: 617-934-2427
www.bibliomotion.com

Copyright © 2014 by Tracy Brower

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

Printed in the United States of America

978-1-62956-003-8 print
978-1-62956-004-5 ebook
978-1-62956-005-2 enhanced ebook
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brower, Tracy.

Bring work to life by bringing life to work : a guide for leaders and organizations / Tracy Brower.

pages cm

Summary: "Organizations accomplish results when they powerfully engage employees and capture their discretionary time. This is more important than ever during this period where employees are facing unprecedented time poverty. Technology has blurred the lines between employees' work and personal lives, and they are faced with the challenges of successfully navigating and integrating work and personal demands. When organizations provide the right benefits, policies, and cultural practices, they win and they serve employees in the process. Using examples and real-world experiences from senior executives and employees, author Tracy Brower shows readers the importance of work-life supports and how they lead to more engaged and fulfilled employees. *Bring Work to Life by Bringing Life to Work* is your go-to guide to work-life support, providing easy-to-read strategies for building and implementing your organization's strategies to harness work-life supports, increasing positive impact to your bottom line."—Provided by publisher.

Summary: "Bring Work to Life by Bringing Life to Work is your go-to guide to work-life support, providing easy-to-read strategies for building and implementing your organization's strategies to harness work-life supports, increasing positive impact to your bottom line"—Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-1-62956-003-8 (hardback) — ISBN 978-1-62956-004-5 (ebook) — ISBN 978-1-62956-005-2 (enhanced ebook)

1. Quality of work life. 2. Work environment. 3. Personnel management. I. Title.
HD6955.B738 2014
658.3'12—dc23

2014020199

*Dedicated with love to my family.
You are abundance and the life in my work-life.*

Contents

Foreword by Brian C. Walker	xiii
Introduction	xv

PART I

Leading to Abundance: Setting Context

Chapter 1	Leading from a New Perspective	3
Chapter 2	Leading from Past to Present	13
Chapter 3	Leading from Today's Challenges	21
Chapter 4	Leading to Work-Life Supports	33
Chapter 5	Leading to Results	45

PART II

Leading with Alignment: Considerations for Success

Chapter 6	Aligning with the Nature of the Work	65
Chapter 7	Aligning with Global Work	75
Chapter 8	Aligning with Technology	87
Chapter 9	Aligning with the Physical Work Environment	103
Chapter 10	Aligning with Generations	113
Chapter 11	Aligning with Gender and Diversity	119
Chapter 12	Aligning with Performance	129
Chapter 13	Aligning with Leaders	141
Chapter 14	Aligning with Teams	151
Chapter 15	Aligning with Culture	163

PART III**Leading for Adaptation:
Implementing Work-Life Supports**

Chapter 16 Leading for the Business Case	181
Chapter 17 Leading for Change and Impact	187
Conclusion Planting Trees	199
 Appendix	 203
Acknowledgments	209
Notes	211
References	219
Index	225
About the Author	234

CHAPTER 2

Leading from Past to Present

Our current reality is informed by where we have been historically and the vanguard of theorists who influenced today's perspectives. Who are workers and what are they facing today? What is the historical foundation for today's reality? Is it as dismal as some of the statistics suggest? How do organizations embrace the whole person at work and how do they bring work to life? How do leaders create the context for joy? This chapter describes our current conundrum of work and life with these questions in mind.

WORKERS TODAY

Work is changing and so are workers. Spillover is the norm for all kinds of workers—men and women, parents and those without children. Workers have full lives and identities both inside and outside of work, and understanding these realities is an important starting point.

AN INCLUSIVE VIEW

Employees are experiencing spillover from work to home and from home to work. In one of my own sets of research, I found women face more spillover than men and those at higher income levels tend to face less spillover.

In addition, in 2007, the American Psychological Association found that 43 percent of Americans were sensing interference from family to job and 52 percent were experiencing interference from job to family.¹

This spillover is occurring for men and women, and for parents and nonparents. Most research efforts, articles, and books focus on mothers. They leave out men and they leave out those who don't have children. However, the need for successful navigation of work and life is relevant to all.

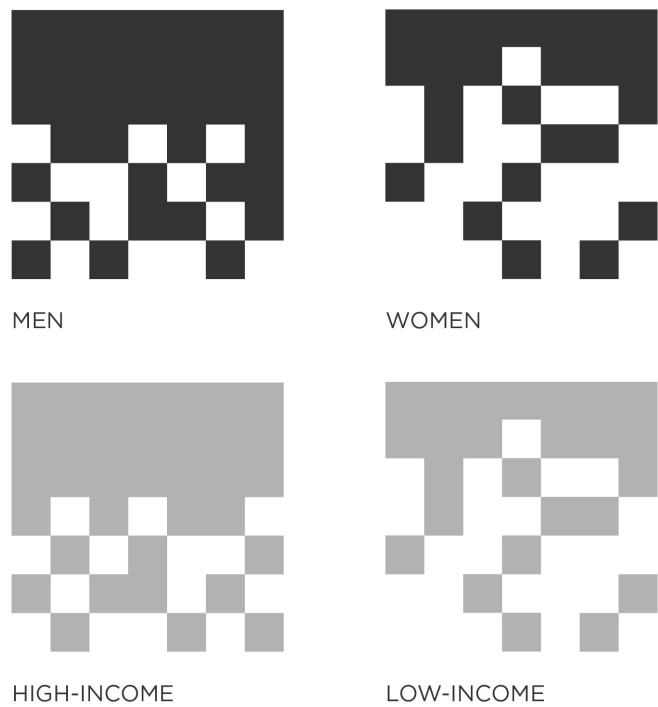


Figure 2-1 Job/Family Spillover Patterns based on gender and income

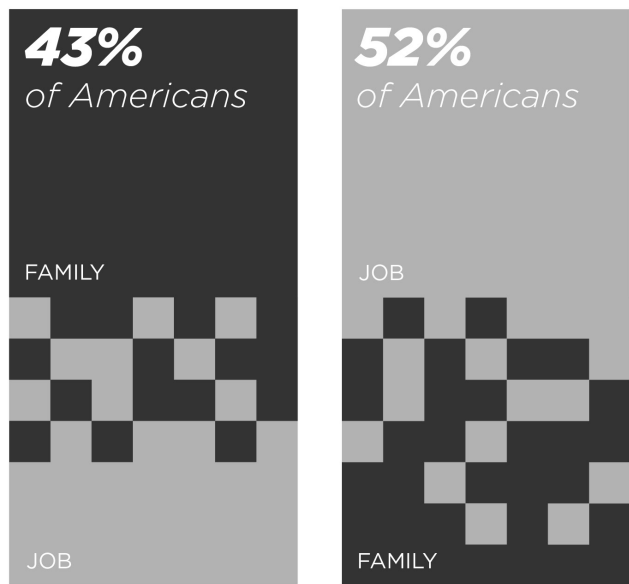


Figure 2-2 Job/Work Spillover Patterns overall

A broader view is necessary. Employees need support for a variety of life responsibilities, not just child care. A full spectrum of life must be attended to, and employees will be most fulfilled when they have time and energy to: spend time with friends, be involved in hobbies, continue education, care for elders, nurture relationships with mates, serve their communities, contribute toward volunteer efforts, and even attend to mundane tasks like housework or fixing the garage door.

EMPLOYEES WITH CHILDREN

Most workers do have children, and in the majority of two-parent families, both parents work outside the home. According to one study, only 20 percent of families fit the traditional breadwinner–caregiver model.² The vast majority of women with children under the age of eighteen work outside the home. (The figures are 80 percent to 90 percent depending on which data set you consult.) For employees with children, their experience of work serves as context for their children. Parents' working conditions, wages, and work hours affect children's emotional and mental functioning and well-being. When parents feel better about the work they are doing, they tend to bring this experience home. Whether or not a parent is satisfied with his or her work is more important to the quality of family life than when or how parents work.

For employees with children, school schedules also create a significant constraint. Most schools are still based on an agrarian calendar and do not conform to the typical work hours of parents. Parents encounter problems when schools close for weather or teacher in-service days and, as a result, parents must adjust their schedules to accommodate changes in the school's schedule. Parents want to participate in school activities and this involvement is important to their senses of self. Children's school performance is also positively impacted when parents are involved in school activities. All of this should matter to companies. When companies offer work-life supports, workers perform better, given all the parenting demands they face. Companies should also take a very long-term view of their contribution to the community. The children of today's employees are tomorrow's employees and future adult members of the broader community of which we are all a part. The parent whom an organization supports today through work-life approaches may be raising the daughter who will cure cancer or the son who will be the next brilliant inventor.

FULL LIVES

Employees are multifaceted and companies should treat them as such. They have full lives of which work is only a part. D.J. DePree, the founder of Herman Miller, tells a moving story of the Millwright.³ It has become a legend in the Herman Miller culture and shapes belief systems and norms within the organization. The Millwright, Herman Rummelt, was a mechanic who kept the factory machines operational. In 1927, around 7 a.m. one day, Herman Rummelt died of a sudden heart attack. D.J. went to visit the Millwright's wife, who showed him handcrafts the Millwright had made and poetry the Millwright had written. This was a defining experience for D.J., who says, "I came to the conclusion that we are all extraordinary." The best leaders recognize this multifaceted nature of people they employ.

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT

How did we get here? A sense of history grounds these discussions of work and life.

A LOSS OF SELF

Consider the work of Karl Marx. In the 1800s he conceived of a world in which workers were alienated and disconnected from their work because they lost connection to the value of their outputs. Employees were separated from the products of their labor because they did not own them. Deskilling of production meant that work was only a means of subsistence, not fulfillment. In addition, they were estranged from other workers since they were in competition with others for pay, jobs, and ultimately survival. Marx compared workers to animals that were used simply for their physical abilities and not for their minds or their passions. Marx argued there was a "loss of self" because work conditions also destroyed workers' ties to family and friends.⁴ This sounds like a dismal reality, but is our current reality any less dismal? Consider these facts:

- 62 percent of mothers and 73 percent of fathers say that work is a significant form of stress⁵
- 68 percent of women and 70 percent of men say that work is a significant form of stress⁶

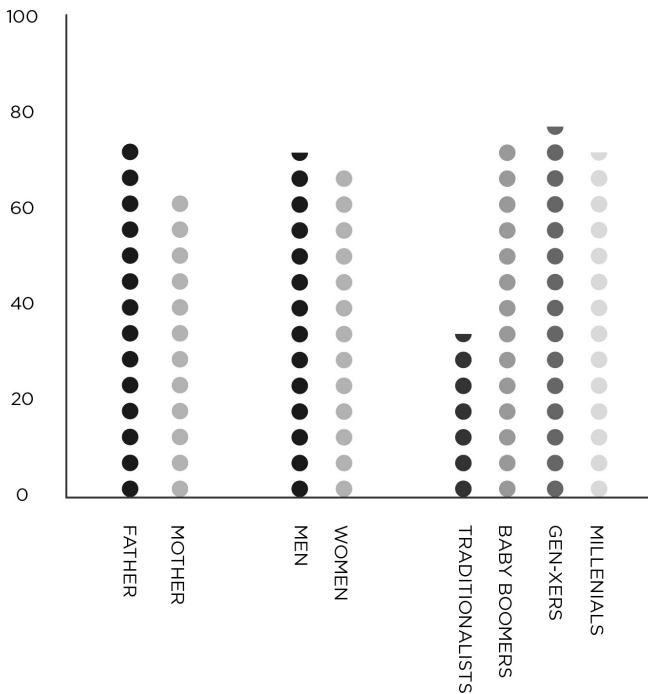


Figure 2-3 Stressed at Work

- 31 percent of the mature generation (sometimes called traditionalists), 73 percent of baby boomers, 75 percent of gen Xers, and 71 percent of millennials say that work is a significant source of stress⁷
- 51 percent of employees say they have been less productive at work due to stress and 41 percent report they feel stressed or tense during their day at work⁸
- Absenteeism, turnover, reduced productivity, and costs for medical, legal, and insurance coverage due to job stress are estimated at a \$300 billion cost annually to U.S. industry⁹
- Worldwide, only 13 percent of employees across 142 countries are engaged (meaning committed and emotionally involved) in their jobs¹⁰
- Within the American workforce, only 28 percent of workers are “engaged,” with 53 percent “not engaged” and 19 percent “actively disengaged”¹¹
- U.S. employers lose between \$450 and \$550 billion per year in productivity¹² due to absenteeism, lack of motivation, or employees who aren’t giving their all

- In interviews with 36,280 employees in eighteen countries, only 3 percent experience high levels of self-governance in their organizations; this was true across countries, industries, economic context, language, and ethnicities¹³

These facts are the result of organizations making demands on employees and the lack of support being provided in turn. There are exceptions, of course, but taken together, the statistics are telling. Rick Wartzman, executive director of the Drucker Institute¹⁴ describes how the social contract has changed:

The idea of work-life integration, as opposed to work-life balance, is right on. Businesses today need to concentrate on supporting workers in new ways because so many of the things they used to do in this regard have disappeared. The context is really important. Historically, big American companies supported workers through a rich social contract, but today, even the most effectively run companies can't afford to do this anymore. Job security, in the form of lifetime employment; medical benefits with no out-of-pocket expenses for the employee; and guaranteed pensions are almost all gone now. The social contract has eroded tremendously over the past thirty to forty years.¹⁵

A recent paper by Peter Fleming¹⁶ suggests a new problem of “biocracy” in which the spillover from work to home causes employees to be exploited in ever-increasing ways, even after they leave the workplace for the day. In his view, technology allows organizations and capitalism to tap personal time, interests, and skills. “Biopower” (a term originally coined by theorist Michel Foucault) on the part of organizations allows for all aspects of employees’ lives to be tapped—in a way that is intrusive and violates appropriate boundaries between work and life. The positive side of this equation is that those employees who are passionate about their work will contribute discretionary time—the time during which they can choose to do anything—to work. How do organizations tap that discretionary time in a way that is positive and not exploitative of employees? This is the power of effective work-life supports, which I will discuss.

A PERSON-CENTERED VIEW

In the meantime, what are the ways companies should view work and workers? After Marx, a more person-centered, optimistic framework was born. It suggested that leaders must value workers for their contributions and recommended that employees participate in more decision making. In 1933, Emile Durkheim took a stand by saying that workers could contribute value in their work through the unique ways they express themselves. This sounds like an early version of abundance, in which workers are bringing their passions and interests to the workplace and engaging completely. Durkheim also asserted that social relationships drive and solidify economic ties. This is fitting, as most people spend a majority of their waking hours at work and form relationships there.

Consider the effects when companies attend to employees. The “Hawthorne Effect” was conceived based on a study in 1941 in which a researcher named George C. Homans studied employees at the Western Electric Company. Homans was interested in studying productivity so he adjusted light levels at a factory. At first he found that as he turned up the lighting levels slightly, productivity increased. However, as he continued the experiment, a funny thing happened: as he turned *down* the lighting, productivity also improved. Eventually, the factory workers were practically working in the dark, but still their productivity was increasing. Homans and his team scratched their heads and assessed what was happening. They went away to think and stopped adjusting the lighting levels. It was at this point that productivity returned to its prior levels. What was happening? Productivity was increasing not because of the lighting levels—whether they were high or low. Productivity was increasing because of the time and attention being paid to the workers. The very process of being studied contributed to the employees feeling valued, and this was the cause of the increased productivity. This example harkens back to the friend of mine who takes each of her staff members out to lunch once per quarter. They feel valued. They feel attended to, and their work shows it.

In 1943, psychologist Abraham Maslow argued for the importance of work that would help employees reach self-actualization. Douglas McGregor, who studied management and motivation in the late 1950s, also said that people should be viewed as motivated, responsible, mature, competent, and hard working. Treating employees in a way that embraced this positive view was better than treating them as untrustworthy or seeking to

be in control of every detail of their work. The reason this history is important is because it demonstrates the lasting nature of these ideas and continuity over time. Through the past, we can better understand our present and our future. By considering how we bring work to life, we are standing on the shoulders of some of the best and brightest management theorists.

One of the tasks of leadership is to create the conditions in which workers can flourish and bring creative potential to their work. A “whole person” mentality, such as D.J. DePree held, views workers as multifaceted. This view acknowledges the talents, personalities, and lives that employees have beyond the work they are expected to perform. Workers must be connected to the broader view and meaning in their work in order to feel fulfilled. They also need the opportunity to be supported holistically in their life, of which work is a part.

IN SUM

Leaders have the opportunity to bring work to life for their employees. During these turbulent, changing times, leaders and organizations must shape a new experience of work for workers. What if companies could create a positive work experience for everyone, men and women, parents and nonparents? What if leaders could help employees find ways to integrate the demands created by spillover, schedule constraints, and the need for fulfilling lives outside of work? What if work were a point of joy and vitality, rather than an additional demand? What if work could be fulfilling and sustaining, rather than burdensome? What if employees had a level of autonomy and self-determination that created a sense of capacity and well-being? This is what it would mean to bring work to life, and providing work-life supports is one way to accomplish this type of new reality for workers.

[Click to purchase *Bring Work to Life by Bringing Life to Work*
by Tracy Brower](#)

For orders of 20 copies or more, contact jill@bibliomotion.com