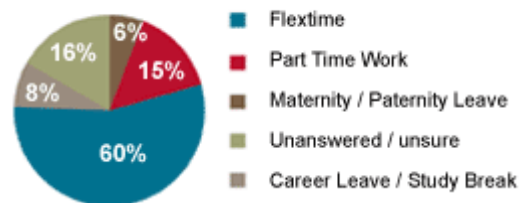


Flexible work patterns the key to staff retention

12 October 2005

Providing employees with flexible work arrangements remains the best way for Australian employers to retain staff and provide them with greater levels of job satisfaction, an Institute of Chartered Accountants survey has found.

Policy Preferences for Achieving Work/Life Balance



The survey revealed 85 per cent of Australian employees surveyed believed that flexible work arrangements would keep them working longer for an organisation. Some 55 per cent cited flextime as the best organisational policy their employer could provide to achieve a better work/life balance, while only 8 per cent cited career leave and 6 per cent maternity or paternity leave.

Career Impact

	Yes	No	Total
Male	68	46	114
Female	99	105	204
Total	167 (52%)	151 (48%)	318

Retention

		Yes	No	Total
18-29 yrs	Male	6	42	48
	Female	12	69	81
	Total	18	111	129
30-39 yrs	Male	8	34	42
	Female	11	87	98
	Total	19	121	140
40-49 yrs	Male	6	11	17
	Female	2	17	19
	Total	8	28	36
50-59yrs	Male	1	6	7
	Female	1	5	6
	Total	2	11	13
TOTAL		47 (14%)	271(85%)	318

The survey canvassed the views of more than 300 members from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia from organisations with less than 25 employees right up to those with more than 1000 employees. Opinions were sought on flexible work practices, sustainability of working hours and work/life balance.

Institute CEO, Mr. Stephen Harrison, said the findings sent a clear message to Australian employers that flexible work policies were central to attracting and retaining a strong work force.

“The survey reinforces to employers that in order to compete in the war for talent they must offer employees tangible choices in work practices otherwise they risk continuing shortages of good people to service their client needs,” Mr Harrison said.

“In an environment where there are four jobs available for every candidate, these findings clearly show what work practices employees are seeking. In addition, by adopting such work practices employers may also be addressing dire skill shortages by attracting experienced retirees back into the work force with flexible work place policies,” he said.

The research revealed that 62 per cent of respondents would not be prepared to take a lower hourly pay rate to be able to work flexibly or part time. Respondents were almost evenly split on the career impact of flexible work arrangements, with 52 per cent saying it would have a negative impact, compared with 48 per cent saying it would not.

In terms of overtime, 69 per cent of respondents work nights and 46 per cent weekends, while a total 52 per cent of respondents believed working less hours was viable.

In terms of the impact of these working hours, 46 per cent of respondents said their current working practices were adversely affecting their health, while 26 per cent indicated their personal relationships had been affected. Overall 49 per cent of respondents indicated they did not have a work life balance.

Informal Structures to Achieve Work/Life Balance



For the best structure to achieve a better work/life balance, 58 per cent of respondents cited working from home as the preferred method. And some 49 per cent responded that a better quality of life was the most popular rationale for seeking more flexible working hours.