Work Life Balance:

Does Information Communications Technology (ICT) enable achieving a better Work Life Balance?

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Declaration

I herby certify this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study

leading to the award of Honours Degree in Business is entirely my own work and has not

been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and

acknowledged within the text of my work.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction.

Organisations today require great flexibility, multi-skilling, team working and a rethinking of the way in which work is structured to meet the fast changing and competitive nature of doing business in the 21st century. The effects of globalisation and the rapid changes that technology has brought to every aspect of our lives has created new pressures on organisations and its employees on how best to meet customers' needs and trying to have a balance and have boundaries around working and non working time.

In Fynes et al (1996 p.1) the authors state that "the rapid rate of technological change is impacting the nature and structure of work, and in many instances is revoulionising the world of work". The authors ask these key questions in their book "Flexible Working Lives" namely:

- How compatible are the driving forces for flexibility.

- Employers seek worker flexibility in terms of effectiveness and gains to the organisation through employee multi-skilling and hours worked in order to remain competitive.

- Employees, on the other hand, may be more concerned with flexibility as it affects their freedom of choice around balancing work and non work time.

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My interest in the area of work life balance is based on observing what has been happening in the past two decades in the areas of how people need to juggle work and non work time and the impact of changes brought by technology. How the internet and the availability and use of wireless technologies such as mobile phone, blackberry and the ability to be "always" switched on has affected organisations and individuals. I work in a legal professional service organisation, which is based in Dublin, as head of their IT Department. I am aware of the demands for more technology systems has grown that allow people to be more available to their clients (clients is the term used in a legal firm for its customers). The nature of business today is that it must be able to respond quickly, expertly and efficiently to its customers' demands. Also today, as the review of the literature on work life balance will illustrate, most people working today who have responsibility for children are from dual income families. Therefore, there are huge pressures on people who work in pressurised and customer focused job and who are also parents to try and juggle work and parental responsibilities. In Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis some interesting responses illustrate this point of how work and non work is balanced through using Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The objective of the research into how people use ICT to balance this juggling act of work and non work time was to find out if ICT enables one to achieve a balance or if the opposite occurs and that the availability of all the various ICT systems actually contribute to extending a person's working day.

There is a lot of interest from organisations today in work life balance issue. There are a lot of flexible work arrangements in place as part of national and EU legislation such as statutory maternity leave and other non mandatory initiatives such as flextime. See Appendix 5 for a list of statutory and non statutory types of flexible initiatives.

CHAPTER 2: LITERARY REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine existing literature in relation to Work Life Balance and what changes in today's world of work necessitates or requires employers and employees to avail of work life balance initiatives. During the research I discovered different terms are used to describe balancing work and non work. Terms such as work life balance, family friendly working arrangements, flexible working are commonly used terms. In this dissertation I will use the term "work life balance" which is also often abbreviated to WLB.

A major study was published in October 2003 by the National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies. The National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies at the level of the Enterprise was established following negotiations between Government and the Social Partners under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. The agreement recognised that the "development of appropriate measures to assist in reconciling work and family life is important to underpinning economic, social and equality objectives. The challenge in developing family-friendly policies relevant to the level of the enterprise is to find ways of developing approaches that reflect the reality of the workplace". The Minister for Labour Affairs, Frank Fahey, T.D., said when launching the report that "the valuable work of the Committee to date is recognised by both Government and the Social Partners. (worklifebalance.ie/2003).

2.2 Definition of Work Life Balance

"Work Life Balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside of work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society". (Employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk.).

2.3 Changing nature of work

In the past twenty years the world of work has changed enormously, and is changing constantly today and will continue to change for the foreseeable future. To quote **Benjamin Disraeli** "Change is inevitable". (Quotedb.com). All organisation, small, medium and large global organisations all have to respond to and are affected by globalisation and the shift to a 24/7/365 world. Consumers of goods and services today, and with 24/7 access to a technology medium such as the Internet, forces organisations to also be able to able to provide that type of continuous service. Fynes et al. (1996, p.1) discussed the emerging trends at that time and the need for employers to "concentrate on measures that promote efficiency and effectiveness". At that time organisational management thinking and trends included downsizing, business process re-engineering, the virtual corporation and the flexible worker. Fynes et al, (1996, p.1) also found in their research that the "rapid rate of technological change is also impacting on the nature of and structure of work and in many instances is revolutionising the world of work". In a paper called "Changes in working trends over the past decade" by

Trish McOrmond, Office for the National Statistics published (2004) she listed the following main areas that have influenced changes in patterns of work.

The growth and widespread use of technology, a shift away from manufacturing based economy to a service-based one, the standard Monday to Friday, nine to five model no longer suits the shift towards a 24/7/365 Global world. The number of women that now participate in the workforce has risen dramatically. McOrmond (2004, p.25) cited in her article that the "perceived growth in non-standard work might be a growing acknowledgement of established working patterns and the role these play in the economy as well as the function they play in allowing people to balance working and non-working time and the needs of families and individuals".

Information Technology and the use of the Internet have changed the way work is structured today. Daft (2006, p.546) in his "New Era of Management" states the importance for organisations that "the strategic use of information technology is one of the defining aspects of organisational success in today's world" Information Technology and e-business have changed the way people and organisations work and this change does present new challenges for managers and employees. The availability of the Internet on a 24/7/365 basis has put pressures on companies to meet market and customer demands. The Internet has created a borderless world and business can be conducted any time and any place. This always available, always switched on with the availability of Wireless Internet access (WiFi) means employees, particularly senior manager and specialist type

employees, can always be contacted by the use of wireless technology. Daft (2006). This development has both positives and negatives for the employee and this particular aspect of the changing world of work and the impact of technology is discussed in more detail in other parts of this dissertation.

2.4   Corporate Culture.

The culture of an organisation is very important in determining how people work and their attitude to work. Some organisations, and in particular professional services firms, are generally known to have a long hours attitude to work which is a result of having to respond to pressures to meet deadlines for clients and to remain competitive.

In an article in People Management (2003) Joy Persaud wrote about Microsoft and their attitude to work life balance. Microsoft's UK Director of People and Culture, Steve Harvey said in the interview for the article that work-life balance isn't simply about how you balance your day-to-day life, it is about taking responsibility at a personal level for balancing your life and trusting employees. He points out that as long as people meet their targets and are responsible about their work that this should mean that employees can have flexibility in where and when they work. A senior manager who works for Microsoft in Ireland, (Breen, E, 2008, pers.comm., 4 April) that this author meet at an IT Conference in April 2008, echoed Mr Harvey's view and told me that the approach to work in Microsoft is on delivering on targets and not on "presenteeism". Employees that hold senior positions are expected to take responsibility for how they carry out

work and they can choose to work away from the office sometimes as well as working from the desk or office.

The culture at Microsoft is different to other organisations and particularly so for professional organisations such as legal firms, where a culture of long hours and staying late to finish work for clients is very standard and expected. However, a reoccurring theme seems to be that most people seem to agree that working long hours, whether in the office or working remotely, causes stress and that it is not a useful response to heavy workloads. James Brockett (2007, p.17) wrote that "evidence suggests that the longer you work, the less effective you will be, and the only real outcome is a rise in stress." Technology makes the work-life balancing difficult. With mobile phones, blackberries, laptops, wireless access, people are always plugged in, tuned in, ready to go all the time. Carroll (2003, p.16) suggested that "such constant connectivity can ruin us, both professionally and personally. Studies show that increased connectivity leads to more responsibility, more pressure and hence more stress. In the end it costs employers big money and that it is time companies adopt a culture ensuring they benefit from connectivity while still giving people clear time away from work.

In a study on Work Life Balance: senior management champions or laggards? conducted by Eileen Drew, Trinity College Dublin (2003, p.262) the following is what emerged in that study on Corporate Culture and WLB. "Senior managers who participated in the study generally supported the need for a culture change in the organisation they work for that departs from the prevailing reliance on

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"presenteeism" to one which places an emphasis on performance results/outcomes".
This seems to tie in with what Steve Harvey said in his interview referred to above.

2.5 Changing role for the manager

The rapid changing nature of work today and the pressures on organisations to deal with internal and external demands to, on the one hand be able to offer flexibility to their employees and to also be able to respond to and meet demands from their customers. These demands presents new challenges for organisations and its managers and HRM department. Organisations must respond to the dynamic changes thrust upon them in order to ensure a means of survival and continuity. In a research paper titled "Flexible working; changing the manger's role" the Johnson (2004) expressed the view that organisations need to have a vision of the future organisation and the future of the worker in order to begin to manage the necessary structural, technological and psychological changes involved. The role of line managers is also discussed in her research paper.

Tiernan et al. (2001) lists the key responsibilities and duties of managers as being:

Planning, Organising, Staffing, Leading and Controlling

These have traditionally been seen as being essential competencies required by line managers and are used daily by managers to manage their team. The challenge now for organisations and their "line managers" is whether these competencies are enough when managing diverse teams where members work away from the office and on different times and conditions to other team members. Johnson (2004, p.725) states that "management is required to consider two aspects, the operational

management of the individual worker engaged in non-standard working arrangements and the need to address the competencies required by the line manager to perform in this new managerial role. Johnson (2004) cited Stredwick and Ellis (1998) who discuss the shift in the nature of the flexible employee to entrepreneur and they talk about the transition from employee package to employee-entrepreneur package; from the formal job role to bounderless role; from written job description and conformity to risks/results and from following procedures to using creativity and initiative. Competencies such as establishing mutual trust, flexibility, leadership in directing a mixed team of standard and non-standard members, and excellent communication are very important for a manager to possess today as well as the traditionally defined competencies listed above. Johnson (2004) in her study discussed the need to provide training and support for managers that will allow them to understand and manage more diverse working practices and which are aligned with the business strategy to ensure successful implementation and management of flexible approaches to work. In Ms Johnson's study attention was drawn to the need for organisations to be cognisant of changes in organisational culture emanating from a reconstruction of the ideal worker and the need to support the individual workers and the managers in learning how to adapt to new working arrangements.

The advances in information and communication technologies is allowing for more flexibility in how some jobs are performed. With fast communication and high speed computer systems available it means that for some types of work that the employee does not have to be present in the office. For example providing support, selling

services or goods to an organisation's customers can now be done really from any location and at any time. A lot of organisations who need to provide 24/7 support to their customers, for example banks providing on line banking and support, this type of work can be done by employees working flexible hours and the location is not important. For this reason a lot of financial and insurance companies have outsourced support to an external partner who may or may not be located in the organisation's domestic country. The challenge is how managers assess performance and measure results. Johnson (2004) in her study concludes that critical to the effectiveness of managing away-workers is the re-negotiation or movement away from traditional psychological contracts to flexible ones at critical stages in the career transition of the worker. Johnson also raises the question of how organisations manage the careers of workers who are not always present. Other issues that arise for managers around managing home-based (not present) employees include on-going training, discipline, promotion and ensuring that they do not become isolated from other team members and the organisation are all challenges for today's manager.

As the demographics of countries change where the population is aging, where there is also a high percentage of highly skilled and educated women participating in the workforce, young and highly educated male and female graduates entering the workforce with different expectations to previous generations. How they want to work and what they expect from the world of work; all these factors are creating challenges for organisations today. (Ireland today is being shaped by these demographic and societal changes.) This is especially so in relation to how managers and HR manage

different types of teams where some work standard and non standard time, others work remotely or part remotely. This demand for a flexible approach to work is to help employees balance pressures of work, leisure and family life. These new flexible approaches to work present challenges for managers.

Johnson (2004, p.729) in her study suggests that "organisational and work changes frequently impact heavily on the employee's psychological contract and also states that "as employees adjust to new working arrangements, they will appraise their psychological contracts in order to renegotiate both employees' and their employer's level of commitment and sense of obligation. Conventional management thinking has been inclined to associate short term, part time, flexible and temporary, non-permanent working with "new" or transactional psychological contracts. Johnson (2004, p.729) cited (MacDonald and Makin (2000) "employees holding such contracts are unlikely to have high levels of commitment to the organisation". If this is true then organisations and managers have a serious problem in motivating and getting results from employees who are working in a non standard way. Johnson (2004) in reporting on research conducted by MacDonald and Makin (2000) looked at the commitment level of "flexible" employees in the holiday sector. Their findings contradicted this thinking and they discovered that there was no significant difference between those working in standard more traditional type of employment and those working in a non-permanent and flexible way. Johnson (2004).

However that is just one study and further research would need to be carried out to ascertain if this change in the world of work does have implications in this area and

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whether employees . that have flexible working arrangements will become less committed and loyal to their employer.

2.6   Psychological Contract

A concern for managers is how committed are "off-site" and part-time workers and does this new approach to work also mean that employees will reappraise their psychological contracts in order to renegotiate both their own and their employer's level of commitment and sense of obligation, trust and emotional involvement. One area that was referred to a lot during the literary review for this thesis was around the affect on what has been traditionally understood by the term psychological contract. The psychological contract has been described as "An individual's belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party ... a belief that some form of promise has been made and that the terms and conditions of the contract have been accepted by both parties". The psychological contract theory may be differentiated and categorised as being either transactional or relational. Robinson (1994, p.216)

Relational contracts are based on emotional involvement between the individual and the employer and encompasses factors such as commitment, loyalty and trust in management on behalf of the employee, in return for competent management, opportunity and a sense of belonging.

Transactional terms cover the monetary and performance related aspects and are usually short term. Robinson (1994, p.216).

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2.7 Role of Human Resource Management

Since the 1990s in Ireland there has been a huge development in the area called Human Resource Management (HRM) and the driver for this was the presence of a high number of global companies (mainly from the US) which was a result of the Industrial Development's policy of attracting foreign investment into Ireland. These companies were very much focussed on offering good pay and conditions to their employees as a strategy to both attract and retain staff. Emphasis on concepts such as "best practice" and "employer of choice" has encouraged organisations to consider flexible work practices. (The National Framework Committee for Work/Life Balance Policies, 2003)

Human Resource Managers have over the past twenty years been adapting to changes in the structure of organisations to meet demands from senior management, employees, Government, EU, trade unions, social partners and advocacy groups. The area of flexible working arrangements has seen huge changes in this time frame. The drivers often cited for requests for flexibility around work and balancing other areas of ones life is usually to do with a need for employees to balance or reconcile work, family and other non-work commitments. O'Brien and Hayden (2007) cited Thomas and Ganster (1995) psychological explanation where they refer to it as "interrole conflict". The authors of this 1995 study also observed that "potential for conflict and stress increases as most workers struggle with the demands of balancing paid work and home responsibilities."

As well as HRM responding to changes in the structure of organisations and work and pressures of the groups mentioned in the first paragraph in 2.7 above, HRM must be equipped to respond to these changes and requests. They also need to be aware of effects such as stress that results from employees trying to balance different roles in their lives, how equipped are the organisations managers in dealing with teams that may be working all or part of the time away from the office. Catton (2007 p.17) wrote about the need for employers and employees needing to think of work life balance initiatives as being part of an "overall engagement strategy, not just the latest fad" and that the "strategy will only become embedded if business leaders and HR professionals can make a strong case for them, by focusing on key areas such as job design, training and development and performance culture and creating a sense of community amongst staff."

Catton (2007 p.17) also discussed the affects of the demographic and sociological trends over the past decade and in particular the increase in the number of women in the workforce, aging population and changing role of men. She also, which is interesting, found in her research on work life balance that the "desire of younger generations not to be married to the job" indicates that providing the right conditions for work life balance is very important in attracting and retaining talent. Catton (2007 p.16) cited a ICM poll released by the Equal Opportunities Commission, that three-quarters of people living in the UK think that balancing work and family responsibilities will be come harder in 10 years time because there will be more mothers in the workplace, fathers will have to be more hands-on, an increasing elderly population will need care and support. Also the impact of globalisation, rapid rise of

technology and competition for attracting and keeping staff will mean that organisations and its Human Resource departments will have to be well prepared to meet ever, and fast, changing environments.

O'Brien and Hayden (2007, p.209) in their research cited Wise and Bond (2003) who said the four main drivers for introducing work-life policies include:

(a)   Recruitment, enables becoming an "employer of choice" and countering negative work practices such as longer working hours

(b)   Retention – being more responsive to workforces changing and diverse needs

(c)   Supportive working environment – improving organisational culture with resultant heightened morale and motivation among staff.

(d)   Equality – improving access through inclusiveness.

HRM departments and HR managers need to ensure that they are fully aware of all the flexible choices that exist as part of their approach at what is available and what can be offered in terms of flexible working arrangements to staff.

2.8   Work Life Balance and Technology

In the past thirty years organisations have implemented computer systems. In the 1980s the introduction of technology was very slow and implementation was generally

on a very small scale because it was expensive and because there was a very low level of knowledge and experience available. Also there was not the same pressure and expectation from customers as they themselves were also only embracing technology slowly. It tended to be introduced in manufacturing, supply, ordering/sales and finance type areas of an organisation. The impact of IT on employees was, therefore, very much restricted to certain areas and a small number of people.

Gradually over the years the speed of implementing and adopting technology accelerated and today in most organisations everyone uses some piece of new technology. The availability of the Internet has also had a huge impact on the spread of and acceptances of technology into all parts of people's lives and not just work. Information technology continues to evolve and new concepts and applications are emerging every day. Some recent trends in information technology that are having the greatest impact are wireless applications (Wifi), new communication tools such as blogs, wikis and the "borderless" aspect to using systems such as the Internet. Information technology is profoundly affecting the way organisations are now structured. Daft (2006).

2.8.1 Is ICT an enabler in achieving a better balance between work and non work time? Is this a Myth?

With the advances in the areas of Information Technology in the past two decades, and the availability of technologies such as the Internet, email and in more recent years availability of wireless technology, an interesting debate is whether the ability to be able to do work any place any time helps workers to

achieve a better balance between work and non work time. Most articles written about work life balance, when ICT is discussed, focus on how employees use technology to help them balance family commitments with work. There is a concern that being able to do work any place, any time will put a burden on employees to be always available to read and respond to email, take calls when they are meant to be not working. In an article in the HRFOCUS Journal (March 1999 p.4) the author discusses important areas for both employers and employees. The"virtual office never closes. And that's good news and bad news for workers and employers alike." Businesses will have to find new ways to define and measure productivity. Home offices also raise questions of who owns, maintains and pays for equipment such as laptops, beepers, fax machines and cellular phones.

The biggest challenge created by home offices, however, may be the increased worker stress from overwork. "The virtual office never closes, opening the potential for abuse if employers require homework above the normal working hours. We need to make sure that workers use technology--not the other way around," reads the Labor Department's report, Futurework: Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century.

"Devices such as beepers and e-mail can make it difficult to escape work and even harder to catch up with missed work," says Deborah Parkinson, Research Associate for the Conference Board's HR/Organizational Division and author of another report, Work-Family Roundtable (2008).

2.8.2 Does ICT "blur" the boundaries between work and non work time?

This is a very hard question to answer. In some organisations there is a culture of working long hours anyway and especially in professional service type organisations such as accountancy and legal firms. There has always been a culture of people working late to turn around work for clients. Whether ICT has enabled the "blurring" of the boundaries between work and non work time may be down to a person's own approach to work. In a study conducted by the CIPD in the UK in 2003, they found that the proportion of long hours being worked has risen from 10% in 1998 to 25% in 2003. Mike Emmott, Head of Employee Relations at the CIPD (UK) says that "once you get into the pattern of working long hours it's hard to move out of it" and he also says that the "onset of new technology has been both a benefit and a hindrance to a better work-life balance. It helps to facilitate flexibility in many jobs because things like mobiles and the internet mean that you can work from home or while abroad. But at the same time it is hard to escape the world of work when you can be contacted any time and any place. You can't police the boundaries between work and the rest of your life to the same extent as you could in previous years because of these new technologies." Accountancy Magazine (November 2003. p.46).

2.8.3 *Does being able to work remotely extend the working day?*

Does the "always on and available" mode with the availability of wireless and freely available broadband made it harder to switch off from work?

Mark Bittman (The New York Times March 2, 2008) in his article titled "I need a Virtual Break. No, Really" wrote about reaching a point where he knew he was in "always on and available" mode and has researched this area of how addicted we have become to using technology all the time and even when we don't need to. He described himself as a "techno-addict" and having developed what he calls "Internet addiction disorder". Bittmann, in his research consulted with David Levy, a professor in the information school at the University of Washington who says when referring to the always being switched onto technology for work (and possibly also switched on to technology for non-work) "what's going on now is insane" (using the term intentionally). "Living a good life requires a kind of balance, a bit of quiet". "Bittman found when he started to evaluate how he was working and the extent he used technology when not in the office and to "take a vacation from the burden of staying in touch" that he found other people he spoke to also wanted to change their habits and to get back to having quality time and creating boundaries around work and non-work time.

2.9   Work and non-work in Professional Service Organisations

In a research paper written by Wilson et al. (2004) titled "The fallacy of integration: work and non-work in professional services" the authors looked at how new technologies and new ways of working that enabled greater flexibility in the workplace of a professional organisation impacted on employees. The study researched attitudes of young professionals who were being given the chance and the

tools to work flexibly to allow them to better integrate their work and non-work lives; did they embrace or push against this development. Their conclusions are interesting and the following examples are taken from this research.

Kanter's 1977 study (cited by Wilson et al. (2004, p.186) cited (Kanter 1977) stated that "work and non-work have traditionally been considered as separate but interdependent worlds". However, the pressures from living in a 24/7 global world of world has placed new pressures on everyone to fulfil more than one role and in our dual income families today balancing work and family responsibilities is a constant challenge for workers.

Wilson et al. discuss role proliferation and how this has contributed to a blurring between work and non-work and cited Hall and Richter (1998, p.186) "that although a few people can happily accept a total integration of work and non-work, many need some degree of separation between the two domains. Establishing and maintaining boundaries between life domains is essential in the modern business environment to protect one role from interference by another and to enable the individual to act in a way that is appropriate in a given situation. Wilson et al. (2004). This is really a challenge for anyone who is trying to use technology so they can do some of their work away from the office desk but how good they are at setting boundaries and maintaining a demarcation between the worlds of work and non-work. *(Non-work is used to describe all aspects of an individual's life outside their paid occupation).*

How to keep work and non-work life separate demands both discipline and flexibility. Most people try to keep both areas separate but in practice the two areas do overlap. The challenge is limiting how much one lets them overlap. In the survey conducted by Wilson et al. (2004) some feedback on how those interviewed managed to create boundaries were interesting. Some respondents stated that "work starts when I turn on the computer and finishes when they put an absent message on the phone and turned the computer off." Wilson et al. (2004, p.192) suggested that this quote illustrates two-technology based boundaries: that of work defined by being in communication and that of the laptop or mobile phone as an artefact symbolising work. A common view that came across was that the respondents to the survey felt that they were working at home when they switched on their computer, answered calls on their mobile phones and for those that used blackberries when they read and reply to email messages when away from the office. Wilson et al. (2004) used the term "artefact" for technology devices that symbolises objects that intrude into the non-work area. Wilson et al. discussed how effective people are when working "any place and at any time" and that technology may perhaps hinder effective working rather than enhance it. "Individuals seem to be more effective when they are allowed to work within defined roles, bounded and defined by specific characteristics which are represented by particular behaviours or artefacts." Wilson et al. (2004). The authors do state that this finding is a tentative one and further research is required to investigate this phenomenon in more detail with a wider population.

2.10 Future of work and achieving a balance

Barbara Ankoff wrote in an article on Work Life Balance (November 2006, p.32) that "study after study shows that it is extremely cost effective and makes good business sense to provide flexibility to your employees. Employee morale, employee productivity, retention, historical knowledge – all of those things improve when people feel they have more control over when, where and how they work. Ankoff (2006, p.32) cited Mary Finlay, Deputy CIO at Partners HealthCare in the same article saying "that flexible work options build a workforce that's willing to go the extra mile".

Most business owners and managers being consulted and writing on work life balance issues seem to agree that in order for organisations to meet the constant pressures from the external environment (its customers and market competition) and its internal environment (its employees), how work is carried out today needs to be structured to meet these new demands. How information technology enables new and flexible approaches to work needs to be a key part of any organisation's strategy. Wilson et al. (2004) in looking at the implications in a study they conducted in a global professional services firm that employed large numbers of young, educated, knowledge workers who were given the chance and the tools to work flexibly found that these professionals pushed against rather than embrace the opportunity to integrate their work and non-work lives. What is going to be a challenge for employers and employees is how to get the balance right. Whereas technology is available to facilitate many different approaches to flexible working through the use of wireless technology, such as mobile phones, blackberries and remote access from home, WiFi

etc., the challenge for both employers and employees will be how to set policies and rules around working away from the office to enable achieving a balance between work and non-work time that is fair and equitable to employees, employers/business owners and society.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the research methodology utilised in the completion of this section of the thesis. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using an online electronic questionnaire survey designed to obtain views of users that use Information Communications Technology (ICT) to do work when away from the office. The key objectives of the survey were to establish the:

- If people understand what is meant by the term "work life balance"

- If they use technology to continue to do work when not in the office and when they are in their "non work" time

- To establish if any trends emerged between men and women surveyed and their views on work life balance

- To get their views on how they see work changing in the future in the context of being able to achieve a balance between work and non work

3.2 Research questionnaire

An electronic questionnaire was developed using SurveyMonkey.Com. The reason for selecting this method was to make it easy to send the questionnaire to participants, allow them to easily complete it and to provide anonymity. Using SurveyMonkey.Com does not record the sender's name when the completed survey is completed.

During the literary review it became evident during the process that there is a lot of material available on the general area of work life balance and flexible approaches to work. However, during the literary review research I discovered that there is not a great deal of material available that is specifically devoted to the area of information technology and whether it enables one to maintain a balance between work and non work. The primary purpose of the questionnaire was to find out if people who frequently used ICT to do work when they are away from the office, if that in their view allows them to attain a balance or if the accessibility of technology in fact extends their working day and blurs the boundaries between work and non work time.

The questionnaire survey sought information on gender, age profile, if participants had family responsibilities and frequency of using ICT systems to do work outside of standard hours and when away from the office.

Copy of the survey questionnaire is attached labelled Appendix 1.

3.3   Research Limitations

Being a part time student and working full time did not allow for a wide population of users to be targeted. Also consideration had to be given to the fact that the intended participants themselves are very busy people, who as solicitors are accountable for their chargeable time. For this reason using SurveyMonkey.Com as referred to in 3.1 above was chosen to make this process easy and quick to complete. A limitation of

using this approach though did mean that more general views could not be gathered as would be the case if face to face interviews had taken place.

The researcher is also depending on those being targeted to complete the survey in a meaning and honest way.

3.4 Ethics

In the process of conducting this research, care was taken to ensure that the four main ethical principles were adhered to as listed below:

- Whether there is harm to participants

- Whether there is a lack of informed consent

- Whether deception is involved

- Whether there is an invasion of privacy (NCIRL Lecture Notes 2008).

Nothing in the questionnaire or the method used to distribute and collect data contained any elements that would cause harm to the participants.

Prior to the distribution of the email survey all participants were contacted by email explaining the purpose of the survey. Appendix 2 attached is a copy of the email.

The process was open and honest to ensure no deception was involved or could be seen to be involved in the request for information or collecting the data.

Participant's privacy was assured and all participants had the option to submit their

responses in a confidential way.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysis of Survey

A total of thirty five questionnaires were distributed to staff via an email survey. The size of the organisation is approximately two hundred and ten employees. Over fifty per cent of the staff complement is made up of qualified solicitors, some newly qualified and others at Senior Associate, Partner and Senior Partner level. Other groups such as HR, IT, Finance, Library and other admin functions make up the remaining staff. Employees that are set up to use remote access IT systems were targeted to get their views and experience of using information communications technology when working away from the office. Heads of each of the support functions were also included in the survey but the majority of the thirty five members of staff surveyed were members of the legal professional staff. The questionnaire was distributed by email with an embedded web link that allowed the participants to access and complete the questionnaire on line. SurveyMonkey.com was the web site used to facilitate this process. Thirty completed questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 86 per cent.

Chart1 gives a breakdown of the response rate by male/female categories.
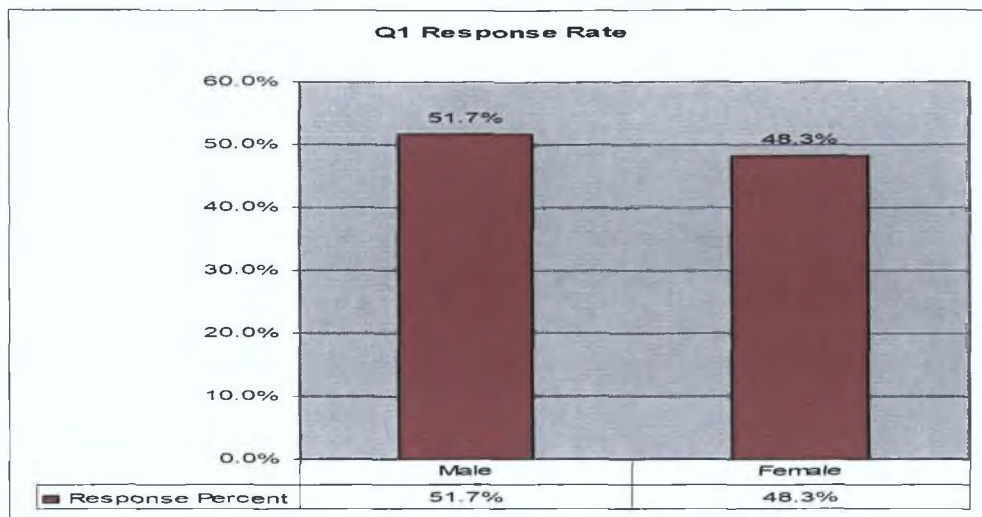
The response rate between male and female is very close and is representative of the breakdown of males/females numbers surveyed.

Table 1

Age Group		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
18 – 30	20.0%	6
31 – 45	66.7%	20
46 – 65	13.3%	4
	Position Held in the Firm?	26
	answered question	**30**
	skipped question	**0**

Table 1 shows the age groups of those surveyed. The high response rate of 20 (66.7%) out the 30 who completed the survey fall into the 31-45 age group is very representative of the age profile of the organisation. This is usually the age profile where people start to settle down and start a family and also when people move into senior roles in an organisation based on their experience and length of service.

Question 3 asked if the participant was married or single and had or had not parental responsibilities. The purpose of this was to see if this would influence when and how they used information technology and if it enabled them to create a balance between work and non work and to help them better manage their dual roles (work and family roles).

Chart 2.

Q3 Percentage with/without parental responsibilities
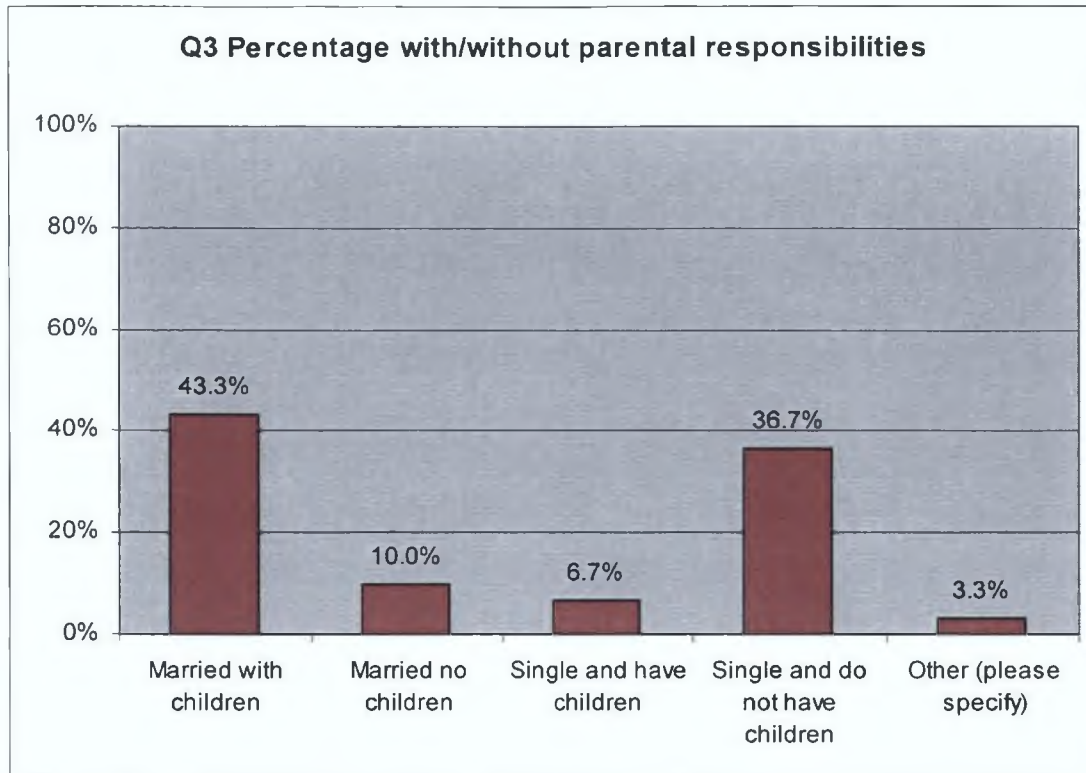
The highest percentage (43.3%) is the group that are both married and have children. Question 10 in the survey was an optional question for participants to complete which asked "What do you think the effects of more availability of information technology will have on your working life in the future. Appendix 3 gives a full list of all the responses. Twenty five out of the thirty who completed the survey gave very good and interesting responses. Only one of the twenty five responses though in Q10 referred to ICT being helpful in balancing time and being able to spend more time with family (**answer 9??** In Appendix 3). This is from a female respondent who has young children and has a partner.

> "*It has positive and negative effects. Without it, I could not spend as much time at home with children and choose to work while they sleep. With them, you are*

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constantly available and if the advances in the last 10 years are replicated in the next, demands of clients for instantaneous responses and constant availability will increase more and more."

Another interesting response from a male respondent, married and who has children is as quoted below

"Other (please specify) - Married and have parental responsibilities for children from time to time but, in general, I rely a great deal on my wife"

This is a very small sampling and cannot be used to make a general statement about whether women still take most of the responsibility for looking after children when both parents work. The objective of this research for this dissertation was to look at work life balance issues in general and specifically to find out if information technology systems is enabling people to create a balance of if it in fact blurs the boundaries between work and non work time. A further research would be required to explore differences between women and male parents to establish which parent (male or female) takes more responsibility.

Q4 asked participants if they agreed with this definition of work life balance

"Work Life Balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside of work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society". (Employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk. 26/2/08).

Table 2

On reading the definition of WLB at the beginning of this survey is this what you understand work life balance to be?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
YES	100.0%	29
NO	0.0%	0
	Other (please specify)	1
	answered question	29
	skipped question	1

All respondents said they agreed with this statement but one respondent listed the below comment "

> *"not really. you always actually have control. you just choose not to exercise it."*

Questions 5 and 6 dealt focused on technology and specifically on what types of devices people used when working away from the office.

Question 5 asked "Do you use any one or all of the following when away from the office? Blackberry, Mobile Phone, Remote Access from home or Wireless access (WiFi) .

Chart 3
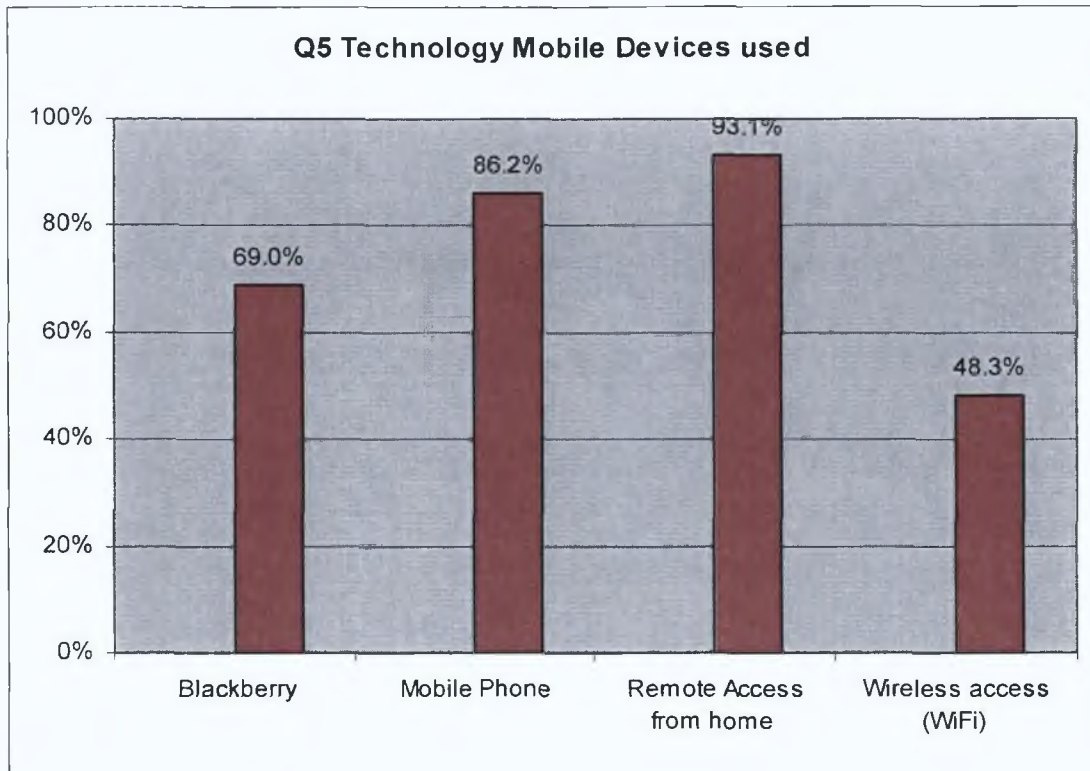
93% said they used Remote Access from home. The reason for this high figure is because it is an easy system to use and it more or less replicates how they use their desk pc (personal computer) in the office. The response times and the how the system in terms of what options and applications are presented, is very close to what they experience in the office. Mobile phone is the next most used technology at 86% and then blackberry. Lastly wireless access (WiFi) at 48.3%.

Question 6 was structured to find out the frequency, outside of standard working time, participants used the various technologies listed in Question 5.

The frequency categories listed in the question included the following:

All of the time - Regularly - Sometimes/Rarely - Never

Table 3

Q6. If you use any or all of the devices listed in Q5 can you select from the following options which best describes your usage outside of standard working time□				
Device	**All of the time**	**Regularly**	**Sometimes/ Rarely**	Never
Mobile Phone	51.9% (14)	**37% (10)**	**11.1% (3)**	0% (0)
Blackberry	50% (12)	**25% (6)**	**8.3% (2)**	16.7% (4)
Remote Access from home	**0% (0)**	84.6% (22)	**11.5% (3)**	3.8% (1)
Remote Access from another Location	0% (0)	11.8% (2)	**70.6% (12)**	17.6% (3)

The analysis displayed in Table 3 shows that mobile phones and the blackberry score the highest (both of 50 per cent) as being used all of the time outside of standard work time. This finding would suggest that both of these devices are the most preferred devices to use when carrying out work away from the office. In casual conversations as part of general interaction

with colleagues, feedback from users is that they find being able to pick up emails when at home helps them to deliver fast responses to clients and also allows them to react quickly to a potent problem with work. This is also mentioned in the feedback to Q10. (See Appendix 3.)

84.6% (22 participants) used remote access regularly which ties in with the type of usage that is see when monitoring system activity as part of standard IT monitoring of system usage. It is also an area where demand is growing as it is easy and is a very reliable technology to use. [1]

70.6% (12 participants) rarely use WiFi and again this is not an unexpected response based of my experience of managing IT Support and Services. It tends to be only used while waiting at airports or in business centres when users are away at conferences. Another reason for the low uptake on the use of WiFi as a means of accessing and doing work when not in the office is because people use their mobile phone and their blackberry extensively; which is borne out for the high percentage figures (over 50%) as answered by participants to the "all of the time" frequency part of Q6.

The response rate of 0% to the "Never use" part of Q6 is interesting but also not surprising. The 16.7% breakdown to the "never use" a blackberry is interesting. Based on anecdotal evidence though this is not too surprising as people find it easier to put some sort of

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[1] *(Note: The author of this study heads up the IT Department for the organisation in which the study was conducted and would be familiar with trends in usage and demands of and for IT systems).*

boundaries around the use of their blackberry during non work time (particularly weekends or on holidays) but find that harder to do with a mobile phone.

Question 7 asked if using the devices listed in Q5 (see Appendix 1 Sample Questionnaire) when working away from the office helped them to balance their work and non work time or if it actually extended their working day.

The following two charts breaks down the responses to each question being asked.

Chart 4 Q7
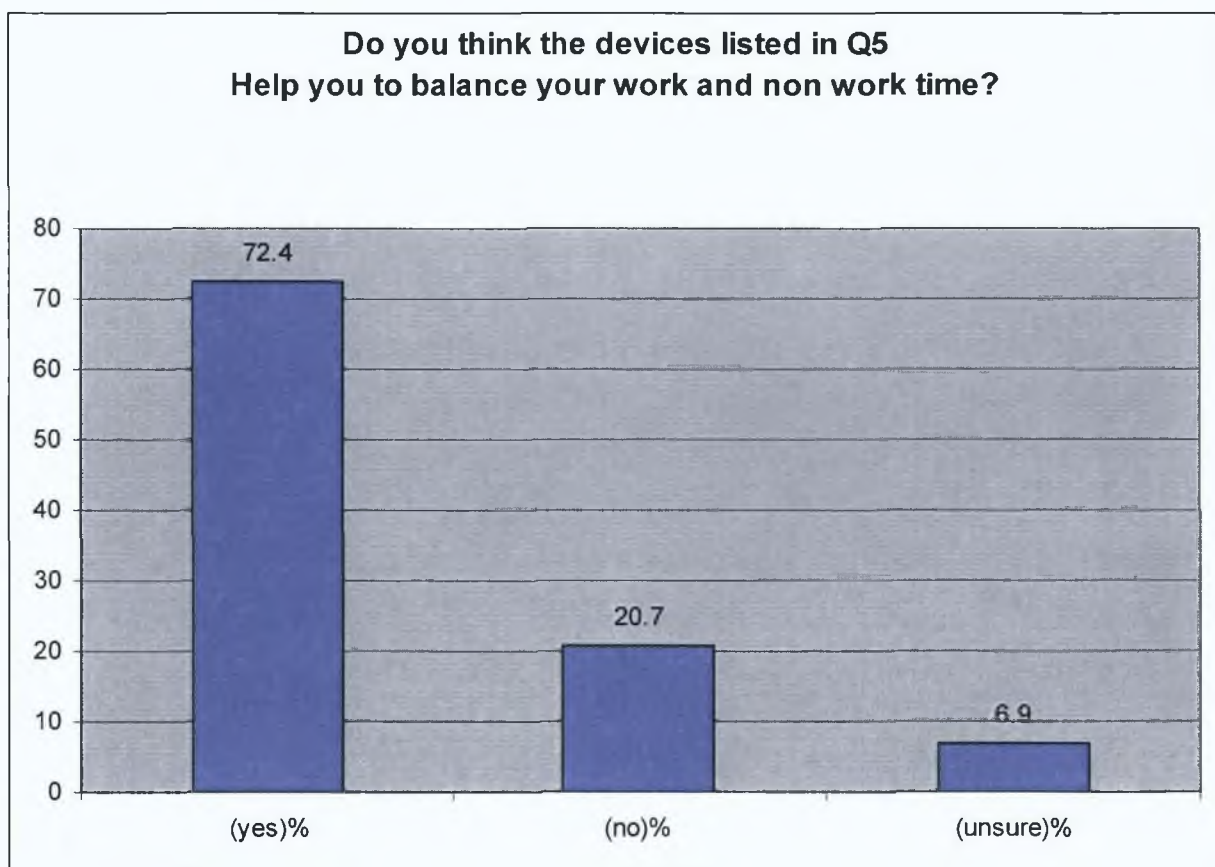
A very high percentage (72.4%) answered yes that it does help to balance work and non work time. However in Chart 7 below 63% feel that using various technology devices such as remote access, mobile phone and blackberries, extends one's working day and does make it harder not to be available or on call.

Chart 5 Q7

Do you think the devices listed in Q5
Do you feel that always on extends your working day?
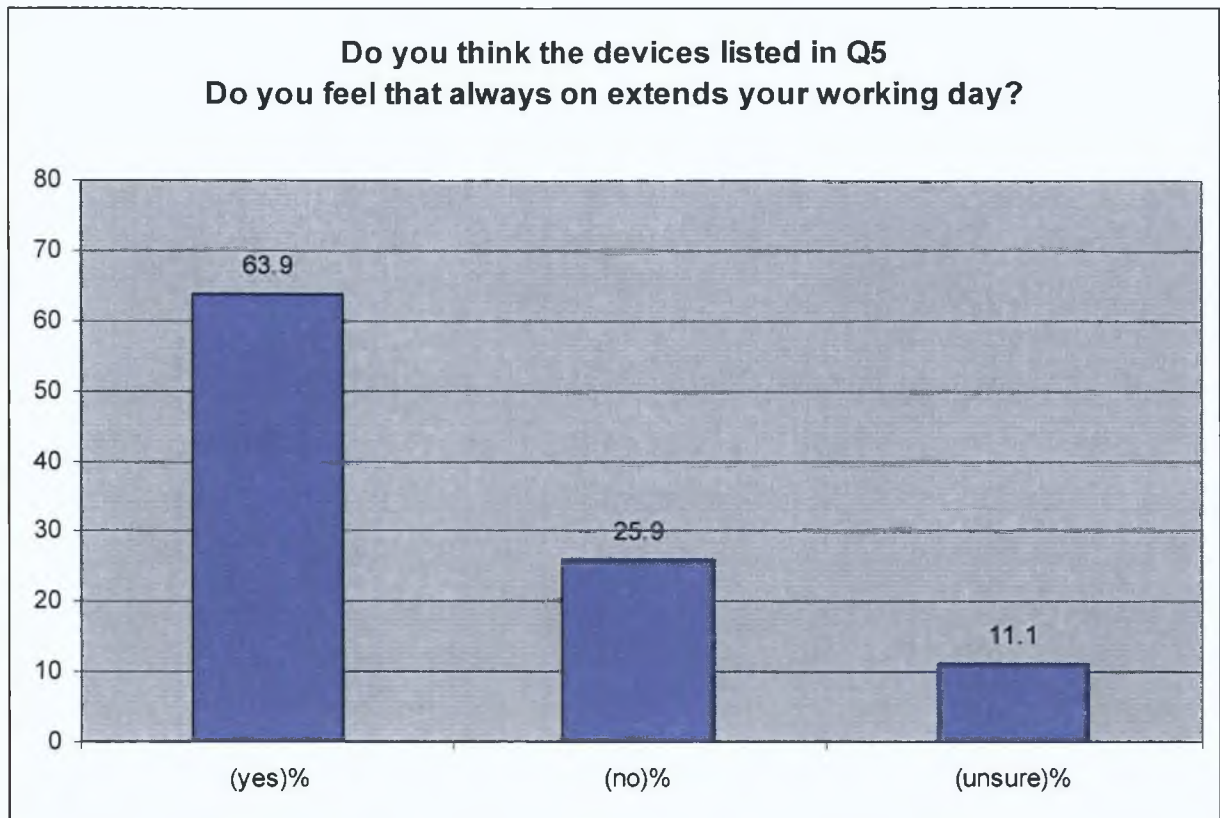
A good percentage (6.9%) unsure if technology does help to balance work and non work. 11.1% of respondents to the survey unsure if "always on/available" extends the working day. Some comments from five respondents illustrate that this is a difficult area to clearly state if technology helps balance or if it in fact extends work time.

" If I have a backlog of work due to holidays, I can catch up in my own time in the evenings, but this is only at certain times of the year "

"Ironically, yes to both, gives you more control, but if unchecked can be intrusive. I think that's the price you pay for some control at times. "

"Not always on as I limit the number of clients that get my mobile number. "

"Yes however it does help as it means that you can leave the office. It is important to control this, i.e. to 'switch off' unless there is something important that needs attention out of hours."

"Answer is in fact yes and no. In the olden days we had to stay till work was done. Now we can clear off home and still deliver work product."

Q8 Table 4

Would you say you are disciplined at setting boundaries around your work and non work time?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
YES	53.6%	15
NO	46.4%	13
	Other (please specify)	5
	Answered question	28
	Skipped question	2

53.6% said they are disciplined at setting boundaries around work and non work time and 46.4% said they were not. This result would suggest that some people are good at setting boundaries and others are not and perhaps have not thought about if they need to set boundaries or not.

Some comments from respondents:

"No I don't delineate as much as I ought"

"It would depend on what's going on and how busy it is in the office"

"yes and no. I suppose my boundaries are flexible. If there is something important boundaries tend to become blurred"

Q9 Table 5

Do you use ICT systems and technologies outside of normal working time because of work deadline/commitments?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	76.7%	23
NO	3.3%	1
Other (please specify)	20.0%	6
	Answered question	30
	skipped question	0

The majority of respondents (76.7%) use ICT systems outside of normal working time to deal with work commitments and deadlines. As those surveyed were mainly senior professionals (solicitor and partner level) this is not a surprising figure as there is an expectation from clients to turn work around quickly, to be available nearly all the time and as a lot of the legal work being done is time sensitive (court appearances, closing transactions such as mergers, finance deals and property deals) there is a huge pressure to ensure that work is done on time and senior partners tend to keep an eye on deals and work even when they are away on holidays or other breaks away from the office. This is also influenced by the culture of the professional service organisations. Wilson et al (2004) study on Work and non-work in Professional Services Organisations in the Literary Review section of this dissertation (see 2.8.5 above) looked at the impact of ICT and new ways of working and whether young professionals embraced or pushed against

development. The study was very interesting to review as my own study has also been conducted in a similar professional organisation.

Some comments from respondents to Q9

"I normally work to deadlines in work. I use ICT to keep an eye on matters which need to be progressed when I am not in the office"

"We are in service industry, competitive pressures and desire to not eat junk food all the time mean if you have to work late a lot, you need to sometimes do this at home if you are to maintain any level of family life"

Question 10 "What do you think the effects of more availability of Information Technology will have on your working life for the future" was an open ended and optional question. Twenty five out of the thirty who completed the work life balance questionnaire supplied comments to this question. The following is a sample of some of the replies and the full list is listed in Appendix 3.

This part of the analysis gives very good insight into how users of technology feel about the impact of ever increasing pressures to respond to their clients' needs and the pressure being competitive and how best to harness the positives of what ICT offers. Also the comments below also show that people are thinking about trying to have a balance and to set boundaries and that it is important to be aware of setting boundaries and try and not let the areas of work and non work blur.

"For me the real issue is being available to clients on an as needed basis (it's a fact of life in this profession). In that regard, mobile and blackberry make this possible"

"spending less time in a formal place of work and being able to work from anywhere"

"The eventual end of paper in non-contentious matters"

"It has positive and negative effects. Without it, I could not spend as much time at home with children and choose to work whilst they sleep. With them, you are constantly available and if the advances in the last 10 years are replicated in the next, demands of clients for instantaneous responses and constant availability will increase more and more"

"For me the real issue is being available to clients on an as needed basis (it's a fact of life in this profession). In that regard, mobile and blackberry make this possible"

"The expectation that one is always available to clients"

"I think it will mean regularly reviewing the impact of such technology on your life. Work life balance isn't always achievable all year round, and I think some level of acceptance of that is needed, whether or not you have children, as family commitments are universal. Viewing the year as a whole is necessary, if you view one month or quarter in isolation it can distort the view in fairness to employers. Holidays

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are necessary, and my own policy is to filter calls to colleagues on hols to ensure they do not get called on hols unless no alternative, as people need their breaks. If that means inconvenience then a certain amount of that is the price you pay for a pleasant working environment overall"

"Clients' expectations of constant and prompt service will increase even further"

"Being able to access the office from anywhere with an internet connection is such a great feature for our office to have. It eliminates 90 minutes of travel in and out of the office for something that might take 5 minutes. Anything that gives me more time / flexibility when I'm out of the office is welcomed by me

CHAPTER 5:   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Work life balance is about trying to create a balance between work and non work time and a full definition is listed in 2.2 above. There is a very good body of work available on this subject already and some areas such as the changing nature of work today, the corporate culture of organisations and how it influences work life balance issues, the drivers for both employers and employees wanting flexibility around work time and how information technology and communications affects this very interesting area.

The following points drawn from the literary review (secondary research) are those that tied in more closely with the type of organisation I conducted my research in.   The objective of the dissertation was to conduct a review of available material already available on work life balance and to see how ICT affected achieving a work life balance.

The following are the main points that were discovered during the literary review on what approaches to flexible work practices have emerged in the past twenty years. Comparisons from the survey are also made against what other authors and researchers have found.

1.   Changing nature of work

Work life balance is getting a lot of attention in recent years because employers have to find ways of meeting customers' demands in today's 24/7/365 global world where everyone gotten used to getting most things quickly and easily by using the Internet.   In the literary review in 2.3 Fynes et al. discussed this need for employers to concentrate on promoting efficiencies in their organisations and also about the rapid rate of technological change. McOrmond (2004)

cited in 2.3 discussed the shift away from manufacturing based economies to service based economies has meant that the standard Monday to Friday work model no longer suits this shift towards a 24/7/365 global market place.

The research survey questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 specifically focussed on gathering information on changes people were experiencing if they had moved beyond working a standard day and if ICT helped/not helped them to attain a balance. Also what was driving the need to do office work when not actually in the office. The organisation the author works for is a legal professional organisation and it is a very good model to test because it operates in a very competitive environment, its clients (customers) expect a fast and expert service, any time and from any place.

Some of the survey questions specifically focussed on the usage and experience of using ICT systems and to find out if people were disciplined at creating boundaries around their non work time and if not what was driving that.

The overall analysis shows that very high percentages of those surveyed do use devices such as blackberries (69%) and mobile phones (82.2.%) extensively and a very high rate of 93.1% use remote access (connecting from their office laptop or home pc to connect via broadband) to the office. These particular devices and systems seem to be the ones used most extensively. These figures would suggest that ICT is allowing people to work away from the office (remotely) very easily and more than being a deliberate organisation policy or strategy it would seem that this type of working has evolved as a response in being able to deliver an excellent service to their clients. This does tie in with Daft's (2006) view that information

technology is profoundly affecting the way organisations work today. See 2.8 in the Literary Review section.

2.   Is ICT an enabler to achieving a balance between work and non work

Is ICT an enabler in allowing one to achieve a balance between work and non work time? Is this a myth? In 2.8.1 in the literary review section Deborah Parkinson (2008) stated that the "virtual" office never closes and that devices such as blackberries, mobile phones, email on and available all the time make it difficult to escape work. In the analysis of Q7 in the survey 72.4% of respondents said that ICT does help to balance work and non work time (see Chart 6 for analysis). 63% also said that the "always on/available" extends their working day. (Chart 7).

Mixed views between does ICT enable a better balance for employees or does the availability of ICT systems extend the working day and make it harder to switch off.

Q8 asked the participants if they were disciplined at setting boundaries around their work and non work time. 53.6% said yes and 46.4 said no. (see Table 4).

What came across in the analysis of these questions (Q5, 6, 7 and 8) which focussed on ICT and its affects, is that it is hard to create boundaries around work and non work time because clients expect and excellent and fast service. Brockett (2007) reviewed in 2.4 found in his study that working longer makes you less effective and creates a rise in stress. He also suggests that ICT makes the work life balance act difficult to achieve. Carroll (2003) reviewed in 2.4 found in his study that constant connectivity leads to more pressure and

stress. In the analysis from the research for this dissertation, the results suggest that yes a lot of people are using ICT systems to work from home or some other location because of pressures of meeting work deadlines. 76.7% replied yes to Q9 which asked why they worked remotely. See Table 5 for analysis of Q9.

In conclusion I think that yes ICT does help organisations and its employees respond to their clients in a fast, efficient and easy way regardless of whether they are still at work and at their desk or if they are working from home or some other remote location. It would appear though that we have not adequately accessed the effects this may have on individuals and about effects such as working too long and that this might lead to stress. How this very new approach to work impacts the individual, their family and leisure time would need to be further researched. Based on the analysis of the survey I think that it is unclear as to whether ICT does enable one to achieve a balance between work and non work time. This is because it has evolved more than it has been a planned strategy and as yet in my own organisation there is probably not enough of an awareness of work life balance and what it might mean for the organisation and its employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the organisation, through its Human Resource Department, conducts a further and more detailed study than the one I have undertaken for this dissertation to facilitate a better collection of data to enable more in-depth findings and conclusions to be drawn.

That HRM itself become more involved in finding out more about this area and what new policies around flexible approaches to work might be implemented to enable employees to have a better work life balance.

Careful review of how long people are working, both in the office and remotely, to ensure that the guide lines as set down by the EU's Working Time ACT are not infringed. (See Appendix 4 for text of Working Time Act.)

Training for staff and managers to help them to better manage their own time, manage diverse teams and different approaches to work.

To have processes and systems in place that can identify potential problems such as stress related illnesses due to individuals working for too long or not being able to say no to doing work remotely and to have establish clear guidelines around work and non work.

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Appendix 1

Sample Questionnaire

Work Life Balance (WLB) Survey

1. Work Life Balance Survey

This survey is to assist me in my research for a College Dissertation. My chosen subject is Work Life Balance and to find out if Information and Communications Technology (ICT) enable you to achieve a work life balance.

This survey is confidential and stating your name is optional.I am using an electronic survey system supplied by SurveyMonkey.Com.

Work Life Balance (also referred to as Flexible Working arrangements) has been defined as "Work-Life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside work is acceptd and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society."
Ref: Employersforwork-lifeblance.org.uk/work/definition.

1. Please pick one of the following:

○ Male
○ Female

Name (Optional)

2. Age Group

○ 18 - 30
○ 31 - 45
○ 46 - 65

Position Held in the Firm?

3. Could you select which category suits you best?

☐ Married and have parental responibilities for children
☐ Married and do not have parental responsibilities for children
☐ Single and have parental responibilities for children
☐ Single and do not have parental responibilities for children

☐ Other (please specify)

4. On readining the definition of WLB at the beginning of this survey is this what you understand work life balance to be?

○ YES
○ NO

Other (please specify)

5. Do you currently use any one or all of the following when away from the office?

- ☐ Blackberry
- ☐ Mobile Phone
- ☐ Remote Access from home
- ☐ Wireless access (WiFi)

Other (please specify)

[   ]

6. If you use any or all of the devices listed in Q5 can you select from the following options which best describes your usage outside of standard working time

	All of the time	Regularly	Sometimes/Rarely	Never
Blackberry	○	○	○	○
Remote Access/WiFi from another location	○	○	○	○
Remote Access from home	○	○	○	○
Mobile Phone	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

7. Do you think the devices listed in Q5

	Yes	No	Unsure
Help you to balance your work and non work time?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel that "always on/available by using mobile technology" extends your working day?	☐	☐	☐

Other (please specify)

[   ]

8. Would you say you are disciplined at setting boundaries around your work and non work time?

- ○ YES
- ○ NO

Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. Do you use ICT systems and technologies outside of normal working time because of work deadline/commitments?

- ○ YES
- ○ NO
- ○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

Work Life Balance (WLB) Survey

10. Optional Question

What do you think the effects of more availability of Information Technology will have on your working life for the future?

2. End of Survey - Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to partipate in this survey.

Catherine Moylan

Appendix 2

Copy of email sent to all survey participants

From: Catherine Moylan
Sent: 19 March 2008 19:38
To: #RAS
Subject: A favour!

Hi everyone, I would be most grateful if you could assist me with some research I am undertaking as part of my final year in a Business (Hons) Degree Course I am studying in the National College of Ireland.

My chosen subject for my research is "Work Life Balance: Does Information Technology enable? Aiming it at remote users as you obviously use technology to do work when you are away from the office. The question is looking at the changing nature of work and the impact of technology, both positives and any negative sides and generally to see what people's views are.

I have about 9 questions which will be very short and most of them will be selecting one answer from 3-4 choices. I am hoping to be able to send out the questionnaire either tomorrow or Tuesday. It should take about 10 minutes max to complete it.

I appreciate that everyone is really busy but would really appreciate if you can find the time to complete it. However please let me know if you do not wish to receive the email questionnaire.

The results will be confidential and will be used by myself, the College course director and an external examiner. You will not have to sign the survey with you name - but that is optional.

Thank you in advance

Regards
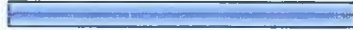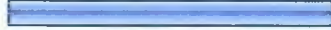
Catherine

Appendix 3

Printout of Summary results of the Work Life Balance Questionnaire and

Complete list of all replies to Question 10

Work Life Balance (WLB) Survey March 2008

1. Please pick one of the following:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	51.7%	15
Female	48.3%	14
Name (Optional)		24
answered question		29
skipped question		1

2. Age Group

	Response Percent	Response Count
18 - 30	20.0%	6
31 - 45	66.7%	20
46 - 65	13.3%	4
Position Held in the Firm?		26
answered question		30
skipped question		0
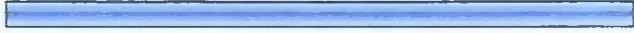
3. Could you select which category suits you best?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Married and have parental responsibilities for children	43.3%	13
Married and do not have parental responsibilities for children	10.0%	3
Single and have parental responibilities for children	6.7%	2
Single and do not have parental responsibilities for children	36.7%	11
Other (please specify)	3.3%	1
answered question		30
skipped question		0

4. On reading the definition of WLB at the beginning of this survey is this what you understand work life balance to be?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	100.0%	29
NO	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		1
answered question		29
skipped question		1

5. Do you currently use any one or all of the following when away from the office?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Blackberry		69.0%	20
Mobile Phone		86.2%	25
Remote Access from home		**93.1%**	27
Wireless access (WiFi)		48.3%	14
	Other (please specify)		2
	answered question		**29**
	skipped question		**1**

6. If you use any or all of the devices listed in Q5 can you select from the following options which best describes your usage outside of standard working time

	All of the time	Regularly	Sometimes/Rarely	Never	Rating Average	Response Count
Mobile Phone	**51.9% (14)**	37.0% (10)	11.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	1.59	27
Blackberry	**50.0% (12)**	25.0% (6)	8.3% (2)	16.7% (4)	1.92	24
Remote Access from home	0.0% (0)	**84.6% (22)**	11.5% (3)	3.8% (1)	2.19	26
Remote Access/WiFi from another location	0.0% (0)	11.8% (2)	**70.6% (12)**	17.6% (3)	3.06	17
			Other (please specify)			0
			answered question			29
			skipped question			1

7. Do you think the devices listed in Q5

	Yes	No	Unsure	Response Count
Help you to balance your work and non work time?	**72.4% (21)**	20.7% (6)	6.9% (2)	29
Do you feel that "always on/available by using mobile technology" extends your working day?	**63.0% (17)**	25.9% (7)	11.1% (3)	27
			Other (please specify)	5
			answered question	30
			skipped question	0

8. Would you say you are disciplined at setting boundaries around your work and non work time?

		Response Percent	Response Count
YES		**53.6%**	15
NO		46.4%	13
	Other (please specify)		5
	answered question		28
	skipped question		2

9. Do you use ICT systems and technologies outside of normal working time because of work deadline/commitments?

		Response Percent	Response Count
YES		76.7%	23
NO		3.3%	1
Other (please specify)		20.0%	6
	answered question		30
	skipped question		0

10. Optional Question What do you think the effects of more availability of Information Technology will have on your working life for the future?

	Response Count
	25
answered question	25
skipped question	5

Displaying 1 - 25 of 25 responses | << Prev | | Next >> | Jump To: |2 | | Go >> |
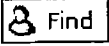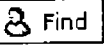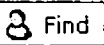
		Comment Text	Response Date
Find	1.	More IT makes working life easier but also makes striking balance outside work increasingly difficult	Mon, 3/31/08 4:35 AM
Find	2.	For me the real issue is being available to clients on an as needed basis (its a fact of life in this profession). In that regard, mobile and blackberry make this possible.	Fri, 3/28/08 10:15 AM
Find	3.	The expectation that one is always available to clients.	Thu, 3/27/08 11:34 AM
Find	4.	hopefully positive - whether it is positive or negative depends more on attitude than greater availability of IT	Wed, 3/26/08 2:36 PM
Find	5.	spending less time in a formal place of work and being able to work from anywhere	Wed, 3/26/08 12:30 PM
Find	6.	Overall greater access to Information Technology would seem to increase productivity levels. Remote access has been very helpful in so far as it allows me to log and monitor a matter from home when the matter in question does not necessarily require me to actually be in the office e.g. waiting for document to come through before releasing a opinion. It also allow me to go home and tidy up matters or complete an email from home before sending it out.	Wed, 3/26/08 10:30 AM
Find	7.	The eventual end of paper in non-contentious matters.	Wed, 3/26/08 10:30 AM
Find	8.	Availability of technology is one thing, attitude of the people you work with regarding the use of such technology is another. I'm not fully convinced that the use of remote access via mobile etc allows extra time to relax etc. It merely extends the parameters/times/locations where you can undertake work, generally extending working hours rather than diminishing them. The positive aspect of this should be allowing flexibility as to where you can conduct business rather than foisting extra expectations as to your ability to undertake more work by being 'connected' to the office on a wider basis.	Wed, 3/26/08 10:28 AM
Find	9.	It has positive and negative effects. Without it, I could not spend as muich time at home with children and choose to work whilf they sleep. With them, you are constantly available and if the advances in the last 10 years are replicated in the next, demands of clients for instantaneous responses and constant availability will increase more and more.	Wed, 3/26/08 6:17 AM
Find	10.	I believe that ICT will assist me in giving me the flexibility to deal with some matters while out of the office. I also believe that it is up to each individual, supported by the Firm, to set boundaries so that their availability is not abused and that the individual has a real opportunity to take time out for rest and relaxation.	Tue, 3/25/08 11:42 AM
Find	11.	it means you can't ever fully escape but you can partially escape more often!	Tue, 3/25/08 10:42 AM
Find	12.	enable me to provide a more efficent service to internal and external clients	Tue, 3/25/08 9:14 AM
Find	13.	More flexibility on location.	Tue, 3/25/08 5:00 AM

14. Have extended the working day and the concept of instance access   Tue, 3/25/08 2:35 AM
and accessibility and not necessarily for the sake of efficiencies

[Find] 15. I think it will mean regularly reviewing the impact of such technology   Thu, 3/20/08 12:22 PM
on your life. Work life balance isnt always achievable all year round,
and I think some level of acceptance of that is needed, whether or not
you have children, as family commitments are universal. Viewing the
year as a whole is necessary, if you view one month or quarter in
isolation it can distort the view in fairness to employers. Holidays are
necessary, and my own policy is to filter calls to colleagues on hols to
ensure they do not get called on hols unless no alternative, as people
need their breaks. If that means inconvenience then a certain amount
of that is the price you pay for a pleasant working environment overall.

[Find] 16. Clients' expectations of constant and prompt service will increase even   Thu, 3/20/08 11:19 AM
further

[Find] 17. I am fully catered for at the moment so no more requirements   Thu, 3/20/08 10:49 AM

[Find] 18. Are likely to reduce the life balance side of the work life balance. Will   Thu, 3/20/08 10:43 AM
probably lead to further erosion of work/home divide and increased
boss/client expectations

[Find] 19. Being able to access the office from anywhere with an internet   Thu, 3/20/08 10:41 AM
connection is such a great feature for our office to have. It eliminates
90 minutes of travel in and out of the office for something that might
take 5 minutes. Anything that gives me more time / flexibility when I'm
out of the office is welcomed by me!

[Find] 20. Clients will always demand more access and even speedier   Thu, 3/20/08 9:49 AM
responses. There is an expectation now of availabiilty all the time,
whether at work or at home, on holidays or at play. There is a danger
that this becomes all encompassing and overpowering so setting some
limits on availability and commuicating with clients why one cannot deal
with a matter is what we need in the future. I find that often if clients
know that eg there is a school concert on so you cannot speak for 3
hours they are quite happy to leave you be and indeed relieved that
there is someone else out there who is not a complete slave to work.

[Find] 21. That what is seen as a standard day becomes more blurred   Thu, 3/20/08 9:44 AM

[Find] 22. I think that having Information Technology more available will have a   Thu, 3/20/08 9:14 AM
positive affect on my working life, making communication quick and
easy with my work colleagues and clients.

[Find] 23. It is very very useful to be able to log on remotely, it means that I can   Thu, 3/20/08 8:37 AM
get home reasonably early even when rather busy. At the same time I
think the availability of advanced IT systems does extend the working
day, for this reason my mobile/laptop set up suits me as it gives me the
flexibility to tune in to work when I need to but does not interfere with
my personal time in the way that a blackberry might.

[Find] 24. Heading towards always on call/contactable   Thu, 3/20/08 7:06 AM

[Find] 25. help to create a better balance between work and non work life   Wed, 3/19/08 5:45 PM

50 responses per page ▾

Appendix 4

Working Time Act

Organisation of Working Time (Records)(Prescribed Form and Exemptions) Regulations, 2001

S.I. No. 473 of 2001

The Minister for Labour, Trade and Consumer Affairs has made Regulations entitled the Organisation of Working Time (Records)(Prescribed Form and Exemptions) Regulations, 2001.The Regulations come into effect from the 1st of November 2001.

The main purpose of these Regulations is to require employers, pursuant to the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997, to keep:
(a) a record of the number of hours worked by employees (excluding meals and rest breaks) on a daily and weekly basis;
(b) a record of leave granted to employees in each week by way of annual leave or in respect of a public holiday and payment made in respect of that leave;
(c) a weekly record of the notification of the starting and finishing time of employees.

In relation to (a) above, the Regulations incorporate statutory form OWT1 on which employers who do not have electronic means of recording must record the number of hours worked by employees on a daily and weekly basis.

The Regulations also require that an employer keep a copy of the statement provided to each employee under the provisions of the Terms of Employment (Information) Act, 1994.

The Regulations also provide for exemptions subject to certain conditions, in relation to the keeping by employers of records of rest breaks and rest periods of employees under the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997.

Copies of the Regulations (incorporating Form OWT1) may be purchased from the Government Publications Sale Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2; Price £1.00, €1.27. They are also available on the Department's website @ **www.entemp.ie**.

Copies of the Form OWT 1 are also available from the Employment Rights Information Unit of the Department – Telephone No. (01) 6313131 or Lo-Call 1890- 220222.

Paul Haran
Secretary General
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
    October 2001.

Organisation of Working Time (Records) (Prescribed Form and Exemptions) Regulations, 2001

I, Tom Kitt, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, in exercise of the powers conferred on me by sections 7 and 25 of the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997 (No. 20 of 1997), as adapted by the Enterprise and Employment (Alteration of Name of Department and Title of Minister) Order, 1997 (S.I. No. 305 of 1997), and the Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) (No. 2) Order, 1997 (S.I. No. 330 of 1997), hereby make the following regulations:

Citation and commencement.

1.   These Regulations may be cited as the Organisation of Working Time (Records) (Prescribed Form and Exemptions) Regulations, 2001, and shall come into operation on the 1st day of November 2001.

Interpretation.

2.   (1)   In these Regulations –
"the Act" means the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997 (No. 20 of 1997), and "inspector" means an inspector within the meaning of section 8 of the Act.

(2)   A reference in these Regulations to a section is a reference to a section of the Act unless it is indicated that reference to some other enactment is intended.

(3)   A reference in these Regulations to a Regulation or the Schedule is to a Regulation of, or the Schedule to, these Regulations unless it is indicated that a reference to some other enactment is intended.

(4)   A reference in these Regulations to a paragraph or subparagraph is to a paragraph or subparagraph of the provision in which the reference occurs, unless it is indicated that a reference to some other provision is intended.

Form of records under section 25(1).

3.   The records required to be kept under section 25(1) shall contain the following particulars and documents –

(a)   the name and address of each employee concerned, the number known as the Revenue and Social Insurance number that has been assigned to him or her and a brief statement (which may be by reference to any form of job description or classification used by the employer concerned) of his or her duties as an employee,

(b)   a copy, as appropriate, of the statement provided to each employee

concerned in accordance with the provisions of the Terms of Employment (Information) Act, 1994 (No. 5 of 1994), or any order or regulation made under that Act, that relates to him or her,

(c)   (i)   the days and total hours worked in each week by each employee concerned,

                 (ii)   any days and hours of leave in each week granted by way of annual leave or in respect of a public holiday to each employee concerned and the payment made to each employee in respect of that leave,

                 (iii)   any additional day's pay referred to in section 21(1)(d) provided in each week to each employee concerned, and

(d)   a copy of a written record of a notification issued to an employee concerned in relation to any of the matters provided for in section 17 (including a copy of a notice posted in the manner referred to in subsection 5 of that section),

and shall generally be in such form as will enable an inspector to understand the particulars contained in them without difficulty.

4.   (1)   Where no clocking in facilities are in place in a work place a form to record the days and hours worked in each week by each employee shall be kept by the employer in the form set out in the Schedule entitled Form OWT 1 or in a form substantially to like effect.

            (2)   Notwithstanding the obligation to keep records imposed on the employer by paragraph (1), where the employer and employee agree, an employee may –

(a)   complete the Form OWT 1, as set out in the Schedule or a form substantially to like effect, and

(b)   present the completed form to his or her employer for counter-signature and retention by the employer in accordance with paragraph (1).

            (3)   The Form OWT 1 should be made available at all reasonable times for inspection by an inspector.

Exemption from section 25(1).

5.   (1)   For the purposes of these Regulations and subject to paragraph (2), the following classes of employer are exempt, by virtue of section 25(2), from the obligation to keep records of rest breaks –

(a)   employers who have electronic record-keeping facilities such as
        flexi-time or clocking-in facilities, and

(b)   employers who have manual as opposed to electronic record-
        keeping facilities and who are required to keep records in
        accordance with Regulation 4.

(2)   The exemption under paragraph (1) shall only apply to an employer if he
or she complies with the following conditions –

(a)   the employer notifies in writing each employee of the rest periods
        and breaks referred to in sections 11, 12 and 13 or, in case of the
        non-application of one or more of those sections (by virtue of
        regulations referred to in section 4(3), a collective agreement or a
        registered employment agreement referred to in section 4(5), or an
        employment regulation order referred to in section 4(6)) of the
        terms of such regulations, collective agreement, registered
        employment agreement or employment regulation order and, in
        particular, of the requirement contained in section 6(1),

(b)   the employer puts in place, and notifies in writing each employee
        of procedures whereby an employee may notify in writing the
        employer of any rest period or break referred to in sections 11, 12
        and 13 of the Act to which such employee is entitled and was not
        able to avail himself or herself of on a particular occasion and the
        reason for not availing of such rest period or break,

and

(c)   the employer keeps –

        (i)   a record of having notified each employee of the matters
                provided for in paragraph (a),

        (ii)   a record of having notified each employee of the
                procedures provided for in paragraph (b), and

        (iii)   records of all notifications made to him or her by each
                employee in accordance with those procedures.

(3)   A notification made to an employer by an employee under paragraph 2(b)
        shall be made within 1 week of the day on which the rest period referred
        to in that paragraph became due to, but was not availed of by, the
        employee. Where such notification is duly made the employer, having
        regard to the circumstances pertaining to the work of the employee and to
        the employee's health and safety interests, shall, as soon as possible, make

available to the employee such rest period or break as is equivalent to the rest period or break which had been due to, but had not been availed of by, the employee. Failure by an employee to avail of such equivalent rest period or break offered by an employer shall not constitute a breach on the part of the employer under the Act or these Regulations.

Form of records under Regulation 5.
6.   Any record that an employer is required to keep under Regulation 5 shall contain like particulars to those specified in Regulation 3(a) and shall generally be in such form as will enable an inspector to understand the particulars contained in it without difficulty.

7.   An employer who fails to keep records under these Regulations shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding €1,900 (£1,496.37).