TITLE: **WORK LIFE BALANCE IN THE MEDICAL DEVICE MANUFACTURING SECTOR. THE REAL BENEFICIARIES.**

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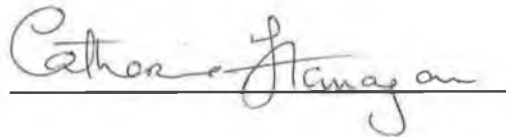YEAR   2010

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Authors' declaration form:

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of Honours Degree in Human Resource Management 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.

Signed:

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Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

CONTENT LISTINGS:

INTRODUCTION

The organisation I work for was established in 1915. We are a privately-held, family-owned manufacturer of medical devices, products and solutions used by caregivers in doctors' offices, hospitals, and emergency response settings around the world. Simply stated, we make products that help people improve lives. Our goal is to make it easier and more efficient for caregivers to assess and diagnose their patients, and we do that by applying innovative technologies that help frontline practitioners work more effectively, efficiently, and empathetically with their patients at the point of care.

And to stay competitive, the company I work for is continuously changing. Demands from consumers forcing costs down and pressures from the workforce to diversify policies, our success are fully dependent on customer and employee satisfaction and our ability to implement change. Work life balance initiatives are needed to help adjust our culture to working towards a cohesive future for all concerned.

Every employee has statutory entitlements that benefit them while they work, but Work Life Balance (WLB) arrangements are more than your Rights as an employee – they are aimed at finding the right balance between your work and personal life to keep you satisfied and content with both.

The thesis subject I have chosen to write about is **'Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: Who are the real beneficiaries?"**

Before I begin, I believe it is imperative to describe the concept of Work life balance and how it impacts both the employee and employer;

'Work/life balance, in its broadest sense, is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in a person's life. Although definitions and explanations vary, work/life balance is generally associated with equilibrium, or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life. The study of work/life balance involves the examination of people's ability to manage simultaneously the multi-faceted demands of life'. Hudson Highland Group, (2005)

So, for an employee, I pondered what the most important thing to them is when they think about their job. Is there an element of dissatisfaction with the balance between work and personal life? What do you look for in your job? Security, flexibility, job satisfaction? How many of these are directly related to Work Life Balance and by providing these, who benefits most, the employee or employer? This is one of the questions I aim to answer by the end of my investigations.

Many advances have been made in the public and private sector in creating workplaces where adjustments are made to ensure that work life balance is a realizable aspiration. There is a challenge to go further on this issue and to be more planned and systematic in the approach to work life balance. In this way, significant benefits flow from such an approach – benefits that accrue to employers and employees.-(National Framework Committee for Work life balance policies, 2010)

There are several reasons why I have chosen this topic but the foremost is because I believe it is important to regularly review our workplace practices and I would like to propose new Work life balance policies for our organization. However, it will be necessary for me to show the benefits to both the organisation and the employees.

Some of the positive reasons for implementing new practices are:

1. To ensure we are an employer of choice when the recession is completely over.

2. Reduce recruitment costs by increasing retention.

3. Employees are no longer only motivated by monetary rewards; there are other important considerations, such as having a job that fits with your personal life.

4. Increase job satisfaction & commitment

5. Higher productivity

6. Reduced Absenteeism

7. Reduced Cost due to Sick Leave

Many organizations are promoting the awareness of work life balance or family friendly practices. One example of this is The Equality Authority who promotes the awareness of the 'Work life Balance day' on its website. They also raise awareness of the positive aspects of Work life balance for employers and how it can assist with the avoidance of redundancies in this volatile time. The Great Place to Work Institute demonstrates the importance of organizations being aware of these practices and striving to improve them, by using the example of the senior executives in General Mills in the US, who 'unapologetically set boundaries in their work lives so as to make room for their families' activities', in the article 'Family Feelings: General Mills and Synovus', (2006). The attitudes and mentalities of the senior executives in General Mills set a precedent for behaviors and expectations for its workforce, thus allowing it be recognized on FORTUNE's "100 Best Companies to Work for" five times since 1998 in addition to being

cited in both the 1984 and 1993 editions of 100 Best Companies to Work For, by Robert Levering and Milton Moskowitz.

IBEC believes that companies that do not address Work-life balance demands, may have a negative effect on families, production and the local community. This transpired at their Work life balance day held on the 1st March 2007 where they discussed the 'old patterns of work are gone'.

Like most organizations in Ireland, we have had to reanalyze and restructure, trim costs, reduce spend and implement pay freezes. We have had to focus on transforming the company through the recession by:

• Improving the quality of decisions made by ourselves and of those whom we support.

• Focus to global solutions for our customers' needs—not only by executing on strategic objectives, but also by providing quality core services

• Unfreezing old perceptions and categories:

    – How we think about the business, what we do and those with whom we work

    – Appreciating that accountability, openness and transparency are on the rise

    – Not trapping ourselves or others: focus on the (evolving) new way.

And part of this 'evolution' is to open the door to new Work life balance practices. Naturally my organisation is focused on the 'bottom-line' at the moment, but once I work through my plan, I believe I will be better placed to show how the introduction of additional Work Life Balance policies can add value to the organisation, changing employee's mindsets so they will look to us as an employer of choice. Allowing

employees the flexibility to balance work and family will increase productivity and reduce absenteeism and employees will want to stay with us! This will be the basis for my argument.

I want us, as an organisation to value the talent and contributions of those with whom we work. We believe we partner with our colleagues in addressing challenges and celebrating successes and strive to grow our own knowledge, skills, and abilities and enable others to do the same by providing coaching, mentoring, new opportunities, and constructive feedback. But I genuinely believe we can improve on this and become the employer of choice and be the best that we can be.

I believe I will be pivotal in moving the company forward and through my research for this thesis, my gathering of primary data, consolidating the information obtained through my interviews, surveys, and any analytical data found, I will put forward adequate recommendations for change.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

I believe the work-life balance phenomenon is still relatively new to organizations in Ireland, with the true realization for the need to change only happening here in the early 21st Century. Organizations are still only beginning to embrace changes such as introducing new work life balance practices based on the desire or requests from their employees to create a harmonious balance between work and home life. And as confirmed by IBEC's Social Policy Executive Finola McDonnell (2008), these practices/policies are becoming standard in the benefits package made available by private sector companies in Ireland today.

> "The National Work Life Balance Study, carried out by a team from NUI Galway during 2007 has shown that the public sector continues to focus on initiatives to reduce or change the number of hours worked by expanding part-time, job-sharing and reduced hours options for employees. However, in the private sector the focus is on supporting employees to organise their lives alongside their work. Private sector firms therefore offer a range of benefits such as gym memberships, medical facilities, education assistance schemes and career breaks, which appeal to a broad range of employees and make the recruitment package more attractive," said Ms. McDonnell. IBEC, Press Publication `Irish companies actively encouraging work life balance'. (2008)

IBEC along with many other Irish organizations, such as Eircom, Electricity Supply Board Intel Ireland Ltd, IBM (Ireland), AIB, CitiGroup, Royal & Sun Alliance, SIPTU, Trinity College Dublin, Irish Nurses Organisation, Bank of Ireland, Irish Civil Service,

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and Anderson (Ireland) Limited have all implemented family friendly policies and are recognizing that one solution will not fit all issues, due to business requirements and customer expectations, but proactive employers are recognizing the way forward for strong working relations by providing for example: Employee Assistance Programs to help employees overcome stress or deal with personal issues, identifying courses to assist employees with how to juggle their workloads and prioritize better and also encouraging employees to pursue leisure pursuits outside of the normal working day with the assistance of sports and social clubs sponsored by the employer.   A supportive culture has also been shown to enhance the perception of an organisation that 'cares' about its employees (Lambert, 2000), which will subsequently promote commitment and loyalty and retain staff.

When I look back on research conducted in the past, such as the research undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2002, they actively 'encourage employers to make workplaces more family friendly,' by introducing 'initiatives that provide workplaces with tailored advice on family-friendly policy practices, while ensuring long-term commitment through regular assessment or audits'. While these initiatives seem to be aimed at accommodating particular 'types' of employees – such as parents, the focus is shifting, and all employees are looking for the balance between Work life and home life. The perception that if you worked long hours you were more dedicated than your colleagues is slowly dissolving, times are changing and employees are reprioritizing. This is supported by research from Schein (1996)

which shows that an increasing number of people are favoring a 'lifestyle' career which encapsulates their personal, family and career needs rather than allowing their career to monopolize their life.

Scase and Goffee (1989) also agree that individuals are becoming *'less interested in career success as it has been traditionally understood and more interested in a career that enhances personal lifestyles that are separate from, rather than subordinated to, work roles'*.

GUEST

Professor David E Guest, Head of Department and Deputy Head of the School of Social Science and Public Policy at King's College London has written and researched extensively in the areas of human resource management, employment relations and the psychological contract, motivation and commitment, and careers. His extensive research in these subject matters has given him an inventory of journal publications such as;

- Free or precarious? A comparison of the attitudes of workers in flexible and traditional employment contracts.
- Managing the career deal: The psychological contract as a framework for understanding career management, organizational commitment and work behavior.
- The psychology of the employment relationship.
- Flexible employment contracts, the psychological contract and employee outcomes: an analysis and review of the evidence.

- Communicating the psychological contract: an employer perspective.

It is his collaborative journal on work life balance with Jane Sturges in 2004 entitled 'Working to live or living to work? Work-life balance early in the career' which I believe corroborates my belief that work-life balance benefits both the employer and the employee equally. His research found that Work life balance was a priority to graduates as they initially started their careers and then 3 years later when they were well established in their careers and would become more important to the graduates as their personal lives changed and family responsibilities became more influential. While the graduates felt it necessary to commit to long hours at the beginning of their careers, they didn't foresee this as a long-term scenario. The main dilemma identified by Guest was finding the right balance between work and home life and ensuring we are satisfied in both environments. This is the same for every organisation or person that I surveyed or interviewed.

Some Irish organizations such as An Garda Síochána, Abbott Vascular Devices Ireland Ltd, Hertz Europe Service Centre, Jurys Doyle Hotel Group Plc., SIPTU, Trocaire, Western Care Association and the Oracle Corporation participated in Work Life balance projects funded by the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance in 2002. These organizations' participated in projects such as; training to promote existing work life balance, pilot e-working, stress management, Work life balance coordinator, effect of relocation on employees lives, formalizing work life balance in organizations and 3 stranded work life balance programmes because of the pressure to adapt to new ways

of working due to employees reprioritizing and demanding a balance between their work-life and their personal life and possibly by the fact that 36% of the Irish population is under 25 (IDA, 2010).

Guest's research paper 'Working to live or living to work? Work-life balance early in the career', 2004, specifically targets graduates in the early years of their careers and establishes their priorities from the very beginning, right through until they are in their 3rd year of employment. When I compare Guests findings with my own organisation, looking at the diversity of personal circumstances, from age range to marital status, I see similarities and changes in priorities as employees become more settled in their roles or when their circumstances change, such as getting married and having children. As Guest (2004) writes, 'this was commonly expressed as having personal values based on a desire to '**work to live, not live to work**'.

To support this theory, I have read numerous articles, websites, case studies and text books about this subject and realize that the scope for implementing new policies is quite broad, and research findings show that Work/life balance benefits the employee but also the employer.

Being relatively young and in the early stages of my career, I never really contemplated that this topic would have been an 'issue' back in 2000; 10 years ago, but I was pleasantly surprised to read an Irish book published by the Equality Authority along with Hugh Fisher (2000) titled '*Investing in People, Family-friendly work arrangements in small and medium sized enterprises, Work life balance in the new millennium*' which

discussed every aspect of this topic. The main method of research was through a survey, and in particular, some of the findings confirm what I believe will be my biggest hurdle, the apparent disadvantages of introducing Work life balance policies – as perceived by the employer. Like Fisher, (2000) I also believe that my employer feels the arrangements could be open to abuse, may add to the workload of our supervisors, will impact our customer care service of which we are a centre of excellence and finally, the employer wants to be selective over who can actually avail of these policies which may have a negative impact on some employees.

Yet the one prominent difference between Fisher's research and my findings is that the challenges faced then, are different to now. We are crawling out of a recession with 444,900 people (on the seasonally adjusted live register from the CSO) in June 2010 so we don't have the Labour shortages experienced back in 2000/ 2001 with the live register at 140,865 in June 2001. We do however have more women in the workforce with 60.5% being the employment rate for women in 2008 (European Commission, 2009) with a greater desire to effectively juggle work and home life, which requires more flexibility from employers. Carlson and Perrewe (1999) have demonstrated that a supportive culture at work can reduce the degree of work/family conflict individuals' experience. But is this a win/win situation for employers, employees or both?

Xerox UK say they saved over £1 million by reducing staff turnover in the last 5 years because they have improved their work-life balance policies (Grady, Mc Carthy, Darcy &

Kirrane, 2008) so this would indicate that by improving their work life balance policies, both the employer and employees benefit.

It is essential to ensure the statutory entitlements of the employees are in place particularly when implementing new practices to accommodate changing working environments while balancing the demands for leaner stronger organizations that are leaders in their fields. The culture of the organisation and the perception the employees have of their leaders, will impact the business. This is prevalent in the article on Northwest Community Hospital entitled 'From Great to Best: Culture as a Competitive Advantage in Healthcare' published by The Great Place to Work Institute (2006) where the VP of Human Resources, Mark Lusson discusses the importance of the culture of the hospital and how it has become an integral part of the strategy which has led to its success as an organisation in the eyes of its employees and has been rewarded with the recognition of being named in the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For, 2006.

The CIPD published a booked entitled 'Flexible Working' with the help of Stredwick, J & Ellis, S (2005) where they confirmed that flexible working has produced higher job satisfaction and commitment from employees. Employees appear to be advocates of promoting Work Life Balance Practices and on the most part, will welcome the implementation of new options to make life easier for themselves, but which will have a positive impact on the organisation. To support the employee and employers; another organisation that is a strong advocate of this topic is IBEC who published a "Work-Life Balance & Childcare Manual" in 2007 to encourage organisations to consider

implementing work-life practices. They were inspired by working parents to create the manual but realized that these policies need to be available to all employees, not just parents. Stredwick & Ellis (2005) confirm this as they have highlighted the challenges faced by organisations when contemplating the introduction of additional Work Life Balance practices in their book 'Flexible Working'. They discuss the challenges of reorganizing and adjusting to accommodate new practices and ensuring fair treatment to all employees. My organisation will need to focus and ensure the management team are educated and empowered to manage any new practices that are implemented.

The National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP) produced a Paper entitled '*Working to our Advantage A National Workplace Strategy'* (2005) which confirms that more and more Irish companies are re-evaluating and addressing their work-life balance practices so it is imperative that all organisations react if they want to remain competitive within their macro environment. The survey I conducted to gain public opinion on my subject matter would indicate that Work life balance options would be viewed as more favorable for individuals seeking employment and would encourage both unemployed and employed individuals to apply to that specific organisation for available roles. Work life balance policies are not only used to retain key staff, but also to attract candidates during the recruitment process.

The Irish website http://www.Work lifebalance.ie/, (2010) hosted by the National Framework Committee for Work life Balance is dedicated to my subject of choice and promotes the positive effects of introducing Work life Balance policies. On the website I

found a case study, 'Learning from Work Life Balance Projects, the positive effects of introducing these policies' which states that employers will reap the rewards from increased productively, reduced absenteeism, stronger commitment and staying power from employees and the organisation will look good to potential new employees. So this specifically identifies the organisation as the main beneficiary yet Calvert et al (2009) talk about the increase in the number of women in the workforce and the decrease in the number of births where:

> "Concerns about the appropriate balance between work and family life have intensified as growth in female Labour market participation has been accompanied by falling fertility and the prospect of an ageing population".

Like the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD), (2002) I believe we as employers have made it difficult for women to return to work once they have children, as access to support structures such as pre-schools or crèches are particularly costly at present with some families or parents not in a position to pay the cost for these services, therefore leaving very little alternative. Also, the subsidy from the State for childcare for children younger than 4 years of age is minimal. The recession has also crippled people's ability from a financial perspective where they just 'can't afford' to work as the price of childcare is too costly. So what does this mean for employees and additional work-life balance practices? It certainly reiterates the need for analysis and my study will prove the benefits to both the employer and employee.

The Great Place to Work Institute (2009) also believes Work Life Balance practices are important for organisations and emphasizes its magnitude when conducting its annual surveys to place companies in the top 50/10 Great workplaces every year. The survey dedicates a whole section to this subject as part of its Cultural Audit. This is supported by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance who published a report entitled 'Working to our Advantage, A National Workplace Strategy Report of the Forum on the Workplace of the Future' (2005) which included statistics that will make organisations seriously consider their work-life balance policies:

- Less women are having babies so this will impact the working age population

- Women currently equate for 42 per cent of the working population

- Over 30 per cent of female employees work part-time, and account for over three quarters of all part-time workers

The CIPD along with McCartney, C & Willmot, B (2009), have conducted several surveys which have an implication on Work life balance. One such publication was their quarterly survey report for summer 2009 'Employee outlook, Job seeking in a recession'. In it they comment that 61 per cent of employees surveyed feel they have the right balance between work-life and their personal life – which is an increase of 5 per cent from the previous quarter, 65 per cent of women specifically saying this is their experience. What concerns me is that only 36 per cent of employees felt that their organisation supports work-life balance. This is the reason why I surveyed our employees. I needed to get their opinions and perspectives about my organisation in

the hope that their feedback will hopefully lead me to implement changes within my organisation in the future.

Graduates from The National college of Ireland along with the National University of Ireland in Galway and 2 Universities in the USA worked on a study entitled "The 2007 Work-life Balance in Ireland Study" which was funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS). After the compilation of their findings, Grady et al, 2008 produced a book entitled "Work-Life Balance, Policies & Initiatives in Irish Organisations, A Best Practice Management Guide" where they talk about the importance for organisations to focus on this subject to retain employees and to attract future candidates. As every organisation needs to continue to motivate and persistently demonstrate how they value their employees which in turn will promote them as an employer of choice and retain current staff, my findings indicate that a review of work life balance policies and practices should happen in organisations within the medical device manufacturing environment, particularly if they want to maintain competitive advantage.

I believe my organisation or more specifically, some of the managers will resist my proposal to implement changes, but I believe my data gathering and analysis will prove the benefits of implementing favorable Work Life Balance practices that will suit my organisation and our employees not only from a cost perspective but from a production and job satisfaction perspective too.
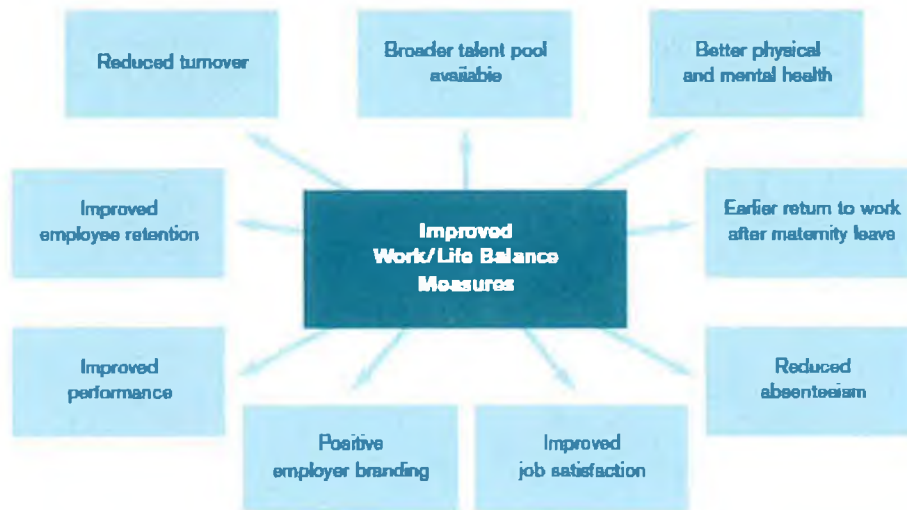
Graphic courtesy of Hudson AU, 2010

My literature review also led me to a study entitled 'Fathers and Mothers - Dilemmas of the work -Life Balance: A comparative study of 4 European Countries' (2002). The study took 19 months to complete after its inception in January 2001. It was funded by the European Commission, the European Social Fund and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in Ireland and was coordinated by the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, Trinity College, Dublin with collaboration from Universities in France, Italy, and Denmark. This comparative study was carried out on samples of men and women in Ireland, France, Denmark and Italy and was defined by sex, marital status and employment status. The study identified many factors that impacted Work life balance for Irish workers, some of which I had not considered before. Do any employers consider the impact commuting has on their employees? Well this study identified that the Irish commuted on average 39 minutes per journey, with over 70% using a car to do so. Our inadequate transportation system plays a part in this with

confirmation by The Siemens European Green Cities Index, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2009), who ranked Dublin 30th out of a list of 30 of the greenest cities in Europe by describing it as the worst city in Europe in terms of its transport infrastructure. The longer the duration of commute, the less straightforward it is to balance work and family life.

The study '*Fathers and Mothers - Dilemmas of the work -Life Balance: A comparative study of 4 European Countries' (2002)* also confirmed that Irish fathers work the longest week of 45 hours compared to the other countries. And obviously this then impacted on relationships as it was noted that the longer working hours that employees worked, the less satisfied their spouses or partners would be, given the excessive hours spent outside the home by their working spouse/partner. Surprisingly, Ireland had the highest number of 'longer hour jobs' which were differentiated by sex, e.g. Shift work in manufacturing facilities is mainly completed by men. So how do Irish companies combat this issue? Shorter shifts with indiscriminate jobs? Will Work life balance alternatives be a possibility in this situation? This leads to the flexibility of the organisation to adapt to change. The report noted that Irish employees had greater Work life balance advantages in the public sector compared to employees in the Private sector but a lack of education and understanding of the policies or practices prevented many from availing of them.

In the United Kingdom, The Employment Act 2002 introduced new employment legislation designed to help working parents which allowed for a new Right to two

weeks' paid paternity leave for fathers within eight weeks of the birth of a child. This was effective from 6 April 2003, yet as noted in the study *Fathers and Mothers - Dilemmas of the work -Life Balance',* more than three quarters of Irish male respondents reported that they would have taken parental leave had it been paid. This was higher than in any other country. So why has a policy like the UK paid paternity leave not been implemented in Ireland, 8 years after a study of this magnitude has been completed? Only the Irish government can answer that.

Kevin Courtney, an Irish Times journalist wrote an article in 2009 where he maintains;

> The reality for most working fathers is that, although they would like to spend more time with their children, they continue the nine-to-five slog right through their children's growing-up years. Even though many parents are sharing the child-rearing more equally, and dads are getting more involved with their kids, most working fathers find there is no flexibility in their job to allow them to be a more active parent.

I don't believe the organisation I work for has actually even considered fathers in the equation when addressing Work life balance arrangements yet all fathers seem to feel that they do not get to spend enough time with their children, but can't do anything about it as that is the way the organisation works. Particularly in Irish society today, there is still a certain stigma associated with men either becoming stay-at-home dads or requesting leave from work to spend time with their families as they fear it will have a direct impact on their careers so the opposite is what we witness in organisations across Ireland – men are more inclined to work additional hours which means they are away

from their families for longer periods than they would like. So what is important to take from this research, is that Work life balance is for all, not just for women or parents, Work life balance should be available to all, irrespective of marital status or family status. And organisations should look at policies that allow for equalization across genders and promote the standardization of paid paternity leave for our fathers. Like the idiom states; 'What is good for the goose is good for the gander'.

Another report titled 'Gender Inequalities in Time Use - The Distribution of Caring, Housework and Employment among Women and Men in Ireland', (2005) commissioned by the Equality Authority gathered information on paid and unpaid labour from 1,089 adults in Ireland and confirmed that the allocation of work is dramatically dissimilar. The report showed that women spent more time 'working unpaid' in the home compared to men, with women actually working 39 minutes extra per day compared to their spouse/partner. This is before children are added to the equation. The report suggests working fathers do more 'paid' work on average compared to non-fathers, yet working mothers do more unpaid work in the home compared to that of non-mothers. If sharing the responsibility of caring for one's children was possible among parents, it would help lessen the financial and emotional burden and this is why it is imperative that work life balance works for all.

Maternity leave and unpaid leave entitlements in Ireland have increased for mothers, allowing them more time at home with their children but this only delays the dilemma of child-care concerns for a certain amount of time until the mother returns to work, and

then this is when the true difficulty arises. The longer parents are working out of the home, the harder it is to juggle the responsibilities of home life. So the consequences of this are that more and more employees are looking for flexible working arrangements to balance the two, which will result in healthier, more satisfied employees who will be more productive for less money.

It will be inevitable for the topic of Work life balance not to be on the priority list for all medical device companies in Ireland as the focus is now coming from political groups to address the issue and implement improvements.

> "Today's working male and female face a broad set of daily challenges which many times create imbalance between their working life and personal/family life. Lack of work-life balance thus influences working individual's performance at workplace as well as in personal life. In the current economic scenario, organisations are hard pressed for higher productivity and can face the recessionary challenges better if their employees are more engaged with work and workplace. Organisations, more than ever, need employees with improved work-life balance. An employee with better work-life balance will contribute more meaningfully towards the organisational growth and success". - Dr. Pranav Naithani, pg. 1 – 'Overview of Work-Life Balance Discourse and Its Relevance in Current Economic Scenario' (2010)

I found a KPMG case study conducted in 2004 in the UK by The Work Foundation which realized the need to balance the connection between Work life and home life and how the uneven apportioning of either can impact the workforce. To combat the issue, the organisation agreed to implement Work life balance arrangements such as flexible working.

The case study highlighted the expectations of the employees and the demands for balance, which could only be achieved with the support of the organisation. As with all organisations, this particular firm had to remain competitive while implementing these changes. The study also disparaged the belief that the more committed an employee was to the firm, the longer hours they worked, similar to the study conducted by Guest (2004) and his graduates. But like every organisation going through change, this firm encountered issues such as maintaining the highest of standards for its customers while juggling the need to change its culture around its personnel management.

The change required for this firm to adapt was embedded in its roots and required the creation of any supporting documentation such as policies and application procedures surrounding the new Work life balance initiatives. This is what I know will be required for my own organisation.

The case study recognized the need to be fair to all employees, not just those who were married with children; all employees were able to request flexible working arrangements once the business didn't suffer as a consequence. This firm identified the key stakeholders such as the line managers in the organisation to work with the HR department as facilitators to review and approve/decline requests.

Many of its new initiatives are widely used today, but on comparison, their 'Glide Time' (core hours working with flexible start and finish times) policy would not be a viable option for my organisation, mainly because we are a Shared Service organisation supporting various countries throughout EMEA. Although this case study was conducted

in 2004, the KPMGs vision for the future was impressive as they considered such initiatives as 'Additional Holiday Purchase scheme' and 'Home working' and with over 390 requests received for flexible working approved in a 12 month period. The vision to demonstrate and implement flexibility for its employees can only be rewarded with commitment and loyalty which no amount of money can buy. This firm was motivated by its focus to retain key staff and maintaining competitive advantage in its marketplace and by doing so, this again demonstrates that both the employer and employees benefit from these types of arrangements.

As you will see in my research, individuals' needs are specific to them and no-one else, so diversity in flexibility is mandatory for companies. Every individual has his/her own reason for wanting to balance their work and personal lives; be it to accommodate growing families, caring for an elderly or poorly relative or just managing the daily commute. When organisations are open and receptive to change, they reap the rewards from their workforce. And as this case study from The Work Foundation, (pg., 2, 2004) confirms, ' 'the ability to cater for these requests can help improve employer and employee affinity, boosts morale, job satisfaction, performance and ultimately improves retention of talent'.

Another survey entitled 'Working time and work–life balance in European companies', which was an Establishment Survey on Working Time prepared in 2004–2005 written by Arnold Riedmann, in cooperation with Harald Bielenski, Teresa Szczurowska and Alexandra Wagner for the European Foundation for the improvement of living and

working conditions identified that 9% of managers said it was not the organisations responsibility to worry about the personal lives of its staff when coordinating work around the organisation and working time regulations. This figure has increased substantially since 2004/2005 and is highlighted in my surveys by emphasizing the importance of Work life balance arrangements to employees.

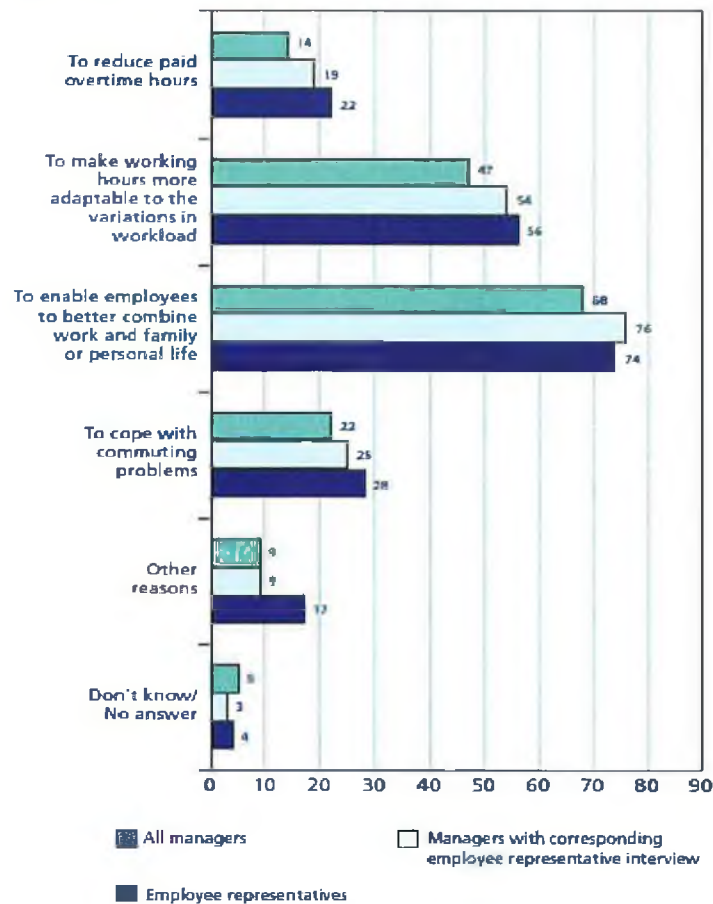**Figure 5: Reasons for introducing flexible working times (%)**

Illustration courtesy of 'Working time and work-life balance in European companies' report, pg. 8, 2006

The reasons for implementing Work life balance arrangements is because "Both managers and employee representatives most frequently report higher job satisfaction

as an outcome of the introduction of flexible working times, followed by a better adaption of working hours to the workload. Among both groups of respondents, only a small minority perceives any negative effects". Riedmann et al, pg. 8, 2006.

RESEARCH QUESTION

I believe it is mandatory that the research question I have chosen is one that I am genuinely interested in researching, and one that I care about the outcome. And this is very applicable to my question of identifying who are the real beneficiaries of work life balance as I know it can benefit my organisation and my colleagues in the medical device manufacturing sector.

My organisation has identified Valued Behaviours that it expects its employees to adhere to. These are as follows:

Core Value	Be Always Kind and True	
Valued Behaviours	**Communicate to Understanding**	*We seek to thoroughly understand and be understood*
	Urgency on the Vital	*We take action on what's vital*
	Global Awareness	*We understand that our success depends on being global*
	Customer Intimacy	*We build customer relationships that guide our success*
	Connected	*We partner with our colleagues to achieve results*
	Deliver	*We do what we say we are going to do*

Build our Talents	*We continually develop ourselves and others*

But for my organisation to practice what it preaches, I would like to see it open its mind to my findings and acknowledge the need to address the Work Life balance issue.

The purpose of my thesis is to explore who are the main beneficiaries of work life balance, the organisation (employer) or the employee. The reason for this is my belief that my organisation will appose my suggestions to review our current practices as they will not see it as a benefit to the organisation. I am in a position where I have the capability to create and execute detailed, work life balance arrangements which will impact the organisation and employees significantly by removing the "one size fits all" mentality when discussing this topic. I need to education my organisation and show the benefits to both. This will be an opportunity for the organisation to embrace change and to live up to its core value **'To be always kind and true'** by treating each other with dignity and respect and acting in an honest and ethical way in all of our interactions.

In my opinion, the most significant way forward for my organisation is to encourage and endorse a vigorous organizational transformation and maintain a serious commitment to it. In a non-unionised workplace such as mine, top management should make this commitment. Healthy organizational change includes employee job satisfaction, health

and fulfilment as an unequivocal and positive outcome measure. These outcomes should be the key goals of the change effort.

The key point here is to increase real control and participation from employees: not just the illusion of control. We need to use staff meetings more effectively to encourage participation and input from our employees and one of the ways I can start this change is by requesting the opinions of our employees in a survey.

We also need to recognize that there are many ways that we are motivated as employees. Managers need to use a portfolio of approaches in order to increase motivation. And I believe by addressing Work Life Balance and promoting this among our staff, we will achieve colossal levels of motivation from our employees.

Today, we as an organisation align our performance review process with our compensation structure, I suggest we make some changes and differentiate between the two, as one thing that we need to keep in mind relative to compensation as a motivator is that while we often think of compensation first, it is actually shown to not be the primary motivation for most people. Recognition and opportunity rate higher, especially over time.

Recognition really has to do with how we feel about our contribution to the organization. What is our value? Going forward we need to help people understand their value through regular feedback and recognition for a job well done. If a manager is consistent in providing this feedback on an ongoing basis, their employees should feel very confident of the value they bring to the organization. We as an organisation also

need to recognize the loyalty and commitment of our staff and in doing so, work with them to create an environment and culture that is sustainable and balanced.

Another primary motivator is opportunity. The chance to grow, be challenged, learn new things and advance in the organization is key motivators and ways to engage and retain employees. An opportunity to grow does not come with a pre-requisite that you must have dedicated your life to the organisation by working a 70 hour week, opportunity can come in several formats and should be available to all employees, irrespective of whether they work fulltime or part-time, whether they avail of parental leave once a week or whether they have previously applied for a career break or not.

> Employees have shown a great desire for flexible work arrangements (FWAs). National data reveals that nearly 80% of workers say they would like to have more flexible work options and would use them if there were no negative consequences at work. Workplace flexibility, 2010

These opportunities must become a reality for all or our employees.

To achieve this, the question I needed to find an answer to is; who are the real beneficiaries of introducing new Work life balance practices, my company, or the employees who work here? I analyzed and re-evaluated our current practices and in the long-term, plan to propose the implementation of new practices and support this proposal with statistical data showing long term benefits to both. *Please see my diagram at number 1 in the appendices.*

These long term aims are to identify relevant practices that I can implement into my organisation that will motivate and retain the best employees and genuinely ensure my company is the company of choice for the future but in order to achieve this, I needed to define who the real beneficiaries are.

We were placed in the top 10 Best Places To Work for in 2009 and the top 50 the year before, but I want to insure we are in the top 10 every year, and from my perspective, in order to achieve this, I believe we have to continually re-evaluate our practices to ensure our staff believe we should be one of the best organisations to work for. This area of flexibility or Work life balance was the one area that was identified as a weakness of my organisation and one of which we could improve. It is also personally important to me as, being a mother of two young children with a third due in August, the flexibility that family friendly practices bring to an organisation are significant to me as a working mum. When I look at the organisation I work for, and the culture that is prevalent, I think it is essential that I constantly strive to improve benefits and perks for our employees to ensure satisfaction, not only for working mums, but for everyone. And as a consequence, the organisation will reap the rewards of happy employees. But first I will need to identify the disadvantages or challenges and provide solutions to make this workable and convenient for the management team to implement and the employees to adapt easily too.

The IBEC 'work life Balance Manual', 2007 states that Recruitment and Retention improve with better Work-life balance practices. My research has confirmed that improved Work-Life Balance practices do have a direct impact on retention of employees. It has also shown how poor economic times influence organisations to re-evaluate their policies to maintain competitive advantage and be an employer of choice in their competitive market.

My research has shown reductions in recruitment costs and an increase in retention on the back of improved work life balance arrangements has benefited both the organisation and the employees in the long run. Increased employee satisfaction and commitment increases productivity, which subsequently has a positive impact on the organisation. *As detailed in my diagram under point 2 of the appendices.*

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides information on how I conducted my research to ascertain the perceptions of all our employees (including management) on work life balance arrangements in our workplace along with an overview of the Theoretical framework I found relevant to my research. This chapter will critically examine the methods I used to collate my information including my selection process for participants of my surveys and focus group. I will also briefly discuss any ethical issues I encountered and the limitations of this study.

The main body of my methodology revolved around conducting surveys. The reason I focused on this method is because I felt that asking for people's opinions would really help me achieve my goal of finding out who is the real beneficiary of work life balance practices.

I chose to include 3 surveys to allow me to capture information from various sources instead of just 1. The 3 surveys I used were as follows:

1. Survey of own employees currently working in my medical device manufacturing company.
2. Survey of other medical device manufacturing companies.
3. Public Opinion survey/interviews

While my initial work plan was as detailed below, I found it difficult to adhere to the timeframes I had allowed myself for each section. This was due to a number of factors but most prevalent of all, was the response times from employees in relation to survey 1

and the turnaround time of survey 2 from other medical device manufacturing companies. Finally I opted to conclude my research with a Focus Group session as I was interested to gain insight into different perspectives in a controlled environment.

INITIAL WORK PLAN:

1. Project Proposal Preparation
2. Literature Review
3. Methodology 1 - Prepare Survey Questions and Pilot same
4. Methodology 2 - Prepare & conduct interviews
    - Define questions
    - Identify interviewees
    - Analyze results
5. Methodology 3 - Observations
    - What have I observed during my field study
    - Primary data information gathered
    - CSO statistics
    - Case study comparisons
6. Methodology 4 – Focus Group
    - Define questions
    - Organize Meeting
    - Record Discussion (Camcorder)
    - Analyze results
7. Re-Run Survey
8. Analysis
9. Consolidation
10. Final Review

11. Submission

Theoretical Framework

I chose to focus on qualitative methods of surveys and focus groups for my research. The reason I chose these methods is because I felt it was important to understand the perspectives and opinions of the key stakeholders (our employees) and other vital participants and as 'A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting' (Creswell, 1994, p2), what better way to do this than through surveys and a focus group.

Something that became more and more apparent throughout the survey responses and in particularly the focus group was the psychological contract and what individual's perceived as 'agreed' behaviors and expectations between themselves and their employer. Winter and Jackson (2006) have used comparative analysis techniques to identify and contrast psychological contract categories of managers and employees. Their research found that although managers and employees shared similar responses as to the state of the psychological contract, they attributed different causes to these states. Managers tended to construct rational explanations and emphasize resource constraints and financial considerations, while employees constructed emotional

explanations and attributed this situation to an unfair, uncaring or distant management. Employees regarded the Staff Consultative Committee and open-door policies as "symbolic acts" rather than genuine attempts to give employees a voice in the company'.

As my literature review has shown, finding the right balance between work and home life increases commitment from employees and, 'employees who experience job satisfaction are most likely to be productive and stay on the job' (McNeese-Smith, 1997), while Mobley (1982) and Mobley et al. (1979) have shown that employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs are more inclined to leave an organisation than remain as employees. But to ensure job satisfaction, understanding the psychological contract will assist with the review and implementation of new work life balance practices and fulfill the desires and meet the expectations of our employees. Psychological contracts specify what employees believe they owe their organizations and what they believe they are owed in return (Rousseau, 1995). This belief directly impacts work life balance arrangements as opinions will differ between managers and their employees about what they are 'owed'.

Further to my literature review where I discuss the importance of working mums and their desire to balance work and home life, Dick (2010) argues that

> 'professional work norms, including working long hours and being ever-available, operate to legitimise the reduction in career development opportunities that accompanies the transition from full to part-time work in professionalised

occupations. On one level, therefore, these norms generate mutuality between managers and employees. When combined with demands of motherhood, however, they fundamentally influence how each party interprets their obligations to each other, generating incongruity and, potentially, a breach of the psychological contract'.

Research Methods (3 Surveys, 1 Focus Group).

The reason I opted to use surveys for my research is because they produce one of the most common types of quantitative data available. I selected a sample of respondents from 3 different environments and issued a standardized questionnaire to them. I chose 2 surveys where the respondents completed the questions in person and conducted the 3rd survey face-to-face thus allowing me to collect data from large and small populations.

After creating and conducting the surveys, I processed and analyzed the results. These steps required strict attention to detail and were fully dependent on the scope of my study, my own capabilities, and the audience that I directed the work to.
Each of the surveys I conducted was focused on obtaining thoughts, opinions and feedback from the individual's perspective on work life balance.

The first survey I decided to conduct was on the employees of the organisation I work for because it will help improve the organisation by gaining insight into our managers

and employees perspectives and by asking for their opinion, we are showing that they matter to us as an organisation. I felt it was important to gain an understanding of what our own team desired in relation to work life balance practices but also to understand the challenges they face finding the right balance. I also wanted to gain perspective on the employees understanding of their entitlements, informal agreements with their manager and any expectations they had regarding their employment with the company. It also helped me to understand the psychological contract - the set of practical and emotional expectations of benefits that employers and employees can reasonably have of each other (Hendry et al, 1997).

The survey helped me to understand how employees perceive the organisation, our mission, vision, valued behaviors and culture and how much they feel valued by the organisation. It helped identify the feelings and emotions of our teams and their values, their passion and commitment to the organisation but also exposing the misconceptions and beliefs about entitlements such as benefits, compensation and 'Rights' as an employee. The survey was also an opportunity for the employees to really assess their current role, how satisfied they are with their role and their development aspiration for a future within the organisation but also to evaluate the balance between work and home life.

The survey results created will provide the management team with a direction for corrective action and help with the implementation of additional work life balance practices.

My other explorative study consisted of contacting individuals who were/are employed in other medical device manufacturing organisations in Ireland to confirm what we are currently doing right in relation to our Work Life Balance practices and what we can improve on as I believe it is important to question people in similar environments to me who have the same challenges that I face. The questionnaires/surveys were distributed to 5 companies in the Irish Medical Device Manufacturing sector, regrettably only 3 of which responded.

The methodology of using surveys allowed me to compare the results from other similar organisations to ensure we are competitive and fair.

It was imperative that I asked the right questions throughout my questionnaires and more importantly how I word the questions could affect the information gathered. I was conscious of capturing precise information from all my survey participants so I could provide objective data for decision-making, empowering management to concentrate on the real threats and opportunities for the organisation.

As mentioned, the first survey was sent to employees in my company and was generally directed at clarifying how satisfied they are in relation to the organisation, their current role and their working environment. It was an opportunity to take on board staff's views and opinions so I could make positive changes to the business going forward. I asked the employees to be as open and honest as possible when answering the questions as the more accurate, relevant and useful the feedback provided is, the more

beneficial the survey will be for everyone. My target group was all employees, from Managers, peers and colleagues in every department with varying personal circumstances such as single, married or parents etc. Please see my **'Employee Attitude Survey'** in my appendices at point 3.

This survey helped me explore what our employees want and what Work Life Balance Practices are preferable. It also identified other areas for improvement.

I wanted to know what is the best practice I should introduce and why. I wanted to know how to go about implementing these practices and I wanted to know the benefits these will have on the organisation. I wanted to know how to convince the management team to support my proposal.

Participants

Survey 1: Employee Attitude Survey

The main people I deemed necessary to include in this survey were managers who will have to support the practices and our employees who will need to adapt to any changes. Stredwick & Ellis 2005, encourage HR practitioners to involve the 'Stakeholders' at an early stage of the business planning. This will be the tact I will take when approaching my organisation with my findings. I will ensure I get the support of the key 'stakeholders' mentioned above.

Survey 2: Medical Device Manufacturing Company Survey

I chose 5 companies who are in the same sector as my organisation as I felt it was important to compare like for like. I sent the survey requests to the Human Resource Manager of each company for completion. Only 3 responded.

Survey 3: Public Opinion Survey

I realized the importance of broadening the opportunity for the collation of data for this research by opting to include results from a survey that I conducted with members of the public. I thought it was important as my own organisation would like to be a company of choice for future employees so a neutral perspective was important to this research. I purposefully selected 'different' people for this survey and did not limit my options.

As Findlay & Li (1999) argue, the theoretical position that a researcher holds about the nature of reality and the philosophies of knowledge which he or she embraces is directly related to the methods adopted in the pursuit of knowledge.

Surveys (Strengths and Weaknessess)

As with all research methods, weaknesses and strengths can be identified and must be taken into consideration when analyzing data. In relation to the weaknesses of using surveys, Goldrick (2010, p52) states "the survey approach bears some disadvantages, namely the time it takes to plan, implement and analyze the data, which can be significant when working alone."

Various other weaknesses can be easily identified such as respondents filling in the answers by what they believe the author wants to hear, rather than following their true beliefs, particularly when the survey results impact them directly. Critics of the survey method claim that surveys can force respondents into making opinions that may not truly reflect their feelings (Garson, 2002). Some respondents can be influenced by their 'feelings' for the author, e.g. if they like the author they will more than likely answer the questions in a more favorable manner, rather than those individuals who dislike the author, they could use the opportunity to vent unnecessarily. This is confirmed by Robson (2002, p231) who argues that surveys are 'Falsely prestigious because of their quantitative nature, the findings are seen as a product of largely uninvolved respondent whose answers owe more to some unknown mixture of politeness, boredom and a desire to be seen in a good light than to their true feelings, beliefs or behavior'.

Yet one of the most apparent weaknesses I found with the survey approach was that sometimes individuals are reluctant to complete questionnaires as they believe that the results are not analyzed and no corrective action is put in place. I believe this is why I had such a poor response to my employee survey with only 62% responding. Also, as identified in my 'limitations section', surveys or questionnaires are unsuitable for probing or follow-up unlike face-to-face interviewing particularly when 'tick boxes' are prevalent.

As the Regional Training Unit (RTU) note: Vroom (1964) and Porter & Lawler (1968) discuss the Expectancy Theory and the impact various aspects of the job have on

performance such as; motivation, abilities, traits and perceptions. Job satisfaction is also linked to their model but is only achieved with high rewards. All of these will influence an individual's perception of the organisation they work for and will subsequently have an impact on their responses to survey questions.

Surveys have strengths too as they 'provide a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives' Robson (2002, pg 233) and if individuals are going to respond, they will usually do this quickly. Other strengths or advantages are surveys/questionnaires can be distributed to huge quantities of participants concurrently and anonymity can be maintained thus encouraging honest and sincere responses. This is also confirmed by Rubin et al (2010, pg 125) who suggest that the use of surveys allow anonymity which facilitates responses regarding sensitive areas. These sensitive areas could be interlinked with The Psychological contract as defined by Makin et al (1997): 'The psychological contract at work is a set of unwritten expectations operating among members' and if these 'expectations' do not synchronize between manager and employee, issues will arise. If expectations are not met, survey results will be marred. If expectations are agreed and performed, a harmonious relationship will prevail.

Focus Group (advantages & disadvantages)

Gillham (2005) suggests that combining surveys with interviews (Focus Group) is a good way to balance the strengths and weaknesses of each method. Where surveys have brief responses, interviews and focus groups have in-depth subjective responses. Unlike the surveys, 'Focus groups are more 'naturalistic' than interviews in that they typically include a range of communicative processes such as – storytelling, joking, arguing, boasting, teasing, persuasion, challenge and disagreement'. Silverman (2004, p 180)

Stewart et al (2007) note that Focus Groups:

- Allow data to be obtained quickly from a number of individuals at one time.
- Allow the researcher to interact directly with the respondents.
- Gives respondents the opportunity to react and build on the respondents of others.
- Results are extremely user friendly and easy to understand.

However, Focus Groups also have disadvantages as confirmed by Edmunds (1999, pg 7:8) such as organizing and recruiting participants for the group can be an arduous task and participant responses are not independent of each other.

Limitations

During my research for this dissertation, I noted several limitations which I would like to acknowledge.

The first methodological limitation I found was the disappointing number of respondents from my own organisation with only 62% of respondents returning a completed survey. I proactively addressed this issue by sending numerous email reminders and updating reminder notifications on the noticeboards.

The second methodological limitation I found was the limited number of Irish Medical device manufacturing companies who returned a completed survey, with only 3 out of the 5 companies contacted actually replying.

The third methodological limitation I found was that I did not include a 'follow-up' period in my timeframe to probe the responses I received from my employees. I would have liked to get a better understanding of their interpretation of what we call the psychological contract and felt the questionnaire limited my ability to collate meaningful information.

Ethical issues

It was my responsibility to ensure Ethical Considerations were adhered to and to identify and safeguard the rights of every individual who participated in my surveys. I did this by assuring that any individual who participated in my surveys would not be subjected to any emotional or physical harm. LoBiondo et al. (1994) state that human subjects have the right not to be harmed physically, psychologically or emotionally.

I did not request the identification of participants to ensure confidentiality but allowed for this to be optional. For the surveys I had to issue manually (to some of my

employees who do not have access to email) I did not include a number or any way of identifying who they were issued too.

SURVEY 1 RESULT – EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE SURVEY

The survey was issued to 103 employees with 64 actually responding before the deadline. The following charts show the personal profiles of the 64 respondents, broken down by Age, Gender, Marital Status, Employees with Children, Department they work in and employment status (Fulltime or part-time).

Personal Information:	103 Questionnaires issued	103	100%
		64	62%

Age:		
	20 – 30 years	13
	31 – 40 years	23
	41 – 50 years	17
	51 – 60 years	9
	61 – 65 years	2
		64
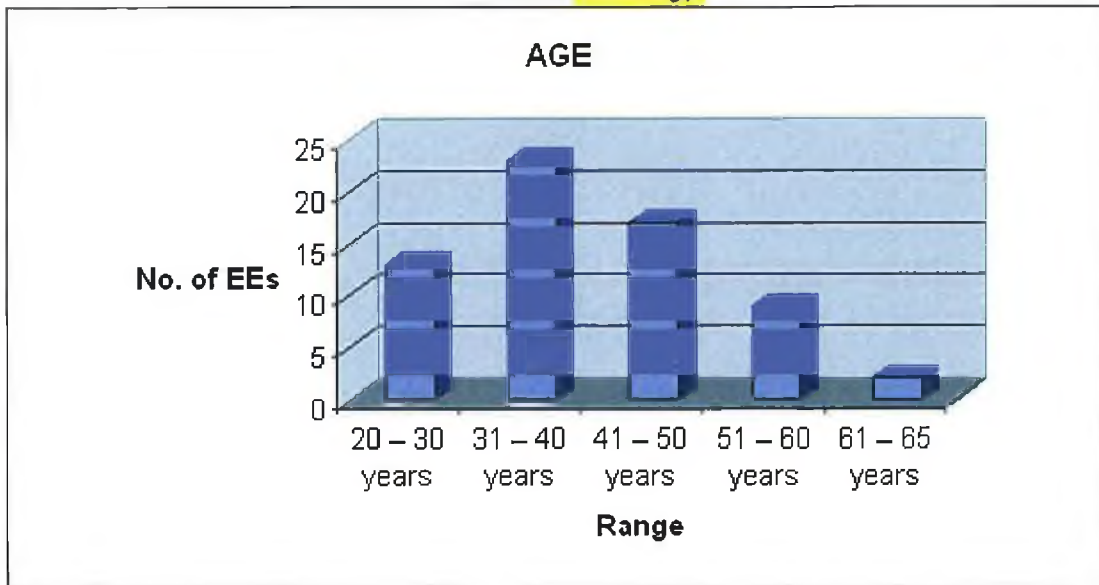
Out of the 64 respondents, our highest numbers of workers are ranged between 31 and forty. This is interesting as this is on average the age group that would either be getting married or starting a family, or both. And from my research, this is the age group that has indicated a desire to see an improvement in our

Work life balance arrangements.

Gender:

	Male	Female	
	17	47	64

Gender
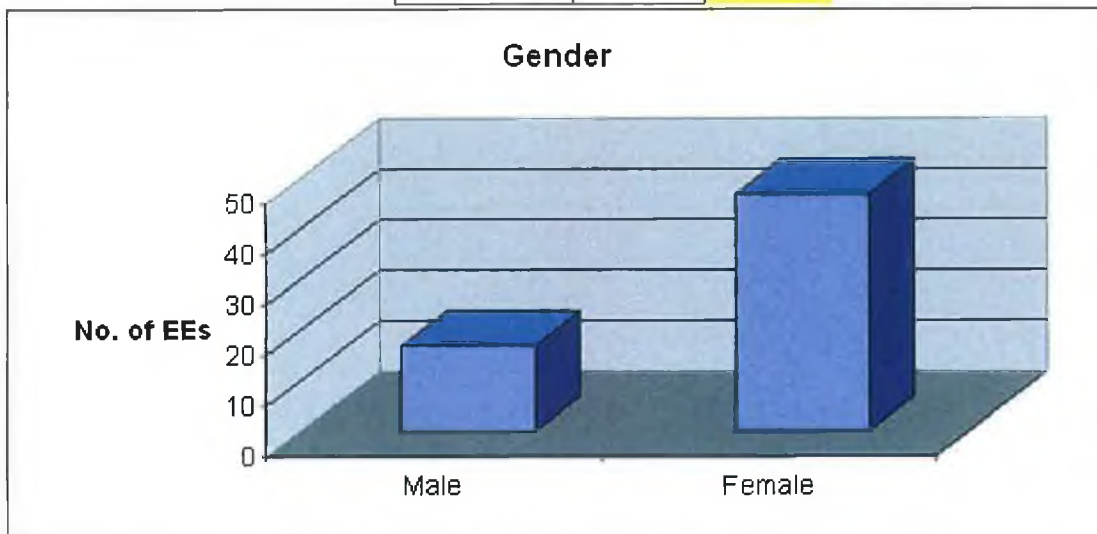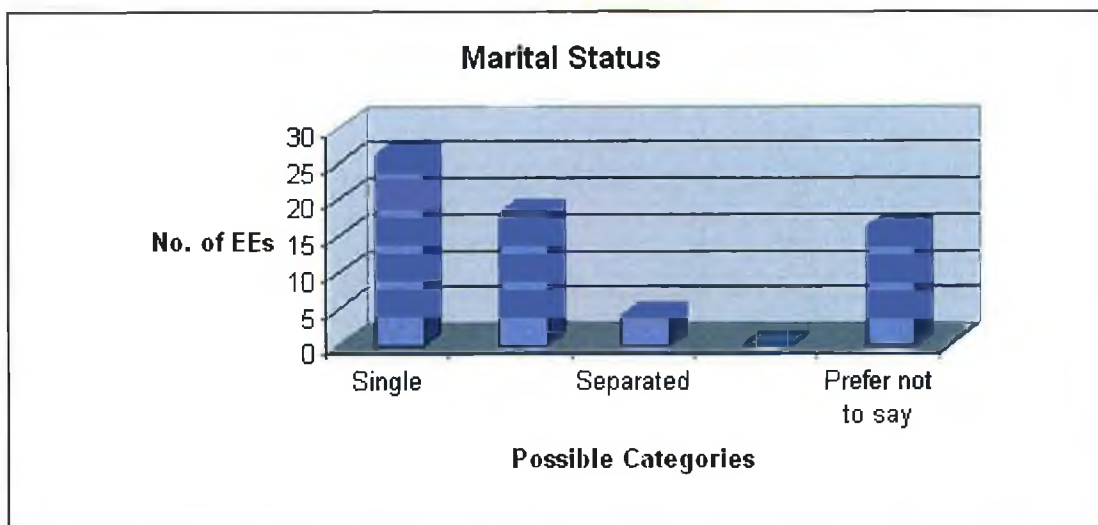

47 of the respondents were female, with only half of the male work force actually responding to the survey (17 out of 34).

Marital Status

Single	26
Married	18
Separated	4
Divorced	0
Prefer not to say	16
	64

Marital Status

26 Employees that responded are single, with the next highest category being married, with 18 respondents. Surprisingly, 16 individuals selected not to say.

| **Children**	**Yes**	**No**	
	38	26	64

Of the 64 respondents, 38 have children which would indicate that some of our employees are unmarried/single parents. Again, this high number from such a small group would indicate the need to re-evaluate our Work life balance arrangements to ensure a happy workforce.

Which department do you work in?

Human Resources	1
Customer Service	18
Research & Development	3
Quality & Regulatory Affairs	14
Operations	18
Finance	9
Executive Team	1
	64
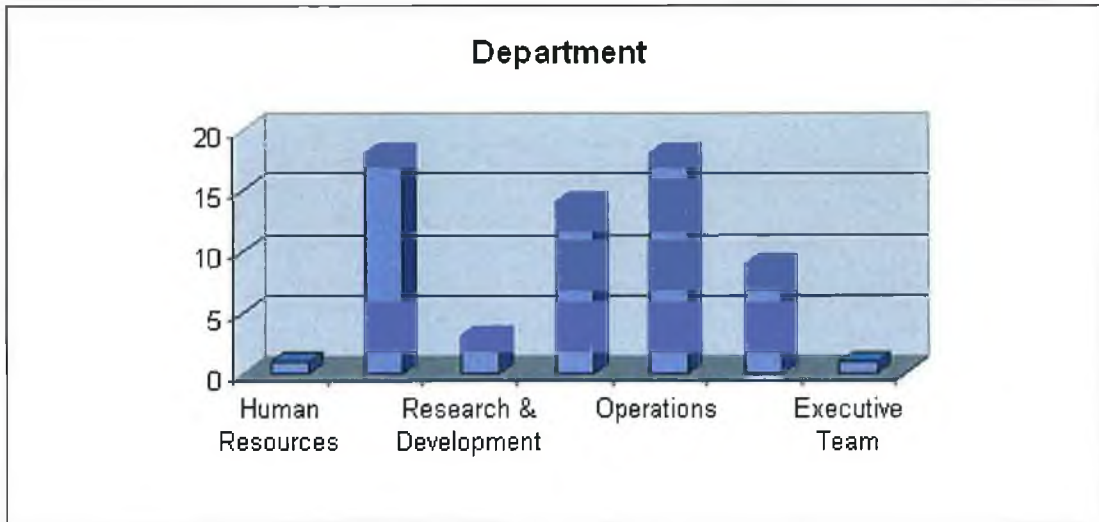
Department

Not surprisingly, the highest numbers of respondents were in the Customer Service Department and the Operations Department as both of these would normally have the largest headcount out of the 103 employees, with Customer Service employing 29 people, and Operations employing 30.

Do you work:

	Full-time	Part-time	
	61	3	64
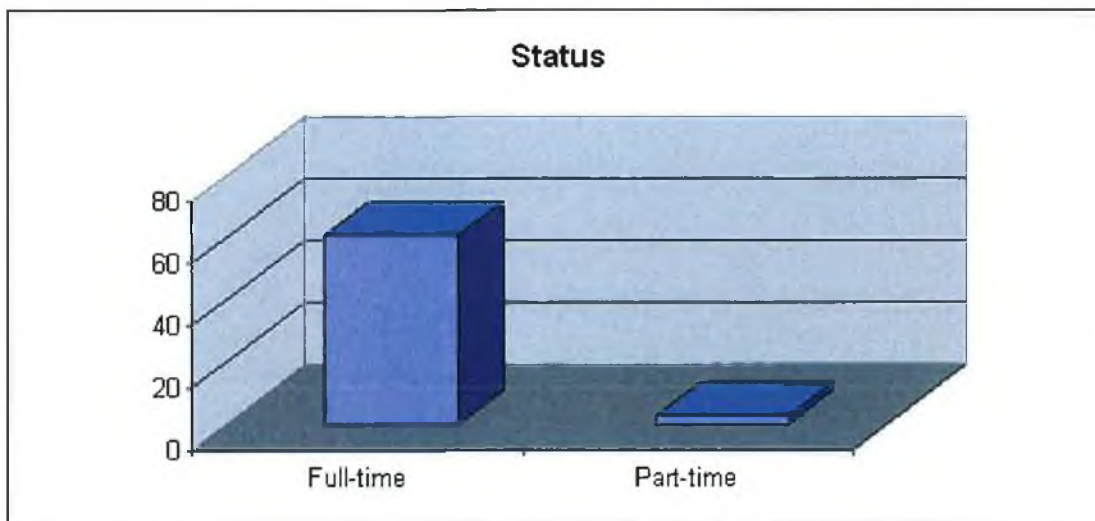
Status

My company has a relatively small population of part-time workers, currently at 5 so I'm delighted that the number of respondents from this sector is so high.

The next section of the survey (no. 1) is based on **'Your job'** and produced the following results:

Your Job	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied	
Your understanding of what is expected of you	1	4	15	33	11	64
The resources and support available to enable you to do your job	0	0	46	11	7	64
Your personal morale	6	10	38	9	1	64
Your personal job satisfaction	1	9	25	26	3	64
Salary package including any commission or bonus	10	19	22	7	6	64
Any non financial rewards you receive eg. recognition, time off	18	11	29	5	1	64
The benefit package offered at WA eg. pension, Gym Subsidy, Educational Assistance, EAP etc	0	0	44	16	4	64
The praise and recognition you get for a job well done from your line manager	0	7	27	20	10	64
The praise and recognition you get for a job well done from senior management	13	12	23	12	4	64
What is the most important thing the company could do to improve your job and maximise your job satisfaction?	Introduce flexible working arrangements					23%

As you can see from the survey results above, 33 respondents are satisfied with their understanding of what is expected of them while 46 feel the resources and support available to them to do their job is just ok. 38 believe Morale is ok while 26 feel their personal job satisfaction is good. 22 respondents feel the salary package is ok and 29 feel the non financial rewards are also ok. 44 people believe the total benefit package is ok while 27 respondents feel the praise and recognition they receive from their line manager is also ok while 23 respondents say recognition from senior managers is ok too. Interestingly, 23% which was the highest percentage of similar responses received believe the most important thing the company can do to improve the job and maximise job satisfaction is to Introduce flexible working arrangements. However, what does concern me is the number of respondents (18) who feel 'Any non financial rewards you receive eg. Recognition, time off' is very poor or totally unsatisfying. Also high on the list is 'The praise and recognition you get for a job well done from senior management' with 13 respondents also saying this is very poor or totally unsatisfying. We as an organisation must improve these figures by addressing concerns. And as neither issue is pay/compensation related, this should be relatively easy to do.

The Work Place	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied	
The Company as an Employer	0	0	44	20	0	64
Your working environment	0	0	38	25	1	64

The morale of your colleagues	0	8	46	10	0	64
The general public's view of Welch Allyn	0	0	0	58	6	64
In your view, what is the single most important thing the company could do to improve your working environment?	Upgrade Air conditioning system					33%

When questioned on the work place, 44 respondents rated the company as an ok employer, with 20 saying it was good/satisfactory. 38 rated the working environment as ok while 46 respondents said the morale of colleagues was ok. Interestingly, 58 respondents felt the public's perception of the company is good/ satisfactory with 6 even suggesting it was excellent. The highest percentage of respondents (33%) requested the upgrading of the air conditioning system when asked 'what is the single most important thing the company could do to improve the working environment'.

Your Line Manager	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied	
Your line manager overall	2	2	38	20	2	64
Feedback given and ideas for improvement	3	4	35	18	4	64
Your manager's management style	0	4	36	17	7	64
Your manager's approachability	2	5	33	22	2	64
Extent to which he/she encourages you to be customer focused	0	7	28	25	4	64
Extent to which he/she provides direction and leadership within the team	0	10	38	16	0	64

Extent to which he/she motivates you	0	0	40	24	0	64
Your manager's fairness and consistency	1	6	35	20	2	64
How do you suggest we improve things to help you and your manager work better together?	Introduce 360 degree feedback					15%

When asked to rate the line manager, the highest number of respondents rated the line manager as ok with 40 employees feeling they were very motivated by their manager. Yet while the 38 of respondents rated the 'Extent to which he/she provides direction and leadership within the team' as ok, 10 individuals said this was Poor/ Unsatisfied. The fact that 360 degree feedback was suggested as a way the company could improve things to help the employee and manager work better together, suggests that transparency and openness is a way to improve things.

Training & Development	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied	
Your induction on joining the company	0	0	28	20	16	64
The ongoing training you receive to enable you to do your job effectively	0	2	30	30	2	64
Opportunities to learn new skills and develop	0	2	31	29	2	64
Effectiveness of the new performance management system	0	0	35	25	4	64
How could the company improve the training and development programme available to you in your current role?	Have a single dedicated trainer					16%

The final part of section 1 questioned our ability to train and develop our staff. And the results really speak for themselves. 35 respondents rated our new performance management system as ok, while 30 respondents feel that our ongoing training received by the employee to enable them to do their job effectively is good or satisfactory.

Section 2 of the survey produced these findings:

Communication	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied	
How do you rate communication across the business?	2	22	25	15	0	64
The content and frequency of your departmental meetings	0	20	27	13	4	64
Your knowledge of what is happening in other parts of the business	5	15	30	13	1	64
Level / understanding of your department's work by other parts of the business	10	32	17	5	0	64
Level of communication between departments	2	22	25	15	0	64
Extent to which you get your voice heard / views aired when you need to	3	18	32	11	0	64
Responsiveness to your views	12	14	27	11	0	64
The way in which you are informed of changes taking place	15	18	21	10	0	64
What would you do to improve communications within the business?	Have quarterly global updates with CEO and Executive team by webcast					33%

32 respondents rated their Level / understanding of your department's work by other parts of the business as poor/unsatisfactory while 32 respondents felt the extent to

which you get your voice heard / views aired when you need to was ok. Alarmingly, 15

respondents said the way the company informed of changes was very poor/totally

unsatisfactory.

And finally, section 3 of the survey produced the following responses:

The best thing about working for our Company is......... **The location! (Majority of employees are from the immediate vicinity).**

The worst thing about working for our company is......... **Its inability of the entity in Navan to adapt to change and grow with the rest of the organisation. Very 'Navan-centric'.**

I have the following suggestions to improve department / Company performance .... **Cut back on non-necessary spending - host annual sales meeting every 2 years instead of annually and conduct by webcast instead of flying all participants to exotic locations for a week!**

When asked to respond to my question; who are the real beneficiaries of Work life

balance arrangements, the responses were as follows:

1. Employee 12
2. Employer 16
3. Both 33
4. Neither ▌

This validates my beliefs and reconfirms my research findings from Guest (2004) and other recognized institutions such as IBEC and the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance.

SURVEY 2 RESULTS- Manufacturing Companies

The second survey was sent to specifically selected Medical Device Manufacturing Companies in Ireland asking for feedback on their organisations attitude to work life balance. Please see my survey at point 4 in my appendices.

My aim was to define what Work-life Balance practices 'work' for other medical device manufacturers in Ireland by contacting some of our main competitors.

This survey gave me an opportunity to compare other companies' views and opinions with my own organisation and receive indications of best practise going forward.

The survey included the following sections:

⇨ Section 1 of the survey contained questions based on the organisations profile information.

⇨ Section 2 of the survey discusses current WLB practices and asks the organisation to comment on their reasons for choosing these specific Work Life Balance practices.

⇨ Section 3 of the survey requests their opinion on why Work Life Balance policies were introduced.

⇨ Section 4 asks the respondent to identify the pros and cons of Work Life Balance in their organisation.

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Organisation Number One:

1. Number of employees

1 – 50 ☐   51-250 ▢   251 of more   ☐

2. Gender
Number of male (full time) **74**   Number of Female (full time) **38**
Number of male (part-time) **9**   Number of Female (part-time) **22**

3. Average Age Profile:
☐   ▢   41 – 50   ☐
20 – 30 years   31 – 40 years   years
☐   ☐
51 – 60 years   61 – 65 years

4. Marital Status of employees (average)
☐   ▢   ☐
Single   Married   Separated
☐   ☐
Divorced   Unsure

5. Number of Employees with Children   Number: **82**

6. The number of employees per department?

Department Name	No. of EEs
Research & Development	18
Human Resources	5
Customer Service	40
Quality & Regulatory Affairs	11
Operations	55
Finance	6
Executive Team	6
Facilities	2
Other	0

143

Section 2 – Work life Balance Arrangements

1. Do you have any of the following WLB arrangements in operation in your organisation at present? If yes, please include the number and gender of employees who utilise these benefits

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Department Name	Yes	Female	Male
Annualised Hours	No	-	-
Career Break	No	-	-
Compassionate Leave	Yes	All	All
Flexitime	Yes	20	35
Job Sharing	Yes	12	-
Paid Maternity Leave	Yes	41	-
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)	Yes	15	5
Part-time Work	Yes	22	9
Paternity Leave	No	-	-
Sabbatical	No	-	-
Study Leave	Yes	13	19
Work from home	No	-	-

2. If no to all of the above, why do you believe your organisation does not operate any Work Life Balance arrangements? Please move to section 5

Section 3 – Work life balance policies

1. If applicable, why did you introduce work life balance policies into your organisation?

☐
Requested by employees   Proposed by employer   ☐
☐
Negotiated by Trade   ☐
Already in operation   Union
Other _____

Section 4 – Pros and Cons

1. What are the main benefits you have experienced by implementing Work Life balance policies?

☐   ☐   ☐
Improved productivity   Staff Retention   other
☐   ☐
Improves Recruitment   Lower absenteeism

2. Please indicate the success of your work life balance arrangements by answering the following questions:

Work-life Balance	V. Poor	Poor	Ok	Good

How would you rate your attitude to Work life balance?			
Are all managers good at apply the policies correctly?			
Are all employees treated equally?			
Are you open to employees taking leave for family matters?			
Does working for your company allow employees to combine work-life and family			
Is the company receptive to new WLB proposals?			

What would you do to improve opportunities within this area?

3. What barriers have you come across when implementing the work life balance policies:

Resistance from management ☐   Complicated to manage   ☐

Additional time required from facilitators ☐   Misuse of privileges'   ☐

Although this is the organisation with the middle amount of employees of the medical device companies surveyed, it has implemented more Work life balance initiatives than the other 2 respondents and has rated itself as good when it comes to address Work life balance.

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Organisation Number Two:

1. Number of employees

☐
1 – 50

▨
51-250

251 or
more

☐

2. Gender

Number of male (full time)
▉

Number of male (part-time) ▮

Number of Female (full time) ▨

Number of Female (part-time) ▨
☐

3. Average Age Profile:

▨
20 – 30 years

▨
31 – 40 years

41 – 50
years

☐

☐
51 – 60 years

☐
61 – 65 years

4. Marital Status of employees (average)

▨
Single

▨
Married

Separated

☐

☐
Divorced

☐
Unsure

5. Number of Employees with Children

Number: ▉

6. The number of employees per department?

Department Name	No. of EEs
Research & Development	8
Human Resources	2
Customer Service	26
Quality & Regulatory Affairs	8
Operations	49
Finance	5
Executive Team	5
Facilities	2
Other	0

105

Section 2 – Work life Balance Arrangements

1. Do you have any of the following WLB arrangements in operation in your organisation at present? If yes, please include the number and gender of employees who utilise these benefits

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Department Name	Yes	Female	Male
Annualised Hours	No	-	-
Career Break	No	-	-
Compassionate Leave	Yes	All	All
Flexitime	No	-	-
Job Sharing	No	-	-
Paid Maternity Leave	No	-	-
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)	Yes	15	5
Part-time Work	Yes	22	9
Paternity Leave	No	-	-
Sabbatical	No	-	-
Study Leave	No	-	-
Work from home	No	-	-

2. If no to all of the above, why do you believe your organisation does not operate any Work Life Balance arrangements? Please move to section 5

Section 3 – Work life balance policies

1. If applicable, why did you introduce work life balance policies into your organisation?

Requested by employees   Proposed by employer
                              Negotiated by Trade
Already in operation   Union
Other _____

Section 4 – Pros and Cons

1. What are the main benefits you have experienced by implementing Work Life balance policies?

Improved productivity   Staff   other
                             Retention

Improves Recruitment   Lower absenteeism

2. Please indicate the success of your work life balance arrangements by answering the following questions:

Work-life Balance	V. Poor	Poor	Ok	Good

Question					
How would you rate your attitude to Work life balance?			■		
Are all managers good at apply the policies correctly?			■		
Are all employees treated equally?				■	
Are you open to employees taking leave for family matters?				■	
Does working for your company allow employees to combine work-life and family			■		
Is the company receptive to new WLB proposals?				■	

What would you do to improve opportunities within this area?

3. What barriers have you come across when implementing the work life balance policies:

Resistance from management　■　Complicated to manage　■

Additional time required from facilitators　☐　Misuse of privileges'　☐

This is the smallest of the organisations surveyed and has very few Work life balance initiatives in operation at present. The 'poor' ratings would indicate that there is a certain resistance to new ideas and this company may struggle to retain staff.

The 3rd and final company to respond is the largest organisation (by headcount) yet this particular organisation does not have many Work life balance initiatives in place and has rated itself as very poor and basically unreceptive to new Work life balance proposals.

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Organisation Profile of Company Number Three:

1. Number of employees

☐   ☐   251 or   ▨
1 – 50   51-250   more

2. Gender

Number of male (full time) ■   Number of Female (full time) ■
Number of male (part-time)

1   Number of Female (part-time) ■

                            ☐

3. Average Age Profile:

▨   ▨   41 –   ▨
20 – 30 years   31 – 40 years   50 years

☐   ☐
51 – 60 years   61 – 65 years

4. Marital Status of employees (average)

▨   ▨   Separa   ☐
Single   Married   ted

☐   ☐
Divorced   Unsure

5. Number of Employees with Children
Number: ■

6. The number of employees per department?

Department Name	No. of EEs
Research & Development	22
Human Resources	6
Customer Service	45
Quality & Regulatory Affairs	16
Operations	85
Finance	10
Executive Team	8
Facilities	4
Other	3

199

Section 2 – Work life Balance Arrangements

1. Do you have any of the following WLB arrangements in operation in your organisation at present? If yes, please include the number and gender of employees who utilise these benefits

Department Name	Yes	Female	Male

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Annualised Hours	Yes	48	37
Career Break	Yes	5	1
Compassionate Leave	Yes	Everyone	Everyone
Flexitime	Yes	28	20
Job Sharing	No	-	-
Paid Maternity Leave	No	-	-
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)	No	-	-
Part-time Work	No	-	-
Paternity Leave	No	-	-
Sabbatical	No	-	-
Study Leave	No	-	-
Work from home	Yes	5	3

2. If no to all of the above, why do you believe your organisation does not operate any Work Life Balance arrangements? Please move to section 5

Section 3 – Work life balance policies

1. If applicable, why did you introduce work life balance policies into your organisation?

Requested by employees   Proposed by employer   ☐

Already in operation   Negotiated by Trade Union   ▣

Other _____

Section 4 – Pros and Cons

1. What are the main benefits you have experienced by implementing Work Life balance policies?

Improved productivity   Staff Retention   other

Improves Recruitment   Lower absenteeism

2. Please indicate the success of your work life balance arrangements by answering the following questions:

Work-life Balance	V. Poor		Poor	Ok	Good
How would you rate your attitude to Work life balance?					

☐

Are all managers good at apply the policies correctly?	██			
Are all employees treated equally?		██		
Are you open to employees taking leave for family matters?			██	
Does working for your company allow employees to combine work-life and family		██		
Is the company receptive to new WLB proposals?	██			

What would you do to improve opportunities within this area?

  I would like to see new initiatives implemented that would be applicable to more employees.

3. What barriers have you come across when implementing the work life balance policies:

Resistance from management   ██   Complicated to manage   ☐

Additional time required from facilitators   ☐   Misuse of privileges'   ██

When asked to respond to my questions; who are the real beneficiaries of Work life balance arrangements; each organisation (or the individual completing the survey) responded that both the employer and employee benefitted from the introduction of these arrangements.

SURVEY 3 RESULTS– PUBLIC OPINION

The 3rd survey/interview I conducted was with the general public. I wanted to incorporate a variety of responses and broaden the opportunity for feedback. Therefore I purposefully approached people from various backgrounds and differentiated between the respondents by:

Gender, Nationality, Employment Status, Average Age Profile, Marital Status and Number of Children (if applicable).

Every survey or interview I conducted was treated in the strictest of confidence and was completely anonymous for all respondents.

The long range purpose of my research was to identify new Work-life balance practices that I can implement into my organisation, but to achieve this; my primary focus was to identify the benefits to both the employer and employees which will allow me to convince both to move forward and make the proposed changes.

Grady et all (2008) sent questionnaires to numerous organisations throughout Ireland in the hope that many would respond. 'In total, 729 employees completed and returned usable responses from the 1,300 questionnaires distributed'.

Likewise, Fisher, 2000 used a questionnaire to help him prepare his book 'Investing in People' for The Equality Authority.

Public Opinion Survey Results

Section 1 - Personal Profiles of interviewees:

1. Gender

Male - 22   Female – 26 Total: 48
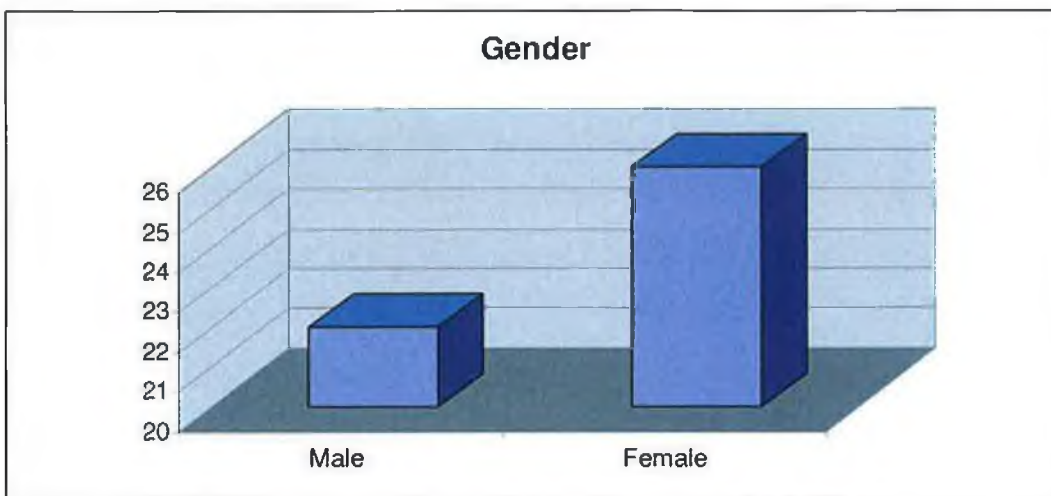
2. Nationality

Irish – 34, English – 2, Polish – 6, Jamaican – 1, American – 2, Swedish – 1,

Dutch – 2.

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Nationality

35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0

Irish   English   Polish   Jamaican American Swedish   Dutch
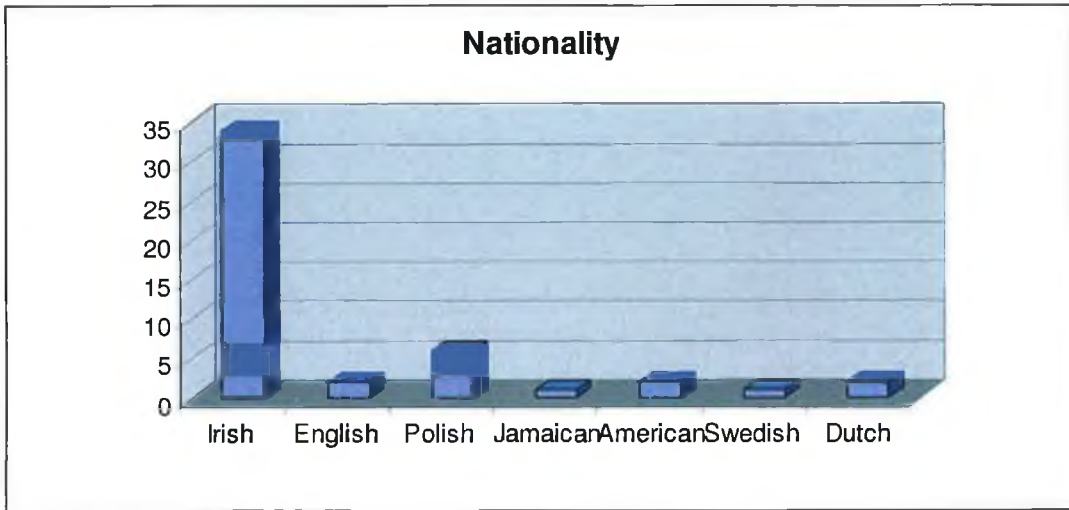
3. Employment Status

Employed 21   Unemployed 11   Self-Employed 4

Work in the home 5   Student 7

Employment Status

25
20
15
10
5
0

Employed   Self-   Student
                  Employed

If employed outside the home, area of work:

Sales - 2, Marketing - 1, Administration - 4, Builder - 2, General Operative - 3,

Engineer – 1, Shop assistant - 1, taxi driver - 1, Council worker – 1, Actor – 1, Bin

man – 1, Cleaner – 3

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Area of work
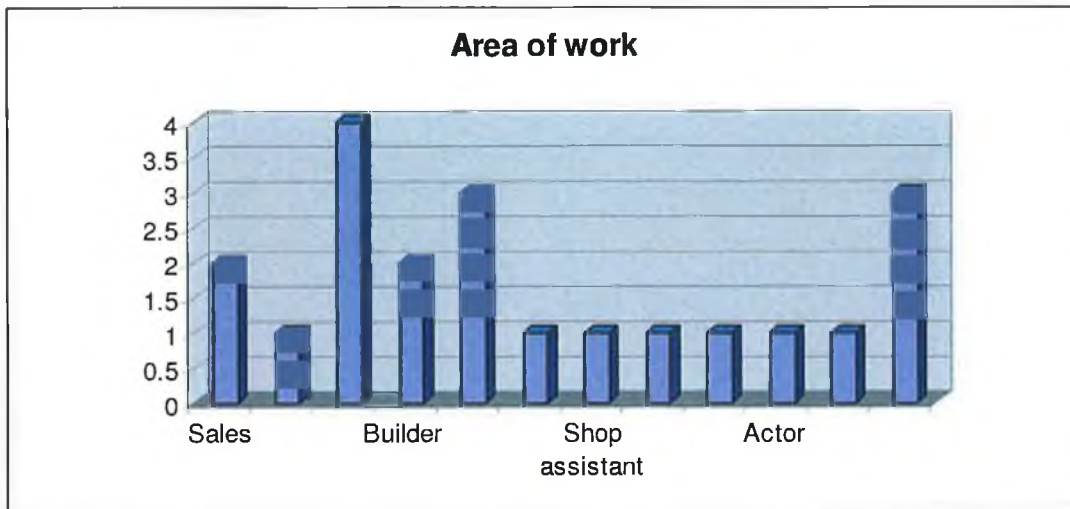
4. **Average Age Profile:**

20 – 30 years (12)   31 – 40 years (23)   41 – 50 years (5)

51 – 60 years (3)   61 – 65 years (5)

Average Age Profile
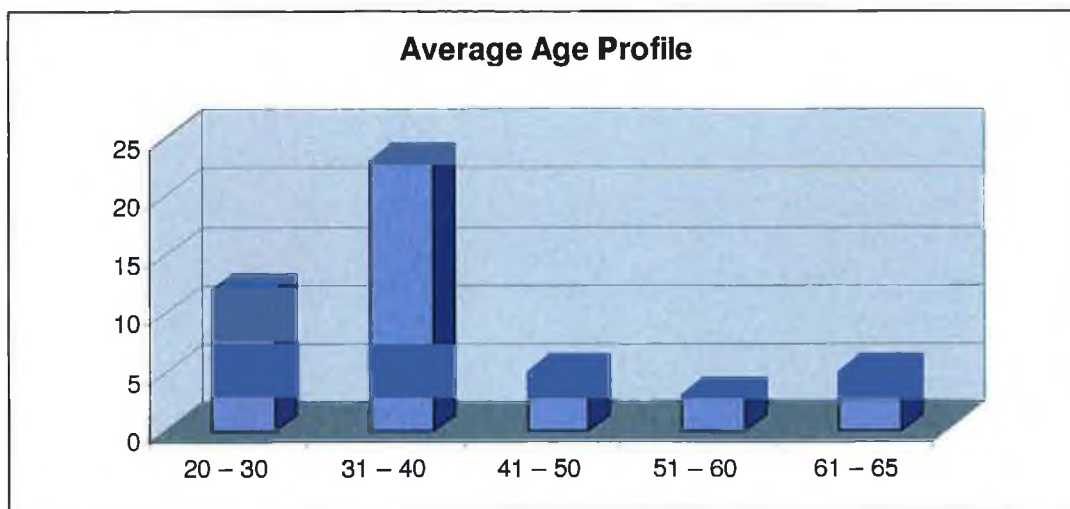
5. **Marital Status**

Single (24)   Married (19) Separated (4)   Divorced (1)

Marital Status
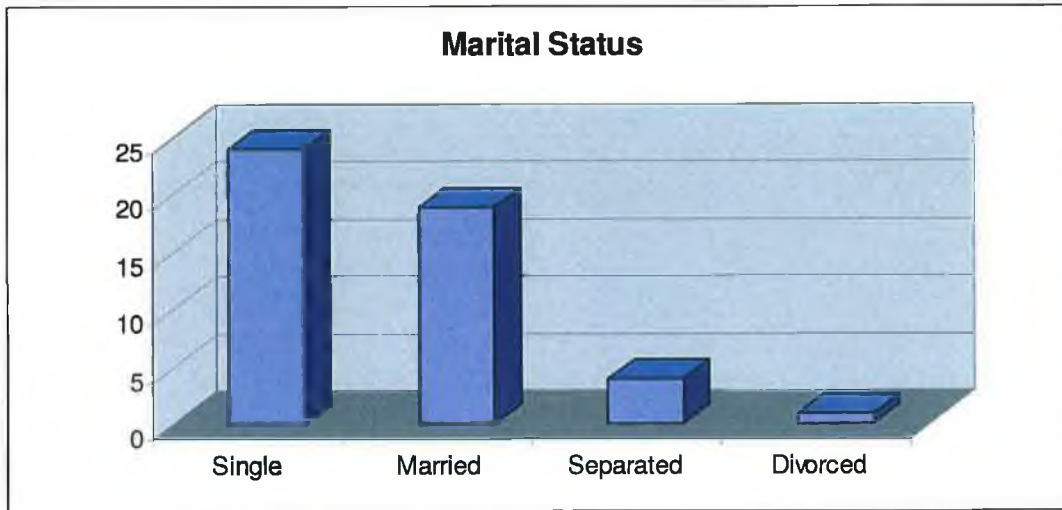
6. Number of Children

Number in Total: 107

Section 2 – Work life Balance Arrangements

1. If employed, do you have any of the following WLB arrangements in operation in your organisation at present? If so, which ones do you/have you availed of, if any?

WLB Option	Yes
Annualised Hours	2
Career Break	1
Compassionate Leave	38
Flexitime	18
Job Sharing	6

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Paid Maternity Leave	1
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)	8
Part-time Work	14
Paternity Leave	2
Sabbatical	0
Study Leave	11
Work from home	4
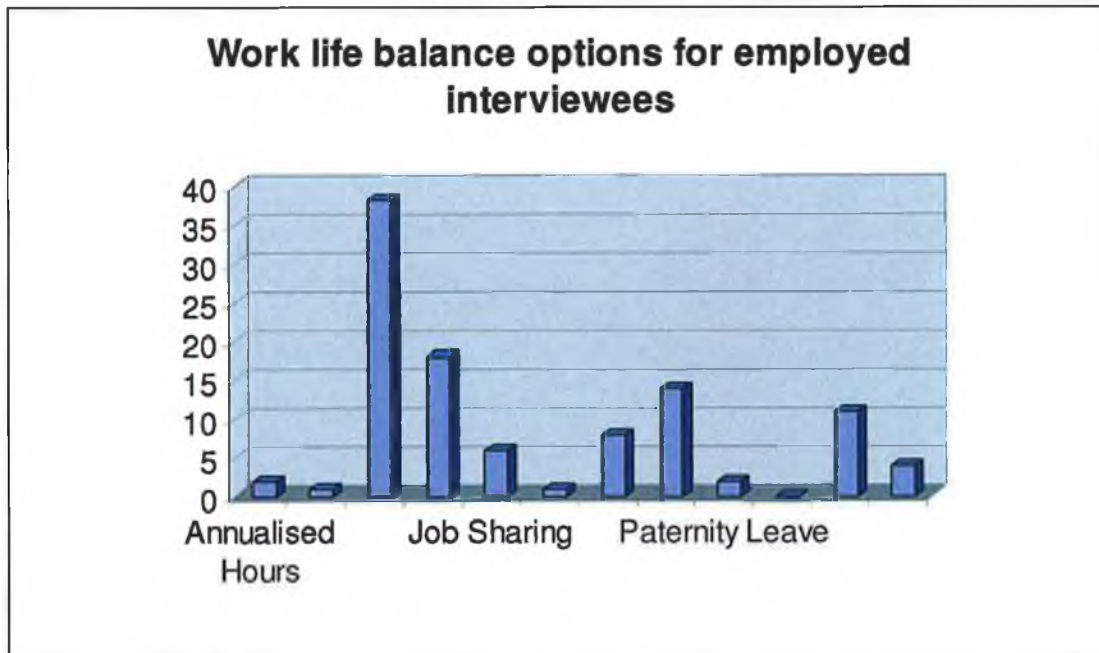
Work life balance options for employed interviewees

2. If unemployed, which WLB policies would you look for in an organisation if you were applying for a job? Which is important to you? (Please rank in order of preference: 1 – most important, 12 – least important)

Work life balance option	Yes	Preference
Annualised Hours	–	–
Career Break	Yes (3)	4
Compassionate Leave	Yes (11)	1
Flexitime	Yes (8)	3
Job Sharing	Yes (7)	4
Paid Maternity Leave	Yes (5)	6
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)	Yes (6)	5
Part-time Work	Yes (5)	6
Paternity Leave	Yes (5)	6
Sabbatical	–	–
Study Leave	Yes (4)	5
Work from home	Yes (9)	2

Eleven people said the opportunity to take compassionate leave was very important, as unfortunately everyone experiences a death of someone close to them. The 2nd most preferred option was to work from home and the 3rd was flexitime. What is most apparent in the outcome of these interviews is how personal the requirements are. People are inclined to set a preference purely based on their own needs i.e. Life balance requirements.

My findings from the 2 surveys and public interviews will be used to recommend new Work-life balance practices for my organisation with the support of the management team locally and may eventually be used as consideration for other locations across EMEA.

As mentioned in my Literature Review, Guest (2001) has written several books and reports on this subject but in his discussion paper prepared for the 2001 ENOP Symposium in Paris, Guest discussed his 'Perspectives on the Study of Work-Life Balance' and identified 'a preliminary model which is useful to identify the independent, intermediate and outcome variables that can be incorporated in any analysis and research'.

This is a fantastic tool which will help me prepare for my dealings with the key stakeholders in my organisation by showing the independent, intermediate and outcome variables in an easy to read format. Please see point 6 in the appendices.

Again I asked each participant to give me their opinion on who they believed was the real beneficiary of the introduction of work life balance arrangements and not surprisingly, the result was as follows:

1. Employee **10**
2. Employer **11**
3. Both **25**
4. Neither **2**

FOCUS GROUP

I purposefully selected a homogeneous group of 6 individuals for this research method, so all participants have previously worked or currently work in a medical device manufacturing facility. However, I purposefully selected individuals of different backgrounds and chose a group based on diversity including ethnic origin, age, marital status etc. Therefore there were 3 males and 3 females in the group with me acting as moderator.

I purposefully included a question about the Psychological Contract as I felt there was a gap in the responses from my surveys to understand why employers and employees behaved as they do.

Project Title: Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Project Dates: 2010

Method: Focus group

Topic: Defining the true beneficiaries of Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing environment.

Target Audience: Individuals who have previously worked or currently work in a medical device manufacturing facility

Moderator: Catherine Flanagan

Total Participant time required: 45 minutes – 1 hour

OVERALL QUESTION TO ANSWER IN FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS:

The purpose of the study is to conduct evaluative research to determine (in order of priority):

- The real beneficiaries of Work life balance – the employer or employee.

- Advantages and disadvantages of introducing Work life balance initiatives.

- Preferences from list of initiatives and why?

- The participants understanding of the Psychological Contract and the implications it has on Work Life Balance arrangements.

Firstly I conducted an introduction to the group:

- I welcomed the participants and introduced myself

- I explained the general purpose of the discussion and why the participants were chosen.

- I discussed the purpose and process of this particular focus group, highlighting the 4 questions that I would like answered. (The real beneficiaries of Work life balance – the employer or employee, Advantages and disadvantages of introducing Work life balance initiatives, Preferences from list of initiatives and why and the participants understanding of the Psychological Contract and the implications it has on Work Life Balance arrangements?)

- I explained the presence and purpose of the camcorder equipment as a means of ensuring I captured all comments accurately.

- I outlined the general ground rules and discussion guidelines such as the importance of everyone speaking up, talking one at a time, and being prepared for me as moderator to interrupt to assure that all the topics can be covered.
- I addressed the issue of confidentiality.
- I informed the group that information discussed is going to be analyzed as a whole and that participant' names will not be used in any analysis of the discussion.

The purpose of the focus group was to extract and clarify the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of individuals who have experience working in a medical device manufacturing company.

I wanted the discussion to be informal and relaxed so participants would be happy to be open with their opinions and respond to other comments. To start the discussion, I asked each participant to provide their first name, the job they did/do in their company and their length of service in the medical device manufacturing environment.

What was important in this focus group was everyone's ability to share thoughts and experiences. I told everyone that I would moderate the group like a chairperson, and if we were stuck on a topic, I would move us along, ensuring we had an opportunity to cover all 4 questions. To ensure confidentiality, I asked all participants to confirm that they would keep each other's identities and comments confidential.

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

Participant	Sex	Age	Marital Status	No. of Children	Years Exp in Medical Device Manufacturing
A	M	25	Single	0	3
B	M	37	Married	2	10
C	M	48	Married	3	6
D	F	21	Single	1	1
E	F	35	Married	0	12
F	F	50	Divorced	1	22

To start the discussion I defined 'Work life Balance' as - the symmetry between the amount of time and effort employees devote to their work and the other aspects of their life outside of work. And the importance of finding the right balance between both.

I asked the group for their opinions on who they felt were the real beneficiaries of Work life balance – the employer or employee?

Participant C was the first individual to respond and he instantly said the employee was the real beneficiary. He said his own experience with Work life balance in his organisation allowed for a lot of flexibility for his colleagues and he himself had even availed of a period of carer's leave when his mother was ill. He said he did witness some individuals take advantage of some of the benefits, such as remote working and not actually working at all, and that was why he felt the employee was the real beneficiary rather than the organisation.

At this time **Participant D** spoke up and said that being a single mother of one child; she had availed of parental leave after her daughter was born and her organisation had allowed her the flexibility to choose a particular day per week that she could take off. She said that she never experienced any of her colleagues taking advantage of the

situation but felt that the organisation benefited from her 4 day week as she was more productive in a shorter time frame so in her opinion both the employer and employee benefitted.

Participant A joined the conversation and said that maybe being so young without dependents; he had not utilized any Work life balance arrangements in his organisation. He felt they were more focused on families, rather than single people. He said that in his opinion both the employer and the employee benefited from Work life balance arrangements. Participant A said that as he was only with his organisation 3 years, he was still very conscious of ensuring he gave the right impression to his employer, that he was committed to his job and wanted to advance throughout the organisation. He said he had no reason to avail of any of the Work life balance arrangements at this time. Participant A's response alarmed me as his opinion seems quite old fashioned particularly when 'It is clear from research that work-life balance is not just an issue for "mothers of young children". There is a much wider demand on the part of employees for work/life balance regardless of their gender, family or marital status. According to the report, this demand is likely to expand rather than contract in the future'. Power, B (2010).

Participant B joined the discussion and initially said he felt the employer benefited most from Work life balance, and agreed with Participant D's comments about employees being more productive when the company showed flexibility. Participant B said that he applied to work from home 2 days per week since his wife returned to the

workforce after having their second child, and he felt that he worked twice as hard from home as he would have if he was in work. This was because he felt he was being 'watched' by his employer to ensure he was not taking advantage of his time at home. He said he would start earlier and finish later on the days he was at home and with no commute to add to the day, the company was effectively getting 10 hours' work from him instead of 8. But on further reflection Participant B said without the flexibility shown by his organisation, he would not have been able to work from home 2 days per week, so both benefitted from this arrangement.

Participant E said that her organisation did not have many Work life balance practices in operation and would like to see more introduced. She said that the company effectively managed statutory entitlements such as maternity leave and portrayed these as Work life balance policies, but as Participant E is not a mother, she too has not had a need to avail of any policies, excluding compassionate leave. In her opinion she felt the employer was the true beneficiary when it came to Work life balance.

Participant F gave her opinion and said that as she had worked for over 22 years in the same organisation, she had seen the changes over the years that impacted the employer/employee relationship. She said the employer has great intentions when it comes to its employees and really relies on the loyalty of its employees to get the job done. (This would appear to be the Psychological contract in operation). However, in this circumstance, she felt the employee was the true beneficiary as the company had accommodated any requests for flexibility including one from herself (as she is currently

working part-time). She said the company was wise and was perceived to be a great employer both internally and externally and the company knew that the better the Work life balance arrangements they have in place, the more appealing they are both to their currently employees and to possible future talent. The attrition rate is very low in participant F's organisation and she believes it is down to the company's attitude to Work life balance.

Calvert et al (2009) suggest that an organisational commitment to family-friendly working arrangements may be beneficial to all employees, not just those who take up these options, since they tend to reflect an organisational culture that acknowledges that employees have commitments outside of the workplace.

This would reconfirm the positive impact Work life balance has on both the culture of the organisation and the people that work there.

So to capture in brief:

Results to question 1 - The real beneficiaries of Work life balance – the employer or employee?	
A	Both
B	Both
C	Employee
D	Both
E	Employer
F	Employee

I then asked the focus group to think about the Advantages and Disadvantages of introducing Work life balance initiatives into the workforce.

This time **Participant F** was the first to respond. She said that one of the advantages she could see was the positive commitment and loyalty given by the employees to the organisation when they provided Work life balance arrangements. Participant F said in her role as Supervisor she also noticed reduced absenteeism among her team after new Work life balance arrangements were offered which would obviously indicate an advantage to both the employer and employee. She did however note the additional 'management' work that she had to take on when members of her team started to avail of the new job sharing policy – which was the one disadvantage that she came across.

Participant C concurred with Participant F in relation to the additional work he too took on as Manager of his department, but he felt the advantages of increased productivity from his team far outweighed the disadvantage of additional work for him. He did note that team morale improved when the new policies were well established and employees had started to avail of them.

Participant B noticed the reduced turnover in staff during the latter part of his 10 years in employment with the Medical Device Manufacturing Company he worked for and this was directly attributed to the introduction of flexible working arrangements. Prior to this, Participant B witnessed poor job satisfaction and low morale among his colleagues which would show a disadvantage of not improving Work life balance within organisations.

Participant A said he could not identify any disadvantages to implementing/improving Work life balance within his organisation and said that his experience to date was very positive with employees constantly being encouraged to balance their work and home life and managers supporting their employees to reach their full potential. Participant A confirmed that he had returned to college to further his education as his employer was subsidizing the full cost of the course.

Participant E said that many of her colleagues with children had availed of the job sharing arrangement in her company. She interpreted this as an advantage to both the employer and the employee as the employee was able to balance work and home life more effectively and the employer was utilizing the expertise of two employees to do one job because with job-sharing, the individuals involved are jointly responsible for the job. As the 2 people are employed to share the duties and responsibilities of one full-time position on a daily basis, the salary and leave is allocated on a pro-rata basis and is actually more cost effective as absenteeism is reduced. The only disadvantage to this as identified by Participant E is that this type of arrangement requires more than normal cooperation, co-ordination, contact and communication between the job-sharers. Participant D also said she could not identify any disadvantage to introducing Work life balance arrangements in the workplace as all she could see were the benefits such as improving staff recruitment, reducing turn-over, absenteeism and costs while improving employee performance and satisfaction.

"The costs to your business of failing to improve work-life balance include: poor performance, absenteeism and sick leave; and higher staff turnover, recruitment and training costs (Department of Trade and Industry, 2001)."

So to recap on responses to question 2 – the advantages and disadvantages of introducing work life balance initiatives into the workforce:

Results to question 2		
	Advantages	Disadvantages
A	Very positive work experience, employees reaching full potential	Could not identify any disadvantages
B	Reduced turnover	Disadvantage is only witnessed when WLB arrangements were **NOT** introduced - such as poor job satisfaction and low morale
C	Increased productivity, improved team morale	Additional workload for Manager
D	Improved staff recruitment, reduced turn-over, absenteeism and costs while improved employee performance and satisfaction.	Could not identify any disadvantages
E	Cost Effective, reduced absenteeism	Additional cooperation, co-ordination, contact and communication between the job-sharers
F	Positive Commitment & Loyalty from EE, reduced absenteeism	Additional workload for supervisor to manage job sharers

The third question I asked the focus group to consider was: 'Preferences from list of initiatives and why?'

I provided the group with the following list of initiatives and asked them to prioritize the list in order of their preferred options (top 3)

	1	2	3
Annualised Hours			
Career Break			
Compassionate Leave			
Flexitime			
Job Sharing			
Paid Maternity Leave			
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)			
Part-time Work			
Paternity Leave			
Sabbatical			
Study Leave			
Work from home			

The results as you will see are definitely based on personal circumstances and were as follows:

Participant A				
Please rate your top 3 preferred WLB practices (1 being very important)				
	1	2	3	Why did you choose this option?
Sabbatical			3	This was my 3rd choice as I may want to

	1	2	3	
				take a sabbatical and go travelling in a few years.
Study Leave	1			I chose this as my number one priority as I have returned to college and would like to avail of this option when my exams are occurring.
Work from home		2		I chose this as my 2nd priority as this would be a nice initiative to avail of.

Participant B			
Please rate your top 3 preferred WLB practices (1 being very important)			
	1	**2**	**3**	**Why did you choose this option?**
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)		2		This was my second choice, as being a father of 2, and fully dependent on financial considerations, I may want to avail of this at some stage.
Paternity Leave			3	It would be nice to have 2 weeks paid paternity leave, like in the UK.
Work from home	1			This is my priority as I currently avail of this initiative and would like to

				remain working from home 2 days per week.

Participant C				
Please rate your top 3 preferred WLB practices (1 being very important)				
	1	**2**	**3**	**Why did you choose this option?**
Flexitime			3	I have always worked 9 until 5 so am interested in how this would work for me.
Part-time Work		2		I chose this as my second option because it is something I have strongly considered lately so would like to know it is an option for me.
Work from home	1			As I'm getting on in my career, I would like to try this initiative and see if it suits to help balance my work and personal life.

Participant D				
Please rate your top 3 preferred WLB practices (1 being very important)				
	1	**2**	**3**	**Why did you choose this option?**
Job Sharing	2			I chose this as my 2nd priority as it will be easier for me to

	1	2	3	
				juggle being a single parent and my responsibilities to my child with my work life.
Paid Maternity Leave	1			I chose this as my first priority as I am a single mum of 1, but my intention is to go on and have more children so I would like this option to be available to me when I do.
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)			3	I am currently availing of my statutory entitlement to take parental leave but my preference would be to job share.

Participant E				
Please rate your top 3 preferred WLB practices (1 being very important)				
	1	2	3	Why did you choose this option?
Career Break	1			This would be my priority as I would like to do a bit of travelling with my husband.
Flexitime		2		This would be nice to have as an option as it would help with balance other priorities in my life.

		1	2	3	
Work from home				3	I would not be interested in this at the moment as I enjoy the buzz of the work environment, but it would be an interesting option for consideration later.

Participant F					
Please rate your top 3 preferred WLB practices (1 being very important)					
		1	**2**	**3**	**Why did you choose this option?**
Annualised Hours		1			I chose this as my favourite because the hours are averaged over the year and my salary would remain the same irrespective of what number of hours I worked in that month. This would also reduce the requirement for overtime - which I'm not really interested in doing at my age.
Sabbatical				3	Being 50, I might consider a sabbatical before I retire.
Study Leave			2		I am considering returning to study as I

went straight into an apprenticeship after school and it is something I have always thought about.
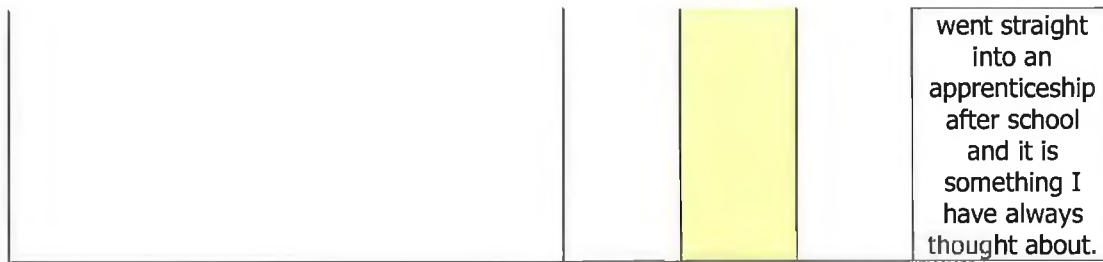
Four participants of the Focus Group requested 'working from home' in their top 3 while study leave, parental leave (customized to suit requestor), flexitime and Sabbatical where each chose by 2 individuals so these would be the top initiatives employees would like to see introduced into the Medical device manufacturing environment.

The final question I put to the focus group was to confirm their understanding of the Psychological Contract and the implications it has on Work Life Balance arrangements.

Of the six participants, 4 had heard of and understood the term 'Psychological Contract' (B,C,E,F) while Participant A had heard of the term but was unsure of its meaning and finally Participant D had never heard of the term at all.

So to start the discussion, I defined the Psychological Contract as the unwritten (and sometimes unspoken) set of expectations between employer and employee. To expand on this statement, I explained to the focus group that Guest (2004) describes the Psychological Contract as:

"The perceptions of both parties to the employment relationship, organization and individual, of the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in that relationship".

To support this statement I displayed Guests (2004) 'Framework for applying the Psychological Contract to the employment relationship' with specific attention to the 'reciprocal promises and obligations' and the 'outcomes from an attitudinal and behavioral' perspective. This framework as displayed below clearly demonstrates the impact the Psychological contract has on the employee and the employer and can be clearly related to Work Life Balance arrangements and how they benefit both.

Framework for applying the psychological contract to the employment relationship
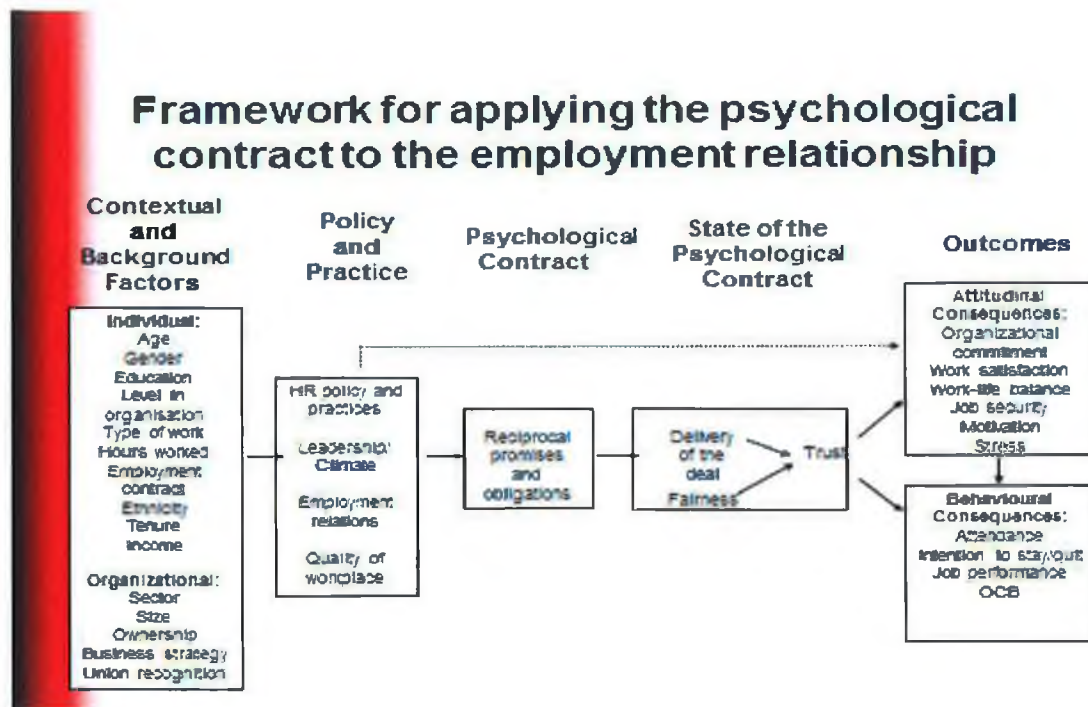
After explaining the definition of the Psychological contract, I asked each participant to give me their understanding of the Psychological Contract and what they believe are the implications it has on Work Life Balance arrangements.

Coincidently the participants (B, C, E, F) who confirmed they had previously heard of and understood the concept of the Psychological contract were all 'older' individuals (average age of 42.5 years) with an average service of 12.5 years in a medical device manufacturing company.

Participant F: Feels the psychological contract helps to build trust between the employee and the employer and will subsequently encourage commitment from both parties which will be apparent for those individuals who avail of Work life balance arrangements such as working from home. Participant F said she feels that her commitment to the organisation (22 years) warranted the flexibility she received when she applied for her current part-time position.

Participant C agreed with this point but noted that when trust was not apparent between the employer and the employee (as in the example C gave about the colleague who was permitted to work from home but took advantage of the situation) the long-term impact could affect everyone within the organisation – such as the removal of certain work life balance arrangements such as working from home.

Participants B & E (both similar in age, marital status and years of service) mutually felt that the Psychological contract was hugely important in all working environments as it promoted job satisfaction, motivation and reduced stressed among employees and the employer benefitted by increased production from its staff. Both agreed that 'give & take' was very important between both parties and Participant E felt that this is why her

organisation had not introduced any 'official' work life balance arrangements as they did not deem it necessary given the harmonious relationship it had with its employees.

Participant D said that after hearing the definition of the psychological contract, she now could see that it is event in her organisation. She said that she had received unconditional support from her manager when she went through a particularly difficult period in her life and her manager encouraged her to avail of her parental leave to look after her daughter. Participant D said that she was 100% committed to the organisation and worked as hard as the next person even though she was only present in the office 4 days per week. However, she said that she loved her job and would on occasion bring work home in the evenings, not because her employer expected her too, but because she wanted too. She said that she did not feel this was an inconvenience for her and was happy to do this to keep on top of things.

Participant A said that he felt if he did avail of work life balance arrangements, this would be frowned upon by his employer. When I questioned him about this, Participant A confirmed that it could possibly be his perception and opinion rather than an underlying consensus related to a psychological contract within his organisation. Participant A continued that as he had not tried and tested this perception by applying for a flexible work arrangement, he could not pre-empt the response from his employer if he was to do so. He did however confirm that occasional overtime was expected if required, without financial reward. This he could instantly relate to the psychological

contract as he could not recall ever having a conversation with his manager about this expectation, but learnt this behavior from his colleagues.

When asked who the real beneficiaries of Work life balance were, the response was unanimous from all participants – both the employer and employee equally.

The focus group participants were very open to each other's attitudes and thoughts and respected each other's comments. The whole experience, like that of the public opinion survey, really revolves around what works for the individual from a Work life balance perspective.

Analysis

When analyzing the results of all 3 surveys and the focus group, my research findings confirm that the factors influencing Work life balance and its conflict differ for each individual depending on their specific personal circumstances.

The common theme is that work life balance and the adaption of these practices within organisations needs to improve and be open to everyone, not just working mums, as confirmed by Drew et al (2002, p124) 'Flexible working has to become more accessible to both men and women, to staff at different grades, and in different types of work, within a wider career planning and changing organisational cultural context'.

Of the Employee Survey, 33 respondents were 'Satisfied' that they knew what was expected of them in relation to their job. This would indicate that my company could improve on its communication and be more open about the psychological contract if

only 51% of respondents were 'satisfied'. And with 23% of respondents requesting the introduction of flexible working arrangements, this is an opportunity for my organisation to address these issues while maintaining harmonious relations and maximize job satisfaction for our teams. This is reiterated by the fact that 40 respondents suggested their manager was 'ok' with the extent to which he/she motivates. Again, this leaves room for improvement and could directly be linked to both the psychological contract and work life balance. Of the 64 respondents, 33 said both the employer and employee benefitted from work life balance. This demonstrates how important it is to listen to employees as verified in the response from the first manufacturing company survey who confirmed that one of the reasons they introduced work life balance policies into the organisation was because they were requested to do so by employees. And as a consequence, they reaped the rewards of improved productivity and staff retention. Similarly, the second manufacturing company responded that they were also requested by their employees to introduce flexible working arrangements and witnessed improved productivity and lower absenteeism. However, they found resistance from the local management team and felt the policies were difficult to manage.

Again, the 3rd company surveyed confirmed that the employees requested work life balance policies and also witnessed improved productivity.

Common denominators:

- Employees requesting work life balance policies
- Improved productivity once implemented

- Happy Employees = Happy Employers

The majority of respondents believe that work life balance benefits both the employer and the employee.

The findings from the surveys and focus group reconfirm what existing theory suggests such as, Guest (2004)

- A career in return for loyalty

- A fair day's work for a fair day's pay

- Individualization of the employment relationship (with work life balance arrangements specific to the individual)

- Search for new ways of managing employment relations to meet the interests and concerns of both employees and the organisation (to benefit both!)

My Literature Review showed how so many organisations such as Eircom, Electricity Supply Board (ESB), Intel Ireland Ltd, IBM (Ireland), AIB, CitiGroup, Royal & Sun Alliance, SIPTU, Trinity College Dublin, Irish Nurses Organisation, Bank of Ireland, Irish Civil Service, Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and Anderson (Ireland) Limited were adapting their policies to include more flexible working arrangements. Surely these large organisations can't all be wrong. Recognising Work Life Balance is the way forward.

However, research has shown that barriers will hamper the implementation / improvement of these practices until the concept of work life balance is accepted not

only by employers, but other organisations and the government. Understanding the Psychological contract within the organisation will assist with continuing to gain trust among employees and in return, long-term commitment and improved job satisfaction from the employees.

Conclusion

Unfortunately as stated by Hendry et al (1997) 'The changes we are experiencing in employment are thus likely to have wider motivational and attitudinal consequences. The erosion of stable careers may feed a wider sense of a rupture in the more generalized social contract'. It is ironic that a quotation from 1997 could be relevant today in 2010. This would indicate that the data hasn't changed as the years have passed. However, I do believe companies such as mine will have to go through a transformation if they want to survive in this volatile environment.

When I started my thesis, I had my own thoughts and opinions about work life balance and who the real beneficiaries are. I was overwhelmed by the passion from employees and others when I discussed the theory of Guest (1998) (2004), Fisher (2000) with them. Life is changing and people can see how short life can be, so people's priorities are changing to suit themselves and their families. The employee is finally becoming number 1 in their worlds and if an organisation has any sense, the compassion and realization shown by an employer will allow the employee to achieve this sense of

wellbeing with the approval of their employer and without recrimination for looking for that balance.

I would like to see future research conducted into categorizing work life balance alternatives as statutory entitlements. I do believe this is a way forward that will benefit both the employer and employees.

I believe my research results present an undeniable case to implement new Work life balance initiatives and tackle the conflict and unbalance currently prevalent in my organisation by approaching it from a holistic perspective. The instantaneous and future benefits for employees and my employer are obvious to all concerned. I have shown how the demand for balance, through surveys, interviews and focus groups reflect the benefits for both the employer and the employee and basically how every organisation throughout Ireland needs to stop ignoring the voice of its workforce and move forward unified in its approach to working conditions that actually 'work' for all concerned. The benefits of introducing work life balance arrangements, as shown in my introduction; will most definitely ensure we are an employer of choice when the recession is completely over, will reduce recruitment costs by increasing retention, will motivate employees using additional options – instead of just monetary rewards by providing a job that fits with their personal life which will subsequently increase job satisfaction and commitment and result in higher productivity, reduced absenteeism and reduced cost incurred by the company due to sick leave. I genuinely believe this is a

win:win situation for both the employer and the employee. **Both are the real beneficiaries of work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector.** I believe more work life balance arrangements should be considered as statutory entitlements but only the government can change this. To implement new work life balance arrangements will require 'a significant commitment by all involved, as well as the allocation of adequate resources to planning, managing, training and evaluating strategies and related actions aimed at achieving these objectives – at government, social partner, organisation and individual staff level. Such actions must aim to ensure that "work" and "life" are properly balanced to the benefits of all concerned. It would be erroneous to suggest that such changes will be easily achieved' (Drew et al 2002, p124).

APPENDICES

1.

2.

A circular diagram showing: Content Employers & Employees → Increased Job Satisfaction & Commitment → Increased Productivity → Increased Retention, Reduced Recruitment Costs → (back to Content Employers & Employees).
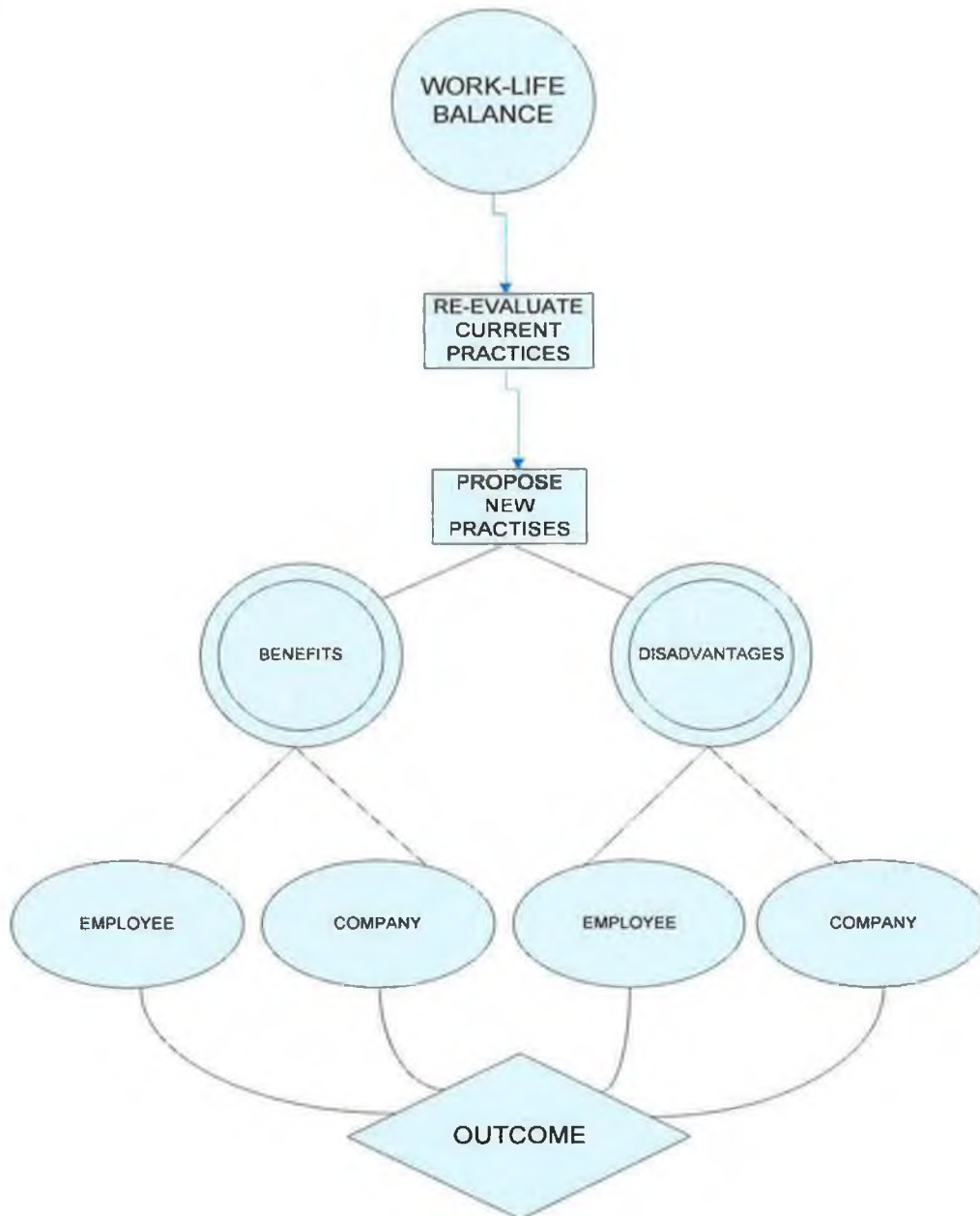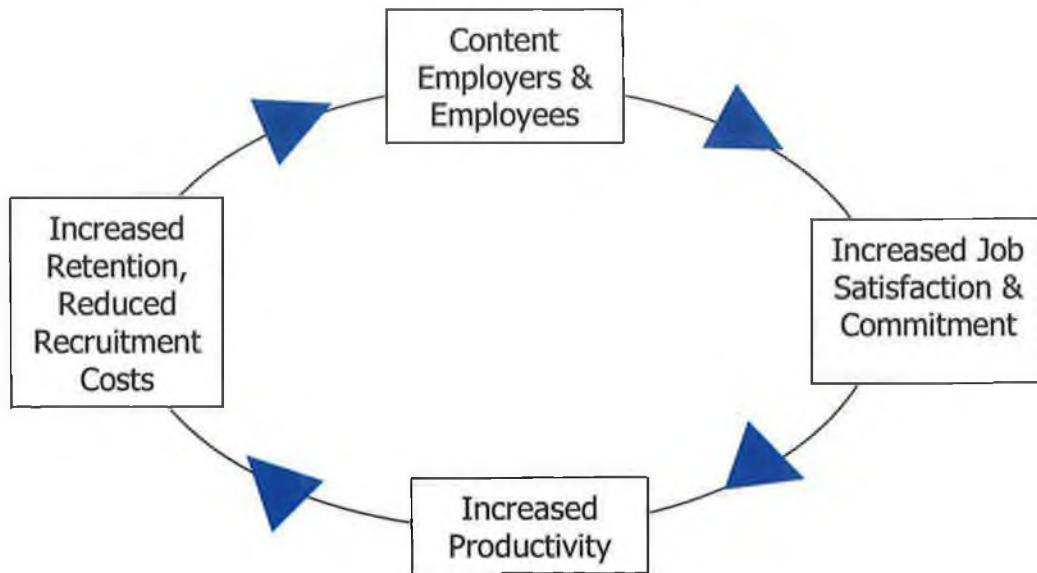
3.

Employee Attitude Survey

Introduction by Catherine Flanagan

Welcome to the WA Employee Attitude Survey which asks for your thoughts, opinions and feedback on how satisfied you are in relation to the organisation, your current role and your working environment.

This survey will give me the ideal opportunity to take on board staff's views and opinions so we can make positive changes to the business going forward. I would appreciate if you could take the time to complete the survey and please be as open and honest as possible when answering the questions as the more accurate, relevant and useful the feedback provided is, the more beneficial the survey will be for everyone.

Confidentiality

This is a completely anonymous exercise and all responses will be treated in the <u>strictest confidence</u>. If you would like to add your name, please feel free to do so in the space provided.

Operation

Please complete Section 1 of the survey, rating how satisfied you are in relation to the statement on a scale of v poor / totally unsatisfied to excellent / totally satisfied. At the end of each separate subsection you will find a general question relating to the topic heading. Please provide as much information as possible in your response.

Section 2 of the survey asks you to comment on the best and worst things about working for WA and there is also a space provided for you to detail any suggestions you may have in relation to improving the business going forward.

The survey should not take more than 15 minutes to complete. Please return the questionnaire in a sealed envelope to HR no later May 7th 2010.

Next Step

Please rest assured that we are fully committed to taking on board your views and as such your feedback is invaluable. Once all feedback has been received it will be summarised and findings / recommendations will be presented to the senior management team.

Personal Information:

Age:

	20 – 30 years		☐
☐	31 – 40 years		
	41 – 50 years		☐
☐	51 – 60 years	☐	
	61 – 65 years		

Gender: Male   ☐   Female   ☐

Marital Status   Single   ☐

Married ☐

Separated ☐

Divorced ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

Children   Yes ☐

No ☐

Which department do you work in?

Human Resources ☐

Customer Service ☐

Research & Development ☐

Quality & Regulatory Affairs ☐

Operations ☐

Finance ☐

Executive Team ☐

Do you work: Full-time ☐

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Part-time ☐

Name: _____ (optional)

Section 1

Your Job	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied
Your understanding of what is expected of you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The resources and support available to enable you to do your job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your personal morale	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your personal job satisfaction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Salary package including any commission or bonus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Any non financial rewards you receive eg. recognition, time off	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The benefit package offered at WA eg. pension, Gym Subsidy, Educational Assistance, EAP etc	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The praise and recognition you get for a job well done from your line manager	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The praise and recognition you get for a job well done from senior management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What is the most important thing the company could do to improve your job and maximise your job satisfaction?					

The Work Place	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied
The Company as an Employer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your working environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The morale of your colleagues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The general public's view of Welch Allyn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In your view, what is the single most important thing the company could do to improve your working environment?

Your Line Manager	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied
Your line manager overall	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback given and ideas for improvement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your manager's management style	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your manager's approachability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extent to which he/she encourages you to be customer focused	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extent to which he/she provides direction and	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

leadership within the team					
Extent to which he/she motivates you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your manager's fairness and consistency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How do you suggest we improve things to help you and your manager work better together?					

Training & Development	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied
Your induction on joining the company	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The ongoing training you receive to enable you to do your job effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Opportunities to learn new skills and develop	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effectiveness of the new performance management system	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How could the company improve the training and development programme available to you in your current role?					

Communication	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied
How do you rate communication across the business?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The content and frequency of your departmental meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your knowledge of what is happening in other parts of the business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Level / understanding of your department's work by other parts of the business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Level of communication between departments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extent to which you get your voice heard / views aired when you need to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responsiveness to your views	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The way in which you are informed of changes taking place	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What would you do to improve communications within the business?					

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Communication	V Poor/ Totally unsatisfied	Poor/ Unsatisfied	OK	Good/ Satisfied	Excellent/ V Satisfied

Work-life Balance (WLB)					
Please rate the following WLB practices (1 being very important)	1	2	3	4	5
Annualised Hours	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career Break	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Compassionate Leave	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flexitime	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job Sharing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Paid Maternity Leave	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Part-time Work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Paternity Leave	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sabbatical	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Study Leave	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Work from home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work-life Balance (continued)	**V. Poor**	**Poor**	**Ok**	**Good**	**Excellent**
How would your rate our attitude to Worklife balance?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are all managers good at apply the policies correctly?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are all employees treated equally?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do we treat part-time & fulltime the same?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are we open to employees taking leave for family matters?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working here allows you to combine work-life and family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are we receptive to new WLB proposals?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What would you do to improve opportunities within this area?					

Motivation

Please rank how motivated you are by the following on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is most important to you and 10 the least important.

For example, the most important thing to me is good working conditions therefore I rank it as 1, the next most important thing to me is appreciation for good work so I rank it as 2 and so on. The least important thing to me is help with personal problems, so I rank it as 10.

Help with personal problems	
Interesting work	
Good working conditions	
Tactful discipline	
Appreciation for good work	
Loyalty of management to staff	
Possibility for promotion	
Good wages	
Job security	
Being involved / Having a voice	

What are the 3 most important things the company could do to improve your motivation levels at work?
1.
2.
3.

Who do you think are the main beneficiaries of Worklife balance arrangements?
1. Employee ☐
2. Employer ☐
3. Both ☐ 4. Neither ☐

Section 3

NB: Please give thought and time to completing this section. We would like your honest views on each question asked.

Please complete the following statements:

The best thing about working for Welch Allyn is.........

The worst thing about working for Welch Allyn is.........

I have the following suggestions to improve department / Company performance ....

4.

Medical Device Manufacturing Company Survey

Introduction by Catherine Flanagan, Chartered MCIPD

Welcome to my **Medical Device Manufacturing Company Survey** which asks for your thoughts, opinions and feedback on your organisation and its attitude to work life balance.

This survey will give me the opportunity to compare other companies' views and opinions so I can make positive changes to the organisation I work for going forward. I would appreciate if you could take the time to complete the survey and please be as open and honest as possible when answering the questions as the more accurate, relevant and useful the feedback provided is, the more beneficial the survey will be for my organisation.

Confidentiality

This is a completely anonymous exercise and all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. If you would like to add your name, and organisation, please feel free to do so in the space provided.

Operation

Please complete Section 1 of the survey with your organisations profile information.

Section 2 of the survey discusses your current WLB practices and asks you to comment on your reasons for choosing these specific Work Life Balance practices.

Section 3 of the survey requests your opinion on why Work Life Balance policies were introduced.

Section 4 asks you to identify the pros and cons of Work Life Balance in your organisation.

The survey should not take more than 10 minutes to complete. Please return the questionnaire in the postage paid addressed envelope provided no later than **31st May 2010.**

Section 1 - Organisation Profile:

1. Number of employees

1 – 50 ☐   51-250 ☐   251 or more ☐

2. Gender

Number of male (full time) ☐   Number of Female (full time) ☐

Number of male (part-time) ☐   Number of Female (part-time) ☐

3. Average Age Profile:

20 – 30 years ☐   31 – 40 years ☐   41 – 50 years ☐

51 – 60 years ☐   61 – 65 years ☐

4. Marital Status of employees (average)

Single ☐   Married ☐   Separated ☐

Divorced ☐   Unsure ☐

5. Number of Employees with Children

Number: _____

6. The number of employees per department?

Department Name	No. of EEs
Research & Development	
Human Resources	
Customer Service	
Quality & Regulatory Affairs	
Operations	
Finance	
Executive Team	
Facilities	
Other	

Contact Name & Organisation: _____ (optional)

Section 2 – Worklife Balance Arrangements

1. Do you have any of the following WLB arrangements in operation in your organisation at present? If yes, please include the number and gender of employees who utilise these benefits

Department Name	Yes	Female	Male

Annualised Hours			
Career Break			
Compassionate Leave			
Flexitime			
Job Sharing			
Paid Maternity Leave			
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)			
Part-time Work			
Paternity Leave			
Sabbatical			
Study Leave			
Work from home			

2. If no to all of the above, why do you believe your organisation does not operate any Work Life Balance arrangements? Please move to section 5

_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

Section 3 – Work life balance policies

1. If applicable, why did you introduce work life balance policies into your organisation?

Requested by employees ☐   Proposed by employer ☐

Already in operation ☐   Negotiated by Trade Union ☐

Other ☐ _____

Section 4 – Pros and Cons

1. What are the main benefits you have experienced by implementing Work Life balance policies?

   Improved productivity ☐ Staff Retention ☐ Improves Recruitment ☐ Lower

   absenteeism ☐ other ☐ _____

2. Please indicate the success of your work life balance arrangements by answering

   the following questions:

Work-life Balance	V. Poor	Poor	Ok	Good	Excellent
How would your rate our attitude to Worklife balance?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are all managers good at apply the policies correctly?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are all employees treated equally?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are you open to employees taking leave for family matters?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Does working for your company allow employees to combine work-life and family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Is the company receptive to new WLB proposals?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What would you do to improve opportunities within this area?					

3. What barriers have you come across when implementing the work life balance policies:

Resistance from management ☐ Complicated to manage ☐ Additional

time required from facilitators ☐ Misuse of privileges' ☐ other ☐

Who do you think are the main beneficiaries of Worklife balance arrangements?
1. Employee ☐
2. Employer ☐
3. Both ☐
4. Neither ☐

I appreciate the time you have allowed to complete this survey. Any information you have provided will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

5.

Public Opinion Survey

Conducted by Catherine Flanagan, Chartered MCIPD on Saturday 22nd May 2010 outside a local shopping centre.

Operation:

I stopped various members of the public and asked them to answer some questions in relation to their personal profile and their opinions on WLB.

The survey did not take more than 2 minutes to complete.

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Section 1 - Personal Profile:

7. Gender

Male ☐   Female ☐

8. Nationality

_____

9. Employment Status

Employed ☐   Unemployed ☐   Self-Employed ☐

Work in the home ☐

If employed, area of work: _____

10.   Average Age Profile:

20 – 30 years ☐   31 – 40 years ☐   41 – 50 years ☐

51 – 60 years ☐   61 – 65 years ☐

11.   Marital Status

Single ☐   Married ☐   Separated ☐   Divorced ☐

12.   Number of Children (if applicable)

Number: _____

Section 2 – Worklife Balance Arrangements

3. If employed, do you have any of the following WLB arrangements in operation in

your organisation at present? If so, which ones do you avail of, if any?

Department Name	Yes	How important is it to you? 1 – most important, 12 – least important
Annualised Hours		
Career Break		
Compassionate Leave		
Flexitime		
Job Sharing		
Paid Maternity Leave		
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)		
Part-time Work		
Paternity Leave		
Sabbatical		
Study Leave		
Work from home		

4. If unemployed, which WLB policies would you look for in an organisation if you were applying for a job? Which is important to you? (Please rank in order of preference: 1 – most important, 12 – least important)

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Worklife balance option	Yes	Preference
Annualised Hours		
Career Break		
Compassionate Leave		
Flexitime		
Job Sharing		
Paid Maternity Leave		
Parental Leave (customised to suit requestor)		
Part-time Work		
Paternity Leave		
Sabbatical		
Study Leave		
Work from home		

Section 3 – Any comments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who do you think are the main beneficiaries of Worklife balance arrangements?

Work life balance in the medical device manufacturing sector: The real beneficiaries.

1. Employee ☐	
2. Employer ☐	
3. Both ☐	
4. Neither ☐	

I appreciate the time you have allowed to complete this survey. Any information you have provided will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

6.

Figure 1: Nature, Causes and Consequences of work-Life Balance

Determinants	Nature of the Balance	Consequences/Impact
A. Contextual Demands of work Culture of work Demands of home Culture of home **B. Individual Factors** Work orientation Personality Energy Personal control and coping Gender Age, life and career stage	**A. Subjective** Balance – no emphasis Balance – home central Balance – work central Spillover of work to home Spillover of home to work **B. Objective** Hours of work "Free" time Family roles	Work satisfaction Life satisfaction Mental health/well-being Stress/ illness Behaviour/performance at work Behaviour/performance at home Impact on others at work Impact on others at home

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