

Flexible reduced-load work arrangements can help companies, professionals

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Although it may seem counter-intuitive for companies to support reducing workloads for professionals, new research by Ellen Kossek of Purdue University's Krannert School of Management highlights the benefits to business and keys to making such work arrangements successful.

Reduced-load work allows a professional to shorten his or her hours, decrease workload and take a commensurate pay cut while actively remaining on a career path, said Kossek, the Basil S. Turner Professor of Management and research director of the Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership.

Reduced-load work is not the same as flextime or telecommuting, Kossek said. She used the examples of a doctor who sees 75 patients a week rather than 100, a professor who teaches three classes instead of four, or an IT professional working four days a week instead of five.

The research, published in *Human Resource Management*, found that companies use reduced-load work to retain talented and productive employees by allowing them to continue working while having more time for other important life activities, such as family, education or community.

For the employee, reduced-load work provides the ability to be engaged with these concerns while continuing to make career progress. It also can prevent burnout, increase work energy and foster cost-savings. Kossek

said that more [professionals](#) also are taking advantage of reduced-load to phase into retirement.

Kossek and her co-researchers interviewed line managers, [human resource](#) experts and senior executives and found that flexibility is key to successful reduced-load work.

"While the company must be flexible in allowing reduced-load work and respect the employee's non-work time, the employee must be flexible in being available when needed to meet client demands," Kossek said.

A key question is how to customize the work to get the most value for both the customer and the business, she said.

The managers said employees best suited to reduced-load work are good performers with jobs that either have predictability or less exposure to tight deadlines or crises.

They also found managers working reduced-load, including one CEO working 80 percent of a normal workload, although reduced-load [work](#) is rarer at the executive level.

Provided by Purdue University

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