



# Solihull Work - Life Balance Newsletter

- Winter 2007

‘There can be no joy of life without joy of work’ Thomas Aquinas

Welcome to the winter edition of the Solihull Work-Life Balance newsletter. May we take this opportunity to wish you a very happy 2008 both at work and in life. enjoy!

## The Last Solihull Work-Life Balance Network Meeting

It was both a time to celebrate and reflect on the past two years of Network Meetings covering various interesting subjects from Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), Team Building, Sharing Best Practice, Age Discrimination, Coaching & Mentoring and more.

During this time businesses from Solihull have had the opportunity to learn on an individual level and as a business and develop and enjoy networking with other like-minded businesses.

The last meeting was themed ‘2008 and Beyond!’ and brought together all the topics covered to date and looked at how you can develop an effective and workable plan to ensure you are ahead when it comes to your employees, flexible working and Work-Life Balance.

Some of the successes from the meetings and feedback from the group included:

- Being able to take ideas back to the work place
- Engaging with employees – listen to them and their needs
- Learning to celebrate successes
- The different coaching techniques and the information I have used at my team meetings

- Agreeing Work-Life Balance practices within the team – not top down but at a team level.
- Meeting with other people and seeing what other companies are doing has further helped our Work-Life Balance.
- Understanding the difference between ‘teamwork’ and ‘team building’
- I found the Whale Tankers approach very interesting
- Introducing an Employee Handbook
- They reminded me of the importance of a positive attitude
- I Wish I had known about these sooner
- Taking the time to stop what I am doing and think for a while.

Overall the meetings on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = low and 5 = high) were scored for: value provided on an individual level = 4.3 and value on a business level = 4.

It is excellent to see that businesses have supported the network meetings, learnt much and would like to see the meetings continue into 2008.

We hope that 2008 will be a successful year full of good flexible working, Work-Life Balance and Corporate Social Responsibility.

But the topics we have covered can only really add value if we remember..... ‘we must be the change’.



One of the delegates experimenting with Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP),



# Interactive Business Tool

[www.equilibrium-business.com](http://www.equilibrium-business.com)

The Equilibrium Interactive Tool can be used by any business no matter what the size! It has been designed to provide a guide to finding solutions and ways to implement Flexible Working, Work-Life Balance and Corporate Social Responsibility best practices and policies into the business workplace.

The Tool has been developed by The Equilibrium Partnership to provide interactive on-line support and solutions for all businesses. The Tool can help businesses assess and identify where they are now and steps they may take to improve their current policies and practices and work towards becoming an 'employer of choice' and a leader of best practice in this area.

Case studies have been provided from the West Midlands, Spain, Italy and Slavakia.

These company case studies have been highlighted as best practice in their area and are there to demonstrate and inspire what can be achieved and how this can benefit not only the business, but also employees and the local community.

The Tool is easy and completely FREE to use. You will work through one step at a time with instructions and further information provided along the way. It should only take you 20mins to complete providing you have the information to answer the questions. It is suggested that you work through the tool saving the information as you go this will then allow you to return at any time with further information or revisit at a later date and identify improvements made.

To start to use The Tool all you have to do is complete the Employer Form providing as up to date and accurate information as possible.

Since the solutions provided are based on the information you provide us to get a truly reflective and appropriate table of solutions you need to ensure you have submitted the best information you can at this time. You will need to register as a user of this site ([www.equilibrium-business.com](http://www.equilibrium-business.com)) before you will be able to complete the form.



**Top Tips and much more are available online from the Equilibrium Website - [www.equal-equilibrium.com](http://www.equal-equilibrium.com) (under downloads) . They have been designed for both businesses and individuals and look to inspire, inform and motivate. Here are just a few:**



### Corporate Social Responsibility

The business benefits of being socially, economically and environmentally responsible.



### Balancing Business

Looking at CSR and sustainability in your business.



### Equality and diversity

A cross-cultural look at valuing all your people in your business.



### Balancing Health

Looking at your health and wellbeing.

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# Life Cycle Research a Literature Review

The Centre for Health Psychology, Staffordshire University have undertaken research in the form of a review of the literature examining Work-Life Balance issues with particular focus on the differing needs of employers, employees' and job seekers at different stages of their career/lifecycle. They also considered the needs of employees dependent upon their ethnicity, gender and disability. In particular addressing the following questions:

- What is the evidence for links between W-LB and stress, life satisfaction, depression and health?
- What is the impact of work-life balance (W-LB) on turnover, productivity, performance, job satisfaction, commitment to work and absenteeism?
- What is the impact of autonomy, organisational support, flexible working and policies on W-LB and outcomes?
- How does life stage impact on W-LB?
- Is W-LB perceived differently by men and women, or parents and non-parents?
- Are there ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status differences in W-LB?

## Some key findings from the research:

- Overall the evidence indicates that higher conflict between the work and life domains has negative outcomes for the individual.

- Those with higher conflict are likely to experience poorer mental and physical health, less life satisfaction and higher levels of stress and emotional exhaustion.
- There is also evidence to suggest that individuals reporting higher conflict are also less likely to engage in physical exercise and are more likely to engage in problem drinking.
- The most frequently used work-life balance initiatives are flexi-time, home working, and special leave arrangements.
- W-LB interventions need to focus on more than just implementing W-LB policies, they need to create a perception that the organisation has family responsive values; people need to feel that they are free to use W-LB arrangements without fearing adverse consequences (e.g. for their career development).

## Conclusions drawn from the review of literature:

- Balancing the demands of work and family life are associated with employees physical and mental health as well as occupational variables such as job satisfaction, performance, absenteeism, and turnover intentions.
- A number of factors have been found to be associated with improved Work-Life Balance such as perceptions of an organisational culture as supportive of W-LB, flexibility in working place and time, and autonomy at work.
- Individuals at different life stages appear to have differing perspectives on work-life balance, and may benefit from different work-life balance strategies.
- Many employees fear that they may suffer adverse career consequences by taking advantage of work-life balance initiatives, and as such employers need to embed W-LB policies within the work culture, to create an environment that is supportive towards employees making use of their entitlements.

The full report is available under downloads at:

**[www.equal-equilibrium.com](http://www.equal-equilibrium.com)**



**Balancing Your Time**  
Top tips on managing and appreciating your time



**Balancing Plans**  
Looking at how and why you need to be proactive.

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# The pick of the plums

The team at Plum Personnel joined in celebrating the success of their Branch Administrator, Vanessa Brooman, on winning the Special Achievement Award in the Recruitment Employment Confederation's (REC) first ever National Individual membership Recruitment Awards.

Julie Whitehouse, Director said, "We are so very proud of her success. This is a tremendous accolade and recognises Vanessa's professionalism and truly valued contribution at Plum."

The judges had a difficult task in selecting the winner. Anita Holbrow, Marketing Director of the REC commented, "We were all impressed and humbled by all applications demonstrating such great talent in the recruitment industry today. The nominations were open to people from around the UK; there were many entries and the standard of entries was high."

Commenting on her achievement, Vanessa said, "I'm thrilled and delighted to have won. It's terrific to be so happy in a job and to also have the recognition and reward is the icing on the cake."

After a successful and varied career followed by a break to bring up her family, Vanessa was seeking a rewarding part-time position

Vanessa added, "The team at Plum is an absolute pleasure to work alongside. I feel very lucky to have a role that's not only interesting and varied, but one that I really enjoy. The part-time hours give me the flexibility I need as a working mother. I truly believe that there are lots of other people just like me who can give 110% commitment and loyalty to forward thinking employers. It's a true 'win-win' situation."

"The inaugural REC Awards celebrate the crème of professionals in recruitment throughout the UK" said Julie.

"Vanessa's achievement really illustrates that behind every successful recruiter there's a great administrator. Vanessa never fails to go the extra mile and she is truly appreciated and valued by all of us at Plum."



# The End of Adjust the Balance (AtB)

After 2 ½ years of working with businesses and organisations in the West Midlands on Work-Life Balance, Flexible Working and Corporate Social Responsibility, this European project funded through Equal has finally come to an end.

During this time the project has worked with many, many various partners who have all contributed through the delivery of their projects from well-being and stress, older workers and younger workers, ethnicity, disabilities, rural issues, Best

Business Awards, Troubleshooting with SME's, getting women back into work, empowerment and that is not mentioning all of the research to support the work and policy recommendations made, the transnational work with Spain, Italy and Slovakia and the development of business tools to support businesses in the workplace.

If you would like to know more or download the work from AtB you can visit :  
**[www.equal-equilibrium.com](http://www.equal-equilibrium.com)**

## Links

<b>Adjust the Balance</b>	- <a href="http://www.equal-equilibrium.com">www.equal-equilibrium.com</a>
<b>ACAS</b>	- <a href="http://www.acas.org.uk">www.acas.org.uk</a>
<b>Federation of Small Businesses</b>	- <a href="http://www.fsb.org.uk">www.fsb.org.uk</a>
<b>Working Families</b>	- <a href="http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk">www.workingfamilies.org.uk</a>
<b>The work Foundation</b>	- <a href="http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk">www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk</a>
<b>Daycare Trust</b>	- <a href="http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk">www.daycaretrust.org.uk</a>

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