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Rethinking the Work-Life Equation

Our workplace isn't truly flexible so the whole office culture has to change.

Phyllis Moen, a sociologist, has made a career studying the challenges of working full time while raising a family. She began considering the ways that corporations could reconfigure work to address the realities of the modern employee.

- 5 Moen, and Erin Kelly, both professors of work and organization at M.I.T, started studying a pilot program which granted workers almost total control of their schedules.

In this program, half the employees in the technology department would continue operating under the company's usual policy (flexibility given at the manager's discretion). The other technology employees would participate to a new initiative which
10 was both radical and simple: Workers in the experimental group were told they could work wherever, and whenever they chose, so long as projects were completed on time and goals were met; only results would matter.

Managers were then trained to support their employees' personal issues and to open up about their own priorities outside work — an ill parent or a child needing care.

- 15 The research found that employees in the experimental group met their goals as reliably as those in the control group, and they were, in short, much happier: They were sleeping better, were healthier and experienced less stress.

Moen and Kelly realized that certain conventions of office culture were changing to both employers and employees' benefits.

By SUSAN DOMINUS, The New York Times, FEB. 25, 2016