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Workplace Flexibility Case Study
AFLAC's Full-time Schedule Options
by Ken Giglio

Company: Aflac (www.aflac.com)

Company profile: Founded by brothers John, Paul and Bill Amos in 1955, Aflac has grown into a Fortune 500 company. Based in Columbus, Georgia, Aflac offers a variety of insurance products to more than 40 million people worldwide. The company had in excess of \$59 billion in assets at the end of 2004, with annual revenues of more than \$13.3 billion. Of Aflac's 4,000 employees, about 70 percent are women, many of whom are working mothers and some of whom are single mothers.

Program profile: As part of its flexibility offerings to employees, Aflac includes several opportunities to work various full-time shifts. While the variety of shifts is designed to meet the family needs of its workers, it must also serve the company's business needs. In addition to offering its workers an opportunity for different start times, Aflac has a 4-by-10 work week and a 3-by-12 work week. In the 4-by-10 work week, employees put in four 10-hour days, with three days off per week. Employees who choose a 3-by-12 work week work three 12-hour days and have four days off per week. These compressed schedule options have been used at Aflac for about six or seven years. Alternate schedules have been in place for about two years. Requests for an alternate schedule or a change in schedule must go through a supervisor. It is an employee-driven system in which the company attempts to put the worker more in control of choosing their own schedule. Much of this is done through the use of employee focus groups and other forms of feedback. Aflac believes that if it takes care of its workers, those workers will take care of the business.

The Challenge: After operating with a standard 8 am to 5 pm shift for its workers for many years, Aflac saw a business need and a worker need to go beyond the one-shift-fits-all work schedule. In an effort to experiment and expand, it started offering these alternative schedules, first trying a compressed schedule and later adding an early morning shift (which runs from 6:30 am to 2:30 pm) and an evening shift (which runs from 3 pm to 11 pm).

Benefits to employees: Employees are given many opportunities to express their feelings about work-related issues through various kinds of feedback, including focus group sessions. This process allows them to be more involved in decisions about their work life and to work out any problems. The result, according to Aflac officials, is happier and more effective employees who report feelings of pride and value about their jobs.

Benefits to employer: Aflac says that with happier, more effective employees they get more productive workers and that helps the company's bottom line. One benefit is less employee turnover, which can be a costly process. Within Aflac's call center operations, employee retention has gone from 87 percent to 94 percent.

Lessons Learned: Aflac management believes that when employees are given the opportunity to better manage their lives at work, they will become better workers and put more pride and effort into their work. The result is not only positive for the worker, but for the company as well in that it gets the most out of its employees.

Personal profile: Tamesia Paschal is an accounting specialist who services payroll accounts for the company. She has worked at Aflac for six years, having advanced from a customer service position after three years. Tamesia currently works a 6 am to 2:30 pm shift, a schedule she started about two years ago after the company approached her with the change. She says she took the opportunity because she feels she is a more productive worker in the morning hours, which helps the business as well. Essentially, Tamesia says, it's a win-win situation, "You're meeting the company needs because you have the option to work the shift you want. I'm more

productive in the early morning, and getting off at 2:30 in the afternoon, I have the option of going to meetings or appointments after work." She adds, "I love it, it works for me. I think it's a good thing."

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