

'Bigger the better' for workers

Large well-managed companies with a wide global reach provide a happier work-life balance for their employees, a study has suggested.

Allowing staff to work "smarter" not "harder" was the key to successful management, the survey by the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) found.

Well-managed firms were not necessarily more productive, it said, but provided a better work-life balance for staff.

The CEP surveyed over 700 companies in France, Germany, the UK and the US.

Good people management, such as fostering talent, rewarding and retaining well performing staff and offering training opportunities were likely to be found in conjunction with good work-life practices, the CEP found.

And the share of women in management relative to non-management was significantly higher in firms with a better work-life balance.

Meanwhile, in well-managed firms, hours worked by both managers and their staff were not significantly higher than those in badly run firms, the report said.

Global is good

Interestingly, suspicions that competition and globalisation were bad for work-life balance were not supported by the CEP's findings.

"It simply is not true that globalisation is such a disaster for employees

Dr Nick Bloom, co-author

Researchers' findings showed no relationship between tougher competition and work-life balance.

Additionally, no relationship was found between productivity and work-life balance once good management was taken into account.

"It simply is not true that globalisation is such a disaster for employees," said co-author of the report Dr Nick Bloom.

"Employees in larger, more globalised firms seem to be much better off in terms of their working lives than those in smaller, more national firms."

In conclusion, the report said a good and fair work-life balance did not impact productivity and was obviously "socially desirable" because workers aspired towards it.

Another of the report's authors, Professor John Van Reenen, said that a good work-life balance seemed to be something that well-run firms were doing naturally.

"They need to treat their employees well to keep them - if not, their competitors will hire them away," Professor Van Reenen said.

"Government policies on work-life balance should take this into account."

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