



Rupert & COMPANY

Guides to a changing workplace

FlexBulletin #34: A Flex Remodel may be in Order

May 31, 2010

[In recent issues we have stepped back and taken an expansive look at the innovative power of flexibility. In [FlexBulletin #32: Pioneering and Defining Flexibility](#) - we recalled the fable of the "Blind Men and an Elephant" to suggest the power of true workplace flexibility. In [FlexBulletin #33: When Flexibility Meets Wellness](#) - we explored a powerful application of flexibility to the constantly changing needs of employees stricken with chronic conditions. And we will continue in the months ahead to highlight the many unique, new and impressive models of flexibility that persistent champions are building.]

*But as we all recover from the great housing market collapse and the recession it spawned, even the flexibility impulse has been affected. Judging from our experiences and those of our many clients and colleagues, this year's flexibility customer focus has been less on new models and more on remodels. Just as millions of households are making do with adding an appliance or upgrading a kitchen, so are hundreds of companies appropriating just enough funds to upgrade a website or add online flex training. And those of us who relish a grand Phased and Partial Retirement initiative or a thorough **FlexAudit**[™] complete with focus groups and executive briefings are happy to meet our clients where they are these days - rank ordering the most cost-effective changes, trying to do more with less.*

Why is there so much remodeling going on right now?

- As with kitchens, it's just clear when the time has come:
 - There are holes in the guidelines and new staff don't know flex exists
 - There's no time or money for live training and nothing on line
 - Everyone skipped metrics last time around and now we need them
- Given many busy priorities, senior leaders are far from engaged
- Managers see flex as retention only, and don't see that as a problem now

What are the wise choices you can make?

The needs are substantial, and it's hard to narrow down the choices to what the organization can sustain right now. But just as you sit with your floor plan and match opportunity and leverage and cost - or kitchen, bath, family room - you peruse the flex Do List for the same. Modified by your unique needs, we see the priority choices as:

- ✓ **Online Guidelines** - The heart of any approach, they're like the kitchen appliances - when the kitchen needs upgrade, so do these. And a good set comes with new features: self-assessment tools, step-by-step proposal form guidance and evaluation tools. And they can incorporate existing features from your old kitchen.
- ✓ **Custom Online Training** - You may have generic training from one source or another. Like an overhaul of the key appliances, your existing training tools can be retained to keep costs down, or you can add consistent messages and convenience for modest cost. Good just-in-time training is an inexpensive way to deepen your flex reach.
- ✓ **Executive Briefings** - A remodel, relaunch or refresh offers the opportunity to engage your leaders - and reengage them. Think of it as the family room addition. It needn't cost much, you can bring in your knowledgeable contractor to do the heavy lifting and it turns the whole initiative into a company-wide effort. And it doesn't have to cost much.

- ✓ **HR Train-the-Trainer** - No matter how modest or extensive the remodel, there have to be guides to show folks around the new place. A short and sweet training can prepare everyone for success.
- ✓ **Metrics** - The beautiful thing about the remodeling metaphor is that it is all about measurement, measurement, measurement. Poor measurement = crooked walls, uneven floors, etc. Good measurement yields success. Good measurement in a flex remodel captures success - and builds further success.

Holding down prices: do it yourself vs. design build partners

The great tension in home remodeling is the do it yourself stream vs. "the professionals" - or sometimes seen as the cost vs. quality conflict. Our advice is to assess honestly what you, your IT folks and your colleagues are quite capable of doing yourselves. Then team up with folks who have designed tools and know all these elements well, and chart a division of labor. An example:

- ◆ **Guidelines** Revise your own or negotiate a limited change, lower cost version
- ◆ **Online Training** This may be one required cost; seek a package price - or skip
- ◆ **Executive Briefings** Do a joint inside/outside presentation; do preparation internally
- ◆ **Train-the-Trainer** Same as above
- ◆ **Metrics** You can do this on your own

Whether you are prepared to leap into a major new initiative, do a well-supported remodel or do a thrifty update, one thing is clear: now is the time to get started. The recovery continues its slow crawl, and as has historically been true, as unemployment drops, openness to flexibility rises. As we know, it takes a year or a year and a half to move an effort from floor plan to finished product. Don't get caught trying to wrap up a kitchen remodel the week before Thanksgiving.

Best regards,

Paul Rupert, President
Rupert & Company
Chevy Chase, MD
301-873-8489

Paul@RupertAndCompany.com

© 2010 Rupert & Company. All Rights Reserved