

FlexBulletin #51: Flex and Independence Day

June 29, 2011

Happy Independence Day!

[As we approach the 4th of July holiday, weekend and vacation weeks, two things are evident:

- *this is not the time for a weighty discourse on flexibility innovations, but*
- *it seems a good time to take a break from our narrow focus and visit the basics*

Many companies link their flexibility initiatives to fundamental documents, such as a Credo, Principles, Core Values, etc. Very few step outside those boundaries to draw on the nation's founding documents as anchors for innovative social designs. On this one national holiday we celebrate change writ large. Let's take a moment to see what the "Declaration of Independence" implies for flexibility initiatives.]

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776

(The original spelling and capitalization of this partial text have been retained.)

***The Unanimous Declaration
of the Thirteen United States of America***

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security...

PRINCIPLES OF THE DECLARATION describe core American assumptions and actions

What does this broad call for democracy and self-governance have to do with your company supporting flexible schedules? Let's start by isolating the key principles from the Declaration:

- ◆ All men [people] are created equal
- ◆ They are endowed with inalienable rights that include life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
- ◆ Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed
- ◆ When government is destructive of these ends, abolition and new forms are in order
- ◆ History shows that people are "more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable" than to act

Clearly political governance and corporate governance are very different forms. Our political system is perceived to have a bottoms-up flow of power and authority, while our companies are believed to function on a top-down basis. But as we all know, things are seldom so neat and linear. While managers and employees know that different rules and habits govern

the workplace and the polling place, there is bound to be overlap. Thus the assumptions and expectations of one may subtly seep into the other.

HOW THE DECLARATION CAN SHAPE broad social initiatives like flexibility

We may think of flexibility on the company-by-company basis through which we implement it. We drive a telecommuting initiative here, a part-time effort there, and can, if we wish, see it as a modest program, benefit or accommodation. But the amalgamation of these thousands of efforts has as its goal or effect the creation of the flexible workplace – over time an organization of a new type. This broad effort in changing social policy occurs within the confines of top-down organizations, but resembles the bottoms-up world of political change. Some of the Principles we summarized from the Declaration have their counterparts in the movement for greater flexibility:

- ◆ All men [people] are created equal
Equitable treatment is a key criterion in flex initiatives, and a driver of broader and deeper access – it is a strongly held value throughout any flexibility process
- ◆ They are endowed with inalienable rights that include life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
Where flex flourishes, it values retention (life), control of schedules (liberty) and employee satisfaction (happiness.)
- ◆ Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed
Companies can command, but they seek the consent of the governed through empowerment of employees and “Employer of Choice” status
- ◆ When government is destructive of these ends, abolition and new forms are in order
Unlike the world of political revolution, flexibility is occurring within the realm of behavioral evolution; those who don’t adapt may well disappear eventually
- ◆ History shows that people are “more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable” than to act
As in politics, so in flexibility; complaining, perhaps behaving passive-aggressively will win out over agitation – and thus its opposite – “engagement” will be a core goal of any initiative

CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE from July 4 forward

It would be presumptuous to assume that we can – or should – appropriate July 4 as a kick-off for a great national flexibility initiative. But it would also be a mistake to so trivialize the scope of what we do that it bears no relationship to the great tributaries of our national drama.

On this holiday of beaches, barbecues and family gatherings, it’s worth taking a minute to remind ourselves of the inspiring words of the Declaration and to rededicate ourselves and our companies to embodying its spirit in the flexible progress in the year ahead.

Enjoy whatever time you take. We look forward to working together in the second half of the year to build bigger and better flexibility initiatives.

Best regards,

Paul Rupert
Stacey Gibson

Rupert & Company
Chevy Chase, MD
301-873-8489
paulrupertdc@cs.com

*Rupert & Company, publisher of the **Bulletin**, is the global leader in creating business-beneficial Flexible Work Arrangements.*

Click [here](#) to request a preview of our new **FlexWise 2.0** guidelines or visit our website at:
www.rupertandcompany.com

You can see our classic FlexWise Guidelines and Training toolkits at:
www.flexwise.com