



## **FlexBulletin #73: What if Comp Were Offered Like Flex?**

December 19, 2012

### ***Wishing You and Yours a Safe, Restful and Inspiring Holiday!***

***It's Time for Change*** As we pursue our holiday habits or undertake new adventures in advance of an uncertain New Year, hopefully we can all take a deep breath or two. And enjoy friends and family. Inevitably we will look forward and backward.

*These are not the worst or best of times. But they are surely among the most challenging. In the last issue (FlexBulletin #72 -- Campaigning for Leader Engagement) I wrote of the importance of leadership in moving flexibility forward. I wrote this with the devastation of Sandy on all our minds – and in many of our neighborhoods – and considerable insistence that the time had come for strong leadership on Global Warming or Climate Change. This natural disaster was eclipsed, at least in the media, by the man-made peril of the “Fiscal Cliff” – or slope, or curb, or... The demand for political leadership became deafening.*

***“And a little child shall lead them”*** Then came the horror of Sandy Hook Elementary School. Thousands of journalists and observers said no words could capture the enormity of this event. They were right. The silence was suddenly deafening. For all of us I believe the words “Sandy Hook Elementary School” say it all. Whatever the causes, whatever one’s analysis, no matter what beliefs one might have about problem and solution – clearly over many years our leaders and the rest of us have failed. As President Obama said of this tragedy, and could have said of devastated beaches and mountains of debt, “Surely we can do better than this.”

*It seems a call we should all heed, and probably on many fronts. There are already some modest signs that leadership may be asserting itself. The President and the Speaker may actually be talking us away from the cliff. Unlikely voices are speaking up for sensible constraints on rapid fire weapons with bottomless magazines. Perhaps vigorous conversations about climate change and immigration are on the horizon.*

***Who will lead us to the truly flexible workplace?*** While strengthening flexibility may not have the impact of these other pressing national challenges, the trajectory of what I will call unacceptably slow progress is similar. A markedly flexible workplace is an important matter for readers of this letter and millions of colleagues in diverse employers across the country. It is a challenge that has confounded us for decades. And progress has been slow, limited and at the margins. As with these other national challenges, leadership has been subdued, scattered and perhaps too willing to sigh at the obstacles and resistance – and accept a glacial pace of change.

*Overcoming all national challenges requires each of us to do our part. The central lesson of late 2012 may be the need for a renewed commitment to work, collaborate and lead emphatically in 2013 on the issues that touch us. As many of you know, I became a practitioner and advocate for better ways of working 40 years ago. Next year, I promise to bring more of my youthful insight, energy, enthusiasm and innovation to these pages and the national dialogue on the changing workplace.*

*Looking back over where we’ve been and where we need to go, one of the simple metrics that will guide me is a comparison: how does the flexibility “offering” stack up against that made for compensation?*

**“FLEX CAN BE A POWERFUL RECRUITING TOOL”** This hopeful phrase has been uttered so many thousands of times that it can rightly be considered part of the “flex mantra.” It is based on the demonstrated fact that more

and more people place a higher and higher value on flexible schedules every year. Decades of single company and public research have shown that in a list of factors that make an attractive employment brand, flexibility has risen from a low rank a decade ago to the trinity at the top: compensation, benefits and flexibility. In some studies flexibility tops comp or is second, trumping benefits.

In the face of such demand from prospects – and increasingly restive employees whose retention is coming to resemble a continuing recruitment campaign – thoughtful companies spend considerable time and energy on their “pitch.” The Total Rewards package may contain all three elements. These attracters vary in impact but can be equally compelling to recruits. Yet they are supported and presented quite differently. Areas of difference include:

- ❖ *Resources and time spent on consulting, benchmarking, design and implementation*
- ❖ *Effort expended in appraisals, rating and administration of systems*
- ❖ *Internal and external communication processes to promote the Rewards “package”*
- ❖ *The massive direct costs expended, especially for compensation and benefits*

Flexibility does not typically enjoy such attention. Imagine that compensation were conceived and described to desirable talent as one would have to honestly describe the flexibility “Reward.” Here are some sample talking points for the compensation segment of that candidate interview.

- ✓ *Many of our associates receive compensation, whether it's formal or informal*
- ✓ *We offer many kinds of comp – straight, deferred, bonuses – from \$60,000 to \$3 million a year*
- ✓ *Your salary will be set by your manager based on position, performance and [his] preference*
- ✓ *Salaries begin to be paid after six months tenure and may be modified once in a while after that*
- ✓ *Salaries are not an entitlement and can be terminated, modified or suspended as business changes*
- ✓ *In the event of transfer, promotion or change of duties, salary continuation is not guaranteed*

Absurd? Yes. But part of an appealing package for a talented person considering a position is its clarity, certainty, specificity and comparability. While no offers are perfectly clear, none should be hopelessly vague. Just as comp should not be highly conditional and arbitrary, neither should health insurance – or flexibility. Some of the lines in the comp pseudo-offer above come straight from flexibility policies we have seen. Again, to quote president Obama, “Surely we can do better than this.” As we rethink and reshape the workplace in 2013, let us imagine this flex pitch becoming a far more prevalent way of highlighting the flexibility people can expect in their new positions:

- ✓ *We are committed to maximum flexibility in schedules that serves you and builds the business*
- ✓ *We can negotiate schedules at entry and modify them as experience allows*
- ✓ *We train, support and expect our managers to collaborate with associates to maximize flexibility*
- ✓ *No position or schedule is automatically off-limits; only your engagement and business success count*
- ✓ *In the event of transfer, promotion or change of duties, we are committed to sustaining flexibility*
- ✓ *We orient, train, monitor and assess to maximize success for managers and associates*

If this destination makes sense, we have a ways to go. But if we are to unleash the power of flexibility and harness the great and growing demand people have for control over when, where and how they work, we need to step up our efforts. Our people, our families, our companies and our country will welcome the change.

See you in the New Year.

***We welcome your comments on this Bulletin. If you write, please email me at:***  
[\*\*\*paulrupertdc@cs.com\*\*\*](mailto:paulrupertdc@cs.com)

*Collaborative or Co Scheduling is a comprehensive, innovative approach to flexibility that offers diverse and powerful features for organizations seeking a broader and more robust form of flexibility. It includes modules on Managing at a Distance and Managing through Chronic Conditions. We would be happy to discuss these and our other online guidelines and training tools with you. They are integrated into our new Co Scheduling guidelines, and can be adopted as individual tools in your current guidelines or Wellness materials.*

***Our Website:*** [\*\*\*www.rupertandcompany.com\*\*\*](http://www.rupertandcompany.com)

Best regards,  
Paul Rupert

Rupert & Company  
Chevy Chase, MD  
301-873-8489  
[paulrupertdc@cs.com](mailto:paulrupertdc@cs.com)

*Rupert & Company, publisher of the **Bulletin**, is the global leader in business-beneficial flexibility.*

© 2012 Rupert & Company. All Rights Reserved