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[Liberated Workforce](#)

Nearly all companies large and small are dealing with creative ways to keep their best talent. And it appears that many companies are waking up to the fact that their needs to be a level of trust between the employer and the employee. The employer needs to trust that the employee cares enough about their job that without a large amount of structure they are going to excel in their job and not slack off because it may appear that no one is watching. Maybe to take it one step further, by allowing employees to have total freedom in their job an employer is opening up their company to free market forces. If a business creates a product in the free market and no one likes it or if it is too expensive or if the quality is poor, word will spread quickly and the market will eventually force that company out of business. The market ultimately decides who is a winner and who is a loser. I am advocating that the “free market” can have the same effect on employees, if an employee has total freedom in their work to get their work done when ever and where ever, it will be their job to lose. If the employee, like the company, produces poor results or doesn't produce results at all the company will then have to make the decision if this person is the right mold for their company. Not everyone is a fit for every company or every work environment. The market will clearly take care of these non-producers. Then like in business the non producers have to go back to the drawing board and come up with a new strategy to move from a non producer to a producer.

To support my argument for the “liberated workforce” I have included a list of characteristics of the 21st century worker from [Steve South's blog](#) over at Lee Hecht Harrison's Pittsburgh blog. You can see the full article [here](#).

- They all work from a home-office and are across several states and more than one country;
- They all put in over 40 hours a week (but not always from 9-5 and not always M-F);
- They all have their own portable laptop, portable printer, scanner and PDA;
- They have their own phone number (for work and personal) and their phone is with them all the time;
- They have 24/7 access to the internet and its plethora of downloadable software applications;
- They have several social networking profiles and network for new opportunities of all kinds regularly;
- Well over half their meetings are via WebX or GoToMeeting;
- They talk about shopping at places like E-Bay, Amazon, and NoBetterDeal.com like our parents used

to talk about shopping at Kaufmann's and Horne's;

- They Google, blog and twitter as a matter of course throughout the day;
- They are cyber school graduates and all working on their advanced degrees online;
- Each has a portable retirement program (IRAs and 401ks);
- They have (or likely will have) some kind of 'portable' health care program;
- A 'sustainable' workplace is one of their top 3 reasons for choosing their employer;
- They identify more with their region and their profession than they do their company – i.e. "I am an accountant from Austin" (versus "I work for Dell");
- They talk in terms of 'self-defined PTO', rather than corporate-defined vacations and holidays;
- Managing their money is a matter of direct deposits, EFTs, ATMs and 'virtual wallets';

Let me as you this:

- Does your company support or undermine the following list of characteristics?
- Are you interested in having a mobile workforce?
- Or does the thought of people determining their own schedule worry you?
- These are all questions that every company will need to answer in the very near if not present future.
- Are you already seeing a large number of your staff asking for modified work hours?
- How many of your staff members work from home at least one day a week?
- Those who do work from home at least one day a week, has their productivity levels gone up or down?
- How about their satisfaction with the company or their job?

On a related matter, we just released our [annual salary survey](#) this week at an event over at the Rivers Club. The survey, as you may have guessed, was largely about what organizations are paying their people, but in addition to that we have a lot of data on healthcare, paid time off, and work / life balance questions. The data is quite fascinating.

Of the nearly 80 companies from southwest Pennsylvania who took the survey:

- 53% said they offer "flextime" time to their employees
- 47% offered every day casual dress
- 26% off "steady telecommuting"
- 24% offer Friday casual dress
- 22% offer a "compressed workweek"

The idea of the "liberated workforce" really isn't that revolutionary if you think about it. Now I do admit for some companies it will be. However, if you ponder it long enough you will realize that this is the way all of us have been designed to function at work. No longer do most of us "punch-in-and-punch-out." We are paid to think, create, and communicate. If that happens between nine and five, great! But if it doesn't that should be ok too. Change may be the word for 2010 but it is very hard to actually make happen, in Washington DC and in the workforce in America.

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