

Eoc says UK needs more contractors

The [Equal Opportunities Commission](#) says that the UK needs more contractors.

Working Outside the Box

According to a new EOC study, "Working Outside the Box," which was released on June 14, 52% of men and 48% of women say they want to work more flexibly. Some employers simply provide flexible schedules for employees, but others use contractors to better control costs and provide highly skilled labour at the points when it is needed most.

The EOC says 6.5 million people in Britain could use their skills more fully if more flexible working was available, either by working at a level at which they used to work or by returning to the workforce.

The study warns that rigid models of work are driving highly qualified workers into jobs below their skill level so they can have a life outside work.

The waste of people's skills and experience is undermining attempts to create a highly skilled workforce. The struggle to find a job that is compatible with life is leading to increasing pressure for a 'new deal' at work – increasingly, people want greater control over the hours and location of work, provided outputs are delivered, rather than reduced hours which currently often lead to low pay and poor prospects.

Contractors Provide Better Returns

In return, employers are benefiting from better staff engagement and loyalty, meeting increasing customer demand for 24/7 products and services, and raising productivity.

Conservative party chairman Davide Cameron came out strongly in favour of the report's conclusions, and committed the party to the support of flexible working. Cameron has also promised to cut taxes for small businesses like those run by contractors. "Flexible working is good for companies, good for the economy and good for society as a whole," Cameron said.

“ The EOC study warns that some workers are accepting lower level jobs just to live the contractor lifestyle ”
Equal Opportunities Commission

Says EOC chairperson Jenny Watson: "Failing to rethink the way we've traditionally organised work is a chronic waste of talent and investment in education, at a time when Britain needs to invest heavily in skills to maintain its competitiveness globally."

Improved Productivity

Adds London-based Confederation of British Industry director general Richard Lambert: "Many businesses are already reaping rewards from more flexible and smarter ways of working, achieving improved productivity and staff recruitment and retention. Local communities and the environment benefit too. The right balance must, of course, be struck between maximum flexibility and businesses remaining competitive and meeting customers' needs."

As the report notes, many economists predict that flexible workers will soon constitute an important part of the entire workforce. Some observers believe that more than half the workforce will be contractor-based within the next 10 years.

“ Flexible working is good for the entire economy ”
David Cameron - Conservative Party Chairman

The EOC report also called for a cross-government task force to champion new models of flexible working.

Watson concludes: "Britain's way of working is looking increasingly unsustainable as we look to the future. On the one hand, endemic long hours, particularly for men and increasing work intensification, particularly for women, are squeezing out time for caring and increasing illness and stress and leading to wider social costs. On the other hand, employers in key sectors face a challenge for the future to recruit and retain highly-skilled people because their ways of working are increasingly unattractive to their workforce. New ways of working are the key to a more sustainable economic model."

Of course, if the Government continues to threaten contractors with badly targeted and restrictive legislation like the [managed services companies attack](#), the chance of making the transition to a flexible workforce grows ever smaller. Fortunately, organisations like the EOC are applying pressure to help make the Government change its attitude.

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