



Guide to Interpreting Flexstyle Results

This work is adapted from: Kossek, E. & Lautsch, B. 2008. CEO of Me: Creating a Life That Works in the Flexible Job Age. Upper Saddle New Jersey: Wharton School Publishing.

Flexstyle Type Overview

This guide is intended to accompany results from the Flexstyle survey and is adapted from CEO of Me: Creating a Life That Works in the Flexible Job Age (Kossek and Lautsch, 2008).

Overview:

For each Flexstyle there are two subtypes: one for when we are feeling in control and satisfied and another for when we are feeling out of control and frustrated. The table below indicates the subtypes for each Flexstyle.

<i>Well-being</i>	Integrators	Volleyers	Separators
HIGH	Fusion Lovers	Quality Timers	Firsters (Work or Family)
LOW	Reactors	Job Warriors	Captives

As you think about your type, keep in mind that one style is not inherently better than another; each style has benefits and drawbacks associated with it. Flexstyles can shift over time and in response to circumstances; for that reason you may want to revisit this material periodically or after major life changes to determine if you are or should be managing your life in a different way. Each Flexstyle has a good and bad subtype for how individuals experience the boundary management style.

Type Descriptors: Integrators

Integrators blend work and personal tasks and commitments. For integrators, there is not a clear line between work life and personal life. Integrators are often the people you see at sporting events or on vacation while taking business calls or emails. Integrators may work nonstandard hours in order to attend to personal needs or attend to pressing business matters. There are two types of integrators: Fusion Lovers who enjoy blending and Reactors who do not.

Fusion Lovers experience the blending of work life and personal life as positive, and feel in control of how, when and where they blend work life and personal life. Fusion Lovers like multitasking and changing roles throughout the day and see it as a way to stay on top of things and efficiently deal with their various responsibilities and expectations.

Reactors experience the blending of work life and personal life as negative and are unhappy with how they balance work and personal obligation. Reactors want more control over transitions between work life and personal life. For reactors, multitasking and changing roles throughout the day is draining and they feel overwhelmed and out of control. They may lack the support they need at work or at home and feel forced to address situations as they arise.

Tradeoffs for Integrators include:

- Long days (job or family creep when it takes longer to complete tasks because you are constantly switching back and forth between work and personal life. Other people may not understand your schedule and be confused as to whether you are “at work” or “at home” and thus not know when to bring up different issues.
- Blending work life and personal life may create the perception that an integrator does not place adequate value on either work or personal life. Family members may resent the intrusion of work into what they see as “family time” and colleagues may wonder about the priority of work if someone leaves early to attend a family event.
- Switching between roles and tasks can take more time and energy than focusing on one thing at a time, because there is often a transition period required as we repeatedly refocus efforts or thoughts.

Type Descriptors: Separators

Separators keep work and personal tasks and commitments divided. For separators, there is a clear line between their work life and their personal life. Separators focus on work when they are at work and to focus on their personal life when they are at home. Separators use physical space, their schedules, and mental perceptions to keep aspects of their life compartmentalized. There are two types of separators: Firsters who enjoy separation and Captives who do not.

Firsters (Work Life or Personal Life) feel in control and choose to place one part of their life – their work or their personal life -- as the highest priority and keep the other aspect of their life separate from it in order to better focus. They use this primary identity to help them structure their role relationships to prioritize activities to give precedence to the primary role. Firsters may choose to put their career first or their personal life first and are comfortable with the tradeoffs needed to make that happen.

Captives do not feel in control of their schedule. For captives the separation feels like they are sacrificing one aspect of their life for another. It may be because of the nature of their job (perhaps they have to use specialized equipment at the workplace) or their organization (perhaps it does not allow flextime or telecommuting), or because of family commitments they cannot attend to work matters at home.

Tradeoffs for Separators include:

- Not benefiting from the crossover opportunities to blend skill development and get support from different sources.
- Work Firsters may not have healthy social attachments outside of work and lack variety in the type of support available to them. Conversely, Family Firsters may regret downshifting their career aspirations.

Type Descriptors: Volleyers

Volleyers switch back and forth between integrating and separating the work life and personal life depending on their priorities and their circumstances. There are two types of integrators: Quality Timers who enjoy volleying and Job Warriors who do not.

Quality Timers separate to give their best to each role. They integrate at key times and separate when necessary. Quality Timers feel in control and satisfied. They may choose to focus on work during part of the year (such a tax season) or for a portion of the week (perhaps separating work and nonwork Monday and Friday in order to focus heavily on one or the other and then blending the rest of the week).

Job Warriors lack control and satisfaction regarding when and how they switch between integrating and separating periods. They may have jobs that require travel or have seasons in which the workload is particularly heavy. They tend to resent what feels like forced integration or separation over daily or weekly periods. They would like to have more control over when they separate or integrate.

Tradeoffs for Volleyers include:

- Switching between styles increases the cognitive complexity required to manage one's life. Tasks and activities are more difficult to prioritize and address when different styles are used in different circumstances.
- Changing styles can confuse those around volleyers because their behavior is not as predictable
- Job Warriors' in particular are susceptible to fatigue and higher vulnerability of support systems breaking down.

Tips for how you can gain control and be CEO of your life regardless of which Flexstyle you have:

Monitor Yourself.

Track how you spend your time and how you feel about it using a journal, chart, or checklist. You may choose to only identify moments of tension or duress. For example, does using a certain Flexstyle create tension for you? Are there certain times of day or days of the week that are problematic? Monitoring your habits may reveal aspects of your schedule or thinking that are not working well for you.

Craft a Vision of Your Ideal Flexstyle Situation.

There are probably options for blending or separating your work life and personal life that you have not considered. Take time to think about your ideal situation. You may want to ask friends, family members, and coworkers about how they manage their Flexstyle. What is your vision of an ideal Flexstyle situation?

Set Goals.

Once you have identified what is and isn't working well and envisioned your ideal Flexstyle, you can set goals for yourself. Even simple changes, such as working from home one day a week or creating times throughout the day to check on personal matters at work may help reduce the stress and tension you experience. Be sure your goal is something within your control and something you are committed to doing (that you see the value of doing). Be aware of how your goal may impact others. Seek support for your goal. Consider potential barriers to progress on your goal and develop plans to address them. Think about the implication and consequences of not making progress on your goal. Are you likely to regret something? Are you more likely to burnout?

Get Support for Change.

In order to make progress on your goal, you may have to reevaluate your professional and personal commitments and expectations. If you are the only person in the office that can do something, now may be the time to train someone else. If you need more time at the office, perhaps you can get more support at home. Even minor changes, such as bundling your personal errands can save you time to focus your energy elsewhere. Get advice and support from others; there's no

reason to go it alone. Invest some time in gathering information and building supportive relationships. Share your successes across domains; for instance if something great happened at work, why not extend the good feeling by sharing the news with family and friends? Focusing on the positive can give you the boost you need to tackle your challenges.

Try Different Approaches.

You may not know what will work (or not work) for you until you try it. If you can, try out different approaches to integrating or separating work and personal tasks and pay attention to how well the approach works for you and those around you. You may want to experiment with a different work schedule or try working (or not working) from home. Keep in mind that changes may need to be explained to and perhaps approved by others. For instance, if you want to work late a couple nights during the week in order to avoid bringing work home, you probably want to discuss that with your significant other. If you want to work from home more often, you'll need to be sure your boss understands why you want to try that approach and approves. When negotiating changes with others, it is helpful to identify the potential benefits for others as well as for yourself.

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For more information and diagnostic tools, please see Dr. Ellen Ernst Kossek, and Dr. Brenda Lautsch' s book: CEO of Me: Creating a Life that Works in the Flexible Job Age (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Wharton School Publishing/Pearson).

Dr. Kossek is partnering with CCL as a visiting scholar to develop new tools. If you or your company would like to be involved in some workshops or pilot testing new materials, please contact Marian Ruderman (Ruderman@ccl.org) or Rachael Foy (foyr@ccl.org).