



## Case Study by Margaret Adams

Cullen Scholefield, based in Haywards Heath, West Sussex, offers a wide range of consultancy services nationally and internationally covering management, personnel related issues and training. Founded in 1986 it has been a recognised Investor in People since 1998 and gained recognition against the Investors in People UK Work-Life Balance Model in 2004.

### *Work-Life Balance and Business Benefits*

Cullen Scholefield has been working with the work-life balance agenda for a number of years and has gained numerous business benefits from its flexible and pragmatic approach to people management.

The organisation relocated its main office from Central London to Sussex twelve years ago creating benefits both for staff and for the organisation. Staff avoided daily commuting journeys and the company avoided the need to finance a London office. The company uses its Haywards Heath office as an activity hub rather than a head office. Cullen Scholefield has become an increasingly virtual organisation, with staff working from home and adopting flexible working patterns to suit the needs of the business's customers and their own work-life balance aspirations. As a result the company uses staff time effectively and ensures that people do not waste their efforts on activities which do not add value such as unnecessary travelling. Thus, Cullen Scholefield enables its consultants to be totally focused on implementing practical responses to needs identified in customers' organisations.

Cullen Scholefield has a very low staff turnover and works to find ways to retain staff when their personal circumstances and life situations change. The organisation recognises that Cullen Scholefield's customers prefer this continuity of approach and that they value the high levels of skill and understanding which consultants bring to their projects.

### *How does work-life balance work at Cullen Scholefield?*

Central to the success of the work-life balance strategy are sound working relationships which are built on trust. Maureen Scholefield, one of the consultancy's founders, says:

"We focus on outcomes. We never worry if someone is in or out of the office. We trust people . . . We don't have the sort of culture where people think they are being watched . . . You can only introduce work-life balance successfully into a business when you trust your people."

Cullen Scholefield has embraced flexible working for all its staff and sees this as central to its business success and to its work-life balance strategy. People who work part-time have the opportunity to vary their hours to suit their work-life balance needs. They also vary their hours to help the consultancy to cope with busy periods.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Maxwelton House, 41 Boltro Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1BJ

Telephone: 01444 455052

Fax: 01444 459221

Website: [www.csgconsult.com](http://www.csgconsult.com)

eMail: [enquiries@csgconsult.com](mailto:enquiries@csgconsult.com)

Cullen Scholefield Limited a company registered in England No: 3298304



"We know people have other outcomes in their lives that they need to achieve. . . . We help them."  
(Maureen Scholefield)

Consultants have had the opportunity both to work flexibly in terms of working from home and in terms of varying their commitment to the company to reflect their changing expectations about the place of work in their lives.

Cullen Scholefield also understands that work-related stress can have an adverse effect on people's work-life balance and has adopted practical management strategies to help to minimise the potential for this type of stress. Thus, the company has not provided hands free kits for mobile phones and now expects people to be out of communication whilst driving. The company allows staff to bring their children into the office finding places in meeting rooms for them to play.

### ***What has Cullen Scholefield gained from working with the Work-Life Balance Model?***

The decision to seek external recognition against the Investors in People Work-Life Balance Model led Cullen Scholefield to review its approach to work-life balance and to formalise its work-life balance practices. This helped to reinforce work-life balance as an essential aspect of the company's management practice. The organisation also used its work towards meeting the requirements of the model as a means of providing a CPD opportunity for one of its consultants who project-managed the assessment and recognition development programme.

Working towards recognition also encouraged Maureen Scholefield, the managing director, to review her approach work-life balance and to be more aware of the impression her own working practices create in the company. As a result she is actively demonstrating that hours can be shorter by coming in late or leaving early after a long day.

Finally the assessment and recognition process helped the organisation to confirm that it is truly a work-life balance employer.

"We knew what we did, but we needed an external benchmark to prove that we were doing things well." *Maureen Scholefield*

### ***Advice to other organisations***

Cullen Scholefield, when given the opportunity to offer advice to other organisations seeking to use the work-life balance agenda to improve all aspects of their business, urged organisations to learn to trust their people as the starting point of any work-life balance development programme.



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eMail: [enquiries@csqconsult.com](mailto:enquiries@csqconsult.com)

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