

**BLOGS**

Archives; Social Media & Technology; Wage & Hour; Workplace Policies

## Is it the Beginning of the End for the Flexible Workplace?

Is workplace flexibility a necessary casualty of difficult economic times? When thinking about the innovations that make up the modern workplace for which this blog is named, employers embrace of flexible work hours and locations would be very near the top of the list. Advances in technology particularly electronic connectivity have allowed employers to move away from traditional concepts of the workplace and the workday. More employers permit telecommuting by their employees and allow flexible work hours. There are, however, signs in the business world that employees may have seen the high-water mark for such flexible approaches by employers.

News has just surfaced that Best Buy has decided to scrap its innovative flexible work policy (called the Results Only Work Environment). Best Buys program allowed its corporate employees significant flexibility in deciding when to work outside the office and what their precise work hours would be. Best Buys decision followed an earlier decision by Yahoo to stop allowing workers to telecommute. Both employers cited concerns about decreased productivity and creativity as key reasons for their decisions, as well as worries about the impact of telecommuting on team-oriented work. Yahoos announcement created a flurry of media reports and commentary reflecting competing points of view. Some commentators portrayed it as a retreat to antiquated times and an attack on working parents, while others said it was supported by studies suggesting poor productivity from telecommuting workers.

It remains to be seen whether we are hearing the death knell for a more fluid concept of where and when work gets done, or if this will merely be a bump on the road to a more permanent redefinition of our modern workplace. In any event, given the significant attention paid to Yahoos decision, this does appear to be a very polarizing issue for employers and employees.