chapter two

Knowing Your Flexstyle

I don't really have big walls around either of them (work and family). If something big is going on, one tends to bleed over into the other. That's just the way my life is.

"Haley," Infocom employee

Flexstyles: The Good and Bad Ways We Manage Relationships Between Work and Personal Life

Whether you know it or not, you already have a strategy for handling your life. But is it a conscious strategy? Do you feel in control of your life? Do you have a meaningful understanding of what is driving your work and life relationships and how this feeds into day-to-day well-being for yourself and those with whom you regularly live and interact?

Or maybe you are like Haley. You know that you experience ongoing tension between your job and personal life, but you're not sure what the root causes of these tensions are. You just know they exist and are always there. You didn't know that there is any other way of living.

Although you probably have access to some work-family or flexibility policies offered by your employer, they don't seem to be helping you make your work and family demands mesh better. They aren't meeting your needs. Sure, you may have a great job—on paper at least. Maybe even a graduate degree and a house with a picket fence (or a cool rent-free apartment with an imaginary one). You have a partner you love living with, a pet, and maybe even a child or two. Or if you are single, you may yearn for this kind of family some day. But why aren't you happy? Why are you always feeling stressed and overloaded? Why isn't your life the way you dreamed it would be? Why can't you stop thinking about work when you are supposed to be relaxing? And why are you always bombarded with non-work stuff to handle when you actually want to be focusing on your job? Why do you feel like you lack control over your life?

The answer, for many of us, is perhaps you haven't understood that you have developed a flexstyle. If you are like most people, your current approach just evolved over time through a series of ad hoc (and sometimes not optimal) choices. Would you like to know whether there is a better way?

In this chapter, we reveal two main ideas to help you begin to take control to be the CEO of your life. The first idea is that we all have a flexstyle—the psychological and physical ways we manage relationships between our job and personal life. We will share with you what a flexstyle is, why it is important, and some examples of how people get into flexstyle routines, through making a number of unconscious or conscious decisions. It is only when people understand their patterns of flexstyle behaviors and how their flexstyle works within the structures of their current work and family environment that they will be able to make changes to be more in control and create healthier work-life relationships.

The second thing to learn is that there are three main types of flexstyles, and under each type is a good and bad way of feeling about how we use flexibility. Under each flexstyle, there is one subgroup where people feel in control and happy with their lives. Under the other subgroup, people are unhappy and feel out of control. So, on the surface, under each flexstyle type, people can look like they are managing work and life relationships the same way. But why is it that one individual is totally miserable and the other is at peace? Why is it that what works well for one person can be horrible for the other?

The answer to this question is that what matters most is

- Whether you feel in control of these relationships
- The degree that you perceive alignment between your flexstyle and values for how you would prefer to allocate the life buckets described in Chapter One, "Are You the CEO of Your Working Life?"

When you perceive a fit between your values and your flexstyle, your work and personal life can even enrich or complement each other. At a minimum, they are a neutral influence on the other. But when you don't perceive a fit, your work and personal life usually compete and are at odds. They deplete resources from each other because you are expending extra energy constantly managing conflicting pressures. So when your flexstyle isn't working for you, it isn't fitting with your preferences and identity for how you want to allocate your time and energy across your many life interests. Then your stress increases and your personal effectiveness plummets, whether at the office, at home, or within your community. You often feel tired by managing competing tensions and needing to expend

extraordinary resources just to hold things together. If you feel you are beginning to lack control over parts of your life that matter to you, identifying your style will be an important first step before attempting some of the change tactics suggested in the last half of this book. It is also important to note that you can change your flexstyle as you go through your life, as your priorities, job, and personal life circumstances change. You can also change your definition of what is a "workable life"—a life that is working for you. So you may align or realign how you enact your flexstyle as your life buckets shift and evolve as you go through personal changes over your life span—as you leave school, get a job, develop your career, find a new partner, have kids, or move to a new city. Your flexstyle also could change at different times of the year, particularly if you have major shifts in job or family demands that are seasonal. An example might be a ski instructor who works a different job in the off season or a noncustodial parent who has a child live with them during the summer. But for any typical week of our life, most of us have a dominant flexstyle that best describes our approach for managing personal and work relationships.

Types of Flexstyles

There are three main flexstyles that individuals use to build their working lives: *Integrators*, *Separators, and Volleyers*. In a nutshell, Integrators blend work and personal life physically in terms of time, schedules, and space or location. Psychologically, they also mix work and personal life in terms of their day-to-day thoughts, emotions, and energy. They have difficulty drawing lines between work and family.

Separators segment work from personal life psychologically and physically. For example, they focus on work when at work and on home when at home. They tend not to work at home or on the weekends, but if they have to do so, they are good at creating a separate space for working at home (maybe a home office with a door). Or they can carve out a separate block of time to go in and work and get things done. *Volleyers* switch back and forth, at times experiencing work and life as tightly demarcated from each other and at other times mixing all aspects of their life. For each of these styles of how people manage work and personal life, there are subgroups in which one group is happy and in control, and the other group is feeling unhappy, not in control, and their values are compromised. (See Table 2.1.)[1]

Table 2.1 *Flexstyles*

Well-Being/ Happiness Level	Integrators	Volleyers	Separators
High	Fusion Lover	Quality Timer	Firsters
(Feeling in control; work and personal life have positive relationships.)			(Work or Family First)
Low (Overwhelmed, overworked, out of control; work and personal life often feel at odds.)	Reactors	Job Warriors	Captives

Flexstyle Category 1: Integrators

Integrators continually blend work and nonwork activities during the day. They can be found in a wide range of roles and work settings, including office and factory roles, managerial or professional jobs, and work performed from home. Under this category, we identified two subgroups. The first is *Fusion Lovers*, who experience blending as positive, feeling in control, and fitting with their life values. The second is *Reactors*, who dislike the fact they are blending and feel out of control and unhappy with how they are living their lives because it doesn't fit with their personal preferences. They would rather keep work and personal life separate. They are unhappy and feeling out of control because they aren't managing their lives the way they want.

Fusion Lovers

> *I hop back and forth all the time. When I hear "boundaries," I hear "restrictive and inflexible." I don't view my arrangement and the way I have my company and work set up as restrictive and inflexible. Yes, there are many times I have been cooking dinner and I take a work call. I don't view it as a hassle, I see it as a benefit of flexibility. I want to have it all. I want to run this company and keep it going and be part of my kids' lives, be the great wife to my husband. The motivation around that chaos is I am able to touch all these different areas by having the flexibility to work until midnight. I am able to go out to lunch with a friend in the neighborhood and then work as late into the evening as I need to.*
>
> *Alyssa, business consultant*

Fusion Lovers like Alyssa enjoy switching between work and nonwork responsibilities during the day. They choose to make themselves available to take personal

phone calls at the office or to respond to the needs of their spouse or children when required. Many of them also feel comfortable allowing work to bleed into their evenings and weekends. They typically relish extensive participation in many different work and nonwork roles at any one time. Indeed, they thrive on remaining connected to their professional, family, community, and personal responsibilities simultaneously. Perhaps you know them: They're the ones who email their spouse during a meeting to see whether their teenaged daughter passed her driver's license test. Or they brainstorm solutions to a complex business problem while on the way to visit an elderly parent. Or they phone their neighbor during the morning commute to go over plans for the community fundraiser that they're organizing for the upcoming weekend.

Fusion Lovers view multitasking as an efficient and desirable way to live. To them, this flexstyle helps them save valuable time and enables them to fulfill their responsibilities across numerous dimensions of their lives. For instance, Joshua, a project manager who telecommutes several days a week, takes a mini-break in his home office when he's bored or tired or when he runs into a snag with his work. During his breaks, he throws a load of laundry into the washing machine, calls the plumber to make an appointment to hook up the new faucet in the bathroom, or works out a training program to prepare for an upcoming road race. Similarly, Mary, a plant manager at a large manufacturing company, takes a short break after spending a few hours on a report and uses the time to write a thank-you note to friends who recently hosted her for dinner. Meanwhile, Seth, an accountant, decides to check his work e-mail on a Saturday after finishing up yard chores, so he can deal with any urgent issues right away rather than being burdened by them on Monday morning when he's back in the office.

In each of the preceding examples, the Fusion Lover switches from role to role in response to his or her own internal cues—the need to "clear my head" between projects, the desire to "recharge my batteries" by introducing some variety, the wish to gain the satisfaction that comes from "cooking on all four burners," or the effort to keep unsavory tasks (such as responding to e-mails) from stacking up all at once.

Fusion Lovers may also willingly and happily switch roles in response to external cues. To illustrate, a colleague phones Mary during the evening to discuss a work problem, and Mary promptly stops helping her child with homework so that she can take the call. Or Seth leaves his cell phone on during a business meeting so he won't miss the call he's expecting from his physician about some test results. Although this way of working is great if your values are such that you prefer to

constantly mix work and personal life, for others such as reactors, integrating work and non-work creates difficulties because the individual is not in control.

Reactors

> *I basically have to work all the time—long hours, weekends, and I'm available by cell phone 24/7. When I'm at home, I try not to think about work, but that's tough because I feel responsible for my parts in production, and if something goes wrong and causes downtime, I end up having to deal with some personal things during work time, even though I'd rather keep them separate. When you are at the office six to seven days a week and are there [at the office] twelve hours a day, it is impossible not to integrate your roles.*
>
> *Paul, materials coordinator*

Like Fusion Lovers, Reactors shift frequently between work and nonwork activities, often handling family or personal issues while at work and dealing with professional issues while at home. And Reactors work in a wide range of settings—small companies, large firms, telecommuting offices, and home businesses. Yet, unlike Fusion Lovers, Reactors feel they have little control over whether to integrate or compartmentalize the work and nonwork dimensions of their lives. They respond to whatever work or nonwork tasks they believe most need their attention at the time. Many of them feel that they're always "on call" to handle family or personal needs while they're at work and that work pressures inexorably "bleed" into their home lives during their time off. Numerous Reactors would prefer to have greater control over when, where, and how they blend their many responsibilities.

Reactors mix work and nonwork life for several reasons. Some have little or no support in grappling with professional and personal demands. For instance, Ruth, a single parent, has no choice but to leave the office and pick up her son from daycare early when he gets sick: No one else is around to help pitch in. Or Monty, a manager at a large corporation, has to handle a midday phone call from a banker regarding his mortgage application because Monty's spouse is unwilling to deal with such tasks. Many Reactors also shoulder both heavy workloads and family or personal demands. Feeling that they have too much on their plate while at work *and* at home, they conclude that they have no choice but to multitask.

Some Reactors give greater weight to nonwork demands in their integration strategy. Consider Marcus, an information technology professional who works

from home for a company and is the father of several young children. After his wife was transferred to a job that required her to work at a corporate office, Marcus began taking on more child-care responsibilities at home during his workday. He puts in 14 to 18 hours per week taking care of the children before and after their school day and is frequently interrupted by the kids during his workday while he's trying to write code. At times, he programs while his two-year-old son sits in his lap. He feels isolated and trapped in a situation that he would not have wanted had he felt he had more control over his choice.

Other Reactors emphasize work priorities, often because they strongly identify themselves through their professional life. Many of these individuals let work seep into personal time during evenings, weekends, and holidays. They may fear that if they didn't "download the office" in this way, they would fail to keep up with the job and possibly get fired. Consider Jane, a senior finance executive, who is married with two teenagers. She sets her own hours, which tend to be long, and works from both her home and office. She feels she has too much work to do in too little time and wishes she didn't have to work at night. As she explains, "My office is two hours from my home [by train], so I work a good hour and a half each way [while commuting], and I count that as part of my workday. I generally spend ten hours in the office and then approximately three hours on the train, and then I'll come home and work for another hour. I will do ten-to-twelve-hour days at home when I work there."

Still other Reactors respond equally promptly to both work and nonwork demands. Cynthia, for example, is an independent consultant who left a demanding corporate job to help start a small consulting firm. Her husband is earning his MBA at night and holding down a difficult corporate job during the daytime. Owing to her spouse's schedule, Cynthia handles all the child-care and family responsibilities in her household as well as meeting the demands of her new professional role.

How Integrators Implement Their Flexstyle

As the preceding vignettes reveal, Integrators blend work and family through a wide variety of means. For example, one single parent who has to leave work early to pick up a child from daycare with a stomachache may depart the office immediately and try to work from home later in the day. Another might pick up the child and, if he's okay, ask a neighbor to watch the youngster and then return to work.

Yet all Integrators share some similarities in how they manage work and nonwork commitments. They *physically integrate* by mixing their use of spaces—for instance, drafting a report on their laptop at the kitchen table while the kids are watching TV or taking a moment during the workday to balance a checking account at their desk. They *mix work and nonwork mentally and emotionally,* such as mulling over a business-related problem while participating in a book discussion group or worrying about a spouse's job interview while taking part in a business meeting. For instance, Charles uses his morning break at the office to take calls from his elderly mother to hear how she's doing at the nursing home. And Susan uses business conference calls to take the opportunity to read incoming emails from her spouse.

Having examined integrator styles, let's turn now to separators, a completely different flexstyle.

Flexstyle Category 2: Separators

Separators keep work and nonwork activities compartmentalized throughout the day. Some make their professional life their top priority, and some make their personal or family life their top priority, and they take steps to prevent any blending of the two. Other Separators feel that, owing to the structure of their jobs or the demands of their nonwork life, they have little or no choice but to keep work and non-work in different "buckets."

As with Integrators, we've identified two strategies that make up the Separators category: Firsters (Work or Family) and Captives. These flexstyles are distinguished by how much control people feel they have in using their current approach and how satisfied they are with their situation. Captives do not feel in control of the fact that one part of their life—either their job or their family demands—forces them to overly focus on one part of life to the sacrifice of the other.

In contrast, firsters feel in control of the fact their flexstyle involves separation between work and personal life. They choose to place one part of their life—either work or family—in the highest priority. For Work Firsters, it is time to focus on their jobs that comes first in life. For Family Firsters, it is family or personal life that matters most.

Firsters (Work or Family)

> *I am a worker for the company during business hours. So they have all my attention and skills. And I'm an achiever. I like to achieve at everything. If I am working at home, it's only on evenings or weekends, and even then my husband knows not to interrupt. My attitude toward work is when you're at work, you work. I look at myself as more than the average person who's at work just to get a paycheck. I am at work because I want to be a professional woman. I want to grow within the company.*
>
> *Anna, financial consultant for Datatel*

Firsters (work or family) identify themselves primarily through their professional lives *or* their nonwork lives. What matters most to firsters is that one part of their life is paramount. (By "Family," we also mean personal, community, spiritual, and other priorities that don't fall within the realm of work.) Work or Family Firsters feel they have extensive control over how they arrange their lives, and they're generally satisfied with their current situation.

Bob, for instance, is a Work Firster who makes his professional responsibilities his top priority. He loves his job as a senior business consultant and accepts that succeeding in this career requires him to be available at all hours to clients and global customers. He often works late into the night. "I work more at home," he says. "Because I'm here in the evening, I'll log in and send some e-mails. Or when the workday is over, I'll keep working, and the next thing I know, it'll be seven or eight at night. But I'll be on a roll, even if other people at the office are leaving. I also work more on weekends, because my computer's here, and I can log on and do a few things. I definitely think I work more hours. But the bottom line is I really enjoy the freedom and the comfort, and I don't mind the hours."

Family Firsters consider their family or personal life more important than their careers. Take Bethany, who works in human resources and is married with three children. She is adamant about keeping her family and work life separate, specifically so she can give her children her full attention when she's home. When she's at work, she focuses on her job responsibilities. For instance, if one of her children needs to come home early from school because he's sick, Bethany arranges for a friend or neighbor to pick him up and stay with him until she gets home. But when Bethany is home, her attention is entirely on her family, with the goal of making her children feel special.

It is important to note that Family Firsters don't necessarily need to have a spouse or children. They could be a family of one. Whether one is a Family

Firster is not based on one's family background, but whether an individual's dominant values are to design life decisions to enable a focus on personal time—whether it is for themselves or personal interest or for being with family. Family Firsters' needs to have a "life" are a high personal priority. Many spoke of highly valuing either "Time for Me or Personal Interests," or "Time for My Family."

So not all Firsters select spending time with family as an alternative priority to work. Consider Nate, who shares an apartment with several housemates and is actively involved in community outreach and neighborhood volunteer efforts. Nate works as a quality control expert for a manufacturing company. Though he enjoys his job, he works a strict eight-hour day so that he can focus sharply on his external interests during his time off.

Captives

I work in a manufacturing plant, ensuring production quality, and we've achieved some of the highest quality in the world. We are very lean. But this means that my usual days are 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m, and I often even end up staying after that for the next shift. Last Christmas we had plant closure for a week, but I needed to make sure that suppliers were doing what they were meant to, and so I came into work. There isn't much of my job that I could do at home, so I'm in the plant all the time, which makes it hard to take care of personal needs sometimes. My wife and I are expecting, and she's had a difficult pregnancy and wants me to come to all her doctor visits, but it's just so hard for me to get away very often. I want to support her and ensure the baby's okay, but I just don't have a lot of flexibility.

Max, production manager

Some Separators segment the work and nonwork aspects of their lives because their jobs or other dimensions of their lives don't lend themselves to any other approach. Perhaps they work for a company that doesn't allow flextime or telecommuting, or their job, by its very nature, must be done only in the office. Or maybe their company's culture is such that people get ahead only by putting in extensive "face time" at the office. For a Separator who prioritizes family life, perhaps the lack of a partner at home means that the person must keep work from bleeding into evenings and weekends so he can care for children. We refer to such individuals as Captives, reflecting their sense of being trapped in either their career role or their nonwork role.

Nadia's situation exemplifies the Captives strategy. She has a human resources job in a company that forbids her to take work home because of the

confidential nature of the information she handles. Her boss also prefers to supervise her by seeing her face-to-face and by meeting frequently with her. The company is structured such that Nadia is the only person in the firm who is familiar with the Human Resources (HR) department's many responsibilities; no one else at the company can serve as a backup if she's not in the office. Moreover, she's an HR generalist; thus, she helps her many internal "customers" with a wide range of HR-related issues—everything from payroll problems, health-insurance claims processing, 401(k) decisions, and so forth. To do her job, she must have well-publicized hours during which employees and managers can count on having access to her. For these reasons, Nadia cannot bring work home even if it has piled up to a worrisome extent—and even if she would like to work from home at times.

How Separators Implement Their Flexstyle

Separators—whether they put work or non-work first, or whether they feel captured in the professional or nonprofessional dimension of their lives—use a wide variety of means in any given day. They compartmentalize work and other dimensions of their lives. It doesn't matter whether they work in a traditional office or manufacturing plant setting or in flexible work arrangements that include working part- or full-time from home. What matters is how they psychologically perceive their lives as organized into fairly discrete buckets.

Separators use physical space, time, and mental perceptions to manage their responsibilities—in this case, to keep work and non-work in different compartments. For example, Rosa, who puts her family first despite enjoying her job as a training manager, avoids taking extra work home (physical separation). She addresses personal tasks early in the morning or during the evening, so she can concentrate on work while she's in the office (temporal separation). If she wants to spend more focused time with her family, she uses paid vacation days (temporal separation). She also feels fine about hiring a trusted daycare provider to look after her children during the workday so that she doesn't have to worry about her children when she is not watching them (mental separation). And she has actively sought to report to a manager who trusts her, values her on-the-job contributions, and respects her focus on family (mental separation).

Carl also puts family first, though he is self-employed and has a home office. He prevents work from leaking into his family responsibilities by working from an office that is separate from the rest of his house. The office has its own door and a separate phone and data line. In addition, Carl has two different email

accounts—work and personal. During the workday, family members aren't allowed to enter Carl's office. And at five o'clock each day, he leaves the office and locks the door. He refuses to sneak back in to check e-mail after his workday ends and the kids have gone to bed. Like Rosa, Carl relies on daycare providers to look after his children during the workday.

Flexstyle Category 3: Volleyers

Some men and women—we've dubbed them Volleyers—integrate the work and nonwork aspects of their lives at times and separate them at other times, depending on their priorities and the circumstances of their professional and home or personal life. We've identified two flexstyles that make up this category: Quality Timers and Job Warriors. Again, these flexstyles are distinguished by the degree of control people feel they have over how they're managing their lives, as well as their level of satisfaction with the current quality of their lives.

Quality Timers

> *I work in a satellite office, where I focus just on work for most of the day but have recently started to telework for part of the day so I can deal with some personal needs. My mother is the primary caregiver for my grandmother who's in her 90s and also for my father who is in his 70s and has heart problems. I'm the only family member in town who can help and so I take my lunch hour at my parents' home so I can help out. I'm happy to give my mother a break and to get this time with my father.*
>
> *Rick, web-based project manager*

Quality Timers use time cues—such as the shift from the workweek to the weekend or from a busy time of year to a not-so-busy time—to decide when to integrate or separate work and nonwork dimensions of their lives. Generally satisfied with their lives, they feel that they have a significant degree of control over their situation.

For example, Susan, an accountant with children in elementary school, works intensely during the tax season—putting in as many as 60 hours a week during February, March, and April. Work comes first during this busy time of year, and family comes second. During tax season, she relies on her husband to take charge of the family's daily scheduling and activities, including ferrying the kids to and from school. Yet in the summer months, Susan reduces her workload considerably and spends far more time with her youngsters when they're on summer

vacation. She readily interrupts work to focus on her family when needed during these months.

Though Susan concentrates entirely on work during her busy season, overall she gives her job and her family equal priority. Susan's story also highlights the sense of control and satisfaction many Quality Timers feel regarding their situation. For instance, Susan has a supportive spouse who can shoulder family responsibilities during her busy time of the year that enables her to perceive choice—to manage work and nonwork life to enable quality time at both. If she had no such support, she might well feel that she had significantly less control. She also has elected to work in a profession that, by its very nature, presents a lighter workload during the summer season, when she enjoys concentrating more on her family.

Other Quality Timers use different time cues to decide when to volley between separating and integrating. Consider Janice, a book editor for a publishing company and mother of two young children. Janice's partner, Sylvia, works part-time. On Monday through Wednesday, the days during which Sylvia works, Janice works at the office—focusing entirely on her job while the children are in daycare. Thus, during these days, Janice separates work and nonwork life. But on Thursdays and Fridays, the days when Sylvia isn't working, Janice telecommutes. She does this to spend some time with Sylvia and the kids, even as she handles some work projects during those days. She integrates work and non-work on those two days of the week.

Lauren is another example of a Quality Timer. Married with no children, Lauren works as a freelance writer. She has a small hobby farm that is home to goats and chickens, as well as numerous house pets. Her husband works for an engineering company. Lauren's business is boom and bust—sometimes she has a heavy workload, and sometimes the load eases up. During busy times, she integrates work and non-work, allowing her job to bleed into nights, weekends, holidays, and even vacations if necessary to meet deadlines. Her husband cares for the animals during such high-tempo times. Lauren has just one phone line for home and business, as well as one e-mail account for personal and work—additional signs of integration. Yet she strives to compartmentalize work and nonwork when business is booming, by relying on caller identification to avoid taking personal phone calls and by ignoring personal e-mails. When the workload eases, Lauren becomes a Fusion Lover—mixing professional and personal communications throughout the day and taking work breaks to dispatch barn and household chores.

Job Warriors

One hundred percent of my work time is spent traveling. I leave home Sunday night to fly to customer sites, and I'm there Monday through Friday. It's not the perfect arrangement but we've come to accept it. It brings in a paycheck. It's hardest on the kids, but we make up for it with quality time on the weekends.

Jeff, senior systems engineer

Job Warriors face more constraints in when and how they switch between integrating and separating work and non-work. Often in jobs that require them to work from the road as well as at the office and from home, Job Warriors frequently compartmentalize professional and personal activities while traveling for work or working from the office. They tend to mix the career and personal or family dimensions of their lives while working from home. Many of them feel that their job structure or family or personal circumstances leave them little or no control over how they manage conflicting demands. These individuals often have jobs with heavy workloads and simply too much to do in too little time. Sure they have some latitude over when and where they do it, but the physical workload or the travel demands give them limited slack at times over when they integrate and when they separate. So they go through periods of high integration when they feel they are in control and can blend as they need to—often when travel or workloads are not so high—and then they go through periods of high separation when they are forced to separate. In one week, they could move from being on a global trip or working until midnight on a client proposal during the height of tax season, to going to a day or two of being the only one watching the kids because now it is their partner's turn to focus on work because the partner has been covering for the Job Warrior.

Take Raul, a consultant and project startup expert for a global company. Raul's 3,000 coworkers are located in Central and South America as well as the U.S. East Coast, where he lives. Three weeks out of every month, he travels extensively to Latin America by air, consulting on new projects such as the establishment of communications networks between the North and South American continents. During these weeks, he often has late-night dinners with clients. While on the road, he strives to build a sense of team identity with his colleagues, especially in the initial phases of a project. In the fourth week of each month, he telecommutes from a home office. Though he can set his own hours, he typically puts in 60 or more hours per week.

Raul doesn't mind telecommuting from home, including participating in strategy discussions with colleagues over the phone. And he relishes the weeks during which he doesn't have to travel. On telecommuting days, he separates work and non-work by stopping work at four o'clock in the afternoon and spending time in the late afternoon and evening with his wife and two school-age children. On traveling days, he integrates by responding to family phone calls and personal e-mails as needed. Though he enjoys his job, Raul wishes he had more control over when and how often he must be on the road. He and his wife have discussed the stresses of the job and have begun acknowledging the burden his schedule puts on their family life. His wife feels stuck in her career, because she always has to be the one to restructure her job to cover for her husband because he has to travel so much.

How Volleyers Implement Their Flexstyle

Like Integrators, Volleyers use physical, temporal, and mental tactics to implement their flexstyles. For example, Quality Timer Marian, an information technology consultant, works two days a week onsite at a major client company and three days a week from home. While working from home, she makes her children breakfast before school and has a snack with them after school, dealing with job responsibilities during the middle of the day. She also lets her family know that it's okay to interrupt her—but only for specific, agreed-upon reasons—during her workday, and she stops working to let the dog out when he signals the need. So she sends cues to others on when she is available for integrating, and she also structures her day in this way. Then for part of the week she uses physical barriers to separate. It works well for her and is a good style because she controls when she is integrating and separating.

What's Your Flexstyle? Where Do You Fit In?

So now you understand flexstyles—what they are, when they are likely to make you feel like you have positive relationships between work and personal life, and when they are likely to make you feel like relationships between work and personal life are at odds. After reading the preceding descriptions of flexstyles, you may already know whether you're an Integrator, Volleyer, or Separator. But it may be more difficult to determine which strategy you use within that category. If you're an Integrator, are you a Fusion Lover or a Reactor? If you're a Separator, are you a Work or Family Firster or a Captive? If a Volleyer, are you a Quality

Timer or Job Warrior? Clues to your strategy include how much control you believe you have in managing your life demands, as well as how satisfied you are with the current quality of your life. For readers who need help clarifying their overall flexstyle, we provide the following self-assessments. If you feel the need, take several moments to complete this instrument.

Self-Assessment: Identifying Your Flexstyle

Part One: Discerning Your Overall Flexstyle Category

This part of the self-assessment helps you determine whether you're an Integrator, Separator, or Volleyer. Read each statement. Circle the number indicating how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Then follow the instructions for calculating and interpreting your results.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. All in all, I try to keep work and personal life separated most of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Except in an emergency, I generally try to take care of personal or family needs at work only when I'm on break or during my lunch hour.	1	2	3	4	5
3. During my workday, there is very little blurring of boundaries between time spent on work and time spent on personal activities.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is clear where my work life ends and my family or personal life begins.	1	2	2	4	5
5. I rarely attend to personal or family issues during the workday.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I almost never do extra work after normal work hours.	1	2	3	4	5
7. In general, I don't take work-related phone calls or e-mails during evenings, weekends, holidays, or vacations.	1	2	3	4	5

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. In general, I talk as little as possible about my family or personal issues with most people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I usually handle e-mails related to my family or personal life separately from e-mails related to my work.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I'm at home, I rarely think about work, so I can fully get away from my job.	1	2	3	4	5
11. If I work or ever were to work from home, I would work in a space that is designated for that purpose only.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I do not think about my family, friends, and personal interests when at work, so I can focus.	1	2	3	4	5
13. With most of my family and friends, I tend not to talk about work issues as I like to keep work separate.	1	2	3	4	5
14. If I work from home (or were ever to work from home) I make it clear that family and friends should not interrupt me unless it is important to do so.	1	2	3	4	5
15. If I work from home (or were ever to work from home) I wouldn't handle household or family responsibilities until the workday is finished.	1	2	3	4	5
Calculating your score: Add up the total number of circles you placed in each column, and write the totals in the boxes to the right.					

Interpreting your score: If you circled "1" and "2" for most of the statements, you are likely a Separator. If you circled "4" or "5" for most of the statements, you are probably an Integrator. If you circled a wide variety of statements, ranging between 1 and 5, you are probably a Volleyer.

Closing

Now you are probably saying, "Okay, great." I now know my flexstyle. But why does it matter what I am? Each of the flexstyles introduced in this chapter has unique pros and cons. If you know your general flexstyle (for example, Integrator, Separator or Volleyer) but still aren't sure whether you are using flexibility in a way that generally makes you feel good and that has a positive impact on you and those you live and work with, see the appendix, "Flexstyle Web Site and Overview Assessments," at the end of this book. These additional assessments can help you take a closer look at how your work and personal life relationships are affecting your well-being and effectiveness on and off the job. You may already think you know how you feel about how you are using flexibility, but these additional assessments can help you clarify whether you are using flexibility positively or negatively. If you are already sure you know who you are—for example, whether you are a Fusion Lover or a Reactor, or a Captive, or Work or Family Firster—you are ready to move on to the next chapter where you will be introduced to the idea of flexstyle tradeoffs to help you begin the journey of thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of your style and whether your style is generally working well for you.