

Family-friendliness as part of a diversity culture at Bosch

Flexibel arbeiten
Persönliche Freiräume schaffen



Sie wollen sich fortbilden? Sich privat engagieren? Oder brauchen Zeit für Ihre Familie? Darüber können wir jederzeit reden. Wir bieten viele Möglichkeiten, Arbeitszeit flexibler zu gestalten. Standardvarianten gibt es dabei nicht. Wir schneiden gemeinsam mit Ihnen eine Lösung, die zu Ihnen und auch zu uns passt.

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MORE – Mind-set ORganisation Executives

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In brief

The Bosch company, an engineering and electronics multinational based near Stuttgart, employs 280,000 people in 50 countries across the world. It promotes diversity as a driver for innovation, and promotes new approaches to leadership based on results, rather than being present in the workplace.

It has developed a range of policies and awareness-raising activities on the reconciliation for work and family life, which are embedded in a strong culture of equality and diversity. These include a website, a press release, a supplement to the annual report and guidelines on a flexible and family-friendly working culture. The company has received certification and awards for being a family-friendly company, and Charters on Diversity and Family-Friendly Working have been agreed. 'Family time' periods can be used as a basis for career development and promotion.

A specific emphasis is given to executives taking family-friendly working hours, so that they can act as disseminators and role models. For a period of three months executives can try out working flexibly from home or part-time – which helps to create a cultural change in the organisation and leadership around flexible working. After the trial period, executives are free to go back to their full-time posts, but in practice 80% of them decide to continue to work flexibly.

The scheme particularly targets executives from research and development departments, as this type of work is less bound to specific locations, and relies on creativity. When the MORE scheme was introduced in 2011, it was enthusiastically received. Over 300 employees applied to take part, so a second round for 650 participants was launched.

The company predominantly employs men and there has been a good take-up of the initiative amongst men. However Bosch also promotes equal opportunities for women, and provides mentoring programmes, the Business Women's Programme (a programme for further training), a women's network (women@bosch), as well as an annual Girls' Day and Girls' Campus. Its aim is to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions worldwide from 11.2% (in 2012) to 20% (in 2020).

Germany's most family-friendly enterprise

Robert Bosch GmbH is a multinational engineering and electronics company, with annual sales of €46 billion. It is a world leader in the production of car parts such as brakes, starter motors and radios, and also makes industrial control systems, household appliances, power tools and security systems. Based near Stuttgart in Germany, the company employs some 280,000 people in 50 countries.

Bosch has long-term experience of implementing flexible working time models. It has been certified by the German *Beruf und Familie* (Work and Family) audit and received the Total E-Quality award for family-friendliness and equal opportunities. A Diversity Charter was signed in 2007, and this was followed by a Charter on Family-Friendly Working-Hours in 2011. In 2012 Bosch was awarded the title of Germany's "Most family-friendly enterprise" in the category of large enterprises, and received the Award for Excellence in recognition of its efforts to reconcile career and family from the Japanese Ministry for Health, Labour and Welfare. Also in 2012, the company developed its *Guidelines for a flexible and family-friendly working culture*, which constitute a self-commitment by the company. Since 2012, employees can invoke "family time" (periods of time spent on care tasks) as a building block for their career with a view to promotion. In addition, there are numerous internal networks (papas@bosch, women@bosch, family@bosch) which allow employees to support each other and exchange experiences.

Leadership based on results

The MORE (Mind-set ORganisation Executives) project is managed by the company's Central Department for Diversity Management. Flexible working time models have been in place since the mid-1990s with the objective of improving the reconciliation of work and care responsibilities. To date, several hundred part-time models exist at all levels of the company's hierarchy. The aim of the MORE scheme is to achieve a sustainable change in the working and management culture at Bosch and to promote a wider use of flexible working amongst executives (working from home or part-time) over a period of three months. The purpose of the scheme is to demonstrate the advantages of flexible working time models by enabling executives try them out and act as role models and disseminators for other employees, thus advancing the development of a more flexible and family-conscious working culture at Bosch. In this way, widespread assumptions are questioned, e.g. the assumption that both achievement and leadership are only possible when the person in charge is present over and above the actual working hours. In the process, the scheme promotes new approaches to leadership based on results, rather than being present in the workplace.

Diversity drives innovation

The scheme is embedded in a company-wide diversity strategy which views diversity as a driving force of innovation. Along with the dimensions gender, generations and internationality, family-friendliness/work-life balance constitutes a central building block of this strategy. At Bosch, each of these elements has a clearly defined profile with corresponding measures and instruments. To promote equal opportunities for women, there are, for example, mentoring programmes (internal management level and cross-company), *the Business Women's Programme* (a programme for further training), a women's network (women@bosch), as well as an annual Girls' Day and Girls' Campus. Within the key area of gender equality, implemented at Bosch since 1994, the aim is to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions worldwide from 11.2% (in 2012) to 20% (in 2020). At present, one in four female executives works part-time.

The scheme particularly targets executives from research and development departments, as this type of work is less bound to specific locations compared to production departments. The executives concerned gain important experiences which allow them to better assess their own situation and that of their employees and, ultimately, to become better leaders. Functioning as role models they also act as important disseminators in creating a family-conscious working and organisational culture.

Business round tables, which accompany the scheme, allow executives to exchange their experiences with other MORE participants, as well as with non-participants. They are also supported by the Human Resources Department. Participants report that they and their teams have had to get used to not being continually present in the workplace. Initially, self-discipline was required to refrain from answering e-mails on a family day. Also, it was necessary to restructure and reorganise office routines. Overall, the new forms of work have met with positive reactions. The initiative has benefited both the employees and the company. Flexibility has enabled employees to experience positive benefits in their quality of life, resulting in higher satisfaction. From the perspective of the company this has resulted in higher creativity and hence innovation.

Enthusiastic take-up

Originally planned for 125 executives in 2011, more than 300 women and men applied to take part. In the first round of MORE 150 employees participated in the initiative, mostly from Germany. After the three-month period trying out flexible working hours, around 80% of participants decided to continue their flexible working time model (home office, part-time, etc.) even where this resulted in a reduction in income. Due to the positive impact and following great interest from employees, MORE commenced a second round with 650 executives worldwide. MORE addresses leading executives irrespective of gender. Given that 78% of employees are male, more men than women are included in the scheme. The examples published in the company 2012 report are exclusively reports of men describing their experience.

The scheme shows how it is possible to attenuate the associations between "work – maleness – leadership – being present – performance", which had been firmly entrenched in people's minds. Changing company culture and shifting mindsets presupposes that performance has little to do with being at the office; instead the aim is to focus on results and to achieve a better reconciliation of work and life. In this way, care responsibilities not only become a natural part of corporate culture but also of an individuals' working culture – and in the case of Bosch, that of male executives in particular. Thus the scheme contributes substantially to achieving greater gender equality.

One of the success factors of the scheme is the fact that the entire corporate culture of Bosch is oriented towards the reconciliation of work and care. This is firmly established in the company's overall mission statement and also in *the Guidelines for a flexible and family-friendly working culture*, which the company views as a form of self-commitment. These are signals that the scheme and its objectives are supported and appreciated by senior management. This has not only enhanced the acceptance of the scheme but may also explain the willingness of many executives to participate.

This good practice can be adopted by companies in all sectors, especially large enterprises.

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Further information

[Bosch page on work-life balance](#)



[Bosch page on flexible work](#)



[Guidelines for a flexible and family-friendly working culture](#)



[Press release Bosch adds to its family-friendly working culture of 11 March 2013](#)



[Press release of 6 June 2013](#)



[Press release of the trade union IG-Metall of 18 July 2013](#)



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