

Objective 3

To provide high quality local employment and to be a good employer with a supportive structure in a productive working environment by –

1. encouraging professional development and training
2. providing systems to support a good work/life balance
3. ensuring high quality supervision and mentoring support
4. keeping up with new developments and cutting edge technology
5. providing good pay and other incentives for high quality performance

1. Staff Training

Once again in 2006 an objective for the company was to continue its focus on staff skills development and the development plans for each member of the team were agreed at annual appraisals in January. The full team training plan was then agreed and a copy of 2006 staff training plan is included at Appendix 7, but it should be noted that 2 new members of staff joined the team during the period of these social accounts.

Staff training during the year included -

- ECDL Level 2 for the majority of staff
- Skills for Life Support and Training at Level 2
- Adult Training (7407) Units 1 and 2
- Modern Apprenticeships – NVQ Level 2
- Management and Leadership (incl. PACE programme)
- Admin and Support learning
- ICT specific training

2. Flexible Working policies

These have become a major feature of the working day at COSMIC and although there are still some issues around communications and work planning, generally the team appreciate the added flexibility which these working arrangements offer – both for work and home commitments. However, it is recognised that the needs of the clients always come first. All members of staff are making use of the flexitime policies and some members of the team are using the homeworking arrangements (either regularly or when needed in order to focus on specific work pieces).

It is hoped that the organisation will be able to bring additional flexible working practices into effect in future years in order to enhance the business and personal improvements which are recognised in this approach.

3. Supervision and Appraisal

The six-weekly programme of supervision aims to provide all members of the working team with an opportunity to reflect on their role, workload and priorities with their line manager. During the year there were some problems in maintaining the six-weekly programme due to capacity issues and project work focus. A change in the staffing structure was agreed at the end of the year in order to address this concern with the addition of 'Team Leader' responsibilities

to two posts on the team, for supervision and support purposes as well as business development roles.

Staff Annual Appraisals are conducted in January and February each year and once again in 2006 these provided an excellent opportunity for reflection, discussion and development of a training plan for each individual on the team (a copy of annual appraisal form 2006 at Appendix 8)

Team building

Each year for the past four years we have been able to organise and benefit from a specific day dedicated to the team and its development. Previous days have included experiences of adventure courses, sailing and rock climbing. In 2006 we opted for a less active approach to the day and focused on communication as a key issue for the team to develop. The day was facilitated by Julie Seddon, who also provided ongoing staff mentoring and coaching in the year as a volunteer (thank you Julie!).



Team meetings continued to be a major opportunity for keeping the team 'in the know' about a wide range of work and projects, but once again a major problem was finding a good time and day when everyone could be available for these meetings. The team continued with the rotation of role of leading team meetings giving everyone the opportunity to chair and organise meetings.

There was also a real sense of 'team work' when we hosted numerous visits from people and organisations interested in our work. These events present an ideal opportunity for the team to collaborate outside of their normal working remit (including doing some cleaning!) in order to welcome visitors and show-

off what COSMIC is all about. The major example of this during 2006 was our 10th Birthday Event which saw everyone on the team 'mucking in' to present a real treat for visitors on the day! Several members of the team took the role of 'host' for these visits including Julie, Sarah, Julia, Rob and Lisa. Visitors to COSMIC always present an ideal opportunity for the team to answer questions and at the same time consider other people's perspectives on our work.

4. Keeping up with Progress

The staff team and Directors are regularly encouraged to keep their knowledge updated, with a particular focus on ICT developments, social enterprise and marketing. Individual members of the team attended a variety of events including conferences and seminars during the year with this in mind. Staff are encouraged to share their learning and experiences with the wider team wherever possible in order to ensure maximum benefit from these events.

Another way in which the staff are able to update knowledge and skills of course is in the development of new projects and products. The role of Research and Development in our business has never been fully analysed and in the main is carried out as a part of ongoing work without specific recognition. Development of new website development methods (e.g. Rocket and E-commerce) and of new training courses, and of new funding bid for projects we want to run, all present opportunities for learning and development and once again it is important that these are shared across the wider staff and Director team.

Above all the enthusiasm and commitment from staff to keeping their knowledge of skills up-to-date continues to play a key role in the company's development.

5. Pay and Conditions

COSMIC has continued to adhere to an agreed pay scale for all full-time permanent staff and reviews against this scale have continued during the course of 2006. Subject to satisfactory performance (as assessed in annual appraisal and supervision) every member of staff moves up the pay scale with an annual increment until they reach the top of the scale which their contract has applied to their role and responsibilities.

(A copy of salary scale for 2006 is included at Appendix 9)

A full review of all job descriptions was undertaken during 2006 and a number of roles on the team were changed at this time in order to gain a more effective approach to the work of the team. These changes affected the roles of Chief Executive (with focus on strategy, business development and funding) and the Operations Manager, and then subsequently led to the development of Team Leader responsibilities which were added to two post holders job

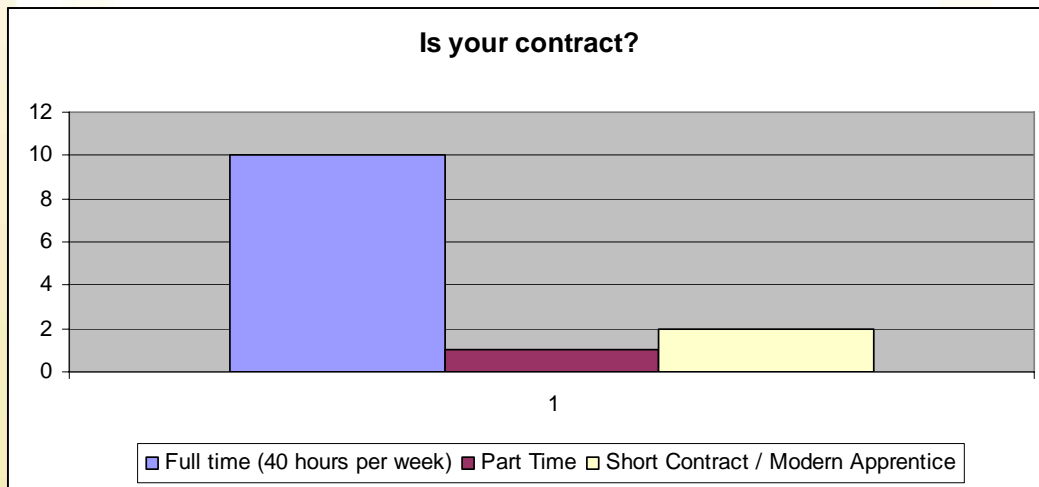
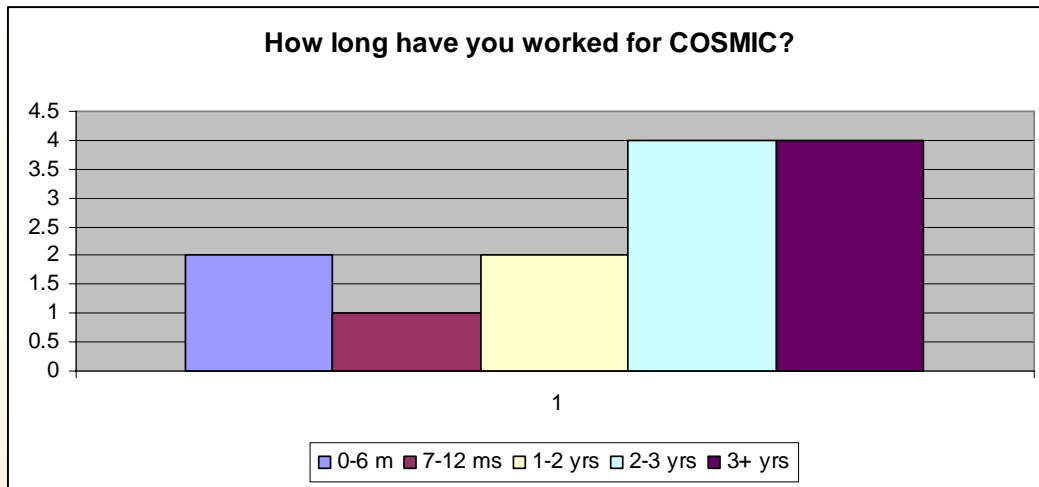
descriptions at the end of the year. As described above, these additional responsibilities aim to provide further support and supervision for team members and to address the role of Duty Manager as a key responsibility in supporting staff and clients/visitors at Ridgeway House.

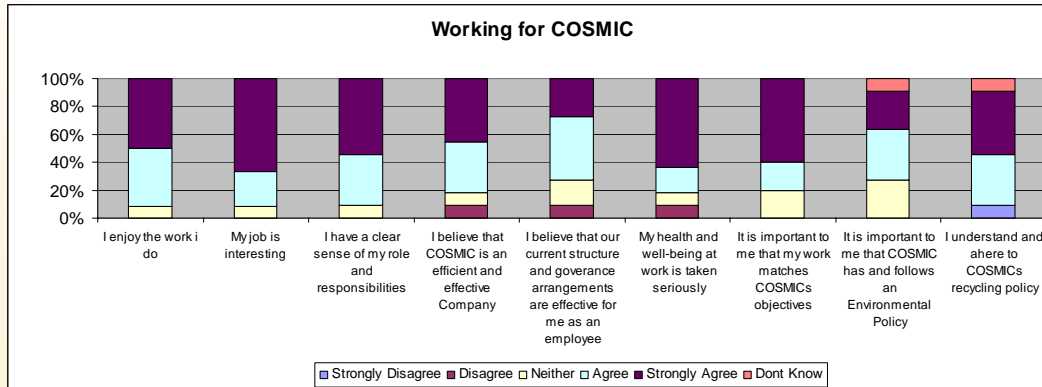
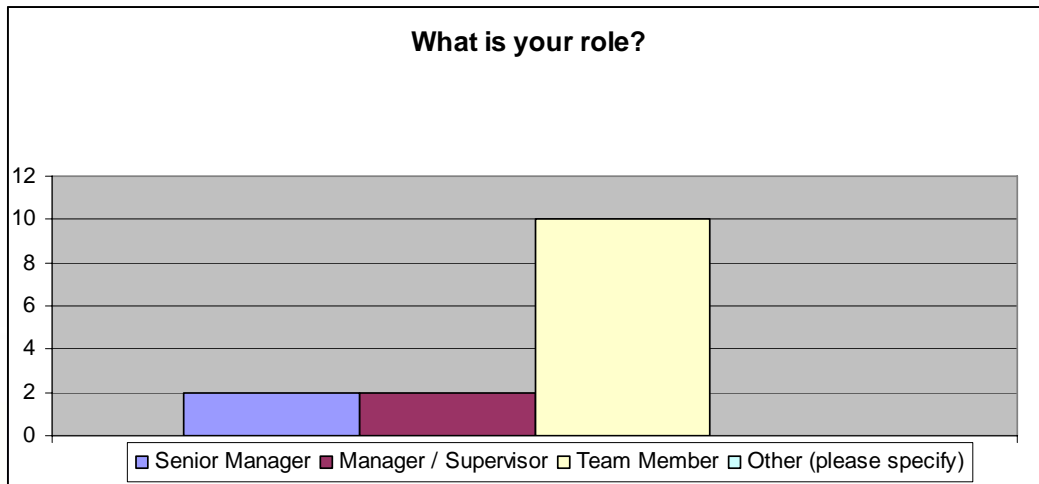
Sickness absence record

2006 saw a very healthy staff team at COSMIC with a sickness absence rate of 1.6%. This equates to an average of 3.84 days per individual staff member, or a company total of 53.76 working days lost to sickness in the year.

CONSULTATION

All current staff were invited to complete an online survey. For the first time, a 100% response rate was achieved with all 13 employees completing form.



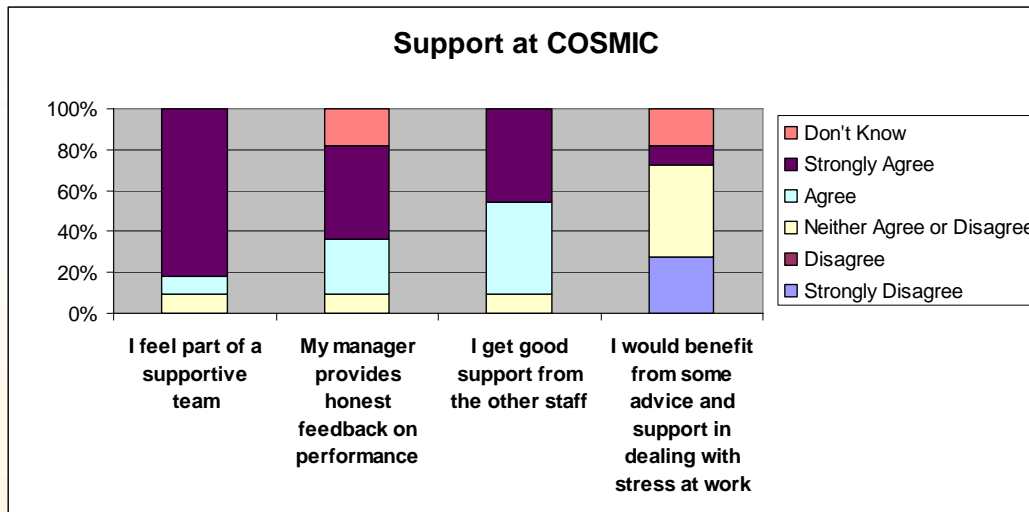


- COSMIC is a diverse company and I believe we are too concerned about what a structure looks like on paper rather than how it will work in practice. I understand what I do, not sure about others as some seem to have a multitude of roles
- What policy?

What is the main thing which has challenged you in your role at COSMIC in 2006?

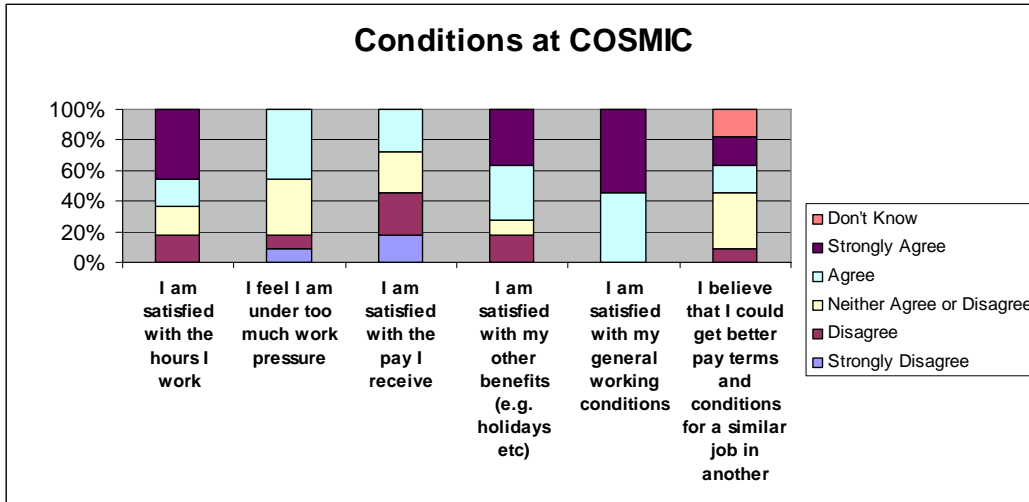
- Job security, role changing...
- Time
- Keeping on top of work at busy times.
- Learning the necessary tools to work in website development
- Balancing an expanding number of priority pieces of work between earning income immediately or developing projects for future income generation - i.e. major funding bids. Overseeing the implementation of a new staffing structure and new delegation arrangements whilst at the same time keeping the company operation effective and efficient.
- Everything

- Net Gain Talk in Somerset (public speaking)
- Time
- An ever changing staff structure, the web team started with 3 people went to 2, then back to 3 then 2 now to 3. We would of done better with some consistency, and there is the need to expand to create new work.
- The students

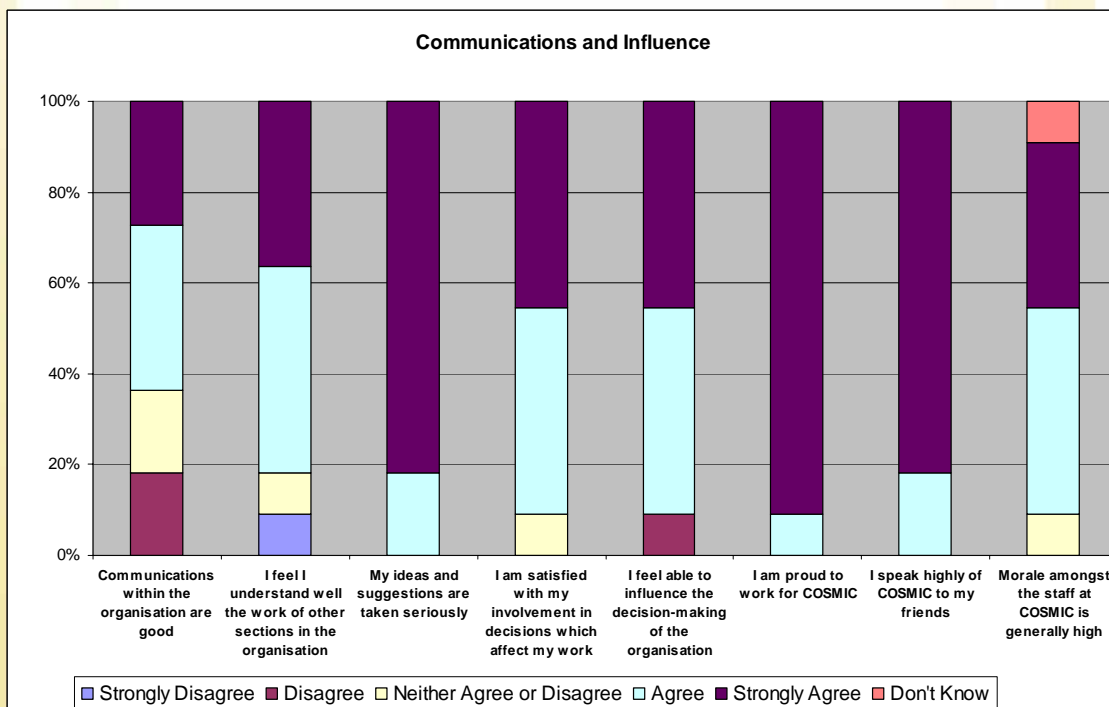


What ideas do you have for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of individuals on the team and the Company overall?

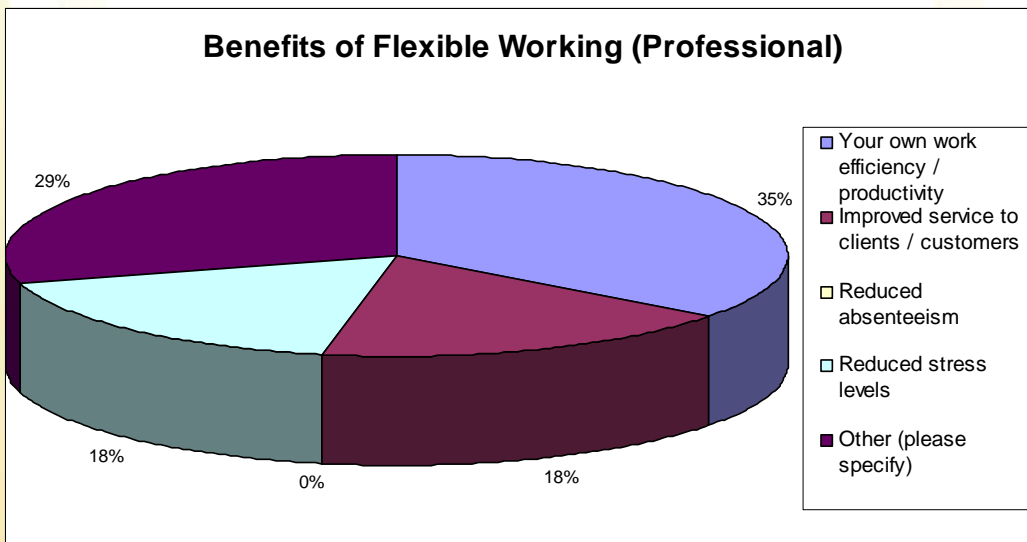
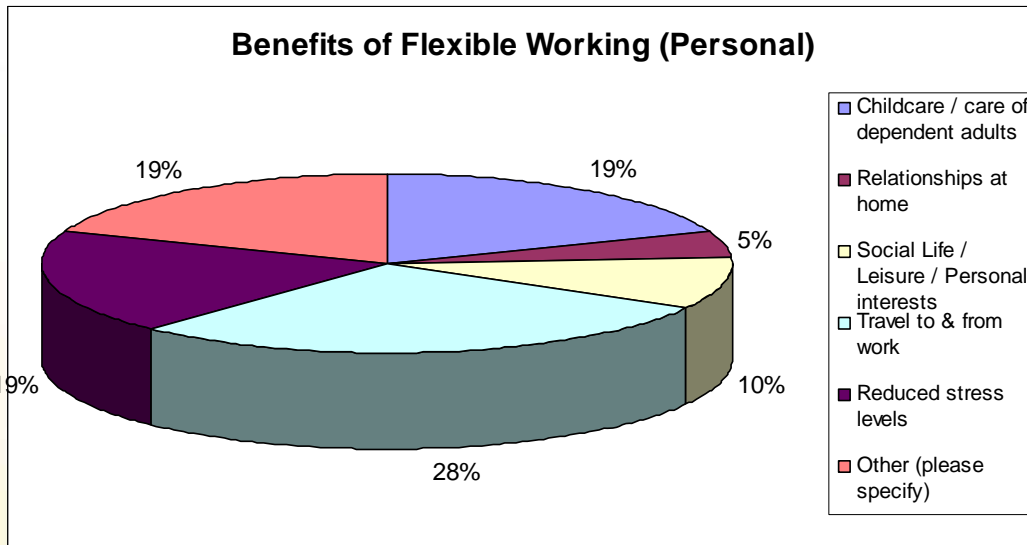
- Regular, monthly assessment
- People could try and carry out more of their own admin? Clear delineation of roles - if people know exactly what they are responsible for, then they can just go ahead and do whatever they do.
- Not something that can easily be put into a online survey form but: Getting staff to take ownership of COSMIC, such as switching the lights off if not using a room, just generally thinking about COSMIC as a whole and not just taking it as a normal employer or job, it isn't. On the other this non-ownership can manifest from not feeling as though you are being treated correctly or valued. It's a big one that can't be easily written down
- Working on the things we use daily, as a team, to make things both more organised and easier to understand for people
- A clearer sense of job responsibilities among all staff on the team and each person's place in achieving targets, whilst at the same time encouraging innovation and project proposals. For individuals on the team I believe a new focus on the importance of 'customer care' in all its aspects and attention to detail would be of value.
- Not sure
- Central contact system!!(Not quite a new idea)
- I don't think we could be more efficient.
- A real sense of role is required, and empowerment to take decisions without having to seek approval from senior managers.
- none

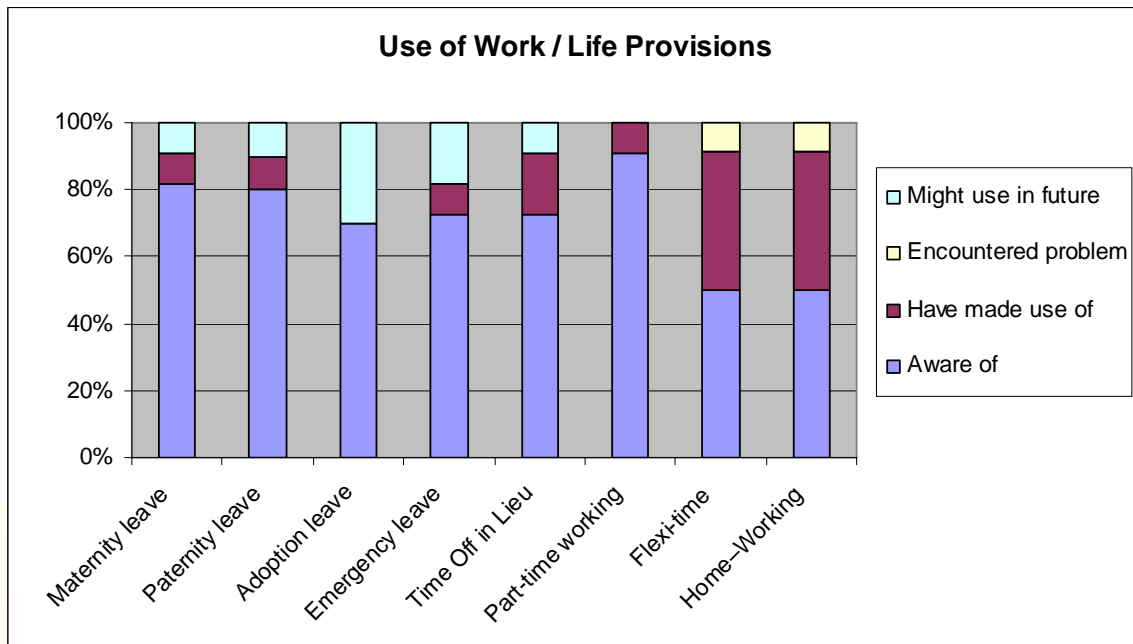


- Hours are Hours. Every organisation has to find balance otherwise people will simply not want to work for it. COSMIC has found that balance through fair and well thought through flexible working arrangements.
- Yin and Yan comes to mind, and I need both to function here in relation to pay and benefits.
- I am generally happy with my working conditions and love the environment. However, in reality it is almost always impossible to keep my working role within a 40 hour week even with flexitime arrangements.
- It difficult to compare us to other companies in the South West as if I was looking for a higher paid job then I would need to look at working in Bristol or outside the area

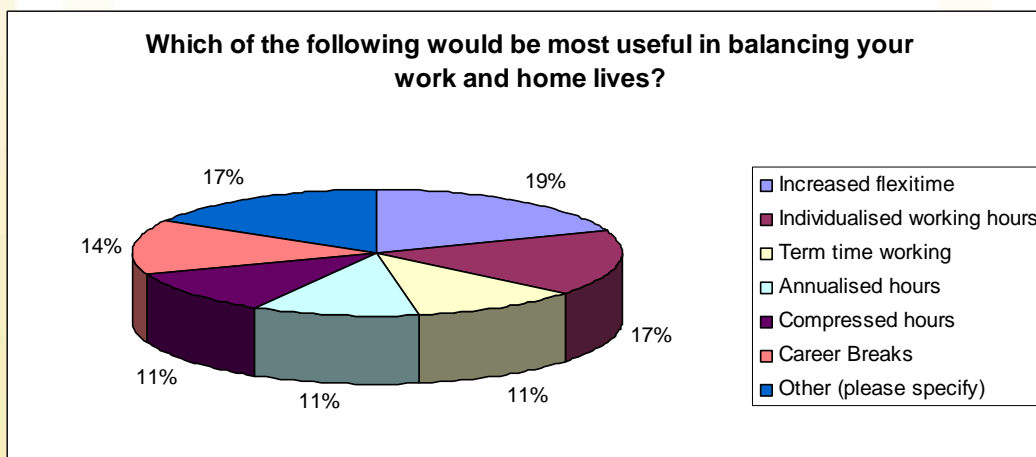


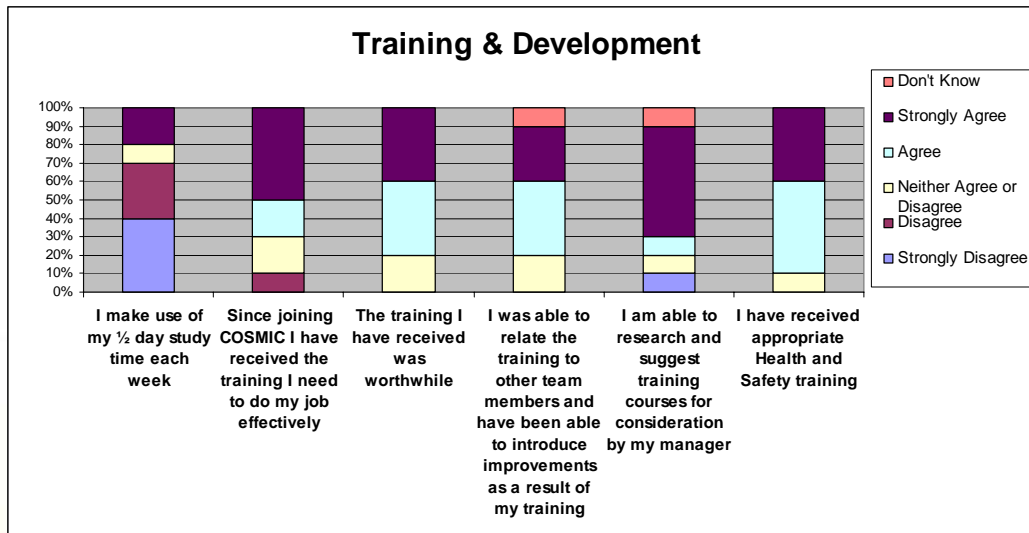
- I am extremely proud of the work of COSMIC and I am always telling other people how great it is to do this job. Communications within the staff team have improved a lot in recent months and there is a new sense of team spirit which is a very good feeling.
- Communication is improving
- This is one of those questions which you need to add "at times" to, at times communications are good, and at times they are piss poor.





- I think the flexible work arrangements are well thought through.
- The big issue for me continues to be the reality of home working arrangements when business priorities always overtake my plans. On the rare weeks when home working has been a possibility the improvement to my work/life balance is much appreciated.





- I made a particular effort to make sue of 1/2 day study - overall it has a positive effect on my overall productivity, and is worthwhile even if you feel you don't have time.
- I am not able to fit in the half day study time each week and my recent studies have been undertaken mainly in my own time - which I am happy to continue because of the personal benefit and development involved.
- Health & Safety Training booked.
- No, none, nada, niet (no additional comments).

Further General Comments.

- I think 2006 has been an incredibly busy and difficult year in many ways, but has been a real move forward for the company and for its future plans. Looking forward to 2007!
- I feel very content with the way that things are and able to deal with any queries / problems should they arise.
- More alcohol would go along way.

Objective 3 Recommendations

1. Explore further potential for improved work / life balance policies
2. Introduction of a new support and supervision structure with the appointment of team leaders