Are you making New Year's resolutions to improve your life? - how about considering something that will make you happier, improve your energy level, and give you more time with your family.

Increased flexibility in your job has the potential to do all three—and more—according to researchers at the University of Minnesota. In the “Journal of Health and Social Behavior,” they report the effects of the Results Only Work Environment (ROWE) implemented by Best Buy, the multinational retailing giant with headquarters in Minnesota [1].

The ROWE approach, which Best Buy adopted in 2005, focuses only on employees' results and performance, rather than their presence at specific times and locations [2]. It eliminates the need for strict scheduling and gives employees control over their work, which was shown to help relieve the stress of work-family conflicts and reduce turnover [3].

The research also showed ROWE has the potential to improve employees' physical and mental health [1]. The greater sense of control translated to workers who

• felt less obligated to work when they were sick and were more likely to go to the doctor
• experienced better sleep quality and energy levels
• had decreased exhaustion levels and psychological stress

And management must be benefitting as well: Best Buy has incorporated ROWE in its training of new employees.

2-What is ROWE? - www.gorowe.com/know-rowe/what-is-rowe/
3- UMNews (Flexible schedules and results-oriented work environments reduce work-family conflict and turnover, U of M researchers find) - www1.umn.edu/news/news-releases/2011/UR_CONTENT_316944.html

UI HealthWorks is a member of the WORKSAFE IOWA Occupational Medicine Associate Network, the only university-affiliated network of occupational health providers. WORKSAFE IOWA is an outreach program of the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health in the College of Public Health at the University of Iowa (www.public-health.uiowa.edu/worksafe).