

## Corporate Best Practices for Retaining Highly Skilled Parents

### 1. Women's Initiatives & Retention Initiatives

For companies like Deloitte and Touche, LLC and Ernst and Young, two leaders in the area of career customization, the formation of a strong Women's Initiative and Retention Initiative respectively were powerful catalysts for culture change within their organizations. With strong CEO support and executive leadership, the focus of these initiatives allowed the company to develop successful responses to internal challenges that had long gone unaddressed.

With the evolution of the workforce, and a broadening of the demographics of workers that value workplace flexibility to include Baby Boomers interested in phased retirement and Gen Y workers who value their personal life highly, in addition to the working Gen X parents that we have heard about for so long, the broader labels of Retention Initiative or Opt In Initiative may be more appropriate to bring men's needs for career sustainability and customization into the discussion.

Whether you start with a Women's Initiative, a Retention Initiative, an initiative of this sort can be the right culminating event to begin exploring and addressing issues of retention in your organization.

### 2. Phased Return from Maternity Leave Programs

Williams Sonoma and other companies offer their employees the option of starting back to work on a reduced schedule as they return from maternity leave. Phased Return programs can help increase retention at this key transition point by easing the pressure on mothers returning to work, particularly during those early months of bonding, lack of sleep and complicated feeding schedules.

These programs also offer management the opportunity to experiment with part time arrangements, often for the first time - creating opportunities for successful arrangements to be extended by mutual agreement. While these phase back programs vary in their specifics, a typical program might allow employees returning from maternity leave the option to reduce their schedule to 50% time or more for the first 2 months after maternity leave and to 75% time or more for the following 2 months before returning to full time, unless an extension is requested and granted at management's discretion.

### 3. Alumni Networking and Consulting Programs

Many companies have begun to recognize the value of keeping in close contact with those employees that do Opt Out (leave their career for some time to focus on personal pursuits rather than taking another position) in the hopes of re-attracting

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them back to the organization when they are ready to return to work. Deloitte and Touche, L.L.C.'s Personal Pursuits Program, Booz Allen Hamilton's Adjunct program and a new program at American Express are all excellent examples of this model. A number of companies are implementing similar programs to maintain close contact with valuable employees that have chosen to take time off from their careers. Again these programs vary, but a typical program would offer employees with consistently positive reviews who are leaving the firm, but don't intend to seek employment during their absence, the ability to keep their corporate email account, continue to attend company parties and events, access free training to keep their skills fresh, and keep aware of part time or temporary consulting opportunities with the firm to stay engaged in their field.

At a very low cost to the firm, these programs help to communicate to valuable talent that the company supports their decision to focus on personal goals for some time, wants to invest in a long term relationship with them, and would welcome them back to the firm when the time is right.

### **3. On Ramp Recruiting**

Lehman Brothers has championed this innovative new recruiting model to re-attract senior women that have Opted Out from the financial industry back to a career at Lehman Brothers. Many companies including Goldman Sachs are following suit. While these programs vary, the common thread is a concerted effort to identify top candidates from the company's industry that have Opted Out of their careers, and an attempt to recruit them back into careers with the firm. Companies that are investing in this model, find that it is having an additional benefit of branding them strongly as employers of choice with younger MBA candidates that are interested in starting their with a firm that is committed to supporting them through all phases of their career.

Lehman Brother's Encore Program is currently structured as a series of targeted regional events, where the top women who have Opted Out of their careers in the Financial industry are invited to attend an event at Lehman Brother's offices to learn about the latest trends in the industry, hear from motivational speakers, and network. Those women that are currently interested in returning to work are invited to interview with the firm. Those that aren't yet ready to return, are connected with one another and members of the firm through an Encore alumni group in the hopes that they will consider Lehman strongly when they are ready to return. In a little under a year, Lehman has hired 15 senior women through their Encore Program. In a shorter period, Goldman Sachs had hired 5 through their similar program.

### **4. Mass Career Customization**

Deloitte and Touche, LLC is currently piloting a Mass Career Customization program for their employees. The program is based in a recognition that every employee can benefit from career control and sustainability. Deloitte's mass career customization program integrates career customization into standard career planning and

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progression with the firm and institutionalizes the concept of a career lattice, rather than a linear career ladder to prevent flexibility options from taking talent off track for promotion.

The Mass Career Customization Program asks management to work with employees to understand their custom career goals on 4 continua of Career Pace (advancement), Place (travel), Role, and Schedule and work with employees to tune their custom career path accordingly.

### **5. Results Oriented Work Environments (ROWE)**

Best Buy developed their methodology for Results Only Work Environments in response to employee survey results that documented dissatisfaction with work life balance and career control among employees, resulting in high turnover. The goal of the ROWE program is to transform the work culture at Best Buy to measure employees primarily on work performance and allow them the freedom to decide how, when and where they get their job done.

Rather than treating the program as a mandate, Best Buy is allowing departments or teams to choose their timelines for migrating to this new work model. The conversion process for new teams takes about 6 months and includes leadership training, team training, a month and a half pilot test and a debriefing. The productivity returns from ROWE teams have been very notable, with a 35% average increase in productivity. The company also sees 3.2% less voluntary turnover from ROWE teams, so the returns have been significant. Other companies interested in exploring ROWE for their companies can reference the book, "Throwing Out the Rules of Work", Patrick J. Kiger, Workforce Management, September 25, 2006.

### **6. Part Time, Job Sharing and Other Flexibility Programs**

Flexibility options include shifted full time schedules, part time, job sharing, condensed schedules, telecommuting and others. Companies like Pfizer, with its prized 80% quota sales force, that boasts a 120 person waiting list use flexibility as a reward and motivator as well as a retention tool.

British Telecom in the UK has been very successful with flexibility programs and cites more than 500 job sharing employees and more than 2500 part time workers. Clorox in the United States has also developed a culture that supports job sharing and part time roles in response to workers' needs. Currently more than 10% of Clorox's Marketing organization is on a Part Time arrangement.

In companies or roles where coverage and access are highly valued, job sharing may be a better fit than an individual part time arrangement. According to one Bay Area study of 100 part time workers, the Job Sharing workers cited higher satisfaction with their future career prospects than part time employees not working as a part of a job sharing team.

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