

Keeping Work

Flexibility is not a working mother's issue as some people seem to think. Rather, it relates to "how and when work gets done and how careers are organized," according to the Families and Work Institute. Everyone has the need for flexibility in the workplace—whether it's to care for an elderly parent, take college classes, take a sick child to the doctor, or get a haircut. More and more, work is "interfering" (as some people would say) with life and is creating overscheduled, stressed people.

"Flexibility isn't going to be an option in the future," says Lois Backon, co-director of When Work Works, a Families and Work Institute project on workplace effectiveness and workplace flexibility. "It's just going to be the way good, competitive businesses operate." Fortunately, many large and small organizations have adopted and perfected innovative programs and opportunities that encourage employees to better balance their work days with their home and family life.

Lancaster Laboratories: Intergenerational

Young children and older adults smiling and laughing during "Show & Tell." Children blowing kisses to mom from the playground while she works in her office window. Parents sharing lunch with their kids in the middle of the workday. Those are some of the opportunities that Lancaster Laboratories offers its employees and their families through on-site, intergenerational child and adult daycare centers in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

"Founder Earl Hess always believed that if you take care of your people, the bottom line will always take care of itself," says Margaret Stoltzfus, manager, human resources and safety, at Lancaster Laboratories. "He would often state that a decision he made with his heart was one of the best business decisions he ever made."

With annual sales of approximately US\$50 million, Lancaster Laboratories—a provider of chemical and biological laboratory services in the environmental and pharmaceutical industries—has grown since its beginnings in 1961, when Hess, his wife, and a technician started the company on the family farm with the Hess children right in the workplace. Even as the organization has grown to more than 700 employees, it still operates with a people-first approach.

By the mid-1980s, Lancaster Labs recognized a need for its young workforce, made up of more than

60 percent women. Twenty-five percent of its 100 employees surveyed at the time said they expected to start a family within five years. Lancaster realized that it needed to do something quickly to ensure retention of those employees and not risk losing the chemists and biologists it had relocated, employed, and trained. Employees expressed an interest in on-site child care, which at the time was pioneering and bold.

"Certainly, a lot of companies questioned what we were doing when we started [on-site child care], based on concerns about liability and keeping employees focused on work with their kids here," Stoltzfus says. "Those same companies several years later were calling us."

Lancaster Laboratories provided the space and partnered with an external provider that ran other child-care centers. Lancaster renovated the front part of its original building for the center and moved the president, vice president, and other administrative offices to another area. Lancaster Laboratories Child Care Center opened in August 1986, with a license for 29 children. Early on, the community filled most of the spots, but that gradually changed as employees started their own families. Stoltzfus says Lancaster Laboratories was the third company in the United States to provide on-site child care. Now, it offers a licensed program for 161 children from infants to school age, along with a full-day kindergarten program and summer daycare. Employees receive a discount averaging 25 percent. Lancaster Labs subsidizes the center each year and paid approximately \$141,000 in cash and in-kind services in 2003.

Lancaster Laboratories made another pioneering decision, in the late 1980s, by surveying employees about the issue of adult daycare. Though there wasn't an immediate need, there was a planned need. With adult daycare, Stoltzfus notes, many people find out they need it and then that they need it immediately. Lancaster Generations Adult Day Care Center opened in late 1991, with space for up to 40 individuals. This center has served more of the community population enrollment rather than employees, but it is providing a necessary niche and partners with the child-care center in several activities and events. "It's neat for those in the adult daycare center because they look forward to the kids coming over," Stoltzfus says. "Their eyes light

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By Vicki Powers

up when these kids come in and do activities with them. That's an unbelievable benefit for both."

Jill Wolgemuth, senior specialist in Lancaster's Environmental Client Services, believes the organization's generous and diverse employee benefits have given her family a level of comfort and confidence. Her son began on-site daycare at age two months, which gave her comfort knowing he was close by. Wolgemuth can work 30 hours a week and be considered "fulltime," which lets her take advantage of benefits as well as have more "mommy" time. Says Wolgemuth, "Rather than feeling like I should be more 'ambitious,' the support makes me feel proud in my role as a mom and as an employee."

Stoltzfus says that the child-care/adult daycare centers go well beyond the people who want to start families or want care for their aging parents. The centers demonstrate the character of the company and make people want to work there. What's more, turnover is 8 percent company-wide, absenteeism is lower, and 96 percent of its new moms return to work in three months.

"For us, it has been terrific to get the caliber of people we're looking for and to get that retention," says Stoltzfus. "It's having happy and satisfied employees who are going to focus and work hard to get their jobs done because they appreciate what we do."

Lancaster has earned a spot on *Working Mother's* "Top 100 Companies for Working Mothers" list for 11 years.

Ernst & Young: Advancing women

"Corporations that aren't already 'in the game' of actively working to recruit, advance, and retain women [employees] won't be able to catch their competitors who are," says Roslyn Duda, co-founder of CorporateHOPE, a Pennsylvania-based, gender-specific talent development and consulting business. "Those companies that heeded the warning signs and have made it a priority to develop their female talent are already reaping the rewards."

Studies—such as the 2004 Catalyst report, "The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and

Gender Diversity”—show a positive correlation between the increased number of women in senior leadership and bigger profits. Ernst & Young’s strong efforts in developing and advancing women, as well as nurturing a culture of flexibility, have helped save the organization about \$12 million annually by reducing turnover.

“We’ve never presented our work-life issues as women’s issues,” says Wendy Hirschberg, Ernst & Young’s Americas Gender Strategy Leader. “They are issues for men and women, and flexibility is something everyone needs. It doesn’t just apply to working mothers, though it’s critical for us to keep our women [here] so we can continue to diversify our leadership.”

Ernst & Young, a New York-based professional services organization, provides a complete solution to

help ensure advancement opportunities for women and that all employees achieve balance between their professional and personal lives. That includes providing flexibility to help employees navigate how, when, and where their work gets done. This strong commitment, begun in 1994, came straight from the chairman at the time, Phil Laskawy, who understood the value and diversity that women brought to the firm and wanted to keep their ideas and experience. Several issues resulted from the organization’s high turnover among women: lost productivity, higher recruiting costs, disruptions in client service, and organizational knowledge loss. In response, Laskawy created the Gender Equity Task Force comprising business unit leaders and key partners. That group commissioned Catalyst, a New York-based nonprofit firm working to advance women in business, to study the female retention issue across Ernst & Young.

“The underlying issues that cause women to leave our firm—such as access to leadership, appreciation for life balance, the availability of role models and mentors—are, of course, people issues,” said Laskawy in the “1998 Office for Retention Annual Report.”

Laskawy put “people issues” as a priority and created the Office of Retention to address the challenges and specifically focus on retaining and advancing women. OFR, headed by Deborah Holmes (whom Laskawy recruited from Catalyst), reported directly to Laskawy in 1996, and provided central support for locally owned efforts relating to gender and work-life issues. OFR evolved into the Center for the New Workforce in 2001, and continues to focus on implementing and supporting local change. Ernst & Young focuses on a variety of initiatives to support women’s leadership development, including group and one-to-one mentoring for women pursuing partnership or leadership in the support ranks, mentoring for key women leaders by executive board members, an annual gathering of top women with key business leaders and executive management, women’s forums, and 41 networks within Ernst & Young to raise women’s stature in the business world, both inside and outside the organization.

Strategy focuses on initiatives that align with the firm’s values, norms, and culture.

Leverage the power of partnership. Ernst & Young brought men into the process as champions for change around gender equity, which continues to be a strength of the organization’s efforts to advance and retain women. “We’ve developed great rapport with our

Workplace Perks: Hot and Not

According to John Challenger, CEO, Challenger, Gray & Christmas, the Chicago-based “original outplacement firm,” employee perks are beginning to reemerge. But today’s perks, according to Challenger, are vastly different from those of the 1990s. “The perks that remain popular with employers *and* employees are those that help workers stay healthy, career focused, and financially stable,” says Challenger. “Perhaps the most appreciated perks are those that help workers maintain work-life balance.”

| What’s Hot | What’s Not |
|--|----------------------------|
| Free shuttle rides | Leased automobiles |
| On-site fitness centers | Fully paid health benefits |
| Quiet rooms | Game rooms |
| Investment seminars | Pension plans |
| Event tickets | Cash bonuses |
| Extra day off around holidays | Three-month sabbaticals |
| Concierge services | Stock options |
| Matching charitable contributions | Matching 401(k) |
| Education assistance/tuition reimbursement | Retiree benefits |
| Flexible scheduling | Bringing pets to work |

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business leaders and learned a lot with them,” Hirschberg says.

Create local focus and ownership. A key element in Ernst & Young’s success is its annual goal-setting meetings between the Center for the New Workforce, top leadership in each business unit, and the local Gender Equity Task Force member. This gathering promotes discussion around the past year’s progress and future goals regarding women’s development and advancement in that location. Ernst & Young created a Balanced Scorecard that reveals enterprise-wide goals and the leaders accountable for each goal. Business units maintain their own scorecards with information and accountability at the business unit level.

Educate staff about the issues, reward contributions. Hirschberg says that Ernst & Young has initiated some innovative aspects around its Women’s Leadership Conference that stand out from other organizations. One is including the reverse percentage of men at the event to put men in the minority in the same percentage that women represent in partnership as a whole.

“We’ve brought in interactive discussions between men and women and have been notably honest and very candid,” says Hirschberg. “It breaks down a lot of myths of what people harbor as slight doubts about the reality of what ‘flexible work arrangements’ can mean.”

To reward contributions, Ernst & Young created the Rosemarie Meschi Award in 1997, to honor men and women in the organization who are doing the most to create a level playing field for women.

Technology helps drive Ernst & Young’s flexibility options through its Flexible Work Arrangement database. This Website has a variety of tools to help employees brainstorm and navigate how to complete their work in a flexible manner. One component features profiles of more than 700 employees who are actually using flexible work arrangements. People can look up those individuals from a specific region or practice area and find out how they negotiated a flexible arrangement.

Research from Families and Work Institute says that flexibility is linked to engagement, retention, job satisfaction, and employee well-being. Flexibility represents one ingredient to an effective workplace. The others are

- job autonomy
- learning opportunities
- decision-making involvement
- co-worker and supervisor support.

“I believe flexibility is a common-sense, obvious way to manage a lot of the changes that our culture has gone

through,” says Backon. “Flexibility needs to be more accepted by business and more understood that it’s an option to offer employees that doesn’t really cost anything but that companies can gain from. The data consistently shows that people with flexible options tend to be happier employees and give back to their companies.”

Hirschberg believes that opening up conversations between leaders and their staffs is one of the greatest benefits of Ernst & Young’s work-life efforts. That’s one reason she favors the profiles in the Flexible Work Arrangement database, which puts people in touch with others directly to have real conversations about day-to-day challenges.

Ernst & Young’s dedication to work-life integration has enabled it to create a variety of flexible work arrangements. More than 2300 (83 percent of that number are women) participate in a formal flexible work arrangement. As of July 2003, 44 people (43 women and one man) have been promoted to the level of partner, principal, or director while in a flexible working arrangement.

The strategic focus and efforts to advance and retain women have paid off, which is critical when women account for half of Ernst & Young’s head count. Currently, women represent 16 percent of all partners, principals, and directors, a figure that has doubled since 1996. Women represent 25 percent of the partner promotion class. The presence of women in top executive management positions has increased from zero to 14.5 percent. Twenty percent of the Americas executive board are women, which is higher than the 12 percent average, according to Catalyst’s recent study of corporate boards in the *Fortune* 500. Over the past three-year period, 84 percent of women professionals who took a maternity leave returned to work.

Ernst & Young is one of only five companies to appear five consecutive times on both *Fortune* and *Working Mother’s* “Best Companies” lists.

“While there are still challenges ahead given the nature of our business, I think we’ve made some real headway making ‘real life’ feel different for our individual women—and our men, to some extent,” says Hirschberg. “The more these things are acceptable for women, the more acceptable they become for men.” **TD**

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