

# INTELLIGENCE

## Father-Friendly

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

A majority of women in the United States now work outside the home. In many cases, that full-time job is combined with the responsibility of being the primary caregiver to the family's children—often because the mother's workplace is more flexible.

It's not that dads don't want to share the load more equally,

but the family-friendly policies many organizations have implemented—paid time off after a birth, flextime for family duties, and even parent training—are often not extended to men. But that's changing slowly, to the benefit of businesses as well as fathers.

By taking care of children, dads gain skills in empathy

that they can apply at work. And companies with father-friendly policies experience higher loyalty and faith in the organization, as well as lower absenteeism and turnover. Here are some leave, flextime, and parent training benefits. **Leave.** Since 1993, when the U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act was passed, men

Dads need work-life balance, too. Some companies are helping out.

in the United States have been allowed to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave after the birth or adoption of a child (with some exceptions). But many men are hesitant to take advantage of the law, fearing that time away from work for family reasons will jeopardize their career. As one researcher puts it, the law guarantees the right to leave, but it doesn't guarantee how the person who takes it will be viewed in the workplace.

Brad Harrington, executive director of the Boston College Center for Work and Family, says that most fathers think providing for their family through working and child-care are conflicting goals. Even British Prime Minister

Tony Blair decided not to take leave after his fourth child was born. His reason: "to not set a public example."

In addition to the fear of career consequences, there's often a financial reason for fathers not to take time off after a birth. Few companies right now offer paid paternity leave, but the tide may be turning. Companies that do offer it include IBM, Microsoft, Merrill Lynch, and Timberland.

**Flextime.** Offering fathers flexible schedules, such as the ability to come in early and leave early, can help them participate in their children's athletic events, parent-teacher conferences, and so forth. At Texas Instruments, for

example, flextime for fathers is built into the company's culture, according to work-life strategies manager Betty Purkey.

And a global study by the Families and Work Institute and nine major companies (including Marriott, Dow, Citigroup, IBM, and JPMorgan Chase) found that male and female executives who placed equal priority on work and home were more successful and less stressed than those who focused primarily on work.

**Parent training.** Some companies offer parent training for dads as part of their family-friendly benefits. Marriott started doing so for 130,000 employees in 1997.

The company estimates it saves four dollars in reduced turnover and absenteeism costs for every one dollar it spends on the training. Texas Instruments offers parent education seminars twice a year at various locations, including sessions on "daddy stress." TI also offers parents resources and referral information online.

Can your company benefit from father-friendly policies and training? No doubt. But these benefits must be supported at the top of organizations so that people feel comfortable using them, says Martin Malin, director of the Institute for Law and the Workplace at Chicago Kent College of Law.

Family-friendly policies such as paid time off for dads may be ahead of the curve, says James Levine, director of The Fatherhood Project at the Families and Work Institute, but "we've got good evidence that when companies do offer it, men start using it."

◀ Sources/ *American Way*, *Kansas City Star*, [familyeducation.com](http://familyeducation.com), [babycenter.com](http://babycenter.com), [lifechallenges.org](http://lifechallenges.org)

## Tips for Fathers

Are you concerned about consequences from using your company's family-friendly policies? Talk to other men at your company who have done so and find out how they were treated by their boss and co-workers.

If you decide not to take time off after a birth or adoption, or aren't allowed to do so, try

**Asking** your employer if you can work overtime before the baby is born in exchange for time off after he or she arrives

**Scheduling** any "firsts" that can be planned for when you have time off

**Minimizing** any voluntary activities that take you away from the baby in his or her first year.

If you feel that your request for leave was unfairly denied, take advantage of these Websites from the U.S. Department of Labor:

<http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/whd/whdfs28.htm> and <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla>.

◀ Source/ [babycenter.com](http://babycenter.com)



## »»» E-News: Blended Leadership Training

*Blended* isn't just a buzzword, says a new study from e-learning researchers Bersin & Associates. Rather, the approach has been adopted by major organizations to teach leadership skills all the way up to the C-level. The study's findings:

**Blended formats are considered essential for effective leadership training.** Almost all participants said a blend of structured learning, collaboration, practice, and personal feedback were important for the success of their leadership programs.

**Blended formats increase completion rates significantly.** Most e-learning programs have completion rates of 20 to 40 percent. Blended leadership programs had rates as high as 75 to 95 percent.

**High quality is crucial.** E-learning that uses video, interaction, creative story lines, exercises, and recognized experts has the best chance of success.

**Blended learning reduces time investment and extends reach.** Learner time can be cut in half with blended learning, and it can reach a geographically diverse audience.

Note: Blended learning does not necessarily imply "classroom." Some blended programs are mixes of different types of technology-based training.

«» For more on the study, [www.bersin.com](http://www.bersin.com) or 510.654.8500

## Global 360

### Career Confidence

The **Career Confidence Index** is based on questions about layoffs and rehiring potential asked of fulltime workers in **18 countries**. The findings in May 2004:

- Workers globally were slightly more confident about their jobs than six months before.
- The most-concerned workers were in Hong Kong and Germany.
- There is continued worldwide recognition that the job market remains tight.
- Worker confidence levels in Ireland, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany increased dramatically from six months ago.
- Regionally, Europe showed the most variance in worker confidence among separate countries.
- Norway registered as the country with the most secure workers.

«» Source/ Right Management Consultants

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