

Generation Sandwich

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

They're the ones doing it all: the Sandwich Generation. They are middle-age workers literally in the middle caring not only for dependent children, but also for aging parents. And the ranks of the Sandwich Generation are growing. According to Work|Benefits

www.wlb.com, roughly 5.8 million people in the United States fall into the Sandwich category. The majority also work full- or part-time.

The impact on businesses is significant. Child-care and elder-care challenges are causing absenteeism rates to

climb. The U.S. National Council on the Aging estimates that employees are missing 15 million days of work each year just for elder-care issues. Work|Life Benefits calculates that companies are losing US\$25 billion to \$30 billion a year due to employees' care-

This group of workers is feeling **squeezed** by multiple family responsibilities, but is holding it all together.

giving responsibilities.

Increasing life spans are one contributing factor. Another is workers caring for children or parental figures not their own; examples from the American Association of Retired Persons include nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and neighbors' children, as well as older relatives and friends. Add the return to the nest of so-called "boomerang" adult children. (The economy is a driving factor.) Although the boomerangers require less care than their younger siblings, they still consume family resources, such as money and time, and thus contribute to the squeeze.

AARP's "In the Middle: A Report on Multicultural Boomers Coping with Family and Aging Issues" www.aarp.org/inthemiddle found that although the members of the Sandwich Generation are experiencing stress (30 percent) and strain on other relationships (20 percent), they are for the most part coping effectively. Some are turning to faith, prayer, and religious organizations for support.

But what about the effects on Sandwich

workers' jobs? What can employers do to help—and to ensure that work gets done? AARP has determined that the Sandwich Generation turns to their employers least often. Yet, there is much that companies can do.

The key word is *flexibility*. Work|Life Benefits asserts that flexibility—in hours, time off, and so forth—is the benefit that employees ask for again and again.

Here are some ways companies are helping workers cope:

- a virtual or paper-based library of elder-care resources and referrals
- financial assistance for elder care through pretax reimbursement accounts, vouchers, or long-term care insurance
- on-site day care for children when schools are closed (or year-round)
- permission for employees to bring spouses and children along on business trips
- lactation rooms for mothers who return to work soon after giving birth.

[Sources/ Work|Life Benefits, The Herman Group, Kids in the Workplace](#)

A multitude of resources on elder care is available at

www.elderlifeplanning.com

How to Gain Tax Credits for Training Investments

By Jack Miller

Most U.S. states and the federal government have laws, or are crafting laws, that allow companies to receive tax credits totaling up to half of their investment in approved training programs. Here's how to take advantage of those laws and maximize your tax credits.

Have your financial advisor research training credit regulations for your state and classification. Many states offer a retraining tax credit of up to US\$500 per training program for each employee after the first 16 weeks of employment.

Outsource your tax preparation. Your company can maximize return-on-investment by outsourcing the initial analysis and ongoing management of your tax-credit program. Tax credits and other incentives typically generate 180 percent return on time invested.

Don't forget your recent history. Training tax credits can be recovered for the past three years. If your company didn't seek credits for the 1999 tax year, for example, you can receive the credits this year if you provide documentation.

Plan for the future. Training tax credits can be carried forward over 10 years. In Georgia, for example, if a company receives \$100,000 in credits, then it can use all of them in the current year or spread them out over a decade.

Used comprehensively, tax credits can be an important tool in helping companies build effective training programs and accelerate growth.

Jack Miller is COO of Learn.net and a former certified public accountant; www.learn.net.

Customer Training on the Edge

How would you create a customer training program for a product that has never existed before? In fact, nothing remotely like it has ever existed before. Ask Dean Kamen, inventor of the revolutionary Segway Human Transporter www.segway.com, a self-balancing personal transportation device.

 "Wish We'd Thought of That!" (January T+D)

The Segway arrived on the scene for consumers late last year after being tested by companies and governments. Amazon.com started taking pre-orders in late 2002 for machines to be delivered in March, but 30 lucky customers received theirs early by writing a 75-word essay.

The winners were flown to the company headquarters in New Hampshire for a two-day training program, including dinner with Kamen and a tour of his high-tech home.

One crucial part of the training: how to get admirers off of your Segway. As users ride them, strangers flock to the devices to see how they work. Says Chris Johnson, owner of two Segways, "They taught us in training class to...grab the center post and say, 'Let me show you how to dismount now.' That was a very useful demo."

Similar training classes will take place in cities around the United States.

 Source/Wired News

E-News: Accessibility Clearinghouse

E-learning, even its detractors admit, is here to stay. As its use becomes more widespread, it's important that it be accessible to all. A new initiative developed by EASI (Equal Access to Software and Information) aims to make that a reality. The National Center for Accessible E-Learning <http://easi-elearn.org> is a recently launched clearinghouse of information, including links, Webcasts, tutorials, and more. An e-newsletter is coming soon; you can register on the site to receive it.

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