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# Women at Work

*Bored with the Boardroom?*



A Research Paper by Hudson  
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# Women at Work

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# Executive Summary

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## 1. Executive Summary

*Women at Work: Bored with the Boardroom?* examines the changing roles, perceptions and aspirations of women within the modern workplace. It forms part of an annual programme of qualitative and quantitative research conducted by global recruitment and HR consultancy, Hudson, looking at issues and trends affecting the employment market. The research was conducted amongst women in professional and managerial roles, their male colleagues and employers (both male and female) spanning a range of sectors, business sizes and regions.

Increasing dissatisfaction with conventional work patterns, particularly amongst female workers, has become a growing concern for employers, one which could threaten the future sustainability of the overall workforce and have a potentially long-lasting impact on business performance.

The report reveals a significant number of female workers have already left, or are seriously considering escaping, the conventional '9 to 5' working world in a bid to reinvent their working patterns. And it is not just working mothers who are seeking greater flexibility in their careers; women of all ages and in all sectors are expressing a desire to break with traditional ways of working in favour of more flexible and stimulating working styles. The potential impact on the composition and productivity of the UK workforce could be profound – the report revealed that almost half (47%) of all female professionals do not expect to be working full time by 2010.

Employers recognise that women are becoming more likely than men to pursue alternative careers or working patterns, but few are fully prepared to respond to this disenchantment with corporate life. The vast majority (87%) of employers do not have a specific attraction and retention plan in place targeted at women, nor are they mindful of their demands. Whilst most employers believe they are committed to providing flexible working opportunities, less than two thirds of employees believe this is an option within their company.

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Many professional women do not feel as though they are being given enough choice to work in a way which suits them or maximises their abilities - whether that is flexible hours or working from home. As a result, female professionals feel women are not fully represented at senior management level or able to progress as quickly as they would like - over half of female workers (56%) believe senior management roles at their place of work are dominated by men. Employers may be committed to providing equal opportunities, but within the conventional working structure, growing numbers of women do not feel able or permitted to take full advantage.

There is also a clear disparity between what employers say they are doing and what they are seen to be doing - 85% of employers believe they are actively committed to providing flexible working opportunities, but only 58% of female workers agree. The majority of women still feel as though their earning potential is impeded and that they are not being afforded sufficient autonomy or responsibility in their roles.

Organisations need the skills and experience that women offer: a balanced workplace benefits all employees. However, many women appear no longer prepared to compromise or tolerate outdated working systems or change their modes of working to suit conventional hierarchies. They want more control on when, where and how they work, and if these options are not available to them in their current position, it seems they are more and more willing to set up their own businesses, go freelance, retrain or pursue an alternative career. To increase and sustain female representation in the workforce, it is not women who need or are prepared to change: the onus is increasingly on employers to be flexible and to adapt.



# Introduction & Key Findings

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## 2. Introduction

To investigate how well, or otherwise, the UK workplace is matched to the needs and aspirations of female workers - as perceived by their employers, male colleagues and female employees themselves - detailed research was carried out amongst over 1000 employees (both men and women) and 500 employers spanning a range of sectors, business sizes and regions. Employees were in professional roles or had managerial responsibilities, with employers represented by HR managers.

### *i) Key Findings*

#### *The employee perspective*

- 54% of professional/managerial women either want to escape the '9 to 5' routine - or have already done so
- 84% of professional women believe that women are increasingly considering alternative ways of working or progressing their career
- 52% of professional women are dissatisfied with the traditional working culture
- 55% of professional women are concerned that they are not fulfilling their ambitions
- 47% of professional women do not expect to be working full-time by 2010
- 65% of professional women are dissatisfied with the amount of free time their work allows them
- 22% of women currently working in '9 to 5' jobs are seriously considering or actively planning to move to an alternative role within three years
- 72% of professional women believe that the earning potential of their job is limited
- 49% of professional women believe their workplace does not have an active commitment to maximising employees' opportunities to make their own decisions
- 25% of professional/managerial women believe their workplace does not have a pro-active equal opportunities culture.

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## *The employer perspective*

- 87% of employers do not have a policy to attract and retain women
- 85% of employers believed they are actively committed to providing flexible working opportunities, only 58% of professional/managerial women agree
- 75% of employers believe that the '9 to 5' routine of conventional employment is now less attractive for female staff
- 70% of employers believe that women are more likely than men to be attracted to alternative career choices
- 64% of employers believe that if more women left for unconventional career choices they would face increasing difficulties recruiting new staff
- 41% of organisations believe that productivity would decrease if female employees were increasingly attracted to less conventional careers
- 60% of employers believe that female representation in the workplace is not complete
- 39% of employers believe that introducing more flexible working hours and home working would increase female representation in the workplace
- 31% of employers believe that introducing pay transparency would increase female representation in the workplace.



# Women at Work: Today

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# Women at Work

## 3. Women at Work: Today

### *i) Too much work, too little time*

Causes for dissatisfaction with working life range from the everyday commute to the long-term prospects for promotion. In particular, all workers were concerned about their potential for progression within the organisation and their licence to work in a way that suits their needs.

The report revealed that men and women shared similar causes of dissatisfaction in the workplace, with both citing the restricted amount of free time in their lives as the major cause of unhappiness at work. Almost two-thirds (65%) of women and a similar proportion of their male colleagues (63%) expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of time they were required to spend at work.

However, concern over lack of free time was most acute for female employees aged 36 to 45; men of the same age group were in fact least concerned about the amount of spare time in their lives. Female professionals also expressed concern over their ability to fulfil their ambitions, with over half (55%) of the female employees questioned claiming to worry about achieving their career goals. Younger female workers in particular (61%) pointed to a lack of career fulfilment as a major cause of dissatisfaction in their lives.

**Fig. 1 Causes of dissatisfaction**

<b>Professionals/managers dissatisfied with each area of their life</b>	<b>Female</b>
The amount of free time in your life	65%
Whether you are fulfilling your ambitions	55%
Your prospects for the future	53%
Working long hours	51%
Your level of responsibility	49%
The opportunities given to you to win promotion	48%
Your daily journey to and from work	48%
Your ability to make decisions at work	48%
Freedom to work the way you want to	42%
Base: Female professional/managerial employees	

# Women at Work

In terms of satisfaction with levels of seniority within the organisation, women expressed most concern at their ability to contribute and the level of responsibility they were afforded. The problem is particularly acute in male-dominant industries such as engineering (66%) and technology, media and telecommunications (TMT) (59%), where women expressed most frustration at their levels of responsibility. For women working in legal professions, one in two (54%) felt they lacked sufficient ability to make decisions, primarily as a result of not having enough responsibility.

Both men and women were concerned about the way their career had turned out, with almost three quarters (73%) of female and male (75%) professionals expressing some level of disappointment with their career progress to date. Again, thirty-something women were the most concerned age group when it came to fulfilling their career ambitions, whereas for men the most concerned age group was slightly older.

**Fig. 2 Career expectations**

Male and female professionals/managers expressing some disappointment with their career	Proportion of employees	
	Women	Men
26 – 35 years	75%	80%
36 – 45 years	72%	81%
46 – 55 years	71%	63%
Base: All professional/managerial employees		

Men aged 46 to 55 were most likely to have achieved complete satisfaction with their career, with 63% expressing some disappointment, whereas women were almost equally likely to say they were disappointed with their career across all age groups.

# Women at Work

## ii) Extensive hours, limited pay

For many, the modern workplace has become synonymous with long hours and short deadlines, where there is an expectation to be at work early and to leave late. Nearly half of all men (48%) and women (42%) acknowledged a 'long hours' culture existed at their place of work. The stress of working long hours was most likely to be felt by female professionals in the banking/financial services sector (55%) and marketing (53%). Women in accountancy were least likely to feel this pressure – less than a quarter of women in this sector (24%) felt they worked unduly long hours. For both genders, workers in the public sector were least likely to regard themselves as pressured to work long hours, with less than a third feeling they needed to arrive early and leave late (31%). Perhaps surprisingly, neither sex was particularly concerned about taking their work home at weekends, with under a quarter of both men and women expressing concern (23% and 15% respectively) at out-of-hours working.

Those in senior management were most likely to feel the pressure to be seen to put in long days, with male employees feeling it slightly more than women (54% v. 48%). However, amongst those employees without managerial responsibility, women felt slightly more pressure than men to work long hours (40% v 37%). Yet, despite the pressure to work longer hours and increased anxiety over promotion prospects, the research revealed that for many workers their primary concern is their earning potential, particularly amongst women. Nearly three quarters of the professional women interviewed (72%) believed that the earning potential of their job was limited.

Across all sectors, the majority of women felt their earning potential was restricted. Women working in manufacturing and engineering were the most likely to feel their potential earnings were being limited (85%), with those working in banking and financial services least likely (64%). Women in manufacturing and engineering (64%) and accountancy (57%) were also least likely to believe that they could see a clear career path ahead of them.

Women also feel much more hampered than men in their ability to change their working pattern or request alternative hours. Men appeared to be more confident in their ability to work flexibly and choose their own hours compared to women (60% v. 52%), and men also felt they had more flexibility over choosing where their work was done - 40% compared with only 27% of women. Women working within the public sector were most likely to feel able to choose where they worked (56%) compared to those in the TMT sector who felt they were least free to choose (24%). Nearly three quarters of women in the public sector were also likely to believe they had flexibility over their hours (73%) compared to those working in manufacturing and engineering (38%).

# Women at Work

**Fig. 3 ‘Long hours’ culture**

Employees believing each of the following to be true	Proportion of employees	
	Women	Men
The earning potential of the job is limited	72%	61%
Senior management posts are mainly filled by men	56%	53%
The career path for promotion is clearly defined	53%	56%
There is flexibility on choosing what hours have to be worked	52%	60%
There is a long hours culture that means people are expected to be there early and to leave late	42%	48%
There is flexibility on choosing where work is done	27%	40%
Taking work home for the weekend is often expected	15%	23%

Base: All professional/managerial employees

### ***iii) Equal opportunities?***

There is a widespread perception amongst women that men continue to dominate senior management roles and are disproportionately represented at a senior level. In some sectors, the imbalance was particularly acute – 82% of women working within law see senior management roles as being filled predominantly by men.

The perception of male dominance at a senior level is less acute for women with senior management responsibilities themselves. Interestingly, male senior managers were much more likely to believe that men held more of the key positions in their organisation than their senior level female colleagues. Only 40% of female senior managers felt men were overrepresented at senior level compared to 60% of men within senior management.

# Women at Work

**Fig. 4 Senior management posts are mainly filled by men**

Employees believing: “Senior management posts are mainly filled by men” to be true/somewhat true	Proportion of employees	
	Female	Male
Legal	82%	62%
Retail/FMCG/leisure/tourism	71%	53%
Accountancy	70%	61%
Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics	57%	71%
Banking & Financial services	56%	53%
Technology/Media/Telecoms	49%	54%
Public Sector	49%	55%
Construction, Property & Infrastructure	47%	42%
Advertising/Marketing/PR/Sales	46%	48%

Base: All professional/managerial employees

More men than women also felt that their employers created transparent equal opportunities culture (86% vs 75%). Across the board, women were less satisfied than their male counterparts that their workplace actively encouraged diversity within the workforce or had a proactive family-friendly culture.

# Women at Work

**Fig. 5 Employee views of the workplace**

Proportion believing each applies in their workplace	Proportion of employees	
	Female	Male
A transparent equal opportunities culture	75%	86%
A transparent family-friendly culture	69%	74%
A transparent culture that encourages diversity within the workforce	66%	67%
A maternity policy aimed at maximising freedom of opportunity for female staff	63%	67%
An active commitment to maximising every employee's individual responsibility	58%	62%
An active commitment to providing flexible working opportunities	58%	59%
An active commitment to maximising every employee's opportunities to make as many decisions for themselves as possible	51%	54%
Positive discrimination toward women	22%	22%

Base: All professional/managerial employees

Whilst men are perceived to hold the majority of senior posts, few employees advocate women adopting specifically male methods of working to boost their chances of promotion. Rather, the majority of both women (58%) and men (51%) believed that taking a pragmatic approach and choosing between both traditional male methods of working and their own way of doing things, was the best means of gaining promotion to senior management. A quarter of women (24%) believe that the best way to succeed is to work in their own way – only 11% advocated adopting male methods of working in order to progress.

# Women at Work

**Fig. 6 The route to senior management**

Proportion of employees advising women who wish to gain promotion to copy male methods of doing things	Proportion of employees	
	Female	Male
Accountancy	20%	4%
Legal	17%	14%
Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics	12%	5%
Public Sector	10%	8%
Construction, Property & Infrastructure	9%	17%
Technology, Media and Telecommunications	8%	4%
Retail, FMCG, Leisure and Tourism	7%	3%
Advertising/Marketing/PR/Sales	6%	2%
Banking & Financial services	5%	8%
Base: All professional/managerial employees		



# Women at Work: Tomorrow

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# Women at Work

## 4. Women at Work: Tomorrow

A disproportionate number of men in senior management, frustration at career progression and a feeling of being let down by their employers' practices has left more and more women wanting to escape the conventional work routine. Many women are not only frustrated with the traditional working culture; they are actively seeking means to break free from it. It is clear from the research, though, that they are not just keen to jettison corporate life in order to have children; furthering their career elsewhere and balancing their individual work/life commitments are priorities. Regardless of age, sector or level of seniority, there is a consensus amongst both women (84%) and men (61%) that women are now increasingly considering alternative ways of working or progressing their careers.

### *i) Nine-to-five fatigue*

Over half (52%) of all female professionals were dissatisfied with the traditional working culture, compared to just 37% of their male counterparts. And men aren't just less likely to experience frustration with conventional working hours; they are also less likely to perceive this is the case amongst their female colleagues. In general, male colleagues underestimate the extent to which women were dissatisfied with the traditional working culture. This disparity was greatest in the construction and property sector (20% men v. 52% of women believing women were dissatisfied) and manufacturing and engineering (40% v. 66%). Men working in the banking/financial services (54%) and marketing/advertising (46%) sectors were most likely to believe that women were dissatisfied with the traditional working culture.

# Women at Work

**Fig. 7 Dissatisfaction with the traditional working culture**

Are female professional/managerial employees dissatisfied with traditional working culture?	Proportion of employees stating "Yes"		
	Female	Male	Disparity [Female – Male]
Construction, Property & Infrastructure	52%	20%	31%
Manufacturing, Engineering and logistics	66%	40%	26%
Public sector	52%	35%	17%
Legal	57%	41%	16%
Accountancy	41%	29%	12%
Retail, FMCG, Leisure and tourism	44%	33%	11%
Technology, Media and telecommunications	47%	37%	10%
Advertising, Marketing, PR and Sales	55%	46%	9%
Banking & Financial services	58%	54%	4%
Base: All professional/managerial employees			

## *ii) The great escape*

A high proportion of female professionals (54%) expressed a desire to escape the '9 to 5' routine, with many already taking steps in that direction. Almost a quarter of women (22%) in a routine '9 to 5' job were either seriously considering or actively planning a move to an alternative role in the next three years. Younger women in particular (26 to 35) were the most likely to be seeking to escape, with one quarter (26%) of young female professionals actively planning or seriously considering an escape in the next three years. Fewer men were seriously considering a move to an alternative role in the next three years - in fact only 18% were contemplating this.

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**Fig 8. Attitude to the conventional '9 to 5' work routine**

<b>Attitude to the conventional '9 to 5' work routine</b>	<b>Proportion of female employees</b>
Planning to escape in next 3 years or seriously considering an escape	22%
Consider an escape would be desirable	24%
Base: All professional/managerial employees currently in '9 to 5' jobs	

**Fig. 9 Employees considering an alternative to the traditional '9 to 5'**

<b>Proportion of employees in nine-to-five jobs planning or seriously considering an alternative within next three years</b>	<b>Proportion of female employees</b>
Manufacturing, Engineering and logistics	40%
Advertising/Marketing/PR/Sales	28%
Technology, Media and Telecommunications	26%
Banking & Financial services	22%
Public Sector	20%
Retail, FMCG, leisure and tourism	19%
Construction, property & infrastructure	16%
Accountancy	14%
Legal	13%
Base: All professional/managerial employees currently in nine-five jobs	

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The impact of this potential female migration into flexible, part-time or freelance working on the shape of the future workforce could be significant. Almost half (47%) of all female professionals did not expect to be working full-time in 2010 compared to nearly three quarters (70%) of their male colleagues. Of those female professionals wanting to leave full-time employment, most were likely to favour working part-time.

A quarter of female professionals in all age groups (range between 21% to 26%) expected to be working part-time within five years, and 14% of women expected to be running their own business. Men across all age groups are, however, highly unlikely to consider themselves working part-time within five years. Younger workers, men and women alike, were most likely to expect to be running their own business in five years' time.

Unsurprisingly, older women were the most likely to expect to have finished working full-time in the next five years. Two in three professional women aged 46 to 55 years old (with potentially another 20 years of working life ahead of them) expect not to be working full-time by 2010, and one in eight expected to have stopped working, but will not consider themselves to be retired.

Women in senior management positions were most likely to see themselves in five years' time as either continuing in full-time roles (60%) or having started their own business (20%).

**Fig.10 Expectation in five years' time**

Expectation in five years' time	Proportion of employees	
	Female	Male
Working full-time	53%	70%
Working part-time	24%	5%
Running your own business	11%	16%
Not working at all	5%	2%
Retired	8%	7%
Base: All professional/managerial employees		

# Women at Work

**Fig. 11 Work status expectations in five years**

Work status expectations in five years	Proportion of employees					
	26 - 35		36 - 45		46 - 55	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Working full-time	58%	80%	64%	71%	33%	53%
Working part-time	26%	1%	21%	6%	23%	8%
Running your own business	14%	19%	10%	17%	5%	12%
Not working at all	1%	0%	3%	2%	12%	3%
Retired	0%	0%	1%	1%	26%	22%

Base: All professional/managerial employees



# The Employer Perspective

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# Women at Work

## 5. Women at Work: The Employer Perspective

### *i) Perception gap*

Whilst the evidence from employees points strongly towards growing dissatisfaction with conventional working life and increased aspirations to pursue alternative career paths, awareness amongst employers and their willingness to proactively address these trends remains low. The report revealed a significant disparity between the current employee experience, particularly amongst women, and the employer perception.

Differences in perceptions of workplace culture between employers and their employees were greatest in three main areas: the provision of flexible working opportunities, maternity policy and maximising individual responsibility.

85% of employers believed they were already committed to providing flexible working opportunities, whereas only half (58%) of professional women agree. With regards to maternity policy, 81% of employers believed this policy had been well provided for, compared with 63% of women. Three quarters of employers felt there were potential opportunities to maximise women's individual responsibility within the organisation, but only 58% of employees believed this to be the case in practice.

# Women at Work

**Fig.12 Employer view**

Proportion believing each to be true in their workplace	Proportion		
	Female employees	Employers	Disparity [Employers - Female Employees]
An active commitment to providing flexible working opportunities	58%	85%	27%
A maternity policy aimed at maximising freedom of opportunity for female staff	63%	81%	18%
An active commitment to maximising every employee's individual responsibility	58%	76%	18%
An active commitment to maximising every employee's opportunities to make as many decisions for themselves as possible	51%	65%	14%
A pro-active family-friendly culture	69%	83%	14%
A pro-active equal opportunities culture	75%	85%	10%
A pro-active culture that encourages diversity within the workforce	66%	70%	4%
Positive discrimination toward women	22%	23%	1%

Base: All professional/managerial female employees; all employers

## ii) Great expectations

Employers do acknowledge, however, that women are becoming increasingly disenchanted with traditional working life. Three quarters of employers believed that the '9 to 5' routine of conventional employment holds less attraction for female staff nowadays than it once did. A further 70% believed that women are becoming more likely than men to be attracted to alternative career choices.

Just over half of all employers (51%) acknowledged that when female members of staff are considering leaving, they are increasingly likely to be interested in pursuing a less conventional career choice. One in eight employers reported that an increasing number of female employees were leaving for less conventional careers. This trend is most prevalent in accountancy (20%) and marketing/advertising (19%), with public sector employers (9%) least likely to report women leaving for less conventional careers.

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## iii) Impact on the workforce

Employers also recognised the potentially detrimental effect on workplace culture and productivity that a loss of female talent may give rise to. Employers were most likely to believe that the effect of increasing numbers of women pursuing less conventional careers would be to increase recruitment difficulties (64%) and reduce the pool of talent, particularly in female-dominated roles such as HR and marketing (58%).

Just over half (52%) of all employers believed that their organisational culture would be harmed if women increasingly left for unconventional careers, and a similar proportion (51%) believed that staff morale would decline. 41% of all organisations believed that productivity would be adversely affected and 32% of private sector companies stated that profits would be reduced if female employees increasingly left for alternative careers or to work unconventional hours.

**Fig. 13 Impact for companies and organisations**

<b>Impact on company or organisation of women choosing unconventional careers</b>	<b>Proportion of employers</b>
Increasingly difficult to recruit sufficient talent for all jobs within the organisation	64%
Insufficient talent to fill roles where women currently dominate such as HR, marketing, operations	58%
Organisational culture would be harmed	52%
Staff morale would decrease	51%
Productivity would decline	41%
Profits would decrease (*private sector only)	(32%)
Base: All employers (*except private sector only)	

# Women at Work

## iv) Prevention and retention

Many employers are actively pursuing measures to attract and retain staff and encourage greater flexibility in the workplace. However, only 13% of employers stated that they had specific attraction and retention plans targeted at female employees. Interestingly, male HR managers (17%) were somewhat more likely to say that this was the case than their female counterparts (12%). Employers in the traditionally male sectors, such as accountancy (6%), TMT (6%) and construction (8%), were least likely to have attraction and retention plans for female staff.

Encouragingly, some employers are recognising the measures they could or should introduce in order to stave off this potential migration. More than a third (39%) of employers believed that more flexible ways of working, including the number of hours worked and opportunities for home working, would increase the proportion of female representation in the workplace.

A third of employers (32%) believed that more women needed to be recruited to a senior level to improve female representation. 31% recognised that clarity in pay was required, with 30% favouring improved support networks for women. 29% believed that increased clarity around role expectations was also needed, and a quarter would favour female success stories being showcased. Overall, nearly two thirds of HR managers (60%) believed that female representation in the workplace was not fully realised.

Sectors most likely to see further need for female representation in the workforce were manufacturing/engineering (70%), the public sector (70%) and TMT (68%). Employers in banking/financial services (46%) and accountancy (50%) were the most likely to believe that women were already well represented.

# Women at Work

**Fig. 14 Measures to increase female representation in the workplace**

Measures needed to increase female representation in the workplace	Proportion of employers
Introduce more flexible ways of working including number of hours and home working	39%
Recruit more women at a senior level	32%
Provide clarity on pay to ensure pay equality between the sexes	31%
Provide better support networks for women within the organisation	30%
Provide external career management programmes or training opportunities	29%
Increase clarity around role and delivery expectations	28%
Showcase female successes within the organisation	25%
Base: All employers	

**Fig. 15 Is there a further need for female representation?**

Employers believing female representation was not complete	Proportion of employers
Manufacturing/engineering/logistics	70%
Public Sector	70%
Technology, Media and Telecommunications	68%
Advertising, Marketing, PR and Sales	63%
Construction, Property & Infrastructure	59%
Legal	56%
Retail, FMCG, leisure & tourism	54%
Accountancy	50%
Banking & Financial services	46%
Base: All employers	



# Recommendations for Employers and Employees

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# Women at Work

## 6. Recommendations for Employers and Employees

### *Employers*

For many employers, the traditional '9 to 5' working culture is part of the fabric of the company. However, with employees leaving, or seriously contemplating leaving, the corporate world in order to explore alternative and more satisfying careers elsewhere – be that running their own business, working flexibly, working at home or studying – many now face the distinct possibility that a significant proportion of their workforce will leave for pastures new, making it increasingly difficult for them to fulfil their recruitment and retention quotas.

So, how can employers prevent the exodus of disenfranchised employees and ensure they are happy in their work and, therefore, more productive?

#### *1. Don't just pay lip service to flexible working*

There's been a lot of talk about flexible working, and most, if not all, companies have swiftly installed a flexible working policy. But how many are actively committed to it and actually encourage their workforce to work flexibly? Ensure that line managers understand the company's commitment to flexible working and are trained in disseminating information, managing requests and assessing the impact on other colleagues and productivity.

#### *2. Make flexible working available to all*

Not everyone wants to work flexibly because they have children. Some may want to care for elderly relatives, study or start their own business alongside their work for your company. Enlightened employers will realise that an employee who is pursuing other interests will be more happy in their work, motivated and more likely to 'work smarter' whilst in the office.

#### *3. Flexible working isn't just 'working from home'*

Most people think flexible working means being able to work from home one or two days a week. Yet there are other options, such as compressed working, job sharing or even enabling staff to start and finish earlier or later. With a little thought and planning, most employee requests can be accommodated.

# Women at Work

## 4. *Showcase success*

Success breeds success, so showcase examples of employees who work flexibly - perhaps in the staff magazine, on the intranet, or even on email – so that employees can see it working in practice.

## 5. *Target women when recruiting*

Use women in your advertising and target women's publications to demonstrate the advantages of working at your company to potential female recruits. Talk to and learn from other organisations that have tackled gender diversity in their recruitment and are now reaping the rewards.

## 6. *Ensure you have fair female representation at a senior level*

The higher echelons shouldn't be a testosterone zone. Female representation is crucial to ensure that the needs of the female workforce are met and understood. Actively encourage female promotion and provide clarity around role expectations and progression paths.

## 7. *Provide effective career management programmes*

Ensure that all employees are motivated and focused on where they are heading with their career and how they are going to get there. Regular meetings with a line or personnel manager will ensure that grievances are aired early and there is plenty of time to affect a solution to the satisfaction of both employee and employer.

## 8. *Build better support networks for employees within your organisation*

Some large organisations have a confidential staff helpline. Others provide staff with a personnel manager who is not their line manager, enabling employees to discuss problems with someone who is removed from their immediate situation.

## 9. *Help employees build additional skills to enable them to perform their job more efficiently*

Time management and assertiveness training are good all-rounders. Also ensure specific training suited to each employee's role is conducted annually at the very least. This will help them to be more efficient, to stay motivated and to get the most out of their job.

# Women at Work

## 10. *Provide clarity on pay to ensure equality between the sexes*

Female employees are hardly likely to stay with an organisation that offers preferential pay rates to men. Yet many organisations still have some way to go when it comes to offering equal pay.

### **Employees**

What can you do if you are dissatisfied with your '9 to 5' career?

#### 1. *Request a flexible working pattern*

Be quite clear what you are asking for and provide recommendations on how this will fit in with other colleagues and clients/customers. There are many different options available to you, from job sharing to flexitime, so try to find one that is mutually suitable.

#### 2. *Build a good relationship with your line/personnel manager*

Don't suffer in silence: speak to your manager about how you can make changes to your role or take on more challenging projects. You may find that it's not the '9 to 5' you are bored with at all – just what you do during that time. Most employers will want to find ways to accommodate you, particularly as it costs more to recruit a new employee than to retain an existing one.

#### 3. *Consider how you could do your existing job and pursue new challenges*

Following an alternative path can be financially daunting. Consider how you might study or start your own business alongside your existing job. Perhaps you could work four days a week, or finish a couple of hours earlier on two days a week?

#### 4. *Tackle your employer about female-friendly policies – or the lack of them*

If your employer is not particularly female-friendly, why not make suggestions as to how they can improve their approach to women? Can you start a discussion board or email group, which encourages employees to make constructive suggestions for change?

#### 5. *Network*

Speak to other women who are successful in the corporate world. How do they stay motivated and challenged? Consider joining a women's networking group outside your company – there are plenty of them around.



# Conclusions

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# Women at Work

## 7. Conclusions

Clearly, the way women are working and want to work is changing. The perception that earnings are limited, winning promotion is too hard a slog, hours are long and not enough women are represented at a senior management level has meant that an increasing number of women, with or without children, are considering turning their backs on traditional working patterns. The desire to actively seek alternative ways of working and escape the corporate treadmill is one that is becoming increasingly strong amongst women.

For employers, the cost of losing female talent to alternative career choices is both cultural and financial. As well as simply reducing the available labour pool and increasing recruitment difficulties, a lack of women in the workplace may damage organisational culture, decrease staff morale and, ultimately, reduce productivity. Employers may believe that they are providing sufficient flexible working, maternity and other benefits packages to maintain female retention – the problem is, it is female workers who need convincing.

Employers need to be seen to be providing flexible working opportunities in practice, rather than paying lip service to initiatives that do not have full endorsement across the board. Only one in ten employers has a specific attraction and retention plan in place targeted at women. Women are not calling for positive discrimination or double standards in benefits and provision; they want the principle of flexible or non-conventional working to be a reality for all employees.

Modern female workers have tasted corporate life and many have decided there are ways of progressing their career other than following a traditional working model. Employers are beginning to recognise the trend, but the realisation and, crucially, the implementation of preventative measures and solutions is slow. To attract and retain women, employers need to ensure they provide effective career management programmes, increase clarity around roles and delivery expectations and seek to improve female representation at a senior level. Without providing women with tangible role models and realistic alternatives, many employers could face the prospect of working in an environment more akin to the nineteenth than twenty-first century.

# Women at Work

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# Women at Work

## **Appendix A: Methodology and Sample**

The research was undertaken by The Survey Shop.

### ***Employees***

The sample was drawn equally from nine sectors of business activity including the public sector. The minimum organisation size was 50 employees.

Respondents were qualified as being in socio-economic groups A, B or C1, typically having a professional role and managerial responsibility. They were evenly drawn from the nine selected sectors of business activity -between 10% to 14% being from each sector. 21% of respondents worked in organisations with over 500 employees, 15% had 201 to 500 colleagues, 18% 101 to 200 and 45% 50 to 100.

1021 interviews, 516 with women and 505 with men, were conducted in the workplace, anonymously by telephone, during the period 21st August - 6th September 2005.

### ***Employers***

The sample was drawn from a cross-section of UK companies and public sector organisations. Quotas were set for business sector, and the minimum organisation size was 50 employees.

Respondents were qualified as having HR managerial responsibility and were evenly drawn from the nine selected sectors, with 10% to 13% from each sector. 25% were organisations with over 500 employees, 14% had 201 to 500 colleagues, 16% 101 to 200 and 40% 50 to 100.

500 interviews were conducted anonymously by telephone during the period 23rd August - 6th September.