

STRATEGY

A W2W Ventures Newsletter

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A Global View

When my husband was getting his MBA in Europe, our friends were from all over the world. Many of my new female friends had similar challenges to those I was facing. They often needed or wanted to work, but they also wanted the best for their children.

The difference between our situations was that their home countries often had better built-in support systems. From a paid years maternity leave, to government supported child care centers that are accessible and staffed by highly trained educators, parents are provided with a wider array of tools that allow them to maintain their professional lives while looking after their children. While it may take some time for the U.S. to implement any of these programs, we can borrow some of the successful practices employed abroad and apply them to businesses and individuals in the short term. This will be especially important as employers develop flexible work initiatives as retention tools.

If you have friends, cousins and colleagues who would enjoy hearing from W2W Ventures, please forward them our newsletter or send us an email with their name and email address.

Karen Sheehan

Stay the Course – Online Education for You

We know it is not easy to manage all of the needs of everyone else and still find time to research classes, let alone take one.

W2W Ventures has partnered with the top online provider of coursework with the goal of addressing both of these issues. With access to over 3,000 online classes, there is no commuting to school or juggling of schedules. From basic skills brush-ups for those re-entering the workplace, to continued skill development, classes are available anytime that works for you. Visit our education center at www.w2wventures.com/education/

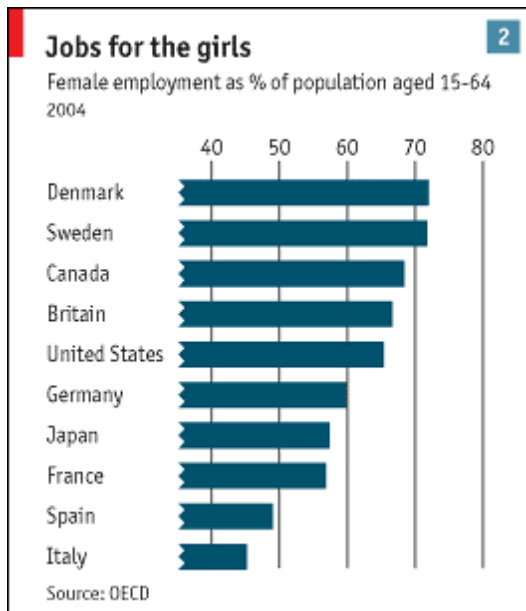
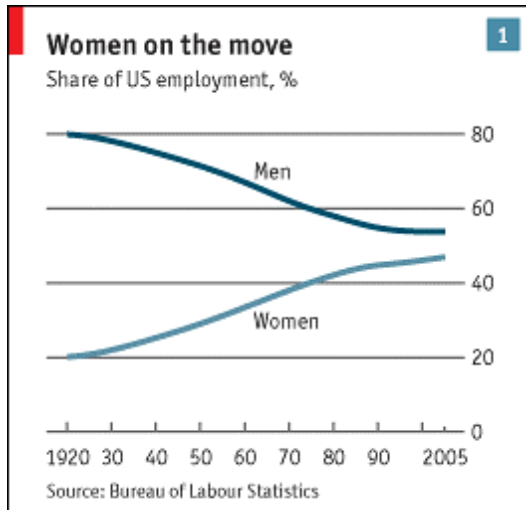
“Womenomics”

“The future of the world economy lies increasingly in female hands.”

The following quotes and charts are from the article “Women and the World Economy.” - The Economist’s April 12 issue.

- “In 1950 only one-third of American women of working age had a paid job. Today two thirds do... Since 1950, men’s employment rate has slid by 12 percentage points to 77%.”
- “In developed economies, women produce just under 40% of official GDP. But if the worth of housework is added (valuing the hours worked at the average wage rates of a home help or nanny) then women probably produce more than half of total output.”
- “It is misleading to talk of women’s ‘entry’ into the workforce. Besides formal employment, women have always worked in the home, looking after children, cleaning or cooking, but because this is unpaid, it is not counted in the official statistics. ...the increase in female employment has meant fewer hours of unpaid housework.”

Week after week we are seeing the importance of women in the market. By understanding these facts and using them in business focused proposals and conversations we can help our employers and managers understand the need to create flexible work programs.



Labour with a “U” May Have a Different Meaning

Since the mid-1990s, Tony Blair’s “New Labour” has attempted to identify and address the challenges faced by working parents. Five years ago the British Government introduced the “Work-Life Balance Campaign.”

In short, the British policy is this: any parent with one or more children under the age of six, who has worked at least 26 consecutive weeks, has the right to file a written request with his or her employer for a change in working hours. The change may include compressed hours, flex-time, telecommuting, job-sharing, shift-working, or staggered hours. The employee must explain exactly how the proposed schedule would work and offer solutions to any inconvenience that might be caused to the employer. In turn, employers are required to meet with any worker who has filed such a request within four weeks to discuss the proposed plan, and they must notify the employee of a decision within two weeks of that meeting.

While this seems fundamentally pro-worker, the policy is not anti-business. While workers may request a change in their schedules, employers are not obligated to approve the request. They may in fact refuse for a number of broad reasons, including the fact that an altered schedule would impose additional costs on the employer or harm a business' ability to meet consumer demand.

Today, the “Right to Request” policy is considered a great success by British businesses, workers, and the government. After the first year, nearly one-quarter of all eligible employees--approximately 800,000 parents--successfully reduced or rearranged their work hours. Out of all of the requests that were filed, 86% were granted either partially or in full.

Why is it working?

- It is a cooperative venture championing both businesses and individuals
- Businesses share their solutions (or “best practices”) for flexible scheduling
- There is a formalized process

Information in this article adapted from “The Joy of Flex,” an article by Karen Kornbluh in the Dec. 2005 issue of **Washington Monthly**

Surveys suggest that women make up to 80% of consumers' buying decisions—from health care and homes to furniture and food.