Are We Losing the Best and the Brightest?

Highly Achieved Women Leaving the Traditional Workforce
Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Choose 2 Lead Women's Foundation (C2L) conducted a qualitative analysis for the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration of the phenomenon of highly educated/achieved women leaving the traditional workplace. While the media has provided anecdotes on the struggles of working women, reports lacked an in-depth understanding of why women leave the workforce or specifics on how to retain them. In this report, we explore the issues and events that bring these highly achieved women to the point where they walk away from the traditional workplace.

The goals of the research were to determine the causes for women leaving the traditional workforce; understand how they spend their time currently; gauge their level of interest in returning to the traditional workforce; gain perspectives from current employees and employers; and offer observations.

This paper discusses factors that influence these women's career decisions which include the examination of workplace culture and practices. Major findings are summarized below.

Why are they leaving the traditional workforce?

These women's career decision-making processes are complex. Their decisions may be based upon several factors that range from generation to ethnicity, marital, family and financial status, and job satisfaction. Often, a life event (such as childbirth, illness or events such as September 11th) tips the scales and leads them to action:

➢ These women are not monolithic, but can be characterized as generally fitting into one of the following scenarios:

- always knew they would leave to raise children
- wanted to pursue an entrepreneurial path
- satisfied with their job but factors and events forced a decision
- dissatisfied with their job and factors and events led to their decision

➢ A critical factor in most women's career decision-making processes is job satisfaction, which includes workplace culture and practices.

➢ Many mid-career women desire job flexibility or predictable schedules, yet many careers are linear and jobs are one-size-fits-all, resulting in a mismatch between supply and demand.

➢ Many women could have been retained if employers would have restructured job requirements.

Interestingly, nearly all women made their decision to leave with an acceptance of the short-term financial tradeoffs, but they generally did not consider their long-term financial security.

How are they spending their time currently?

These women are making palpable impacts on themselves, their families and communities:

➢ Their activities include one or more of the following:

- are full-time care givers (for children, parents, grandchildren or other relatives)
- are earning a paycheck through consulting or entrepreneurial ventures
- participate in numerous activities that include volunteer work, politics, hobbies, health and well-being, mother's groups, and continuing education

➢ Over half of the women interviewed have started their own business and acknowledge that technology facilitates their ventures.

While some interviewees expressed happiness and fulfillment upon leaving the traditional workforce, others felt frustrated that their talents were being underutilized.

What is their level of interest in returning to the traditional workforce?

➢ None of the women interviewed that have continued to earn a living (generally self-employed) aspire to return to the traditional workplace.

➢ Most women who leave the workforce want to return to work, but would not go back to their previous employer and/or industry, citing fears of being "sucked in" and "losing all control" should they go back. Many expressed a strong desire to "make a difference" or "give back to society."

➢ Many women wishing to return to the workplace demonstrate a lack of confidence, outdated skill sets, a lack of a network to assist in finding a suitable position, concerns with explaining gaps in their resume; fear of surrendering personal control; and resistance to accepting a position with less compensation and responsibility relative to their last paid position.

What are employer perspectives and concerns as they relate to women in their organizations?

In a voluntary survey sponsored by Choose 2 Lead and the Society for Human Resource Management, member organizations were asked to identify the employee group that they were *most* concerned about retaining:

➢ Interestingly, employers are *most* concerned about retaining Generation X and Y employees, both women and men (37 percent); followed by Baby Boomers, both women and men (22 percent); women in general (12 percent); and women with caring responsibilities (11 percent).

➢ Industries that expressed the highest level of concern about retaining women were education, finance and professional services industries.

➢ During our interviews, employers noted the following concerns specific to women:

- the ability to attract and retain women in the future
- bringing back the women who have left the workforce
- women staying in the organization, but unwilling to advance

- low numbers of women in senior leadership roles

➢ Some organizations that employ knowledge workers are motivated to develop women's retention programs because they place a high value on diversity of thought and believe it provides them with a competitive advantage.

➢ Without compelling data, managers are skeptical of the relationship between pursuing employee diversity and achieving required bottom line financial results.

What are the perspectives and concerns of female executives?

➢ Some executive women expressed frustration as they perceive that a male-dominated, inflexible corporate culture can constrain their abilities to succeed. Several senior women told of being excluded from firm-wide leadership positions and even from key decision-making, which often takes place informally between male leaders during social gatherings on weekends.

➢ Some of the most senior women perceive that many women do not wish to advance.

➢ Technology has had an impact not only on the way people work but also where and when they work. Some women believe technology facilitates their success, while others feel as if they are "on the clock" 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

➢ Senior women interviewed sometimes feel overwhelmed by the hectic schedules they keep to fulfill their job responsibilities. Several would be willing to reduce their responsibilities and compensation.

➢ Several successful women reported that their attachment to the paid workforce was influenced in part by the degree of support they received, such as a spouse that truly helped significantly at home, employer acknowledgement of work/family responsibilities, and supportive, quality childcare.

What circumstances create barriers in the workplace to organizational change that would better support the needs of the 21st century workforce?

Our interviews with employers led us to conclude that it will be challenging to make significant and far-reaching changes to the workplace. Interviewees told us that acceptance and widespread utilization of non-traditional employment options is often hampered by various roadblocks, including:

- infrastructure (policies, practices and regulations)
- institutional culture
- limited experience in managing to the requirements of a diverse 21st century workforce
- lack of readily available business cases and models for implementation (such as data on return on investment, measures for productivity, and structures for alternative management practices).

Observations

In general, today's workplace has not changed markedly from the 1940's model for monolithic factory workers, despite radical changes in workforce composition and skills. In particular, our research suggests that highly achieved women often leave the traditional workforce because they

desire flexibility or predictable schedules, and most organizations are not doing enough to change practices and cultures to meet those needs. We postulate several reasons for this organizational inertia:

- A number of innovative human resources programs and research findings exist, but their impact has not been maximized.
- Many organizational leaders appear resistant to making workplace changes that offer innovative options to women.
- Policy, legal, regulatory and institutional barriers may be impeding progress in offering and implementing innovative workplace practices.

Although women's labor force participation has increased over time, and women are more educated than ever before, women's executive-level participation has lagged, and some talented women have left the workforce altogether. We believe that when highly achieved women leave the traditional workforce, this represents a loss of intellectual capital to the organizations that employ them as well as a potential loss to the U.S. economy.

Recent publications, such as *The World is Flat* by Thomas L. Friedman, address the significant implications of an underutilization of our country's intellectual assets, namely a loss of our national knowledge base and place as a global leader. While the potential loss of the national knowledge base and the impact of women's choices are beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear that the country can benefit by maximizing the talents of underutilized populations such as highly achieved women. (In addition to the needs of the working woman, the workforce demographics include an aging cohort that possesses its own – yet similar – needs.)

Ultimately, our research confirms that more highly achieved women would be in the traditional workforce if "work" and the "workplace" were redefined—including how, when and where work is conducted. Redefining "work" and the "workplace" is no small feat, and requires a coordinated effort by employers, educational institutions, interest groups, the government and individuals themselves. What is needed is *work/life leadership* to advocate for real and sustaining changes in how people maximize their time and talents.

Perhaps the recognition of a looming skilled labor shortage will combine with both the changing workforce demographics and a desire for enhanced global competition to create the "perfect storm" that is needed to facilitate true changes in workplace practices and culture.

INTRODUCTION

Journalists and researchers have addressed the purported mass exodus of highly-educated/achieved women from the workforce in academic journals and best-selling books, often concluding that career and motherhood cannot peacefully co-exist. What really is happening with this cohort of women?

To find out what is truly behind their exodus and to better understand their challenges and needs, the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration sponsored this qualitative study. Why is this issue worth studying? This issue has significant impacts on families and

communities. Furthermore, this is a social and economic policy issue of national significance as these women are a source of underutilized intellectual capital during a time when demand is high for knowledge workers. The composition of the workforce has drastically changed over the past forty years, and with women earning over half of college degrees, their participation should increase at all levels. However, unless reasons for their departure from the traditional workplace are addressed, the workplace will be challenged to retain them, thus putting a significant percent of their workforce at risk. It is important to understand what may need to be done to ensure that the U.S. optimally employs its resources.

This study explores what is going on in the workplace and in the minds of highly educated and achieved women to better understand why some leave the traditional workplace. It also provides a foundation within which to understand and embrace the needs of a changing workforce. Some employers offer non-traditional jobs and benefits because they realize that happy, productive employees impact the bottom line positively. However, these practices are not yet pervasive in U.S. organizations. Therefore, in this paper we explore incentives and barriers to more widespread use of non-traditional methods to attract and retain highly educated/achieved workers.

Project Objectives

The goals of the research were to:

➢ Determine the causes for women leaving the traditional workforce, the decision-making process that occurred, and factors that may have enticed them to stay;
➢ Understand how they currently spend their time;
➢ Gauge the level of interest these women have in returning to the traditional workforce and the factors that would encourage them in this regard;
➢ Understand employer and senior women's concerns as they relate to women's career paths;
➢ Document specific issues that cause women to leave or keep them from returning to the traditional workforce; and
➢ Understand workplace practices that form barriers to change.

In summary, the ultimate objectives of the project were to supplement existing research with qualitative data from both employees and employers, to provide a better understanding of the trends and to identify feasible avenues for improving the workforce participation and productivity of highly skilled women.

Methodology

Our approach consisted of conducting: focus groups with women that have left the traditional workforce; supplemental interviews with employers, senior women employees, and other stakeholders; and a literature search. Following the research, the draft findings and observations were subject to peer review to enhance the quality of the final report. Peer reviewers included senior representatives from business, academia, government, and interest groups.

Our initial focus group subjects were women who have chosen to leave the "traditional workforce," defined as: 1) full-time employment, 2) outside of the home, 3) for someone else, and 4) with compensation. These women have voluntarily departed the workforce for a particular reason (e.g. motherhood, caretaking or health issues). They may or may not plan to reenter the workforce in another traditional job situation in the future.

In late 2005, we contracted the polling company™, inc. to conduct formal focus groups with 38 women in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, GA, Chicago, IL and San Jose, CA and two in-depth individual interviews. Geographic locations were determined based on demographic data available that deemed the sites conducive and appropriate given the nature of intended participants. (For detailed information on focus groups and site selection, see Appendix A.)

All participants met screening criteria designed by the polling company™, inc. and approved by Choose 2 Lead prior to commencement of the project. (See Appendix B for screening criteria). Utilizing their extensive database, the polling company™, inc. sought out participants for each city. Women in the research were considered "highly educated" (i.e., they had attained a post-graduate degree, including, but not limited to MA, MBA, MS, MPH, JD, MD, DDS, DVM) and/or "highly achieved" (i.e., they were on a management, directorship, or partnership track at their previous places of employment and had responsibilities including supervising staffs and/or monetary budgets). It is important to acknowledge that the women interviewed for this research are members of a selective demographic group, with greater educational attainment and income levels than the majority of American women, and as such represent only a small minority of the overall female population.

To ensure diversity in our sample, we included Caucasian, African American, Asian, and Hispanic women as focus group participants and individual interviewees. Additionally, primary focus was on those with children, although we did interview several without children as well. We targeted highly educated and achieved women who formerly worked in both large and small firms, and from top management and those on track for top management. Kellyanne Conway, President and CEO of the polling company™, inc. moderated all interviews and discussion groups. (See Appendix C for interview questions).

It is important to note that information extrapolated from the focus groups was used to provide deeper insight into the experiences and attitudes of women leaving the traditional workforce. However, these findings are not statistically representative of a larger universe and should be regarded as working hypotheses, subject to verification by quantitative research and analysis.

Choose 2 Lead also conducted a series of supplemental individual interviews with women from around the country and was assisted with outreach by national membership organizations such as Mothers and More.

To capture the views of women who want to reenter the workplace as well as women who are climbing the corporate ladder, additional interviews were conducted with women who are making it work in the traditional workforce, including several who have passed up promotions, and women who want to reenter. To obtain clarity on business concerns, stakeholder meetings were held in the spring and summer of 2006 in New York, NY and Dallas, TX to gain the perspectives of corporate executives and human resource professionals as well as researchers and interest groups.

Throughout the project, we talked with hundreds of women, through formal interviews and informal conversation, to affirm and fine-tune our findings.

An ongoing literature review identified pertinent research and writing in the fields of women and work. (See Appendix F) Relevant findings and recommendations from these and other research works are addressed where applicable.

While an effort has been made to include examples of some of the positive change in the workplace, it is important to note that the primary focus of this study is on the causes and events leading to the exodus of these women.

Background

Over time, the composition of the U.S. labor force has changed drastically. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, "many economists credit the increase in number of women in the workplace as one of the most important forces shaping the economy over the past 30 years, influencing economic factors such as average family income, productivity and consumer behavior." (Workplace Visions, No. 3, Society for Human Resource Management, 2006)

Fast Facts on the Evolving Role of Women in the Workplace

➢ **Women are more educated than ever before.**

- Between 1990 and 2004, the number and proportion of degrees awarded to women rose at all levels. (National Center for Education Statistics, Projections of Education Statistics to 2015, 34th edition).

- In 2004, women earned the majority of associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees, 48 percent of all doctor's degrees and 49 percent of first-professional degrees (such as in medicine and law). (National Center for Education Statistics, Projections of Education Statistics to 2015, 34th edition)

- Since 1976, female enrollment in graduate programs has increased 106 percent while male enrollment has increased 23 percent. Females represented 46 percent of total graduate enrollment in 1976 and 59 percent in 2004. Between 1976 and 2004, female enrollment in first-professional programs (such as in medicine and law) increased 205 percent while male enrollment decreased 11 percent. In 1976, females represented 22 percent of total first-professional enrollment, compared with 50 percent in 2004. (National Center for Education Statistics, The Condition of Education, 2006)By 2012, women are projected to earn 56.7% of all advanced degrees in the U.S. This includes Masters, First-Professional and Doctoral degrees. (Facts about Working Women, Catalyst, 2003)

- Of women age 25 and older, 16.8 percent have earned bachelor's degrees (versus 17.6 percent of men), 7 percent have earned master's degrees (versus 6.8 percent of men), 1.5 percent have earned first-professional degrees (versus 2.5 percent of men), and less than 1 percent have earned doctor's degrees (versus 1.5 percent of men). (U.S. Census, 2005 American Community Survey).

➢ **Although women's labor force participation has increased over time, their executive-level participation has lagged.**

- Women's labor force participation rate was 32.7 percent in 1948, peaked at 60 percent in 2000 and was 59.3 percent in 2005. In 2005, women accounted for 46 percent of the total labor force. (U.S. Department of Labor, America's Dynamic Workforce, August 2006).

- The labor force participation rate of mothers with children under age 18 rose from 47 in 1975 to 73 percent in 2000 (U. S. Department of Labor, America's Dynamic Workforce, August 2006).

- Women comprised 42.5 percent of management, business and financial operations occupations in 2005, and 56.3 percent of all professional and related occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, America's Dynamic Workforce, August 2006).

- A study released in March, 2006 shows that women hold only 14.7 percent of all Fortune 500 board seats, and one in nine Fortune 500 companies has no women on its Board of Directors (2005 Catalyst Census of Women Board Directors of the Fortune *500*, March 2006).

➢ **Women-owned businesses are increasing.**

- The number of women-owned businesses grew at a faster rate than the number of U.S. businesses overall between 1997 and 2002 (U.S. Census, 2005 American Community Survey).

- According to a study commissioned by Solomon Smith Barney, Inc., the primary reason that women are launching new businesses is that they are inspired by an entrepreneurial idea. The next most frequently stated reason women give for starting their businesses is frustration with their previous work environment. Interestingly, over half (58 percent) say nothing would attract them back to the corporate world ("Paths to Entrepreneurship: New Directions for Women in Business", National Foundation for Women Business Owners (NFWBO), Catalyst, and The Committee of 200, February 24, 1998).

- A new generation of American businesses, so-called "Web-Driven Entrepreneurs," now make up 25 percent of all U.S. small businesses. According to a survey of 400 small businesses, conducted by MasterCard International and Warrillow & Co., a small-business consulting firm, Web-Driven Entrepreneurs are 25 percent more likely to be women and 25 percent more likely to be university- educated ("Web-Based Companies Significant Part of U.S. Small Business, Inc.com, June 7, 2005, Stacy Zhao).

- In 2002, 86 percent of women-owned firms had no employees, and nearly 80 percent of women-owned firms made less than $50,000 annually (U.S. Census, 2005 American Community Survey).

➢ **Some women lose momentum and earning power when they leave and then return to the workforce.**

- According to a Wharton survey of 130 professional women, despite earning MBAs that many thought would protect them, these women said they were rarely candidates for

executive jobs. After taking time off for motherhood, 61 percent changed industries, 54 percent had to change roles, and 59 percent took jobs with smaller companies ("Back in the Game: Returning to Business After a Hiatus: Experiences and Recommendations for Women, Employers, and Universities", June 2005, Monica McGrath, Marla Driscoll and Mary Gross, Wharton Center for Leadership and Change).

- A *Harvard Business Review* research report cites that on average, women lose 18 percent of their earning power when they step out of the workplace, and suggest this figure rises to 37 percent when women are out of the workforce for three or more years ("The Hidden Brain Drain: Off-Ramps and On-Ramps in Women's Careers", *Harvard Business Review,* March 2005, Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Carolyn Buck Luce, Peggy Shiller and Sandra Southwell).

➢ **Employers face a diverse talent pool and competition for workers.**

- The labor force has become more diverse as a result of progressively higher participation by women and immigrants.

- In 2004, Baby Boomers comprised 44 percent of the labor force and are expected to decrease to 33 percent in 2012. In contrast, Gen X and Y employees are expected to increase from 49 percent of the workforce in 2004 to 70 percent of the workforce by 2012. ("Helping employers secure advantages in a shifting labor market", The Kelly Intelligence Report, April 2005).

- According to research, while 76 million Baby Boomers are beginning to retire, only 45 million workers are available to fill their jobs. ("Helping employers secure advantages in a shifting labor market", The Kelly Intelligence Report, April 2005).

- The U.S. workforce will continue to increase in size, but at a significantly slower rate over the next several decades. According to a 2004 study, "the slowdown of the workforce growth rate may make it more difficult for firms to recruit workers in the future, especially in periods of more rapid economic growth." ("The 21ˢᵗ Century at Work: Forces Shaping the Future Workforce and Workplace in the United States", Lynn A. Karoly, Constantijn W.A. Panis, Rand Corporation, 2004.)

➢ **Employers are looking at a range of options to fill resource requirements.**

- Some employers are beginning to look beyond their employees to fulfill their resource requirements. As a result, there has been a rise in the use of "free agents" or consultants--employees that offer their skills to clients on a temporary basis.

- These free agents comprise nearly one-quarter of the U.S. workforce, and their share of the labor market is expected to grow to nearly 40 percent of the workforce by the year 2014.
- Three of the most important causes of this increase are "shortening of job life cycles, an increasing trend toward more project-based work, and the acceptance of the new work style" according to Carl Camden, President and COO of Kelly Services. ("The Rise of Free Agents: Thirty Million Strong…and Growing", A Kelly Services Report, 2005). Further, an increasing number of organizations are turning to resources off-shore, either because they can't find the human capital in the U.S. or to realize cost savings.

FINDINGS

Findings are presented from two perspectives: we present results of our data gathering from women that have left the traditional workforce and then we offer perspectives gained from employers, women currently employed, and other stakeholders. Where relevant, some data from women who are still in the workforce may be included in the findings of those who have left.

Findings from Women who Left the Traditional Workforce

The focus groups and individual interviews conducted with experienced professional women that have left the traditional workforce as well as those currently in the workforce provided answers to each of the key study questions. Illustrative examples are presented from the interview subjects themselves.

Why are they leaving the traditional workforce?

While there were a variety of personal stories and reasons for leaving, most highly educated, highly achieved women interviewed left the traditional workforce for one of four basic reasons:

> **Predisposition**
> There are highly-educated women who have planned to leave at certain milestones in their lives. Reasons most cited include marriage, child-bearing and or child-rearing years, and early retirement.

> **Entrepreneurial opportunity**
> Some women had great ideas for a business – either within their field or something entirely new.

> **Satisfied with their job but want to control their time and pursue non-career obligations or interests**
> A majority of the women stated that they needed more control over their time to effectively address personal obligations and a desire to "make a difference" to families and communities. Had there been an opportunity to adjust their working structure or schedule and still contribute in a meaningful way, many of these women said they would have stayed.

> **Frustrated with the workplace culture and their prospects for obtaining more flexibility**
> Many of the female interviewees told us that their workplace culture left them feeling like they had lost their ability to manage their time. Others said that they saw little chance of being offered the flexibility and control they desired. While there were often several factors for leaving, dissatisfaction with the workplace accelerated their plans and was often a key component of their decision.

Each of these factors is discussed below.

Predisposition

Whether influenced by their own busy mothers or simply having a desire to take care of their own children, some women left the workforce in early to middle stages of their careers. Many of them are not able to imagine what it would be like to put their children into daycare or to miss out on the

monumental developments in the growth of a son or daughter. Others, having reached a point where executive leadership was on the horizon, found alternatives more attractive and "retired" from their corporate life.

These women did not struggle with their decision, as did so many others. Their plans had been made for a period of time. Their decisions were clearly made within the context of the financial stability of the individual or family. Since many educated women marry similarly educated men, they often can afford to stay home on one income, support their husband's career and provide a stable family influence.

"I feel blessed. Grateful I was able to make preparations before I was pregnant; putting money to the side to tide the family over; blessed to be exposed to the proper planning information."
Ayanna, 33, former social worker, current stay-at-home mom, Washington, D.C.

"When my daughter was born, it was important to me to be there, that the neglect was not in her world."
Debbie, 48, former procurement manager, current stay-at-home mom, Washington D.C.

Entrepreneurial opportunity

Technological advances presented highly educated, highly skilled women additional avenues to leave the traditional workforce and start their own entrepreneurial enterprises. While some were launched because of a great idea, others were the result of timing and opportunity. Many women started consulting businesses after they left the traditional workforce – often due to requests from former clients, colleagues or even their former employer. Others totally switched gears and started businesses unrelated to their former careers.

"I'm a mother and started my own business for moms and kids. It's personalized, monogrammed, embroidered bibs, blankets – it's a boutique for babies."
Stacie, 33, former senior consultant, current small business owner, Atlanta

To clarify some of the complexity of why women leave, we separate these entrepreneurs into two categories (as depicted in Figure 1) – those who left because of an idea or plan and those who had made the decision to leave and the business came later, as the latter generally was a result of their leaving and not the motivation. Either way, even with the stress of running their own companies, these women stated that now they could control their time and produce on their own terms. It generally works for them.

"I started my own business. I have a husband who still works for somebody else and has his own business as well. We are trying to get ourselves financially situated… I do some freelance... I work three or four days a week… I have a schedule that I control…"
Stacie, 33, former senior consultant, current small business owner, Atlanta

> *"I am the owner of my own business. I love every minute of it. I don't miss anything about corporate."*
> Leila, 51, accountant, currently self-employed, Atlanta

Satisfied with their job but want to control their time and pursue non-career obligations or interests

Life-changing events, such as the birth of a child, an illness, and the attacks of September 11th, forced many women to reassess how they spend their time. They want to know that they are they making a difference. Specific *reasons* women most often cited for leaving their job include needing time for family and household management; raising children or grandchildren; caring for aging parent or relative; and personal health issues.

While not a significant population in our findings, small minorities of talented women were quite happy with their job but agreed to a family relocation that supported the career of the spouse, the primary breadwinner. Some also mentioned that the commuting time factored into their decision.

All generations interviewed appeared to seek more balance and control. Baby Boomers are choosing fulfillment over a high-stress workplace and Gen Xers are unwilling to compromise their life for their career. Many Gen Xers want to stay home to care for infants and toddlers while mid-career Baby Boomers want to spend time overseeing activities of their teenage children.

For many women, the constant struggle for work/life balance, the routine of the workday, and caretaking and household management at home resulted in their feeling a constant lack of control. Even when not actually working, their thoughts were focused on the office. They could not give less than their best to their employer, so it was *their own standards* that often acted as barriers to the more balanced life they craved.

> *"You have to make decisions, you have a soccer game to go to, and you have to choose between do I have to go at 6 and a conference call to do. When you are a parent, you have to make a decision: should I go to that, or should I go to the other? Even if your company is family-friendly, you still feel guilty because you are leaving a team, and you are the leader. Even if they say to go, you feel like you are letting them down."*
> Alelie, 50, former Vice President of Engineering and Manufacturing Operations, currently self-employed, San Jose
>
> *"I had it as good as it gets, and it still wasn't good enough. After 9-11, I quit. [When you are a lawyer] you put kids to bed and finish that memo. No one asked me to work more time, but you get relationships with clients and you feel as though you need to get things done. You are senior enough that you know what your client needs."*
> Chris, 38, former attorney, current stay-at-home mom, Washington, D.C.

For some in dual career households, it became an insurmountable challenge to continue to manage the competing requirements on their time at work and at home. Some women just didn't see a feasible option as they held middle- and upper-management positions, and therefore needed to be literally on the job to lead and supervise their teams. This sentiment was particularly prevalent in the high tech industry in Silicon Valley.

Others saw their employer as inflexible since most positions and career options are structured in a linear fashion and simply are not conducive to the needs of some female employees. Many organizations do not have more than one career track, (we spoke to only one organization where there were part-time partner tracks) which presents problems for employees who seek "the road not taken". This is particularly true in the legal profession, which has an up-or-out mentality. Further, many attorneys said that they didn't know what they were qualified to do if not employed in a law firm.

> *"Those of us who came of age (in the post-feminist era/80's/as second generation feminists) were discouraged from pursuing any of the traditional "feminine" professions; only later did I realize had I pursued one of those careers, I would have flexible job options and most likely would never have left the workforce in the first place."*
>
> Amy, 43, former attorney, current stay-at-home mom, Chicago

There were some that would have stayed if their job could have been restructured. Unfortunately, most women we interviewed either felt uncomfortable negotiating a non-traditional arrangement, or were refused.

> *"[I would have stayed with my last job] if they would have let me work part-time for straight commission. I suggested it and they would not even consider it a possibility. There were other people who had tried a similar thing, like job-sharing. Two women worked out a whole proposal and [the company] said no. And these ladies didn't want benefits either; they were getting benefits from their husbands. So they lost two great employees and me, too."*
>
> Barbara, 45, former senior telecommunications account executive, current stay-at-home mom, Chicago

> *A mid-level female public relations manager at a health services company in Durham, N.C. told us that her manager finally "allowed" her to take advantage of the flex time policy that was on the books once she celebrated her 10-year anniversary with that company.*
>
> *A senior female executive at a Washington, D.C. defense contractor managed a successful, productive group of professional women. Their jobs sometimes required long hours and weekends to meet proposal deadlines. This manager created a "culture within a culture" by holding staff accountable for end results rather than set hours in the office. One staff member left work early to coach her son's football team and then returned to work later in the evening. This manager's informal comp time policy allowed staff to take a few weekdays off after working all weekend. Not coincidentally, the retention in this group (we were told) was four times that of the average group functioning in this role.*

Some women who were able to successfully negotiate found that the demands of even a reduced schedule caused excessive stress – often because there were very few guidelines for them or their supervisors – to help these positions stay "reduced". Those that attempted to make reduced-hours positions work felt that they put in full-time hours but received part-time compensation, which prompted one woman to state, "There's no such thing as a true part-time job."

> *"It took me six months to come to terms with [my decision to leave the workforce]. I did try to work from home, but I couldn't do it. So a little part of me is still itching to get back, but the main focus right now is on my daughter. I don't think that I am ending my career, just putting it on hold."*
> Pearlie, 32, former attorney, current consultant, Atlanta

Ultimately, the support of the direct supervisor was the most critical component of successful non-traditional work arrangements. Several women talked glowingly of the situations they have created. Those who make it work generally have been able to negotiate proactively and assertively, relying on their past history as a proven entity with their long-term employer or have identified a niche within their organization where they can be themselves, often because their boss offered a more flexible, accepting culture than the organization as a whole.

However, for those that could not find or create the necessary circumstances, they felt that a peaceful coexistence or a less stressful lifestyle was the best option for all parties as they switched from "I can do it all" to an "I need to do it right" mindset. Thus many of these women expressed an overt willingness to downshift their lifestyle and "do more with less".

> *"I just realized I didn't have these kids to be raised by someone else. I was doing more and more intense litigation, which meant I had to run out of the door in the morning and usually not come home until 7 or 8 pm and see them for a little bit and then stay up all night writing briefs. I would bring work home on the weekends all of the time"*
> Mary, 37, former attorney, current stay-at-home mom, Chicago
>
> *"I can't remember when I bought myself something. … My children's happiness is my reward now."*
> Tracey, 33, former project manager, current stay-at-home mom, Washington, D.C.

Frustrated with the workplace culture and their prospects for obtaining flexibility

During the interviews, women stated they often used "family and other obligations" as their excuse to leave, rather than stating their true frustration with the workplace and risk burning a bridge. Discussions on workplace dissatisfaction ranged from "leaving 75% of who I was at the door" to "I can find more productive ways to use my time than to be constantly struggling with the good old boys" to "I became exhausted by consistently being judged on the number of face time hours on a project, and not by the quality of my work."

Women shared their frustrations about how and when work gets done, how they are ostracized by their co-workers or managers if they cannot work late hours – even if the company policies allow it, how inflexible some organizations are and their challenges in negotiating a workable schedule, and how most organizational cultures still reward face time over quality of product.

> *"The CEO [of the nonprofit agency] was an attorney; he had very strong work ethic—you are at your desk and you work. The [agency's] mission to provide services was all external and it did not extend to employees. I was always fighting for the rights of the employees and flex time issues, telecommunicating issues. [The CEO] wanted to see you there. He frowned on staying home with a sick child or taking all of maternity leave. It was a constant battle trying to get him to recognize the employees as an important asset."*
> Carolyn, age 53, former Human Resources manager, currently pursuing Masters degree in alternative health, Washington, D.C.

Interviewees at all levels of organizations shared concerns consistently that their supervisor needed to see them in their chair for long hours each day, and that this seemed to carry more weight than the work product itself, resulting in a feeling of always being "on the clock".

> *"I would come home at 9 pm, right when my kids were going to bed. I never had dinner with them…When I couldn't be in my office physically, I would bring work home, and do it after the kids went to sleep. Or I was calling Japan with my cell phone on the soccer field."*
> Chidori, 49, former business development director, current stay-at-home mom, San Jose

However, most interviewees indicated that the major cause of their workplace dissatisfaction was deeply rooted in culture and tradition. As they entered the workforce, little was done to adapt to their needs, much less their style of working. Some felt that flexibility in where, when and how work is accomplished is often viewed as an accommodation rather than as part of a standard structure for a workforce consisting of many dual-income families and single-parents.

Researcher Pamela Stone has also examined high-achieving women's reasons for quitting careers and, as in this study, found that work-related factors played the primary role in women's decision-making processes. Dr. Stone offers additional insights about the workplace: her research highlighted economic restructuring and resultant changes in corporate culture and management turnover as key factors in both accelerating workplace demands but also influencing women's disenchantment with their employers. ("Fast-Track Women and the 'Choice' to Stay Home," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November 2004).

> *"I was in a job in a large company … I had a boss that said 'I am not promoting you because you are a woman.' Those were his exact words. Some people choose to fight that, I said that is a waste of energy for me. I want to go somewhere where I can be productive….The politics and bureaucracy is a waste of time and gets in the way. You can't be productive and feel good about what you are doing."*
> Kelley, 46, former Vice President of Engineering, current homemaker with no children, San Jose

Interestingly, as women enter their careers, many are initially shocked by the environment, but then learn how to play the game and even thrive. One woman left the traditional workforce after 16 very successful years at a Fortune 100 company, and stated that she realized she hadn't been herself in years and that she could never go back. However, some women stay employed, but are counting their days. During our interviews with executive women, we heard their corporate views, and then they shared their private experiences.

Several women in senior leadership roles described with dismay stories where they were consistently excluded from key meetings or decisions—male colleagues often made decisions on the golf course or at weekend get-togethers. These women have one foot out the door and they believe their organization won't do anything to stop them from leaving. Some of these interviewees hesitated to speak to us because they weren't sure how it would be perceived in their organization– or they specifically asked for anonymity.

Many young women hope for, but cannot imagine a long-term career with their organization as they cite politics and traditional structure as inhibitors to their productivity and job satisfaction. A number of women still in the workplace are planning their exit strategies rather than planning to be in a "corner office".

> *"I was asked to interview for a job that would have been a sizable promotion. I didn't want it, but my boss told me that I should go ahead with the interview. The HR manager told me that they wanted me for the position, but I couldn't possibly take it, even though it was more money and responsibility. I would have had to leave my boss, who is great, to work with a bunch of good ole boys. I know I would have been miserable working in that environment as I have seen how they work. So I stayed where I am and am now recognizing that my next move may have to be outside of the company."*
> Anonymous, New York

How are they spending their time currently?

The women we interviewed used to spend 40- to- 60 hours of their week working according to someone else's rules. Since they left the workforce, they have allocated their time to better meet their own priorities and interests. Women leaving the traditional workplace have more options than ever before and even as some continue to earn a living, they are generally able to create a schedule that allows them to participate in additional activities. They are doing various combinations of the activities below:

- Caring for children/grandchildren of all ages
- Managing a household, taking the load off of a successful spouse
- Volunteering at school, church or community
- Placing increased emphasis on their health and well-being
- Pursuing hobbies
- Recuperating from illness/injury
- Caring for elders
- Continuing education
- Starting/running a business at home or onsite
- Independent consulting

Many women had converted a hobby, passion, or expertise into a business with a little bit of entrepreneurial spirit and a website. Women no longer must choose between traditional "full-time work in the office" or "not work at all". Women have more options outside of the traditional workforce today than they had just a few years ago–what women are doing now may not be considered "traditional" work, but it works for them.

Most women did not remain idle for long. They typically described their lives as filled with an infinite to-do list, filled by their marriages, children, health and exercise, work or volunteer responsibilities, errands and household duties.

"I don't understand people that don't work or retire and are bored. There is so much to do. I need to start being more disciplined and pick one thing to focus on…I'm always busy."
Kelley, 46, former Vice President of Engineering, current homemaker with no children, San Jose

Clearly, they are using their talents and energy to make palpable impacts on themselves, their families and communities. In fact, over half of the subjects interviewed already own or were just starting a business (the "new American dream"), or were an independent contractor, proving they could use their education and skills outside the traditional workforce. Most of these highly valued, skilled employees are "knowledge workers" who seek positions of "responsible autonomy" where the focus is on outcomes or products rather than time put in the office. Some refer to these workers as the "collarless workforce."

What is their level of interest in returning to the traditional workforce?

The majority of the women currently not earning a living indicated that they did intend to return once their care giving or other responsibilities were reduced or if they could find a situation that allowed them to adequately do both.

"If [going back to work] didn't require me to let someone else raise my kids, I would [go back]."
Laura, 31, former epidemiologist, current stay-at-home mom, Atlanta

Many women said they would pursue other opportunities or even return to school to find a job that would allow them to manage their lives and also feel satisfaction about their contribution to their employer. They also felt that they would be compelled to seek out smaller companies because they were perceived as more likely to accept a non-traditional job structure.

The majority of those interviewed who aspire to return to the traditional workforce would not return to their former employer or even return to their former industry. These women cited fears of being "sucked in" and "losing all control" should they go back to the traditional workforce.

"I can't imagine going back to work unless I had purpose. I am not sure I can in corporate America – I think I can do more as a volunteer."
Rachel, 38, former accountant, current stay-at-home mom, Chicago

"I'll go back. I need to be in the loop. I do find I am on the computer all the time now. I'm antsy right now. I'm not sure exactly what I want, or if I want to go back into the school systems but I know that I do want to go back."
Patricia, 38, former manager and administrator, current stay-at-home mom, Washington, D.C.

> *"[I might go back to work] somewhere down the road when my kids are back in school. I would need to have enough energy to be the mom I want to be when they get off the bus. It couldn't be demanding. If my husband and I are in a situation that I don't need to work to support our family, then I want to do something good, to give back."*
> Chris, 38, former practicing attorney, current stay-at-home mom, Washington, D.C.
>
> *"I probably could [go back] qualification-wise. But not physically or emotionally. I have a different mindset now. I know that I can do it on my own. I know there is life after corporate."*
> Eileen, 52, former executive, current consultant with no children, Chicago
>
> *"I plan to return to the paid workforce. Work for someone else? Never. I want to start my own business."*
> Cheryl, 46, former attorney, current stay-at-home mom, Atlanta

Those women who have become self-employed expressed no desire to return to the traditional workforce, but some confessed they would consider doing so to achieve financial gains.

> *"I'm the owner of my own business. I love every minute of it. I don't miss anything about corporate. I've studied everything that has changed in the accounting industry, I've learned how I can replace everything I had benefit-wise in the workforce…What do I need them [corporations] for? I can do what I like best, and I have replaced everything."*
> Leila, 51, former corporate accountant, currently self-employed, Atlanta
>
> *"Having your own business is very challenging…I have gotten to the point that I want to go back into corporate for security of having the big money, of having all the benefits and everything taken care of for you. I know I am going to have to give up time, which is still the biggest issue for me"*
> Debra, 53, former Human Resources executive, current small business owner, Atlanta

Women interviewed who have been out of the workforce for five or more years (primarily to raise children) were planning to reenter the labor market, but few had a timeline and none had specific plans. These women identified significant challenges and often exhibited a striking lack of self-confidence. They cited outdated skill-sets, lack of a network to assist in finding a suitable position; gaps in their resume; not understanding how they fit into today's workplace, and also a fear of being back in an environment where they surrender their personal control.

> *"I don't know which part of me to market…I feel stupid."*
> Sue, 48, former financial manager, Washington, D.C.
>
> *"It's hard for companies to see a big 'blip' on a resume and think that you haven't lost your skills. They are probably right to a certain extent; it may depend on what you are doing."*
> Rachel, 38, former accountant, current stay-at-home mom, Chicago
>
> *"I think a fear factor sets in over time. The longer you are out, the easier it is to stay out."*
> Cheryl, 46, former attorney, current stay-at-home mom, Atlanta

These women understood that by leaving the workforce, their career trajectory would be put in neutral, but many of them felt like it had actually been stalled or thrust into reverse. They don't expect to be rewarded for their time away by staying on the same track as those who have remained in the workforce for that time, but nor do they feel they should be *penalized* for their choices. They also aspired to combine work with personal passions and to make a difference by giving back to the community.

The business world makes little effort to maintain connections with employees who have left and few corporations have established policies for helping women return to their old jobs after time away. Organizations spend time and resources investing in these resources but yet don't attempt to keep in touch or woo them back. Women out of the workforce feel disconnected from the workplace as well as from peers. The women in the focus groups spoke of and demonstrated the critical component of connectiveness to one another.

> *"Why go back [to the traditional workforce]? I have talents in other areas. I can make it work. I'm married to someone with benefits. Why give up the flexibility you have? You have more control this way."*
> Rita, 51, former hospital quality assurance manager, currently self-employed, cares for elders, pursues Masters degree in Psychology, Washington, D.C.

In fact, after some of the groups, the women took it upon themselves to exchange phone numbers and emails to keep in touch.

For illustrative purposes, the following chart provides a simplified overview of the reasons women told us they left the workplace and our assessment of the likelihood that employer actions could retain them. The shaded boxes represent the largest opportunity to retain or bring these women back into the traditional workforce, in our opinion.

RATIONALE FOR WOMEN LEAVING AND LIKELIHOOD OF RETAINING

Basic reasons why women leave	Personal factors in the decision process	Workplace factors	Could they have been retained?	Will they return to the traditional workforce?	Would they return to their employer?	Obstacles when considering a return	Comments
Always planned to leave	Financial ability Long-term desire to raise children Early retirement	May not have been a factor	Highly unlikely	Likely	Unlikely	Outdated skill sets Lack of network Uncertainty of worth	Women in this minority may stay out longer, disconnect with industry
Wanted to start own business and/or consult*	Had great idea Needed more autonomy Wanted more schedule control Opportunity	Dissatisfaction may have been a factor	Unlikely	Highly unlikely	Highly unlikely	Will value their life and time control	Will return if financially necessary
Was satisfied with the job but events or series of events lead to decision to leave	Child care Elder care Pursue more education Relocation Illness/health Desire to give back Husband's job too demanding for two careers Need more personal time Too much stress	Wanted to stay, but workable options were not available	Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Won't keep in touch Once out of the workforce, will value control Skills will become outdated	Will accept position with smaller company and/or for less pay to gain flexibility and control
Was dissatisfied with the job and events or series of events lead to decision to leave	Any from above	Dissatisfaction - may include: Opportunities not visible Challenges with cultural differences Marginalization Didn't like job or boss Too much travel/too many hours New boss - rules changed Company sold or reorganized	Highly unlikely	Likely	Highly unlikely	Many of these women seek smaller companies or become entreprenuers	Many plan their exit long before they leave, as they do not see a future in their organization . Some event will generally tip the scale and they will leave.

Figure 1

*There is a distinction, as some women, after deciding to leave, became consultants or started their own businesses - often from home, however there were women who left because of their ideas and vision. In cases of the latter, the employer could most likely have done little to retain these women.

During our interviews, it was also interesting to note that nearly all of the women were aware of the short-term financial tradeoffs of their decisions, but did not generally consider their long-term financial security. Women could benefit by receiving information on part-time penalties and other financial issues that are intertwined with their career decisions.

Finally, while not the focus of this study, we heard a fair amount of anecdotal evidence from human resource professionals to suggest that many men would also like more control of their time, and it is not merely women that take advantage of benefits that provide flexibility. They also drew parallels between the value sets of mid-career working mothers and those interested in phased retirement, and noted a "work to live" mindset in Generation X and Y workers of both genders. Workplaces that design jobs to be flexible, yet still offer challenge and advancement will be attractive to many employees.

Findings from the Workplace

A fundamental theme that arose from the focus groups was that workplace culture, attitudes, and practices were critical components in women's decision-making processes. In subsequent meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders, insights were sought on business realities, ongoing research and other relevant activities. To gain perspective, we went to the workplace, including those bearing the badge of "best places to work" and spoke with senior leaders, mid-level managers and directors of human resources and diversity programs. We also worked in cooperation with the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) to survey their membership on their relative priority of retaining various cohorts of employees, including women.

What are employer perspectives and concerns as they relate to women in their organizations?

We found that the majority of human resource professionals and executives interviewed expressed concern about the availability of the necessary talent to meet their resource requirements, irrespective of generation or gender. In order to gauge business and industry's concern regarding retention issues for highly skilled and educated workers, Choose 2 Lead asked the Society for Human Resource Management to survey its membership. In June 2006, an e-mail survey was sent to 2,977 members asking the following question:

What types of demographics of high-skilled/ highly educated workers is your organization most concerned about retaining over the next ten years?

The survey provided the following choices:

- Generations X and Y (employees born after 1964)
- Veterans and Baby Boomers (employees born before 1964)
- Women in general
- Women with care giving responsibilities at home
- Men in general
- Men with care giving responsibilities at home
- Foreign-born workers returning to home country/emigrating to a different country
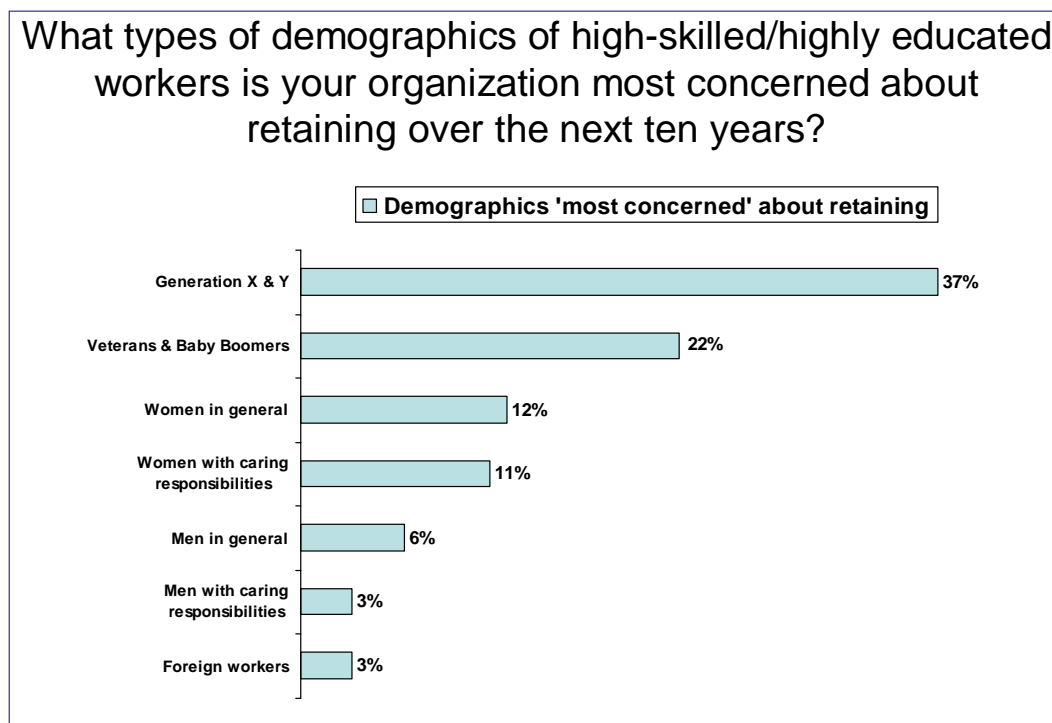
They were asked if they were "most concerned", "concerned", "somewhat concerned" or 'least concerned" about retaining each demographic group over the next ten years

Of the 2,977 e-mail surveys sent, 322 of the 2,699 e-mails received responded. Response was strictly voluntary. These respondents included human resource professionals in the following industries:

Manufacturing	19.0%
Services (i.e., hospitality or other services)	15.9%
Health	14.7%
Professional Services (i.e., legal, accounting, consulting, etc.)	10.9%
Finance	9.0%
Government	6.9%
High tech	5.9%
Wholesale/retail trade	5.0%
Education	3.7%

Given multiple choice, the survey indicated that the highest proportion of organizations are most concerned with retaining Generation X & Y employees, both female and male (37 percent), followed by Baby Boomers, both female and male (22 percent), women in general (12 percent), and women with care giving responsibilities (11 percent). (See Figure 2) (See summary of results in Appendix D.)

MOST CONCERNED ABOUT RETAINING

What types of demographics of high-skilled/highly educated workers is your organization most concerned about retaining over the next ten years?

SHRM weekly on-line survey: June 6, 2006   Figure 2

We found that certain industries are particularly concerned with retaining specific demographic populations:

INDUSTRIES "MOST CONCERNED ABOUT RETAINING" VARIOUS DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS	
Demographic Group	**Industries "Most Concerned"**
Gen X and Y	▪ High tech ▪ Finance ▪ Government
Baby Boomers	▪ Education ▪ Service sector
Women	▪ Education ▪ Finance ▪ Professional services

Source: SHRM weekly online survey: June 6, 2006   Figure 3

Further, there were variations in concerns based upon organizational size. For example, larger organizations over 500 employees were much more concerned about retaining women in general than organizations under 100 employees (17 percent versus 4 percent, respectively.)

Research conducted in 2002 by Families and Work Institute, "Generation & Gender in the Workplace," revealed that the younger generations, both female and male, are placing a higher priority on family over work than their Baby Boomer predecessors. Thus, the demand for non-traditional or less time-consuming positions is likely to increase over time. Several of our interviewees noted the younger workers' unique work ethics and values and felt that their organizations must determine new approaches to attract and retain younger workers that are predisposed towards independence and multiple job changes. In fact, some forward-thinking organizations are developing generation-and gender-specific strategies to attract, retain and advance employees.

To follow up on concerns expressed, we interviewed several senior industry representatives. We found that service industries, especially those that employ knowledge workers (such as consulting and banking) were particularly concerned about attracting, retaining and advancing women. Representatives from these industries indicated that their organizations value diversity of thought and believe it provides them with a competitive advantage. Employers raised several distinct concerns related to mid-career women which include the ability to attract and retain women in the future, bringing back the women who have left the workforce, women staying in the organization but unwilling to advance, and low numbers of women in senior leadership roles.

> *One senior woman at a consulting firm described the lack of women in senior firm-wide leadership teams, and her perception that male peers felt that "I was making a lot of money, isn't that enough?" She believes there is more competition as one approaches the top of the organization, and senior-level employees often abdicate their responsibilities to mentor and encourage others to advance.*

What are the perspectives and concerns of female executives?

We heard about various concerns throughout our interviews. The following are those most often discussed:

- Workplace culture, attitudes and tradition often present challenges to aspiring women
- Current job structures generally are not friendly to women (or men) who have family obligations, regardless of company "policies" on flexibility
- The use of technology has presented new opportunities for the way they work; some feel freedom while others feel trapped by the highly addictive communication devices
- Leaving one's career for any period of time appears to reduce opportunities and impact long-term earnings
- Many executive women were concerned that their female managers do not want to ascend to higher levels in the organization

In a study conducted by Catalyst, over half of the senior women leaders surveyed expressed their desire to get to the top. (*Women in U.S. Corporate Leadership: 2003*). However, we talked to several senior executive women who are frustrated with the current corporate culture and also feel isolated and ignored by male cliques.

> *One disenfranchised female senior VP stated, "The old boy's network is still alive and well, particularly at the executive level and on Boards…Anyone who thinks it's not a man's world is kidding themselves…Sexual discrimination has gone underground…"*

Many of the female executives we interviewed feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities and the amount of time it takes to fulfill them. Several women believed they could become more effective if their jobs were retooled. Others said that they would be willing to reduce their responsibilities and compensation.

> *One senior VP stated that she would be more effective if she could "peel off" some of her responsibilities to a seasoned, trusted employee (such as an employee at mid-career or nearing retirement).*
>
> *Another told us that it was impossible to ask one manager to both "run the trains and manage all of the projects".*

According to many of the employees and employers interviewed, technology has had an impact not only on the way people work but also where and when they work. Employers often provide technological tools to employees to facilitate their contributions outside of the office. Many employees cited use of cellular phones, personal data assistants, fax machines and computers as tools that allow them to stay connected with work regardless of their physical location.

An Executive Director of a foundation works part of her workweek from home. She told us that "…a huge impact for me and many multitasking moms is technology. Simply put, the cell phone and blackberry have freed me from office time. Some refer to them as electronic leashes, but I view them as kite strings allowing me to soar!"

Some women believe technology facilitates their success, while others feel as if they are "on the clock" 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Thus, technology has blurred the lines between work and non-work time. Keeping a disciplined approach to work is a particular challenge for high-achieving employees in responsible positions.

Interestingly, very few of the senior women we interviewed had taken time away from their careers to raise children. However, one woman did leave her career for a period, and raised concerns about her long-term earnings:

One woman in academia took eight years out of her career to raise her three children. "At the time, I was only concerned about whether we could make ends meet on my husband's paycheck. Now I am paying for it, as I am eligible for 40 percent of my salary in retirement pay, when I would have been eligible for 80 percent."

While some of the most senior women said they feel they are being shut out of true leadership positions, they also perceive that other women don't want to advance, which concerns them as well.

One senior woman at an aerospace company said that while she had an opportunity to move into a role she coveted, she could not find anyone that wanted to step up into her current role. She had several qualified women on her staff who clearly articulated that they did not want to make the sacrifices in their lives that she had made in hers.

Another senior manager in the hospitality arena cited a similar concern, as the company was struggling to fill management positions that most of their qualified female candidates were not interested in pursuing.

The interviews suggested that organizational culture, practices and expectations contributed to an apparent lack of interest in advancing on the part of some women. It is clear that this complex, controversial topic has significant implications for today's and tomorrow's workforces, and is ripe for further study.

Most of the executive women with children that we interviewed said that their support system was a key to their success. Many of these women have stay-at-home husbands or spouses that share a large proportion of the household load, and others have been able to make it work by relying on extended family and other stellar child-care arrangements.

What circumstances create barriers to organizational change that would better support the needs of the 21ˢᵗ century workforce?

Organizations that aspire to address the 21ˢᵗ century workforce often encounter barriers in the form of long-standing management and business practices. Acceptance and widespread utilization of "non-traditional employment" can be hampered by various roadblocks. These roadblocks or barriers include infrastructure, culture, inadequate management tools, and lack of compelling business cases.

Infrastructure Hurdles

Many managers reported frustration in trying to offer their employees or their direct reports more options within the confines of the existing organizational framework, including policies and regulations. They reported concerns in the areas of:

➢ **Competing internal demands**
An unanticipated finding was that line managers, human resource professionals and diversity managers acknowledged internal organizational tensions and conflicting agendas that serve to impede policy implementation. Line managers are held accountable for achieving bottom line financial results, a goal that is reflected in performance appraisals and compensation plans. Managers don't seem to be held accountable for the quality or satisfaction of their strategic human capital or the diversity of their teams on a consistent basis.

In contrast, human resources staffs generally focus on keeping organizations within legal constraints, and diversity staffs strive to enhance heterogeneity within their workforce. The most successful and diverse organizations have figured out how to keep all of these players on the same team with common, measurable goals, but we found that to be the exception rather than the rule.

➢ **Non-existent format for non-traditional positions**
Some organizations did not offer non-traditional or alternative jobs or arrangements; thus, some managers struggled with how to assign work to those that did not work a full-time schedule. Further, human resources departments are overwhelmed with dealing with legal requirements, and adding a simple benefit takes time and resources. Some company representatives stated that they didn't have anyone to focus on these issues but would have been happy to emulate a similar program or position if already in place and proven, and several managers told us that "ready-to-go" alternative work models would be very helpful to them.

> *One senior woman at an IT firm relayed that they had finally, after years of work with their HR department found a way to account for positions that were not FTEs. However, she confessed that they had not "spread the word" internally, as they feared many of their full-time employees would want to seek positions with fewer hours. She also stated that while they had the policy option, they did not have a work model in place and later, when she tried to hire someone part-time, they were never able to structure and complete the transaction.*

➢ **Managing human resources accounting issues**
Several interviewees relayed that it was difficult to hire anyone for less than a full-time position, as their budgets allowed for a certain number of full- time equivalents (FTEs). Others stated that it was the human resources infrastructure that prevented them from hiring part-time workers, as the payroll systems didn't accommodate them or they did not have a pay structure in place for part-time employees. Further, some small companies complained of the regulatory and legal constraints regarding hours and compensation.

➢ **High cost of insurance**
One physician noted that the premium for medical malpractice insurance was not reduced for someone working fewer days per month (we heard similar stories from law firms); this became a disincentive to hire female doctors seeking part-time positions. In addition, some human resources professionals told us that health insurance programs do not accommodate less than full- time equivalents, so the cost is either absorbed by the employer for a part-time employee or the part-time employee is not offered health care.

➢ **Legal and regulatory hurdles**
Some organizations struggled with how to implement certain programs, such as telecommuting. Working off-site raises issues of data security and workman's compensation – how to determine what was or wasn't a company liability. They did not have a structure in place to address these concerns.

Several years ago, a female executive created a consulting firm that employed seasoned female professionals on a flexible contract basis. The organization and employees thrived. However, the firm became mired in red tape because the IRS viewed her staff as employees rather than contractors, and she dissolved the organization.

While not the focus of this paper, one defense contractor told us of their strategy to rehire seasoned ex-employees that possessed the necessary security clearances and experience. However, they view regulations regarding pension and social security as insurmountable obstacles to rehiring experienced employees.

Cultural Concerns

An organization's culture and history were most often cited as major deterrents to creating a type of workplace that embraces non-linear or more flexible career options. While many innovative workplace structures have been brought about by enlightened leaders, there were numerous reports that "flexible benefits" were paid lip service and were not integrated into the workplace culture.

Clearly, the institutional culture has significant impacts on sentiments of loyalty and advancement as well. Specific issues raised include:

➢ **Direction from leadership**
It was apparent from interviews that successful implementation of any work/life program depended on leadership-level commitment and management accountability. Additionally, we found many organizations that employed diversity teams and/or mandated diversity training for their employees, yet these programs often seemed to lack a focus on diverse values and work

styles. Despite organizational rhetoric, participants felt that non-traditional work arrangements are often discouraged or even blatantly not allowed because of management resistance.

> **Management Issues Cited as Barriers to Flexible Work Options**
>
> - Senior leadership (predominantly male) didn't embrace the offerings or recognize a need to change the culture
>
> - The relatively low numbers of women in senior leadership roles and on Boards advocating for more aggressive workplace change
>
> - Even as flexible schedules were on an organization's benefits list, implementation was most often left to individual managers' discretion
>
> - There was no follow through or integration of flexible options, as it was deemed a "human resource" offering
>
> - Manager's fears that if they offered flexible benefits more broadly, they would lose the required level of productivity, as "everyone" would want to work less
>
> - Leaders (often with stay-at-home spouses) who did not consider the personal lives of their employees or their need to control the balance between work and other obligations
>
> - Lack of understanding of the differences between "flexible", "alternative" and "reduced"
>
> - A view that this is a "women's issue" and therefore not enough critical mass to warrant alternatives

➢ **Lack of focus on the individual**
A Dallas human resources association executive told us of a trend: outsourcing the human resources function. This is concerning as outsourced human resources staffs are generally not personally acquainted with staff and are compensated to complete actions, not take care of employees.

➢ **Job Structure**
Many women expressed frustration with rigid career paths and organizations' perceived lack of investment in professional development opportunities for mid-career employees.

> *One mid-level female engineer told us that, if she aspired to advance, she was told she must take on [unwanted] management responsibilities. She also noted that experienced engineers are rarely offered professional development opportunities or programs.*

➢ **Marginalization and resentment**
Those that took advantage of non-traditional arrangements routinely noted their perception of being marginalized by managers and co-workers – especially if senior leadership did not set an example of balance. Many individual managers and supervisors assume once a woman asks for special treatment, she is no longer a committed contributor.

> *A woman at a Fortune 100 company was told that she wasn't considered for a promotion because she worked two days a week from home and therefore was thought "not to want it".*
>
> *Another woman in the same company was expected to "step up" into a new role. When she decided the new role would take her away from her family too much, her boss stopped paying attention to her and invited her subordinates to meetings even though she was at the office.*

Some co-workers were reported to resent the work hours or perceived benefits of those attempting to work an alternate schedule – even when they were working full-time. This caused women to either leave the company, to give up their schedules, or to endure the ire of co-workers in a somewhat hostile work environment.

Human resource managers are careful to explain that flexible or similar benefits could apply to anyone, but acknowledged a perception of only being available to a subset of their employees: working mothers. It was interesting to note that most did not track how flexible or non-traditional benefits and arrangements were being used or by whom, but that human resources managers perceived that men were becoming increasingly interested in flexible jobs.

Our interviewees spoke of the challenges that managers face in meeting objectives, which often appear to be reflected in a culture that supports a "work until you drop" attitude.

Challenges in Managing a New Workforce

Successful alternative work arrangements require senior leaders' and direct managers' commitment as well as the ability to manage to a non-traditional model. As the workplace began to migrate from manufacturing to services, "widgets" could no longer be used as the productivity measurement, and face time and hourly billing were often used to replace these metrics. New ways to measure productivity are not uniformly established for leaders to fully invest in non-traditional work models.

Additionally, organizations may have flexible policies and offer innovative programs, but have yet to develop guidelines and procedures for their line managers to follow, thus, making implementation a challenge.

> *A mid-level manager at a federal government agency told us that her organization offers employees many flexible work arrangements. While she was happy to support her staff, her challenge was that she was not provided with tools or training to assist her in managing these non-traditional arrangements.*

We also spoke with academia regarding these training needs. Little has been done to teach skills that will help newly-degreed leaders adapt to the changing workplace: degree programs do not routinely teach how to manage remotely, how to redefine job responsibilities to facilitate offsite work, or how to manage different generations of employees, for example.

A single female manager at a large financial institution lamented that many of her staff were mothers and needed to pick up their children by a certain time each evening, leaving the workload to others. While we discussed that in an ideal world everyone should have an opportunity to leave by 6:00 pm, reality is that there is always more work to be done. She said that given a choice, when a project is assigned, she would choose someone that had the ability to "work around the clock". She also made a comment that she felt like she needed to adopt a child in order to have an excuse to leave earlier.

Challenges with Making the Business Case

Vital to any business decision is the ability to project investment returns. Unless leaders see a compelling reason to change the dimensions of the workplace, they will turn their attentions elsewhere. Organizations that have been leaders in innovation typically have had a strong rationale: some wanted to see more diversity on their management teams and client projects, some had a need to retain valued knowledge workers or customer contacts, while some were looking for an upper hand in recruiting. Whatever the motivation, the leadership was enlightened and motivated by the business need to invest in creating new programs. However, this has not been the case in many other organizations, as reported by our interviewees.

Employers can easily do the math when considering an outsourced venture or developing a project budget, using available full-time equivalent (FTE) and overhead costs, but there isn't a quantifiable model to address unique workplace structures. For many organizations, there isn't even a viable operational model they can consult for guidance. While much has been written about the benefits of providing employees opportunities for more balance in their lives, in an employer's view, the hard costs of developing and implementing this type of change can conceivably outweigh any projected savings.

Several reports in recent years, such as "Win-Win Workplace Practices: Improved Organizational Results and Improved Quality of Life", September 2004, Patricia Reed and Shirley Clark and "Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion", November 2005, Corporate Voices for Working Families, have reported the associations between workplace practices and improved business results. However, in this study, researchers found that the link between alternative practices and profitability is not universally known or accepted by organizations across the country. Furthermore, human resources managers spoke of the challenges in this competitive environment to add the resources required to design and administer new programs, even if they could be shown to yield positive results.

How are organizations responding to the changing workforce and what practices have positive results?

As discussed previously, this paper focuses on issues and barriers to creating a more equitable workplace. However, to maintain some perspective, it is necessary to understand how some organizations have responded to the challenges.

Indeed, some organizations have made significant strides in providing options to working women. There are hundreds of companies that submit themselves for consideration on one of the "best places" lists published in popular magazines such as *Fortune*, *Working Mother* and *Computerworld*.

Some organizations have adopted win-win recruiting and retention programs for employees in general, while others have focused on strategies to retain women or on creative uses for retired workers and alumni employees. Some of the innovations identified include the following:

- Targeted recruiting and innovative hiring strategies to gain competitive advantage through diversity
- Using retirement-age workers as part-time mentors
- Alumni staff to fill interim resource needs as contractors
- Job banks and seminars to match non-traditional workers with non-traditional positions
- Exclusively local client focus to minimize travel
- Encouraging and rewarding team and product approaches to projects, irrespective of hours or work location
- Allowing employees to complete full-time hours within a 24-hour block at times desired
- Working cooperatively with community colleges to train potential employees for specific skilled positions, including teacher certification programs for non-teacher professionals

It is interesting to note that many organizations are relying on conventional methods versus innovation to retain their workforce. SHRM researchers found that their member organizations planned to address challenges associated with the changing workforce principally through training and skills development.

ACTIONS RELATED TO DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS/AGING WORKFORCE THAT ORGANIZATIONS/HR PROFESSIONALS ARE TAKING OR ARE PLANNING TO TAKE	Are Taking	Plan to Take
Investing more in training and development to boost skills levels of employees	62%	21%
Training line managers to recognize and respond to generational differences	35%	28%
Changing employment practices to avoid charges of age discrimination	32%	11%
Carrying out studies to determine projected future retirement rates in the organization	30%	20%
Changing health care policies and plans due to projected demographic changes	30%	24%
Offering customized benefits packages to all employees	30%	15%
Offering employment options designed to attract and retain Generations X and Y	27%	16%
Changing retirement policies and plans due to projected demographic changes	24%	18%

Source: SHRM 2006 Workplace Forecast   Figure 4

Innovative programs and approaches are highlighted in the following examples:

> *An anesthesiologist in private practice bemoaned the physician shortage. Out of sheer necessity to fulfill his resource requirements, he has decided to create a new type of position that does not include the typical on-call shift. Compensation would be adjusted accordingly. He hopes that the reduced responsibilities/hours model will be attractive to female physicians that are job-hunting.*
>
> *An aerospace company is using part-time-on-call positions as an approach to manage workload surges. Often, these positions are outsourced to former employees on a contract basis.*

> *The Director of Work/Life programs for a software company indicates that knowledge of the individual's "whole life situation" is critical to providing tools and practices to allow employees to best meet the demands in all areas of their lives. This successful "humanistic" approach has contributed to the continued low turnover rates of employees.*
>
> *A Director of HR for an aerospace company has a small, all-female staff, and several work a reduced hour schedule. She believes these women are the most productive and appreciative staff members because they do what it takes to get the job done and they are happy to have found a supportive, rewarding, team-oriented situation that works for them. This executive demonstrated a strong attachment to her team, stating emphatically, "I'd take a bullet for any one of them".*

Several initiatives introduced over the last few years include programs to

Retain their talents…

Booz Allen Hamilton's Adjunct Program
Booz Allen Hamilton has created a new employee category for adjunct workers, which enables former full-time employees to work on a contract basis. It also gives them the option to return as a full-time employee at some point in the future. While in adjunct status, staff will be given performance appraisals for their project work, have access to high level career planning and mentoring, and have the ability to maintain internal and external networks. Additionally, they could be eligible for partial benefits.

Deloitte & Touche Career Customization Program
Deloitte & Touche is developing an innovative approach for knowledge-driven companies and professional services firms to recast how they manage work/life trade-offs faced by their employees. The approach, called Mass Career Customization, is a framework that encourages employees to customize their career paths -- in terms of intensity, roles and locations -- to better match the realities of what is going on at any given period in their personal lives *and* their careers. While one-off arrangements that address work/life trade-offs are common in many companies and firms, Mass Career Customization creates a unified, consistent and scalable solution.

Emphasize productivity over face time…

Best Buy's Result-Only Work Environment (ROWE)
In 2001, Best Buy surveyed its Minnesota corporate headquarters employees and received some distressing results: employees perceived that managers did not trust them to get their work done, and they felt constrained in their abilities to live healthy, happy productive lives. As a result, Best Buy initiated the Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE) program the following year. The goals of this radical experiment were to "reshape the corporate workplace, achieve an unparalleled degree of work/life balance and redefine the very nature of work itself." Essentially, employees can decide how, when and where they get their job done. The only yardstick for evaluating employees is whether they meet goals for productivity.

Instead of forcing the entire organization to convert simultaneously, Best Buy is allowing departments or teams to gradually migrate to the new work model. The conversion process takes about six months. The first phase is leadership training, followed by team training, a six week pilot test, and a debriefing. Best Buy's ROWE teams' productivity increased by 35 percent, and they have 3.2 percent less voluntary turnover than non-ROWE teams. As it continues its roll-out, Best Buy also is in the process of marketing the system to other companies. ("Throwing Out the Rules of Work," Patrick J. Kiger, *Workforce Management*, September 25, 2006)

Facilitate transitions back into the workforce…

Pepperdine University's Morning MBA Program
In March 2006, Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business and Management announced its new Morning MBA program. The program is the first of its type aimed primarily at women who want to return to the workplace with their MBA and a new skill set focused on leadership and real-world business problems. The Morning MBA is a 28-month program with a seven-week break during each of the two summer sessions. Twice-a-week morning MBA classes emphasize an innovative, hands-on, experiential, practical, and results-oriented approach. The curriculum emphasizes real-world applications taught in small, collaborative classes averaging 30 or fewer students. The university also provides career support including personal executive career coaching, and is seeking companies to offer scholarships to offset students' tuition costs.

Allow employees to propose their own structures…

Network Appliance's leadership
Network Appliance, Inc. prides itself on being process light. This has enabled an environment open to innovation and not bogged down by infrastructure. The enlightened management has a simple vision which supports workers and their families.

This organization has successfully allowed their employees to telecommute, job-share and work flexible hours. Their programs are not formal, but their culture supports the individual manager's decisions on these issues.

Using performance appraisals to ensure results…

> **Marriott International's Inclusive Management**
> Marriott International is an example of a company incorporating a leadership culture that contributes to the success of the programs. In addition to the broad menu of available benefits, the managers and supervisors are strongly encouraged to cooperate fully with associates in crafting job schedules and work plans that help all associates achieve a good balance between their professional and personal lives. This commitment is further shown by their leadership through the use of consultants to implement and measure work redesign options, a booklet entitled "Alternative Work Arrangements: A Guideline for Workplace Flexibility" distributed to help managers and their associates craft flexible work schedules, and the results of employee satisfaction surveys incorporated into managers' compensation.

Spread the word….

> **Great Place to Work Institute, Inc.**
> In addition to formatting and compiling the data for *Fortune*'s "100 Best Companies to Work For,"® Great Place to Work® Institute follows through on what it learns. Not only does it employ many of the flexible practices within its own ranks, but works diligently to share best practices and results with organizations world wide. One such practice includes a series of networking calls they facilitate with organizations to share and promote best practices. Information and content from these calls can be found on their website http://www.greatplacetowork.com/education/articles.php.

OBSERVATIONS

Throughout the interviews, women discussed the challenges of the workplace and of integrating their career with their personal lives. While there were commonalities, each woman had her own story. In particular, our research suggests that highly achieved women often leave the traditional workforce because they desire flexibility or controllable schedules, and most organizations are not doing enough to meet this need.

In addition to the excessive time demands of most skilled positions, women spoke of challenges fitting into a "male-dominated, inflexible corporate culture". Many women we interviewed determined that stepping back or starting their own businesses were the only options for them to address these challenges. So while women left their senior positions, they may still be working in some capacity, either at less responsible positions or utilizing very different skills than their education and experience provided.

These findings suggest that the talents of many highly achieved women are being underutilized, and unnecessarily so: more of these women would have stayed in, or want to return to, a workplace that embraces and respects their desire to have control over how they allocate their time. More talented women would be in the traditional workforce if "work" and the "workplace" were redefined—including how, when and where work has to be conducted.

Redefining "work" and the "workplace" for the 21st century workplace is no small feat, and on a wide scale would require a coordinated effort from employers, educational institutions, interest groups, the government and employees themselves. In general, today's workplace has not changed markedly from the 1940's model of monolithic factory workers, despite radical changes in workforce composition and skills. However, it is important to note that some innovative approaches to retaining highly achieved women are underway at select organizations in the U.S. The retention programs highlighted in this paper range from emphasizing employee results over face time, tying managers' compensation to employee satisfaction, and encouraging employees to customize their career paths. While trends point to an increase in innovative workplace practices and increasing numbers of "diversity" or "work/life" divisions in some industries and organizations, the results are varied and widespread change is not occurring.

Our research suggests that three areas of significant outreach could improve the success of building a sustainable workplace for the 21st century worker: leveraging existing innovative programs, delivering a more compelling business case, and working to overcome the roadblocks created by organizational and regulatory policies.

> ### Leveraging existing innovative programs to attract, retain or bring back highly achieved women

> *A number of innovative human resources programs and research findings exist, but their impact has not been maximized.*

> Magazines and "best' lists provide high-level information about programs and offerings of more flexible or innovative work structures. However, implementation tactics, costs and practices are not readily available for replication. Further, organizational managers (as opposed to human resources staff) may be too focused on the bottom line to seek out cutting-edge programs and practices. Several managers mentioned that they could benefit from models and information, but acknowledged they lack the time or resources to look for tailored and useful business cases, models or replicable programs.

> ### Making the business case

> *Many organizational leaders appear resistant to making workplace changes that have an unknown implementation cost, operational impact or bottom-line benefit.*

> Clearly, business leaders require a compelling business case prior to investing the time and effort required to offer new ways to for their employees to work. From our interviews, we learned that a driving force behind innovation is high attrition rates coupled with limited replacement resources, particularly for many accounting and consulting firms that employ knowledge workers and seek competitive advantage. However, for leaders of organizations not yet facing these challenges, the business case is more challenging to present, as the short-term benefits may not be as quantifiable. Information on implementation costs and financial results of existing programs, as well as the data from studies or pilot demonstrations would no doubt prove beneficial in making a stronger case.

Additional support for changes in work practices could come from line managers or direct supervisors. However, new practices often demand new management skills. Some managers we interviewed were challenged to implement even the most basic flexibility programs, as they were not given the tools or training to be effective. Managers told us that specific tools would be welcomed as they strive to offer a more balanced workplace.

> **Overcoming organizational and regulatory roadblocks**

Policy, legal, regulatory and institutional barriers may be impeding progress in offering and implementing innovative workplace practices for women.

Some interviewees indicated that certain policies and practices impede their abilities to offer innovative work structures. These barriers include organizational policies and procedures such as accounting for salaries and benefits in new ways or metrics to manage for productivity over face time, as well as regulations regarding such benefits as insurance and retirement for other than full-time traditional workers.

Although women's labor force participation has increased over time, and women are more educated than ever before, women's executive-level participation has lagged, and some talented women have left the workforce altogether. This presents two losses: the first being the lack of female leaders advocating for more aggressive workplace change, and the second a loss of intellectual capital to those organizations and to the U.S. economy. These losses have not been quantified and therefore no compelling statistics are available to further an economic case for the changes needed to retain and promote these women.

However, recent publications, such as *The World is Flat* by Thomas L. Friedman, address the significant implications of an underutilization of our country's intellectual assets, namely a loss of our national knowledge base and place as a global leader. While the potential loss of the national knowledge base and the impact of women's choices are beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear that the country can benefit by maximizing the talents of underutilized populations such as highly achieved women. (In addition to the needs of the working woman, the workforce demographics include an aging cohort that possesses its own – yet similar – needs.)

Facilitating when, where and how work gets done in the 21st century will require informed efforts from employer and employee. What is needed is a collaborative *work/life leadership* effort that will advocate for real and sustaining changes in how people maximize their time and talents. Perhaps the recognition of a looming skilled labor shortage will combine with both the changing workforce demographics and a desire for enhanced global competition to create the "perfect storm" that is needed to facilitate true changes in workplace practices and culture.

APPENDIX A

Detailed Focus Group Methodology

The research featured several qualitative research methodologies in four targeted cities across the country during September and October 2005. Geographic locations were determined based on demographic data available that deemed the sites conducive and appropriate given the nature of intended participants (see Site Selection).

➢ *Washington, DC* – September 21, 2005: one in-depth interview at 10:00 AM EST, one 2-hour focus group at 11:00 AM EST with 11 women

➢ *Atlanta, GA* – October 14, 2005: two 1-hour mini-focus groups at 12:30 PM EST with 5 women and 2:00 PM EST with 3 women

➢ *Chicago, IL* – October 25, 2005: two 1-hour mini-focus groups at 1:00 PM CST with 4 women and 2:30 PM CST with 4 women, one in-depth interview at 4:00 PM CST.

➢ *San Jose, CA* – October 26, 2005: two 1-hour mini-focus groups at 11:00 AM PST with 4 women and 12:30 PM PST with 5 women

Kellyanne Conway, President and CEO of **the polling company™, inc.** moderated all interviews and discussion groups. Mrs. Conway was assisted in the planning and execution of this project by Karen Smith, Director of Special Projects.

All participants met screening criteria designed by **the polling company™, inc.** and approved by **Choose 2 Lead** prior to commencement of the project. For the first segment of research in Washington, DC, the following criteria were used to recruit participants for one in-depth interview and one two-hour focus group.

- 28-55 years old
- Self-employed or otherwise not earning a paycheck from someone else
- Had been in the traditional workforce in the past
- Not currently trying to return to the traditional workforce
- Either "highly achieved" (in their previous position were on track to be a manager, director or partner, supervised a staff of two or more people, or responsible for a monetary budget) or "highly educated" (had a post-graduate degree)

After the first segment of research, screening criteria were altered to focus on a smaller and more specific universe of women. As such, the research methodology was also adapted, taking the form of two smaller, more focused group discussions that were approximately one hour in length and consisted of four to five women rather than a single large discussion, and one additional in-depth interview.

As such, participant qualifications included:

- 31-55 years old
- Self-employed (no more than three per group) or otherwise not earning a paycheck from someone else
- In the traditional workforce in the past
- College or post-graduate degree
- Was a doctor, lawyer, banker/financial advisor, accountant, senior-level consultant, corporate/business executive/director, engineering/defense/ aerospace executive/VP/director, or other executive-level position
- In their occupation at least seven years, or three to six years if they had a post-graduate degree
- "Highly achieved" (in their previous position were on track to be a manager, director or partner, supervised a staff of two or more people, or responsible for a monetary budget)
- Left the traditional workforce less than 10 years ago
- Not more than one woman who had always planned on leaving the workforce after having children

CAUTION ON GENERALIZATION

The information extrapolated from these focus group sessions represents the attitudes and opinions of a small number of respondents and is not statistically representative of a larger universe. These findings should be regarded as working hypotheses, subject to verification by quantitative research and analysis.

Site Selection

➢ **Washington, District of Columbia**
  The nation's capital was tapped to begin the research for multiple reasons. Participants were drawn from Virginia, Maryland, and the District, representing the region's distinct demography. In the greater DC Metro Area, the median household income is $68,229, and 42% of adults hold at least a bachelor's degree.

  With the United States government as the region's largest employer, certain occupations were represented that were otherwise absent in other research locations.

➢ **Atlanta, Georgia**
  Atlanta, a city ripe with Southern culture and heritage, was selected for a different perspective from women toward work-life balance, even though some 44% of people who live in metro Atlanta were born (and often schooled) north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Two-thirds (66%) of the overall population aged 16 years or older are in the labor force, compared to 62% of Atlanta women 16 or older.

Almost 30% of households with children under the age of 18 have at least one parent who is not working. The average household income in the Peach City is $32,635.   It is a growing city that has not yet become a prohibitively expensive place to live. Atlanta has both international appeal (the city served as the host of the 1996 Olympic Games), and a collection of sprawling suburbs that allow for true family living.

➢ **Chicago, Illinois**
The Windy City comprised the Midwest portion of research. Chicago boasts a strong financial industry, coupled with a metropolitan locale and accessible outlying suburbs. While 64% of residents over the age of 16 work, only 58% of Chicago women in the same age category do so. Therefore, nearly 42% of women in the city are not currently in the workforce. The median household income is $40,879, with women who work full-time earning an average of $32,320.

➢ **San Jose, California**
For a West Coast location, San Jose, California was chosen. San Jose is the third largest city in California, following Los Angeles and San Diego, and the 10th largest city in the U.S. The area is home to the greatest concentration of technology expertise in the world—more than 6,600 technology companies employing more than 254,000 people.

San Jose also has a slightly higher percentage of women over the age of 16 who are not in the workforce than the nearby city of San Francisco.   Nearly seven-in-ten residents (69%) are employed, yet only 60% of women work outside the home. The average household earns $70,240 per year, with women who work full-time bringing in $42,501.

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Screener

Wednesday, September 21, 10 AM EST - IDI
Wednesday, September 21, 11 AM EST – Focus group

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT SCREENER – WASHINGTON, DC

Hello, may I please speak to_____? My name is _____and I am calling from the polling company™, a national research firm headquartered in Washington, DC. We are conducting a discussion group with women like you and I'd like to ask you a few questions. I assure you that we are not trying to sell you anything, and all of your responses will remain confidential unless you direct otherwise.

SCREENER QUESTIONS
SPEAK WITH WOMEN ONLY

A. Have you ever or does anyone currently in your immediate family work for in any of the following industries? (READ LIST)
      1 ADVERTISING (TERMINATE)
      2 PUBLIC RELATIONS (TERMINATE)
      3 MARKETING, MARKET RESEARCH (TERMINATE)

B. When is the last time you participated in a market research discussion group? (If within the past six months, please terminate)
      1 LESS THAN ONE MONTH AGO (TERMINATE)
      2 1-3 MONTHS AGO (TERMINATE)
      3 3-6 MONTHS AGO
      4 6-9 MONTHS AGO
      5 8-10 MONTHS AGO
      6 10-12 MONTHS AGO
      7 OVER A YEAR AGO

1. Could you please tell me how old you are? _____(WRITE EXACT AGE) (RECRUIT MIX) If refused, in what year were you born? _____ (NOTE TERMINATES)
      1 18-27 (TERMINATE)
      2 28-35
      3 36-45
      4 46-55
      5 56+ (TERMINATE)

2. Which of the following categories best describes your current work or school status? (READ AND ROTATE)
    1 WORK FOR SOMEONE OTHER THAN YOURSELF FULL- OR PART-TIME (TERMINATE)
    2 SELF-EMPLOYED/SMALL BUSINESS OWNER (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 5 PER GROUP)
    3 NOT CURRENTLY IN THE TRADITIONAL WORKFORCE
    4 STUDENT (TERMINATE)
    5 RETIRED (TERMINATE)

3. Prior to your current situation, have you ever been in the traditional workforce that is, earning a paycheck from someone other than yourself?
    1. YES
    2. NO (TERMINATE)
    3. DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (TERMINATE)

4. How long ago did you leave the traditional workforce? (READ AND ROTATE)(RECRUIT A MIX)
    1 LESS THAN ONE YEAR
    2 1-2 YEARS
    3 3-5 YEARS
    4 5-10 YEARS
    5 MORE THAN 10 YEARS
    6 DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (DO NOT READ)
    Interviewer note: We are looking to recruit a mix of highly achieved and/or highly educated women.

HIGHLY ACHIEVED WOMEN

5. Which of the following statements is most true for you personally? (READ AND ROTATE) (RECRUIT A MIX)
    1 I NEVER TRIED TO GET BACK INTO THE WORKFORCE
    2 I DID TRY TO GET BACK INTO THE WORKFORCE, BUT NOW CHOOSE TO STAY HOME
    3 I AM STILL TRYING TO GET BACK INTO THE WORKFORCE (IF THE RESPONDENT HAS BEEN OUT OF WORKFORCE 3 OR MORE YEARS, CONTINUE, IF NOT, TERMINATE)
    4 I AM NOT CURRENTLY TRYING TO GET BACK INTO THE WORKFORCE BUT PLAN TO SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE

Please think about when you were in the workforce.
6. In which industry did you work (for example, legal, retail/sales, business, financial, medical, government)?
    _____ (RECORD VERBATIM) (RECRUIT A MIX OF INDUSTRIES)

7. What was your occupation? _____ (RECORD VERBATIM)

8. Which of the following applied to the position you previously held? (READ AND ROTATE, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)
   1 I WAS A MANAGER, DIRECTOR, OR PARTNER
   2 I WAS ON TRACK TO BE A MANAGER, DIRECTOR, OR PARTNER
   3 I SUPERVISED A STAFF OF 2 OR MORE PEOPLE
   4 I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A MONETARY BUDGET
   5 NONE OF THESE (RESPONDENT IS NOT "HIGHLY ACHIEVED" AND MUST BE "HIGHLY EDUCATED" TO QUALIFY)

9. Why did you first leave your job? (READ AND ROTATE, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES) (RECRUIT A MIX)
   1 TO RAISE A CHILD
   2 TO CARE FOR A PARENT OR OTHER ADULT FAMILY MEMBER
   3 TO MANAGE MY HOUSEHOLD
   4 TO VOLUNTEER
   5 RELOCATION TO ANOTHER AREA
   6 BECAUSE OF WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT
   7 TO TAKE A BREAK/JUST BECAUSE
   8 EDUCATIONAL REASONS (TO PURSUE A HIGHER DEGREE)
   9 TO PURSUE A HOBBY (TRAVEL, SPORTS)
   10 OTHER _____ (RECORD VERBATIM)
   11 I DID NOT CHOOSE TO LEAVE, I WAS FIRED OR LAID OFF

HIGHLY EDUCATED WOMEN

10. What is the last grade of formal education that you have completed?
    1 HIGH SCHOOL (TERMINATE)
    2 SOME COLLEGE/ VOCATIONAL SCHOOL (RESPONDENT IS NOT "HIGHLY EDUCATED" AND MUST BE "HIGHLY ACHIEVED" TO QUALIFY)
    3 COLLEGE GRADUATE (RESPONDENT IS NOT "HIGHLY EDUCATED" AND MUST BE "HIGHLY ACHIEVED" TO QUALIFY)
    4 POST-GRADUATE – SPECIFY DEGREE_____(CONTINUE)
    5 DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED (TERMINATE)

DEMOGRAPHICS

11. How would you describe your current marital status? (READ AND ROTATE)
    1 SINGLE
    2 ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED
    3 MARRIED
    4 DIVORCED/ SEPARATED
    5 WIDOWED

12. Do you have any children? (RECORD AGES) (RECRUIT A MIX OF CHILDREN AND AGES)

    1 YES, 1
    2 YES, 2
    3 YES, 3 OR MORE
    4 NO

13. For classification purposes, please tell me into which of the following categories your TOTAL HOUSEHOLD income falls *before taxes*? (READ LIST) (RECRUIT A MIX)

    1 UNDER $35,000
    2 BETWEEN $35,000 AND $45,000
    3 BETWEEN $45,000 AND $60,000
    4 BETWEEN $60,000 AND $80,000
    5 BETWEEN $80,000 AND $100,000
    6 OVER $100,000

14. Lastly, could you please tell me which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (RECRUIT MIX SO THAT IS PROPORTIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AREA)

    1 CAUCASIAN
    2 BLACK/ AFRICAN-AMERICAN
    3 HISPANIC
    4 ASIAN
    5 OTHER_____ (RECORD VERBATIM)

In-depth Interview – 1 participant
Focus Group Session- 10-12 participants

For focus group participants:
We are inviting a group of women to participate in this unique focus group session. The group will be held on Wednesday, September 21, 2005 at 11 a.m. and will last approximately 2 hours. You will be offered refreshments and paid $100 in cash after the session is completed. Will you be able to attend?

For in-depth interview participant:
We would like to invite you to participate in this unique discussion. The interview will be held on Wednesday, September 21, 2005 at 10 a.m. and will last approximately 45 minutes. You will be offered refreshments and paid $75 in cash after the session is completed. Will you be able to attend?

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT SCREENER – ATLANTA

Hello, may I please speak to_____? My name is _____and I am calling from the polling company™, a national research firm headquartered in Washington, DC. We are conducting a discussion group with women like you and I'd like to ask you a few questions. I assure you that we are not trying to sell you anything, and all of your responses will remain confidential unless you direct otherwise.

SCREENER QUESTIONS
SPEAK WITH WOMEN ONLY

A. When is the last time you participated in a market research discussion group? (If within the past six months, please terminate)
    1 LESS THAN ONE MONTH AGO (TERMINATE)
    2 1-3 MONTHS AGO (TERMINATE)
    3 3-6 MONTHS AGO
    4 6-9 MONTHS AGO
    5 8-10 MONTHS AGO
    6 10-12 MONTHS AGO
    7 OVER A YEAR AGO

1. Could you please tell me how old you are? _____(WRITE EXACT AGE) (RECRUIT MIX) If refused, in what year were you born? _____ (NOTE TERMINATES)
    1 18-30 (TERMINATE)
    2 31-35
    3 36-45
    4 46-55
    5 56+ (TERMINATE)

2. Which of the following categories best describes your current work or school status? (READ AND ROTATE)
    1 WORK FOR SOMEONE OTHER THAN YOURSELF FULL- OR PART-TIME (TERMINATE)
    2 SELF-EMPLOYED/SMALL BUSINESS OWNER (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 3 PER GROUP)
    3 NOT CURRENTLY IN THE TRADITIONAL WORKFORCE
    4 STUDENT (TERMINATE)
    5 RETIRED (TERMINATE)

3. Prior to your current situation, have you ever been in the traditional workforce that is, earning a paycheck from someone other than yourself?
    1. YES
    2. NO (TERMINATE)
    3. DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (TERMINATE)

4. What is the last grade of formal education that you have completed?
    1 HIGH SCHOOL (TERMINATE)
    2 SOME COLLEGE/ VOCATIONAL SCHOOL (TERMINATE)
    3 COLLEGE GRADUATE (CONTINUE)
    4 POST-GRADUATE – SPECIFY DEGREE_____(CONTINUE)
    5 DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED (TERMINATE)

Please think about when you were in the workforce.
5. In which industry did you work (for example, legal, retail/sales, business, financial, medical, government)?
    _____ (RECORD VERBATIM) (RECRUIT A MIX OF INDUSTRIES)

6. What was your occupation? _____ (RECORD VERBATIM)
    RESPONDENT MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

    DOCTOR (PROBE FOR SPECIALTIES)
    LAWYER
    BANKER/ FINANCIAL ADVISOR
    ACCOUNTANT
    CONSULTANT (SENIOR-LEVEL)
    CORPORATE/BUSINESS EXECUTIVE/VP/DIRECTOR
    ENGINEERING/DEFENSE/AEROSPACE EXECUTIVE/VP/DIRECTOR
    OTHER EXECUTIVE-LEVEL POSITION (SPECIFY)

7. How many years were you in your occupation?
    1. LESS THAN 3 (TERMINATE)
    2. 3 – 6 (CONTINUE IF RESPONDENT HAS A POST-GRADUATE DEGREE, OTHERWISE TERMINATE)
    3. 7 – 10
    4. MORE THAN 10

8. Which of the following applied to the position you previously held? (READ AND ROTATE, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)
    1 I WAS AN OFFICER, DIRECTOR, OR PARTNER
    2 I WAS ON TRACK TO BE AN OFFICER, DIRECTOR, OR PARTNER (SPECIFY HOW THEY KNEW THEY WERE ON SUCH A TRACK)
    3 I SUPERVISED A STAFF OF PEOPLE (SPECIFY NUMBER OF STAFF)
    4 I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A MONETARY BUDGET
    5 NONE OF THESE (TERMINATE)

9. How long ago did you leave the traditional workforce? (READ AND ROTATE)
　　1 LESS THAN ONE YEAR
　　2 1-2 YEARS
　　3 3-5 YEARS
　　4 6-10 YEARS
　　5 MORE THAN 10 YEARS (TERMINATE)
　　6 DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (DO NOT READ)

10. Which of the following best describes why you left your job? (READ AND ROTATE, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES) (RECRUIT A MIX)
　　1 TO RAISE A CHILD (ASK Q11)
　　2 TO CARE FOR A PARENT OR OTHER ADULT FAMILY MEMBER
　　3 TO MANAGE MY HOUSEHOLD
　　4 TO VOLUNTEER
　　5 RELOCATION TO ANOTHER AREA
　　6 BECAUSE OF WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT
　　7 TO TAKE A BREAK/JUST BECAUSE
　　8 EDUCATIONAL REASONS (TO PURSUE A HIGHER DEGREE)
　　9 TO PURSUE A HOBBY (TRAVEL, SPORTS)
　　10 OTHER _____ (RECORD VERBATIM)
　　11 RELOCATION OF SPOUSE (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 1 PER GROUP)
　　12 I DID NOT CHOOSE TO LEAVE, I WAS FIRED OR LAID OFF
　　　(TERMINATE)

ASK ONLY OF THOSE WHO LEFT TO RAISE A CHILD:
11. And did you always know that you were going to leave your job to raise your children, or was that a decision you made after having a family?
　　1. I ALWAYS KNEW I WAS GOING TO LEAVE THE WORKFORCE
　　　(ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 1 PER GROUP)
　　2. I MADE THE DECISION TO LEAVE AFTER HAVING CHILDREN

DEMOGRAPHICS

12. How would you describe your current marital status? (READ AND ROTATE)
　　1 SINGLE
　　2 ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED
　　3 MARRIED
　　4 DIVORCED/ SEPARATED
　　5 WIDOWED

13. Do you have any children? (RECORD AGES) (RECRUIT A MIX OF CHILDREN AND AGES)
　　1 YES, 1
　　2 YES, 2
　　3 YES, 3 OR MORE
　　4 NO

14. For classification purposes, please tell me into which of the following categories your TOTAL HOUSEHOLD income falls *before taxes*? (READ LIST) (RECRUIT A MIX)
    1 UNDER $45,000
    2 BETWEEN $45,000 AND $59,000
    3 BETWEEN $60,000 AND $79,000
    4 BETWEEN $80,000 AND $99,000
    5 OVER $100,000

15. Lastly, could you please tell me which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (RECRUIT MIX SO THAT IS PROPORTIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AREA, AT LEAST 2 MINORITIES IN EACH GROUP)
    1 CAUCASIAN
    2 BLACK/ AFRICAN-AMERICAN
    3 HISPANIC
    4 ASIAN
    5 OTHER_____ (RECORD VERBATIM)

Focus Group Session- 4-5 participants
We are inviting a group of women to participate in this unique focus group session. The group will be held on _____, October __, 2005 at ____ and will last approximately 1 hour. You will be offered refreshments and paid $100 in cash after the session is completed. Will you be able to attend?

Hello, may I please speak to_____? My name is _____and I am calling from the polling company™, a national research firm headquartered in Washington, DC. We are conducting a discussion group with women like you in the CHICAGO/SAN JOSE area and I'd like to ask you a few questions. I assure you that we are not trying to sell you anything, and all of your responses will remain confidential unless you direct otherwise.

SCREENER QUESTIONS
SPEAK WITH WOMEN ONLY

A. When is the last time you participated in a market research discussion group? (If within the past six months, please terminate)
    1 LESS THAN ONE MONTH AGO (TERMINATE)
    2 1-3 MONTHS AGO (TERMINATE)
    3 3-6 MONTHS AGO
    4 6-9 MONTHS AGO
    5 8-10 MONTHS AGO
    6 10-12 MONTHS AGO
    7 OVER A YEAR AGO

1. Could you please tell me how old you are? _____(WRITE EXACT AGE) (RECRUIT MIX) If refused, in what year were you born? _____ (NOTE TERMINATES)
    1 25-29
    2 30-35
    3 36-40
    4 41+ (RECRUIT FOR OLDER WOMEN GROUP)

2. Which of the following categories best describes your current work or school status? (READ AND ROTATE)
    1 WORK FOR SOMEONE OTHER THAN YOURSELF FULL- OR PART-TIME (TERMINATE)
    2 SELF-EMPLOYED/SMALL BUSINESS OWNER (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 3 PER GROUP)
    3 NOT CURRENTLY IN THE TRADITIONAL WORKFORCE
    4 STUDENT (TERMINATE)
    5 RETIRED (TERMINATE)

3. Prior to your current situation, have you ever been in the traditional workforce that is, earning a paycheck from someone other than yourself?
    1. YES
    2. NO (TERMINATE)
    3. DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (TERMINATE)

4. What is the last grade of formal education that you have completed?
      1 HIGH SCHOOL (TERMINATE)
      2 SOME COLLEGE/ VOCATIONAL SCHOOL (TERMINATE)
      3 COLLEGE GRADUATE (CONTINUE)
      4 POST-GRADUATE – SPECIFY DEGREE_____(CONTINUE)
      5 DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED (TERMINATE)

Please think about when you were in the workforce.

5.   In which industry did you work (for example, legal, retail/sales, business, financial, medical, government)?
     _____ (RECORD VERBATIM) (RECRUIT A MIX OF INDUSTRIES)

6. What was your occupation? _____ (RECORD VERBATIM)
      RESPONDENT MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

      DOCTOR (PROBE FOR SPECIALTIES)
      LAWYER
      BANKER/ FINANCIAL ADVISOR
      ACCOUNTANT
      CONSULTANT (SENIOR-LEVEL)
      CORPORATE/BUSINESS EXECUTIVE/VP/DIRECTOR
      ENGINEERING/DEFENSE/AEROSPACE EXECUTIVE/VP/DIRECTOR
      OTHER EXECUTIVE-LEVEL POSITION (SPECIFY)

7. How many years were you in your occupation? (RECRUIT MIX)
      1. LESS THAN 3 (CONTINUE IF RESPONDENT HAS A POSTGRADUATE
         DEGREE, OTHERWISE TERMINATE)
      2. 3 – 6
      3. 7 – 10
      4. MORE THAN 10

8.   Which of the following applied to the position you previously held? (READ AND ROTATE, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)
      1 I WAS AN OFFICER, DIRECTOR, OR PARTNER
      2 I WAS ON TRACK TO BE AN OFFICER, DIRECTOR, OR PARTNER
        (SPECIFY HOW THEY KNEW THEY WERE ON SUCH A TRACK)
      3 I SUPERVISED A STAFF OF PEOPLE (SPECIFY NUMBER OF STAFF)
      4 I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A MONETARY BUDGET
      5 NONE OF THESE (TERMINATE)

9. How long ago did you leave the traditional workforce? (READ AND ROTATE)
      1 LESS THAN ONE YEAR
      2 1-2 YEARS
      3 3-5 YEARS
      4 6-10 YEARS (TERMINATE)
      5 MORE THAN 10 YEARS (TERMINATE)
      6 DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (DO NOT READ)

10. Which of the following best describes why you left your job? (READ AND ROTATE, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES) (RECRUIT A MIX)
    1 TO RAISE A CHILD (ASK Q11)
    2 TO CARE FOR A PARENT OR OTHER ADULT FAMILY MEMBER
    3 TO MANAGE MY HOUSEHOLD
    4 TO VOLUNTEER
    5 RELOCATION TO ANOTHER AREA
    6 BECAUSE OF WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT
    7 TO TAKE A BREAK/JUST BECAUSE
    8 EDUCATIONAL REASONS (TO PURSUE A HIGHER DEGREE)
    9 TO PURSUE A HOBBY (TRAVEL, SPORTS)
    10 OTHER _____ (RECORD VERBATIM)
    11 RELOCATION OF SPOUSE (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 1 PER GROUP)
    12 I DID NOT CHOOSE TO LEAVE, I WAS FIRED OR LAID OFF (TERMINATE)

ASK ONLY OF THOSE WHO LEFT TO RAISE A CHILD:
11. And did you always know that you were going to leave your job to raise your children, or was that a decision you made after having a family?
    1. I ALWAYS KNEW I WAS GOING TO LEAVE THE WORKFORCE
       (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 2 PER GROUP)
    2. I MADE THE DECISION TO LEAVE AFTER HAVING CHILDREN

DEMOGRAPHICS

12. How would you describe your current marital status? (READ AND ROTATE)
    1 SINGLE
    2 ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED
    3 MARRIED
    4 DIVORCED/ SEPARATED
    5 WIDOWED

13. Do you have any children? (RECORD AGES) (RECRUIT A MIX OF CHILDREN AND AGES)
    1 YES, 1
    2 YES, 2
    3 YES, 3 OR MORE
    4 NO

14. For classification purposes, please tell me into which of the following categories your current TOTAL HOUSEHOLD income falls *before taxes*? (READ LIST) (RECRUIT A MIX)
    1 UNDER $45,000
    2 BETWEEN $45,000 AND $59,000
    3 BETWEEN $60,000 AND $79,000
    4 BETWEEN $80,000 AND $99,000
    5 OVER $100,000

15. Lastly, could you please tell me which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (RECRUIT MIX SO THAT IS PROPORTIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AREA, AT LEAST 2 MINORITIES IN EACH GROUP)

     1 CAUCASIAN
     2 BLACK/ AFRICAN-AMERICAN
     3 HISPANIC
     4 ASIAN
     5 OTHER_____ (RECORD VERBATIM)

Focus Group Session- 5 participants
We are inviting a group of women to participate in this unique focus group session. The group will be held on _____, October ___, 2005 at ____ and will last approximately 1 hour. You will be offered refreshments and paid $100 in cash after the session is completed. Will you be able to attend?

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT SCREENER – CHICAGO AND SAN JOSE

Hello, may I please speak to_____? My name is _____and I am calling from the polling company™, a national research firm headquartered in Washington, DC. We are conducting a discussion group with women like you and I'd like to ask you a few questions. I assure you that we are not trying to sell you anything, and all of your responses will remain confidential unless you direct otherwise.

SCREENER QUESTIONS
SPEAK WITH WOMEN ONLY

A. When is the last time you participated in a market research discussion group? (If within the past six months, please terminate)
      1 LESS THAN ONE MONTH AGO (TERMINATE)
      2 1-3 MONTHS AGO (TERMINATE)
      3 3-6 MONTHS AGO
      4 6-9 MONTHS AGO
      5 8-10 MONTHS AGO
      6 10-12 MONTHS AGO
      7 OVER A YEAR AGO

1. Could you please tell me how old you are? _____(WRITE EXACT AGE) (RECRUIT MIX) If refused, in what year were you born? _____ (NOTE TERMINATES)
      1 18-30 (TERMINATE)
      2 31-35
      3 36-45
      4 46-55
      5 56+ (TERMINATE)

2. Which of the following categories best describes your current work or school status? (READ AND ROTATE)
      1 WORK FOR SOMEONE OTHER THAN YOURSELF FULL- OR PART-TIME (TERMINATE)
      2 SELF-EMPLOYED/SMALL BUSINESS OWNER (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 3 PER GROUP)
      3 NOT CURRENTLY IN THE TRADITIONAL WORKFORCE
      4 STUDENT (TERMINATE)
      5 RETIRED (TERMINATE)

3. Prior to your current situation, have you ever been in the traditional workforce, that is, earning a paycheck from someone other than yourself?
      1. YES
      2. NO (TERMINATE)
      3. DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (TERMINATE)

4. What is the last grade of formal education that you have completed?
      1 HIGH SCHOOL (TERMINATE)
      2 SOME COLLEGE/ VOCATIONAL SCHOOL (TERMINATE)
      3 COLLEGE GRADUATE (CONTINUE)
      4 POST-GRADUATE – SPECIFY DEGREE_____(CONTINUE)
      5 DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED (TERMINATE)

Please think about when you were in the workforce.

5. In which industry did you work (for example, legal, retail/sales, business/financial, medical, government)?
      _____ (RECORD VERBATIM) (RECRUIT A MIX OF INDUSTRIES)

6. What was your occupation? _____ (RECORD VERBATIM)
      RESPONDENT MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

      DOCTOR (PROBE FOR SPECIALTIES)
      LAWYER
      BANKER/ FINANCIAL ADVISOR
      ACCOUNTANT
      CONSULTANT (SENIOR-LEVEL)
      CORPORATE/BUSINESS EXECUTIVE/VP/DIRECTOR
      ENGINEERING/DEFENSE/AEROSPACE EXECUTIVE/VP/DIRECTOR
      OTHER EXECUTIVE-LEVEL POSITION (SPECIFY)

7. How many years were you in your occupation?
      1. LESS THAN 3 (TERMINATE)
      2. 3 – 6 (CONTINUE IF RESPONDENT HAS A POST-GRADUATE DEGREE, OTHERWISE TERMINATE)
      3. 7 – 10
      4. MORE THAN 10

8. Which of the following applied to the position you previously held? (READ AND ROTATE, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)
      1 I WAS AN OFFICER, DIRECTOR, OR PARTNER
      2 I WAS ON TRACK TO BE AN OFFICER, DIRECTOR, OR PARTNER
        (SPECIFY HOW THEY KNEW THEY WERE ON SUCH A TRACK)
      3 I SUPERVISED A STAFF OF PEOPLE (SPECIFY NUMBER OF STAFF)
      4 I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A MONETARY BUDGET
      5 NONE OF THESE (TERMINATE)

9. How long ago did you leave the traditional workforce? (READ AND ROTATE)
      1 LESS THAN ONE YEAR
      2 1-2 YEARS
      3 3-5 YEARS
      4 6-10 YEARS
      5 MORE THAN 10 YEARS (TERMINATE)
      6 DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (DO NOT READ)

10. Which of the following best describes why you left your job? (READ AND ROTATE, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES) (RECRUIT A MIX)
    1 TO RAISE A CHILD (ASK Q11)
    2 TO CARE FOR A PARENT OR OTHER ADULT FAMILY MEMBER
    3 TO MANAGE MY HOUSEHOLD
    4 TO VOLUNTEER
    5 RELOCATION TO ANOTHER AREA
    6 BECAUSE OF WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT
    7 TO TAKE A BREAK/JUST BECAUSE
    8 EDUCATIONAL REASONS (TO PURSUE A HIGHER DEGREE)
    9 TO PURSUE A HOBBY (TRAVEL, SPORTS)
    10 OTHER _____ (RECORD VERBATIM)
    11 RELOCATION OF SPOUSE (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 1 PER GROUP)
    12 I DID NOT CHOOSE TO LEAVE, I WAS FIRED OR LAID OFF (TERMINATE)

ASK ONLY OF THOSE WHO LEFT TO RAISE A CHILD:
11. And did you always know that you were going to leave your job to raise your children, or was that a decision you made after having a family?
    1. I ALWAYS KNEW I WAS GOING TO LEAVE THE WORKFORCE
       (ACCEPT NO MORE THAN 1 PER GROUP)
    2. I MADE THE DECISION TO LEAVE AFTER HAVING CHILDREN

DEMOGRAPHICS

12. How would you describe your current marital status? (READ AND ROTATE)
    1 SINGLE
    2 ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED
    3 MARRIED
    4 DIVORCED/ SEPARATED
    5 WIDOWED

13. Do you have any children? (RECORD AGES) (RECRUIT A MIX OF CHILDREN AND AGES)
    1 YES, 1
    2 YES, 2
    3 YES, 3 OR MORE
    4 NO

14. For classification purposes, please tell me into which of the following categories your TOTAL HOUSEHOLD income falls *before taxes*? (READ LIST) (RECRUIT A MIX)
    1 UNDER $45,000
    2 BETWEEN $45,000 AND $59,000
    3 BETWEEN $60,000 AND $79,000
    4 BETWEEN $80,000 AND $99,000
    5 OVER $100,000

15. Lastly, could you please tell me which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (RECRUIT MIX SO THAT IS PROPORTIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AREA, AT LEAST 2 MINORITIES IN EACH GROUP)

     1 CAUCASIAN
     2 BLACK/ AFRICAN-AMERICAN
     3 HISPANIC
     4 ASIAN
     5 OTHER_____ (RECORD VERBATIM)

Focus Group Session- 4-5 participants

We are inviting a group of women to participate in this unique focus group session. The group will be held on _____, October ___, 2005 at ____ and will last approximately 1 hour. You will be offered refreshments and paid $100 in cash after the session is completed. Will you be able to attend?

APPENDIX C
Discussion Guides

the polling company™, inc. *for* Choose 2 Lead

Focus Group Discussion Guide
Women Who Have Opted Out
Washington, DC, September 21, 2005, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM EST

Introduction & Explanation of Session (5 minutes)

Ask each participant to introduce themselves to the group:

- Name, Age
- Length of time lived in Washington, DC area, how came to live in DC (school, grew up here, relocated)
- Household/Family: number of people in household, married, kids, children living at home?

Work and Education History (15 minutes)

This segment will provide background information on participants, particularly, why they are considered "highly educated" or "highly achieved." The women will also be able to learn about each other's similar situated circumstances.

1. Please tell us about your educational background. Where did you go to college? What did you major in? Do you have any advanced degrees? Did you always know you were going to pursue this educational path?

2. Did you work in the field in which you earned your degree? Please explain. If no, why? Why did you change directions? Was it mostly deliberate or circumstantial? (probe a few participants for actual experiences)

3. Explain your work history to us. How many jobs have you held? In what fields? Where? When you changed jobs was it by choice? Which did you like the best? The least? Why? How long has it been since you last worked outside the home or for yourself?

4. Tell us about your last job in the traditional workforce, that is, when you earned a paycheck from someone other than yourself. What were your responsibilities? How long had you been with the company? Please complete the following sentence: "The best thing about my last job was..." and "The worst thing about my last job was…" Please explain.

5. Why did you leave your last job? Please complete the following sentence: "I would have stayed at my last job if ..."

6. When you left that job, did you intend to leave the traditional workforce altogether? How many of you thought you would only be gone temporarily? How many intended to go back part-time? How many did not know what you would do?

Reasons for Leaving (40 minutes)

This section explores the situation surrounding why these women left the workforce, including the attitudes of those closest to her, which may or may not have influenced her decision. It also probes alternatives to "opting out" completely, and why those alternatives were not utilized.

1. Think back to when you first decided to leave the traditional workforce. What was going on in your life (event like 9-11, birth of a first or second child, spouse getting a better job)? What factors lead up to the decision? Had you intended to "check out" altogether, or did this mark a change in intention, attitude, or perspective?

2. Was it a difficult decision? Why or why not? Did you make the decision to leave right away, or did you have to think about it for a while?

3. Did you feel pressure from people regarding you decision (family members, spouse, friends, co-workers)? Please explain. Was there any type of support system or someone for you to refer to?

4. Did you know other women who had taken this type of unconventional path? Who were they? Were these women an inspiration to you?

5. Please complete the following sentence: "The main reason I left the traditional workforce was…" (On flip chart, list reasons volunteered for opting out.) Any others? Which of these factors was most important to you? Which was the least? Why?

6. Have any of these factors changed or been eliminated? For example, a young child has started school, an ailing parent has gotten well, etc? If so, why do you still continue to not work?

7. Show of hands: How many of you left the traditional workforce because of relocation? Whose decision was it to move? Looking back, was it a good choice? Why or why not?

8. How much of a factor was your commute to work in deciding to leave (very, somewhat, just a little bit, not at all)? How long was your typical commute? Did you drive yourself, carpool, take public transportation (specify type)? If you drove did you have to pay for parking or did you employer pay for it?

9. Thinking back, were there specific issues that your employer or organization had that were part of why you left? For example, your CEO or boss not enforcing certain policies, unfriendly work environment, difficulty with co-workers? Do you think these things were unique to your company or more widespread among all employers?

10. Did you consider working part-time or from home? Why or why not? What is most appealing about part-time employment?

11. For those that may have tried to transition out of the traditional workforce by working less hours, utilizing flex-time or job sharing, or telecommuting, what worked and what did not? What would have made this a feasible option for you?

12. Did you feel that your boss and/or co-workers understood your decision? How so?

13. Do you feel like you had a choice to leave your job, or did your circumstances force you to leave? How did those around you feel about your decision (spouse, friends, family members)?

14. Are you happy with your decision to leave the workforce? Why or why not? Would you do it again or recommend it to a friend, family member, or colleague in a similar circumstance? Explain.

Current Activities (20 minutes)

These questions will probe what these women currently do on a day to day basis, the activities that have replaced working outside the home. They also explore future aspirations of the women, including whether they see themselves returning to the traditional workforce.

1. Describe to me a typical day in your life. (Probe: caretaking, volunteering, hobbies). Anything else? What type of alternative work are you doing? What determines your schedule?

2. Do you feel like you have free time, or do you feel like you are always "booked"? Are your activities more for you, or more for those around you (husbands, children, friends, other family members)?

3. What are your responsibilities and on your "to-do" list during an average day? An average week? A year from now?

4. If someone asks you what you do, how do you describe your situation? For those of you not earning a paycheck, how many of you consider yourself "working inside the home"? Why or why not? Do you think you work harder now that you are not "working outside the home"?

5. Thinking about your life currently, are you doing what you thought you would be doing at this stage when you first entered the workforce? What caused those changes? Are you happy with the path you have taken? Why or why not? Looking back, what would you have done differently?

6. Please complete the following sentence: "My ideal career path is…" Do you think this will ever become a reality? Why or why not?

7. How would you define your long-term goals? Where do you see yourself in one year? Five years? Ten years? Are these goals professional, personal, or both?

Returning to the Workforce (30 minutes)

This portion pushes women to examine their feelings towards and about re-entering the traditional workforce. It will help to understand what circumstances and support systems must be in place to re-engage these individuals.

1. What do you miss about a traditional job (intellectual stimulation, salary, ability to dress up and go to work, purpose/structure, colleagues)? Do you do anything now to try and recreate those activities? Please explain.

2. How do you compare the rewards and benefits that you received when working in a traditional career versus now? What is lacking?

3. Show of hands: Do you still keep up with your industry? How? Do you attend conferences, read trade publications, monitor website, retain your professional membership? If not, why?

4. Do you keep in touch with your former coworkers? In a personal or professional manner?

5. Imagine for a moment that you could return to the last job you had before leaving the workforce. Show of hands: How many would return to the traditional workforce? Why or why not? Who would support you most in your return? Who would support you the least? What, if anything would need to be the same/different to make it worthwhile for you to return?

6. If money were not an issue, would you still want to work? Why or why not?

7. What are the main impediments to re-entry in the workforce? (List on flip chart) Any others? Did any of these NOT apply to anyone?

8. What, if anything, would need to change in your personal life to go back to work? What would need to change at your job to accommodate you working (more time off, flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, higher salary)?

9. Have you considered part-time work or entrepreneurship? What specifically?

10. Have you taken any steps towards returning to work? What are they? Will you continue those? Why or why not?

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Before we finish up, please think about all the issues and individual circumstances that we talked about today. I'd like to go around the room and have everyone complete the following sentence: "I would re-enter the traditional workforce if…" and tell us whether or not you believe that it is a viable possibility that you will return to working outside the home. Anything else? (If someone says they would not return to working, ask them why it is not worth it to them to go back to work). Thank you all for your participation.

Introduction – Welcome, explain the purpose of this exercise, and have participant share pertinent demographic information:

- Name, Age
- Length of time lived in Washington, DC area, how came to live in DC (school, grew up here, relocated)
- Household/Family: number of people in household, married, kids, children living at home?

Work and Education History (5-7 minutes)

1. Please tell me about your educational background. Where did you go to college? What did you major in? Do you have any advanced degrees? Did you always know you were going to pursue this educational path?

2. Explain your work history to me. Did you work in the field in which you earned your degree? If no, why? How many jobs have you held? In what fields? Where? When you changed jobs was it by choice? Which did you like the best? The least? Why?

3. How long has it been since you last worked outside the home or for yourself?

4. Think about your last job in the traditional workforce, that is, when you earned a paycheck from someone other than yourself. What were your responsibilities? How long had you been with the company?

5. How would you complete the following sentence: "The best thing about my last job was..." and "The worst thing about my last job was…"

6. Why did you leave your last job? Please complete the following sentence: "I would have stayed at my last job if ..." When you left that job, did you intend to leave the traditional workforce altogether?

Reasons for Leaving (15-20 minutes)

1. Think back to when you first decided to leave the traditional workforce. What was going on in your life (event like 9-11, birth of a first or second child, spouse getting a better job)? What factors lead up to the decision? Had you intended to "check out" altogether, or did this mark a change in intention, attitude, or perspective?

2. Was it a difficult decision? Why or why not? Did you make the decision to leave right away, or did you have to think about it for a while?

3. Did you feel pressure from people regarding you decision (family members, spouse, friends, co-workers)? Please explain. Was there any type of support system or someone for you to refer to?

4. Did you know other women who had taken this type of unconventional path? Who were they? Were these women an inspiration to you?

5. Please complete the following sentence: "The main reason I left the traditional workforce was…" Any others? Did relocation have anything to do with it? How much of a factor was your commute to work in deciding to leave (very, somewhat, just a little bit, not at all)?

6. Have any of these factors changed or been eliminated? For example, a young child has started school, an ailing parent has gotten well, etc? If so, why do you still continue to not work?

7. Thinking back, were there specific issues that your employer or organization had that were part of why you left? For example, your CEO or boss not enforcing certain policies, unfriendly work environment, difficulty with co-workers? Do you think these things were unique to your company or more widespread among all employers? Did you feel that your boss and/or co-workers understood your decision?

8. Did you consider working part-time or from home? Why or why not? What about utilizing flex-time, job sharing, or telecommuting?

9. Do you feel like you had a choice to leave your job, or did your circumstances force you to leave? How did those around you feel about your decision (spouse, friends, family members)?

10. Are you happy with your decision to leave the workforce? Why or why not? Would you do it again or recommend it to a friend, family member, or colleague in a similar circumstance? Explain.

Current Activities (5-10 minutes)

1. Describe to me a typical day in your life. (Probe: caretaking, volunteering, hobbies). Anything else? What determines your schedule?

2. Do you feel like you have free time, or do you feel like you are always "booked"? Are your activities more for you, or more for those around you (husbands, children, friends, other family members)?

3. (If not self-employed:) If someone asks you what you do, how do you describe your situation? Do you consider yourself "working inside the home"? Why or why not? Do you think you work harder now that you are not "working outside the home"?

4. Thinking about your life currently, are you doing what you thought you would be doing at this stage when you first entered the workforce? What caused those changes? Are you happy with the path you have taken? Why or why not? Looking back, what would you have done differently?

5. Please complete the following sentence: "My ideal career path is…" Do you think this will ever become a reality? Why or why not?

Returning to the Workforce (10 minutes)

1. What do you miss about a traditional job (intellectual stimulation, salary, ability to dress up and go to work, purpose/structure, colleagues)? Do you do anything now to try and recreate those activities? Please explain.

2. How do you compare the rewards and benefits that you received when working in a traditional career versus now? What is lacking?

3. Do you still keep up with your industry? How? Do you attend conferences, read trade publications, monitor website, retain your professional membership? If not, why? Do you keep in touch with your former coworkers? In a personal or professional manner?

4. Imagine for a moment that you could return to the last job you had before leaving the workforce. Would return to the traditional workforce? Why or why not? Who would support you most in your return? Who would support you the least? What, if anything would need to be the same/different to make it worthwhile for you to return?

5. If money were not an issue, would you still want to work? Why or why not?

6. What, if anything, would need to change in your personal life to go back to work? What would need to change at your job to accommodate you working (more time off, flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, higher salary)?

7. Have you taken any steps towards returning to work? What are they? Will you continue those? Why or why not?

Conclusion

Before we finish up, complete the following sentence: "I would re-enter the traditional workforce if…" and tell me whether or not you believe that it is a viable possibility that you will return to working outside the home. Anything else? Thank you for your participation.

Introduction & Explanation of Session (3-5 minutes)

Ask each participant to introduce themselves to the group:

- Name, Age
- Length of time lived in area, how came to live in area (school, grew up here, relocated)
- Household/Family: number of people in household, married, kids, children living at home?

Work and Education History (5-7 minutes)

1. Did you work in the field in which you earned your degree? Please explain. If no, why?

2. Why did you change directions? Was it mostly deliberate or circumstantial? (probe a for actual experiences)

3. Tell us about your last job in the traditional workforce, that is, when you earned a paycheck from someone other than yourself. What were your responsibilities? How long had you been with the company?

4. How many of your companies or organizations had a leadership development program?

5. Please describe it to us. Was it formal or informal? Did you participate? Why or why not? How useful was it to you? Please explain.

6. Please complete the following sentence: "The best thing about my last job was..." and "The worst thing about my last job was…" Please explain.

7. Would you say that your job provided opportunities for advancement? Were there opportunities for women? For men? For employees in different positions? If yes, did you take advantage of those opportunities? How so? Why or why not?

8. How long has it been since you last worked outside the home or for yourself? Why did you leave your last job? Please complete the following sentence: "I would have stayed at my last job if ..."

9. When you left that job, did you intend to leave the traditional workforce altogether? How many of you thought you would only be gone temporarily? How many intended to go back part-time? How many did not know what you would do?

Reasons for Leaving (15 minutes)

1. Think back to when you first decided to leave the traditional workforce. What was going on in your life (event like 9-11, birth of a first or second child, spouse getting a better job)? What factors lead up to the decision? Had you intended to "check out" altogether, or did this mark a change in intention, attitude, or perspective? Did you make the decision to leave right away, or did you have to think about it for a while?

2. Please complete the following sentence: "The main reason I left the traditional workforce was…" Any others? Which of these factors was most important to you? Which was the least? Why? Have any of these factors changed or been eliminated? For example, a young child has started school, an ailing parent has gotten well, etc? If so, why do you still continue to not work?

3. Show of hands: How many of you left the traditional workforce because of relocation? Whose decision was it to move? Looking back, was it a good choice? Why or why not?

4. How much of a factor was your commute to work in deciding to leave (very, somewhat, just a little bit, not at all)? How long was your typical commute? Did you drive yourself, carpool, take public transportation (specify type)? If you drove did you have to pay for parking or did you employer pay for it?

5. Thinking back, were there specific issues that your employer or organization had that were part of why you left? For example, your CEO or boss not enforcing certain policies, unfriendly work environment, difficulty with co-workers? Do you think these things were unique to your company or more widespread among all employers?

6. Show of hands: How many of you worked for companies or organizations that had "family friendly" policies? Please describe what that term, "family friendly," meant at your office. Did you feel that the policies were accessible to you? Did they work? If so, what made them work? If not, what made them unsuccessful?

7. Did you consider working part-time or from home? Why or why not? What is most appealing about part-time employment? For those that may have tried to transition out of the traditional workforce by working less hours, utilizing flex-time or job sharing, or telecommuting, what worked and what did not? What would have made this a feasible option for you?

8. Did you feel that your boss and/or co-workers understood your decision? How so?

9. What role did your husband or partner have in your decision? Were they supportive when you decided to leave the workforce? In what ways? Are they still supportive of your decision? What is their occupation? Did they make any changes in their job or career because you left the workforce?

10. Are you happy with your decision to leave the workforce? Why or why not? Would you do it again or recommend it to a friend, family member, or colleague in a similar circumstance? Explain.

Current Activities (5-7 minutes) – *This section can be shortened if needed*

1. Describe to me a typical day in your life. (Probe: caretaking, volunteering, hobbies). Anything else? What type of alternative work are you doing? Who or what determines your schedule?

2. Do you feel like you have free time, or do you feel like you are always "booked"? Are your activities more for you, or more for those around you (husbands, children, friends, other family members)?

3. Do you belong to any clubs or groups? Are they formal or informal? What activities do you do? How often do you meet? How did you learn about them? What do you enjoy most about them?

4. If someone asks you what "you do," how do you describe your situation? For those of you not earning a paycheck, how many of you consider yourself "working inside the home"? Why or why not? Do you think you work harder now that you are not "working outside the home"?

5. Thinking about your life currently, are you doing what you thought you would be doing at this stage when you first entered the workforce? What caused those changes? Are you happy with the path you have taken? Why or why not? Looking back, what would you have done differently?

Returning to the Workforce (20 minutes)

1. What do you miss about a traditional job (intellectual stimulation, salary, ability to dress up and go to work, purpose/structure, colleagues)? Do you do anything now to try and re-create those activities? Please explain.

2. How do you compare the rewards and benefits that you received when working in a traditional career versus now? What is lacking?

3. Show of hands: Do you still keep up with your industry? How? Do you attend conferences, read trade publications, monitor website, retain your professional memberships? If not, why?

4. Do you keep in touch with your former coworkers? In a personal or professional manner?

5. Imagine for a moment that you could return to the last job you had before leaving the workforce. Show of hands: How many would return to the traditional workforce? Why or why not? Who would support you most in your return? Who would support you the least? What, if anything would need to be the same/different to make it worthwhile for you to return?

6. Show of hands: If you decided to go back to the traditional workforce, how many believe you could resume a position similar to the one you left? Do you think you could get the same responsibilities, duties, tasks, salary, benefits? Why or why not?

7. Pretend for a moment that something changed in your current life that necessitated you returning to the workforce. Would you try and go back to your old job or something similar, or would you opt for a different type of position or occupation altogether? Please explain. What would be your biggest fears about going back to work? What would help alleviate these fears?

8. How many think it would be difficult to return to a similar position? In what ways?

9. What do you think you could do to prepare yourself for re-entry into the workforce?

10. What resources are available to you? Do you utilize them now? Why or why not?

11. If you went back would you want the same position or would you want to create a new one? What would your ideal job look like?

12. What are the main impediments to re-entry in the workforce? Are there any others? Did any of these NOT apply to anyone? Why? What, if anything, would need to change in your personal life to go back to work?

13. What would need to change at your job to accommodate you going back to work (more time off, flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, higher salary)? Did you ever try any of these activities while you were working? What was the result? Do you think your profession would accommodate these types of activities?

14. Have you considered part-time work or entrepreneurship? What specifically? Why or why not?

15. Have you taken any steps towards returning to work? What are they? Will you continue those? Why or why not?

Conclusion (3-5 minutes)

Before we finish up, please think about all the issues and individual circumstances that we talked about today. I'd like to go around the room and have everyone complete the following sentence: "I would re-enter the traditional workforce if…" and tell us whether or not you believe that it is a viable possibility that you will return to working outside the home. Anything else? (If someone says they would not return to working, ask them why it is not worth it to them to go back to work). Thank you all for your participation.

Introduction & Explanation of Session (3 minutes)

- Name, Age
- Length of time lived in area, how came to live in area (school, grew up here, relocated)
- Household/Family: number of people in household, married, kids, children living at home?

Work and Education History (5 minutes)

1. Did you work in the field in which you earned your degree? Please explain. If no, why? Why did you change directions? Was it mostly deliberate or circumstantial? (probe for an actual experience)

2. Tell us about your last job in the traditional workforce, that is, when you earned a paycheck from someone other than yourself. What were your responsibilities? How long had you been with the company?

3. Did your company or organization have a leadership development program? Please describe it.

4. Was it formal or informal? Did you participate? Why or why not? How useful was it to you? Please explain.

5. Please complete the following sentence: "The best thing about my last job was..." and "The worst thing about my last job was…" Please explain.

6. How long has it been since you last worked outside the home or for yourself? Please complete the following sentence: "I would have stayed at my last job if ..." When you left that job, did you intend to leave the traditional workforce altogether?

Reasons for Leaving (10 minutes)

1. Think back to when you first decided to leave the traditional workforce. What was going on in your life (event like 9-11, birth of a first or second child, spouse getting a better job)? Had you intended to "check out" altogether, or did this mark a change in intention, attitude, or perspective? Did you make the decision to leave right away, or did you have to think about it for a while?

2. Please complete the following sentence: "The main reason I left the traditional workforce was…" Have any of these factors changed or been eliminated? For example, a young child has started school, an ailing parent has gotten well, etc? If so, why do you still continue to not work? Did relocation have anything to do with it?

3. How much of a factor was your commute to work in deciding to leave (very, somewhat, just a little bit, not at all)? How long was your typical commute? Did you drive yourself, carpool, take public transportation (specify type)? If you drove did you have to pay for parking or did you employer pay for it?

4. Thinking back, were there specific issues that your employer or organization had that were part of why you left? For example, your CEO or boss not enforcing certain policies, unfriendly work environment, difficulty with co-workers? Do you think these things were unique to your company or more widespread among all employers?

5. Do you think your company or organization had "family friendly" policies? Please describe what that term, "family friendly," meant at your office. Did you feel that the policies were accessible to you? Did they work? If so, what made them work? If not, what made them unsuccessful?

6. Did you consider working part-time or from home? Why or why not? If you tried to transition out of the traditional workforce by working less hours, utilizing flex-time or job sharing, or telecommuting, what worked and what did not? What would have made this a feasible option for you?

7. Did you feel that your boss and/or co-workers understood your decision? How so?

8. What role did your husband or partner have in your decision? Were they supportive when you decided to leave the workforce? In what ways? Are they still supportive of your decision? What is their occupation? Did they make any changes in their job or career because you left the workforce?

9. Was the rest of your family supportive or unsupportive of your decision? In what ways? What about your mother, how did she react?

10. When you were growing up, did your mother stay at home, work part-time or work full-time? What was her highest education level? How much did her decision to work or stay home impact your decision to work or stay home? Please explain.

Current Activities (5 minutes)

1. Describe to me a typical day in your life. (Probe: caretaking, volunteering, hobbies). Who or what determines your schedule?

2. Do you feel like you have free time, or do you feel like you are always "booked"? Are your activities more for you, or more for those around you (husbands, children, friends, other family members)?

3. Do you belong to any clubs or groups? Are they formal or informal? What activities do you do?

4. How often do you meet? How did you learn about them? What do you enjoy most about them?

5. If someone asks you what "you do," how do you describe your situation? Thinking about your life currently, are you doing what you thought you would be doing at this stage when you first entered the workforce? Looking back, what would you have done differently?

Returning to the Workforce (10 minutes)

1. What do you miss about a traditional job (intellectual stimulation, salary, ability to dress up and go to work, purpose/structure, colleagues)? Do you do anything now to try and recreate those activities?

2. How do you compare the rewards and benefits that you received when working in a traditional career versus now? What is lacking?

3. Do you still keep up with your industry? Do you attend conferences, read trade publications, monitor website, retain your professional memberships? If not, why? Do you keep in touch with your former coworkers?

4. Pretend for a moment that something changed in your current life that necessitated you returning to the workforce. Would you try and go back to your old job or something similar, or would you opt for a different type of position or occupation altogether? Please explain.

5. What would be your biggest fears about going back to work? What would help alleviate these fears?

6. Now imagine that you could return to the last job you had before leaving the workforce, this time by choice, not circumstance. Would you return to the traditional workforce? Why or why not?

7. Who would support you most in your return? Who would support you the least?

8. If you decided to go back to the traditional workforce, do you believe you could resume a position similar to the one you left? Do you think you could get the same responsibilities, duties, tasks, salary, benefits? Why or why not?

9. Do you think it would be difficult to return to a similar position? In what ways? What do you think you could do to prepare yourself for re-entry into the workforce? What resources are available to you? Do you utilize them now? Why or why not?

10. If you went back would you want the same position or would you want to create a new one? What would your ideal job look like?

11. What are the main impediments to re-entry in the workforce? Are there any others? What, if anything, would need to change in your personal life to go back to work?

12. What would need to change at your job to accommodate you going back to work (more time off, flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, higher salary)? Did you ever try any of these activities while you were working? What was the result? Do you think your profession would accommodate these types of activities?

13. Have you considered part-time work or entrepreneurship? What specifically? Why or why not?

14. Have you taken any steps towards returning to work? What are they? Will you continue those? Why or why not?

Conclusion (3 minutes)

Before we finish up, please think about all the issues that we talked about today. Please complete the following sentence: "I would re-enter the traditional workforce if…" and tell us whether or not you believe that it is a viable possibility that you will return to working outside the home. Anything else? Thank you all for your participation.

Introduction & Explanation of Session (3-5 minutes)

Ask each participant to introduce themselves to the group:

- Name, Age
- Length of time lived in area, how came to live in area (school, grew up here, relocated)
- Household/Family: number of people in household, married, kids, children living at home?

Work and Education History (5-7 minutes)

1. Did you work in the field in which you earned your degree? Please explain. If no, why? Why did you change directions? Was it mostly deliberate or circumstantial? (probe a for actual experiences)

2. Tell us about your last job in the traditional workforce, that is, when you earned a paycheck from someone other than yourself. What were your responsibilities? How long had you been with the company?

3. How many of your companies or organizations had a leadership development program? Please describe it to us. Was it formal or informal? Did you participate? Why or why not? How useful was it to you? Please explain.

4. Please complete the following sentence: "The best thing about my last job was..." and "The worst thing about my last job was…" Please explain.

5. How long has it been since you last worked outside the home or for yourself? Why did you leave your last job? Please complete the following sentence: "I would have stayed at my last job if ..."

6. When you left that job, did you intend to leave the traditional workforce altogether? How many of you thought you would only be gone temporarily? How many intended to go back part-time? How many did not know what you would do?

Reasons for Leaving (15 minutes)

1. Think back to when you first decided to leave the traditional workforce. What was going on in your life (event like 9-11, birth of a first or second child, spouse getting a better job)? What factors lead up to the decision? Had you intended to "check out" altogether, or did this mark a change in intention, attitude, or perspective? Did you make the decision to leave right away, or did you have to think about it for a while?

2. Please complete the following sentence: "The main reason I left the traditional workforce was…" Any others? Which of these factors was most important to you? Which was the least? Why? Have any of these factors changed or been eliminated? For example, a young child has started school, an ailing parent has gotten well, etc? If so, why do you still continue to not work?

3. Show of hands: How many of you left the traditional workforce because of relocation? Whose decision was it to move? Looking back, was it a good choice? Why or why not?

4. How much of a factor was your commute to work in deciding to leave (very, somewhat, just a little bit, not at all)? How long was your typical commute? Did you drive yourself, carpool, take public transportation (specify type)? If you drove did you have to pay for parking or did you employer pay for it?

5. Thinking back, were there specific issues that your employer or organization had that were part of why you left? For example, your CEO or boss not enforcing certain policies, unfriendly work environment, difficulty with co-workers? Do you think these things were unique to your company or more widespread among all employers?

6. Show of hands: How many of you worked for companies or organizations that had "family friendly" policies? Please describe what that term, "family friendly," meant at your office. Did you feel that the policies were accessible to you? Did they work? If so, what made them work? If not, what made them unsuccessful?

7. Did you consider working part-time or from home? Why or why not? What is most appealing about part-time employment? For those that may have tried to transition out of the traditional workforce by working less hours, utilizing flex-time or job sharing, or telecommuting, what worked and what did not? What would have made this a feasible option for you?

8. Did you feel that your boss and/or co-workers understood your decision? How so?

9. What role did your husband or partner have in your decision? Were they supportive when you decided to leave the workforce? In what ways? Are they still supportive of your decision? What is their occupation? Did they make any changes in their job or career because you left the workforce?

10. Think about the rest of your family. Where they supportive of your decision? In what ways? What about your mothers? How did they react to your decision?

11. Tell me a little bit about your mothers. Show of hands: How many of you had mothers that stayed at home when you were growing up? How many had mothers that worked full-time outside the home? Part-time? What was her education level? How much did her decision to work or stay home impact your decision to work or stay home? Please explain.

12. Are you happy with your decision to leave the workforce? Why or why not? Would you do it again or recommend it to a friend, family member, or colleague in a similar circumstance? Explain.

Current Activities (5-7 minutes)

1. Describe to me a typical day in your life. (Probe: caretaking, volunteering, hobbies). Anything else? What type of alternative work are you doing? Who or what determines your schedule?

2. Do you feel like you have free time, or do you feel like you are always "booked"? Are your activities more for you, or more for those around you (husbands, children, friends, other family members)?

3. Do you belong to any clubs or groups? Are they formal or informal? What activities do you do? How often do you meet? How did you learn about them? What do you enjoy most about them?

4. If someone asks you what "you do," how do you describe your situation? For those of you not earning a paycheck, how many of you consider yourself "working inside the home"? Why or why not? Do you think you work harder now that you are not "working outside the home"?

5. Thinking about your life currently, are you doing what you thought you would be doing at this stage when you first entered the workforce? What caused those changes? Are you happy with the path you have taken? Why or why not? Looking back, what would you have done differently?

Returning to the Workforce (20 minutes)

1. What do you miss about a traditional job (intellectual stimulation, salary, ability to dress up and go to work, purpose/structure, colleagues)? Do you do anything now to try and recreate those activities? Please explain.

2. How do you compare the rewards and benefits that you received when working in a traditional career versus now? What is lacking?

3. Show of hands: Do you still keep up with your industry? How? Do you attend conferences, read trade publications, monitor website, retain your professional memberships? If not, why?

4. Do you keep in touch with your former coworkers? In a personal or professional manner?

5. Imagine for a moment that you could return to the last job you had before leaving the workforce. Show of hands: How many would return to the traditional workforce? Why or why not? Who would support you most in your return? Who would support you the least? What, if anything would need to be the same/different to make it worthwhile for you to return?

6. Show of hands: If you decided to go back to the traditional workforce, how many believe you could resume a position similar to the one you left? Do you think you could get the same responsibilities, duties, tasks, salary, benefits? Why or why not?
7. Pretend for a moment that something changed in your current life that necessitated you returning to the workforce. Would you try and go back to your old job or something similar, or would you opt for a different type of position or occupation altogether? Please explain.

8. What would be your biggest fears about going back to work? What would help alleviate these fears?

9. How many think it would be difficult to return to a similar position? In what ways?

10. What do you think you could do to prepare yourself for re-entry into the workforce?

11. What resources are available to you? Do you utilize them now? Why or why not?

12. If you went back would you want the same position or would you want to create a new one? What would your ideal job look like?

13. What are the main impediments to re-entry in the workforce? Are there any others? Did any of these NOT apply to anyone? Why? What, if anything, would need to change in your personal life to go back to work?

14. What would need to change at your job to accommodate you going back to work (more time off, flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, higher salary)? Did you ever try any of these activities while you were working? What was the result? Do you think your profession would accommodate these types of activities?

15. Have you considered part-time work or entrepreneurship? What specifically? Why or why not?

16. Have you taken any steps towards returning to work? What are they? Will you continue those? Why or why not?

Conclusion (3-5 minutes)

Before we finish up, please think about all the issues and individual circumstances that we talked about today. I'd like to go around the room and have everyone complete the following sentence: "I would re-enter the traditional workforce if…" and tell us whether or not you believe that it is a viable possibility that you will return to working outside the home. Anything else? (If someone says they would not return to working, ask them why it is not worth it to them to go back to work). Thank you all for your participation.

APPENDIX D

SHRM Voluntary Survey

In order to gauge business and industry's concern regarding retention issues for highly skilled and educated workers, Choose 2 Lead asked the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), which is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management, to survey its membership. In June 2006, an e-mail survey was sent to 2,977 members asking the following question:

> ***What types of demographics of high-skilled/highly educated workers is your organization most concerned about retaining over the next ten years?***

The survey provided the following choices:

- Generations X and Y (employees born after 1964)
- Veterans and Baby Boomers (employees born before 1964)
- Women in general
- Women with caring responsibilities at home
- Men in general
- Men with caring responsibilities at home
- Foreign-born workers returning to home country/emigrating to a different country

Of the 2,977 e-mail surveys sent, 322 of the 2,699 e-mails received responded. These random respondents included human resource professionals in the following industries:

Industry	Percent Responded
Manufacturing	19.0%
Services (i.e., hospitality or other services)	15.9%
Health	14.7%
Professional Services (i.e., legal, accounting, consulting, etc.)	10.9%
Finance	9.0%
Government	6.9%
High tech	5.9%
Wholesale/retain trade	5.0%
Education	3.7%
Other	9.0%

They were asked if they were *"most concerned", "concerned", "somewhat concerned" or "least concerned"*
The collective group was *most concerned* about retaining the various demographics as follows:

Demographic to Retain	Percent of Most Concerned
Generations X and Y (employees born after 1964)	37%
Veterans and Baby Boomers (employees born before 1964)	22%
Women in general	12%
Women with caring responsibilities at home	11%
Men in general	6%
Men with caring responsibilities at home	3%
Foreign-born workers returning home	3%

The industries *most concerned* about retaining women include:

- Education
- Finance
- Professional services

Industries *most concerned* about retaining baby boomers:

- Education
- Service sector

Industries *most concerned* about retaining Gen X and Gen Y

- High tech
- Finance
- Government

APPENDIX E

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While preparing for the project, researchers reviewed numerous articles, studies, reports, books and editorials on related subject matter. While not all are specifically referenced in this study, the following body of literature played a role in shaping the direction of the research.

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