

The Secret Sauce for keeping women in the Workforce-A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

One method to improve the quality of life for women, families, and communities is to empower them to engage in economic life. "We need to be more deliberate about learning what workers, particularly women, desire," Nettles said. "Women were already being held back by a lack of flexible working hours, a lack of role models, gendered professional routes, and difficulties finding sponsors and influential networks."

In the previous 20 years, there have been some positive developments in gender equality in the workplace, but there is always room for growth. The private sector, which includes employers and business membership organisations, plays a critical role in accelerating progress toward eliminating gender disparities in the workplace. Women make up more than half of the world's population, while only 45.3 percent of women worked in 2018. Workplace equality between men and women has improved in recent years, but progress toward erasing gender gaps has slowed. Disparities between men and women persist in a variety of areas, including labour market participation, remuneration for equal work, representation of women in high-paying occupations and managerial roles, and the distribution of wealth. For many women in the workplace, violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, are still a reality. A multitude of global stakeholders, including governments, enterprises, employers' and workers' groups, and civil society, will need to take proactive and revolutionary policies to achieve economic empowerment and gender equality for women. However, private-sector gender equality performance varies greatly by country, sector, and company size, as well as corporate leadership and culture, with small and medium-sized businesses facing the most difficulties. This article delves into the secret sauce for retaining women in the workforce.

Keywords-Boundaries, strategies, women in work place, *Real* Leadership Opportunities

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Introduction

More than 75% of all carers are women, implying that in addition to balancing the pressures of job, many women are also balancing the obligations of caring for a loved one. Women's unpaid labour outside of the workplace frequently leads to a career pause with both short- and long-term consequences. According to a 2019 Flex Jobs poll of more than 2,000 women with children under the age of 18, around 31% of women who took a career sabbatical after having children claimed they didn't want to but had no choice due to a lack of job flexibility.

"Forcing someone to choose between their family and their work is the worst option you can make," says popular novelist and futurist Dan Brown. *"I think that's terrible."*

Morgan, who hosts the podcast "The Future of Work," believes that allowing employees to work from home will demonstrate that they can still be effective when they are not in the office. He claims that following the pandemic, any "forward-thinking organisation" will introduce long-term flexible work plans, allowing parents, particularly women, to work schedules that balance their personal and professional obligations.

Keeping women in the workforce is a necessity, not a choice. According to a recent study, women could hold as many jobs as men and contribute trillions of dollars to the global economy if they had better access to secondary education, childcare, and flexible work arrangements. It's more important than ever that workplaces not just extend to their employees.

Women in the Workplace & Workplace Well-Being

Having more women in the office makes a company a better place to work for everyone. We asked hundreds of respondents in a major survey research to estimate the percentage of women in their employment. The responses ranged from 0 to 100 percent, with an average of around 45 percent (pretty close to the U.S. national workplace average). After that, we asked them a series of questions regarding their work situations. According to the findings, having a larger number of female employees predicted: -

- ❖ Increased job satisfaction
- ❖ More commitment from the organisation;

- ❖ More meaningful work; and
- ❖ Burnout is reduced.

Things Women want in the Workplace

You may be thinking what you can do to recruit, retain, and promote women in your organisation as a result of this study. Women were also asked what they wanted from their jobs in our study. What we discovered was:

- 1) **Women Want a Calling — Not Just a 9-to-5--**The most prevalent reason women offered for sticking with their current company was that it fits well with other aspects of their lives, followed by that they enjoy their work and that it allows them to make a difference. Furthermore, many women mentioned having personally meaningful employment that is aligned with their beliefs, purpose, and work-life balance. These factors combine to form what social scientists call "a calling." The telephone rings. Given this finding, you might be considering what you can do to attract, retain, and promote women in your organization. Our study also asked women about what they want from the workplace.
- 2) **Women want to be able to choose where, when, and how they work-** Flexibility concerns were at the top of the list when women were asked to rank the value of employment perks and rewards. Paid time off was voted the most significant reward, followed by healthcare benefits, paid leadership development, flexible scheduling, and advancement chances. In comparison to a control group of males, women prioritised paid time off and working from home. Women with children regarded having a flexible schedule and being able to work from home as more significant than women without children, suggesting that flexibility is especially crucial when it comes to maintaining smart women who also want to raise families.
- 3) **Real Leadership Opportunities for Women-** Women were just as interested in promotions, raises, and leadership development chances as males. They were also equally inclined to request and accept leadership roles. However, women in the workplace gave different reasons for declining leadership positions than men. Men often declined jobs because they didn't want them (e.g., they didn't like the boss, they didn't want to relocate, they didn't want to work longer hours, or they weren't offered enough money). While some women expressed similar concerns, others stated that they

were unsure of their qualifications, were unsure of others' support, and were concerned that they were being set up for failure.

Strategies to Avoid potential Pitfalls

To prevent potential difficulties, organisations wishing to expand their flexible work alternatives without disadvantage women in their workforce can adopt three basic strategies:

- 1) **Maintain Engagement Opportunities**—More women working part-time outside the office may deprive them of a valuable resource for career advancement: workplace relationships and mentorships. If managers and leaders are unable to offer resources for persons working from home, these groups' chances will be further eroded. Employers can discover strategies to guarantee that flexible work does not limit employees' ability to form long-term relationships and engage with mentors. Internal connectivity has remained relatively unaffected by the pandemic.
- 2) **Ensure that remote work is valued**—Organizations that expand their flexible work options must create a shift in managers' attitudes toward remote work. HR professionals can educate managers on the facts concerning remote work productivity, using the pandemic as an example, such as the fact that 90 percent of businesses discovered that productivity remained constant or increased between March and October 2020. Employers should aggressively urge managers to schedule facetime with remote workers to ensure that distant work is productive and aligned, but managers should also model new flexible work habits to avoid inadvertently expressing a preference for in-office work.
- 3) **Be open to many types of flexibility.** While not every company can provide remote work, everyone can increase their flexibility. Employers can provide flexibility in terms of when, how, and what work their workers do. Organizations must determine what options exist in their own workplace and which type of flexibility benefits their employees the most. The labour participation rate for women in 2019 was just shy of an all-time high. Women had made substantial gains in managerial positions. Poverty rates among women were decreasing. Organizations must embrace the numerous aspects of gender diversity to resurrect that trend and attract women back into the workforce, retain talent who wants more options in the workplace, and increase corporate performance.

What Organizations & Leaders Can Do to Support Women in the Workplace?

Here are a few things that organisational leaders can do based on these results to help women (and people of all genders) get what they want out of work: -

- **Assist employees in finding significance and satisfaction in their work.** Consider their personal values, passions, strengths, and life aspirations. Consider how they can include these elements into their work. Small adjustments to the way work is framed and carried out can go a long way toward transforming a job into a calling.
- **Support persons working remotely wherever practicable and practical,** and allow them to work hours that are convenient for their personal lives. Job sharing (having numerous employees share one role), virtual work teams, and sabbatical choices are all viable options.
- **Provide equal chances for men and women to advance in their careers, receive increases,** and develop their leadership abilities, as well as the resources and support they require to succeed. Leader development experiences that are effective must be difficult yet attainable, with clear incentives for efforts and results.

Conclusion

As a single working mother, reading the steady stream of articles about women leaving the labour at alarming numbers in the last year, particularly women of colour, is heart-breaking. According to a recent estimate, men in the United States gained roughly 16,000 net employments in December 2020, but women lost 156,000 net jobs. To put it another way, for every man who got a new job during that time, nearly ten women quit theirs.

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Nobody has had an easy time dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. It is indisputable, however, that women have been disproportionately harmed. That's why creating a workplace culture that supports everyone is a never-ending process that includes constant self-reflection, listening to your employees, and responding to their needs.

And if working during a pandemic has taught us anything, it's that flexibility isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. It must be accompanied with empathy, a positive tone from the top, and a diverse set of policies and perks. Organizations should evaluate and redefine their employee benefits on a regular basis. It becomes much easier to keep business culture in sync with what employees require from there. Here are some ideas for getting started: -

Make the "windowed" workweek more powerful.

It's critical that teams collaborate to clearly define work schedules and establish boundaries for team members to manage work and personal obligations. Encourage employees to be as open as possible about their scheduling requirements, and discuss strategies to safeguard time and block time windows throughout the day. Working flexibly—and getting work done where and how it best suits your people—may be one of the most valuable benefits you can provide.

Accept the unusual and offer assistance.

Because each person's needs are distinct and may alter, unconventional schedules may appear from time to time when flexibility is done correctly. Employees seeking flexible work arrangements may benefit from cross-functional support groups, which can help them feel safer in their individual workdays.

Provide perks that emphasise empathy.

It's critical to provide additional support in addition to a flexible day-to-day, week-to-week work schedule. Reduced meeting schedules, no-video meetings, backup childcare

choices, mental health and well-being support, and even leaves of absence are all examples of this.

"Everyday flexibility," which embraces the concept that flexibility is something that is ingrained in the culture rather than something that is "won" or "given," is critical. It's critical that we encourage everyone in the workplace to stand out and say, "I may have to do things differently, but I can still meet my duties and do excellent work."

Now is the moment to adapt "business as usual" to incorporate the most successful lessons learnt during the pandemic. Moving forward, we may embrace flexibility as an important aspect of our work culture. While a "flexibility for all" approach benefits all employees, women, in particular, require more help than ever. Flexibility, when used correctly, can open up new opportunities.

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