

Working Paper No. 7

Flexible work arrangements: career advancement (Part of the Gender Worx Working Paper Series)

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References

For all references please refer to Working Paper References on the Gender Worx website.



Flexible work arrangements: career advancement

Combining flexible working paths with continued career progression is challenging, yet fundamental to achieving diversity goals. Child rearing responsibilities generally coincide with moves into middle level managerial roles, yet the increased time commitments and pressures of middle management are seen as incompatible with family responsibilities (Nesbit & Seeger 2007). Family responsibilities are seen as barriers to women's availability for work, and availability is considered essential for promotion (Chinchilla, León, Torres & Canela 2006).

There is an implicit assumption that working part-time is an indication of a lack of ambition; women's ambition is seen to inevitably disappear once they have children (Sools, Van Engen & Baerveldt 2007). Women who *are* committed to their careers and seek to improve their status may nevertheless be seen as less committed by the organisation if they take advantage of flexible work arrangements and family friendly opportunities (Furst & Reeves 2008).

Liff & Ward (2001) draw attention to a 'hypocrisy gap' in organisations. While 55% of managers in their study reported that their organisation provides flexible work provisions as an ethical requirement, only 30% said they actually deliver them.

Hays supports senior women in management holding flexible and part-time managerial roles. They have achieved 52% female managers, 62% of staff in part-time positions and 15% of part-time staff hold senior managerial roles (EOWA 2010c). IBM Australia pioneered a job share arrangement for two senior women returning from parental leave and who both wanted to work part-time. They jointly manage a team of approximately 70 people. The shared role enables them to maintain their career goals (EOWA 2010c).

Organisations may or may not be aware of the full extent of career compromise they create, as women experiencing rigidity or insensitivity to family issues are more likely to quit quietly than to ask for what they need (Reinhold 2005).



About Gender Worx

Gender Worx is a specialist gender diversity practice. We are thought leaders, experts and consultants to organisations in gender diversity measurement and change. We assist organisations to unlock the potential of women and help make organisations:

- better places to work; and
- more productive and profitable

Gender Worx is a specialist division of Insync Surveys, stakeholder survey and consulting specialists and a 2009 BRW Fast 100 Company.

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Insync Surveys has carried out surveys for some of the largest public, private, government and not-for-profit organisations in Asia Pacific. It is based in Australia and has representatives in New Zealand, Asia, UK and North America. Insync Surveys' technology also powers the surveys of Board Benchmarking and Gender Worx.

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