



GEN Y  
WOMEN  
IN THE  
WORKPLACE

FOCUS  
GROUP  
SUMMARY  
REPORT



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# Gen Y Women in the Workplace

## Focus Group Summary Report

### Introduction

Baby Boomlets... Mypod Generation... Gen Why? This 80 million-strong generation is creating quite the buzz.<sup>1</sup> By 2025, Generation Y (born 1978-1994) will comprise nearly 75 percent of the world's workforce. From their comfort with technology, to their multicultural perspectives, to their insatiable desire for making a difference, Gen Y is expected to revolutionize the workplace.

Much has already been written about Gen Y. Far less has been written about different segments of Gen Y. Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation's Young Careerist (YC) research project provides a framework through which to view the career choices and challenges of Generation Y women.

This primary research gives voice to a distinct group of working women who are vital to developing a diverse and skilled workforce. BPW Foundation seeks to understand what Gen Y women need in order to be successful in the workplace and then translate that knowledge into tools that improve how employers recruit, support and retain young women. Understanding and addressing the needs of Gen Y women is critical for maintaining a competitive edge.



BPW Foundation has a history of researching workforce issues and practices that lead to a successful workplace. Successful Workplaces are those that embrace and practice diversity, equity and work-life balance. Our research provides employers and policy makers with insights on the needs and challenges of key groups of working women with a variety of skills, education and training.

In June 2010, BPW Foundation conducted three employer-based focus groups with a total of 27 Gen Y women and 17 managers of Gen Y. The sessions focused on three categories of questions:

1. [Definitions](#): How do Gen Y women define work and work-life balance? How do their definitions relate to their workplace values?
2. [Intergenerational Workplace Dynamics](#): How do Gen Y women interact with and benefit from older colleagues? How can older colleagues benefit from Gen Y women?
3. [Gender in the workplace](#): What gender differences do Gen Y women observe in the workplace? How is work different for men than women?

For more information about the data collection and characteristics of participants, please see the Appendix.

### About this Issue Brief

This Issue Brief explores Gen Y women's workplace attitudes, perspectives on intergenerational workplace dynamics, and perceptions of how gender impacts their workplace experiences.\* Gen Y is often labeled "different" for their attitudes toward work, their demand for work-life balance and emphasis on intrinsic rewards. BPW Foundation's focus groups sought to critically engage these areas of difference to provide a framework for understanding Gen Y women's workplace priorities. The Issue Brief concludes with recommendations to help employers engage Gen Y women employees.

\* The data presented below is based on a limited sample of Gen Y. The focus group findings will be corroborated with results from an online survey to be conducted in the near term.





## Sample Limitations

This report is based on the perspectives of women working in professional, sales and office occupations. It does not account for the range of workplace experiences such as women engaged in service occupations or production occupations. However, as of 2009, the largest percentage of employed women (40 percent) work in management, professional and related occupations and 32 percent worked in sales and office occupations (Department of Labor, 2009). Their workplace attitudes and priorities reflect realities particular to the nature of their work. For the most part, participants were engaged in heuristic work where they possess some degree of autonomy over how their work is completed.

The study was also limited in its scope. It was designed to explore Gen Y women's attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. As such, it is not a generational study. The perspectives of Gen Y women are not compared to the perspectives of other generational cohorts except in the section where intergenerational workplace dynamics are explored. Where possible, efforts have been made to indicate how Gen Y women's perspectives relate to existing workplace trends or bodies of literature.

Further, the study is not a gender analysis. It does not examine the extent to which Gen Y women's perspectives are similar to or different from Gen Y men's perspectives.



## Working Definitions

### Beyond the “live to work/work to live” Equation

There is a sense that Gen Y’s approach to work is different from previous generations. Popular literature states that unlike Baby Boomers who “live to work,” Gen Y “work to live.” Focus group participants agreed that unlike previous generations they do not “live to work;” however, concluding that Gen Y women are therefore only working to live is far too simplistic. The equation is unhelpful. Preliminary findings suggest that Gen Y is not only redefining their relationship to work, they

are redefining work itself. Gen Y women did not express a stark dichotomy between work and life. Work was described as an integral part of life that meets ones material and existential needs.

#### Work: An Integral Part of Life

Gen Y women recognize work as an integral part of life. Work is recognized as impacting all other areas of life. As one Gen Yer stated, “You are here [at work] more than anywhere else. You take it around with you. Whether you carry your stress home or actually take your laptop home, it goes with you. It affects everything.” However, work is still just one aspect of life. Gen Y women are more than workers. They are also mothers, daughters, sisters and friends. Their various identities and spheres of life interact in dynamic ways. Gen Y women want an employer who treats them as a whole being and acknowledges the various facets of their life.

“

#### We’re very passionate

about what we do. We want to be in jobs with growth opportunities. It’s important for us to like what we’re doing. I think it’s why we move around . . . it’s why we are known as the restless Millennials. We want to wake up energized and love what we do.”



## The Pursuit of Enjoyable and Meaningful Work

Work is more than a necessary evil. Gen Y women assume that work does not have to be drudgery. In fact, Gen Y women expect to enjoy their work. They are not interested in “making it through the day just to make money.” It’s not about putting in time or picking up a paycheck. Gen Y women are concerned with the inherent satisfaction of work.

Not only do Gen Y women assume that work can be enjoyable, they also assume that work should be meaningful. For Gen Y women, having a successful career means making an impact. The women who reported the highest level of job satisfaction described their work as “fun” and contributing to something bigger than themselves. Work is an aspect of a meaningful existence. Women report a sense of fulfillment when work is enjoyable, meaningful, and leads to professional growth.

## Toward a Liveable Life

It’s hard to find an article or book on Gen Y that does not include a reference to the importance of work-life balance for this generation. It has been said that “Unlike previous generations, for Gen Y work-life balance isn’t just something to strive for – it’s a given.”<sup>2</sup> According to a Universum survey of 37,000 recent college graduates, 59 percent reported balancing their personal and professional lives as their top career goal.<sup>3</sup> It is unclear the degree to which Gen Y workplace attitudes and priorities are changing as a result of the current economic climate. A 2009 Businessweek survey found that Gen Y’s focus on work-life balance was not decreasing.<sup>4</sup> Current research indicates it is still an important factor in Gen Y workplace decisions, but the key is how do Gen Y women define work-life balance?

Gen Y women’s perspectives on work – as an integral, enjoyable and meaningful aspect of life – informs how they approach work-life balance. Participants largely reject the false dichotomy between work and life. They believe that they have one life and work is a key component of that life. In addition to workers, they are also



sisters, aunts, spouses, mothers, friends and volunteers. They have commitments, responsibilities and interests outside of work. They do not want to have to forfeit or neglect other areas of their life to excel professionally. Gen Y women want and expect the workplace to adapt to their lifestyle. In this way, they are looking less for a particular work-life balance policy or program. Their responses support Joan Williams', Director of the Center for WorkLife Law, argument that, "The issue is less the need for individualized workplace flexibility than the need to match today's workplace to today's workforce."<sup>5</sup>

Participants voiced concerns about their company's current offering of work-life balance programs and policies. Their concerns include issues related to current and future effects of their employer's current practices.

1. The implementation of work-life programs and policies are often limited to individuals with care giving responsibilities.
2. The existing programs and tools do not necessarily provide an enabling environment for working mothers.

### Work-Life Balance: Not Just a Family Thing

The age-old concept of the balanced wheel of life has been used to help explain work-life balance. It suggests eight important aspects of life as the eight spokes in a wheel: work, finances, spiritual, hobbies, self, social, family and health. All eight aspects of life are regarded as important for every human being.<sup>6</sup> However, Gen Y women participants reported that within their workplaces the only spoke that is

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**Folks aren't as considerate** to younger folks who don't have kids. If it's a kid thing and you need to leave early people are much more considerate. It's like we're being penalized for not having a family. They get a pass and we have to justify that we have a happy hour and want to go out.” – Gen Y woman



willingly granted accommodation is “family.” From Gen Y women’s perspective work-life balance is treated as a family issue.

Gen Y women report a double standard when it comes to work-life balance. It is widely accepted that women with children are juggling more than work. It’s accepted that their non-work priorities may have to come first from time to time. For example, if a woman has a sick child she is encouraged to go home. However, a woman without sick children is questioned whether or not her illness really warrants a sick day. Managers and colleagues understand if a woman needs to leave work early to pick up her kids. It’s accepted that she will complete her work later that night or early the next morning. The same type of consideration is not afforded to a younger worker who wants to leave early to go to a concert. Not only do women feel as though there is a double-standard when it comes to exercising flex-time, Gen Y women believe that additional work is often assigned to them because it is assumed they have no responsibilities outside of work. Gen Y women without children perceive that they are expected to wholly commit themselves to work. The women agreed work-life balance should not be a benefit reserved for working mothers. Work-life balance should be a right guaranteed to all employees regardless of their position in life.

### Work-Life Balance: Important for the Family Thing

While very few Gen Y women participants are mothers, most anticipate having children at some point in their life. Gen Y women want to believe that they can have it all. They want meaningful work and a healthy home life. However, they are wary that they can, in fact, have it all. The majority of women expressed anticipatory career anxiety. They are concerned about how having a family will affect their careers. Gen Y women perceive gender differences in terms of long-term career planning. As one Gen Yer stated, “Men at 26 or 27 aren’t saying; I’m going to stay at this company because of the flexibility, so that when I have kids, I can take my kids to soccer practice.” Gen Y women, are in fact, thinking ahead and evaluating the extent to which an employer offers an environment that is compatible with life changes.





Gen Y women are forward thinking. They are looking for an enabling work environment. Participants in two of the focus groups were uncertain whether or not their employers provide an enabling environment for working mothers. The discussion surrounding work/family compatibility included benefits/provisions as well as corporate culture. Some women reported that the lack of on-site daycare options would make it difficult to continue full-time employment. Other women want to know whether or not job-share and part-time options will be available to them in the future. Not only are Gen Y women uncertain whether or not the tools exist to combine career and family, but Gen Y women are also concerned about the perceived lack of role models within their respective companies. Participants who expressed the least amount of concern worked for an employer who provides on-site daycare, on-site medical services, and flexible work arrangements. These women have seen working mothers successfully rise to leadership positions without having to sacrifice their family life.

To have their best life now, work-life balance is essential. When Gen Y women talk about work-life balance, they aren't just looking for a corporate program with an onsite daycare, casual Fridays, and tele-commuting options – all of which are welcome. What Gen Y women participants really want is greater control. It's about having the freedom and tools to be self-directed. Participants expressed a desire for autonomy not just "flex time." The problem with "flex time" programs is that managers have the control. Managers can choose to dole out flexibility to workers they deem deserving or not at all.

These sentiments reflect larger shifts in the workplace flexibility movement. While workplace flexibility is not a new issue, the emphasis that Gen Y places on flexibility is new. Managers feel that Gen Y workers are breaking barriers by making demands for flexibility which benefits everyone. As one manager stated, "When I entered the work force, I wasn't as bold about talking about work life balance because it was perceived as being less dedicated."



## Results Orientation

Preliminary findings suggest that Gen Y women assume that people want to do good work. Based on this premise, they question why it matters where, when and how they work as long as the job gets done. Gen Y women want to be evaluated based on the work they produce not the number of hours they sit at their desk. These sentiments are not unique to Gen Y. More and more workers are questioning the traditional 9-5 workplace ritual. At the same time, there are notable examples of employers who are providing workers with greater autonomy over what they're doing. For example, under Best Buy's ROWE (result only work environment) program, employees do not have set schedules and are only measured by the work they produce.

While all three employers were identified as being results-oriented, Gen Y women perceived disconnects between rhetoric about being a results oriented company and corporate practices. Examples include the following:



**We [Gen Y] are much more productive when we have the freedom and flexibility to get the work done when and how we want to get it done. Society isn't 9am-5pm. I have the flexibility to work from home and I'm much more productive at home. I might run some errands during the day, but be online at 11pm. I'm still putting in a full day's work plus some, but I'm not confined to 9am-5pm." – Gen Y woman**

- Employees judge each other based on the number of hours worked and not results produced. If you leave at 5pm, you're labeled a "slacker."
- Flexibility is earned. Employees at the top have more freedom than employees at the bottom.
- Tools that facilitate results (e.g. work email on an employee's phone) are only distributed to management level and above.

Facilitating a Results-Oriented Work Environment

To fully embrace a results-oriented work environment, Gen Y women participants recommend a multi-pronged approach to address issues at the corporate, management, and individual levels. Gen Y women's recommendations align with the current workplace flexibility literature.



- **Organizational Level** – Examine and adjust the prevailing mindset of inputs (hours worked) over outputs (results produced). An environment that rewards a person’s “presence” is not conducive for encouraging people to apply tools that may improve their “performance” (e.g. working remotely).
- **Management Level** – Managers need to be coached in and held accountable for the ways in which their practices enable or limit the effectiveness of their direct reports.
- **Individual Level** – Each individual should be encouraged to identify where and when they work best. [Participants acknowledged that certain types of jobs are place specific and may have limited flexibility]. Once a woman identifies her best work style, she may need tools in order to adopt that work style. For example, several Gen Y reported wanting to occasionally work from home but do not have the necessary tools (e.g. laptop). It should be recognized, though, that work style is highly individualistic. Not all Gen Y women want to fully integrate work and life. Work styles should be explored not assumed.

#### Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE)

Gen Y women are not the only ones questioning the efficacy of the traditional 9-5 “work is where you go” mentality. Paying people for the results they produce rather than the number of hours they work is at the heart of a Results-Only Work Environment. ROWE, a human resource management strategy, was co-created by Jody Thompson and Cali Ressler. The strategy was first implemented by Best Buy. Subsequently, ROWE has been implemented by Gap, Girl Scouts of San Gorgino, J.A. Counter and Associates, and the Fairview Health Services I.T. Department. In May 2010, BPW Foundation joined the list of organizations operating under ROWE.

Shifting from a focus on inputs to outputs creates a win-win situation for employees and employers. Employees report greater workplace satisfaction as a result of ROWE and employers report lower attrition rates and high productivity levels.

[ROWE Business Case PDF](#)



## In Pursuit of Intrinsic Rewards: Gen Y Women's Workplace Values

Gen Y women's basic assumptions about work affect how they evaluate job opportunities. While salary and benefits (e.g. health insurance, educational benefits, and skills development) matter, Gen Y women also consider the following questions before accepting a job offer.

- Does the work have meaning/purpose?
- Will I enjoy the work?
- Are there opportunities for advancement?
- Will the work environment facilitate work-life balance?

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**Most of your waking hours** are spent working. If you don't enjoy what you do there is going to be a huge cognitive dissonance. You're going to be very unhappy. I love what I do. I get to work on cutting edge stuff.” – Gen Y woman

Through a pre-focus group survey, participants were asked to rank a series of employer characteristics. Across the three focus groups, the three most important employer characteristics were:

1. Employees are allowed to self-manage
2. Emphasis is placed on meeting goals not on how, when or where people do the work
3. Career advancement opportunities are actively promoted

Gen Y women's workplace values are consistent with what they perceive as enabling them to do their best work. Gen Y women and managers agreed that self-management is key to Gen Y women's work performance. They want clearly defined expectations but freedom over the execution. Gen Y women believe that they are best able to achieve their designated results when they have autonomy over when, where and how the work gets done.





Gen Y women's workplace definitions and desires reflect the rise of heuristic jobs. The participants, for the most part, were not engaged in "algorithmic" or routine tasks where there are set instructions to achieve one pre-determined conclusion. Their day-to-day responsibilities include and require space for experimenting with possibilities to come up with a solution. The value that Gen Y women participants place on self-direction, results-orientation, and advancement opportunities is consistent with new motivation theory which highlights the importance of intrinsic rewards. It has been suggested "that enjoyment-based intrinsic motivation, namely how creative a person feels when working on the project, is the strongest and most pervasive driver."<sup>7</sup>

Further, Gen Y women's belief that work can and should be enjoyable is consistent with psychologist Csikszentmihalyi's finding that people are much more likely to reach a state of flow - the mental state of operation in which a person in an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity – at work than in leisure.<sup>8</sup> Gen Y women's attitudes and beliefs surrounding work, work-life balance and workplace values reject the false dichotomies of work and play and work and life. As Csikszentmihalyi argues, this is an important step forward, "There is no reason to believe any longer that only irrelevant 'play' can be enjoyed, while the serious business of life must be borne as a burdensome cross. Once we realize that the boundaries between work and play are artificial, we can take matters in hand and begin the difficult task of making life more liveable."<sup>9</sup>

## Intergenerational Workplace Dynamics

Books and articles on intergenerational workplace dynamics are not in short supply. The literature often indicates that there is a bridge that needs to be constructed to bring older and younger colleagues into successful working relationships. Neither Gen Y women nor managers characterized inter-generational relations as tense. Participants did, however, identify some generational challenges. Gen Y women and managers, alike, agreed that several challenges were compounded by gender.



The chart below provides a summary of perspectives from Gen Y women and managers of Gen Y.

*Perspectives from Gen Y women*

Older workers either embrace the opportunity to mentor younger workers or they shut Gen Y women out.

Older workers are perceived as being resistant to change. Gen Y, on the other hand, embrace change.

Gen Y women often feel judged because of their age. Their gender adds a compounding effect.

*Perspectives from Managers of Gen Y*

There is a technology gap between older and younger workers. Gen Y employees are typically the subject matter experts when it comes to the adoption of new technologies.

Older workers do not always understand Gen Y values.

Older workers are quick to judge Gen Y women's actions and decisions.

While generational rifts do exist, positive attributes were identified for both older and younger workers. The chart below provides a summary of what Gen Y women and older workers appreciate about each other as well as what each group believes they can teach each other.

*What Gen Y women appreciate about older colleagues*

Professional experience

Institutional knowledge

Company loyalty

Ability to collaborate

Perspective – being able to see the bigger picture

*What Managers appreciate about Gen Y women*

Fresh perspective

Ability to brainstorm

Willingness to vocalize their wants and needs

Innate sense of meritocracy

Ability to seek out and embrace change

Desire to understand not only the "what" of a task, but the "why"



*Gen Y women can teach older colleagues to:*

Be flexible

Be open to new ideas

Be willing to take risks

Embrace change to improve a process

*Older colleagues can teach Gen Y women to:*

Be patient

See the bigger picture

Be adaptable/how to use influence

Understand the organizational culture

Gen Y women appreciate the wealth of knowledge and experience that older colleagues bring to the workplace. They expressed a desire to learn from the mistakes and successes of previous generations. However, managers reported that older colleagues often sense that Gen Y do not in fact acknowledge or appreciate their experience. Gen Y women most often ask other Gen Yers for work-related advice. Managers suggested that Gen Yers may not know how to approach older workers or how to tap into their knowledge base. Alternately, it is important for older workers to acknowledge how Gen Yers were socialized. In school, Gen Yers were taught that when faced with a problem they should first try to solve it themselves, and then ask a peer. Asking the teacher was the last resort. It is not surprising then that Gen Y women consult with their peers before approaching an older colleague. Managers recommended hosting roundtables to further explore how to help younger workers benefit from older workers' experience.

## Gender in the Workplace

Research on gender in the workplace consistently indicates that gender is an accurate predictor of occupation, pay and career progress.<sup>10</sup> Further, men and women are often treated differently at work even when formal barriers to equal employment are removed. Although the labor market is often perceived as a neutral space in which buyers and sellers interact, managerial practices, performance evaluations, and professional networks are all shaped by gendered social norms.<sup>11</sup> Dif-



ferential treatment is attributed to perceived gender differences between men and women. In this way, labor market practices reflect societal beliefs about appropriate roles and responsibilities for men and women.

While gender differences exist in the workplace, the literature on Gen Y reports young women are optimistic about their workplace prospects. Young women have been socialized to expect equity. A 2009 study found that of all the generational cohorts, Gen Y women are most likely to believe that deliberate discrimination is declining.<sup>12</sup> To what extent, though, do Gen Y women's workplace expectations match their workplace experiences? Focus group questions sought to identify the extent to which Gen Y women perceive gender-based work differences. While participants never used the words "discrimination" or "disadvantage," their experiences encompass gender-based bias. Participant responses also indicate that while Gen Y may be more optimistic, they still perceive and experience the same types of issues that have been written about for the last several decades in studies on gender in the workplace.

Gen Y women identified two types of gender bias in their workplace: maternal wall and prove it again.<sup>13</sup> The findings reported below are composite. It should be noted that one focus group yielded very little data on gender bias.<sup>†</sup>

### Anticipating the Maternal Wall

While very few Gen Y women participants are mothers, most anticipate having children and some point in their life. Responses indicate that Gen Y women also anticipate hitting the maternal wall. Discussions surrounding work and family revealed dichotomous beliefs. On the one hand, Gen Y women believe that they can have it all and on the other hand they question whether or not they can have it all. Participants repeatedly referred to young women as having a superwoman complex. They have been socialized to believe that they can do and be everything,

<sup>†</sup> The employer with the least reported gender bias also had the highest levels of women with families in senior leadership positions.





but their workplace experiences thus far are rattling those beliefs. Gen Y women expressed frustration over having to potentially choose between work and family in the future. As one Gen Y woman stated, “Men don’t have to make a decision or call to take a back seat to their husband’s career. As women we have to make decisions about whether or not we are going to have children. Men don’t have to make that call. It’s not going to impact their career.”

In one focus group, there was a vehement argument about the compatibility of work and family. Several women argued that it simply was not possible to be at the top of your profession and have a healthy family life. Such women suggested that if women wanted to do both they should plan ahead and pursue professions that were more compatible with care giving responsibilities. Other women strongly disagreed and expressed the need for change within the workplace. As one Gen Yer stated, “We’ve been welcomed into the workplace, but the structure hasn’t changed. The rules have to change.”

These two sets of opinions reflect larger debates within the work-family work arena. Work-family conflict is often treated as a “woman’s issue.” As such employers are encouraged to “accommodate” to women’s care giving responsibilities. The second set of comments about the need for change within the workplace reflects another line of work-family argumentation that the conflict is really about men and masculinity. Workplace ideals are still shaped around one breadwinner and one homemaker. The ideal worker is someone who starts work early and works late for forty years or more without taking time off for child-rearing. From this perspective, the notion of the ideal worker must change to ensure more equitable employment opportunities and experiences for men and women.<sup>14</sup>





## Prove it Again

While Gen Y women do not believe that gender hinders their access to positions, they do acknowledge that their experiences within those positions differ from that of their male counterparts. As one Gen Y woman explained, “No one will tell you that you can’t do something because you’re a woman, but that doesn’t mean you won’t have to overcome some hurdles because you are a woman.” One key area of gender difference that was reported repeatedly was performance pressure.

Several women reported that within their particular organizations the “good old boy” mentality prevails. Being a woman is viewed negatively. One Gen Y woman, who worked within a male dominated department, felt that women’s opinions were not valued as highly as men’s. She stated, “As a woman the value that you bring will be devalued so you have to work twice as hard as men.” Even within organizations where being a woman is not viewed negatively, Gen Y women agreed that it’s not enough to be a good worker. As a young woman, if you want to gain recognition you have to be a “rockstar.” Gen Y women feel that they have to establish and prove themselves more than their male counterparts. These statements were consistent for Gen Y women working within a predominately male field. Gen Y women working with mostly women felt that gender did not matter and did not report performance pressure.

These findings suggest that Gen Y women’s perceptions and experiences in the workplace are not unique to their generational cohort. One study described the workplaces as having a “glass escalator” in which women advance slowly in fields dominated by men, but men get promoted more rapidly.<sup>15</sup> In another study, 71 percent of women bosses reported needing to work harder or be smarter than a man to get the same respect.<sup>16</sup> Gen Y women’s workplace experiences reflect findings in the larger workplace gender literature - the workplace is still not gender neutral.



## Recommendations

BPW Foundation's preliminary research suggests several opportunities for employers to engage Gen Y women employees. The following suggestions are aimed at helping organizations collect data about Gen Y women and organizational practices that can be used to stimulate dialogue and develop practical strategies around areas of great importance to Gen Y women. The recommended activities include illustrative questions and are not complete research tools.

1. *Conduct an Autonomy Audit.* Ask each Gen Y woman to answer the following questions:

- How much autonomy do you have over your tasks at work (your main responsibilities on a daily basis)?
- How much autonomy do you have over your time at work (when you arrive, when you leave, etc.)?
- How much autonomy do you have over your technique at work (how you actually perform your tasks)?

Compare Gen Y women's responses with manager perceptions' about the level of freedom granted to employees. Hold sessions with Gen Y women and managers to discuss the implications of the findings.

2. *Host a Multi-generational Roundtable.* Host roundtables with Gen Y women and workers representing other generational cohorts to explore how each group can better leverage the unique skills and experiences each brings to the workplace.

3. *Host a Work-Life Balance Roundtable.* Host roundtables with Gen Y women and managers to explore perceptions surrounding the implementation of work-life balance tools and policies within your organization. How is work-life bal-



ance defined in your organization? What work-life balance policies and tools exist? Who benefits from those policies and tools? Do Gen Y women perceive a double standard? Are your programs and policies geared toward families? Identify strategies to make work-life balance a greater reality for all employees.

4. *Develop a Work/Life Compatibility Inventory.* Ask Gen Y women to provide a list of benefits and tools needed to make work and life more compatible. Compare the findings with the resources currently provided by your organization.

BPW Foundation suggests that women-friendly employers are characterized by the following programs and benefits:

#### Career Support Practices

1. Flexible Scheduling (i.e. part time, compressed work week, flextime)
2. Telecommuting
3. Job sharing options
4. Child care subsidy or reimbursement
5. Onsite child-care
6. Paid Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave
7. Health insurance options for full-time employees
8. Health insurance options for part-time employees
9. Allowance of sick time utilization to care for family members
10. Management training to support the implementation of family friendly policies





### Advancement Practices

1. Educational benefits or reimbursement for education/training
  2. Management level promotion availability for part-time positions
  3. Formal organizational salary reviews to ensure pay equity
  4. Career counseling or planning services
  5. Professional and/or skills development training
  6. Opportunities for rotation into job roles important to advancement
  7. Management training opportunities for working women
  8. Formalized women's networks
  9. Formalized mentoring programs
  10. Executive leadership (board of directors and/or executive team) includes at least 40% women
5. Develop a Career Advancement Questionnaire. Gather employee perceptions of the grade and promotion system within the organization. Hold sessions to discuss any gaps between career advancement perceptions and practices.

For best practices in developing a successful workplace, please explore BPW Foundation resources including:

- [Successful Workplaces Guidelines](#)
- [Successful Workplaces Digest](#)
- [Workplace Transformer™](#) e-publication





## Appendix

### Data Collection

#### *Overview*

During the month of June 2010, BPW Foundation conducted three employer-based focus groups. Separate two-hour sessions were held with Gen Y women and managers of Gen Y women. BPW Foundation recruited employers through press releases, social media, and professional networks. Employee participants were recruited through company affinity groups and professional development programs.

Two of the three focus groups were conducted in-person at the employer's headquarters. One focus group was held remotely in order to facilitate the participation of employees from multiple locations in the United States. Participating employers represented networking, communications and retail industries. All three employer participants are Fortune 500 companies with between approximately 40,000 to 200,000 employees.

#### *Participants*

A total of 27 Gen Y women and 17 managers of Gen Y women participated in the focus groups. An overview of participant's personal and work-related demographics is provided below.



## Gen Y Women

### *Personal Demographics*

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Average</b>
23-32 years old	27
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
Never Married	60%
Currently Married	33%
Divorced	7%
<b>Presence of Dependents</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
No	85%
Yes	15%
Plan to have children one day	95%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
White/non-Hispanic	70%
Asian/Pacific Islander	15%
Black/non-Hispanic	9%
Hispanic	3%
Other	3%





**Highest level of Education**

**Percentage of Participants**

Some College	4%
4 year degree	70%
Master's degree	22%
Doctorate	4%

*Work-related Demographics*

**Number of years in the workforce**

Range	Average
1-10	5

**Number of organizations worked for**

Range	Average
1-5	3

**Job Grade**

**Percentage of Participants**

Entry-level	36%
Junior-level	36%
Mid-level	27%



## Managers of Gen Y

### *Personal Demographics*

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
Female	67%
Male	33%

  

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
20-32	8%
33-50	67%
51-64	25%

### *Work-related Demographics*

<b>Years of Management Experience</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
1-9 years	43%
10-19 years	29%
20-29 years	21%
30 or more years	7%

  

<b>Number of employees managed</b>	<b>Average</b>
Range	7
3-14	

  

<b>Number of Gen Y women managed</b>	<b>Average</b>
Range	2
1-3	



## Endnotes

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