

Forces Impacting 21st Century Workforces and Workplaces

A publication of the Business and Professional Women's Foundation



January 2006

As part of its ongoing efforts to support business and professional women as they engage policymakers and employers in solving the challenges facing workingwomen in the 21st Century, the Business and Professional Women's Foundation (BPW Foundation) is publishing this collection of discussion topics for use in WOMENomics[®] Forums or small-group discussions on issues important to workingwomen and employers.

Workingwomen and their employers are facing new challenges as the 21st century begins in full force. This discussion guide and its companion planning guide are meant to help start conversations through WOMENomics[®] Forums. These conversations should be focused on enabling workingwoman, policymakers, and employers to find common ground around the challenges facing them and to develop solutions that will help create successful workplaces that empower workingwomen (and men) to achieve their full potential.

WOMENomics[®] is a signature grassroots program that brings together local businesses, government, educational institutions, and civic organizations in the community to identify, act on, and resolve the everyday issues that challenge workingwomen and their employers. This model program is an outgrowth of the BPW Foundation's extensive experience bringing together key figures from all sectors to create solutions to workplace issues. In 2003 and 2004, the BPW Foundation, in partnership with BPW/USA, implemented 50 forums across the country that engaged over 1,700 women and business leaders. In celebration of its 50th Anniversary in 2006, the BPW Foundation is publishing this guide to support the efforts of BPW/USA members, other interested workingwomen, and employers in conducting workplace discussions and WOMENomics[®] Forums.

Issues highlighted in the guide have been identified by the BPW Foundation as among the leading trends impacting workingwomen and employers over the next decade. Periodically, the BPW Foundation will add new discussion topics to the guide as new information on emerging trends is captured. Check back periodically at www.bpwfoundation.org at the Rawalt On-line Resource Center for updates.

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Issues Included in this Discussion Guide

1. Workplaces & Workforces in Transition
 - a. Career-Focused Transitions
 - b. Life-Cycle Induced Transitions
 - c. Workplace or Market Induced Transitions
2. Work-Life Balance Issues and Policies
3. Workforce Diversity: Involving Everyone To Get Work Done
4. The Intellectual Capital of a Knowledge-Economy
5. Entering & Exiting the Workplace: It's No Longer Done Just Once

How to Use the Discussion Guide

Whether through a formal WOMENomics[®] Forum, a small-group discussion at work, or in a local BPW meeting, utilize this guide as a discussion starter. The discussion guide contains discussion hand-outs (about three pages long each) that offer:

- a brief summary of the discussion issue,
- a snapshot of issues and impacts affecting employers and employees,
- an outline of recent workplace practices or public policies related to it,
- a list of resources to find additional information on that issue, and
- suggested discussion questions.

The handouts are formatted for easy use and can be printed and distributed individually during a brown bag lunch at the office or at a regular BPW meeting to spark discussion. They can also be used collectively as a discussion guide for a full-scale WOMENomics[®] Forum covering multiple topics.

The discussion guide also contains a bibliography of the resources used in its compilation that can be referenced for more information.

Use the companion publication, the WOMENomics[®] 2006 Planning Guide, to plan and implement a full-scale forum in your community. Use the report back forms and surveys in the planning guide to capture lessons learned from the Forum and to share with the BPW Foundation.

About the Business and Professional Women's Foundation

Mission: To empower workingwomen to achieve their full potential and to partner with employers to build successful workplaces. (*Adopted 2004.*)

Established in 1956 by the members of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the BPW Foundation is a nonprofit research and educational institution. With 50 years of experience educating policymakers, employers, and the general public on information important to workingwomen, the BPW Foundation has a national reputation as an institution that provides accurate, unbiased information on the needs of women in the workforce.

Thank you:

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Workplaces & Workforces in Transitions: Impacts on Workingwomen and Employers

Career-Focused Transitions

As the 21st Century begins, employers and workingwomen face the convergence of many internal and external forces that will provide them with both challenges and opportunities. In general there are three types of transitions impacting workplaces and workforces:

- Career-Focused Transitions
- Life-Cycle Induced Transitions
- Workplace or Market Induced Transitions

The number and types of specific transitions being felt by employers and employees are many and varied.

Career-focused Transitions occur as employees move along the continuum of their career requiring and wanting new skills and experiences that can enhance their employability. This may not be a single, simple set of transitions experienced in one organization; many individuals will change workplaces multiple times in a single career and be engaged in more than one career over their lifetime. For example, a growing portion of the civilian workforce is composed of workingwomen who are retired or separated from a military career.

The number and types of specific transitions being felt by employers and employees are many and varied; highlighted below are some of the most significant issues impacting workplaces and workforces related to **Career-focused Transitions**.

Issues & Impacts Affecting Employers

- At one time, employers could count on life-long relationships with most of their employees from entry into the workforce through retirement. The latest generations of employees are quite comfortable moving between multiple employees as they advance in

their careers. Employees on average will change jobs at least five times in their career and have multiple careers over their lifetime:

- Over the next five years, 150,000 workingwomen are expected to separate from the military and transition into the civilian workforce.
- Recent studies are showing that moving between employers is seen as a winning strategy by workingwomen and minority employees who are feeling stalled at current employers.
- In 2002, one-third of federal employees surveyed (100,000) said they were considering leaving government employment.
- Studies show that women leave the corporate workforce at twice the rate of men. One study showed that workingwomen may transition between sectors (nonprofit, for-profit, or government) looking for jobs where they can make a difference.

Issues & Impacts Affecting Employees

- Seventy-six percent of job seekers in one study indicated that they were looking for employers who could offer them access to skills development that increased their employability.
- One recent [Harvard Business Review](#) article showed that some women employees on the executive track feel that they have to change employers to move up the career ladder in order to counter the effects of workplace assumptions about their dedication to their careers.
- As the life-span of the average worker increases and medical advances allow a greater percentage of people to be active at older ages, some employees are creating a second or third career path. As such, they are looking for employers that offer opportunities to be mentored, access to business internal business networks, educational assistance, and access to work experiences and positions that can help them transition between career paths.

Trends in Policies or Programs

- Recent studies show some organizational functions are more likely than others to be a track to advancement because they are linked to profit and loss. These studies also show that workingwomen and minorities are often less likely to be involved in them than other employees. Employers and workingwomen are developing strategies to identify and access these functional roles (e.g., operations, product development); when workingwomen don't get these experiences at current employers they either stall in their career advancement or move to other employers.
- There appears to be growing awareness that it isn't just policies or programs that make a difference for employees. Instead, systemic changes in organizational culture that allow employees and supervisors to make use of such programs without penalty are necessary to make work-life effectiveness programs or flexible work options work. How employers make these systemic changes is a new challenge that researchers and employers are just beginning to study.
- To retain and attract employees, some employers are beginning to offer skills training opportunities; some have even created in-house universities.
- The role of networks and mentoring in advancing careers and retaining employees is receiving increased attention:
 - Employers are cultivating "old girls' networks" or women's networks to counteract the impact on women of not being a part of existing old boys' networks.
 - Studies indicate that the types of mentoring that propel employees forward must include:
 - Access to key networks and organizational sponsors,
 - Help in obtaining project opportunities that are in key functional areas related to organizational success, and
 - Participation in cross-department work teams that introduce mentees to employees in other functional areas

who can become part of their own network.

- Employers are strategizing how to retain highly-skilled workers who are interested in a new career field or integrating second careerists into a system more geared to the traditional career route. New types of internships are being developed to engage both entry-level employees and second and third careerists looking for the experiences they need to make a lateral career move.
- As employees look for a workplace, they are often looking for something other than a permanent home. Adapting to a work world shaped by decades of downsizings, mergers, and lay-offs, job seekers are looking for employers who can provide them with skills, networking, and mentoring opportunities that increase their employability in order to keep them attractive to their current employer as well as any future employers.

Additional Resources

- 101 Facts on the Status of Workingwomen*, BPW Foundation, 2005.
- Harvard Business Review on Diversity*, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.
- Harvard Business Review on Women in Business*, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.
- Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005.
- Workingwomen Speak Out Survey*, BPW Foundation, 2004.

Suggested Discussion Questions

Do you agree that people are changing careers and employers more often than in the past? What effects do you think this trend has on the workplace? On employees?

What types of gains, if any, do you think would be made in career opportunities for workingwomen if more women were engaged in leadership positions in organizations? Do you think it would make a significant change in the workplace for workingwomen and men? How so?

What supports do you think have to be available to workingwomen as they advance their careers?

Among some organizations that are pioneering leadership programs for workingwomen, there seems to be some frustration that even when programs are available, women are not utilizing them in desired numbers. Do you see this frustration in your industry, sector, or organization?

Do you think workingwomen are making full use of the opportunity for career advancement that is available to them? What, if anything, do you think is hindering workingwomen's participation in existing programs?

Are there job roles in your organization that you think are more linked to organizational success (e.g., development, operations, finance)?

What job functions do you most often see workingwomen in at your organization?

Workplaces & Workforces in Transitions: Impacts on Workingwomen and Employers

Life-Cycle Induced Transitions

As the 21st Century begins, employers and workingwomen face the convergence of many internal and external forces that will provide them with both challenges and opportunities. In general there are three types of transitions impacting workplaces and workforces:

- Career-Focused Transitions
- Life-Cycle Induced Transitions
- Workplace or Market Induced Transitions

Life-Cycle Induced Transitions are a result of the changing expectations and responsibilities adults experience as they move through their life-cycle such as becoming a parent, taking care of an elderly or ill relative, or achieving a personal growth goal. These transitions place demands on workingwomen and men that may require them to ask more of their workplaces in terms of work-life effectiveness, flexibility, and autonomy.

The number and types of specific transitions being felt by employers and employees are many and varied; highlighted below are some of the most significant issues impacting workplaces and workforces related to **Life-Cycle Induced Transitions**.

Issues & Impacts Affecting Employers

- As employees cycle in and out of workplaces to deal with personal obligations or increased caregiving responsibilities, employers bear a cost for losing trained workers. The costs of replacing highly-skilled workers can range from between 150 to 250 percent of their salary for employers.
- The number of skilled, experienced workers retiring in the next 20 years will outstrip the number of young skilled workers entering the

workforce by a wide margin, and there will be a drop in the number of people in mid-career (a 7 percent drop in people aged 25-44 years). This loss of experienced workers means that employers are not only losing employees, they are seeing the intellectual capital of their organizations walk out the door.

- Sixty percent of workers in private industry had access to at least one type of retirement plan. Employees with access to a retirement plan were more likely to retire than those without. Those with a defined benefit plan (pension) were more likely to retire than those with a defined contribution plan (401 K or 403 B).
- Certain employers are more likely to feel the first impacts of exiting retirees than others: aerospace, utilities, federal government, and healthcare.
- Increasingly expectations for work-life balance options, flexible workplaces, and workplace equity mark both those generations of employees entering into and maturing out of the workplace; 76 percent of active job seekers, in one study, expected and wanted on-going training that increased their employability as well as access to flexible work options. Maturing workers reported in another study that they wanted work options that included part-time work, changing shifts, flex time, telecommuting, compressed workweeks, temporary, seasonal, consulting, and contract work; and pro-rated benefits.
- In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 2 million grandparents were the main caregivers of one or more grandchildren.
- Thirty-one percent of mature workers are responsible for a dependent parent; 23 percent had an adult child move home; and 16 percent were providing day care or child care for a grandchild.
- Fully 37 percent of highly-skilled workingwomen in one study had to leave the workforce for an average of 2.2 years because of caregiving responsibilities.
- By 2015, 20 percent of the U.S. workforce will be 55 years or older; by 2030, 20 percent will be 65 or older.

- From 2004 to mid-2005, the number of job seekers (ages 42 to 60) who decided to start their own businesses as a mid-life career change or early retirement option increased by 10 percent
- The newest generation of entry-level workers has a changing set of expectations related to their place in the workforce and the benefits available to them. A smaller population than the generation they are replacing, the gap between their entry-level skills and those of the mature workers leaving is often quite large.
- The self-employed are more likely than other workers to continue working after retirement age.

Issues & Impacts Affecting Employees

- On average, highly-skilled workingwomen can lose up to 18 percent of their income over the course of their careers when they have to take time away from the workplace in order to meet caregiving responsibilities, one study shows.
- Workplace cultures can greatly impact a workingwoman's chances for promotion. Some studies show that cultural assumptions in businesses are hindering the advancement of many young women because employers assume they will leave their jobs if they have children.
- Assumptions by supervisors that women are committed more to their families and less to their work than their male counterparts do impact promotional opportunities, some studies show.
- Seventy percent of workers who have not retired report that they plan to work into their retirement years or never retire. This is an increasing reality for many seniors. Guarantees of life-long pensions no longer exist—the increasing number of boomers entering retirement has meant that some employers with large pension programs are declaring bankruptcy to offset future costs of paying out their increasingly large retiree pool.
- Pending and current retirees are looking for work options that allow them flexibility in their

schedules, access to health insurance, and help with expenses as well as opportunities to continue to learn or enter a new career. One study shows that 80 percent of employers do not offer the types of flexible work options favored by retirees.

- Small business owners are more likely to offer the part-time opportunities sought by some mature workers.
- The effects of life-cycle transitions can have even deeper impacts on workingwomen who are also members of a minority group or other special population.
 - Ninety-nine percent of senior-level executive women of color in one study said the excessive number of hours they worked impacted their work-life balance; in the same survey, women of color executives said they often felt they had to downplay their race or gender in their workplace.
 - Women veterans are more likely to be underemployed than their male counterparts thus taking jobs that do not reflect the full extent of their skills or experience.
- Today, an estimated one in 12 U.S. workers has a child with a disability or special need. A handful of employers are stepping up to help, with support groups, informational meetings and insurance benefits.

Trends in Policies or Programs

- For employers and employees at workplaces pioneering policies to integrate life-cycle transitions into workplace practices, conversations focus on doing what it takes to get work done rather than dictating how it gets done. This new paradigm is resulting in the development of slow but steady career tracks that accommodate flexible or part-time schedules. Working men are also more likely to be asking for these types of flexible advancement options than at times in the past. These newer flexible advancement tracks should not be confused with so-called “mommy tracks” that have become synonymous with career dead-ends. These

mommy tracks often pointed women into functional roles that allowed for more flexibility but were not linked to an organization's success and thus rarely led to advancement.

- Eager to both retain and transfer the knowledge held by retiring employees to mid-career or entry level workers, some employers are creating new ways to keep pending and current retirees in the workplace longer including job sharing, phased retirement options, and flexible work schedules.
- In an effort to retain mid-career employees looking for a change of career, some employers are pioneering new programs that include internships for second careerists, in-house universities, and mentoring between advanced level employees and up-and-coming leaders.
- Increasingly, employers and think tanks are sponsoring research that looks at the bottom-line effects of work-life balance and career advancement programs. These studies are showing that workplace cultures that don't penalize employees for making use of work-life effectiveness programs show up-ticks in productivity from employees and, for publicly held for-profit employers, greater valuations of their stock.
- The federal government is sponsoring a five-year project by Massachusetts General Hospital of Boston to examine workplace supports for parents of children with disabilities.
- While employers are creating internal policy changes related to integrating life-cycle transitions into the workplaces, they are also taking their concerns to federal policymakers. For example, some employers are looking for changes in federal laws that impact the types of phased retirement options they can offer current and pending retirees. Some of these changes hold potential benefits for employees, but workingwomen are also watching employers as they seek to restrict employee-friendly legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Medical Leave Act.

Additional Resources

101 Facts on the Status of Workingwomen, BPW Foundation, 2005.

Harvard Business Review on Diversity, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.

Harvard Business Review on Women in Business, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.

Women in the Labor Force: A Databook, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005.

Workingwomen Speak Out Survey, BPW Foundation, 2004.

Suggested Discussion Questions

What life-cycle induced transitions do you see effecting workingwomen and men of your acquaintance? What effects are these transitions having on their work?

What life-cycle induced transitions do you see affecting workingwomen and men in your industry or sector? Your organization?

Are employers being affected by what is happening to employees? What effects are you seeing?

What industries do you think will feel the impact of losing employees to retirement or caregiving responsibilities? What impacts do you see occurring to these industries now or in the future?

Do you see any knowledge gaps occurring between exiting workers and entry-level or mid-career workers? What do you think the effects of such a gap would be on employees left behind? If yes, how do you think employees and employers can work together to bridge this gap?

What do you think are the primary reasons workingwomen leave the workforce?

What efforts do you see occurring among employers, in general, to retain workingwomen who are dealing with caregiving or other obligations? Do you think these efforts ultimately benefit employers or employees? Why or why not?

Workplaces & Workforces in Transitions: Impacts on Workingwomen and Employers

Workplace or Market Induced Transitions

As the 21st Century begins, employers and workingwomen face the convergence of many internal and external forces that will provide them with both challenges and opportunities. In general there are three types of transitions impacting workplaces and workforces:

- Career-Focused Transitions
- Life-Cycle Induced Transitions
- Workplace or Market Induced Transitions

Market or Workplace Induced Transitions are precipitated by changes in the market or in the workplace and put pressure on both employers and employees to adapt. Forces that can precipitate adaptive activities can include mergers of organizations or departments, globalization activities (e.g., outsourcing, opening international offices), governmental regulations, downsizing (e.g., layoffs) or upsizing (e.g., growing a small business into a national concern).

The number and types of specific transitions being felt by employers and employees are many and varied; highlighted below are some of the most significant issues impacting workplaces and workforces related to **Workplace or Market Induced Transitions**.

Issues & Impacts Affecting Employers

- One of the highest cost centers for employers is labor. One way employers dealt with this in the 1980s onward was by outsourcing. This was done by outsourcing jobs to outside vendors (e.g., accounting, human resources) or to labor pools in other countries (e.g., manufacturing, service call centers).

Employers are increasingly being held accountable for ensuring that outsourced employees do not operate in either better or worse workplace environments than their traditional employees.

- In the past, employers in the nonprofit, for-profit, and government sectors often pulled from very different pools of potential employees for highly skilled positions. Over the two decades, as workplaces have become more permeable and many more job skills transferable, these various sectors have begun to compete for employees out of a shrinking domestic employment market.
- Approximately 52 percent of the U.S. workforce is employed by small businesses (firms with less than 500 employees), 25 percent by large businesses or corporations (firms with more than 500 employees), 16 percent by local, state, and federal government agencies, and 7 percent by nonprofit organizations.
- Some studies show that workingwomen, in particular, who have left the for-profit sector because of family obligations, may return to the workforce via a nonprofit job because they view their work there as more likely to make a difference.
- Technology has transformed most workplaces. Whether it is a benefit or a bane depends on your point of view. Technology has made a single employee much more productive. It has also broken down walls between home and work, in theory, making employees accessible 24/7. Expectations are high from both employers and employees about the changes technology can bring.

Issues & Impacts Affecting Employees

- By expanding the labor pool through outsourcing jobs to other countries and increasing competition among employees for positions, employers have been able to keep production costs and inflation down, one study shows. However, for employees, jobs lost to overseas competitors are unlikely to return.

- Local and domestic vendors can also be sources of outsourcing by employers. Transitioning full-time employees to contractor or consultant status is an on-going phenomenon as employees enter the 21st century. As more employers merge, employees may benefit or suffer as benefits and workplace cultures are integrated.
- Increasingly technology is expanding the types of jobs that can be outsourced. Originally, manufacturing jobs were most frequently outsourced overseas; now, tutors for children, customer service centers, and call centers are all possibilities for outsourcing.
- Technology has transformed the workplace for employees. It has increased their productivity but has also increased their time working as cell phones, Blackberries, and at home computers have erased the barriers between home and work. Conversely, some employees have benefited from technology as employers become increasingly more comfortable with job sharing, telecommuting, and portable workstations.
- A 2001 United Nations' study shows American employees work more hours per year than any other worker in the industrialized world. The study showed Americans worked 1,978 hours per year in 2001, up 36 hours from 1990. Part of this increase is linked to the blurring between work and life environments. A recent report in FORTUNE magazine showed that more men as well as workingwomen are requesting more flexible work arrangements and utilizing options allowed by technology that allow them to make the balance between work and life more effective.
- Ninety-two percent of employees in one survey indicated that the ability to telework would be a key factor in their deciding between employers.
- Flexibility and autonomy were two workplace characteristics linked to higher job satisfaction among employees.

Trends in Policies or Programs

- Beginning in the 1980s, a wave of friendly mergers, “hostile” takeovers, and consolidations swept through many industries including airlines, retail, railroad, telephone, and financial services; many nonprofits merged to minimize duplication of services and maximize shrinking funding sources. Government agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security, merged multiple federal agencies under one authority. Whether merging local, national, or international offices, employers are under pressure to integrate policies, programs, and workplace cultures, reconcile workplace practices with different laws and regulations that can vary across borders, and provide employees with a seamless set of benefits and programs.
- Pressured to reduce overhead and costs, employers often resort to downsizing their labor force, one of the highest cost centers for most organizations. However, technology is allowing some employers to look at another type of cost reduction: real estate. The development of technology (home computers, remote access to organizational networks, conference calls, web conferencing) is allowing some employers to reduce real estate costs by allowing more workers to work from home. This trend is being felt in organizations as diverse as AT&T and the Internal Revenue Service.
- Long-term consequences of downsizing or outsourcing employees are being felt by employers. The loss of institutional knowledge, knowledge of customers/processes, or subject matter expertise are inducing some employers to re-engage employees and retirees through temporary agencies, consulting contracts, or knowledge sharing forums.
- Expanding global markets for goods and labor are an ongoing trend. In early 2005, Congress approved the Central American Free Trade Agreement treaty that created a “free trade” zone in Central America, expanding on the

North American Free Trade Agreement treaty of the mid 1990s.

Additional Resources

101 Facts on the Status of Workingwomen, BPW Foundation, 2005.

Harvard Business Review on Diversity, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.

Harvard Business Review on Women in Business, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.

Key Indicators of the Labor Market, United Nation's International Labor Organization, 2002.

Women in the Labor Force: A Databook, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005.

Workingwomen Speak Out Survey, BPW Foundation, 2004.

Suggested Discussion Questions

What types of workplace or market induced transitions are affecting organizations in your community (e.g., reorganization, downsizing, mergers)

How have these transitions affected the community? How did they affect employers? Employees?

In what ways has technology changed your workplace? Would you categorize these changes as mostly positive or negative?

What career opportunities for workingwomen have opened up thanks to technological advances? What avenues have been lost?

What resources have your industry, sector, or organization dedicated to advancing workingwomen into international or national positions?

What kind of support do you think is needed to help workingwomen take advantage of new international or national positions?

What international or national policies (e.g., NAFTA, CAFTA, and copyright laws) are affecting your workplace? How have they affected the workplace?

Changing Views on Work-Life Balance Issues and Policies

In one sense, workingwomen are no longer alone on the edge of change. Maturing workers, entry-level workers, and a growing percentage of male colleagues are also seeking greater work-life balance, demanding more flexible work options, and advocating for more autonomy within their workday. A 2003 study showed that 76 percent of job seekers were more apt to look for benefits that enhanced their employability and work-life balance.

A recent survey showed that both workingwomen and men were increasingly likely to want flexible work options (59 percent wanted telecommuting options, 67 percent compressed workweeks) but few got them (17 percent telecommuted and 6 percent had a compressed work week).

There are four significant changes in the conversation and activity surrounding work-life balance policies and programs since the mid 1990s.

1. References to work-life balance are slowly being switched to the term work-life effectiveness reflecting a realization among advocates that employees and employers are less and less likely to neatly cleave work from life in proper proportions.
2. Work-life effectiveness advocates are finding ways to show the impacts of programs and policies on the bottom-line. There are more studies showing that a lack of work-life balance among employees has an impact on workplace productivity and the valuation of organizations.
3. The debate on how to ensure equity and work-life effectiveness in the workplace has taken on a new tenor among employers who are leading efforts in these areas as they talk more about how to ensure that work gets done rather than on dictating how it gets done.
4. Putting policies and programs in place is being recognized as only the first step in establishing successful workplaces that empower

workingwomen and men. The end now sought by employers and employees in the area of work-life effectiveness has become more about creating systemic changes in workplace culture that allow employees to make use of policies and programs without penalty or stigma. Changes in workplace culture are critical to ensuring that such programs are utilized.

These changes reflect a new understanding of the work environment and the 21st century workforce.

- Technology has transformed the workplace. Employers have ways to stay connected to workers even when they are not housed on-site.
- The post-industrial style single-income family that includes an employed father and a stay-at-home mother now makes up less than 25 percent of the U.S. workforce. In 2003, 58 percent of married couples represented two-income families. Many existing work-life balance policies were written for what is a shrinking segment of the workforce. New work-life effectiveness policies try to include the needs and goals of singles and single parents as well as single and dual-income families in the workforce.
- Studies are showing that personal goals, ill relatives, sandwich generation responsibilities can all impact an employee's ability to effectively integrate life and work. This lack of integration can directly impact an employer's bottom line. One study showed that companies with strong work-life policies exhibit greater returns in the stock market; returns that outpace even such indexes as the S&P 500.

Issues & Impacts Affecting Employers

- For many employers, work-life effectiveness is still not considered an issue. One study indicated that over 80 percent of employers had not enacted any of the flexible work options that appeal to groups of employees such as retirees.
- Work-life effectiveness does impact the bottom-line. Strong human resource practices that included flexible work schedules were linked in one study to significant increases in

the market-value of for-profit companies. Companies with the best human capital records had a 3 TIMES greater return to shareholders over five years.

- Companies on best companies to work for lists produced 4 TIMES the gains compared to other indexes such as the S&P 500.
- For employers, the costs of replacing a highly-skilled employee can run from 150 percent to 250 percent of their salary in terms of lost time, lost productivity, and retraining. Flexible work arrangements can create a surge in employee productivity with time being used more effectively and a resultant increase in employee retention.

Issues & Impacts Affecting Employees

- American employees work more hours per year than workers in any other industrialized nation. The 60-hour work week is becoming a new “norm” in many workplaces; high demand and low control workplace cultures result in twice the rate of cardiovascular problems, higher rates of anxiety and depression, and higher levels of alcohol and prescription drug use. Chronic distress also adds to abdominal obesity, which is linked to increased rates of heart disease.
- Workingwomen are especially hit hard by workplaces that are characterized by lack of communication, lack of decision making authority, and a fast work pace and work overload because of their work and family imbalances. 37 percent of highly skilled managerial track workingwomen in one study had to take time out of their careers because of caregiving responsibilities as opposed to just 24 percent of men.
- The three leading causes of absence among employees in a new study in the United Kingdom were stress, caregiving responsibilities, and managing other work-life issues; 85 percent of respondents said that flexibility is the best incentive employers can offer to manage absences.
- Two-thirds of women of color in one study said that flexible scheduling—telecommuting,

flextime, or job share—could make a significant difference in their work-life balance efforts; 51 percent of respondents to the BPW Foundation's *Workingwomen Speak Out* survey said that flexible work schedules were of moderate or major importance to them.

- The desire for greater work-life balance was one of the top reasons given by workingwomen and men who were separating from the military for transitioning into the civilian workforce.
- Seventy-six percent of job seekers in one study said they were looking for employers who offered flexible work arrangements.
- Employees with perceived job flexibility have less difficulty with work-life conflicts than those without. They are able to work longer hours and outperform their counterparts in more traditional work arrangements.
- Seventy percent of senior executives who work flexible hours scored higher in resilience, leadership, and commitment than colleagues in traditional work arrangements and had 30 percent higher outputs.

Trends in Policies or Programs

- Researchers in universities or think tanks as well as employers are conducting and sponsoring more studies on the link between work-life effectiveness and the bottom-line. This quantifiable research is having an impact at the organizations in which it is conducted, but whether it is helping encourage other employers to adopt work-life effectiveness programs is not known.
- A key trend in the work-life effectiveness movement is the acknowledgement that having a list of programs and policies is not enough; the workplace culture must support the use of programs without stigma. The answer to reducing health care costs, says one researcher, is not about gyms or healthy eating habits; the complete solution is changing workplace cultures.
- Practices and policies enacted by employers engaged in work-life effectiveness programming vary greatly. Some new trends in practices include:

- Adapting career advancement tracks to accommodate employees who are willing to advance at a slower pace in return for increased flexibility,
- Creating flex-work benefits that accommodate a range of life-span needs (e.g., phased retirement, parenting, caregiving, meeting personal goals), and
- Conducting internal focus groups with women employees to determine their needs.
- A November 2005 *FORTUNE* Magazine article confirmed that men, in general, as well as mature workers, and entry-level job seekers are beginning to advocate within their agencies for greater work-life balance and flexibility. Whether the efforts of these new cohorts of employees will have an impact where generations of workingwomen have not is yet to be seen.
- Some studies are showing that workplace policies that incorporate tangible goals and programs (e.g., telecommuting, job sharing, and flextime) that employees can use without stigma are more important than “soft goals” (e.g., conducting 360° Reviews or setting “changing work culture” as a strategic goal) in creating positive changes for employees. Only real and systemic changes in corporate culture can remove the stigma attached to utilizing programs, further studies state.
- Employers who are most likely to feel the early impacts of upcoming changes in the demographics of the U.S. workforce (e.g., the retiring workforce) are those most likely to be engaged in trying flexible work arrangements (e.g. service industry/retailers who rely on a large volume of employees, or the tech industry where large numbers of highly skilled workers are getting set to retire). A significant portion of employers do not feel that they are affected by these upcoming changes.

Additional Resources

101 Facts on the Status of Workingwomen, BPW Foundation, 2005.
Harvard Business Review on Diversity, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.
Harvard Business Review on Women in Business, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.
Women in the Labor Force: A Databook, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005.
Workingwomen Speak Out Survey, BPW Foundation, 2004.

Suggested Discussion Questions

In the past, work-life balance advocates spoke about flexible work arrangements and work-life balance programs as the “right” thing to do for working parents. Now, they are linking work-life effectiveness to the bottom-line. What do you think the benefits or downfalls in this strategy are for workingwomen?

Are workingwomen still on the “bleeding edge” of change in work-life effectiveness issues? Why or Why not?

Do you think work-life effectiveness is a better description of what workingwomen are striving for than work-life balance? Why or Why not?

A key trend in the work-life effectiveness movement is the acknowledgement that having a list of programs is not enough; the workplace culture must support the use of programs without stigma. What do you think needs to happen in order for employers and employees to change workplace cultures?

Sometimes employees are told that stress caused by work-life imbalances are just the price of working. Recent studies are showing that stress can have real-life impacts on people's health and their productivity. How did reading these statistics affect you? What was your first impression on reading them? What effect do you think studies like these might have on policies in your organization?

Workforce Diversity: Involving Everyone To Get Work Done

What is the most significant trend in workplace diversity in the 21st century? There is no simple answer to that question.

One answer is that it's not just about the numbers anymore. Employers that took early action to increase the diversity of their workforces by increasing numbers of identified populations are finding that an increase in numbers does not necessarily translate into increased productivity or more culturally supportive workplaces. These pioneering workplaces have begun to look, instead, at what types of policies and programs engage all employees effectively in order to get work done. New focus is being placed on changing workplace cultures that appear to have limited the advancement and engagement of diverse employees.

A second, equally valid answer is that for many other employers and employees it is still about the numbers. Reports from the Census Bureau indicate that there is still a de facto type of segregation in employment industries. In 2004, women held half of all management, professional, and related occupations; however, only 14 percent of architects and engineers and 29 percent of physicians and surgeons are women. In contrast, 86 percent of paralegals and legal assistants are women according to the Census Bureau. The same report shows that while women are well-represented in financial activities, education and health services, and leisure and hospitality, they are still underrepresented in mining, construction, transportation, and utilities.

Employers are also contending with an increasing understanding of what diversity can mean beyond the usual categories such as race and gender. Concepts of culture, age, religion, marital status, functional discipline, and socio-economic status can be of significant importance to individual employees or to communities. Identifying which elements of diversity are appropriate to integrate

into workplace policies can be extremely challenging.

Workingwomen are making strides in breaking into some nontraditional fields, but they are still being asked to pay a price for their efforts. For example, women make up an increasing percentage of the military (about 15 percent). However, other studies show that workingwomen in the military are more likely than their male counterparts to be subjected to sexual harassment or sexual assault; upon transitioning out of the military, women veterans are more than three times more likely than non-veteran women to become homeless.

For women of color both numbers and workplace culture had significant impact on their perceptions of work-life effectiveness programs and their chances for advancement. Seventy-one percent of women of color in one survey said that they are proud to work for their companies, but only 30 percent would recommend their company to a friend based on its commitment to diversity. Forty-eight percent of women of color who were directors and managers said they felt they had to play down their race or ethnicity to succeed.

Salary rates between women and men also show disparities. In 2004, women's median incomes were 80 percent of men's. The disparities were higher for women who were black or Hispanic (89 and 87 percent).

Issues & Impacts on Employers

- Sixty percent of CEOs in one study believe that diversity is essential to meeting long-term international growth and see it as a competitive strategy to penetrating new, diverse markets.
- Diversity in many permutations will have a growing impact over the coming decades as the American population grows ever more diverse. By 2050, the workforce will have a very different look than it does today. In 45 years, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 50 percent of the population will be of non-Hispanic White, 24 percent will be Hispanic,

15 percent black, and 8 percent of Asian-descent.

- By 2030, an estimated 20 percent of the U.S. population will be over the age of 65. Some studies indicate that U.S. employers will experience a 7 percent reduction in the numbers of mid-career workers over the next decade.
- One-third of women of color in one survey had actively looked for another job.
- Supportive managers were cited by women of color as being an essential employer resource that significantly affected whether or not they were looking for another job.
- Small firms may be among those best poised to work with the maturing workforce; they already tend to hire a greater number of older workers and people who prefer to work part-time.
- A dynamic, international marketplace is injecting the concept of culture into the workplace as an aspect of diversity for those employers who are opening international offices or outsourcing positions to other countries. Domestic employers in many locales are finding that immigration from other countries may mean that a significant part of their labor pool may represent members of a specific culture who may have different needs related to work-life effectiveness, caregiving responsibilities, or flexible work options.

Issues and Impacts on Employees

- One study showed that minority employees on the executive track actually have a very different experience from their majority counterparts as they move from entry-level, to mid-management, to the executive suite. Minority executive track participants were more likely to be tracked into a two-stage path to the executive suite that took longer than those of their majority counterparts. Minority candidates who advanced the furthest often had access to a strong network of mentors and corporate sponsors.
- In 2004, women represented about 36 percent of all officials and managers in private sector

employment, a seven percent increase over a 12-year period.

- Women at multinational corporations cite personal and family responsibilities and perceptions of women's capabilities as the two most significant barriers to their success.
- Ninety-nine percent of women of color, in one study, who were members of senior management or executives, said that the excessive amount of work they must complete and long hours are detrimental to their work-life balance.
- Seventy-one percent of mothers with children were in the labor force; unmarried mothers have higher participation rates than married mothers.
- By 2020 all Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, will be over the age of 55; by 2010 the U.S. could experience an employment shortfall of 6.6 percent.
- Sixty-three percent of workers plan to work for pay after retiring.
- Eighty-three percent of working women ages 28 to 40 say a woman can go as far as she wants in her career; but, they also agree with their Baby Boomer colleagues that there are still significant barriers to workingwomen attaining top professional positions.
- More top-level executive positions at Fortune 500 companies are being taken by employees without degrees from Ivy League universities. This increase in educational diversity means that the executive suite appears to be a greater option for employees from state or non-Ivy League private colleges.

Trends in Policies and Programs

- Since the early 1990s, trends affecting the larger society are finding their way into the workplace as parts of laws aimed at addressing the needs of employers and diverse employees in the workplace:
 - The Violence Against Women Act
 - Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
 - Employee Retirement Income Security Act
 - Family Medical Leave Act

- Diversity has also taken on many permutations. Many existing work-life effectiveness policies were written for what is becoming a minority of those in the workplace. The post-industrial single-income family that includes a father working outside the home and an at-home mother now makes up less than 25 percent of the workforce. New work-life effectiveness policies seek to include the needs and goals of the singles, single parents, and dual-income families in the workforce.

Trends in types of recognized categories of diversity include:

- maturing workers
- youth
- women on boards
- religion
- politics
- people with disabilities
- ethnicity
- educational diversity
- 2nd and 3rd careerists
- working parents vs. non-parents or singles

Additional Resources

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Harvard Business Review on Diversity, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.

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Women of Color in Corporate Management, Catalyst, 1999.

Workingwomen Speak Out Survey, BPW Foundation, 2004.

Suggested Discussion Questions

Employers think of a spectrum of diversity in many permutations...religion, age, life experience, education, disability. Is there any new type of diversity?

Why are employers seeking diversity? Can it be avoided? What benefits can employers realize from having a diverse workforce? What are the challenges of having a diverse workforce?

According to some studies, for minorities wishing to advance in the workplace, access to a mentor, who can help them with skills acquisition but also with forming a network of sponsors and co-workers and accessing positions that will expand their work network to other departments and provide them with experience in organizational functions that are linked to profit and loss, is critical. How prevalent do you think this type of mentoring is in the workplace? What steps do you think employers and employees can take to increase it?

How are employers seeing the trends in the workforce and deciding which ones to create policies and programs around. Is there a change or trend in this? Initially, employers may consider diversity initiatives to be legal issues and may implement diversity programs to meet legal or regulatory standards. Later, employers may see diversity as a way to gain an edge in specialized or niche markets. What do you think is the main reason employers seek a diverse workforce?

Workingwomen, in general, face challenges in the workplace. What do you think the effects of being part of an additional identified "diverse" population is on a workingwoman?

Workingwomen (and Men): the Intellectual Capital of a Knowledge-Economy

Employees possess intellectual capital related to customer and vendor connections, policies, processes, and subject matter expertise. To employers knee-deep in a new knowledge-economy, their competitive edge is increasingly walking out the door. Employers in government, for-profits and nonprofit agencies are facing a serious knowledge crunch. The pressure to capture the knowledge held by employees before it walks out the door is being fueled by two forces: the first is the increasing frequency of employees to change jobs and even industries, the second is the upcoming retirement of millions of Baby Boom generation (people born from 1946 to 1964) workers.

It sounds like so much jargon: intellectual capital, knowledge economy, knowledge transfer, but the realities these words describe is a growing trend that is affecting how some employers do business and how employees are viewed within their organizations. For many employers it is a make or break profit-and-loss reality. Their best, brightest, and most experienced employees are walking out the door taking with them much of the institutional knowledge of the organization. Those leaving may be retirees or women leaving to pursue more promising career opportunities or to meet personal responsibilities. To combat this exodus some companies are implementing strategies to capture and retain employee knowledge by fostering communities of practice and other knowledge management opportunities. All sectors are looking into new ways to retain retiring workers and to find ways to bridge the knowledge gap between those leaving and upcoming leadership. The federal government, for example, has instituted a series of new programs and policies to address this loss of intellectual capital; some consulting services are adding a new type of consulting to their job list to help clients address the growing knowledge loss in organizations.

It is a phenomenon impacting all sectors of employers—nonprofits, government organizations, and businesses. They are struggling to find ways to capture the knowledge of employees, clients, or volunteers and to transfer that knowledge among employees through networks, communities of practices, automated knowledge data bases, and mentoring relationships. This movement is called knowledge management. It involves managing the knowledge of an organization and viewing it as a transferable, measurable commodity.

Definitions:

Intellectual Capital: the fact or condition of knowing something with a familiarity gained through experience or association; it is used to describe the intangible capital held by employees, especially those with a long-term connection to an organization and its processes or with a specific subject matter.

Knowledge Management: the systemic process of finding, selecting, organizing, distilling, and presenting information in a way that improves an employee's comprehension in a specific area of interest (definition from the University of Texas).

Community of Practice (COP): self-selected group of people informally bound together by their shared expertise or passion for a given subject or program who share knowledge and information; these communities may meet in person or via e-mail or other online technology to solve specific problems or to share general knowledge; COPs can form across departments, divisions, or even organizations.

Issues & Impacts on Employers

- A 2000 study of communities of practice (COPs) published by [Harvard Business Review](#) found that when organizations nurture their existence, organizations can realize multiple benefits:
 - COPs drive strategy and can provide high-quality information and responsive problem solving,

- COPs can drive the development of new lines of business,
- COPs are an effective way to transfer promising practices,
- Participation in a COP can develop professional skills, and
- Peer support and mentoring provided through a COP can help recruit and retain talent.
- Identifying the “go to” person for knowledge can be a challenge for employers; most knowledge projects depend on the accurate identification of people with knowledge and then the development of processes that capture and disseminate their knowledge, such as process forms, resource libraries, or databases.
- In the 1980s a wave of friendly and not-so-friendly mergers, acquisitions, and downsizings began to sweep through the employment sector impacting nonprofits, government, and for-profit agencies. While short-term cost benefits to organizations were significant, employers began to see that with their lost employees went important knowledge about their customers, their processes, and subject matter expertise.
- In a 2002 Federal Human Capital Survey administered to over 100,000 employees, researchers found that one-third of employees were considering leaving government employment. In a related concern, as the federal government’s workforce begins to “gray,” the government is vulnerable to knowledge drains as increasing numbers of civil servants become eligible to retire. For-profit and nonprofit employers are facing a similar knowledge drain.
- In 2035, 27 percent of the population will be over the age of 65 and eligible for retirement.
- Potential sources of knowledge gaps can be seen in all sectors:
 - Over the next five years, 150,000 women will separate from the military and enter the civilian workforce
 - Women leave the corporate workforce at twice the rate of men

- 61 percent of women reentering the workforce after a hiatus change industries; 54 percent change functional roles
- 44 percent of human resource executives say they fear a loss of employees due to self-employment and to other companies

Issues & Impacts on Employees

- For those in organizations that recognize their value as a source of intellectual capital, being a key knowledge resource can be an avenue to the executive suite as peers take on the role of mentor and provide avenues for networking often unavailable to women and minorities.
- For the vast majority of employees who do not work in a knowledge culture, it is a struggle to get those “in the know” to share their knowledge and their connections. This knowledge hoarding trait playing out in some organizations can impact the ability of other employees to advance and gain the skills needed to grow in their chosen career.
- Communities of practice offer an avenue for professional skills development and networking that can be unfettered by organizational barriers, cites one study.
- One study shows that minority employees on the executive track actually have a very different experience from their majority counterparts as they try to move from entry-level to mid-management, to executive positions. Minority executive track participants were often tracked into a two-stage progression to the executive suite that took longer than those of majority counterparts. Minority candidates who advanced the furthest often had access to a strong network of mentors and organizational sponsors who shared their knowledge about subject matter and advocated for their place in key positions and cross-department teams.

Trends in Policies or Programs

- Some organizations are maintaining access to retirees by engaging them as leaders in communities of practice that connect current

and retired employees in problem-solving and knowledge sharing activities.

- Employers are seeking ways to bridge the impending knowledge gap by creating knowledge retention programs that focus on mentoring activities, knowledge sharing forums with retirees and current employees, on demand or on-call reserves of retirees who can address specific problems or issues.
- In 2004, the federal government created a new position called the “Chief Human Capital Officer,” whose role it is to develop ways to bridge knowledge and skills gaps throughout the federal government. Many for-profit organizations have created similar high-level positions.
- In fiscal year 2004, the Defense Authorization Act allowed Department of Defense civilian retirees to return to work without sacrificing pay.
- Some organizations, such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), are creating deliberate opportunities for knowledge sharing by :
 - Conducting knowledge sharing workshops, retiree and project manager forums, and other workshops to capture, share, and transfer knowledge from experienced senior level employees and retirees to up-and-coming project leaders,
 - Fostering mentoring opportunities between advanced-level employees and mid- and entry-level careers,
 - Fostering women’s or “old girls’ networks,” and
 - Seeking to retain high-performing women who cycle out of the workforce with benefits that maintain their relationships with the organization such as continued access to business networks or skills training.
- Employers are also investing heavily in technological solutions as well as new software to facilitate communications between employees or that creates electronic repositories of promising practices or manages processes.

Additional Resources

- 101 Facts on the Status of Workingwomen*, BPW Foundation, 2005.
- Bridging the Knowledge and Skills Gap: Tapping Harvard Business Review on Diversity*, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.
- Communities of Practice*, Harvard Business Review, 2000.
- Federal Retirees*, IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2004.
- Harvard Business Review on Women in Business*, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.
- Storytelling in Organizations*, www.SteveDenning.com, 2005.
- Workingwomen Speak Out Survey*, BPW Foundation, 2004.
- Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005.

Suggested Discussion Questions

Do communities of practice sound like an efficient way to bridge the knowledge gap between exiting and remaining employees?

Can you name at least one community of practice that operates in your organization? What practice or subject matter area do you think your organization would benefit from having a COP in place?

What do you think are the benefits to employees of being a part of a knowledge sharing culture or a community of practice? What are the downsides?

Do you think having communities of practice based on knowledge of a specific functional area or subject matter are a way for workingwomen to find the mentors and networks they need to advance in organizations? Do you think that they are yet one more network from which workingwomen are excluded? Why do you think this?

Entering & Exiting the Workplace: It's No Longer Something Employees

Do Just Once

In the not so distant past, an employee would enter a workplace after college or high school and expect to spend their entire career with one employer. In the even more recent past, an employee could expect to enter one career path and, even if they changed employers, they would only exit their chosen career upon retirement, if at all. Now, entering and exiting a workplace, the workforce, or a career are things many employees do more than once and often multiple times. What defines retirement is also changing; 42 percent of 40 plus aged Americans who responded to a survey said they intend to fully retire but then go on to describe retirement as working full or part-time for another employer.

Sweeping changes are underway in the workplace even when looking at the traditional definition of entry-level and exiting employee. The changing expectations and demands of younger, qualified workers, and mature, experienced workers could shape the workplace for the next half-century. Both types of workers are beginning to demand some of the same work-life effectiveness and workplace equity policies and programs that workingwomen have advocated for (and usually gone without) since they began to enter the workforce in increasing numbers in the 1970s.

Studies indicate that work-life balance expectations by entering and exiting workers are similar—76 percent of active job seekers, in one study, said they expected and wanted on-going training that increased their employability as well as flexible work options. Maturing workers reported in another study that they wanted work options that included access to on-going learning opportunities, part-time work, changing shifts, flexible work options, telecommuting, compressed workweeks, temporary, seasonal, consulting, and contract work; and pro-rated benefits. Increasingly expectations for work-life effectiveness options,

flexible workplaces, and workplace equity mark both those generations of employees entering into and maturing out of the workplace.

But traditional views of entering and exiting the workforce are being challenged by the growing trend to have second and third careers (to complete as it were one entire career cycle only to enter another). For example, within five years 150,000 workingwomen are expected to transition out of the military and into the civilian workforce effectively undergoing a dramatic career transition. In a related trend, the number of Americans over age 40 who said they intend to start their own business as a form of mid-life career change increased by 10 percent between 2004 and mid-2005, which means that employers will have to grapple with how to engage so-called entry level workers who actually have many decades of workplace experience and a life-span of different responsibilities and expectations.

Issues & Impacts on Employers

- As fewer young people are available, more employers are looking at a shrinking pool of employees and trying to retain mature workers as well as seeking ways to bridge the knowledge-gap between remaining and exiting employees.
- Certain employers are more likely to feel the first impacts of exiting retirees than others: aerospace, utilities, federal government, and healthcare.
- The self-employed are more likely than other workers to continue working after retirement age.
- Nearly four out of ten highly-qualified workingwomen and over two out of ten working men have left the workforce “voluntarily” at some point in their lives.
- Thirty-seven percent of highly qualified women, in one study, took time out of the careers at some point; of these 93 percent want to return to the workforce.
- A recent series of case studies at major corporations indicated that while company executives assumed that most of the

workingwomen who had left their organization left because of caregiving responsibilities, follow-up conversations with the workingwomen indicated they left to pursue what they perceived as better career opportunities at other organizations.

- From 2004 to mid-2005, the number of job seekers (ages 42 to 60) who decided to start their own businesses as a mid-life career change or early retirement option increased by 10 percent.
- The average employee will change jobs at least five times in their career and have multiple careers over their lifetime.
- Women leave the corporate workforce at twice the rate of men.

Issues & Impacts on Employees

- Workingwomen spend 15 percent of their careers out of the workforce due to personal and family responsibilities; two years off from full-time work can cost highly-qualified women 18 percent of their earning power; three years off can cost them 37 percent.
- Seventy-four percent of women who leave the workforce often rejoin the workforce and 40 percent return to full-time jobs.
- Employees with pension plans are more likely to retire than those without; those with a defined benefit plan (pension) were more likely to retire than those with a defined contribution plan (401K or 403B).
- Fifty-eight percent of women at the top of their careers describe their careers as nonlinear.
- Sixty-one percent of returning workingwomen changed industries and 54 percent changed functional roles; 83 percent re-entered the workforce at a comparable or lower level, with just 17 percent reentering at a higher level.
- Forty-two percent of Americans who are over 40 say that they intend to fully retire, but 13 percent of them define that as working full-time at a different job, 32 percent working part-time, and 26 percent working occasionally.

Trends in Policies or Programs

- Strategies adopted by companies that are trying to address the loss of retiring workers include: succession planning, more training for employees, increased recruitment and retention, enhanced mentoring, creating consulting and training tracks for retirees and future retirees, and increasing compensation.
- Employers are strategizing how to retain highly-skilled workers who are interested in entering a new career field and integrating second careerists into a system more geared to the traditional career route. For example, new types of internships are being developed to engage both first entry employees and second and third careerists looking for the experiences they need to make a career change.
- As employees look for a workplace, they are often looking for something other than a permanent home. Adapting to a work world shaped by decades of downsizings, mergers, and lay-offs, job seekers are looking for employers who can provide them with skills, networking, and mentoring opportunities that increase their employability in order to keep them attractive to their current employer as well as any future employers.
- Pending and current retirees are looking for work options that allow them flexibility in their schedules, access to health insurance, and help with expenses as well as opportunities to continue to learn or enter a new career. One study shows that 80 percent of employers do not offer the types of flexible work options favored by retirees.

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- 101 Facts on the Status of Workingwomen*, BPW Foundation, 2005.
- Harvard Business Review on Women in Business*, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.
- Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005.
- Workingwomen Speak Out Survey*, BPW Foundation, 2004.

Suggested Discussion Questions

Is entering and exiting your career just something you do at the beginning and end of a working life, or is something that is done through out?

What can be done to facilitate career changes—for new employees? For existing employees?

As more job seekers look for employers that offer flexible work options and work-life effectiveness programs, do you think this will spark significant changes in work cultures? Do you think that other factors will determine whether employers will offer these benefits?

What ways do you think employers and employees can work together to make transitions in and out of the workforce easier on both? Are there government policy changes that could make a difference? Employer practices? Employee actions?

Do you think workingwomen undergoing a mid-life/mid-career change would have an easier time finding an employer than a male job seeker or vice versa? Why or why not?

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