Resources and Policy Changes Needed to Create Successful Workplaces

Recommendations from 2005's inaugural Workplaces and Workforces in Transition:
*A National Employer Summit*

The BPW Foundation
Fifty Years of
Women Helping Women Achieve Success

In 1956, the Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation became the first foundation dedicated to conducting research and providing information solely about workingwomen. The mission of the BPW Foundation is to empower workingwomen to achieve their full potential and to partner with employers to build successful workplaces.

The BPW Foundation has influenced, informed and educated Presidents, Members of Congress, State Officials, policy makers, women of influence and employers by conducting research and offering educational resources that accurately portray the challenges facing workingwomen and the important roles they play in the workplace, politics and their communities. The BPW Foundation is supported by foundations, corporations, BPW/USA members and other individuals who share a common belief in equity for workingwomen.
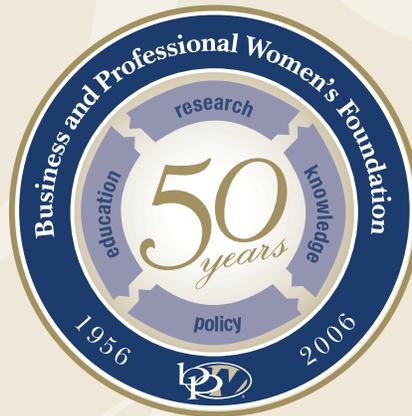
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Workingwomen Making Strides

Ensuring the life-long success of women in the workforce means addressing issues of work-life effectiveness, diversity and workplace equity. Today, 69 million women are active in the U.S. labor force and make up 46 percent of the working population.[1] Even as they take on a greater role in the economic health of the nation, workingwomen often shoulder primary care-giving responsibilities for children and aging or ill relatives. In fact, workingwomen may spend up to 15 percent of their careers out of the workforce because of personal and family responsibilities.[2] The need for flexible workplaces that provide commensurate management support continues to be a constant throughout women's careers.

"Workingwomen have made great strides over the last five decades in establishing themselves as an integral part of the American workforce. What remains to be done is identifying and implementing fundamental strategies that will create systemic changes and remove the last barriers to their full participation in the workforce; there must be a common ground where the needs of employers and workingwomen coincide," explains Dr. Sheila Barry-Oliver, chair of the Business and Professional Women's Foundation Board of Trustees.

Workplaces & Workforces in Transition: A National Employer Summit

Drawing on decades of experience convening key figures to generate solutions for serious workplace issues, the BPW Foundation underwrote a summit for national employers who are leading the way in work-life effectiveness, diversity and workplace equity to explore what employers need to create successful workplaces.

Workplaces & Workforces in Transition: A National Employer Summit (NES), held December 15, 2005 in Washington, DC, was a first step in developing the BPW Foundation's employer initiative aimed at creating systemic changes through employer partnerships.

One participant noted, "This was a great event. Most seminars you attend do not allow this level of input and interaction among the attendees This setting was intimate and conducive to addressing the issues."

This report will cover the following topic areas:
- Defining a Successful Workplace
- Forces Shaping 21st Century Workplaces and Workforces
- An Overview of Summit Attendees
- Summary of Discussions & Recommendations
- Next Steps

The goals of the National Employer Summit were to:
- Understand emerging and pressing concerns of employers regarding the status and advancement of workingwomen;
- Capture recommendations from employers who are leading efforts in work-life effectiveness, diversity and workplace equity about the tools, resources and policy changes needed;
- Distill these recommendations into a report that would serve as an action plan to help employers, workingwomen and policy makers identify and create systemic changes.

This report captures insights provided by Summit attendees on issues that are shaping today's workforces and workplaces. Their recommendations on resources, research and policy changes can be read as a call to action for the many nonprofits, government agencies, policy makers and employers trying to create systemic change.

Defining a Successful Workplace

To identify the resources needed to create a successful workplace, it is critical to have an understanding of what a successful workplace looks like. One of the objectives of the Summit was to craft a shared definition (or set of traits) for a successful workplace that would resonate with both employers and workingwomen.

A successful workplace:

- Empowers workingwomen and men to achieve their full potential
- Is financially successful, innovative and productive
- Challenges its mental models and assumptions
- Expands its definition of diversity (i.e. social status, age, culture, gender, nationality, ethnicity, etc.)
- Effectively engages all employees to achieve the goals of the organization
- Has benefits, policies and programs that support work-life flexibility
- Has a people-driven culture that fosters growth and learning which frames decisions around what is best for people as well as for generating profits
- "Does well by doing good"
- Has a sense of global mission and citizenship
- Promotes a healthy work environment
- Exhibits a willingness to stretch to solve problems, particularly finding new ways to eliminate barriers for all employees
- Exhibits fairness and provides meaningful work
- Mirrors demographics of its customers
- Supports customers/client service in the broadest sense

(This list reflects a summary of 37 identified traits.)

Forces Shaping 21ˢᵗ Century Workplaces and Workforces

Prior to the Summit, the BPW Foundation reviewed the most recent publications on policies and programs related to work-life effectiveness, employee diversity and workplace equity. Patterns revealed the factors that are shaping workplaces and workforces. The insights resulting from this overview were woven into the structure and discussions of the National Employer Summit.

Into the 21ˢᵗ Century, employers and workingwomen face internal and external forces that challenge their efforts to create successful workplaces. The BPW Foundation determined that three types of transition-based forces are shaping workplaces and workforces:

- *Life-Cycle-Induced Transitions* are the 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.

- *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.

- *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.

The BPW Foundation invited employers with a demonstrated interest in developing workplace practices related to work-life effectiveness, diversity or workplace equity to the Summit. Attendees were tasked with discussing transition-related challenges and experiences, sharing promising practices they have observed and making recommendations for resources and policy changes that will help to create successful workplaces.

Executive Summary

An Overview of Summit Attendees

The BPW Foundation invited employers specifically that do not represent the norm; they invited those that already have a proven track record in advancing women and crafting practical solutions to work-life dilemmas.

To understand how progressive employers are already addressing issues of workforces and workplaces in transition, the BPW Foundation collected information from a variety of sources. Summit participants were invited to provide in-depth feedback through an online survey available before and after the event. These responses were used to prioritize the event topics and discussion, to shape intensive focus groups about specific sub-topics related to the main themes of transition and to gather additional recommendations.

As a third stage in information collecting, several employers participated on panels during a special research and education day sponsored by the BPW Foundation at the 2006 BPW/USA Policy & Action Conference. Conversations between panelists and audience members covered the topics of *Employer Recommendations for Policy Changes that Can Support the Creation of Successful Workplaces and How Employers and Workingwomen Find Common Ground on Policy: Creating Win-Win Advocacy.*

Attendee Profile

Top-level decision makers in human resources, diversity and programming areas representing eighteen national employers participated in the Summit. Thirteen of the employers represented national for-profit businesses, four represented national nonprofit organizations and one a leading university. Employers traveled from as far away as California, Arizona and Indiana to attend. They represented workforces ranging from over 100,000 to less than 500 with most representing workforces of 5,000 to 30,000 employees. For a list of employers who participated in the inaugural National Employer Summit, see Appendix A.

Summit attendees also sought information. Employers participated in the event:

- To learn more about challenges employers are dealing with in the various sectors (e.g. government, nonprofit, for-profit);
- To gather information on the federal government's position on workplace issues;
- To learn more about workingwomen's issues and the forces affecting them;
- To understand and identify breakthrough ideas and strategies for advancing women and minorities[3] including people of color, LGBT employees, ethnic minorities, etc.;
- To glean promising practices on transition and diversity issues;
- And to share ideas and network.

Discussion Summaries

The summaries that follow include brief discussions of each of the overarching forces affecting workforces and workplaces in the 21st century as well as the related sub-topics covered during the Summit. Following the discussion of each sub-topic are recommendations from participants for activities, research, resources or policy changes that would allow employers to address the challenges related to each issue area and help them create successful workplaces.

Recommendations in this report are not necessarily the view of every participant. While the recommendations embody the ideas of those who participated in the Summit and related programming, they are not statistically significant. Recommendations have been condensed into general categories to better capture overall concerns of participants.

Life-Cycle-Induced Transitions

Life-cycle induced transitions are a result of the changing expectations and responsibilities that adults experience as they move across their life span. These transitions include becoming a parent, caring for an elderly or ill relative or pursuing personal or volunteer goals. These life-cycle-linked needs often motivate women (and men), especially in mid-career, to ask employers for flexibility and autonomy to achieve work-life effectiveness. These needs have prompted some employers to create policies and practices aimed at increasing retention and creating new ways of getting work done.

"The need for flexible work options and workplaces with commensurate management support appears to be a constant throughout women's careers."

Discussion

The need for flexible work options and workplaces with commensurate management support appears to be a constant throughout women's careers. Work-life programs and policies often meet the needs at one stage of life, such as becoming a parent, but often fail to evolve along with the employee's life and expectations. The demand by job seekers for workplaces that allow them to more effectively blend their work and personal responsibilities is on the rise among different populations including maturing workers and entry-level workers. Employers meeting the needs of employees for greater flexibility are finding their retention rates improve and that productivity among workers increases.

Participants pointed out that some companies have policies in place that support women dealing with life-cycle induced transitions such as parenting or care giving, but employees often do not take advantage of them. "They are on the books, but the company culture does not support them [the policies]," one Summit participant explained. "People do not want to be the first." Another explained that such situations result in policies deemed as not valuable. "Perception is reality. It keeps people from using existing programs."

Statistics Sampler

- Eighty-five (85) percent of respondents to the Business and Professional Women's Foundation's *Workingwomen Speak Out Survey* said that flexible work schedules were of moderate or major importance to them.
- Workingwomen spend 15 percent of their careers out of the workforce due to personal and family obligations.
- In 2000, two million mature workers were the main caregivers for one or more grandchildren.
- Forty-eight (48) percent of male executives in a Fortune ™ Magazine survey said they wanted job options that would let them realize their full professional aspirations while having time for family, community, religious activities, friends and hobbies.
- Only 19 percent of companies offer job-sharing, 33 percent offer compressed workweeks, 56 percent provide flextime and 37 percent allow telecommuting.[4]

Participants provided additional insight and recommendations on the topics of *Retaining Highly Skilled Women* and *Retaining and Augmenting the Maturing Workforce* under the area of Life-Cycle-Induced Transitions. These topics were identified by attendees as being of significant interest to employers because of their effects on their own workforces and workplaces.

Re-engaging Highly Skilled Women

"Women are starting their own businesses at twice the rate of men."

Discussion

Re-engaging highly-skilled workingwomen is a challenge that frustrates many employers. Companies are losing some of their highest-performing and highest potential women to caregiving responsibilities. Currently, the average workingwoman spends up to 15 percent of her career out the workforce dealing with caregiving responsibilities. These women often cycle in and out of the workforce over several years' span. Seventy-four (74) percent of women who leave the workforce eventually rejoin and 40 percent return to full-time jobs, but 61 percent of returning women changed industries and 54 percent changed functional roles.[5]

Many women would like to maintain productive relationships with their employers, even as that relationship morphs through a variety of forms — full-time, in-office work, part-time, telecommuting, or contractor status if they become small business owners. However, these types of evolving work arrangements are still a rarity.

Women are starting their own businesses at twice the rate of men.[6] Women often start their own businesses to forge more challenging careers and to enable them to blend work and personal responsibilities. Their entrepreneurship derives, in part, from the lack of flexible work options and promotional opportunities available in traditional workplaces. When highly skilled women leave the workplace, employers can lose access to a valuable source of institutional knowledge and intellectual capital. The costs for replacing a highly-skilled worker can range from 150 to 250 percent of their salary.

Challenges Facing Employers Creating Successful Workplaces

- There is a perception by employees that flexible work options such as job-sharing or part-time career tracks are not avenues to advancement.
- The organizational culture does not always encourage employees to make use of existing policies or programs.
- For those creating workplace policies, there can be a disconnect within upper and mid-management about what it really takes to get a job done versus what a particular job "should" look like (e.g. jobs should be 9 to 5 regardless of whether work can be successfully accomplished in other formats).
- There is concern that senior-level executives do not model the work-life effectiveness values that they promote which undermines the utilization of programs.
- Employers are not making full use of existing information-gathering opportunities, such as exit interviews, to find out why workingwomen are really leaving.
- Gaps between the life experiences of those making and enforcing work-life policies and those subject to them often results in outdated and underutilized policies that do not change with the needs of the workforce.
- There are limited resources available within employers in all sectors for new programs and policies.
- Government regulations that limit the ability of employees to access retirement funds or pensions if they continue to work hamper the ability of employers to offer innovative phased retirement or similar programs.

> *Respondents to the pre-summit questionnaire said their employers prioritize work-life trends or issues based on:*
> • Financial impact
> • Law or regulation
> • Results of employee surveys
> • Volume of employees impacted

- In addition to re-engaging women into the workforce, employers also need to address ways to re-energize women in their organizations that are experiencing burn-out because of a lack of work-life effectiveness.
- Given the great diversity in the workplace (e.g. singles without children, parents, maturing workers) there are growing issues that have not been adequately addressed about what outside personal commitments take priority (e.g. children, elderly parents, personal growth) when setting policy.
- Matching women that want to re-enter the workforce after a hiatus with the right employer and the most appropriate job is a challenge for both employers and workingwomen.

Recommendations: Resources and/ or Policy Changes

In order to create successful workplaces, employers need:

Policy Changes (Local, State or Federal)

- Changes to public policy or regulatory rules that allow employers to offer more flexible work options (e.g. such as shorter work weeks for pending retirees that will not require them to sacrifice benefits).

Research

- Examples of easily-implemented, replicable, promising practices especially on:
  - The cultivation of alumni networks;
  - Examples of mentoring that reduces knowledge gaps and retains connections to women who are cycling out of the workplace;
  - Examples of succession planning;
  - Ways to identify and support employers that excel at retaining and rehiring mid-career women;
- New research or a clearinghouse of existing research on:
  - Proven career paths that cultivate the retention and return of highly-skilled workingwomen;
  - Ways to measure the return on investment of practical, everyday services and programs that ease daily work-life conflicts (i.e., concierge, on-site health care, etc.);
  - Examples of effective management practices as well as training or coaching programs for managers that encourage the development of flexible work environments.

Resources

- Resource guides for workingwomen (and men) on how to successfully cycle in and out of a workplace and training materials for managers that coincide with the information provided.

Summary of Discussions

Retaining and Augmenting the Maturing Workforce

Discussion

In 2006, the first wave of Baby Boomers turned 60 and began preparing for retirement. Many employers are also preparing, as they evaluate ways to adapt retirement polices and benefits to reflect their own needs and those of retirees. By the end of the decade, 40 percent of the U.S. labor force will qualify for retirement or early retirement. At the other end of the spectrum, the entering generation of workers is smaller in size. There will be 7 percent fewer mid-career employees over the next decade representing a shrinking labor pool from which employers can draw the next generation of organizational leaders.

Some employers recognize that they face losing millions of experienced workers, but few have comprehensive programs to capture their knowledge and engineer smooth retirement transitions. AARP reports that the majority of employers do not have the types of flexible work options desired by maturing workers. These options include reduced schedules, part-time work, internal consulting opportunities and other methods of phased retirement. As employees approach retirement, they are also facing a career transition that changes their perceptions of what they have to offer an employer and what they want to gain from an employment opportunity in terms of flexibility, training or possibilities for advancement.

Challenges Facing Employers Creating Successful Workplaces

- Many employers are behind the curve when it comes to dealing with changing demographics such as:
  - The rising percentage of older workers in the workforce;
  - The declining percentage of younger workers in the workforce;
  - The Baby Boomer generation reaching retirement age.
- Employers, small and large, are tasked with fostering an atmosphere in which older workers are valued for their knowledge by:
  - Providing on-going training and development;
  - Developing flexible career paths for workers of all ages;
  - Offering enough flexibility for the caregiver generation;
  - Understanding that maturing workers are as diverse as the rest of the workforce;
  - Rethinking job requirements to allow for new ways to get work done while improving flexibility;
  - Supporting the abilities of some older workers that have physical challenges to perform by providing tools and equipment;
  - Reviewing and adapting benefits (i.e. insurance or pension plan) to reflect new work options;
- Current legal and regulatory issues can limit employer offerings for phased retirement options.

Recommendations: Resources and/ or Policy Changes

In order to create successful workplaces, employers need:

Policy Changes (Local, State or Federal)

- Policy or regulatory options that:
  - Allow pending retirees to continue working (i.e. disability accommodation, continued ability to access retirement savings accounts and other income sources, etc.);
  - Support telework, remote work and other forms of flex-work options;
  - Create incentives for employers to invest in employee health;
  - Offer standard protocols and policies related to phased retirement options.

Research

- Capture and share promising practices on:
  - How employers are pioneering a 'middle ground' between full employment and full retirement;
  - Types of cross-generational mentoring aimed at closing knowledge gaps;
  - Creating new ways to capture and retain institutional knowledge that it is not lost upon employee retirement;
  - Successful solutions that help employers launch initiatives of their own (i.e. external "temp" pools of retirees for project work and consulting).

Promising Practices for Life-Cycle-Induced Transitions

During the summit, attendees generously shared some of their promising practices. A sampling of these practices are offered in this report.

Job Sharing

Promising Practice Topic Area: Work-Life Balance

Name of Organization: KPMG

About the Organization: KPMG is a global network of professional firms providing Audit, Tax and Advisory services. KPMG operates in 144 countries and has over 6,700 partners, 76,000 client service professionals and 21,000 administration and support staff working in member firms around the world. The company's purpose, is to turn knowledge into value for the benefit of clients, people and the capital markets.

Its member firms aim to provide clients with a globally consistent set of multidisciplinary financial and accounting services, based on deep industry knowledge.

Challenges: Male managers needing to take advantage of paternity time while still facing problems of taking care of their clients.

Summary of practice:
For male managers whose wives are expecting and whose delivery due dates occured around the same time, they covered each other's clients during others' leave.

Largest challenges in implementing practice:
- Ensuring client comfort level remained high
- Ensuring that the manager who covered the client was educated and informed of clients' particular needs
- Avoiding conflicts of interest

Impacts on your employees:
- Ensuring managers did not feel guilty about taking time off to be with their new baby and family
- Reassuring managers that the company values their time off
- Ensuring managers feel comfortable that their client was being taken care of

Impacts on your organization:
- Employees see that company supports their needs
- Employees became aware of benefits available to them

Program evaluation measures:
- Surveys
- Articles in employee newsletter

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On-Site Elder Care Consultant

Promising Practice Topic Area: Work-Life Balance

Name of Organization: Fannie Mae

About the Organization: Fannie Mae is a private, shareholder-owned company that ensures mortgage money is available for people in communities all across America. Fannie Mae does not lend money directly to home buyers. Instead, it works with lenders to make sure they don't run out of mortgage funds, so more people can achieve their goal of homeownership.

Challenges: More employees were caring for elders and had to take time away from work. This results in higher stress levels compounded by the fact that most of them did not know where to turn for help.

Summary of practice:
- Built an on-site elder care help line center
- Site workers can call on employees' behalf
- Resources
- Family help
- Planning ahead for elder care
- Fannie Mae's Elder kit™

Largest challenges in implementing practice:
- Employees vs. Contractor
- Regional help

Impacts on your employees:
- Less stress
- Attract and retain employees

Impacts on your organization:
- Employees take less time away from work
- Less turnover
- Engaged employees

Program evaluation measures:
- Surveys
- Statistics
- Case load

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Career-Focused Transitions

Career-focused transitions occur as employees move along the continuum of their career desiring or requiring new skills and experiences to enhance 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 engage in more than one career over their lifetime. As the life-span of the average worker increases, some employees are creating a second or third career path such as those from a growing population of workingwomen who are retired or separated from a military career.

Discussion

The quest to create a fulfilling career can involve changing positions or job tracks, leaving or re-entering the workforce. For workingwomen, there is a "glass wall," which hinders lateral moves that can garner the most valuable experience; this is just beginning to be understood. It appears that more women on the executive track feel that they have to change employers in order to move up the career ladder and counter questions about their dedication to a career. As such, they are looking for employers that offer opportunities to be mentored, access to internal business networks, educational assistance and access to work experiences and positions that can help them transition between career paths.

Statistics Sampler

- Fifty-eight (58) percent of high-level workingwomen describe their careers as nonlinear.
- In 2003, 76 percent of job seekers were more apt to look for benefits that enhanced both their employability and work-life effectiveness.
- Over the next five years, 150,000 workingwomen are expected to separate from the military and transition into the civilian workforce.
- In 2002, one-third of federal employees surveyed (100,000) said that they were considering leaving government employment.
- Recent studies are showing that moving between employers is seen as a winning strategy by workingwomen that are feeling stalled in their current positions.

The Summit participants provided further insight and recommendations on the topics of *Advancing Workingwomen to Leadership Positions and Meeting the Career Expectations of Entry-Level, Mid-Career and Executive Track Women.* These topics were identified by attendees as being of significant interest to employers because of their effects on their own workforces and workplaces.

Advancing Workingwomen to Leadership Positions

Discussion

Women now hold approximately 50 percent of management, professional or related positions, but they are still underrepresented in the top levels of corporations, academia and government.[7] More than ever, women are taking responsibility for their own career advancement. They expect employers to invest in them and want to return that investment to their employers. Often they find that work-life conflicts make that difficult. While they are likely to translate their skills into self-employment, many strongly desire ways to advance at traditional workplaces. In response, organizations are shifting from top-down command style organizations to flatter, team-based structures and appear to benefit from the more inclusive, risk-taking styles of many women leaders.

Employers at the National Employer Summit report having taken the following steps to retain women cycling out of the workforce:
- Allowing telecommuting;
- Implementing job sharing;
- Offering customized flex-work options;
- Offering part-time work;
- Offering seasonal work;
- Providing consulting opportunities;
- Providing contract opportunities.

Challenges Facing Employers Creating Successful Workplaces

- Employers that want to advance workingwomen are finding that cultural and business stereotypes may be getting in the way. These include:
  - Differences in the perceptions of gender-based working styles or the perceived/real lack of willingness of managers to advance workingwomen;
  - A deficit of operational roles that are a key to advancement (i.e. operations, finance, etc.);
  - Management's perceived commitment (or lack of) to women's career advancement or to work-life effectiveness programs;
  - A lack of senior-level women executive role models with children. (i.e. across industries 60 percent of men managers compared to 40 percent of women managers have children);[8]
- Work-life options continue to be impacted by realities in employees' personal lives including:
  - Challenges of balancing needs of employees who are part of dual career families;
  - Personal responsibilites that collide with opportunites such as growth assignments that might include extensive travel.
- Encouraging innovation in programs and policies (i.e. changing or blending job descriptions to make leadership roles more accommodating);
- Resources (or lack thereof) available to employers to actually make changes in programs or policies to support the infrastructure for new initiatives.

Summary of Discussions

Recommendations: Resources and/ or Policy Changes

In order to create successful workplaces, employers need:

Activities

- Create networks or opportunities that help employers leverage resources that create ways for workingwomen to access professional development:
  - Memberships in professional organizations;
  - Internships that provide opportunities for "lateral" skills development;
  - Leave for skills-building volunteer opportunities.

Policy Changes (Local, State or Federal)

- As an employer with high public visibility, government agencies (federal, state, or local) should support internal policy or regulatory changes that offer training and development of the women leaders in their agencies and operate as models of work-life effectiveness, workplace equity, or diversity.

Research

- Capture and share promising practices from employers in all sectors (government, nonprofit and for-profit) on:
  - Fresh, replicable models of mentoring that aid career advancement;
  - Human resource modules that would equip human resource professionals with new employee career options that include operational experience, provide new definitions of success and show how to measure and evolve these new practices;
  - A model of a performances/skills matching service that employers can replicate.

"Women now hold approximately 50 percent of management, professional or related positions, but they are still underrepresented in the top levels of corporations, academia and government..."

Summary of Discussions

Meeting the Career Expectations of Entry-level, Mid-career and Executive-track Women

Discussion

Expectations about career advancement have changed dramatically among workingwomen. "Generation X" (28-40 years) and "Generation Y" (under 28 years) workingwomen expect to get challenging, meaningful assignments right away. They want access to special projects and leaders and are eager to get ahead. Meanwhile, frustration with the continued existence of glass ceilings and glass walls in organizations causes more mature women to start their own businesses. The combination of these two phenomena result in a lack of mentors for the incoming workforce.

Workingwomen are also feeling more comfortable changing employers as a method of career advancement. This can also mean advancing into entirely new careers. As stated earlier, more workers are beginning second and third careers. More employers are encountering entry-level workers on new career tracks but with executive-level experience and expectations.

> *Pre-Summit questionnaire respondents said they are proactively responding to the demographic shift by reaching out to non-traditional, diverse groups including:*
> - Current retirees;
> - Immigrants;
> - Minorities;[9]
> - Veterans (male and female);
> - Women veterans (specifically).

Challenges Facing Employers Creating Successful Workplaces

- Technology and demographic changes have resulted in a growing skills gap between senior-level executives and entry-level workers. This dearth of mid-level positions has also meant fewer opportunities to develop lateral skills within organizations.
- Employers that want to advance workingwomen report that there are systemic barriers to advancement including:
  - A lack of access to special projects for workingwomen;
  - Less time for women executives to network, mentor or be mentored;
  - Unfavorable stereotypes about women's career goals and expectations.
- Women view entrepreneurship as a viable career path over traditional employment.
- Work-life effectiveness programs are often not available for young or maturing workers, or they are culturally discouraged from taking advantage of them.

Recommendations: Resources and/ or Policy Changes

In order to create successful workplaces, employers need:

Policy Changes (Local, State or Federal)

- Policy and regulatory changes that help employers:
  - ○ Support telework, remote work and other forms of flex work;
  - ○ Support equitable pay and equal rights for women;
  - ○ Support women returning to work from hiatus.

Research

- Capture and share promising practices on:
  - ○ Access and support for women's networking groups;
  - ○ Career transition coaches who help workingwomen through intense changes in responsibilities (i.e. as for first-time mothers or first-time managers);
  - ○ Cross-generational mentoring and networking groups within workplaces;
  - ○ 'Intra-preneurship' projects for Gen X, Gen Y and pre-retirees – i.e., launching new products and lines of business within existing employers.

> *In order to retain pre-retirees, employers represented at the Summit offered the following incentives:*
> - Consulting opportunities;
> - Contract work;
> - Part-time work;
> - Phased retirement;
> - Project work;
> - Seasonal work;
> - Vendor opportunities.

Summary of Discussions

Market or Workplace-Induced Transitions

Market or Workplace-Induced Transitions are precipitated by changes in the market or in the workplace that put pressure on both employers and employees to adapt. These environmental factors include mergers, globalization, downsizing or rapid growth. While these changes can be wrenching, they create fresh avenues for workingwomen, new positions, emerging markets and opportunities for contract work, consulting and business ownership.

Discussion

Changes in the workplace can be shaped by any number of factors ranging from the unexpected affects of new technologies to the impacts of traditional economic drivers such as the costs of labor or expanded global options emerging from international free trade treaties. The ability to adapt successfully to changes in the workplace brought about by market forces or internal pressures is an increasingly important quality for both employers and employees to possess. Whether competing in a global or national market for employees, employers increasingly find that how they handle change or help their employees handle change can significantly impact their ability attract and retain skilled workers.

A pre-Summit questionnaire revealed the greatest challenges in adapting company policies and programs. These included:
-- Difficulties in executing headquarters plans across a region;
-- Different cultures between states or regions;
-- Different laws governing workplaces;
-- Lack of training in diversity sensitivity.

Statistics Sampler

- Sixty (60) percent of CEOs believe that diversity is essential to meeting long-term international growth and see it as a competitive advantage for penetrating new, diverse markets.
- One study found that companies with strong work-life policies have higher stock prices and greater profitability, outpacing indexes such as the S&P 500.
- Currently, 52 percent of Americans are employed by small businesses; 25 percent by large businesses; 16 percent by local, state and federal governments; and 7 percent by nonprofits.
- After a hiatus, 64 percent of women reentering the workforce change industries.
- In 2004, women represented 36 percent of all officials and managers in private sector employment — a 7 percent increase over a 12-year period.

The Summit participants provided further insight and recommendations on the topics of *Making Policies Work Nationally* and *Making Policies Work Globally.* These topics were identified by attendees as being of significant interest to employers because of their effects on their own workforces and workplaces.

Making Policies Work Nationally

Discussion

Employers seeking to advance women into national-level leadership positions are relying on a system of skills development, educational reimbursements, mentoring and women's business networks. But women's overall progress has stalled. Workingwomen hold about 50 percent of management, professional or related positions in the United States, but only 15.7 percent of corporate officer positions in Fortune 500 companies.[10]

Employers are also challenged by expanding workplaces. Technology has changed the workplace for employees and employers. Cell phones, PDAs and home computers have erased the physical barriers between home and work and allowed teams to collaborate across borders. As employers stretch programs and policies geographically, employers encounter different workplace cultures that can impede the development of a common organizational culture, programs and policies. At the same time, there is increasing competition for employees at the national level.

> "*Workingwomen hold about 50 percent of management, professional or related positions in the United States, but only 15.7 percent of corporate officer positions in Fortune 500 companies.*"

Challenges Facing Employers Creating Successful Workplaces

- While downsizing employers are able to cut expenditures, those without a strong knowledge management program find that over time they lose valuable institutional knowledge possessed by former employees.
- After a reorganization or merger, converging workplace cultures can make creating a seamless set of programs and policies difficult.
- A key challenge is recognizing potential opportunities for skills and career advancement for workingwomen that may arise from re-organization.
- Managers working across state or regional lines have difficulty aligning headquarters policies with different regulations and laws.

Recommendations: Resources and/ or Policy Changes

In order to create successful workplaces, employers need:

Activities

- Create networks or opportunities that:
  - Connect professionals regionally and locally to share ideas;
  - Connect employers who want to discuss creating shared resources;
  - Help women's business groups to collaborate and coordinate.

Research

- Capture and share promising practices on:
  - Work-life effectiveness and diversity programs across various sectors and industries;
  - Replicable, "successful" pilot projects (on work-life effectiveness, diversity, or workplace equity) at field offices that can be expanded nationwide;
  - Methods for measuring the Return on Investment (ROI) of programs that builds a strong case for business managers.

Making Policies Work Globally

Discussion

In recent decades, waves of mergers, acquisitions, re-organizations and outsourcing have meant that many more employers are finding that they have to make workplace policies fit an international workforce. Many experiences and needs of workingwomen are universal. For example, work-life effectiveness and caregiving responsibilities tends to cross most cultural boundaries.

Global employers struggle with the logistics of moving women into overseas postings. Yet, they see enormous opportunities for new product development and new markets that rely on their ability to understand and reach women in other cultures. The challenge is to be on the ground in each market with a corporate culture that recognizes and understands global and local differences.

Challenges Facing Employers Creating Successful Workplaces

- International employers must deal with the challenges faced by workingwomen of any nationality working cross-culturally and consider:
  - The locale of the international assignment/market;
  - The definition of "diversity" will change within each country;
  - Dual career relocations.
- Developing management skills for workingwomen that include:
  - Building relationships and moving through an organization;
  - Being successful in a particular culture;
- Creating policies and programs internationally may be "uncharted territory" for many employers.
- Melding different employer cultures can be problematic.
- Developing programs or policies that adapt to political and economic shifts.

Recommendations: Resources and/ or Policy Changes

In order to create successful workplaces, employers need:

Activities

- Convene international work-life and diversity experts to discuss policies, challenges and recommendations (i.e. in person or through webcasts or other virtual meeting places).

Policy Changes (Local, State, or Federal)

- Support policy and regulatory changes that help employers create seamless policies and programs related to work-life effectiveness, workplace equity and diversity (i.e. the universal right to work for women).

Resources

- Create a clearinghouse of case studies of successful programs at overseas operations and country-specific considerations for developing global policies.

> *To advance U.S. workingwomen's options globally, strategies identified in the pre-Summit Questionnaire include:*
> - Creating networks for women working internationally;
> - Offering work-life benefits tailored to each country;
> - Offering opportunities for rotation into global, operational positions;
> - Providing cross-culture sensitivity training;
> - Providing management training geared to women working internationally;
> - Providing mentoring opportunities tailored to each country's culture;
> - Providing specific skills training;
> - Providing for relocation of families.

Summary of Discussions

Promising Practices for Making Policies Nationally and Globally

During the summit, attendees generously shared some of their promising practices. A sampling of these practices are offered in this report.

Diversity Toolkit

Promising Practice Topic Area: Workplace Equity and Diversity

Organization Name: Cook Ross, Inc.

About the Organization: Cook Ross, Inc. has provided organizational development and diversity strategy services to corporate and nonprofit organizations and associations for the past 17 years. The company supports the formation and development of women's networks and employee groups and work always to improve the organization's culture around diversity and equity issues.

Challenges: This tool addresses the on-going challenges leaders, managers and associates will face day-to-day in their diverse organizations after they have had diversity awareness or management training.

Summary of practice:
The Diversity Toolkit is a unique resource designed for managers, leaders and frontline workers to successfully build, manage and thrive in diverse organizations and teams. It contains over 40 short, relevant case studies with resolutions hyperlinked to over 100 downloadable tools that are 1-7 pages long.

Largest challenges in implementing practice:
- Making potential users aware of the tool

Impacts on your employees:
- Having a "diversity consultant in the box" at their fingertips to resolve relevant, daily diversity-related issues
- Being able to initially learn about and resolve diversity issues without first having to go to human resources
- Having a training and development tool for managers and associates to foster team development in a multi-cultural environment

Impacts on your organization:
- Provides on-going support for organizational learning on diversity
- Anticipates when there may be an issue or problem relating to diversity or equity and managers having the tools to address them before they are serious
- Builds a culture that focuses on diversity and inclusion which goes beyond training and policies

Program evaluation measures:
- Number of times each tool is accessed by client
- Conduct baseline diversity-related climate surveys and measures change over time
- Conduct focus groups of users to determine the usefulness of the tool and how it could be improved

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Overall Recommendations

   While attendees provided insights into tools, resources and policy changes within individual issue areas, they were also asked to define key items that could help create successful workplaces while still meeting the needs of employers across the board. The following lists highlight those recommendations. Recommendations can be read as an open request to employers, policy makers or non-profit or consulting partners to come together to develop or support the recommendations.

Activities

- Encourage collaboration among business women's groups to provide support and information related to workingwomen issues.
- Create executive advisory committees on women's movement and growth within organizations.
- Establish executive-level and mid-management trainings on how to make organizational policies a reality.
- Target programs that support single, working, professional mothers and fathers with regards to benefits, mentoring, financial planning, etc.
- Support well-defined mentoring programs (i.e. bridging knowledge gaps between senior workers and mid-career/entry-level workers, executive-track mentoring, etc.).
- Start women's support groups at all levels of organizations.

Policy Changes (Local, State, or Federal)

- Provide legislative or regulatory support for:
  - More flexible work schedule options (i.e. tax deductions on computers for telework programs);
  - Increased options for retirees that allow them to work without penalty;
  - "Official" public definitions of work-life effectiveness or work-life balance;
  - Tax or other incentives for employers that offer employer-supported professional development, work-life effectiveness, or diversity programs.

Research

- Share formulas for determining the cost of employee turnover and underlying causes.
- Seek information and research on the impact of multiple generations in the workforce.
- Collect and utilize data on how well various sectors are doing with regards to diversity, work-life effectiveness and workplace equity.
- Document the benefits of work-life effectiveness, career advancement and diversity programs.
- Gather examples from different sectors, industries on career paths (i.e. full-time, part-time, job sharing) and outline how advancement opportunities are provided and facilitated through key departments (i.e. finance, operations).

Resources

- Provide user-friendly information for employers on government policies that effect work-life effectiveness, diversity and workplace equity programming.
- Find or create replicable models for a resources/skills match database.
- Develop and distribute toolkits on how workingwomen successfully cycle in and out of a workplace by drawing on the experiences of women and employers who have been through the process.
- Create a tools and resources clearinghouse with ratings and evaluations to support various topics.
- Utilize institutions of higher education to develop curriculum that recognizes the issues and potential of women in the workforce.

Next Steps

The BPW Foundation has committed to the following activities in order to turn the recommendations of the Summit attendees into action:

Educational Activities

Continue to offer ways to connect employers with each other and with workingwomen to discuss and find solutions to work-life issues.

- Host a 2006 National Employer Summit that will focus on Return on Investment (ROI) for work-life effectiveness, diversity and workplace equity programs.
- Pilot a listserv on work-life effectiveness, diversity and workplace equity.
- Offer opportunities for employers to share their expertise and find common ground with workingwomen on how to create successful workplaces.
- Over 2006 and 2007, provide technology-friendly ways for employers to share and learn from one another (i.e. facilitated conference calls, webinars, etc.).

Resources

Over the next two years, continue to build the BPW Foundation's clearinghouse, the Rawalt Online Resource Center, and include information on:

- Generational impacts on workplace — implications of multi-generational workplaces;
- Documentation of changes in the work lives of workingwomen over the past 50 years;
- Promising practices for work-life effectiveness, diversity, networking, workplace equity, mentoring;
- ROI for work-life effectiveness, diversity, networking, mentoring, workplace equity;
- Tools and information for women re-entering the workforce;
- Examples on calculating the costs of replacing an employee;
- Links to fact sheets and practical manuals on policy issues facing employers;
- Mentoring that bridges knowledge-gaps in organizations.

Research

- Integrate questions related to mentoring, networking, knowledge sharing and advocacy into upcoming surveys and research projects.

Policy

- Reach out to and assist employers and workingwomen and men as they seek out common ground on policy changes that can help create successful workplaces.
- Find and share resources and fact sheets on issues identified as "common ground" policy areas that can be useful to both workingwomen and employers in their shared advocacy efforts.

Summary of Discussions

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Appendix A: List of Attending Employers

During the Summit, attendees participated in intensive focus groups that targeted specific sub-topics related to three themes of transition. As a next stage in discussions, several employers also participated on panels during a special research and education day sponsored by the BPW Foundation at the 2006 BPW/USA Policy & Action Conference. Insights provided in the conversations between panelists and audience members have also been incorporated into this report.

The following employers contributed to the development of this report by participating in a day-long learning program in Washington, DC— *Workplaces and Workforces in Transition: A National Employer Summit*

AARP
Avnet, Inc.
Big Brothers Big Sisters
The Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation
Business and Professional Women/USA
Caliber
Calvert
Cook Ross, Inc.
Daston Corporation
Discovery Communications, Inc.
Fannie Mae
Internal Revenue Service
KPMG
MomCorps
The National Wildlife Federation
Sempra Energy
Soroptimist International of the Americas
Starbucks Coffee Company
The University of Notre Dame

Appendix B: List of Participating Employers in Questionnaire

To understand how progressive employers are already addressing issues of workforces and workplaces in transition, the BPW Foundation invited Summit participants to provide in-depth feedback through an online survey available before and after the event.

Additional employers participated in the questionnaire, but were unable to attend the Summit. Their responses are also incorporated into the report.

Avnet, Inc.	KPMG
Big Brothers Big Sisters	The National Wildlife Federation
Calvert	Randstad U.S.
Daston Corporation	Soroptimist International of the Americas
Discovery Communications, Inc.	Starbucks Coffee Company
Fannie Mae	Texas Instruments
Internal Revenue Service	The University of Notre Dame

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Download a copy of this report and find information on issues important to workingwomen, families and employers at the
BPW Foundation's Rawalt Online Resource Center at www.bpwfoundation.org

End Notes:
[1] "Women in the Labor Force in 2005, The Department of Labor-Women's Bureau, 2005
[2] "National Women's Retirement Survey" Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement, 1998.
[3] Within the Summit discussions and questionnaire, the term 'minorities' was inclusive of many aspects of diversity including people of color, sexual orientation, religion, culture, disability, ethnicity, etc.
[4] "Annual Benefits Survey," Society of Human Resource Management, 2005.
[5] "Hidden Brain Drain," Harvard Business Review Research Report, 2005.
[6] "Escape From Corporate America," The Conference Board, 2006.
[7] "Women in Management: Quick Takes," Catalyst, 2002.
[8] "A New Look Through the Glass Ceiling," Government Accountability Office, 2002.
[9] See endnote #3.
[10] See endnote #7.

The BPW Foundation
Fifty Years of Women Helping
Women Achieve Success