



# successful workplaces *digest*

**Business and Professional Women's Foundation**

National Employer Summit | Washington, DC | June 20, 2008



## about

### Business and Professional Women's Foundation

Business and Professional Women's Foundation strives to help working women establish successful careers by providing them with the resources they need to make informed career decisions, achieve a healthy balance between work and life and attain merited career advancement while realizing their full personal and professional potential. BPW Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable, educational, organization impacting the lives of thousands of women in communities nationwide.

**BPW Foundation  
funds innovative  
research in order  
to help understand,  
support and guide  
workingwomen at  
crucial points  
in their careers  
and lives.**

Since 1956, BPW Foundation has brought together key figures from all sectors of society at critical times to generate solutions to workplace issues. By engaging national employers to discuss the challenges they face in their endeavor to create diverse, innovative and successful workplaces, BPW Foundation continues its legacy as an agent for change.

This June, BPW Foundation is hosting the third National Employer Summit and publishing the first *Successful Workplaces Digest* to help enable employers to create effective and thriving workplaces. These are just two of the tools BPW Foundation offers to help workingwomen and employers bring about meaningful changes for themselves, their organizations and their communities.

In addition to facilitating knowledge sharing among corporate and public leaders, BPW Foundation funds innovative research in order to help understand, support and guide workingwomen at crucial points in their careers and lives. The organization's latest research explores issues faced by women veterans in transition from military careers to the civilian workplace. BPW Foundation's research and programs also help young careerists improve their job skills and expand their knowledge of how to succeed in the workplace.

Since 1969, BPW Foundation has provided financial assistance to disadvantaged women, 25 years and older, to further their education as they enter or re-enter the workforce. BPW has awarded more than \$6 million in scholarships, grants and loans to over 8,000 women.



## introduction

### *Successful Workplaces Digest* & National Employer Summit

Business and Professional Women's Foundation's *Successful Workplaces Digest* showcases promising practices, inventive ideas and applied research. Represented in the *Digest* is a range of corporate, non-profit and governmental organizations committed to building diverse, flexible and equitable workplaces.

**Leading national  
employers gather  
at the Summit  
to showcase  
their promising  
practices.**

Designed to be a user-friendly resource for busy professionals, the *Digest* offers straightforward, accessible ideas on great practices that can be implemented in a variety workplaces.

*Successful Workplaces Digest* is being published in conjunction with BPW Foundation's National Employer Summit, *Practice What You Promise: Building Successful Workplaces with Innovative Practices*. The event's program has been guided by the *Digest*'s exciting submissions.

Leading employers who are actively developing policies to enhance work-life effectiveness will gather at the Summit on June 20, 2008, to showcase and share their practices. The Summit helps individuals and employers develop and nurture programs through round table discussions, experiential learning and keynote presentations.

The Summit and *Digest* provide forums in which employers can begin to envision a future in which they have the resources necessary to create modern work environments, help employees to realize their potential and establish sustainable organizations.

## The Balanced Worker Project™

### Helping Young Careerists Navigate the Challenges of Work-Life Balance

While women have joined the work force in increasing numbers they continue to face barriers that hinder both career advancement and personal growth. Despite the labor force's more inclusive landscape, the organizational structure and policies of the workplace maintain the status quo, failing to provide female workers with the necessary support to balance personal, family and workplace responsibilities without compromising their careers.

The Balanced Worker Project™ was created to address these dilemmas. The program provides both preventative and proactive initiatives, targeting young female employees either before they enter the workforce or in the early stages of their careers. Research and real world examples highlight the challenges of achieving a balance between work and life that can erode a successful career path. Female careerists are made aware of the pervasive workplace biases that keep women in lower paying jobs with fewer opportunities to build job skills and cultivate career advancement.

**The workplace fails to provide female workers with the necessary support for them to balance personal, family and workplace responsibilities without compromising their careers.**

The proactive component of The Balanced Worker Project™ provides tips and techniques that young careerists can employ to safeguard their careers. Participants become familiarized with industry best practices such as workplace flexibility policies and they participate in role-playing scenarios to learn essential workplace skills.

With support, women no longer need to feel vulnerable as they struggle to navigate these workplace issues.

continued

**Encourage and Support Young Female Careerists in the Workplace**

**DO**

- » Model what you want young careerists to internalize about the organization.
- » Link young careerists’ work to the core goals of the organization as a whole.
- » Leverage young careerists’ strengths.
- » Demonstrate a non-judgmental attitude.
- » Force yourself out of your own comfort zone.

**DON’T**

- » Address problems based on your experience alone.
- » Assume how young careerists will feel in a given situation.
- » Breach confidentiality.
- » Feel threatened by young careerists’ technological expertise.
- » Discount young careerists’ ideas due to their limited experience. *SWD*



## Batteries Plus LLC

### Corporate Growth Arises from Engaged Employees

**B**atteries Plus believes that strong company growth comes from engaged and committed employees. To promote this philosophy, every 4 to 6 weeks employees have opportunities to participate in a little fun at work. Incorporating enjoyment and humor in the workplace creates camaraderie and deepens loyalty to the company.

While many companies contribute publicly to charities and provide national sponsorships, Batteries Plus prefers to let employees drive community involvement and charitable contributions.

**Employees enjoy these events because it's a break from the daily routine. It connects them to each other on a personal level creating powerful interpersonal relationships.**

Employee events are planned by an employee-driven “Plus Panel,” which is open to all employees, or are organized by individuals committed to a specific charity.

#### **Breast Cancer Fundraiser**

This initiative involves a number of events over several weeks and is concluded by employees participating in the Breast Cancer Walk.

- » Donated items such as a golf outing, hotel stay and autographed sports items are bid on in a silent auction.
- » Employees donate baked goods and the company donates beverages and snacks for the bake sale.
- » An IT auction lets employees bid on computer items for the opportunity to purchase.
- » Employees purchase a “jean certificate” so they can wear jeans for a week.
- » For the picnic lunch, Batteries Plus donates food and staff buys lunch tickets.

#### **March Madness**

Every organization includes sports-minded individuals, so to create some friendly competition Batteries Plus celebrates the NCAA Men’s Basketball Championships.

- » Employees are divided into 8 cross-departmental teams.

continued

- » Teams are randomly assigned 8 NCAA teams.
- » Employees wear jeans until their teams are out of the competition.
- » Tournament games are shown on a projection screen during Thursday and Friday lunches.
- » The winning team receives a jeans week.

### **Annual Chili Cook-off and Halloween Costume Contest**

These events promote cooking creativity and highlight staff members' talents.

- » Employees are divided up into teams of 6 to 8.
- » Teams make one batch of chili, an appetizer and dessert.
- » Employees vote for their 3 favorite chilies (there are typically 20+ to choose from).
- » Winning team gets to wear jeans for a week.
- » Halloween costumes are optional, but are voted on in the same way and prizes are given to the winners.

Employees enjoy these events because they provide a break from the daily routine. Social activities connect workers to each other on a personal level, creating powerful interpersonal relationships and subsequently strengthening workplace productivity.

Batteries Plus benefits because satisfied employees work more productively, and are more willing to go the extra mile for the company and for each other.

Measuring success quantitatively for these types of these events is difficult to do, but more and more newly hired individuals are stepping up to sponsor their own events. Of the 200 corporate employees, 37 have been with Batteries Plus for 3 years and 54 for 5 years or more (13 of which for more than 10 years). But the true measure is listening to employees discuss the events in the halls- this speaks volumes to their success. *SWD*

Batteries Plus LLC | [www.batteriesplus.com](http://www.batteriesplus.com)

**Patty Luebke**, MAOM, PHR | *HR Partner* | [pluebke@batteriesplus.com](mailto:pluebke@batteriesplus.com)

## Business and Professional Women's Foundation

### Understanding a New Generation

**M**any myths persist regarding younger generations, such as Millennials (born 1981–99) and Gen Xers (born 1965–80), which can have a negative effect to how these young careerists are perceived and treated in the workplace. (As defined by Business and Professional Women's Foundation, young careerists are between the ages of 18 and 35.) While opportunities abound, young careerists—especially women—must confront lingering prejudices, limitations, stereotypes, expectations and difficult choices. Employers and managers should recognize that these young workers are the future of organizations, and acknowledge that these emerging leaders have much to offer the burgeoning global labor force.

#### MYTH

The playing field has been leveled: women and men have essentially the same opportunities to secure successful, profitable careers.

#### FACT

Women are still over-represented in low-paying jobs.

» Forty-four percent of employed women work in technical, sales and administrative support jobs.<sup>1</sup>

» Women are more likely to have white-collar jobs as professionals (23 percent versus 16 percent for men) and in administrative support (22 percent versus 8 percent for men), which typically offer a lower wage.<sup>2</sup>

#### MYTH

The percentage of female students enrolled in higher education now outnumbers that of males.

#### FACT

Higher enrollment rates of women at the undergraduate level—57 percent of bachelor's degrees are obtained by women, versus 43 percent by men, according to the Department of Education's latest statistics—have not translated into equal graduate enrollment rates.<sup>3</sup>

#### MYTH

Young careerists today are, on average, the most educated generation to enter the workforce, and particularly regarding their technological skills, it is not difficult for young people to obtain secure jobs within the labor force.

#### FACT

Fifty-three percent of all temporary or intermittent workers are under age 35.

» Temporary jobs on average pay lower wages.

» Temporary employees are more likely than permanent workers to experience periods of unemployment and to live near the poverty line.<sup>4</sup>

continued



**MYTH**

Female young careerists have many more opportunities to attain high level jobs because men and women typically have the same prospects to achieve management positions.<sup>5</sup>

**FACT**

While the occupational profile of employed women has diversified and improved since the late 1970s, this progress has not resulted in similar growth within the upper levels of management.

**MYTH**

Employees from the younger generations are apathetic and self-centered.

**FACT**

Young careerists tend to be accepting of multiculturalism and the broadest definitions of diversity, while exhibiting a willingness to fight for social justice both within the workplace and the broader community and world.

**MYTH**

Young careerists are idle and exhibit limited drive to excel in their jobs.

**FACT**

Dedication to goals, a self-starter mentality and pursuing passions are key skills that young careerists bring to the workplace.

- » Raised in an environment where they were told to pursue their passions, young careerists tend to be more confident and willing to take risks to pursue their interests entrepreneurially.
- » The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the self-employed category will grow 5 percent between 2004–14, compared with 2 percent growth from 1994–2004.

**MYTH**

Young careerists expect to have challenging, meaningful work right from the start of their first job, and are reluctant, or even averse, to more mundane tasks.

**FACT**

Young employees recognize that even mundane office duties have to be done by someone; they just don't want mindless tasks to comprise the entirety of their workday.

» Today's workplace is transactional.

- » Successful managers can best engage young careerists by offering short-term growth opportunities, rather than expecting young careerists to stick it out on the promise of more interesting work based on long-term residency.<sup>6</sup>

**MYTH**

Young careerists are not loyal.

**FACT**

Even though young careerists switch jobs frequently, this should not be interpreted as disloyalty.

- » Young careerists change jobs because of dedication to the values instilled in them by their parents: valuing their time, learning new things and finding personal fulfillment through one's work. Therefore, they leave jobs when they do not experience personal growth.
- » Because of their team mentality, young careerists are generally willing to ask for help and advice, and they tend to feel committed to their colleagues and employer.
- » Even if they don't have qualms about leaving the organization as a whole, young careerists are generally concerned about jilting their workplace "team."<sup>7</sup>

**MYTH**

With the influx of working mothers in the labor force, workplaces have widely adopted more accommodating policies, so when young careerists choose to leave their jobs, it is the result of a personal decision to place familial responsibilities over career advancement.

**FACT**

Most women—86 percent—who leave their careers cite workplace constraints, such as inflexible jobs or maternal profiling, as the primary reason why they left the labor force.<sup>8</sup>

**MYTH**

Mature employees often feel edged out of the workplace to make room for younger, more technologically savvy careerists.

**FACT**

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act protects only workers over age 40, so young careerists—not their older colleagues—are most at risk for age discrimination.<sup>9</sup>

- » Young careerists are more likely to be laid off than mature workers.
- » In September and October 2001, workers ages 16–24 suffered 95 percent of all job losses.
- » Young employees are six times more likely than their older counterparts to be unemployed.<sup>10</sup> *SWD*

## Young careerists tend to be accepting of multiculturalism and the broadest definitions of diversity.

**ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor. (1993, June).

<sup>2</sup> 2006 Statistics, Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Clune, M., Nunez, A. & Choy, S. (2001, May).

<sup>4</sup> Jorgensen, Helene. 1999. *When Good Jobs Go Bad: Young Adults and Temporary Work in the New Economy*. Washington DC: The 2030 Center.

<sup>5</sup> Bond, J., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E. & Protas, D. (2003), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> <http://blog.penelopetrunk.com/2007/06/21/trying-to-keep-young-workers-from-quitting-your-job-its-not-about-money/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, J., Manvell, J. & Bornstein, S. (2006). 'Opt Out' or Pushed Out?: *How the Press Covers Work/Family Conflict: The Untold Story of Why Women Leave the Workforce*, p. 4. The Center for Work-Life Law at The University of California, Hastings College of Law, [www.worklifelaw.org](http://www.worklifelaw.org).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.youngworkersunited.org/article.php?id=39>

<sup>10</sup> Sum, Andrew, Taggart, Robert, et al. *The National Economic Recession and Its Impacts on Employment Among the Nation's Young Adults (16–24 Years Old): The Untold Story of Rising Youth Joblessness*. Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston, February 2002.

Business and Professional Women's Foundation | [www.bpwfoundation.org](http://www.bpwfoundation.org)

**Deborah L. Frett** | *Chief Executive Officer* | [foundation@bpwfoundation.org](mailto:foundation@bpwfoundation.org)

## Business and Professional Women's Foundation

### Untapped Talent: Women Veterans

Women have a high rate of success in the military with opportunities to advance and hold high-ranking positions, but many misconceptions negatively influence women veterans' capacity to transition successfully into civilian life. As women comprise a growing portion of the military, they have subsequently become a substantial segment of our veteran population. Unfortunately, women veterans' issues are still largely ignored.

While most veterans face similar problems as they transition from the military to the new world of civilian work, women veterans must deal with a different set of stereotypes and ignorance. The training, skills, discipline, team building and leadership experience cultivated within the military are all valuable to civilian employers, and women veterans can be as great an asset to employers as their male counterparts.

Below are myths debunked by Business and Professional Women's Foundation's research project, *Women Veterans in Transition*, and additional sources. The facts presented here should encourage employers to actively recruit and engage women veterans in their organizations.

#### MYTH

Women are less capable than men of carrying out the physical tasks demanded by military work.

#### FACT

The Defense Women's Health Research Program (DWHRP) demonstrates conclusively that women are equal to men in the physical and cognitive aspects of military readiness, including meeting such physical challenges as the tolerance of gravity forces, the ability to respond to stress and the ability to survive in extremes of heat and cold.”<sup>1</sup>

#### MYTH

Women have a hard time achieving success in the military.

#### FACT

Approximately 95 percent of all jobs in the military are open to women.

- » The percentage of women serving on active duty in the military has more than doubled since 1978.
- » Women account for close to 20 percent of the U.S. Military.
- » Women account for the largest increase in enlistment.<sup>2</sup>

**MYTH** Women compromise the military's efficiency and success because of on-duty days lost due to pregnancy and maternal leave.

**FACT** Statistically, men spend even more time away from active duty. For male soldiers, this is almost exclusively due to behavioral issues such as desertion, drug and alcohol abuse, incarceration or being AWOL.<sup>3</sup>

**MYTH** Most veterans are middle-aged.

**FACT** Thirty percent of female veterans are under the age of 35, compared to only 10 percent of male veterans.<sup>4</sup>

**MYTH** The military is a roadblock to a higher education.

**FACT** Qualified service-members can receive more than \$70,000 in tuition benefits.

- » More than half the enlisted force has some background in higher education.
- » Over 30,000 degrees were earned by service personnel in 1999 alone.
- » The military operates over 300 schools, teaching more than 10,000 courses.

» Many military bases bring in professors from local colleges to teach courses.

» Military personnel can take college courses through the Internet.<sup>5</sup>

» The military offers retired personnel up to \$100 per month reimbursement for tutorial assistance.

» The military provides free training for personnel interested in starting or enhancing a small business.

**MYTH** In general, female veterans tend to be less well-educated than their male counterparts.

**FACT** Eighty-one percent of women veterans who responded to BPW Foundation's survey had completed some college, and 60 percent of them have a college degree.<sup>6</sup>

**MYTH** Military training and jobs have little relation to the civilian world.

**FACT** Eighty-eight percent of military jobs have direct civilian counterparts.

» The military offers thousands of specialized jobs in varied fields.<sup>7</sup>

» Eight-one percent of all jobs in the military are non-combat occupations.

» Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces are less likely to be unemployed than non-veterans.

continued

## MYTH

After leaving the service, women veterans are not qualified for jobs besides entry-level positions.

## FACT

As civilians, about 235,000 women veterans work in managerial and professional occupations, and an additional 100,000 work as administrators.<sup>8</sup>

## MYTH

Women veterans have an extensive network of military assistance and veteran support to aid in their transition into the civilian workforce.

## FACT

Ninety-three percent of women veterans surveyed by BPW Foundation cited that they did not turn to a women's network, veterans' service organization or professional association to help secure a civilian job.<sup>9</sup>

## MYTH

Most veterans can transition into civilian life with relative ease.

## FACT

Forty-four percent of respondents to BPW Foundation's survey, who had been out of the service an average of seven years, said they still did not feel completely adjusted to participation in the civilian workforce.

» Only 21 percent felt they had successfully transitioned into civilian life by the start of their first post-service job.<sup>10</sup>

» Just over half of women veterans surveyed by BPW Foundation (51.7 percent) did not seek civilian work

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan B. Perlin, M.D., Pd.D., M.S.H.A., F.A.C.P., Susan H. Mather, M.D., M.P.H., and Carole L. Turner, R. N.P., M.S.N., C.N.A.A. (2005). Women in the Military: New Perspectives, New Science. *Journal of Women's Health* 14, no. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Today's Military*. <http://www.todaysmilitary.com/app/tm/like/myths>

<sup>3</sup> Peach. (1996). *It's Our Military, Too!*

<sup>4</sup> Women's Bureau, Washington, DC. (1997, June). Outlook on Women Veterans. *Facts on Working Women* 97, no. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Today's Military*.

<sup>6</sup> BPW Foundation. (2007). Understanding the Complexity of Women Veterans' Career Transitions.

<sup>7</sup> *Today's Military*.

<sup>8</sup> Women's Bureau. Outlook on Women Veterans.

<sup>9</sup> BPW Foundation. (2007). Understanding the Complexity of Women Veterans' Career Transitions.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2007, November). Vital Mission: Ending Homelessness Among Veterans.

until after leaving the military, but women veterans who began looking for a civilian job prior to their official separation were twice as likely to say that they had secured the type of job they had hoped for, and were also twice as likely to recall that they felt well-prepared for the civilian workforce.<sup>11</sup>

» Female veterans, especially if they have disabilities or are unmarried or separated, are more likely to experience the burden of housing costs and other necessities.<sup>12</sup> *SWD*

Business and Professional Women's Foundation | [www.bpwfoundation.org](http://www.bpwfoundation.org)

**Deborah L. Frett** | Chief Executive Officer | [foundation@bpwfoundation.org](mailto:foundation@bpwfoundation.org)

## Calvert

### Commuter Benefits: Helping Employees, Employer and Environment

Calvert, a socially responsible mutual funds firm, headquartered in suburban Washington, D.C., has set industry standards for asset management excellence—both in selection of companies for portfolios and how the organization serves its clients' interests.

Calvert is actively committed to transparency and corporate responsibility which parlays into providing employees with a flexible, benefit-rich, family-friendly work environment. It is with this commitment in mind that offers commuter benefits in an effort to minimize the impact of commuting on employees and their families.

**Our program demonstrates success from a socially responsible standpoint, encouraging and rewarding employees for using alternative methods of transportation.**

Calvert has offered commuter benefits to its employees for more than 20 years. This program demonstrates success from a socially responsible standpoint, encouraging and rewarding employees for using alternative methods of transportation.

#### **Transportation Program Highlights**

##### » Bicycle and Walking Shoe Reimbursement

- » Employees are eligible for either a yearly reimbursement of \$120 to cover the cost of shoes or a one-time reimbursement of \$500 for the purchase of a bicycle.
- » Shower facility for the physically active commuter

##### » Hybrid Vehicle Subsidy Program

- » All employees working at least 20 hours per week are eligible for a one-time reimbursement of \$3,000 for the purchase, or \$1,500 for the lease, of a new or used hybrid vehicle.

continued

### **Win-Win Policy**

#### » Nearly 100 percent Participation

- » Benefits start on day one and with subsidies on parking and public transportation, as well as biking and walking, almost all employees receive transportation benefits. More than 30 percent of Calvert's employees commute to and from work using a method other than driving.

#### » Workplace Flexibility and Cost Savings

- » Telecommuting and compressed work weeks give employees the opportunity to spend more time with their families and less time commuting, thus taking their vehicles off of the road during the peak of rush hour. Employees typically save hundreds of dollars on an annual basis by simply participating in Calvert's commuter benefits program, and Calvert saves money on office usage by telecommuting workers.

#### » Recruiting and Retention

- » Calvert's commuter benefits program helps attract new employees to an urban-suburban area, which can come with a costly commuting price.
- » Among other programs, transportation benefits help Calvert to attract new employees and retain current employees. While many companies work with high turnover rates, Calvert generally keeps more than 90 percent of its workforce each year and has an average employee tenure of more than 8 years. *SWD*

Calvert | [www.calvert.com](http://www.calvert.com)

**Lauren Lefkowitz, PHR** | *Human Resources* | [Lauren.Lefkowitz@Calvert.com](mailto:Lauren.Lefkowitz@Calvert.com)

## Choose 2 Lead

### Keeping the Best and the Brightest with a More Flexible Workplace

A study by Choose 2 Lead Women's Foundation, recently released by the U.S. Department of Labor, examines why highly successful women tend to leave the traditional workforce. "Are We Losing the Best and the Brightest? Highly Achieved Women Leaving the Traditional Workforce" uncovered core reasons why women opt-out, with job dissatisfaction ranking the highest.

#### **Why Women Opt-out**

- » Organizational culture was often a key component of workplace dissatisfaction.
- » The demand for flexible careers is greater than the supply.
- » Immediate supervisors generally control the opportunity for flexibility.
- » Barriers to implementation of flexible practices include infrastructure, institutional culture, limited experience in managing a diverse 21st century workforce and lack of readily available business cases and models.
- » Some women would be willing to reduce their responsibilities and compensation if jobs could be restructured.

If employers had revised jobs to offer more flexibility and control to the worker many women in the study could have stayed at their current job. These findings point to a need for reforms in organizational culture and in the way the workplace and work-life balance is structured.

**All of us—both employers and employees—have a role in  
changing the 21st century workplace.**

Some organizations are getting it right, though. To capitalize on its intellectual capabilities and remain competitive globally, American corporations and organizations must create new work models to accommodate women, mature employees and other diverse workers. All of us—both employers and employees—have a role in changing the 21st century workplace.



## **Employers**

### **Set the Organizational Tone**

- » Minimize negative impacts to those employees utilizing flexibility.
- » Create an environment that rewards accomplishment and ability.
- » Provide training to manage the 21st century worker.
- » Promote diversity in leadership ranks and on boards.
- » Be willing to leverage, test and share innovative approaches.

### **Redefine Jobs**

- » Offer more than one career track.
- » Rely on results-oriented team approaches.

### **Develop New Metrics**

- » Measure and reward productivity rather than face time.

## **Employees**

### **Advocate for Yourself**

- » Know your employer and industry labor needs.
- » Negotiate for what you need.
- » Keep the pressure on your organization to offer solutions to retain you.

### **Reach Out to Others**

- » Maintain an active network within your industry.
- » Compare notes with women in similar situations. *SWD*

Choose 2 Lead | [www.choose2lead.org](http://www.choose2lead.org)

**Shirley Clark** | *Founding Partner* | [shirley@choose2lead.org](mailto:shirley@choose2lead.org)

**Patricia Reed** | *Founding Partner* | [patricia@choose2lead.org](mailto:patricia@choose2lead.org)

## Ernst & Young LLP

### Practical Tips for Effective Mentoring

**M**entoring ensures a talent pipeline, engages employees and encourages a team atmosphere. Mentoring also works both ways—mentors can learn new skills and new paradigms from their mentees.

#### **Get this Most Out of Mentor-Mentee Relationship**

##### **Structure the Relationship**

Have a conversation with the mentee to negotiate how the mentoring relationship will develop and function. Upfront communication sets the stage for more meaningful mentoring relationships.

##### **Important Questions**

Consider together who will initiate meetings, how often they will occur and whether they will be in person or via phone.

##### **Establish Communication Preferences**

The mentor should make clear whether they are comfortable if the mentee calls unexpectedly for counsel, or whether interaction should be limited to set meeting times.

##### **Meet Regularly**

Meetings should take place at least quarterly, if not more frequently. At least one of these meetings per year should be in person.

##### **Leverage Existing Events**

Set up meeting times that capitalize on the when and where of both individuals' schedules, such as arrange a mentoring session following an event that both must attend.

**Even a gesture as simple as leaving voicemails can really deepen the relationship by demonstrating the mentor's concern for the mentee.**

## Check-Ins

Even a gesture as simple and easy as leaving voicemails can really deepen the relationship by demonstrating the mentor's concern for and attention to the mentee, who will, in turn, be more likely to approach the mentor. Consider sending a voicemail to your mentee a week before your meeting to help her prepare by suggesting that she bring topics to discuss.

## Mentor-Mentee Discussions

- » Share personal background—experiences, skills, workplace encounters, ups and downs. This is frequently very helpful for mentees who are still developing their career path and work-life balance.
- » Help the mentee clarify goals—what assignments might be beneficial, as well as possible paths to gain access to assignments and opportunities.
- » Review decision-making processes and problem-solving approaches.
- » Discuss and outline a plan for develop and implement the mentee's personal and career goals, including charting progress, addressing obstacles and acknowledging any ways in which the mentor may be of assistance.
- » Share perspectives on leadership and management success factors. *SWD*



Ernst & Young LLP | [www.ey.com](http://www.ey.com)

**Holly Humphrey** | *Americas Public Relations* | [Holly.Humphrey@ey.com](mailto:Holly.Humphrey@ey.com)

## Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC

### Crafting a Job that Fits Both Employer and Worker

As the competition for highly skilled workers intensifies, employers are beginning to customize work arrangements to more closely accommodate the skills, interests and work-life realities of potential employees. Technology-savvy younger workers, workers seeking phased retirement, individuals with disabilities and those looking for greater work-life flexibility are committed to finding ways to make work *work* for them as well as their employers.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP) research on how to successfully customize work for individuals who need workplace accommodations, such as people with disabilities, provides insight into this process of customizing workplace policies and environments. In the current climate of a competitive yet inclusive labor force, employers are becoming increasingly accustomed to tailoring work for all employees, and ODEP's research has the potential to help make the employment of people with disabilities a mainstream practice.

## Customized Employment is moving the workforce from a history of charity to one of partnership with employers to create economic opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Customized Employment is moving the workforce from a history of charity to one of partnership with employers to create economic opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

### **Process of Customized Employment**

#### Explore Potential Employment Options for the Individual

- » Conduct an assessment of the prospective or existing employee.
- » This can be done (with the agreement of the employee) through conversations with family and friends, paid work experiences and direct observations of skills, talents and individual's expressed employment desires.
- » This assessment will reveal the ideal conditions for employment for this worker.

## Assess the Workplace

- » In conjunction with a job coach, allow the employee to conduct informational interviews with staff in departments that match their interest areas.
- » Ask other staff about their career paths within the company and explore which routes may work for the employee.
- » Identify specific job duties and employer expectations.
- » Isolate roles that are being carried out by multiple employees and evaluate if one employee could take on those tasks.
- » Try to match individualized job goals with the employee's goals and strengths.
- » Ensure that the resulting job pays a living wage.

For more information about Customized Employment see ODEP:  
[www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/cust\\_emp](http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/cust_emp) or START-UP-USA project: [www.start-up-usa.biz](http://www.start-up-usa.biz)

## Self-Employment Options

Additionally, State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program can provide the services necessary to support self-employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Self-employment, as well as telecommuting and establishing a small business, are recognized as “employment outcomes” under the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, which are contained in Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

The Small Business Administration reported that in 2004, 14.3 percent of people with disabilities started their own businesses, a slightly higher percentage than the national average (12.2 percent). ODEP found that self-employed individuals with disabilities articulate the same challenges and rewards as small business owners without disabilities. Starting and operating an enterprise may be simultaneously frightening, exhilarating, challenging and liberating. *SWD*

Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC | [www.griffinhammis.com](http://www.griffinhammis.com)

**Cary Griffin** | Senior Partner | [cgriffin@griffinhammis.com](mailto:cgriffin@griffinhammis.com)

**Dave Hammis** | Senior Partner | [dhammis@griffinhammis.com](mailto:dhammis@griffinhammis.com)

## Kansas City Power & Light

### Recruiting a Diverse Workforce

Concerned that Kansas City Power & Light's (KCP&L) traditional employment practices were not effective in attracting a significant cross-section of employees, including women, KCP&L launched a new initiative to improve its diversity recruitment and workplace practices.

#### **Promotion of Diversity**

- » Partnering with community-based organizations such as The Full Employment Council, Kansas Workforce Partnership and Women's Employment Network.
- » Establishing a program in which female KCP&L employees in technology-related positions make presentations to local community colleges and trade schools to recruit young female careerists.
- » Creating goals that 50 percent of attendants come from diverse backgrounds for our pre-apprentice delivery business unit class.
- » Identifying high potential employees and encouraging participation in external leadership programs, such as Urban League's Leadership Forum, the Greater Missouri Leadership Challenge for Women, Kansas City Tomorrow, Leadership Kansas and the Central Exchange's Emerging Leaders Program for Women.

KCP&L's initiative has proven extremely successful, with increased attraction and retention of diverse employees, and an overall staff identification with and appreciation for diverse representation. To evaluate this new diversity recruitment and retention program, KCP&L utilizes employee statistics, focus groups that target diverse populations and an Occupational Health Survey for employees taken every 18 months.

**Challenges still exist in making women aware of non-traditional job possibilities.**

**The successful recruitment, integration and retention of a more diverse range of employees at KCP&L is representative of the communities where the employees live and work, and underscores the company's commitment to inclusion and diversity.**

Despite KCP&L's successful diversification of their workforce, there is still much to be done.

**Challenges to Increasing Diversity**

- » Making women aware of non-traditional job opportunities.
- » Educating the public and organizations about non-traditional jobs.
- » Enhancing partnerships with community-based organizations.
- » Ensuring the company's culture fosters an environment where employees can succeed.

The successful recruitment, integration and retention of a more diverse range of employees at KCP&L is representative of the communities where the employees live and work, and underscores the company's commitment to inclusion and diversity. *SWD*

Kansas City Power & Light | [www.kcpl.com](http://www.kcpl.com)

**Barbara Curry** | *Senior Vice President, Corporate Services and Corporate Secretary* | [barbara.curry@kcpl.com](mailto:barbara.curry@kcpl.com)

## Maga Design Group and InnerPlay

### How to Make Fitness Fun

CEO Scott Williams started out looking for a fitness solution to fit into his busy life. Frustrated by his schedule and his dislike of conventional exercise, he wanted a way to make fitness fun and creative for his entire staff.

Maga Design Group teamed up with InnerPlay, a wellness-consulting firm that specializes in office fitness games. Maga Design staff signed up for InnerPlay's online Challenge that rewards employees for exercise and other healthy behaviors, as well as hosts a weekly Pilates class and provides each employee with a personal wellness coach.

Only six months into the program, the results are significant, and Maga Design's investment has paid off: 92 percent participation rate; 50 percent of participants significantly increased their physical activity levels; 31 percent of participants report a major success (for example, losing over 10 lbs); and a 9 percent increase in energy and motivation.

#### **Starting a Successful Wellness Program**

##### **Make it Fun**

By using an outside firm's online interactive program, Maga Design shifted fitness from a boring chore to an enjoyable game.

##### **Customization**

InnerPlay works with individual employees to articulate personally compelling challenges from quitting smoking to setting up a meditation practice.

##### **Keep it Regular**

Continual check-ins and the weekly Pilates classes create a sense of accountability. By playing the InnerPlay Challenge daily, employees are reminded of small successes, such as drinking water and eating fresh foods.

**50 percent of participants significantly increased their physical activity levels.**



### Create Teams

Employees encourage, motivate and support each other through office teams. By having different ways to score points, everyone can participate and help their team.

### Focus on the Positive

Employees acknowledge all the things they are doing right. By picking up the easy wins, employees are far more motivated to keep playing. *SWD*



Maga Design Group | [www.magadesign.com](http://www.magadesign.com)

**Scott Williams** | *CEO* | [scott@magadesign.com](mailto:scott@magadesign.com)

InnerPlay | [www.innerplaygames.com](http://www.innerplaygames.com)

**Julie Bucy** | *Executive Director* | [julie@inner-play.com](mailto:julie@inner-play.com)

## Sprint

### Developing and Mentoring Diverse Talent

**D**iversity is an integral part of the way Sprint operates. A company that reflects its diverse customer base is better able to meet—and exceed—the needs of those customers. An inclusive workplace also nurtures diversity of thought, fostering heightened creativity and innovation. Recognizing this, Sprint has implemented several initiatives to ensure that every employee is given the opportunity to live up to her or his full potential.

Sprint's inclusive workplace programs have allowed the company to foster the best talent and ideas from its diverse workforce. Employees with a variety of backgrounds and experiences are able to approach challenges from differing viewpoints, creating solutions that may not have been possible had everyone been looking at things in exactly the same way.

#### **Employee Resource Group (ERG)**

ERGs are employee-led groups that provide unique, cross-functional development opportunities for their members, and subsequently, a competitive advantage for Sprint as a whole.

- » Sprint currently has six ERGs: Diamond Network (African American focused), Enlace (Hispanic focused), OASIS (Asian focused), Sprint Pride (GLBT focused), V.E.T.S. (Veterans and Employees helping others Through Sprint) and the newly launched women's group. ERGs are open to all employees, not just those who fall within the ERG's focus; the only requirement to join an ERG is a desire to see Sprint and its employees succeed.
- » Through ERGs, employees are able to develop leadership skills, network with diverse groups of people (both inside and outside Sprint) and get insights into new areas of the business.
- » The programs established by ERGs also provide employees exposure to executive levels, mentoring opportunities and special ERG-sponsored training.
- » ERGs also work to provide cultural-awareness events for all Sprint employees, thereby furthering the company's diversity outreach.

#### **ERG Mentoring Program**

- » All ERG members may join.
- » The mentoring program matches a senior executive with a group of interested ERG members.
- » Mentee groups are kept small so that each mentor ideally has no more than three mentees at any time.

continued

## **Sprint recognizes that a productive, successful workplace must nurture diversity of thought, thereby fostering heightened creativity and innovation.**

- » The mentor works with her or his team of mentees to provide input, feedback and suggestions that the mentees can use to further their career at Sprint and nurture their personal and professional development.
- » Sprint works to match each mentee with a mentor whose history, career path and role within the company will be most relevant to the mentee's interests.
- » Each mentor is encouraged to meet with his mentee group once a month for one year, at which point the program is re-opened so that new ERG members can sign up as mentees and new executives can sign up as mentors. When the program is re-opened for new applicants, existing mentors and mentees are encouraged to continue their participation.

The benefits provided from programs like this are multi-faceted. At the individual level, Sprint employees are able to receive feedback and networking to help advance their careers. These employees are then able to use their new skills to make Sprint a stronger competitor in the marketplace. The company as a whole benefits from these mentoring programs because by promoting and strengthening diversity in the workplace, Sprint is able to better serve its diverse customer base. *SWD*

Sprint | [www.sprint.com](http://www.sprint.com)

**Becky Smith** | *Manager Inclusion & Leadership Development* | [becky.j.smith@sprint.com](mailto:becky.j.smith@sprint.com)

## U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy Career-Focused Youth Mentoring

Career-focused mentoring provides young people the opportunity to get a glimpse of the world of work that may not otherwise be available to them. It also allows them to gain and practice skills that are useful in professional settings to prepare for life as an adult.

### **What is Mentoring?**

Mentoring is a relationship where a mentor, through support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and constructive example, helps another person (usually a young person) reach his or her work and life goals. Mentoring principles and practices have enabled the continuity of art, craft and commerce dating back to ancient times when masters taught, coached and guided the skill development of apprentices. Mentoring is a relationship built on trust and the return on investment of a successful mentoring relationship can be profound and significant.

### **Why is Mentoring Important?**

Mentoring relationships provide valuable support to young people. Mentors can help guide youth through the sometimes awkward developmental stages that accompany the transition into adulthood. Mentoring can offer not only academic and career guidance, but also teach leadership and problem-solving skills.

### **Mentoring Youth with Disabilities**

Many young people with disabilities, like other disadvantaged youth, have not had the same exposure as their peers to career preparation options like mentoring. They also tend to play a passive role in their own career-planning process. This may reflect low expectations, learned dependency or the perceived need for protection and support.

**Working focuses on the positive attitudes, skills and behaviors necessary to meet expectations in jobs, careers and vocational development.**

continued

## **Mentors can help guide youth through the sometimes awkward developmental stages that accompany the transition into adulthood.**

### **Characteristics of a Good Mentoring Relationship**

By and large, youth appreciate mentors who are supportive, caring and willing to assist them with activities that support academic, career, social or personal goals. The longer the relationship continues, the more positive the outcome. Young people are also more likely to benefit if the mentor maintains frequent contact and knows the family. Youth who are disadvantaged or at-risk stand to gain the most from mentoring; youth with disabilities are included in these populations.

### **Tips for Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences**

- » Develop an understanding of the world of work.
- » Outline work readiness skills.
- » Identify individual strengths and potential opportunities for meaningful work.
- » Understand the relationships between appropriate financial and benefits planning and career choices.
- » Access supports and accommodations for work and community living, and learn to request, find and secure appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations at work, at home and in the community.
- » Find opportunities to engage in work-based exploration activities such as site visits, job shadowing, internships and community service.

- » Set career-related goals.
- » Secure varied internships and work experiences, including summer employment.
- » Assist with exposure to entrepreneurship training.
- » Network with other young people with similar interests.
- » Practice mock interviews.
- » Attend work readiness workshops.
- » Arrange visits from representatives of specific industries to speak to young participants about the employment opportunities and share details of working within their industry.
- » Provide assistance with job searches, including resume and cover letter writing.
- » Conduct visits to education or training programs.
- » Offer job coaching. *SWD*

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## NOTE

*This is an excerpt from: Paving the way to work: A guide to career-focused mentoring for youth with disabilities.*

## ORIGINAL AUTHOR

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U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy | [www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep)

**Rhonda Basha** | Team Leader, Workforce System Policy | [basha.rhonda@dol.gov](mailto:basha.rhonda@dol.gov)

## Verizon

### Addressing Domestic Violence with Technology

**D**omestic violence is the greatest cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 in the United States—more than muggings, car accidents and rapes combined. One in four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime, and it impacts the entire spectrum of American society. The urgent need for action and change lies at the heart of Verizon Communications Inc.'s commitment to helping prevent and raise awareness about this pervasive social issue.

#### **Effects of Domestic Violence in the Home, Community and Workplace**

- » Women lose nearly 8 million days of work annually because they have been threatened, stalked or physically assaulted by a former partner or spouse.
- » The health related costs of intimate partner violence exceed \$5.8 billion each year: \$4.1 billion in direct medical and mental health care services, and over \$1.7 billion in lost productivity.
- » The widespread nature of the problem—its toll on individuals, families, communities and businesses—makes it a critical concern.

#### **Verizon's Multi-Faceted Approach to Preventing Domestic Violence**

- » Verizon Wireless employees receive targeted training.
- » The Verizon Foundation supports, and the company partners with, nonprofit organizations.
- » Verizon cell phones can serve as a lifeline in times of need.

#### **Verizon Initiatives**

##### **SafeWork Program**

This Verizon Wireless management training initiative was launched in 2007 with support from Safe Horizon, a New York-based nonprofit organization that assists victims of abuse. Supervisors at Verizon Wireless call centers take part in a 90 minute training session to heighten awareness of domestic violence and its impact on the workplace, and to supply information on how best to assist employees coping with domestic violence situations. As part of the program, supervisors watch a film depicting a woman experiencing domestic violence, then participate in a facilitated conversation to discuss

possible scenarios. The program will expand later this year to provide training for supervisors and managers at Verizon Wireless retail locations.

### **Assistance for Employees**

In situations where a Verizon employee has become a victim of domestic violence, Verizon management and human resources staff work with the employee on a case-by-case basis. When needed, Verizon has taken a variety of steps, including changing work schedules, removing employees' names from staff directory lists and relocating employees across the country.

### **Assistance for Everyone**

By dialing #HOPE (#4673) from a Verizon Wireless handset, callers are connected to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, where they can receive confidential help, crisis intervention, information and resources. The number is accessible across Verizon's nationwide network and the call is toll and airtime free. *SWD*

**Women lose nearly 8 million days of work annually because they have been threatened, stalked or physically assaulted by a former partner or spouse.**

Verizon | [www.verizon.com](http://www.verizon.com)

**Brian Malina** | *Media Relations* | [brian.c.malina@verizon.com](mailto:brian.c.malina@verizon.com)



## Women Thrive Worldwide

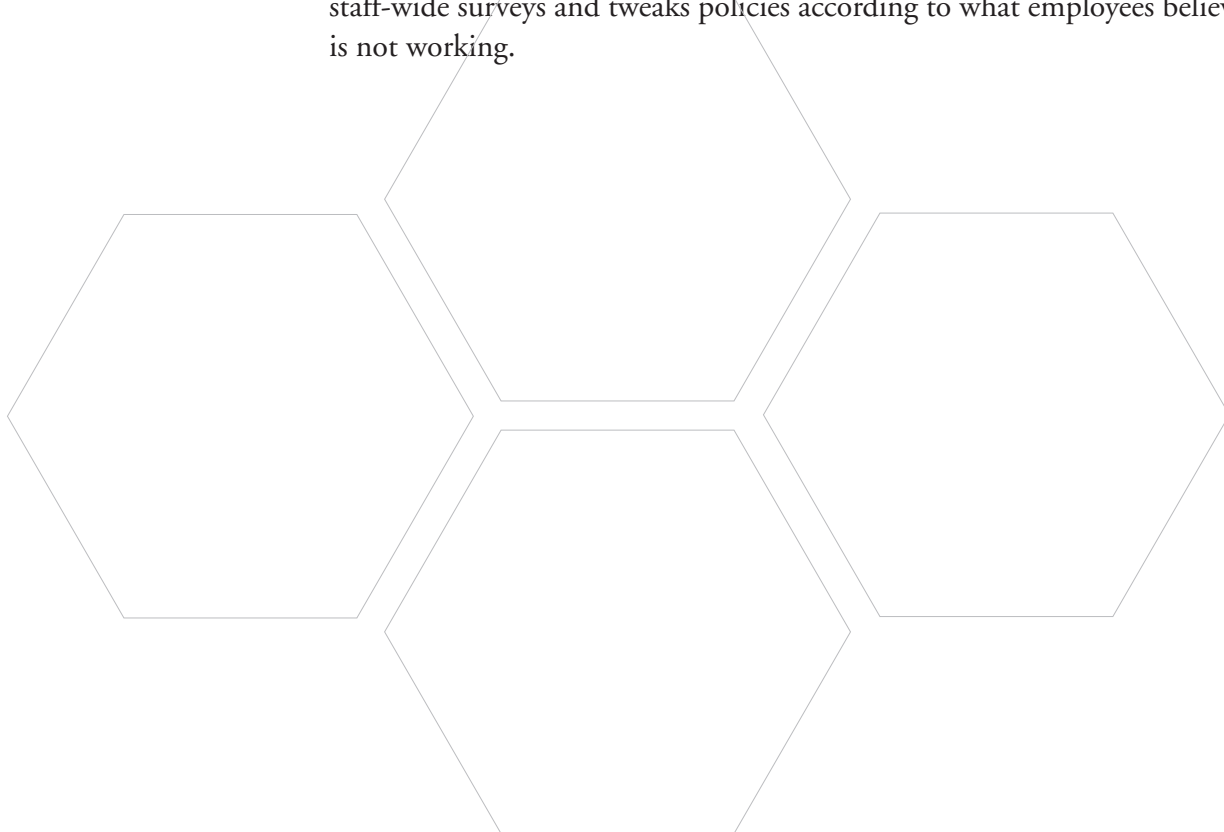
### Reap the Benefits of a Flexible Work Schedule Program

**A**s a feminist organization, Women Thrive Worldwide (formerly Women's Edge Coalition) is keenly aware of the obstacles women (and men) face in balancing family and work lives. From the organization's inception, work-life balance has been the crux of Women Thrive's workplace policies.

#### **Flexible Work Schedule Program**

- » Staff may arrive anytime between 8 and 10 a.m. and leave between 4 and 6 p.m.
- » On Tuesdays and Fridays, employees are allowed to work from home. Even the President, Ritu Sharma Fox, now the mother of two boys, works from home on those days.
- » Employees are provided with laptops, enabling them to bring work with them on the go.
- » Employees can optimize the balance between their personal and professional lives and customize their work schedules according to their diverse commuting and family situations.

As a result of these policies, employees are less stressed and more committed and productive. In order to monitor the program's success, the organization conducts staff-wide surveys and tweaks policies according to what employees believe is and is not working.



In order to ensure that those who work from home are equally accessible during work hours, the organization added a question in the year-end review which rates employees on this metric and keeps all employees accountable to each other.

Women Thrive believes that work-life balance is not only the ethically correct workplace model, but is also an important investment in their employees and, ultimately, the organization's long-term success. Investing in its employees' health and happiness has empowered Women Thrive's staff to achieve incredible policy results over the last ten years. *SWD*

**Work-life balance is not only the ethically correct workplace model, but is also an important investment in the organization's employees and, ultimately, its long-term success.**



Women Thrive Worldwide | [www.womenthrive.org](http://www.womenthrive.org)

**Lorelle Curry** | *Senior Outreach Manager* | [lcurry@womenthrive.org](mailto:lcurry@womenthrive.org)