



success through diversity
Ahakoa whakaaro kē, ka puta a ihu

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He Pānui mō ngā Take Mahi me ngā Take Oranga

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More work/life choice for parents in the UK

A raft of new UK legislation will provide parents with more opportunities to balance work and family life. The Government is increasing and extending maternity leave and pay, introducing paternity pay, rights to paid leave for adoptive parents, and the right for parents of young children to apply to work flexibly.

The most significant of these changes to the law gives parents with children under six, or disabled children under the age of 18, the right to request flexible work arrangements from their employers.

Employers have a duty to consider such requests seriously and may only refuse when there are recognised business grounds for doing so. It is estimated that 3.7 million parents, both fathers and mothers, will be eligible to apply.

The UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has found that nine out of 10 British employers say flexible working is low cost and good for business.

The DTI survey also found that:

- 94% of employers agree that people will work best when they can strike a healthy balance between work and the rest of their lives
- 91% of employers said there were no or minimal costs involved in implementing work/life balance practices and 77% of employees who requested a change to their working patterns have had their request agreed to
- 82% of employers said they have some work/life balance practices in place
- 74% of employers thought than an employee who works flexibly is just as likely to be promoted as those who don't
- 81% of employers who have work/life balance practices in place reported a positive effect on employment relations
- 7% said they had a more motivated and

committed workforce as a result of these practices and 60% reported reduced turnover

It is hoped that once employers see the benefits of offering flexibility to parents, they will extend its availability to all their workers.

The legislation recognises that there will be times when an employer is unable to accommodate a parent's request. It is intended to help the employer and employee have a discussion and find a solution that suits them both.

The employee has a responsibility to think carefully about their desired working pattern when making an application and the employer is required to follow a specific procedure to ensure requests are considered seriously.

It is significant that this new right to apply for flexible working applies to men well as women. This is supported by the introduction of new statutory paternity leave. Eligible employees will be able to take up to two weeks' paid leave to care for their new baby and support the mother.

How well these new opportunities are taken up by men remain to be seen. In a survey of men by *Management Today*, 30% of respondents agreed that work seriously interferes with their private life. Despite this 29% felt that the changes to employment legislation go too far, although younger men were more in favour of the scheme than those over 55.

The editor of *Management Today*, Matthew Gwyther, says, "Modern dads are in a dilemma – they understand the importance of spending time with their families and want to contribute on the domestic front. But at the same time men still derive an immense amount of satisfaction from their jobs and in quite a traditional way continue to define their sense of accomplishment through their work."

If you would like information about the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust services or resources, please contact:

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Flexible working guide

A UK union, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), has developed a web-based best practice guide to help its members get flexible, family-friendly jobs.

The guide is based on the OurTime project which was a partnership between PCS and the Inland Revenue. OurTime is their solution to the challenge of providing a more accessible service and extended opening hours, while helping staff to achieve a work/life balance.

Go to www.pcs.org.uk and go to Campaigns for more details. It includes a process map giving guidance on why flexible working can be a good idea, a 'flexible working' guide and a 'bringing learning into work' section.



Paid parental leave increase and review

The Government is increasing its maximum paid parental leave payment to \$334.74/week for those already receiving payments and for new applicants. The increase reflects the increase in average weekly earnings.

The Department of Labour is currently reviewing the paid parental leave scheme which was introduced November 2001 and invites input on the scheme.

For more information on the scheme go to www.ers.dol.govt.nz.

Provide feedback on the following questions to the EEO Trust (admin@eetrust.org.nz) or to Janet Hector, Employment Relations Service, Department of Labour, PO Box 3705, Wellington or janet.hector@ers.dol.govt.nz.

Employers' experiences with PPL

How many of your employees have taken PPL?

What benefits and costs do you see in the PPL scheme?

Possible changes to the existing PPL scheme

What, if any, additional groups should be eligible for parental leave?

What, if any, changes should be made to the way payments to employees are determined and how long they are paid for?

What are the implications for employers and employees of the changes you have suggested?

Australian government rejects paid maternity leave

The Australian Government announced its decision not to pay maternity leave in its May Budget.

Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward had been arguing for a national government funded scheme of 14 weeks paid maternity leave for women who have been in paid work for 40 of the 52 weeks before the birth of their child, including small businesswomen, contractors and other self-employed, casual and part time workers, would be eligible.

Unions had estimated that up to half of working women - including those on the lowest incomes - would receive full income replacement under Pru Goward's proposal.

She says the absence of a national scheme means that Australian women will continue to return to work early and leave their children early.



Work, life and the glass ceiling

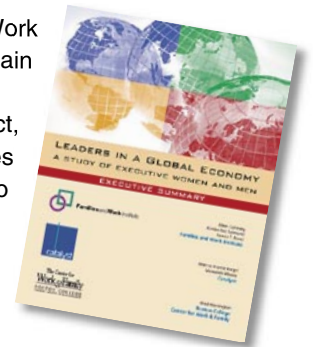
Two new pieces of research explore the experiences, perceptions and life choices of women in middle and senior management roles.

Leaders in a Global Economy is a recent study by the Families and Work Institute, Catalyst, and the Centre of Work and Family. It seeks to explain the differences between the status of women's and men's jobs.

The authors say that many companies had been seeking to attract, develop and retain women for a number of years but the companies "felt there were still many challenges – both subtle and overt – to overcome."

Among the study's recommendations for action is, "Focus on work-life: Transform the company understanding about work-life, clarifying that it is possible and positive to have a viable personal life while holding a senior management position in the company."

The executive summary of *Leaders in a Global Economy*, as well as information about the full research report of the study findings, is available at www.familiesandwork.org, www.catalystwomen.org and www.bc.edu/cwf.



A Catalyst study called *Women in leadership: a European business imperative*, looks at the perceptions and attitudes of top-level women and men executives across 20 European countries.

It found that the stereotypes and preconceptions about women's roles and abilities are the number one obstacle to advancement, closely followed by lack of role models, lack of general management experiences, commitment to family and personal responsibilities and lack of mentoring.

Other findings were:

- The women respondents want to reach the top and are equally ambitious as men
- The majority of women executives in the study were married, had full-time working partners and children
- The parental leave policies in many European countries are generous, but fully utilising them is viewed as a career stumbling block.
- 75% of women as compared to 95% of men were married, 73% as compared to 90% have children, and 73% compared to 26% have full-time working partners.

Download a summary of *Women in leadership: a European business imperative* from www.conference-board.org

What inhibits flexibility in Australia's medical world?

A new report by the Australian Medical Association sheds light on attitudes to flexible working in Australia's medical establishments.

The AMA's Work Life Flexibility Project aims to facilitate reforms in medical work and training practices. The report says these changes are necessary as a result of the changing demographics of the medical workforce and changing societal attitudes to the balance between work, family and other responsibilities.

The most significant factors of the changing demographic are the growing number of women entering medical practice and the development of graduate medical schools. Students graduating from the graduate schools are generally older than those coming through the undergraduate programmes and have different expectations of the work environment. Some already have young families.

Focus group research in 2001 found that lifestyle and flexible working practices are important issues for many junior doctors when determining which medical vocation to pursue, and are the single most important consideration for many junior doctors when making that choice. Another key finding was that these issues are just as important for male as they are

for female doctors.

The findings from the focus group research were used as the basis for a program of consultations throughout Australia last year.

The research project found that the mind-sets of consultants, medical colleges and hospital administrators were perceived by junior doctors to be the greatest barriers to implementing change in the medical profession. These groups of people were seen to regard junior doctors who seek flexible training as not being committed to medicine.

However a significant number of these stakeholders report that neither they nor their colleges are opposed to change in medical work and training practices. "Most stakeholders report a commitment to change and a genuine desire to make the medical workplace more flexible," the final report, released in March 2003, says. "Any remaining cultural resistance is rooted in concerns regarding quality and safety."

An overwhelming majority of stakeholders said that the most effective way to achieve change is to lead by example. Effective communication between administrators, consultants and junior medical staff regarding rostering and work arrangements was also seen as critical. "Merely ensuring that all participants are aware of arrangements is widely regarded as insufficient."

Opportunities and Impediments to Flexibility is available from workplace@ama.co.au

Australian research shows benefits of work/life strategies

Australia's annual Managing Work/Life Balance survey confirms the business benefits of work/life strategies including:

- Reduced turnover by an average of 6%
- Reduced absenteeism by an average of 4%
- Increased return rate from parental leave by an average of 25%
- Increased employee satisfaction by an average of 14%

Thirteen percent of respondents also said they had reliable data that indicated a positive impact on productivity.

The research also showed that work/life balance is an emerging concern for "blue collar organisations". The report says that staff in some of these organisations are increasingly stressed by higher workloads and longer hours, which is causing increased levels of absenteeism.

"Clearly manufacturing and other types of 'hands on delivery' organisations have significant challenges to overcome if they are to not only change what may be entrenched work practices but also to win senior executives' commitment to action," says the report.

Work/Life Initiatives – The Way Ahead Report on the Year 2003 Survey from www.worklifebalance.com.au

World Wide

Take our daughters and sons to work day

The US Ms. Foundation for Women has extended its Take Our Daughters To Work Day with a new programme of workplace activities developed in conjunction with the Families and Work Institute. The day is held annually on April 24.

The activities are designed to engage girls and boys in thinking about work and home life, and about how their dreams for the future can be achieved. The activities include:

- Conversation cafes designed to encourage children to think about their future workplace, what type of work they'd like to do, whether they'd like to have a pet etc
- A dynamic problem solving activity to help children build awareness of how they might approach the challenges of managing work and family life
- An exercise where children are encouraged to interview adults about their experiences of managing work and home life.

The activities are designed to be used by children in American workplaces on April 24.

More information at www.daughtersandsonstowork.org.



Upcoming Events

EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2003

The presentation dinner for the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards will be held on Thursday September 4 at the Carlton Hotel Auckland. The Prime Minister, Rt Hon Helen Clark has been asked to present these prestigious Awards again this year.

Attend this celebration of New Zealand's leading workplaces and be the first to know which New Zealand organisations have been judged leaders in work/life balance.

It is an excellent opportunity to network with your peers, celebrate with the winners and find out more about what New Zealand's best practice organisations are doing.

Free childcare is provided so bring your families.

For more information go to www.eeotrust.org.nz/news/events.php or email admin@eeotrust.org.nz.



Make the most of the Work & Life Bulletin

If you find the *Work & Life Bulletin* helpful and would like colleagues, managers or others in your workplace to get enthusiastic about work and life issues, feel free to place the PDF on your intranet or email it around your organisation.

If you're an EEO Employers Group member you can find this and previous issues of the *Work & Life Bulletin* in the members section at www.eeotrust.org.nz.