

Work-Life Integration Practices in Today's Companies

By Margo Lee, PhD (AWIS Member since 1995)

Women have many roles to balance in today's world; two of the most important are work and family. This tug-of-war, that exists as women try to perform well in all areas of their lives, often causes stress and unhappiness. Over the past few years numerous articles and books have been written about women and the issue of work-life integration. Companies that want to recruit and retain talented people know that they need to establish family friendly practices in the workplace.

More and more employers, like AWIS corporate partner Genentech, are designing initiatives to boost work-life integration. They're offering flexible work schedules as well as telecommuting, compressed work-week, and job sharing options. The concept of flexible and non-traditional work schedules are not new to the workforce, but the number of workplaces that have embraced the option to work outside the office has soared over the years due to technological advances such as mobile devices, virtual meetings, and cloud based computing. From 2005 to 2012, telecommuting increased 80% (not including the self-employed) (Global Workforce Analytics 2013). When the idea of telecommuting was first established, offices allowed some employees a day at home to work. At the present, almost everyone teleworks at some level, as most employees use cell phones to call into the office or use a computer to send and receive information anywhere the employee is on any day of the week.

Companies are also providing access to improved health and wellness programs including on-site medical care, on-staff life coaches, and extensive exercise facilities and wellness classes. Several AWIS corporate partners provide free life coaches to help employees find balance at work and provide career advice. Genentech and BD, include onsite gyms and pools with numerous exercise and yoga classes. Other companies, like DreamWorks Animation, hold classes in drawing and sculpture to stimulate creativity among its staff. At Google, supervisors award employees with credits that can be accumulated and used for an on-campus, one-hour massage. Bringing better health and wellness to employees makes for happier and more productive workforce.

Many employers actively support the professional goals of their employees through programs such as college education reimbursement for work-related and personal improvement courses. AWIS corporate partners offer an assortment of tuition reimbursement for their employees. AWIS partner Ventana offers tuition reimbursement up to \$10K per year and has scholarships for employee dependents. Genentech also offers paid sabbaticals for their employees to further their education.

Employers are also doing more to accommodate workers with families, who juggle so many facets of life outside the

workplace. In recognition of this important need for integration, companies have brought day-to-day services close to its offices. Companies like Genentech offer onsite childcare. Ventana even offers a subsidized back up care option, if regular daycare falls through. Many companies offer a free concierge service to help get errands done outside the workplace. AWIS partner Thermo Fisher offers an employee purchasing discount program where employees save on clothing, electronics and restaurant purchases. Quicken Loans provides free rides to all Cleveland Cavaliers games, which

Happy Perks at Work

In the race for employers to attract and retain top talent, companies are establishing new and unique benefits to their employees in the office. Many perks are now being offered to help increase employee satisfaction at work and improve their work-life satisfaction. Employers are focusing their efforts in the areas of health and wellness, continuing education, and better office work environments to boost happiness (and profits) in the workplace.

the company owns. Raising employee benefits can lead to happier employees, increased loyalty to the company, and may result in bigger profits.

In the race to attract and retain top talent, companies are offering not only women but all employees new ways to integrate their work and personal life. Human resource groups are setting the pace by establishing better employee benefits that aim to improve work-life satisfaction to recruit and retain employees. ■

The Association for Women in Science has developed a Work-Life Satisfaction Workshop that addresses the key issues of importance to women and men. For further details on this and other workshops offered by AWIS, email Cindy Simpson at simpson@awis.org.