

**Creating
Family
Friendly
Workplaces**

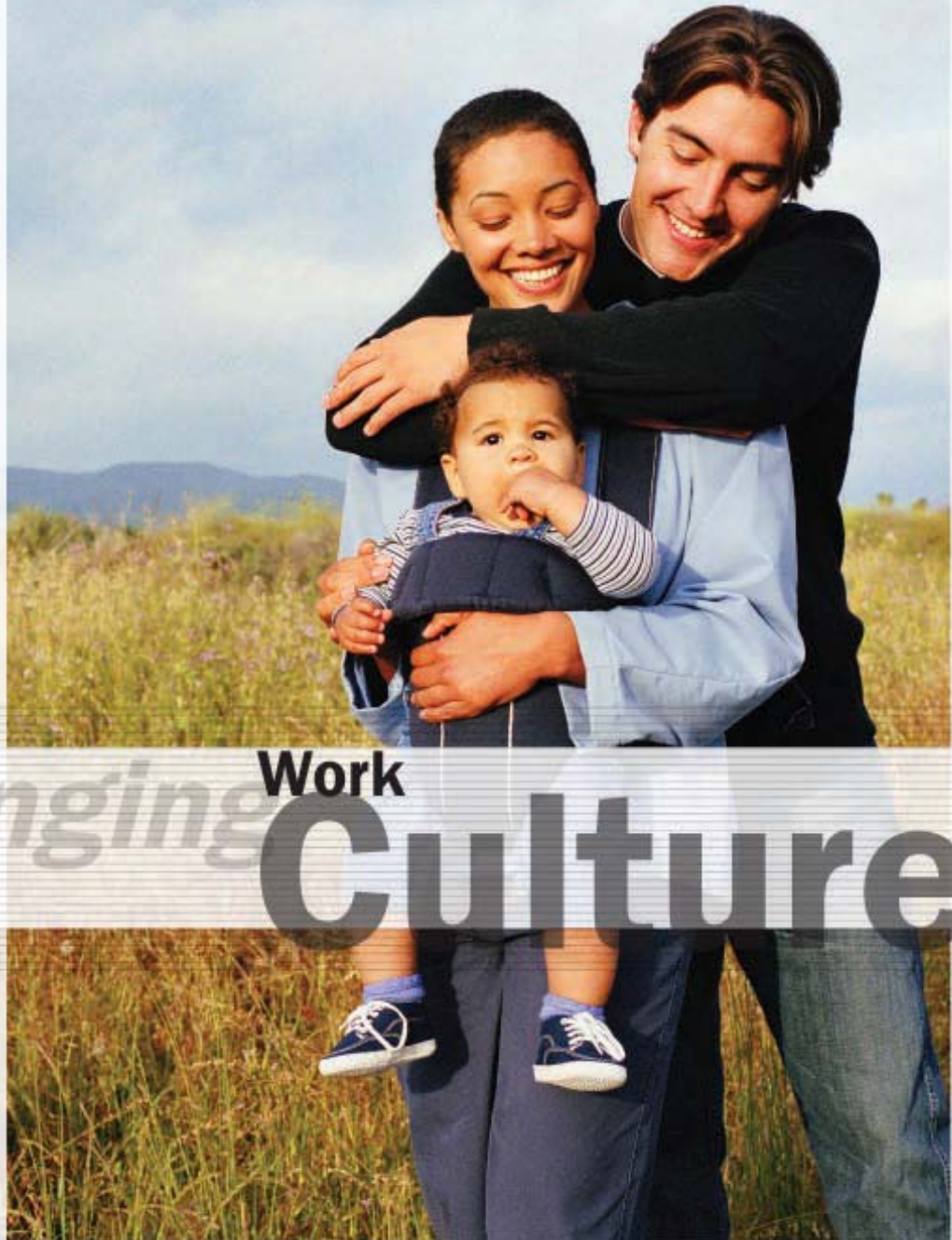
balancing your life & work



WHAT is a family friendly workplace?

A family friendly workplace is one where employees feel that they are supported in meeting both their work commitments and their family responsibilities. It is one where the employer accepts that family responsibilities will have an impact on employees' working lives, and is prepared to accommodate these responsibilities wherever possible.

An employer can promote a family friendly workplace by developing a supportive work culture for employees with family responsibilities, and by implementing family friendly employment practices and policies.



Changing **Work Culture**



WHY have a family friendly workplace?

People's lives are getting busier all the time. Employees today are often juggling work and family responsibilities, demands on their time for education, exercise, community service and/or leisure and may at times feel dissatisfied with the quality of both their work and personal lives. Organizations who work with their employees to find and implement solutions to this dilemma will find that providing a workplace that fosters work-life balance is not without clear business benefits.

These benefits can be described as:



Get the BEST from your employee...

- Attract and retain a skilled work force.
- Satisfied employees are productive employees.
- A flexible work-place enables employees to take care of their families and get the work done.
- Lessening employee stress in their daily lives makes for greater job satisfaction.
- Create an atmosphere of empathy and understanding of your employees' needs.
- A flexible organization allowing special arrangements enjoys increased employee loyalty, effort and commitment.
- Legal obligations, such as those concerned with pregnancy, health, and safety become part of the organization's culture.
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HOW do we create a family friendly workplace?

The key factors to a family friendly culture is one that allows employees to openly discuss their family responsibilities and needs. Employers can facilitate openness and understanding by creating a workplace culture that treats everyone equally and with respect and by establishing an atmosphere of trust and communication.

Good communication allows employers and employees to better understand both the family circumstances of employees and the business requirements. Improving communication between employees and employers also enables better planning to manage absences without affecting service to customers

As small businesses have limited staff resources teamwork and flexibility among employees is the key to successfully managing a family friendly workplace. This can be accomplished through creating a pool of multi-skilled employees who are prepared to share the workload and be flexible about managing workload peaks and troughs while ensuring quality service to customers.



What are the practices of a family friendly workplace?

Parental Leave

is a composite term used to describe maternity, paternity and adoption leaves. Employers can support these leaves through offering flexible work and hour arrangements to employees returning from parental leave, helping their employees organize childcare so that they have a smooth return to work and provide practical support for breastfeeding employees.

These practices mean an employer has the opportunity to keep valued employees who they may otherwise lose.

Career Breaks

are times when an employee can negotiate with their employer to take a break away from work for a fixed period of time to, fulfill family responsibilities while maintaining a guaranteed job at the end of the term.

Part-Time Work

is regular, ongoing work where employees work a lesser number of hours than full time hours. This can be beneficial for employees with family responsibilities as it can reduce stress levels involved in juggling work and family commitments,

Offering part-time work may increase retention of experienced and skilled employees, they may return to work earlier from parental leave because of the option for part-time work, may also mean a greater ability to minimize turnover rates on jobs which are stressful, monotonous or boring, reduce absenteeism, greater flexibility for employers to manage peaks and troughs, and can enable an employer to extend the hours of operations of the organization without incurring overtime costs.

Flexible Working Hours

are hours that can be worked by an employee, which may vary from day to day or may differ from the traditional span or pattern of hours working in the organization. Some examples of flexible hours are; flex-time and banking time, staggered starting and finishing times, employee working a slightly longer day or week and taking a set time off on a fixed basis, monthly or annualized hours arrangements, and compressed work weeks.

Flexible working hours can offer greater flexibility for employers to manage peaks and troughs in workloads, may enable an employer to increase productivity and competitiveness in meeting customer requirements by extending business operation or trading hours without increased costs, and allowing employees more control over their hours can decrease absenteeism.

Employee Assistance Programs

provide counseling support on a range of issues from financial to legal to personal.

Job Sharing

is a practical way of attracting and retaining experience and skilled employees who do not wish to or are unable to work full time because of their family responsibilities. Job sharers are working to achieve the aims and objectives of one full time position.

Job sharing arrangements can result in lower absenteeism, enable an employer to extend the hours of operation without incurring overtime costs, can bring a wider range of skills to one job and may provide opportunities for job sharers to learn and develop skills from their partner and provide mutual support and encouragement on the job and job sharers may be able to cover for their partner during absences such as vacation time or leave for family reasons.

Bringing to Children to Work

is a feature of family friendly workplace that gives the ability for employees to bring their children to work on a short-term basis if required.

Scheduling Working Hours

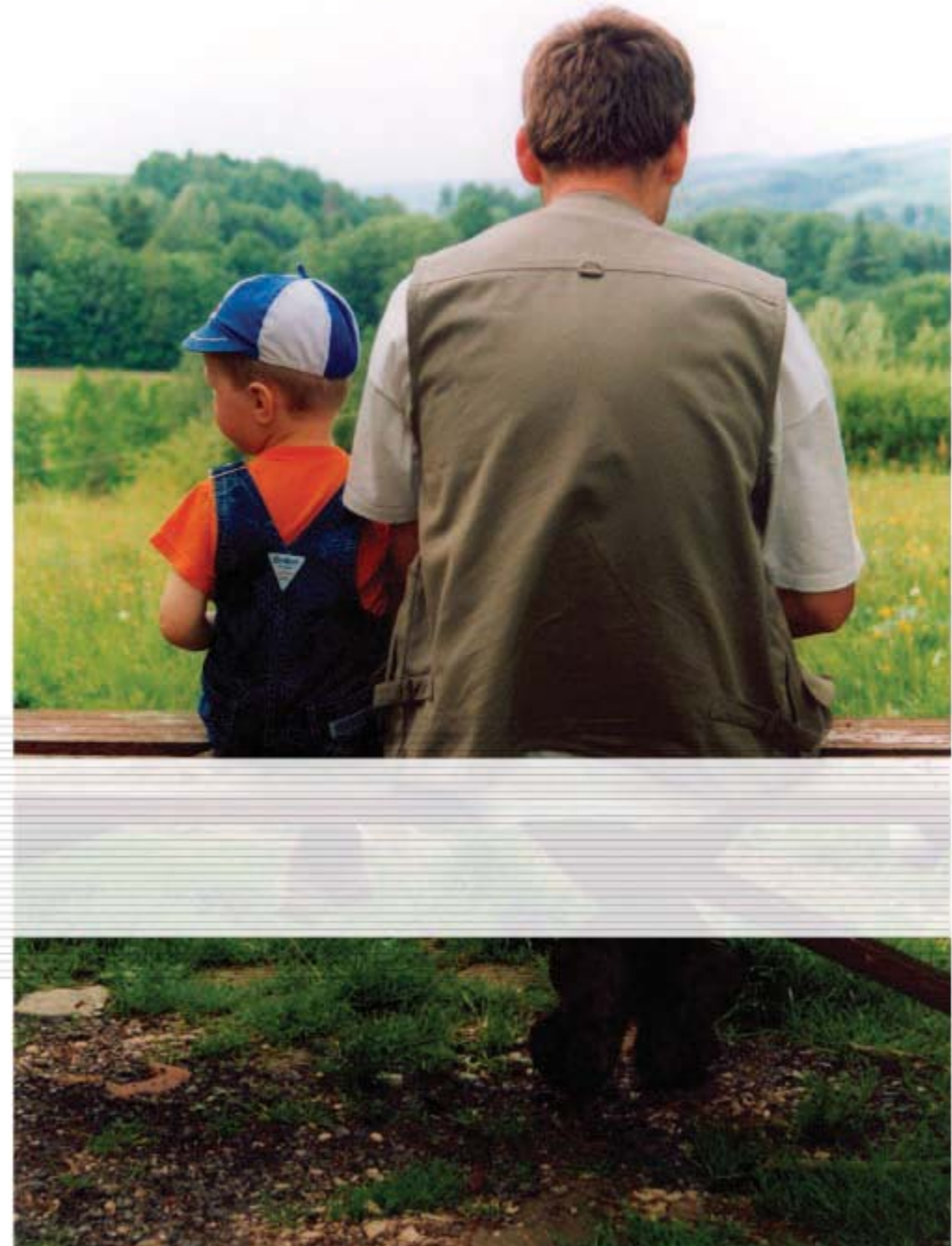
helps employees manage their family responsibly as their working day and hours are set out plus it can ensure that the business can provide customer service during its hours of operation.

Home Based Work

is the practice of employees working at home rather than at the employer's normal place of business. This can benefit employers with increased productivity, retention of valued employees, savings on office space and associated costs through desk and equipment sharing while employees have the opportunity to balance the demands of being a working parent.

Health and Wellness Initiatives

programs such as health club facilities, smoking cessation initiatives to stress management workshops.





CONCLUSION:

More and more employees are looking for companies that will be supportive of their need for a healthy work-life balance. They are attracted to the companies that offer flexibility in an environment where they can have an interesting career.

Companies that promote family friendly workplaces have an edge when it comes to recruitment and retention of skilled employees

STEPS to success as a family friendly workplace.

1. Think big, but start small. Assess your current situation and set objectives.
2. Plan quick hits to debunk the myths and show people flexibility can work.
3. Collect stories and statistics.
4. Determine employee needs through formal and informal discussions.
5. Get executive attention and buy-in.
6. Ensure managers are on side and have the training and tools they need.
7. Get as many advocates and role models as possible from all levels and areas of the organization.
8. Build networks and communities within the company so employees have a sense they are not the only ones trying to achieve a work-life balance.
9. Focus on on-going regular communication where the successes, issues and challenges are raised and addressed.
10. Monitor progress of policies and programs and evaluate regularly.
11. Keep work-life issues on the business agenda to ensure sustained interest, awareness and accountability.