

## **ASK THE CONSULTANT**

APRIL, 2000 WOMEN'S BUREAU CONFERENCE CALL

**Host:** Karen Furia, Women's Bureau Regional Director, Region 10

**Consultants:** Rich Wald, Principal, William M. Mercer Company

Debbie Cohen, Senior Consultant, Bright Horizons Family Solutions

Ellen Blizinsky, Vice President, Working Solutions

### **SUMMARY OF TOPIC**

Three well known consultants in the work/life arena share their expertise on a variety of work/life questions from the conference participants. Included in this summary is a sample of the conference call questions and answers.

**Q-1** How can company use their benefits package to attract and retain employees?

**A-1** Companies need to focus on value vs. cost from the employees' point of view. For example, casual Friday's have a high value to most employees, and cost the company nothing to provide. Medical benefits cost an average of \$4,000 per year for every employee and some employees may not see the value of that benefit based on where they are in life and how healthy they are, yet this is the number one benefit in terms of cost.

**Q-2** How would you work with a company to package their benefits to achieve their goals?

**A-2** I would begin by asking the employer three questions. Who are you trying to attract and retain? Once you've identified that piece you need to know what that employee wants. Lastly what kind of programs are going to motivate that employee. Then the issue is how do we factor those answers into who we are and what we can afford.

**Q-3** In your experience of marketing programs what are the differences between the more mature worker and the generation x employees?

**A-3** The biggest area is not age but income. The more disposable income you have changes the way you look at benefits the second factor is family dynamics, the childless couple vs. the single parent or the single employee and what their needs are. So your higher wage earners are going to value different things than your entry level employees, for example the higher earner may be concerned with the companies 401-K plan and the entry level single parent is concerned with the medical co-payment that the insurance plan offers.

**Q-4** How can we address our employees child care needs with out building an on-site child care facility?

**A-4** I would suggest the employer look at four categories knowing that no single option will serve everyone's needs. First resource and referral services for dependant care needs. Second financial resources to help employees with child care costs. Thirdly would be to look at internal policies such as flexible work arrangements and release time. Fourth would be community resources and how to get employees hooked into those services.

**Q-5** How does a work/life manager convince a bottom line executive of the value of work/life benefits?

**A-5** You need to draw the connection between the business case and the programs that you are trying to put in place. Turnover is a great example to use with a bottom line manager. By calculating the true cost of turnover and how your new benefit can reduce that turnover or stop turnover from happening is a good place to start and then link it to productivity. Lower turnover, equals higher productivity, equals stronger bottom line.

### **SPEAKER CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Debbie Cohen**

**Title: Senior Work/Life Consultant**

**Agency: Bright Horizons Family Solutions**

**E-mail: [dcohen@brighthorizons.com](mailto:dcohen@brighthorizons.com)**

**Website: [www.brighthorizons.com](http://www.brighthorizons.com)**

### **RESOURCES**

- Karen Furia, Women's Bureau Regional Director, Region 10 [furia-karen@dol.gov](mailto:furia-karen@dol.gov)
- The Women's Bureau <http://www.dol.gov/wb/>
- Kelly Tyler ,Child Care Resources, Business Liaison [tyler@childcare.org](mailto:tyler@childcare.org)
- The Child Care Bureau <http://nccic.org>
- Alliance of Work Life Professionals <http://www.awlp.org>
- The Fatherhood Project <http://www.fatherhoodproject.org>
- Life Work Strategies <http://www.nationalpartnership.org>
- National Partnership for Women & Families <http://www.nationalpartnership.org>
- Boston College Center for Work & Family <http://www.bc.edu/cwf>
- Labor Project for Working Families  
<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~iir/workfam/home.html>
- Blue Suit Mom <http://www.bluesuitmom.com/>
- National Network for Child Care <http://www.nncc.org/>
- The Green Commute <http://www.cleanair.org>
- Child Care in Health Care <http://www.childcareinhealthcare.org/>
- Child Care Partnership Project <http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships>

- Woman's-Work <http://www.womans-work.com>
- Human Resources Executive/Cornell <http://www.workindex.com>
- Families and Work Institute <http://www.familiesandwork.org>
- The Life Station <http://www.thelifestation.com>
- Work Life Benefits <http://www.wlb.com>

*The Women's Bureau Region X office and Child Care Resources of King County has compiled this "Work and Family Virtual Conference Call Summary Sheets" for information sharing and does not endorse any programs or organizations included in it. These summaries include information on programs and policies that employers have tried or ideas and thoughts that work and work/life professionals have shared.*