

Work-life programs have been on the corporate radar screen for more than a quarter century. During that time, we have seen dramatic changes in the business environment and in workforce demographics. Many pioneering work-life companies have stayed the course and contributed to a wealth of research that provides clear evidence of the value of work-life programs.

Today, work-life programs have evolved to a breadth of programs which support employees' work experience and their personal lives to a far greater degree than imagined by even the most visionary work-life leaders of a quarter century ago. Progressive companies have moved beyond simply implementing programs to creating work environments that recognize the connection between people and business success.

We see continual evidence that when the right programs are in place, and the work environment is aligned with the programs, employees are more engaged and committed to their work. The positive result is noticeable to the customers they serve and in the products they design, manufacture or sell. The ultimate impact is on the success of the organization. Executive management of successful companies now recognize that no matter how brilliantly their business strategy is crafted; it is their people who make it happen on a day-to-day basis.

Following are just a few of the research highlights that demonstrate the business case for work-life programs.

Work-life services more than pay for themselves.

At PepsiCola, a company fitness program produced a 300% ROI (three dollars for every 1 dollar invested).

Motorola offers work-life and wellness and programs to its 45,000 employees and reports saving almost 4 dollars for every 1 dollar it invests in these programs.

Work-life services promote employee productivity, flexibility and commitment.

DuPont's company wide work-life surveys conducted every five years generates data the company uses to track changes in employee needs and business impacts over time. This research has linked employee commitment and discretionary effort leading to productivity and business results. Employees who either use or are aware of work-life programs and flexible work arrangements are: more highly committed to DuPont and the company's business goals, less willing to seriously consider leaving DuPont, less likely to refuse overtime, relocation and more willing to "go the extra mile" (45 percent more likely to say they will "go the extra mile" to help the company succeed).

At Johnson & Johnson, an evaluation study found that employees who used the company's work-life benefits (e.g. onsite child care, flexible work) were absent for less than half a day in a three -month period compared to one day for other workers who were non-users.

Baxter Healthcare found that addressing work-life issues and needs for flexibility and dependent care yields significant return on investment (ROI) in terms of reduced turnover, heightened commitment and discretionary effort. However, ROI was not maximized unless primary attention is given to "respect" and the work environment—without focus on the management practices and the work environment, programs alone may engender cynicism.

An extensive 2000 Gallup Study involving 2 million employees at 700 companies' found that employees rate having a caring boss as more important than compensation or fringe benefits. This confirms findings by a 1999 Lou Harris Association/Spherion study that found 40 percent of employees who rated their supervisors as poor were likely to leave their company.

Eli Lilly's evaluation of their Flexible Work Arrangement process found that employees

working on a flexible schedule were working the same number, or more, hours during the week. Employees participating in the Flexible Work Arrangement reported greater efficiency and satisfaction with their work. The conclusion: flex week has reduced clock watching and increased overall employee satisfaction.

Work-life services position companies for the future.

The Kaiser Foundation and Family Circle in a joint study in 2000 found that the number of employed caregivers will rise dramatically as Americans age. By 2020, the 50+ population will increase 74 percent compared to 1 percent for those under 50.

The benefits of work-life services to companies and employees are as compelling as they were 25 years ago. In today's world, however, both management and employees are savvy about work-life benefits and better able to leverage them to their mutual success. Today, work-life programs rank alongside compensation, health care and retirement benefits as important.

The spotlight on work-life benefits continues to shine and will intensify as the economy recovers and there is renewed emphasis on attracting and retaining the best talent.