

BALANCING WORK *and home life...*

It's home time - dinner time almost. You're still in the office because you can't escape the incessant phonecalls and requests from co-workers, let alone finishing your to-do list. If only it was because of your over achieving A type personality!

As you travel home, the faces of your children and husband flash into your mind; you'd rather be home with them right now than just making your way there. Then you think about having more time for friends, your mother, to look after your fitness, to read a magazine even! ...Sound familiar? It's difficult when you need to travel towards the city to work in a role that is financially rewarding and uses your skills....or do you?

Balancing work and home life today is everyone's challenge.

Women in particular are feeling more pressure than ever as they juggle the need to contribute to their family financially, as well as emotionally, while also gaining satisfaction from what they do. Women who are returning from maternity leave, who have children, who want to feel they are doing something worthwhile after their children have left the nest and who want to keep their grey matter stimulated. Women like you and me.

When we're such willing participants in the workforce, why is it still so hard to obtain jobs where management also understands the bigger picture of our lives, and works with us so that we all benefit?

In a time of full-employment, it's up to employers to change their attitudes to recruitment, but especially on retention.

Employers need to start thinking outside of the recruitment square they're in. It's time to widen the net to include women normally in employers' peripheral visions such as mothers returning to the workforce or to mature aged workers with extensive work and life experience. To attract and keep them though, employers must be genuine in their willingness to create a culture around family values, and valuing each employee as an individual with a life outside work. Flexible working hours is just the beginning: it's about company culture.



Harvest Management's CEO Ingrid Maynard built her business to business lead generation company around providing all employees, including working mothers with a supportive and flexible work place.

One of Harvest's core values is 'Balance;' employees are given an environment in which they are encouraged to have a balanced approach to life, remembering that their spiritual, social, physical and family aspects are just as important as their financial and intellectual; to have quality time with themselves, their family and to renew.

"I grew up in a work sense at The Body Shop's head office in Mulgrave, so it's part of my DNA to know that in order to engage people at work, employers need to treat their employees as people who have lives outside work. Offering child care as a benefit is something I did instinctively when I started, because I saw it could be done at The Body Shop, and what it meant to working mothers to see their children whenever they wanted to at work. Our family style culture has really grown from there I guess."

While Harvest doesn't just employ mothers or women (Harvest has 4 male employees), it is inclusive of partners in all functions, of children at most functions, and sees itself as the vehicle for its team members to achieve their personal and professional goals. "What gives me satisfaction," says Ingrid "is watching people travel through Harvest richer for the experience. Hopefully it's a place they've grown as people in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, where they've made friends for life, and where they know they can return to if they ever wanted to."

No wonder then, that the business has more than quadrupled in size since its inception three and a half years ago. Harvest's clients work with dedicated Business Development Consultants who are happy in their workplace and role. It gives clients a level of comfort working with a company they know will be consistent in the longer term because happy workers usually means they'll stick around. This means that clients are far more likely to deal with one person consistently so momentum once built is maintained. Because Harvest's role is to extend their clients' sales functions by doing the first part of the sales process for them, the relationship Harvest develops through its team with clients is key.

Denise Thomas, a Business Development Consultant at Harvest who has been with the company since 2005, said the company has allowed her to achieve balance in her work/home life, because she no longer travels to work, "I used to have to travel extensively in my last job, and knew that I couldn't continue doing it, if I wanted to achieve balance. I was looking for a career, not a job. And Harvest has given me all of that!"



Mature aged people are in much the same category as women returning to the workplace struggling to find part time work, or more flexible hours.

Experienced workers offer a level of loyalty, commitment, and experience not necessarily available with generation y employees. With an aging population, especially on the Mornington Peninsula, it makes sense to consider workers in the 50 plus age group.

To survive and thrive organisations must consider what they can offer to attract women returning to the workforce as well as older workers. They must consider what's important to them, what they value, and how to keep them engaged once they're in the workplace.

Beverley Lewis, another Business Development Consultant at Harvest Management, who has been in sales for 25 years, commented that she started at Harvest because "no one else would have me!" she laughed, "No, I love the industry, and Harvest has provided an environment for both mature-aged workers and young people. We have a great mix and get along really well. It is also a great family environment."

Forward-thinking companies are recruiting, retaining and developing new opportunities for these workers, and are reaping the benefits.

Life is too short to spend in a job where you're travelling too much, seeing your family too little and not enjoying yourself while you're there. Maybe it's time to consider a little job sea-change: after all, wouldn't it be great to work here on the peninsula and still feel stimulated, appreciated and proud of where you work?

Harvest Management is in a constant state of recruitment for Business Development Consultants, to carry out our lead generation services. Harvest provides a supportive, stable and family-oriented workplace, where you can achieve the life balance you always wanted.

To find out when the next group interview is, please call Ingrid Maynard: 1300 300 485

