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The Secretary
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission No:	82
Date Received:	27.8.08
Secretary:	

Dear Sir/Madam

I appreciate the opportunity to submit comment to the Standing Committee on issues relating to increasing female participation in the workforce. I invited a female colleague, Kelly Johnson, who has expressed an interest in this area, to comment on some issues about fair access to promotion to leadership positions for women; particularly for those who have taken maternity leave, returned to part-time work or who, aged between mid 40s – 50s, are ready to take on new challenges.

Currently, Kelly is a Classroom Teacher at our College, teaching Years 7 to 12. She also holds the position of Year 10 Coordinator. Kelly is a member of EOWA (School Committee Member) and a member of the Women and Leadership Committee (Catholic Education Office Wollongong). In February this year, Kelly attended the Aspiring Women's Leadership Conference in Brisbane.

Comments

▪ ***There seems to be a perception that part-time equals part-time commitment***

In general, part-time workers are highly dedicated and committed members of an organisation's staff. Women juggling career responsibilities with family demands need flexible work arrangements, such as flexi-time, job sharing and the opportunity to work from home. Choosing to work part-time should not be seen as a career disadvantage.

In some schools, a woman with young children who teaches senior classes may lose those classes if she chooses to work part-time. These teachers work hard to achieve the position of teaching senior classes and may feel forced to return to full-time work much earlier than planned so that their position isn't compromised.

▪ ***Advantages of flexible work arrangements***

- more productive
- less absenteeism
- employees feel valued
- allows employees to keep 'their hand in' - keep in touch.



■ ***Why can't there be part-time manager roles (Job Share)***

In most cases, when a school's management is male dominated they are reluctant to give women experience in management/leadership roles. This raises the following questions:

- Why is this the case?
- Are there assumptions in the workplace of what a woman is capable of?
- Are there assumptions that women aren't as ambitious as men?
- Is there a question of whether a woman would be willing to travel and participate in interstate or overseas conferences, take a promotion or accept challenging projects and responsibilities due to family commitments? (It should be noted that many women have supportive families that embrace their career choices.)
- Why do some women only consider taking on leadership roles or promotions when someone else suggests they do so or when they are 'tapped on the shoulder' to apply?

There are women in leadership/senior management roles who can be role models and mentors for other women.

Suggestions

Female role models in positions of leadership are best placed to equip, train, advise, prepare and assist women in taking on new positions and opportunities in senior and leadership roles.

Workplaces could:

- Initiate and fund leadership workshops, forums and in-services for women; including opportunities to hear from women that have succeeded - their advice, difficulties faced, why they did it and how they got there.
- Provide informal opportunities for women to discuss the issues relevant to them.
- Provide formal opportunities to raise the profile of women through visibility in the workplace, eg. chairing committees, interviewing staff, addressing/leading assemblies.
- Assist with and give advice about curriculum vitae, 'tips' to assist in getting that promotion, interview techniques and interview mock ups and advice on what the employer is looking for.
- Provide a dress code for women aspiring to management and leadership - the importance and how it works for a woman.
- Provide networking opportunities, illustrating the effectiveness and the benefits of exchanging ideas through associations with different organisations.

I do hope that the above comments are of assistance to the Committee.

Yours faithfully

Chris McDermott
PRINCIPAL