

**“Career Flexibility: Off-Ramps and On-Ramps”
Teleconference Transcript
May 18, 2006**

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**Moderator: Frances Jefferson
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Background: On May 18, 2006 the Women’s Bureau Flex Options project hosted “Career Flexibility: Off-Ramps and On-Ramps,” the tenth in a series of national teleconferences sharing information about workplace flexibility. The featured speakers, Sylvia Ann Hewlett, founding President of the Center for Work-Life Policy; Kathy Karcher, Founder, Career/Life Alliance Services (CLAS); Sharon Klun, Director of Work Life Initiatives, Accenture; as well as Dana Riegard, Internal Communications Manager, Accenture shared their expertise and experiences about stepping off and back on the career path.

Following presentations by the guest experts and speakers, a lively Q&A period followed.

Coordinator: Good afternoon and welcome to today’s Flex-Options Teleconference on Career Flexibility.

Following today's presentation, there will be a formal question and answer session. At that time, instructions will be given should anyone wish to ask a question. Until that time, all lines will remain on a listen only fashion. At the request of the company, today's conference is being recorded for replay purposes. Should you object, you may disconnect at this time.

I would now like to turn the meeting over to today's host, Ms. Frances Jefferson. Ma'am, you may begin.

Frances Jefferson: Thank you. Good afternoon to some and good morning to those of you on the West Coast. I am Fran Jefferson, Regional Administrator for the Women's Bureau in Region 8, and co-team leader with Michael Williams, Economist in Washington, DC for this Flex-Options initiative. Michael will provide closing remarks.

We welcome and thank more than the 100 of you for participating in this virtual call addressing career flexibility. For those of you in our audience not fully familiar with the Flex-Options project, let me say that the specific goal of the Flex-Options project is to help business owners develop workplace flexibility practices for their employees.

It is my pleasure to introduce two outstanding women business owners who are working as our national service providers -- Karen Kerrigan, President and CEO of Women Entrepreneurs, Inc., Washington DC; and Linda Roundtree, President, Roundtree Consulting LLC, Renton, Washington. Linda and Karen have done a tremendous job in planning and organizing today's virtual conference call.

At this time, I'm going to turn the call over to Linda. Linda?

Linda Roundtree: Thank you, Fran, and welcome everyone.

I am honored and delighted to introduce Sylvia Ann Hewlett, the Founding President of the Center for Work-Life Policy, a non-profit organization which seeks to develop policies that enhance work-life balance. Dr. Hewlett is the first woman to head up the economic policy council--a think-tank comprised of 125 business and labor leaders.

Her books include "When the Bough Breaks," winner of a Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Book Prize, and "Creating A Life," named by Business Week as one of the top 10 books of 2002.

Her articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Financial Times, and the Harvard Business Review. She has taught at Cambridge, Columbia, and Princeton universities and held fellowships in London and at Harvard.

She has appeared on numerous television broadcasts including 60 Minutes, The Today's Show, Good Morning America, NBC Nightly News, and Oprah.

A Kennedy Scholar and graduate of Cambridge University, she earned her PhD in Economics at London University.

Also of note, The Center for Work-Life Policy is partnering with the Women's Bureau in New York to help publicize the Flex-Options project and the center's small business project. They are working on a small business project toolkit to aid employers and employees in implementing workplace flexibility and other employee-friendly programs.

I am delighted to welcome Sylvia Ann Hewlett.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: Good afternoon, this is Sylvia Ann Hewlett. It's such a pleasure to be here this afternoon linking with you all around the country.

What I want to talk to you about this afternoon is our work which is called "Off-Ramps and On-Ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success." This was a research project that was undertaken in '04 and '05 and appeared in the Harvard Business Review in March of last year.

Let me just start with a very personal introduction to this topic because I think many of us have experienced off-ramps in our own lives.

I grew up in the Welsh mining valleys. This is a very kind of backward-looking piece of the British Isles. The unemployment rate for instance in the valley I grew up in was 35% when I was growing up. I was part of a working-class family which was really not really prosperous. My father taught primary school and there were six daughters in the family. So we grew up without a telephone or refrigerator or car or any of those kinds of modern conveniences. I think that I experienced the power of the women's movement in the 1970s, because had it not been to the women's movement, I tell you, I would not have gotten myself an education.

I think had I stayed in the Welsh mining valleys, you know, my only options would have been to marry an unemployed miner. But as it was, you know, the universities were being forced to open their doors a little bit wider to women and it's also true that they were forced to consider a kid from the wrong side of the tracks. So I really understand how opportunity, access, and those wonderful things that happened in the '70s have impacted my life.

But when I got to be a kind of grown-up, I was in my first career which was an Assistant Professor of Economics here in New York City. I had my first

child, not fully realizing that my employer had no policies, no benefits, and so I got just 10 days off to deal with child birth and I was back, you know, working full time literally 10 days after birth.

And then I actually had a very hard time with my second pregnancy and lost twins in the seventh month of pregnancy. At this time, I kind of got tired because I simply could not deal with that in the allocated 10 days and ended up really on the kind of losing side of a job struggle in my early 30's really around a very difficult late miscarriage.

So that was my first off-ramp and I've had two since. And what we see in our research is that many women out there in the workforce have serious interruptions or breaks in their careers. And let me just give you a little bit of the data and then really talk about the implications of this data.

We find for instance that right across the country, 37% of professional women will voluntarily leave their jobs, many of them for family reasons. The other piece of this part of the data set is that it shows that actually these women are out for a very short period of time. On average, they're out of their jobs for just 2.2 years. After this very brief break, 93% of them are trying to get back in.

Well, why are they trying to get back in? Well, you know, quite frankly, many of them very much need the income, need the financial security that that job represented, and for 50% of them, you know, the financial pressure is the main pressure pushing them back in.

But for another 50% of women, it's their love for their work. They find it very difficult to craft a satisfying existence when they don't have this link with professional life--with work that they love. And so what we see is that

for 50% of women, it is the job satisfaction reason that drives them back into the job market.

And I think in some ways, that data is very encouraging for employers because I think it shows that despite all of these stories we hear about women dropping out, labor force attachment is alive and well. Women actually leave their jobs for just a short period of time. It's usually triggered by some kind of family need, but then they really want to get back in and rejoin their career path.

When we look at the precise factors that tore women out, it's again very interesting because what we see is a mix of push and pull factors.

The pull factors, I think, we can guess at. Forty-five percent of women leave because they want to spend more time with their small child.

But for 24 % of women, the trigger factor is elder care. Your mother-in-law just got diagnosed with Alzheimer's and that was the kind of straw that broke the camel's back. You were already coping with your own kids, but then, the elder care responsibility kind of pushed you over the edge.

So these pull factors that are powerful. But there are also a set of push factors -- stuff that's going on at work which encourages you to leave. And here we find, particularly in the business sector and in the finance sector, push factors, are very strong.

For instance, in finance, 59% of women who often say that the trigger factor is being under-utilized or unappreciated by work. And I think that for many women--and we picked this up in our focus groups--it's an interaction between the push and the pull factors. For instance, you're two-year old

might look like a whole lot more appealing if you just got passed over for a promotion at work.

If employers manage their women colleagues well, in other words, make them feel fully utilized, really challenged on the job, the odds are that they are able to solve whatever problems that are going on at home because they are really motivated to stay on the job. It's not written in concrete that just because you have a two-year old or an elder care situation that you absolutely have to be off from work for a period of time.

Another dimension of this data which is very interesting is that 37% of women take off, another 30% take what we call a scenic route, a little (telecommuting), a flex schedule, or a reduced hour position. In other words, they don't step off; they step back.

And again, this is a temporary phenomenon because when most of these women have dealt with whatever they need to deal with--and it is often a home issue--they do want to ramp up; they do want a second shot at getting back on the first track, improving their earning power and being ambitious again.

The final piece of data I want to turn to, and I think in some ways this was the most discouraging and distressing part of the research, was really what happened when women attempted to on-ramp. And remember, 93% of them are doing precisely that. They're coming back in after they take some time out to cope with other responsibilities in their lives.

We find that on-ramps as described in our data are still few and far between and they involve big penalties. For instance, 93% of women are trying to get

back in, but only 74% of them succeed in getting a job, and only 40% of them land, a fairly well-paid job in the sector that they are trying to get back into.

So there's a lot of talent that is lost on this re-entry part, and I think it's particularly distressing because we know that these women have been out a really short time. They haven't really lost their skills in these two or three years and yet they still have this huge penalty in terms of difficulty in finding work.

And there's also a penalty in terms of returning salary. We're able to show in the data that a two-year absence will cause your wages to go down--18% a year, and if you're out three years or more, that figure jumps to 38% of your salary level. That's what you need to forfeit to actually find a job out there.

What we see here is enormous penalties attached to off-ramps. Again, in our focus groups, women talked about being redefined by employers -- they're thought to be no longer committed, no longer ambitious just because they took some time out.

And so I think what we are seeing here is a huge need for employers to rethink this re-attachment process. And in fact, one of the very good pieces of news in this research is that a lot of companies are beginning to create new on-ramps that do a much job of allowing women to get back into their career after having taken some time out.

One thing I was able to do two years ago was pull together a group of 34 companies. It's a task force called the *Hidden Brain Drain Task Force* which I now direct. And these companies have committed to driving some change on the ground in terms of both retaining and reattaching women.

And I think what they are now making available to women through innovative new programs is a whole range of scenic routes -- better ways to use flex time, better ways to re-imagine how, where, and when work is done, and a whole group of ways to on-ramp. As a result, this creates fewer penalties for women and maximizes opportunities for employers to get themselves very loyal, professional women employees. It's essential that employers reach out and make these kinds of accommodations available.

One program I want mention because it's just symbolic of the kind of change that's beginning to happen as the result of this research is one started by Lehman Brothers that launched in November in New York. It's actually the same program that was launched in London in February and is going to be launched in Tokyo next month.

The program is called *Encore*, and it's an attempt by Lehman Brothers to reach out to women who left the financial sector two, three, or four years ago. Lehman Brothers is very proactively seeking these women out and offering them different kinds of options within the company.

For instance, they can come back and do part-time contract work or they can come back and be candidates in the regular lateral hiring pool. This is something that they wouldn't have much access to normally because they are not currently employed.

This is an example of a company that understands that there's a lot of talent out there that is having a hard time re-attaching. The creation of this on-ramp might make a lot of sense not just to the women, but also for the company who realizes that these women are committed and can be extremely productive workers into the future if there is this attempt to creatively bring them back.

That is an example of what's happening. I have a whole set of other examples in other sectors we might share together in the question and answer period.

Linda Roundtree: Sylvia, thank you so much for sharing your personal story and some information from your research and the work that you've done. We really look forward to hearing more from you during the Q&A.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce Kathy Kacher, a successful small business owner and working mom. Kathy founded Career/Life Alliance Services in 1987--an organization dedicated to the development and integration of work-life initiatives.

For the past 18 years, Kathy has designed work-life programs for many Fortune 500 companies. She has created several popular work-life tools for businesses including the nation's first Internet-based child care and elder care resource and referral system, a comprehensive online flexible work arrangement guidance and tracking system, and most recently, a virtual benefits fair.

A frequent speaker at national conferences and global events, her work has been featured at prominent industry events around the world.

Since 1998, she has played significant roles in designing and managing the *Alliance for Work-Life Progress Innovative Excellence Award*.

Recently selected as a faculty member for WorldatWork in AWLP, she participates on the Work-Life Certification advisory team. We are delighted to have Kathy join us today to share her personal experiences.

Kathy, welcome.

Kathy Kacher: Thank you, Linda. And, you know, it's a real pleasure to be with everyone here today. I have participated in the listening side of these programs many times and learned an awful lot. So I'm looking forward to sharing some of the lessons that I've learned over the years with you today.

First, I just want to give you an overview, a little information about my organization. Linda told you some things, but what's unique with me is I have an opportunity to work with some very large organizations around the issue of flexibility. And then I return to the office and I have the challenges of dealing with flexibility in my own small organization.

And it's interesting in my work. I've learned about what our organizations-- large organizations-- worry about. What's keeping them up at night. One of the issues that come to mind is the global flu pandemic and what are we going to do in case there's an outbreak?

So I go back to my office and one of my major concerns is what if there's just a regular influenza outbreak and I lose 20% of my work force?

So from the outside, it really seems like the needs of a large organization and a small organization are really different. But at the core of any organization, there must be an acceptance and the respect for an individual's need to have choices at various times in their lives -- whether they're planned, if it's a sabbatical, a maternity leave, or if it's unplanned like a medical emergency.

So I'm going to share a couple of stories with you today and start with the job that I had with a small marketing company in early 1980s.

This organization was the worst possible commute from my house. So I always ended up showing up a half an hour early because it's either a half an hour in traffic or half an hour at my desk. But I always had to stay till 5:00 p.m. I did this for several years and then my daughter was born.

I went to my manager and I said, you know, how bad would it be for me to leave a half an hour early? Since I don't have any West Coast accounts, why don't we give it a try?

The answer was, "absolutely not." "If we do it for you, we have to do it for everyone." And back in 1984, that wasn't such a big shock. But what is shocking is in 2006 we're still getting the same response from our leader.

So I thought I might help them realize the error of their decision, so the following week I just started doing it because I believe that it's easier to ask forgiveness than permission. I tried the permission route. And I went to work the following week. I got everything done. I put my hours in. Nobody I worked with had any complaints.

And the following week, I was pulled into the manager's office and I was really hoping, (unintelligible) hoping that it was just to thank me for showing them how to retain such a valuable employee like myself.

But it was just to collect my final paycheck and they sent me on my way into the traditional workplace to look for more traditional jobs that didn't work. Well, it was just a few years later that I started my own company. And my belief about flexibility was as strong as ever.

Over the years, I have hired and worked with some of the best people. And from the onset, I have encouraged anyone that joined my organization to

explore flexibility in their work. And more importantly, I was a great user of flexibility in my own right. So by cultivating a flexible environment where people weren't hesitant to ask for what they needed, I was paid back.

In the early 90's, I had a really horrible horseback riding accident that left me in a coma. I was unable to work for a very long time. But during this time, my team pulled together. And I know it was because of the culture I had worked hard to foster and that culture is "life happens." When it does, we just pull together and we make sure that everyone is able and willing, which is so important, willing to cover for each other. And sometimes we don't have a lot of control. I believe it is easier for smaller organizations can move quickly, because of our size.

But we also believe in the trust that work will continue, even the best staffed organizations can and will become immobilized in the face of an unexpected change.

Well, I thought I was back, you know, back on the road to recovery, when 16 months later, my three-old son was diagnosed with adult leukemia. Once again, I'm out of the game.

But once again, everyone stepped in and led this organization through 2-1/2 of the toughest years. And it wasn't because I was working 30% time, usually less than that, but the industry, the work-life industry during that time was changing dramatically and everyone needed to figure out how to work through the challenging economy.

So whether you're working for a larger organization with policies and procedures or a small company like mine with informal flexibility, the flexibility initiatives are not going to work without support from the inside.

I don't know how many of you are "Survivor" fans. I'm not a fan, but I was tuned in to the last episode because I just wanted to see what happened. I was moved by a gentleman who had been there and had to leave early because he had been sick. And he was a teacher. He was talking about when he learned that he had gotten the spot on Survivor, he went to the Administration and said, hey, I got a once in a lifetime opportunity. And they said, no.

This man was a teacher for 34 years. He had a once in a lifetime opportunity that if somebody would have just channeled one creative bone in their body, they could have seen it as huge opportunity. They could have integrated all of these into their studies -- there's geography, there's social studies.

I'm not a professional in the public school system, but it appears that they are very well equipped to deal with absenteeism. They have a pool of substitutes that can be drawn on.

He went ahead and he went on the show. And like me, he just asked for forgiveness later. When he returned, he was placed on an unpaid list. And that is something we come across everyday and I'm sure you do too.

I was talking with a university on Monday about flexibility. And they said, we're going to do a flexibility program, but we're carving off faculty because they already have enough flexibility.

But if you stop and look at the tenure track--what it takes to become tenured--well it appears that that's just another tradition that needs to be broken down and rebuilt as does the medical field and the legal field.

It's interesting listening to Sylvia because she was talking about Lehman Brothers and the financial services industry. I want to talk about that as well,

because we're seeing a lot of change there. Deloitte has their "Personal Pursuits" initiative that they've just launched. In a minute you're going to hear from Sharon Klun about this program that they put together.

So we ask ourselves -- why them and why right now? Well, financial services firms have a staffing problem. And it's causing them to bleed green. They are leaving the bottom line impact of the traditional workplace and are changing it because they have to respond. They have to respond to the changing workforce.

So today, as you all go forward into the workplace and whether you're a manager in a large organization, if you're a small business owner like me, or if you're an employee, I want to challenge each of you to rethink your work options. Get creative and pull people together and have some conversations about how we can do things differently. It's time to change outdated policies and put them in the drawer.

I was at the WorldatWork conference last week. It was an excellent conference with some awesome speakers. One gentleman, a keynote speaker, really caught my ear. He said while wandering around, he saw someone wearing a t-shirt that said: "Change is great. You go first." I thought that was perfect; that sums up change perfectly.

So I thought today as I talk with you, that's going to be my challenge. You go first.

And with that, Linda, I'm going to turn this back to you.

Linda Roundtree: Kathy, thank you so much. What a great story. And thank you for openly sharing so many tidbits from your own personal story and your successes and challenges. We really appreciate that.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce Sharon Klun. Sharon is the Director of Work Life Initiatives at Accenture, a global management consulting technology services and outsourcing company.

Sharon joined Accenture to design US work-life initiatives and develop cultural components to support program expansion. She is responsible for creating initiatives that support organizational developmental in the areas of wellness, work-life, and total reward.

Recognizing Sharon's expertise, the governor of Minnesota appointed her to two state boards. She is a recipient of the Chamber of Commerce Quality of Life at Work. Frequently quoted in print media and the sought after speaker for national events, Sharon's expertise was profiled in the PBS special "Running Out Of Time." She received her degree from Concordia University and served 13 years in the United States Army Judge Advocate General's division, known as JAG.

Accompanying Sharon on the call today, to share the employee's perspective on our topic, is Sharon's colleague, Dana Riegard, whom Sharon will introduce.

I am delighted to welcome them both and turn it over now to Sharon.

Sharon Klun: Great. Thank you, Linda.

Although we're a large company, the work-life flexibility components that I'm going to share today really can be used for any type of organization -- small, medium, or large.

I noted that Sylvia and Kathy made some great points about the value and the need for flexibility. I'd like to add a few comments from an organizational perspective in terms of representing the practicality of making it work, the value to people, and some trends that we're seeing on the flexibility horizon.

Accenture uses flexibility as a business tool to help employees balance work and personal responsibilities, business needs, and, to positively impact our bottom line results.

Workforces change. And we absolutely know that because we have these multiple generations that are working side by side. Each group, whether it's a boomer or Generation X or Generation Y, they're all bringing different values and expectations with them. This means that they are motivated differently within the work experience. The one thing they have in common is that they place high value on job flexibility.

There are two points that I just want to raise. The first one is: I still believe flexibility will look different in every organization and even within a single organization.

It doesn't matter the size of the company. Flexibility is the one single tool that can provide the broadest positive impact you're looking for and it doesn't cost a lot of money.

The second point is: whether you're using traditional flexible work arrangement such as flex time, part time, telecommuting, or you're looking at

some of the leading-edge trends such as careers with an off-ramp and on-ramp -- which is one of the newer flexibility offerings that I want to talk about later -- both are valued by all employees. And don't think that you have to spend a lot of time making up new versions of flexibility because you'll be surprised to how effective some of the standard flexibility arrangements are.

Today, I want to share two examples of flexibility used within Accenture. The first is more of a traditional program using telecommuting and part-time arrangement. But instead of me telling you about this, I want to introduce you to Dana Riegard, an Accenture employee, so she can share her own story.
Dana.

Dana Riegard: Thanks very much, Sharon.

I'm an Internal Communications Manager for Accenture's United States business. And I've been with the company for about 15 years in various global and national communication roles.

I definitely don't see myself as an expert in balancing work and life. That continues to be a daily challenge for me. But I have had the opportunity to add some flexibility to my work schedule and it's really making a big difference. So I'm happy to share a little bit of my experience with you all today.

I've struggled with work-life balance issues my entire career. My personal life always seems to take a backseat to whatever urgent project is going on at work at the time. And a few years ago, I came to a point when I knew I had to make a change -- to bring some balance into my life. And I actually thought that I might have to leave my job to do that.

But thankfully, my situation didn't come to that. The changes actually came about from my company. Around that time, Accenture started a new work-from-home program for people in internal roles in several of our US locations. I jumped at the chance to give that program a try and got my home office set up. I started out by working a little bit from home every week and now I'm working from home most of the time.

That program has been a win-win situation for both the company and me. The company is able to lower its real estate costs and employees like me receive increased job flexibility and satisfaction.

For me, the time I used to spend commuting is now much more productive than it used to be. I have more time for my family during the week. And my weekends aren't spent doing the laundry and running all the errands I used to be because I'm able to fit some of that stuff in during the week.

My other big workplace challenge came just in the last year. My first child was born in May of 2005 and I decided to come back to work part time after maternity leave. At that point, I was able to scale back my workload and now I'm working three days a week at a 60% of my original salary with my full benefits.

I can happily say it's going pretty well so far. Some weeks are definitely easier than others. It's all depending on what's happening with my workload and deadlines and what's going on at home. But I'm so thankful to have this opportunity to work part time and continue my career while I'm spending more time with my daughter. In fact, today is one of my off days and we have a chance to do a music class together. So it's that kind of thing that really makes part-time work special for me.

It's one thing for a company to offer these kinds of flexibility programs, but I really think it takes leadership commitment and support from team members to make them successful. My supervisor is a woman and she is a true advocate for flexibility herself. She has spent sometime working part time and now does the virtual work arrangement herself, and she leads by example with her own work-life balance.

We've also set up a virtual support network for the working moms in our team. We have an Internet site where we can share ideas. We meet once a month by conference call to discuss issues and learn from each other. It's extremely helpful to note that those women are there for me when I need their help.

As a new working mom, I think flexibility means so much more to me at this point in my career than a raise or a bonus or any other kind of monetary benefit. Having this kind of support at the highest level from my company in terms of this program and then day to day from my colleagues has been extremely helpful and reassuring as I continue to work at this work-life balancing.

So thanks so much for your time today and I'd like to turn it back to Sharon.

Sharon Klun: All right. Thanks, Dana.

The best part of this whole story is that her talents and skills are still with us and we very appreciate it.

I'd like to take a second to talk about the second example of flexibility, which is one of the newest work life components which provide career on and off ramps for all employees. I want to reinforce the "all employees' idea"

because, at Accenture, it really is to support all employees at all stages of their career progression

The program is called future leave. It's designed so that an employee has the ability to step off the career path at their discretion periodically throughout the career.

This is how it works. Basically, future leave is a self-funded sabbatical. Here are some examples: an employee decides that he or she needs some time away in the future, for personal rejuvenation, to take care of an aging parent, participate in an environmental cause or a charity, be home more after the birth or adoption of a child, you've been traveling a lot, and/or you want to reconnect with your family.

Looking at a generational chart, the baby boomers may be thinking, "now I have an elderly parent to take care of," or "I spent my whole life raising kids and now I need a break for me." Generation Xers may want to be at home with young children or volunteer at their child's school or church or synagogue. Generation Y may say, "I want that to spend two months teaching in underdeveloped countries or go back to school." You know, the reason doesn't matter.

If the employee requests **Future Leave** – that means they want to participate in the self-funded sabbatical. They will work with their manager in identifying a pre-determined time that they want to be away from work. Then they work full time for 8, 9, or 10 months but receive maybe 80% of their pay during those months. They can decide if it's 80% or 75% or 90% pay that they take home. But for the example today, I'm just using the 80% monthly pay as an example. So they receive 80% take home pay and the remaining 20% is banked for them every month. At the end of those set number of months, 8, 9, 10 or whatever number of months -- where they've been receiving their 80%

pay -- they can take off one, two, or up to three months. They continue to receive their 80% pay every month because it's **been banked for them and now they can pull from that account**. Accenture continues to pay the employer's portion of medical insurance and they return to the same role at the end of whatever specific period of time that they had indicated.

The maximum time an employee can be gone is three months. And the option to use future leave is limited to three times during your career. And **yes**, we have to confirm with the IRS that we could do this.

This is currently in pilot status at Accenture. It was released earlier this year in a few **pilot** workgroups. It was a bit early for final results, but I'll tell you the feedback has been really positive.

Employees who have had the option and they're in the pilot right now, are excited because they feel that they have control over their time related to their career decisions. And we've also even heard from employees not in the pilot saying that they are pleased to work for an organization that understands the value of career flexibility and career on- and off- ramps.

All this reinforces our 2004 survey data results -- that career flexibility was one of the top issues that our employees wanted.

So whether it's flexibility and work schedules on a daily basis or flexibility in career on- and off-ramps, I really believe from working with this everyday, the impact is positive--it's low cost and it can be implemented by any size of organization.

Karen Kerrigan, I'm going to turn it over to you.

Karen Kerrigan: Thank you very much, Sharon. This is Karen Kerrigan with Women Entrepreneurs, Inc. I really enjoyed hearing from Sylvia, Kathy, Sharon and Dana. Thank you very much for your presentations.

I would like to remind our participants today on the call that, in about two weeks, the transcripts of this conference call will be posted on the WE, Inc. website -- that's www.we-inc.org. Once there, just click on the Flex-Options logo and you'll be able to find it.

Before we begin with the Q's & A's, I'd like to ask our operator again to review how the process works.

Coordinator: Thank you.

At this time, we'll begin the Q&A session, if you would like to ask a question, please press star 1 on your telephone touch pad. If you are using speaker equipment, you may need to lift the handset prior to pressing star 1.

Should you wish to cancel your question or if your question has already been answered, simply press star 2.

Once again, that's star 1 to ask your question, star 2 to cancel your question.

Please allow a moment if a question is registering and as a reminder, please state your name slowly and clearly for pronunciation purposes.

Thank you.

Karen Kerrigan: Thank you and while those questions are queuing up, and I'm sure there'll be plenty, I guess I'll start off with maybe just one, and perhaps direct this to

Sylvia. Are there any industries or perhaps geographical areas of the country where on/off ramp programs are more prevalent, or more in use, are there any trends with respect to that?

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: A very good question. I think that there's flexibility over the entire geographical arc--the ability to step out and then step back without much penalty. It's actually a very new form of flexibility. It's a kind of dynamic form of flexibility rather than, you know, flexibility in a day or a week. We're thinking of it over a several year period.

And the sectors that are moving fastest are those that I think are struggling with particularly high rates of attrition in terms of the women.

And I think it is the financial sector, it is the management consulting sector, it's perhaps the accounting industry, and perhaps law firms. As you can see obviously, what's typical of those sectors is that they've got very long work days. I think in some of those companies in those sectors, it's particularly hard for women to hang on to their 60-hour a week job, have kids, and possibly care for elderly parent. Basically, there are not enough hours in a given day.

In new research that we are conducting, one thing we are discovering is that there is a kind of structural trend line out there in that professionals are increasingly working more and more hours a week. I think in recent research we show that half of everyone is working at least ten hours more per week than five years ago.

In sectors where employees work particularly long hours, I think women do need to bail out for a couple of years if they have the choice because it has

become almost increasingly difficult to do everything at the same time in a kind of full-bore, full-time way.

I think this is a trend line that's really with us for the duration. And employers in those sectors are beginning to realize that it's not only about retention, it's about re-attachment as well. This very nice, scenic, career route, as I mentioned before and as everyone else on the call has described, can only happen if some of the new policies on the flexibility front are implemented. These practices can certainly enable women to step back as well as step out.

Karen Kerrigan: Thank you.

Let me see if there are any questions?

Coordinator: Our first question comes from Lyn Corwin.

Karen Kerrigan: Hello Lyn.

Lyn Corwin: Yes. Hi. I was just curious. We do currently have a flex options plan and it's under review. One of the main reasons is because we constantly seem to be struggling with finding the time to be able to manage our day to day operations.

But this is my question. There's a lot of resentment amongst our staff toward those who utilize it because they don't ever feel that they'll need anything like that. Just wondering your thoughts or some examples of how others have maybe dealt with that.

Karen Kerrigan: That's a good question.

Why don't I give that to Kathy first? Kathy, would you be willing to address that?

Kathy Kacher: Sure.

You know, that's the biggest challenge among many organizations. Organizations have rolled out programs and policies and have had them in place forever. And the main consideration would be – have a taskforce. I mean, the best way to resolve these issues is to pull the people together and have a discussion. Ask. Why is it so hard? What is it that's bothering you? What Sharon and Dana have said is that it's so good to work for an organization that has those tools in place for anyone who needs to step off or step away.

Sharon, how did your organization -- and I know you have thousands and thousands of employees -- get that acceptance? Was there one parallel that just struck you and is that what made the difference?

Sharon Klun: Well I think, very briefly, it is a long process. It doesn't happen where you just design a flexibility policy and then the next morning you wake up and life is just perfect all over the organization. It does take education along with the policy. The education is to begin to help your mid-level leaders really understand the value, and to help your employees feel comfortable asking for flexibility. Then make sure your senior leadership is into it.

So it really is an ongoing educational process of continuing to make sure the policy's there along with the guidelines. It's not going to happen overnight.

Kathy Kacher: I have a little addition to that. We are very much trying to figure out how to reduce the stigma attached to flexible arrangements. One thing we're finding is that, if we have some of the senior guys model it, the message gets relayed. It's kind of magical. For instance, at Unilever -- one of our companies in the taskforce -- a CEO, the guy who heads up the ice cream and a frozen foods division, actually telecommutes on Fridays. He screams it from the rooftop. So that everyone knows that's kind of okay to do that.

Getting some of the senior men to do it -- really kind of walking the talk at the top -- has proven to be very powerful.

Lyn Corwin: Okay.

Karen Kerrigan: Lyn, how big is your organization?

Lyn Corwin: Small, 52 people.

Karen Kerrigan: Okay. Thanks Lyn

Lyn Corwin: Thank you very much for your answers.

Karen Kerrigan: Oh, you bet. Next question?

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Elaine Cole.

Karen Kerrigan: Hi, Elaine.

Elaine Cole: Hello. I have a question about being fair to other employees. I work with women and I've had the same issues. I have children, too, however, my children are grown but I work with other women who have to take time off

sometimes to pick up their children from school or because they have no one else to do it. They may have to do other things for their children, for example, maybe the child got hurt at school, and all of a sudden, you're left without coverage. Without comprising that privacy, how can their employers address this situation with the other workers?

Karen Kerrigan: Sharon, can I start with you and then Dana, if you have anything to add, please. We'd love to hear from you.

Dana Riegard: Sure. I'm Dana. Do you want me to go first?

Karen Kerrigan: Sure.

Dana Riegard: Well, I think the issue is more about just being consistent with all employees and not calling out or making flexibility always equal to a certain situation if you're working with employees who have other responsibilities and challenges related to either dependent care or family responsibilities.

I still go back to flexibility as a core program. Employees should be able to use the flex when they need to. One person's reason doesn't have to match another person's reason. It should be kind of an equitable option.

Karen Kerrigan: Right.

Kathy Kacher: This is Kathy. Although we've shared a lot of personal stories here today, we must take the personal situation away from the proposal or the request or the need thing. This is based in having and creating a consistent proposal or request process that every employee must go through. You know, leveling the playing field and removing any personal issues that go along with it, like Sharon said...

Karen Kerrigan: Sylvia or anyone else?

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: In our research, we showed that there is a very high resentment of policies that only go to parents. This echoes what I think one of the other commentators mentioned -- a point they made which was to be scrupulous in terms of fairness here.

For instance, Time Warner, one of our companies, changed the language of their benefits and some of their policies to not talk about dependents or children, but to talk about reliant individuals. So if the employee wanted to, some of their dependent care account could be for a godchild or a step grandchild--someone in your orbit. We found, for instance, that particularly amongst professionals of color, the extended family obligations -- the neighborhood obligations were very real. And yet they didn't qualify for a lot of the policies because it was so tied to the nuclear family.

Widen the net and redefine it so that everyone counts. After all, everyone does have a life and to honor all of those lives is very important.

Karen Kerrigan: All good advice and I think we're going to have time for perhaps one more question and three quick answers perhaps.

Is there another question?

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Marlene Tucker.

Karen Kerrigan: Hello. Is it Marlene?

Marlene Tucker: Yes.

Karen Kerrigan: Hi Marlene.

Marlene Tucker: Hi. How do vacation and other types of accrued time come into play with the self-funded sabbatical where you can take up to three months?

Sharon Klun: It's completely separately. Our people told us that they don't care about the vacation because it's kind of sporadic and it's not the chunk of time that they need to kind of step off.

So, PTO is a whole bucket and then participating in future leave is a separate issue.

Sharon Klun: Does that answer your question?

Marlene Tucker: Yes. Thanks.

Karen Kerrigan: Great. I think we can squeeze just one more in.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Kelly Watson.

Karen Kerrigan: Hello, Kelly.

Kelly Watson: Hi. This question is for Sylvia, and first Sylvia, I read your book "Creating A Life." I was stepping off and it is very influential. I think I cried for a month along with you.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: Thank you.

Kelly Watson: I wondered about the 50% of the folks that come back in, step back on because of job satisfaction and not financial pressure. What percentages of those are executives? Or what level are they at?

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: We were looking at women across the economy earning more than \$45,000. In other words, this book was very definitely a look at this kind of professional work force. The top 20%, if you like. It's not a tiny elite cross-section, but it is those with human capital and the reason we work with that group is that they have some market power. They are more likely to be able to force change in terms of policy change and in the end will benefit everyone because when corporate policy changes, it does change for everyone.

We, very deliberately, are using this group as the wedge, if you like. Obviously, they are powerful these days given the demographics of retiring baby boomers, you know, the baby bust generation. There's an emerging shortage of skills.

Kelly Watson: Yes, absolutely.

But given that most of the existing programs in companies seem to be geared towards the administrative levels. I'm wondering what types of things are out there for executive level women who want to on ramp.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: Well, the programs that I've been describing, like the one at Lehman, really targets executive women. Time Warner is widening the tent of its benefits package which is much more for everyone. You know the devil is in the detail. We've got about 22 new policies we're playing with. Please do be in touch because I can get you examples of what is going on out there. I think that they do target somewhat different populations.

Kelly Watson: Great. Thank you.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: Thank you. And the hour went by so quickly and I wish we could take more questions. But I think I'm going to have to turn it back to Mike Williams.

Mike Williams: Yes. I think we might have time for one more because we did start a little bit late.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: Oh, that would be great.

Mike Williams: Yes. Let's see if we can get one or two more questions answered.

Karen Kerrigan: That's fine. We got some bonus questions. Okay.

Coordinator: Once again, could you please press star 1 to ask your question and star 2 to withdraw your question.

Karen Kerrigan: While we're waiting for that one last question to come in, we do have a lot of small employers who listen on the phone conversations. In terms of on- and off- ramping and flexibility, in general, or even taking advantage of some of the latent talent, do small employers have an advantage over large employers or an advantage that may not even know that they have?

Sylvia Ann Hewlett: Well absolutely and I'll be very brief because I want to hear all the other voices. Reaching out to previous employees, when you think they might be ready to come back in is particularly possible for small employers because of the intimate nature of the net that we're talking about. They are much more likely to have personal relationships with ex-employees. It is a great tool and our data show that time out is very short and so they are not deskilled.

Women really do re-ignite their ambition. And you know, if you reach age 50 in good health, you live to 92. So, many of us are thinking about long careers.

Karen Kerrigan: Great. Was there another question that came in?

Coordinator: Yes, we have a question from Catherine Carl.

Karen Kerrigan: Okay, Catherine, how are you?

Catherine Carl: I'm good. How are you?

Karen Kerrigan: Doing great. Thanks for joining us.

Catherine Carl: Thank you. I am with Allstate Insurance. I have a question geared more towards Sharon Klun from Accenture and if Kathy or Sylvia have any other things to add, I'd appreciate it. Related to Future Leave - is that also linked with other benefits? So, for example, if I was pregnant, would I work the nine or ten months and get a couple of months off to care for my child? So while working nine months or so, at 80% of pay, would you then go to like your standard short term disability and then take the 20%?

Sharon Klun: You can tack it on at the end of maternity or disability leave and we're seeing nearly 50% of the utilization exactly for that reason. The percentage of pay received is pre-determined by the employee – so yes an employee can bank pay for leave after the birth of a child – so they receive 80% after their maternity leave runs out.

Catherine Carl: So, how long has that been going on in the company?

Sharon Klun: We just started it earlier this year. But we already have people signed up in the pipeline for exactly the reasons you're talking about -- they know they have a life event coming down the road. They can prepare for this life event by using future leave and having some of their money banked for them. I think that's also getting us some very, very good feedback.

Catherine Carl: Okay. Thank you. Good luck Allstate.

Sharon Klun: Good luck at Allstate.

Karen Kerrigan: Was there another question?

Coordinator: Yes, we have a question from Gill Miller.

Karen Kerrigan: Hello Gill.

Gill Miller: Hi. Thank you. I'm interested to know if there are flexibility options for companies with non-professional workers in manufacturing or production companies.

Karen Kerrigan: I'll open that up to the group. Would anyone like to jump in on that one?

Sharon Klun: When it comes to manufacturing, just go back to the group and say "Do you want flexibility." If they do, then ask "How do you visualize that? How do you see it working?"

And another opportunity for those organizations is to go back to their retirees. Ask them would they be interested in stepping back in temporarily if a current employee wanted to take a vacation or an extended amount of time off. Think about different ways to pull individuals together. The number one thing to do,

of course, is to go to the team itself and ask “do you want to do it, and how should we do it?” Inevitably, they do have the best answers.

Karen Kerrigan: Okay. Good answer. I think we’re going to have to wrap it up. Right, Mike?

Mike Williams: Yes, we’re done.

Karen Kerrigan: And again, I’d like to thank our featured speakers, Sylvia, Kathy, Sharon, and Dana and the hour went much too quickly but it was just terrific.

Woman: Okay, Mike.

Mike Williams: Okay. I’m sure everyone really enjoyed the presentations today, especially, Kathy and Sharon giving their personal views and experiences. I was really impressed with some of the things that you all had to deal with in your careers. But, it’s been really a good session we’ve had today and I’m glad everybody got a chance to get their questions in.

Along with thanking our presenters today, I’d personally like to thank Linda Roundtree and Karen Kerrigan -- our national contractors -- for putting this conference call together and securing our speakers.

This was our second flex option conference call for 2006 and our next call is scheduled for - tentatively scheduled for July 20. I think that’s the third Thursday in July. Please be aware of that and continue to visit the Women’s Bureau’s website at www.dol.gov/wb and also visit the Women Entrepreneur’s, Inc. website at www.we-inc.org. Like Karen said, you’ll see the flex options logo in the upper right hand corner of their homepage. Just click on that and it will take you directly to the Flex-Option section. Lastly,

the transcript for this conference call should be posted within the next two weeks.

So if you know somebody who didn't get a chance to listen in on this call, let them know that they will be able to read the entire transcript.

I'd like to thank everybody for participating today -- the presenters, our contractors, and of course the audience. We all hope that you have a great afternoon. This concludes our conference call on Career Flexibility: On- and Off-Ramps.

Thank you very much for participating.

Bye-bye.

Coordinator: Thank you for participating in today's teleconference. And have a nice day.

END