

## EMPLOYEES WANT FLEXIBILITY

**Tuesday, 4 February 2003:** With increasing rates of female participation in the workforce helping to drive the economy and baby-boomers thinking about retirement, a major workplace issue over the next few years will be retaining female employees.

While the relative proportion of men in the workforce has declined over the last three decades, there are more women in paid employment than ever before. December job figures showed the proportion of women in the labour force rose to a record 56.3 per cent, compared with 44 per cent 25 years ago.

Concurrent to the increase in female employment, part-time employment has increased and issues such as paid maternity leave and work/family-life balance are firmly on the national agenda.

The ACTU's *National Survey of Workplace Issues*, released in January and covering more than 8,000 employees nationwide, found that 80 per cent of Australian employees want more family friendly workplace provisions and a cap on long working hours.

At the risk of losing talented staff, will companies have to develop retention programs specific to female employees and ageing boomers, as well as the younger generations entering and coming up through the ranks of Australian business? Or is there a one-size-fits-all strategy?

"Companies don't necessarily need different strategies for different generations," says CSI professional services manager Jairus Ashworth. "It is more about creating a flexible system with choice woven into the fabric; choice for both the employee and for the manager of the employee."

In a recent US survey by human capital management organisation Spherion, 60 per cent of employees said the key reason they accepted their current position was its effect on personal/family life.

"Today's employees demand greater flexibility from employers than ever before," says Jane Beaumont, managing director of Spherion Recruitment Solutions. "As employers, we have acknowledged the costs, both economical and knowledge-based, of losing skilled employees."

"By providing flexible work conditions, you send a simple message to your employees; that you value their contribution to your business and also respect their personal lives," says Beaumont. "It can often mean the difference between retaining and losing talented staff."

With 71 per cent of CEOs surveyed in the Hewitt Associates *Best Employers to Work for in Australia 2001* citing the acquisition and retention of the best staff available to be their most pressing issue, it seems organizations can no longer afford to ignore the retention benefits of a flexible workplace.

## ENDS

### Note:

CSI are Australia's remuneration specialists. We can provide information or advice about all remuneration issues, from executive pay to global pay practices.

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