

Round-table Discussion

What Makes a Good Workplace?

The Daiwa Securities Group is a member of the securities and financial industry, an area long considered as a masculine domain. The Group, however, is fully cognizant of the capabilities of women in the work force and seeks to tap this source of talent. The Group is taking further steps to encourage the advancement of women, by establishing schemes to actively promote female employees to management positions while giving them the tools and options needed to balance family and work obligations. What is the current situation for women in the workplace? What is needed to further encourage female employees? A discussion was held with a panel of working mothers and a branch manager from the Daiwa Securities Group. (Discussion date: June 29, 2006)

In recent years, the workplace has gradually evolved into one of equality between men and women.

Yamazaki: There are two aspects to the encouragement of female employees. The first is the active promotion of female workers. Even prior to the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, the Daiwa Securities Group has taken the lead in this area. Just like Ms. Saito, women with real ability are being promoted to all types of positions, including branch manager.

Saito: I used to be in a regional career-track position, and the job of branch manager seemed like an unattainable goal for me at that point. In fact, up until five or six years ago, jobs were still divided along gender lines; nowadays, I think the inequality between men and women is gradually

disappearing. Indeed, the number of female managers is steadily increasing.

Katsuura: Until recently, women that rose through the ranks quickly had to try to act like men. But now you can see women with typically feminine qualities also being promoted. I'm glad that we have reached the point where women like Ms. Saito can be branch managers.

It is the attitude rather than actual systems and processes that change an organization.

Yamazaki: The other aspect is the establishment of a workplace that allows women to both have children and build a career. In October 2005, the Female Employee Support Plan was created, and various programs were introduced to

support women. In the future I think it will be important for each and every employee to help build an environment where women feel free to use these programs.

Katsuura: I was lucky enough to be able to have a child and continue my career, thanks to the great understanding and cooperation of my branch manager and superiors when I took maternity leave prior to returning to work. Even so, they actually had no concrete idea of what programs were available to me, and I felt like I had to explain it to them and receive permission. At this point, there are still a lot of higher-ups that are not aware of the programs available to women; I think they should be educated about them.

Yamazaki: The proper functioning of these programs is dependent on the understanding of male employees, especially male managers.



Yuko Yamazaki

Assistant Manager
Personnel Department
Daiwa Securities Group Inc.

Ms. Yamazaki serves as the leader of the Women's Advancement Action Team founded in the Personnel Department in February 2005. "We have already begun changing the focus from a workplace that is supportive of women to one that is supportive of both men and women."

Seigo Hasegawa

Deputy General Manager
Product Planning Dept.
Daiwa Securities Co. Ltd.

While working at the union executive office, Mr. Hasegawa focused on workplace environment issues. "The level of involvement of female employees serves as an important barometer of a company's vitality."

Akiko Matsuo

Deputy General Manager
Shinjuku Center Building Branch
Daiwa Securities Co. Ltd.

Ms. Matsuo moved from a general office position to a career-track job. She is currently working in sales, while raising a three-year-old. "It is hard work raising a child and working in sales at the same time. It consumes all my energy."

Yukiko Katsuura

Station Plaza, Headquarters,
Daiwa Securities Co. Ltd.

Ms. Katsuura got married two years after joining the company. Her child was born two years after that, and is now five. "Since I'd like to work until mandatory retirement, I hope that the programs to support female employees will be improved and properly understood throughout the company."

Naoko Saito

Branch Manager
Nakano Branch
Daiwa Securities Co. Ltd.

In April 2005, Ms. Saito became the first person to be promoted to branch manager from a regional career-track position, without any transfers to other locations. "I think that branch managers need to realize that women can raise children and still maintain their careers."

In the future, we will have to make the programs more widely understood and accepted in the workplace.

Saito: Although I don't have children of my own, I try to be supportive of my employees when it comes to theirs. For example, if one of my employees asks for time off to attend his/her child's school entrance ceremony, then I agree to it, so long as it does not cause any problems in our operations. But some branch managers would see this as being too soft. They have the notion that taking a day off means you have no commitment to the job.

Hasegawa: During the period of rapid growth in Japan, from the fifties to the seventies, the archetype of a typical family gradually become one where the man's position was at the workplace and the woman's was at home raising the children. Admittedly, it is very hard to change this mindset, but I think the question is not whether we can change it, but whether we will change it. Consequently, a lot of this depends on management, and it would be great if the Daiwa Securities Group became a pioneer in the creation of a new workplace environment. First the management must get a proper understanding of the programs available to women employees, and then take the responsibility of explaining them to all their subordinates, especially those who are directly involved. The most important thing, however, is to remember to put yourself in the other person's shoes when considering these issues.

Saito: I really think a change in the mindset of branch managers is essential. If there was some way that the personnel department could make sure that female employees with small children are able to leave work at the official time, it would also help enforce a change in branch managers' attitudes.

Yamazaki: Don't you think that women employees need not only the understanding of male managers but co-workers, too?

Matsuo: That's true. It does not help if someone makes an insensitive comment about a female employee arriving late and leaving early for childcare reasons.

Katsuura: That really puts stress on the female employee. I hope that I can be an understanding colleague in this respect.

Hasegawa: Ultimately, I think it is the attitude rather than the mechanisms that will change an organization. The sum of these attitudes forms the corporate climate, and this will determine if a better workplace environment can be created.

■ Career women are a valuable resource. Childcare support helps secure corporate competitiveness.

Saito: We are part of a profit-making organization, thus the limited number of sales staff at the branches is under constant pressure to produce profits. If one of these salespersons leaves his or her job, then we need to think about how to fill this gap. Whether or not someone has to look after a child or family, everyone must be completely professional in their jobs.

Matsuo: That's true. I fully understand that as a manager, I am expected to work to maintain a certain standard regardless of whether I have children or not. On the other hand, there are time constraints, such as when my child has to be picked up. As a result, the demands of work and family push me to the point of exhaustion.

Katsuura: However, even if working mothers are at a disadvantage, I think they can still produce good results. I have never come across a saleswoman who slacked off just because she had a child. That kind of person would not come back to work after having a baby anyway. Since it is only those women with a lot of drive that return to work, I think they will help boost the profits of the company over the long term.

Yamazaki: Enabling women with experience and skill to meet their childcare needs and stay employed long term is the best way to secure an outstanding source of human capital. It takes a lot of time to develop good personnel from the time they are hired and it would definitely benefit the company to

enable as many women as possible to enjoy a long career with the company.

Matsuo: From a program perspective, I think the period of no overtime work should be longer. Although the nursery lets my child stay later, once she enters elementary school, she'll get out earlier and I want to be able to send her for after-school activities.

Katsuura: I think there should be a way for women to stay in touch with what is happening at the office while they are on maternity leave. It is very disconcerting not to know what is happening at work while you are on leave. It would also be great to have opportunities for working-mother colleagues to bring their children and get together. We could share tips and encourage each other.

Yamazaki: There are lots of programs for childcare support. In order to raise awareness of these programs, the Childcare Support Guidebook was distributed to all employees in June of this year. It presents the schemes in a very easy-to-understand format. A childcare support website called the Daiwa Family Net has been set up for employees on maternity leave. Through the online bulletin board, employees can communicate with each other, and co-workers can share news. Initiatives are currently being publicized based on the campaign to encourage female employees, but first, the company is aiming to put in place a work environment that is supportive of both men and women, in achieving a balance between work and family. We want to create a workplace where any employee can participate in childcare, regardless of gender.

