

WHARTON ON

Managing Your Career



The Work/Life Balance

WHETHER IT'S DECIDING which parent continues to work after a child is born, figuring out the jigsaw puzzle of job demands and out-of-work commitments, or simply finding time to take a vacation, work/life balance is a critical equation that all employees need to solve. While these issues have been given increasing visibility in recent years, causing workers to literally redefine what success can mean, pressure on the work end has not subsided—and in many cases it's increasing. The following articles from *Knowledge@Wharton* look at the clash between home and work life and what it takes to keep people plugged into their jobs while feeling personally fulfilled.

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Employees are starting to set career paths based on their own needs, values, and definitions of success. They are otherwise talented and energetic workers who are “plateauing”—setting boundaries around their ambitions rather than striving to climb the next step up the corporate ladder. Some companies are beginning to take notice, providing new options and opportunities in the ongoing war for talent.

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Workers in much of Western Europe can afford to check out for a month in August because they receive an average of nearly 2 months a year in paid leave, a combination of vacation and government holidays. That distinguishes them from citizens of the United States, who, despite a similarly productive economy and a comparable standard of living, enjoy about half as much paid time off. Why are Americans reluctant, or unable, to extricate themselves from their jobs and sign up for some serious vacation time?

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Women executives who leave the corporate world when they hit a glass ceiling, want to raise a family full-time, or decide to focus on other interests, encounter frustrating roadblocks in their attempts to re-enter the workforce, according to new Wharton research. To overcome the obstacles, women should confront the difficulties they face and prepare for their return to the labor force the moment they leave, says Monica McGrath, adjunct professor of management at Wharton.

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In their book, *Work and Family—Allies or Enemies? What Happens When Business Professionals Confront Life Choices*, authors Stewart D. Friedman and Jeffrey H. Greenhaus set out to study the experience of 860 business professionals, as recorded in extensive questionnaires describing the hectic lives of the interviewees. Conventional wisdom, our reviewer notes, will be upset by some of the findings contained in this well-researched and serious approach to a much-dissected subject.

More Than Job Demands or Personality, Lack of Organizational Respect Fuels Employee Burnout

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One of the biggest complaints employees have, according to Wharton Management Professor Sigal Barsade, is that “they are not sufficiently recognized by their organizations for the work they do.” Barsade and doctoral student Lakshmi Ramarajan look at the role of respect in a paper entitled “What Makes the Job Tough? The Influence of Organizational Respect on Burnout in Human Services.”

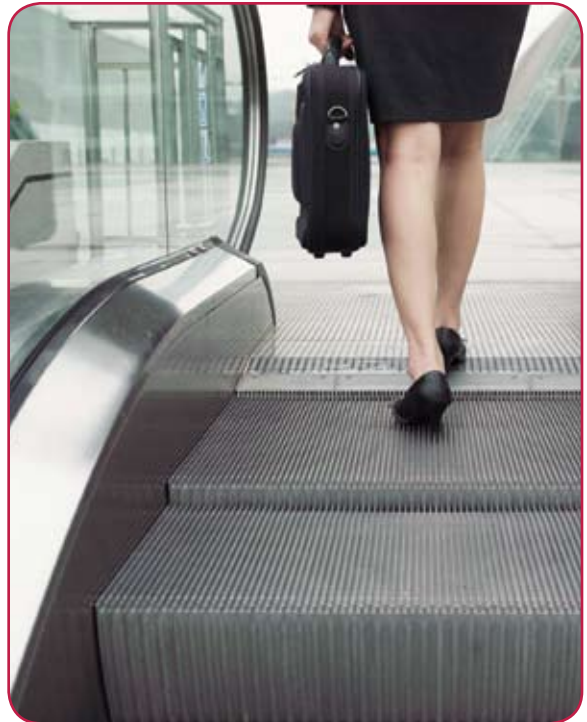
Plateauing: Redefining Success at Work

AS AN EXECUTIVE COACH who works with corporations, Monica McGrath has her ear to the ground. And what she is hearing is this: A number of men and women in middle management are increasingly reluctant to take the next step in their careers because the corporate ladder is not as appealing as it used to be, and the price to climb it is too high. “These people are still ambitious, and they are still driving. They just aren’t driving for the same things they were driving for 15 years ago,” she says.

What may be happening, suggest McGrath and others, is that people are setting career paths based on their own values and definitions of success. They are not burned out or dropping out; they are not going back to school and changing careers; they are not having a mid-life crisis. Instead, they are redefining how they can keep contributing to their organizations, but on their own terms. Rather than subscribe to the “onward and upward” motto, they are more interested in “plateauing,” unhooking from the pressure to follow an upward path that someone else has set.

A number of oft-cited trends in the workplace contribute to this phenomenon: Technological advancements are breaking down the barriers between work and nonwork hours, adding to the pressure to constantly be on the job or on call. Strategic decisions like restructuring, downsizing, and outsourcing are adding to job uncertainty at all levels and reducing the number of promotions available to mid- and upper-level managers. The continuing influx of women into the workforce keeps raising the level of stress when it comes to work/life balance issues.

Lois Backon, a vice president at Families and Work Institute (FWI), a New York-based nonprofit research organization, points to a report FWI does every 5 years entitled “National Study of the Changing Work Force.” The latest one was released in 2003. One of their areas of research relates to what the organization calls “reduced



aspirations” among various sectors of the workforce. “This is an incredibly important issue, and it offers some of the most troubling data out there for corporate America,” she notes.

For example, in one of its latest reports, “Generation & Gender (2004),” which uses data from the national study to determine differences among generations, FWI found that fewer employees aspired to positions of greater responsibility than in the past. Among college-educated men of Gen-Y, Gen-X, and boomer ages, 68 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992, versus only 52 percent in 2002. Among college-educated women of Gen-Y, Gen-X and boomer ages, the decrease was even higher: 57 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 1992 versus 36 percent in 2002. (Generation Y is typically defined as those born between 1980 and 1995, Generation X as those born between 1965 and 1980.)

“We then did a more focused look at leaders in the global economy,” Backon says. “We took the top 10 multinational companies—such as

Citicorp and IBM—and conducted in-depth interviews with the top 100 men and top 100 women. Of those leaders, 34 percent of the women and 21 percent of the men said they have reduced their career aspirations.”

This plateauing is part of a bigger phenomenon in the workforce—one that also includes people putting higher priorities on activities outside their jobs, from family to volunteer work to hobbies. For example, in the FWI study, the reason that the majority (67 percent) of these leaders gave for their response was “not that they couldn’t do the work, but that the sacrifices they would have to make in their personal lives were too great,” says Backon.

“We call it ‘negative spillover from their jobs to their homes,’” Backon adds. “The whole issue of overwork, of needing to multitask, of having to deal with numerous interruptions during their work day” affects employee attitude, not just toward their jobs but also their free time. “Based on our research, we know that 54 percent of employees are less than fully satisfied with their jobs, 38 percent are likely to actively look for new employment in the next year, and 39 percent of employees feel they are not engaged in the work they are doing.” Most employees “do want to feel engaged by their jobs. The term ‘reduced aspirations’ does not mean they are not talented or not good at what they do. They are. But in focus groups, they also say things like, ‘I need to make these choices because my family is a priority,’ or ‘I need to make these choices to make my life work.’”

One way to look at this phenomenon, adds Wharton Management Professor Nancy Rothbard, is that some employees “still derive some sense of identity from their jobs, but they have, or are seeking, other ways to get that fulfillment.” They are no longer pushing for the bigger raise, the larger staff, the more prestigious title; “they are taking energy that had been focused primarily on goals defined by the corporation and focusing it elsewhere.”

Fewer Promotions, Fewer Pensions

Peter Cappelli, director of Wharton’s Center for Human Resources, has done extensive research into the changing nature of the workplace. As he and others have noted, companies no longer promise job security, generous benefits packages, or even pensions; and employees no

longer feel loyal to their employers or obligated to stay for long periods of time. Employees are responsible for managing their own career track and seeking out the mentors and training they need to move on in their current company or, just as likely, in a new company.

Cappelli agrees that organizations “don’t have quite as much influence over people as they used to in terms of shaping their goals and aspirations, in part because people come to these jobs at an older age and change jobs more frequently than in the past. Does that necessarily mean people are on their own career path? It depends what you mean by that. I’m not sure it means they are eschewing corporate success. But they are looking outside their current employer’s definition of success, more so than in the past.”

Cappelli cautions, however, that it’s unlikely employees can go on cruise control and still hope to be retained and valued by their employers. “It used to be you could just lie low and wait for the pension. That doesn’t happen much any more.” And while some employees may not pay as much attention to the goals that their companies want them to pursue, they “continue to work hard because they are afraid of being laid off.... Companies systematically go through and fire people who are not pulling their weight. The ability to punish people into appropriate behavior is one of the great and unpleasant lessons of the 1980s. Employee morale sank and productivity stayed up because people were afraid of being fired,” Cappelli notes, adding, however, that this dynamic changes in a tight labor market.

Wharton Management Professor Sara Kaplan “could imagine a scenario where people have discovered that there is not too much point being loyal to their employers, and then go on to say, ‘Okay, I have gotten where I am going to get, and I am going to focus on the other part of my life. I will keep working but won’t invest all my energy in my job.’”

But Kaplan also thinks “everyone needs something to be passionate about, so it would be hard for me to imagine that people would simply ramp down on their job without having a crisis or without having found something else” to interest them. Indeed, in today’s economy, she adds, “you can’t keep your job unless you are engaged, to a certain extent. Corporations

don't want people who don't want to go higher. They don't want people who won't strive. You can't plateau; there are always people biting at your heels."

Directly related to the issue of job satisfaction is the question of job design. "Management scholars have been studying this for a long time," says Wharton Management Professor Sigal Barsade. "Whenever a company designs a job, it must take into account how employees view that job, whether their goal is to get ahead, whether work is central to their lives, and so forth. A company can make a real error trying to redesign a job to be more enriched if the employee doesn't want that," especially if the new job definition requires them to work harder.

What is crucial, Barsade says, "is good job fit. Is the person doing what the company needs done? If the answer is 'yes' and the person also is good at what they do but simply doesn't want to do more, then that could actually be a good situation, especially for jobs that don't include room for promotion." This is applicable in particular to customer service positions where people need to be engaged while they are providing the service but are not expected to be thinking of ways to redesign the whole customer service system. "So the fit needs to be between what the organization needs and what the employee wants and values. If that fit isn't there, that's when you are going to have a problem."

When should employees who have no interest in advancing or taking on higher challenges worry about losing their job? "I think as long as these employees are working diligently and competently and are willing to change—whether that means learning a new technology or adapting to a new work process—they should be safe," says Barsade.

Making Tradeoffs

Kathleen Christensen, who directs the program *Workplace, Work Force and Working Families* at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, suggests that plateauing in one's job "is a completely natural part of a career, but we ignore it because we have this notion of a steep trajectory." Psychologists, she says, "talk about different stages of human development. One stage may be that as people reach middle age, there is the idea of generativity—a willingness at this point to start giving back, perhaps start

cultivating others rather than just" focusing on your own achievements. Plateauing can be desirable, she says, in that employees "are likely to have a great deal of institutional knowledge. They can be the ones who know the processes, can share them, and guide others. If everyone is always out for themselves, it goes counter to developing the team culture that every company wants."

No matter how people define their jobs, Christensen adds, "they still must have performance goals and be evaluated in terms of how well they meet those goals. But we should also recognize that at different points in people's lives, they may define their performance goals in slightly different ways—they may move at different tempos—and still be well within what the company needs in order to achieve its business goals."

Plateauing cuts across all boundaries, Christensen suggests, and it could be the result of certain events in people's lives—like the birth of a child or the need to care for a sick parent—which lead an employee to decide, "I'm going to hold my own but not try to climb." But it would be "a mistake to assume that all the factors that lead to different tempos are due only to outside forces. It could just be an employees' own decision not to try to climb" in the organization. It doesn't mean they are slacking off. "Someone can be working hard and still be plateauing in a career," Christensen says.

She emphasizes the need for employer and employee to communicate expectations and goals. Any decision to plateau, for whatever length of time, should be a "deal that is structured to meet both sides' needs. It's a danger if employees think they can make these decisions based only on what they want to do. It's also a danger for the company if it doesn't take into account what the employee needs in order to do his or her best. It comes down to principles of good management."

At Deloitte & Touche USA LLP, Senior Advisor Anne Weisberg is involved with a pilot program called Mass Career Customization, which allows employer and employee together to customize an individual's career "along a defined set of options." It's a realization, she says, that "the 'one-size-fits-all' approach no longer works." In the pilot program, which started in June with a practice group of 400 people and will run for a

year, “we have unbundled the career into four dimensions: role, pace, location and schedule, and work load.” Under the role dimension, employees can specify, for example, whether they want an external role involving significant client interaction, an internal role without that client service aspect, or a role somewhere between the two. Under pace, the issue is how quickly an employee wants to move up. Under location and schedule, issues such as part-time hours, working at home, and willingness to travel are included; while work load looks at variables like the number of projects an employee is willing to undertake at any one time.

“There are tradeoffs to these choices,” Weisberg emphasizes. “A totally internal role has a different compensation structure and advancement route. But the tradeoffs are articulated, and an employee can move from one set of options to another. It’s a recognition that people need to fit their work into their life and their life into their work over the course of their career, which is 40 years. No one solution will work” for all that time. (Interestingly, she notes, the pilot program so far has found that “rather than dialing down on their careers, most of the practice group is choosing to dial up,” reflecting, in part, the fact that 65 percent of Deloitte’s employees are under the age of 35.)

Companies can’t redefine the corporate ladder “with a different model that is just as rigid,” Weisberg adds. “We need to replace the corporate ladder with a corporate lattice” — a term implying a more adaptive kind of framework that allows an individual to move in many different directions, not just upward or downward. “I know in many companies, employees are evaluated on the basis of how much time they spend on the job or how many sacrifices they make. That paradigm has to shift so that you look at performance and contribution separate from sacrifice.”

Weisberg, senior advisor to Deloitte’s Women’s Initiative, says that when the initiative was started in 1993, it was concerned primarily with women’s career paths, which are very different from men’s. (For example, the vast majority of women, about 80 percent, do not work full-time continuously throughout their career, whereas the vast majority of men do, she notes.) “But we quickly realized these issues affect many groups other than women, including men,

members of Gen-X and Gen-Y who perhaps want to accelerate early and then decelerate later, and the baby boomers” who are trying to adjust their workloads to accommodate interests or responsibilities outside of work. What’s been missing, she says, “is a way to approach all these different people with a consistent set of options.” On the micro level, she adds, “it is fundamentally a negotiation between the employer and employee,” which is why it is so important to develop “the right kind of negotiation framework.”

What may be happening, suggest McGrath and others, is that people are setting career paths based on their own values and definitions of success.

In scanning the 2006 employment landscape, Weisberg says she sees a “heating up of the war for talent. If you look at the demographics, there is a huge shortage in many of the knowledge-based industries. That is going to be with us for a long time.” She cites a recent statistic that women now make up 58 percent of college graduates, a trend that should affect even more how jobs and careers are structured. “Smart employers don’t want to drive their employees so hard that they burn out. That is very expensive. The estimates of the cost of turnover keep going up, in large part because of this issue of the shrinking skilled labor force.”

In the past, she says, “we used 150 percent of salary as the cost of turnover. We are now using 200 percent of salary.” Some experts say that for knowledge-based companies, that figure is 500 percent. “Turnover is a huge cost. One of the major reasons for doing mass career customization is to improve retention.”

Weisberg, too, suggests the need for transparency in any decisions related to the work environment. When both employer and employee are clear about the choices being made, “then both sides are more satisfied with the arrangement. If choices are never discussed, you can end up with mismatched expectations, which can lead to stress on both sides.”

Wharton Management Professor Stewart Friedman, who teaches Wharton Executive MBA students, among others, agrees that

“people are struggling with this issue of, ‘What do I really care about and how do I measure success?’ My sense is that more people, not just middle-aged employees but younger people as well, are raising this question in ways they didn’t 20 years ago. If so, is it because more people are hitting the pyramid and accepting the reality of lowered expectations caused by less upward mobility, or is it that they are part of a larger swing in our culture that is more focused on other definitions of success besides economics? I think it is probably both.”

What makes leaders in an organization effective, says Friedman, is that they realize employees can have different values than your typical workaholics—those who enjoy working 80 hours a week—and still contribute to the organization. “But it’s hard to change norms and cultural values that are deeply embedded.” What Friedman describes as “the excesses of the overworked generation” have reached a point “where more and more people are starting to question their total dedication to work. We are seeing more people pursuing creative alternatives. The big question 20 years ago was, ‘How early did your power breakfast start?’ Now the big question is, ‘Where and how far did you go on your vacation?’”

Disappearing Flex Time

It’s not clear how managers in organizations might react to employees who redefine their positions as jobs rather than as vocations or callings. “They could worry that people simply decide to ‘work to rule,’—i.e., do exactly what is specified and nothing more,” says Rothbard. “Companies are terrified of that happening: They know things will break down at that point because you can’t specify everything that has to be done in a particular job. But I think if employees’ identities are still tied up in their jobs, this won’t happen.”

Another consideration is how to continue to motivate people if none of the traditional rewards are available—such as a promotion or a bigger office. “A company may, in fact, want employees to have other sources of fulfillment, and so will try to build in things that matter to them,” says Rothbard. That could include flex time, job sharing, job sabbaticals, or the sponsorship of charity events that are meaningful to employees.

Some people question the sincerity of programs like flex time or sabbaticals that let people pursue interests outside of work. “I don’t think companies are paying a lot of attention to people’s passions. There are programs to address this but, frankly, it doesn’t happen that much,” says Kaplan, who notes that companies will try to institute flex-time benefits during times of economic growth, but “the minute the crunch happens, then all those programs go away.” And even when companies implement such procedures as flex time or job sharing, adds Barsade, “it doesn’t really address the bigger issues of the tremendous amount of work people these days are expected to do on the job.”

Plateauing is part of a bigger phenomenon in the workforce—people putting higher priorities on activities outside their jobs, from family to volunteer work to hobbies.

One of those bigger issues relates to work/life balance and job commitment. McGrath recently taught an Executive Education course for women in the middle management ranks of a pharmaceuticals company to explore “ways to build relationships with, and support, each other, as they attempted to take on the next level of responsibility. It’s because the companies were finding that women were not willing to step into the high-potential pool of employees” for a number of different reasons, including, in some cases, wanting to make sure they had time for their families. “These women were at the vice president level. They weren’t lacking in ambition and they wanted to make a difference in their jobs. It was just a question of, ‘How much more responsibility can I take on?’”

Rothbard continues to find it ironic that employees who want to “opt out” of their jobs for a short time get less pushback than women who want flex time “so that they can pick up their children from school at 4:30 instead of 5:30 every day.” Rothbard cites Arlie Hochschild’s book *The Time Bind*, which notes the exceptions available to high-potential men who want to take a sabbatical and travel around the world. In one chapter, Hochschild relates how two men had asked their supervisor for

time off to do underwater photography of coral reefs. The supervisor granted them an educational leave to pursue their project. Why, the author asks, can't the company offer flexible schedules to parents who want to pick up their children early from daycare?

Rothbard also points to research on the phenomenon of "multiple roles, and the fact that there are physical as well as psychological benefits to people" who have more than one area in their lives that engages them and requires their attention. An example would be a woman who has responsibilities both at her job and with her family at home. The research discusses "the buffer hypothesis, which says that if something goes wrong in one area, you then have another area that buffers you," says Rothbard. "In other words, work/family roles enrich, rather than deplete, each other."

Stress in the workplace, many experts have noted, can be intensified by technological advancements that make it harder for people to ever totally disconnect from their jobs at appropriate moments, like vacations. As McGrath notes, "there are no boundaries around employees' time. They are always available." McGrath has worked as a coach in five large corporations over the past year and at all of them, she observed workloads that were, in her opinion, unmanageable. Some employees, she says, react by trying to set strict limits on their accessibility—for example, not answering their Blackberry from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. "They have come to some sort of peace with the fact that they will never get everything done and keep everyone happy." ■

Reluctant Vacationers: Why Americans Work More, Relax Less, Than Europeans

BEWARE, LONELY PLANET PUBLICATIONS tells readers of its guide to France: This country largely closes down for the month of August. In Paris, particularly, shops are shuttered, and even some museums operate for only limited hours. Locals seem to migrate—en masse—to vacation resorts along the Atlantic Coast and the Riviera.

The French and, for that matter, people in much of the rest of Western Europe, can afford to check out for a month because they receive an average of nearly two months a year in paid leave, a combination of vacation and government holidays, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. That distinguishes them from citizens of the United States, who, despite a similarly productive economy and a comparable standard of living, enjoy about half as much paid time off. The average American receives approximately 4 weeks a year of paid leave, while the average person in France gets 7 and the average German, 8.

Sure, plenty of Americans will take a vacation next month. If you have ever spent an hour in August sweltering in the lines at Disney World or stuck in the traffic on New York's Long Island Expressway, you know that. But Europeans, with their generous allowances of downtime, can afford to loll around for the whole month, not just the 1 week that's typical in the United States.

Work and vacation habits in the world's most economically advanced regions weren't always this way. As recently as the 1960s, Europeans worked more than people in the U.S., according to a 2005 study by Bruce Sacerdote of Dartmouth University and Alberto Alesina and Ed Glaeser, both of Harvard University. Since then, however, the regions' appetites for leisure have diverged, with Americans grinding away for ever-more hours at the office, and Europeans taking time to savor *la dolce vita* ("the sweet life"). These days, the U.S. even outworks famously industrious Japan.



Curse of the Blackberry

What changed? The explanations vary as much as the potential locales for a summer sojourn. Several experts at Wharton see a role for culture and history. A Nobel laureate, in contrast, says the difference boils down to taxes. And Sacerdote, Alesina, and Glaeser chalk it up to levels of unionization.

Cultural explanations enjoy the most currency in the popular press. In the U.S., publications like the *Wall Street Journal* brag about the productivity and work ethic of big-shouldered America, while European commentators sniff about what fun-hating grinds Americans have become. These are obviously caricatures, but they do appear to hold some truth, scholars at Wharton say. Europeans seem to place a higher value on leisure, while Americans tend to prefer earning and spending. As a result, Americans on average own bigger cars, bigger houses, and more vacation homes, says Witold Rybczynski, a Wharton real estate professor.

In contrast, Europeans' self worth is often tied up not with whether they drive a Lexus or a Porsche but with their ability to enjoy a hefty holiday, says Mauro Guillen, Wharton management and sociology professor and a native of Spain. "It is a sign of social status in

Europe to take a long vacation away from home. Money is not everything in Europe; status is not only conferred by money. Having fun, or being able to have fun, also is a sign of success and a source of social esteem.”

Likewise, Christian Schneider, manager of the multinational research advisory group at the Wharton Center for Human Resources, points out that European managers often use all of their vacation time, even as their U.S. counterparts brag about their workaholicism. “There’s a tendency to really relax in Europe, to disengage from work,” says Schneider, a native of Germany. “When an American finally does take those few days of vacation per year, they are most likely to be in constant contact with the office.” Call it the curse of the Blackberry.

This cultural chasm can surprise Europeans who come to work in the United States. Denise Dahlhoff, a director for Wharton Executive Education, remembers seeing her vacation days cut nearly in half when she took a job in the New Jersey office of ACNielsen, a market-research company. The consultancy she had worked for in Bonn, Germany, gave her 25 days a year—five days more than the minimum required by German law—while Nielsen initially provided only 10. (The U.S. has no statutory minimum.) She also learned that, unlike many Germans, Americans typically check their emails even when they leave the office for just a couple of days. “It’s definitely socially more acceptable to take vacation in Germany,” she says. “Taking two or three weeks off without being in touch is fine.”

Cultural differences undoubtedly exist, but for Ed Prescott, a Nobel Prize-winning economist at Arizona State University, they don’t explain something as basic as work habits. He instead credits taxes. In a 2003 study, Prescott points out that European countries have much higher marginal tax rates than the United States. As a result, he argues, Europeans have much less incentive to work additional hours. Why plug away for 45 hours, instead of 37.5, when the government ends up taking much of your extra income?

Peter Cappelli, a Wharton management professor and director of the school’s Center for Human Resources, doesn’t buy that argument. Marginal tax rates don’t really apply to salaried workers, who are paid a set amount no matter

how long they work and are taxed accordingly. And it’s these people, not hourly employees, who have lately seen the biggest gains in hours worked, he says.

In addition, many surveys have shown that Americans are willing to accept less money for more vacation, he notes. Even so, their hours keep creeping higher. “People here are working more than they want to because that’s cheaper for employers than hiring new employees,” he adds. “In the U.S., there isn’t much of a way for employees to rebel against that. Unions only represent a small proportion of people, and they are mostly blue collar.”

Unions’ Clout

Sacerdote, Alesina, and Glaeser’s analysis mirrors Cappelli’s. They, too, conclude that different levels of unionization explain why Europeans work so much less than Americans these days. Simply put, burlier European unions bargained for more vacation. About 9 out of 10 workers in Germany and France are covered by collective-bargaining agreements, compared with only about 2 of 10 in the United States, they point out. Because of their heft, European unions have more muscle in politics and board rooms. As a consequence, they succeed at lobbying for policies that benefit their members and employees in general. In contrast, political decisions in the United States tend to favor employers.

Yet that argument still seems to leave room for a greater European liking for leisure; after all, European unions could have fought for higher pay, not more vacation. Sacerdote, Alesina, and Glaeser say that expediency, not a cultural predisposition for kicking back, drove their decisions.

In the 1970s, Western Europe’s economy endured a series of economic shocks, including the oil crisis, they explain. In response, employers insisted that they needed to lay off workers. Unions, in turn, proposed retaining workers but cutting everyone’s hours. The outcome would be the same—a reduction in total hours and thus costs—but it would achieve savings without layoffs. These “work-sharing” arrangements were often promoted with slogans like “work less; work all,” the professors write.

“Work sharing may make little sense as a national response to a negative economic shock,” they add. “But at a single firm, a membership-maximizing union may indeed find work sharing to be an attractive policy.”

Once work hours started falling for large numbers of Europeans, a “social multiplier” kicked in; more people wanted more vacation because their family and friends were getting it. People enjoy taking time off together, even if it means inconveniencing themselves to do so. “We put ourselves through a lot of pain to standardize on things like our weekends and our vacations because there are big complementarities,” Sacerdote says. Even in America, you can see the hassles that this tendency causes: Home Depot wouldn’t be so jammed on Saturday mornings if most people didn’t have the same days off each week.

If [more vacation] means making less money, some people might pass, preferring to save for their children’s college educations, their retirements, or even a house at the beach—even if they rarely have the time to use it.

Regardless of who’s right in the debate, these differences in work habits may not endure. Faced with slow-growing economies and social unrest stemming from youth unemployment, some European politicians have begun to jawbone for change. And corporate managers there have begun to squeeze more flexible work rules out of unions, including longer hours and fewer restrictions on firing, by threatening to move plants abroad. Just this week, the *Wall Street Journal* documented how, in response to these sorts of changes, some German firms have stepped up hiring at home. If this trend continues, it might not only jumpstart Western Europe’s economies but also begin to increase average work hours and decrease paid holidays.

Sacerdote agrees that labor restrictions play a role in Europe’s higher levels of unemployment. Policies that make employment costly—like lots of paid leave and restrictions on hiring—can also make employers reluctant to hire. But he also sees a “bedrock issue” that no amount of

negotiating will solve. “Labor is so much less mobile in Europe,” he points out. “So when Ireland is booming, it’s not like people pour out of France into Ireland. Even within Germany, you have high unemployment in East Germany, yet people don’t move west. In the U.S., it’s labor mobility that helps the labor market. But people don’t just pick up and move in Europe.”

Undergirding the debate about vacation is the unstated premise that “more is better.” Besides the occasional Scrooge-like boss, everybody loves vacation—or at least says they do—and attests to its usefulness as a way for workers to recharge.

But count Nancy Rothbard, a Wharton management professor, among the rare skeptics. She cites research that has found that the recharge effect lasts about 3 days. And for many people, those 3 days come with a hefty price of their own—and it’s not entirely financial. “Would more vacation be better for us?” she asks. “It depends on the tradeoffs.” If it means making less money, some people might pass, preferring to save for their children’s college educations, their retirements, or even a house at the beach—even if they rarely have the time to use it.

Studies also show that some people bank weeks and weeks of vacation, she points out. Analysts tend to assume that their bosses discourage them from taking their time or that they fear a rock pile of work when they return. But it’s possible that they just don’t want to leave work.

Consider parents, she says. Hauling kids on long trips can be more stressful than staying at home. If people can afford to bring along grandparents or babysitters, then they can still rest and relax. If they can’t, working may beat refereeing back-seat boxing matches in the minivan. What’s more, vacations, especially with gas prices at \$3 a gallon and airfares rising, aren’t cheap. “It takes a lot of resources to vacation with a family. Not everybody can afford to go to Paris.”

Besides, if they go there in August, they might find all the shops closed. ■

Women Who Step Out of the Corporate World Find It Hard To Step Back In

WOMEN EXECUTIVES who leave the corporate world when they hit a glass ceiling, want to raise a family full-time, or decide to focus on other interests, encounter frustrating roadblocks in their attempts to re-enter the workforce, according to new Wharton research.

To overcome the obstacles, women should confront the difficulties they face and prepare for their return to the labor force the moment they leave, says Monica McGrath, adjunct professor of management at Wharton, executive coach, and co-author of the study entitled “Back in the Game. Returning to Business After a Hiatus: Experiences and Recommendations for Women, Employers, and Universities.” “I was seeing many women who, when they reached 50 and their kids were heading off to college, said, ‘Now let me get back to work,’ and they couldn’t,” says McGrath. “These are talented professional women. Why was it so impossible?”

The study found that while 36 percent of the women who left their jobs said they were conflicted about their decision, 70 percent remained positive overall about the decision. When they were asked to describe their hunt for a job after deciding to return to work, 50 percent said they were frustrated, and 18 percent said the experience was depressing. The women were “angry about having to justify the time they took off and start over as if they had never gotten an MBA,” says McGrath, who is also the former director of leadership development for the Wharton MBA program.

McGrath conducted the research with two Wharton alumnae, Marla Driscoll, a former partner at Accenture, who has been an independent consultant for 2 years, and Mary Gross, head of learning and development with Merrill Lynch Investment Managers. The Wharton Center for Leadership and Change Management and the Forté Foundation, a nonprofit organization that develops women business leaders, supported the study.

In late 2004 and early 2005, the researchers surveyed 130 executives who had stepped out



of the workforce for at least 2 years and had already returned, or were trying to do so. Of those who responded, 83 percent were over 35, and 81 percent had an MBA. Sixty percent had left their jobs within the last 5 years and 18 percent within the last 10 years. At the time of the survey, 60 percent of the respondents had re-entered the workforce, and 32 percent were actively seeking employment.

Most of the respondents—64 percent—had planned to step out for 5 years or less, while 48 percent had planned to stay out for 2 years or less. In the end, 29 percent stayed out for about the amount of time they had anticipated, while 28 percent stayed out for a shorter period, and 43 percent stayed out longer. A full 87 percent of those who initially never planned to return to work were already back on the job or looking for employment.

The women indicated that they wanted to find a job for the intellectual challenge and stimulation of being back in the workforce. They were also returning out of economic necessity. “Economic times change. Children’s ages change. What these women thought was going to be a lot of money in their IRA is now not a lot,” McGrath says, citing comments that survey respondents made in followup interviews. Those who are part of the baby-boom generation seemed reluctant to fully retire between ages 50 and 65, McGrath noted. “That’s a long time to play golf.”

The study showed that the participants entered into their new job searches with realistic expectations. Forty-nine percent anticipated that the process would take at least a few months, and 36 percent thought they might have to take a lower-level position. Frustration developed when they actually started the interview process and had trouble even making it past initial gatekeepers.

Keeping Up With the Competition

Survey respondents reported that one obstacle to women re-entering the workforce is corporate recruiters' concern that experienced MBAs are more expensive than a new graduate. "[Recruiters] are thinking, 'I can get a Wharton MBA who graduated in 2005 who will hit the ground running. Or I can get an MBA who graduated [several years earlier], and I have to get them back on track, and that's going to take more time and money,'" says McGrath.

The best way to combat that problem is to stay up-to-date on skills and to keep a hand in the working world while absent from full-time employment. For example, women need to maintain professional licenses, take continuing education courses, and keep their informal network of business contacts alive if they hope to have an easy transition back to work, survey respondents said. Better yet, women who plan to return full-time should seek out project work or find short-term consulting jobs to remain in closer touch with the business community. "Being part of a project is a way to prove your mettle," says McGrath. One woman surveyed negotiated a deal with her boss to work on projects, even though that type of agreement was not official corporate policy. She took on short-term projects for different parts of the organization over 9 years. "When she came back full-time, she knew the company, and she knew all the people."

When study participants were asked to describe their hunt for a job after deciding to return to work, 50 percent said they were frustrated, and 18 percent said the experience was depressing.

Many of the executive women McGrath coaches have a spouse who has decided to

step out of the workplace to manage the home. Those men almost always continue some kind of connection to their work life. "When the women talk about the role their husbands take, they all talk about the business the husband does on the side," says McGrath. "The men seem to stay more connected. I'm not sure women do that when they are home."

Keeping up with Excel is just one example of how women can improve their chances of easing back into the workforce, suggests McGrath. A large number of women who responded to the survey had worked in the financial industry and learned how to do a spreadsheet in business school. "Two years later, the technology changes. It's totally unacceptable to say, 'I don't know how to do that.'" Another frustration for survey respondents was being told they were overqualified for jobs they were willing to take just to get back into the workforce. One woman said she was thinking about removing her MBA from her resume.

McGrath advises women to be honest and unapologetic about the time they stepped out but to quickly return the focus to the present. "You can say, 'I felt I could make a bigger impact with my parents who were sick, and here is how I've been keeping myself up-to-date on skills.'" The best way for a woman to make her case is to take a proactive stance, not apologizing for taking time off for family but framing her story in business terms and adopting a tone that exudes strength.

Four Sons and Teamwork

For example, one woman spent her years out of the workforce raising four sons. "This person was very confident and said, 'Let me tell you how managing a family with four sons is like managing people at work,'" says McGrath. "She was able to cite a long list using business language." McGrath gave another example: "Don't say, 'I helped raise \$100,000 for my kid's school.' Say 'I was part of a team that put together a fundraising program.' There are ways to frame it."

The survey results indicate women attempting to go back to work set out with confidence. Then, when confronted with obstacles, they begin to suffer self-doubt, which only makes their situation worse, says McGrath. "When

they meet resistance, they are taken aback. They are not prepared for it, and they lose confidence. There is a difference between interviewing from power and confidence and interviewing in such a way that you feel a need to explain yourself.”

For many of those who responded to the survey, the best route back to work was through smaller companies. Of those who had returned to full-time jobs, 59 percent joined companies that were smaller than the companies they worked for before they stepped out. Only 20 percent were at larger companies, and 21 percent had joined companies of roughly the same size. The trend was stronger among younger women: 63 percent of respondents up to age 45 joined smaller companies, while 50 percent of respondents over 45 joined smaller firms than the ones they had left.

Wharton’s McGrath advises women to be honest and unapologetic about the time they stepped out but to quickly return the focus to the present.

The strong showing for small companies also reflects respondents who are now self-employed. Of those who had re-entered the workforce, 45 percent are self-employed. “Our hypothesis is that the migration to smaller companies and to their own businesses is a way to have control over their hours and perhaps a way to convince people that they have the competency to do the job,” says McGrath, adding that many of the respondents used their time out of the workforce to reflect on where they wanted to go next in their careers. Of those who had returned to the workforce, 61 percent had changed industries, and 54 percent had changed the kind of role they played on the job.

Employers who are interested in attracting women returning to the workforce should offer more flexible programs, says McGrath. Companies should also train their recruiting staffs to recognize the value that women returning from a break in their careers can bring and should develop mentoring initiatives for women—with structured programs similar to the ones they have for relocating employees or ex-patriots.

Finally, she says she would like to see an annual “best of” list for companies that welcome women who are returning to work. Among those she cites are Deloitte & Touche, IBM, Rohm and Haas, and Goldman Sachs. “I think companies are still trying to make sure that they are women-friendly,” says McGrath. “Maybe we will never know the real reasons that women run into barriers, but I tend to be optimistic. I think it’s just that no one at the most senior level of the company has ever said that finding women who want to reenter the workplace and helping them become successful is what he or she wants their workplace to be known for.”

Universities can also play a part in helping smooth the way for MBAs and other professional women to return to work. Schools could offer targeted career services, alumni networks, and executive education programs to update skills for women trying to re-start their careers. They should also ask students to think more about the various paths their careers may take once they have a few years of experience in the working world. “We need to encourage women to think of their career as a lifetime,” says McGrath. “They need to be asked, ‘What’s your game plan?’ Companies are diligent and strategic in planning the path for a talented person’s career. As women, we need to do a better job of that ourselves.” ■

Work and Family: Is Peaceful Co-existence Possible?

WORKING TOO MUCH, worrying about work too much, neglecting family, neglecting self, experiencing conflict, dissatisfaction, depression. These problems are all-too familiar in today's overbooked, overworked world. Indeed, they seem practically inevitable in a culture that defines success as "having it all."

Everyone struggles to balance work and family; everyone has some firsthand knowledge of the stress, frustration, and fatigue that arise when personal and professional priorities conflict. We are all familiar, too, with the massive commercial response to this pattern. Seminars, self-help books, software, support groups, periodicals, electronic planners, executive briefcases, and even executive pens have been developed to help people negotiate the competing, increasingly complex demands of modern life.

This flood of knowledge, advice, and specialized equipment speaks both to an acute need for help and to the skillful exploitation of that need by a business sector whose pressurized atmosphere produced that need in the first place. The demand for practical tips on living is so great that people are willing to pay top dollar for organizational and psychological assistance. (This reviewer happens to be devoted to her Seven Habits Organizer, which sits open before her as she writes. Item number one on the Prioritized Daily Task List: Finish writing book review.)

As inspirational and even consoling as much of this material is (my planner is bound in soft green soothing suede; it contains an uplifting quote for every day of the year), it tends to be a bit light on actual information. We are rich in theories and opinions about what is at stake for people working in today's fast-paced and impersonal corporate environment, but we are comparatively poor in hard data about what choices professionals as a population actually make and how they experience the results of those choices.

Stewart D. Friedman and Jeffrey H. Greenhaus address this problem in their new book *Work and Family—Allies or Enemies? What Happens When Business Professionals Confront Life*



Choices. Forthcoming from Oxford University Press this summer, *Work and Family* sets out to study the lived experience of 860 business professionals, as recorded in an extensive questionnaire designed to elicit both the facts of their life situations (how many hours a week they work, how many hours they devote to childcare each week, what sort of work they do, and so on) and their feelings about those situations (how satisfied they are with their careers, their families, their personal growth, and so on).

The group surveyed consists of business graduates from Wharton and Drexel, and the substance of the book centers on an elaborate interpretation of their responses. The authors report their data in a logical way, their explanations are clear, and they supplement the whole with various charts and graphs for easy statistical reference. The book is a solid account of the difficult culture of modern professionals, an account whose dual emphasis on quantitative and qualitative factors allows

it both to confirm conventional wisdom and to uncover surprising new information.

One confirmation: Motherhood remains a career liability for women, while fatherhood is actually a career asset. Women are still doing most of the child care, while men with stable family lives advance faster than single men. Some new information: Families seem to be more stable when mothers work long hours than when fathers do. Conventional wisdom says that kids are healthier and better adjusted if their parents are involved in their lives. Friedman and Greenhaus expose a far more complicated reality. On the one hand, their numbers show, the truism holds for fathers: When dad isn't home much, and when he is distracted by work while at home, kids act out more. On the other hand, the truism does not hold true for mothers: When mom is working overtime, it turns out, kids actually do better. Their explanation: A professionally happy mom has more to give her family than moms who are ambivalent about their decision to slow or even sacrifice their careers after having children.

The number of hours worked has very little to do with whether professionals are happy with their home lives. Rather, what seems to determine satisfaction is the degree to which people can focus.

Another intriguing finding: Contrary to popular belief, time is not the most important issue when it comes to balancing work and family. Friedman and Greenhaus show convincingly that the number of hours worked has very little to do with whether professionals are happy with their home lives. Rather, what seems to determine satisfaction is the degree to which people can focus. Being able to switch gears effectively, so that work stays at work and home life doesn't intrude at the office, is far more important to a sense of overall well-being than having more total free time.

Findings such as these prove the value of the authors' detailed, scientific approach. Amassing data allows statistically significant patterns to emerge, some of which confirm our intuitions and some of which press us to rethink our assumptions about what work and family are and about what it takes to "have it all." The authors suggest, for example, that rather than

seeing work and family as competing for time and attention, we might begin to see them as mutually constitutive and beneficial; in other words, we might be more effective at home and at work if we could allow positive energy to flow from one domain to the other. If we could do that, the authors suggest, we could begin to build a better future, one where corporations would be more family-centered, where working mothers would no longer be at a structural disadvantage, and where everyone—parents, children, and businesses—would come out ahead.

Moving from statistical analysis to social manifesto, *Work and Family* aims to be an inspiring blend of data and dream work, an uplifting account of how we might re-imagine our lives that gets its power from a solid grounding in fact. The irony is that this goal might have been better realized if the authors had borrowed some of the catchy strategies found in the softer work they aim to displace.

Simply put, as good as *Work and Family* is, it is also awfully dry. It reports findings with care, but not with particular flair. And it makes its recommendations for the future in such bland and abstract terms that they are hard to grasp. The authors write in their preface that they hope the book will appeal to a general audience as well as to specialists, and they are right to want to make their findings available to the lay reader. After all, that is who stands to benefit most from the information and vision Friedman and Greenhaus have to impart. But the straightforward reporting of numbers and the restrained interpretation of those numbers is not likely to be enough to attract or keep the sort of broad attention this work deserves.

Work and Family avoids the sort of chatty, prescriptive anecdotes that characterize best-selling work such as Stephen R. Covey's *First Things First* and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, and it does so for good reason, because it is committed to building a case of another kind. And yet, the sad reality is that it is just this sort of personalized approach that would have made the book thoroughly engaging and accessible. In its desire to supply data where others have supplied anecdotes, *Work and Family* avoids exemplary anecdotes almost entirely. And in so doing, it misses its chance to convert a dry sociological study into a readable and therefore usable piece of social criticism. ■

More Than Job Demands or Personality, Lack of Organizational Respect Fuels Employee Burnout

WHEN LAKSHMI RAMARAJAN worked for a nonprofit organization several years ago, she noticed a high turnover rate among the employees. It wasn't because of the work itself, but because of the organization's management. "Employees were passionate about their jobs but felt disrespected by their managers," says Ramarajan. "The employees were belittled and patronized and often publicly chastised for challenging the status-quo." Complaints about the negative work environment "were met with inertia or rejected out of hand. Eventually, a lot of employees left."

That experience led to a research paper co-authored by Ramarajan, now a doctoral student in the Wharton Management Department, and Wharton Management Professor Sigal Barsade entitled "What Makes the Job Tough? The Influence of Organizational Respect on Burnout in Human Services."

According to Barsade, "One of the biggest complaints employees have is they are not sufficiently recognized by their organizations for the work that they do. Respect is a component of recognition. When employees don't feel that the organization respects and values them, they tend to experience higher levels of burnout."

Or, as Ramarajan puts it, "it is often not the job that burns you out, but the organization."

A Sense of Identification

While the researchers' paper focuses on the health care industry—specifically on certified nursing assistants (CNAs) in a large, long-term care facility—their findings apply to a broader range of industries and individuals. Barsade, for example, cites a project she did for the real estate, accounting, and legal departments of a large financial services agency. "The people in these departments were known as 'nonproducers.' That wasn't their formal title, but it was what they were called because they were not revenue generators. Not only did they not have as much power as the people who brought in the money," but their contributions



in terms of helping streamline and improve the company's operations were not acknowledged. "This does not suggest a culture of respect," Barsade says.

She also cites physicians allied with HMOs who are often told how many patients they must see each day, how long they can spend with the patients, and what diagnostic questions they must ask. "Doctors can't offer customized care under these circumstances. They feel disrespected and are more prone to burnout" than doctors who work more autonomously, she suggests.

A company's culture—which, for the purposes of the study, is defined as "the unwritten norms and values surrounding how employees are valued as individuals"—plays an important role in burnout, the researchers say. "We know that employees start identifying with an organization as soon as they join it," says Ramarajan. "The more they feel respected as a member of the group, the more likely they are to have that sense of identification. Respect is a way in which employees get entrenched into the workplace and feel that what they do is meaningful. Conversely, if they observe that people around them are disrespected, they come to a consensus that the organization doesn't treat people well."

The researchers cite several ways in which the perception of organizational respect or disrespect can influence employee burnout. For example, “in situations where employees perceive that the organization does not treat employees with respect or dignity, burnout can occur from employee demoralization. Disrespected employees may need to mask their true emotional reaction regarding how their organization treats them while they assist their clients. This masking and suppressing could increase emotional exhaustion, a major component of burnout studied in the human services industry.”

Conversely, the researchers say, “individuals who feel respected by their organizations are more likely to expend effort on behalf of the organization” and are thus less likely to experience burnout.

“Negative Affectivity”

Barsade and Ramarajan were especially interested in health care because many of the lower-level jobs in that industry tend to be difficult and because a lot of research has been done on the industry’s burnout rate, says Barsade. “In the existing literature, there are two factors that have predicted burnout and why it occurs. The first factor is the job itself. The second is the personality of the employees and the presence of ‘negative affectivity’—someone’s propensity to be high energy in their negative emotions, such as anger, irritability, anxiety, or frustration. It’s not that people are always feeling that way but that they are feeling that way more so than people who have less negative affectivity. We focused on those two factors.”

Within health care, Barsade adds, the CNA job was especially interesting because the work is so hard. “There are tough physical components involved in helping patients, such as lifting them, bathing and feeding them, cleaning up after them, and so forth. And there are also emotionally taxing components, such as when the CNA gets attached to a patient who dies, or when patients demand constant attention and care. So what better place to see what impact the organization has on the burnout levels of its employees and what they can do about it?” In addition, she says, burnout can affect the quality of patient care.

One approach an organization can take to try and decrease burnout and reduce turnover is to hire people who aren’t going to be stressed out by the job. That, of course, is not only difficult to predict with complete accuracy but is often not feasible given the labor market supply. Organizations can also try to change the job to make it less demanding; but, at least in the case of CNA positions, the ability to do that is limited because of the nature of the job. A third approach—one not addressed by the existing research on burnout—is to consider the organizational culture of the company, says Barsade. “Can the values of the company—including whether you treat employees with respect or with disrespect—influence how people do their work and whether or not they will feel burned out?” Although burnout can lead to higher turnover costs in any industry, health care is especially interesting because the nature of its work is more likely to result in burnout. “As our country ages, this will become a bigger and bigger issue,” Barsade says.

A company’s culture—the unwritten norms and values surrounding how employees are valued as individuals—plays an important role in burnout, the researchers say.

In conducting their study—which looked at CNAs from 13 units across three sites of a long-term care facility during two different time periods, 2003 and 2005—the researchers measured several aspects of participants’ jobs. Under the heading “organizational respect,” for example, participants were asked to rank how characteristic, or how uncharacteristic, the following five statements were of their organization: “Staff members respect each other;” “Staff members are treated with dignity;” “Cultural diversity of the staff is valued;” “Supervisors pay attention to staff members’ ideas;” and “Staff members are encouraged to be creative when solving problems.” These were the characteristics that a committee of senior managers and employees thought best illustrated how organizational respect would be demonstrated in their organization.

Under the heading of “autonomy,” participants were asked to respond to the following

statements: “In general, how much say or influence do you feel you have in what goes on in your unit?” “Do you feel that you can influence decision making...regarding things about which you are concerned?” “Does your supervisor ask your opinion when a problem comes up which involves your work?”

Under the heading “trait negative affectivity,” employees rated their general tendency to feel irritable, upset, nervous, afraid, and guilty. “Burnout” was measured by participants’ reactions to four statements: “I feel emotionally drained from my work;” “I feel used up at the end of the workday;” “I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job;” and “I feel burned out from my work.”

Among the Study’s Findings

■ Organizational respect influences burnout above and beyond the effects of job demands and negative affectivity. Because existing studies conceptualize burnout as stemming from the job or the individual, rather than the organization, “the ‘problem’ from a managerial perspective is the person,” the authors note. “Succumbing to burnout becomes a private affair of the employee and not something of concern to the organization as a whole... This ignores the contextual sources of the problem.”

Furthermore, the researchers say, “by conceptualizing job demands as a primary cause of emotional exhaustion,” the nature of the work is seen as the culprit, rather than “the multiple sources of an employees’ work experience.” Human services jobs—such as caring for elderly sick patients or working with mentally ill individuals—may be difficult, the researchers add, but the “presumption that the demands are due to client interaction means that very little can be done about changing the negative parts of the experience.” In fact, the researchers suggest, companies can take a number of steps to change the organizational culture.

■ The impact of organizational respect on burnout is felt most strongly when job autonomy is low. This finding confirms the researchers’ hypothesis going into the study about the importance of autonomy, which they define as “the discretion that one has to determine the processes and schedules involved in completing a task.” Autonomy,

the researchers note, can act as a buffer on stress—and actually decrease job burnout—if autonomy is high, but not if it is low.

■ The respect with which an organization treats its employees “is a pervasive organizational-level phenomenon that employees can recognize and agree upon,” the researchers note.

By conceptualizing job demands as a primary cause of emotional exhaustion, the nature of the work is seen as the culprit, rather than the multiple sources of an employees’ work experience.

In addition, “respect can be a powerful signal to individuals regarding their standing not only as employees but as people... As information comes from a variety of sources, one’s perceptions of respect and disrespect are not only based on how one views one’s own treatment but also by how others are treated. For example, when team members see someone else on the team being treated unfairly, they alter their own perceptions of the fairness of the team. Likewise, the extent to which others, not just the self, are treated...can influence an individual’s own perceptions of respect.”

Ramarajan and Barsade carry this point further: Given the increasing importance of health care providers in aging societies, one aspect of burnout is especially crucial—the phenomenon of human services workers mentally “turning over” but remaining physically present. “In our study, we found that being a longer-tenured employee was significantly correlated with higher burnout. From a managerial perspective, withdrawal behaviors are perhaps more important to human services organizations than turnover because withdrawal may be the response taken by employees who do not have high-quality job alternatives,” they write.

In the worst-case scenario, the researchers add, “disrespectful organizations can be left with neglected and neglectful individuals who have figured out how to cope or survive by mentally turning over, while those with better job alternatives—or more commitment to their professions rather than the organization—end up leaving.”

Putting Work in a Broader Context

The authors' research has a number of implications for managers. While it is likely, the authors note, "that disrespect is experienced across industries, disrespect for individuals may be particularly problematic in the helping professions where concern for individuals is supposedly paramount." Because it is not just the demands of the job, or the personality of the employee, that drive burnout in human services jobs, but is also the organizational environment, "then there is a point of entry for human resource management. Good versus poor management, in the form of organizational respect, may therefore have a clear and critical role in stemming burnout in human service organizations."

For example, Barsade suggests that HR departments make it clear they respect and value the work employees do and recognize the difficulty of that work. "Employees understand that internally their work is very significant to how well the organization achieves its goals." Companies like Mary Kay, Inc., are based on the idea of "rewarding people to success," she says. "Mary Kay rewards for everything. It uses respect as a powerful motivator for its sales force of independent contractors."

Employers can also highlight to their employees how important their work is to society as a whole, Barsade adds. "Very often, caretaking

work is not all that valued, but if employees in a daycare center, for example, understand that they are involved in early childhood education," this puts their work in a broader context. In addition, she suggests that for people in jobs that don't pay very well (and won't in the future), managers can at least compliment employees, hold awards dinners, and so forth, "just so long as these shows of respect are authentic."

This doesn't mean that managers "can't look at employees' performance or can't disagree with suggestions and demands that employees might put forward," Ramarajan adds. "It just means that everything is done with an attitude of respect." This approach won't just make employees feel better. "It will help them stay with the organization and do a better job. So it's not just about keeping your employees happy but actually doing the job the organization exists to do."

Does Ramarajan think employees would be surprised to learn that job burnout is not always "their fault," but can also reflect the way the organization treats them? "I don't think employees would be surprised, but I do think managers and/or corporate executives might be. And I think employees would be surprised to find out how widely shared this experience is." ■