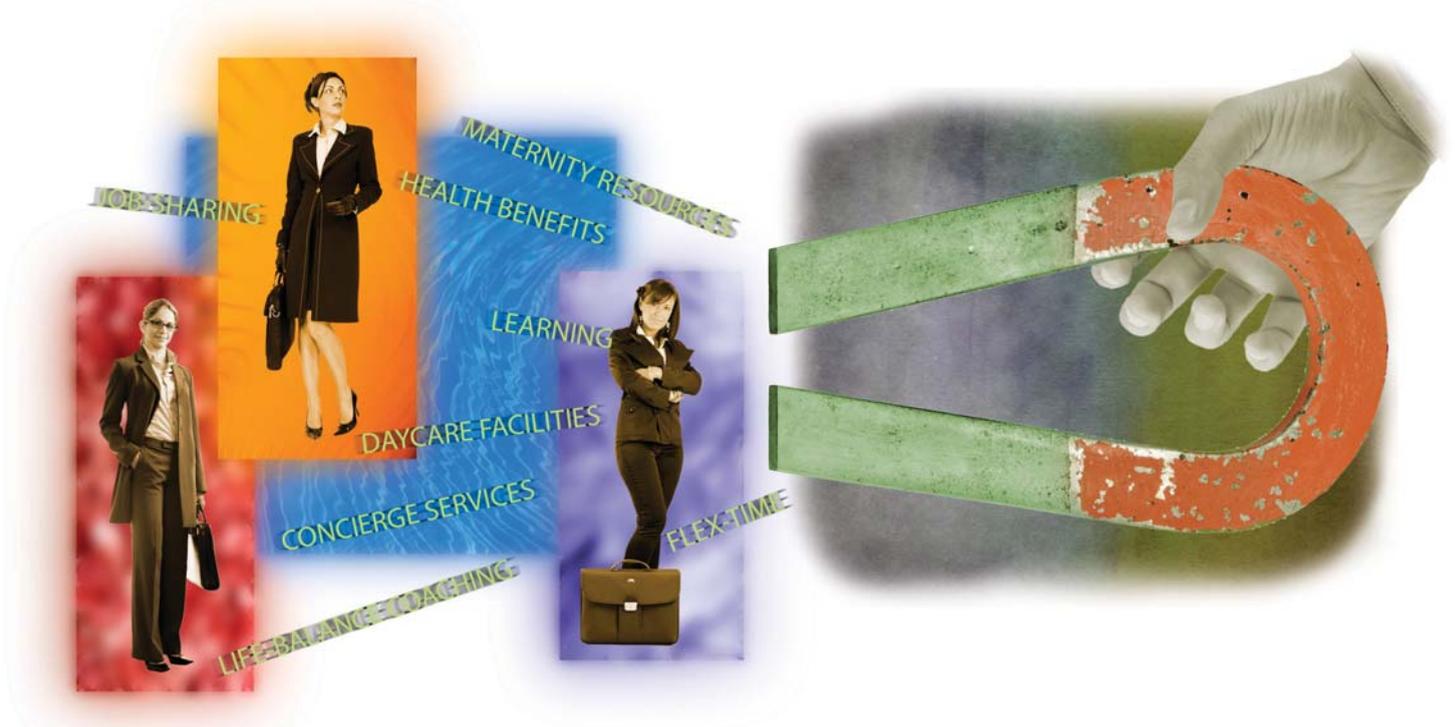


Family value

Progressive practices help companies recruit career-focused mothers



By Lisa Martin

When senior executives find, develop and keep great talent, their organizations excel.

A key segment of the top talent: career-oriented mothers. Wondering what these professionals sought in employers, ConnectMoms, Momcafé and Lisa Martin International conducted a nationwide survey to determine what women, and particularly mothers, identified as the hallmarks of an ideal organizational culture.

The survey's results were clear: Canadian professional women wanted employers that offered flexibility, supportive leadership and progressive programs.

In response to this demand, we created the annual Progressive Employers of Canada List. With this list, we hoped to encourage organizations to consider innovative ways of offering value to employees. We also wanted to share this information with savvy, educated professionals nationwide and to enhance dialogue among these groups and ultimately see more supportive workplaces.

The 2009 and 2010 lists acknowledge

more than 40 organizations for their practices.

What selective criteria did we use? Whereas many other employer lists emerge from nominations made by closed executive judicial committees, we held open nominations. Our approach is also unique in that the criteria were developed by working moms themselves, across Canada.

What moms are saying

According to career-oriented mothers, organizations need to offer a range of the following services or benefits to be considered supportive of working parents:

- personal/life-balance coaching;
- access to emergency and on-site childcare;
- information and access to daycare facilities;
- flex-time, job co-operatives/job-sharing, part-time or contract positions;
- maternity and paternity resources;
- lactation rooms;
- concierge services; and
- health benefits.

How does an organization create a culture that helps it attract and retain female talent?

Personal/life-balance coaching

- **Counselling:** This provides support, motivation and resources for employees seeking lifestyle changes.
- **EFAP:** The employer offers an employee family assistance program (EFAP) with 24-hour access. (For more on EFAPs, see page 31.)
- **Learning:** An in-house educational “university” provides learning opportunities to develop staff in their current jobs and prepare them for advancement.
- **“Lunch and learn” sessions:** Employee-led sessions give colleagues a chance to share skills.
- **Briefcase Moms:** This coaching program brings mothers together to address the practical and emotional challenges in being a working parent.

Emergency and on-site childcare

- **Backup childcare benefit:** This eases the stress and financial loss caused by emergencies with regular childcare providers.

- **Backup family care benefit:** This applies when regular care arrangements are disrupted or emergency care is required for family members such as parents or grandparents who don't qualify for the backup childcare benefit.
- **Daycare:** Access to a daycare located in many cities nationally providing full-time, part-time or emergency backup childcare.
- **Childcare on site:** This allows moms to breastfeed and spend breaks with children throughout the workday.
- **Ability to bring children:** Part-time employees may bring their children to work on school professional-development days if they don't have other options. Offices can stock toys, books and art supplies and supply child-size sofas.

Flex-time, job co-operatives/ job-sharing, part-time or contract positions

- **The mommy shift:** This shift (9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday to Friday) targets mothers who want to work while their kids are at school. Moms may also take school professional-development days and summers off to spend time with the kids.
- **Flexible schedules:** A full range of options allows working at home, compressed work weeks and the ability to adjust start and stop times by up to two hours before or after normal start times ("individual work schedule").

Maternity and paternity resources

- **Maternity leave top-up:** This option tops maternity leave pay up to 100 per cent for up to 17 weeks, depending on length of service.
- **Adoption assistance:** This benefit provides consultation and referral, as well as reimbursement for adoption expenses up to \$2,500 per child.
- **Handbook for expectant and new parents:** An employer can develop a handbook providing employees with tools and resources to manage their leaves, including planning and preparation, making the transition between work and home, being on leave and returning to work. It can be supplemented with an online "parents who work" resource that gives access to external information on pregnancy, child development, childcare, health and safety, products and services,

and governmental resources.

- **Managers' handbook:** An employer can develop a step-by-step guide with tools and resources that outlines the manager's role at various stages of the employee's leave.
- **"Welcome baby" gift box:** An employer can provide employees with a box containing helpful resources and information about maternity and parental leave programs and partnerships, as well as a small gift for the baby and a personal letter from the company president.
- **Family community group:** Such a group, offered or referred through the employer, can help people achieve personal and professional goals by providing useful family information and a support network of colleagues. Similarly, a new moms' group can be a forum for discussion of many topics associated with parenthood, including the transitions between work and maternity leave.

Lactation rooms

Employers can designate wellness or quiet rooms or allow reservation of offices or meeting rooms for lactation, religious observance, etc.

Concierge services

- **In-house "healthwise" consultant:** Paid by the organization, the consultant advises on personal wellness (exercise, diet, nutrition, EFAP, etc.). The organization can also employ an in-house financial consultant to counsel on personal financial wealth (mortgages, RSPs, savings, etc.) and in-house career consultant who advises employees on their futures, paid educational leave and job-shadowing.
- **Celebrations:** The organization provides lunch for all employees every Friday and cake or dessert the first Friday of each month to celebrate employees' birthdays.
- **Extras:** For work-life balance, managers and professionals can receive personal services available from outside suppliers to handle a range of tasks, such as dropping off library books and booking airfare and accommodations.

For information on organizations offering such options, visit www.progressiveemployers.com. Want to nominate a company? Nominations for the 2011 Progressive Employers of Canada List open on January 30, 2011. ■



Lisa Martin of Lisa Martin International helps organizations maximize their talent. She is provider of the Briefcase Moms coaching program, author of the book

Briefcase Moms and co-author, with Alan Weiss, of the forthcoming Talent for Life. See www.lisamartininternational.com.

2010 Progressive Employers of Canada List

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs
BC Children's Hospital Foundation*
BC Hydro*
Bugalug
Coast Capital Savings*
Dell Canada*
Desnoyers-Schuler Inc.
Ernst & Young Canada*
Flight Centre Canada*
Habañero Consulting Group*
IBM Canada Ltd.*
Kraft Canada Inc.*
Kwantlen Polytechnic University*
Mabel's Labels Inc.
McNeill Nakamoto
Recruitment Group Inc.*
Mennonite Central Committee
British Columbia*
Nannies on Call*
Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc.*
Nurse Next Door Home
Healthcare Services*
Please Mum*
PricewaterhouseCoopers Canada*
SavvyMom Media, Inc.*
Steadyhand Investment Funds Inc.*
Sweetspot.ca*
TD Bank Financial Group*
Telus*
Webnames.ca Inc.*
WestCoast Families magazine*

*This employer is located in whole or in part in British Columbia.

Note: Inclusions have not been vetted for accuracy, as this was the responsibility of nominators.