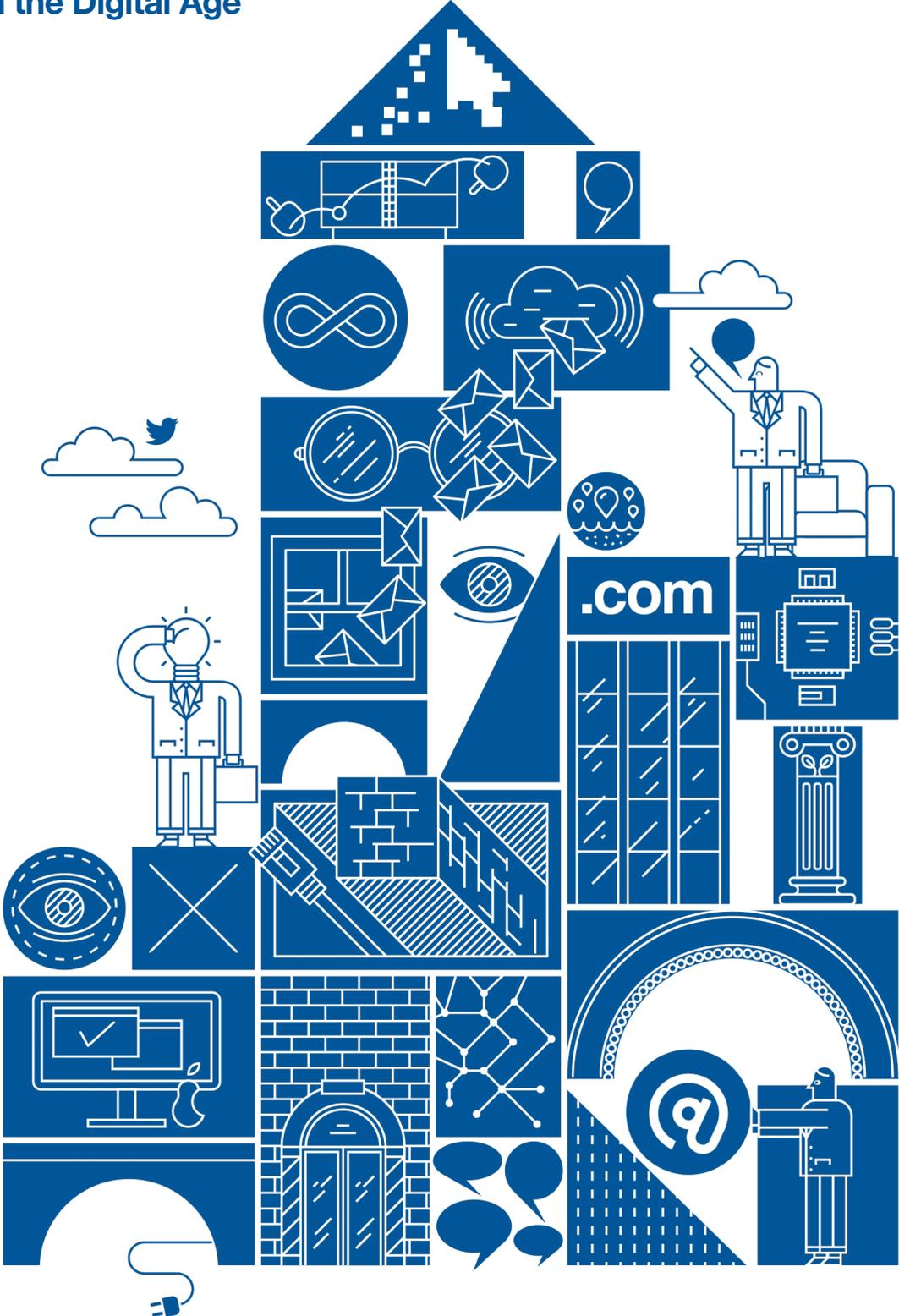


Reinventing the Company

in the Digital Age



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Implications of the Revolution in Work and Family

Stewart D. Friedman

Professor Stewart D. Friedman sees us in the midst of a revolution in gender roles, both at work and at home, as the context for major life decisions about careers and families has changed for young business professionals. Friedman has examined the radical shifts in young people's values and aspirations about careers and family life to find out what we need to do to ensure a brighter future for them and for subsequent generations.

He starts from the premise that we need to continue replacing the human population; that children will still need caregivers to lovingly care for, educate and support them, both financially and emotionally, as they grow; and that we must continue to build a society that is ripe with opportunity and choice for both men and women. Also for those people who want to become parents, it is essential for society to make it easy enough for them to foresee how they can realize this wish. Organizations and social institutions have an important role to play cultivating an increasingly adaptable and productive workforce that can both compete in the global economy and raise the next generation. He concludes by saying all of this must come together in order to empower individuals to create sustainable change, with a particular emphasis on the challenges and opportunities for the future.

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Key Features for the Company of the Future:

Set Clear Goals

And promote flexibility and provide support for childcare. Establish clear and measurable goals and give as much flexibility as possible as to where, when, and how the work is conducted. Recognize that employees' compensation is not just in the paycheck but, especially for Millennials, also in the control of their time. In addition, private-sector leaders should encourage government sponsorship of excellent childcare.

Make Work Meaningful

Connect work to social benefits, either by providing more direct feedback from clients about the value of a firm's services or undertaking other initiatives to serve some charitable aim. Young people today want to have a positive social impact through their work. If their jobs resulted in greater social impact and made more use of their talents they might not feel the need to split time between work and civic engagement.

Encourage Slow Careers

By providing models and encouragement for alternative paths, employers should demonstrate that it's acceptable to off-ramp and then on-ramp—for young men and women during the childbearing years, for older workers when they need to care for aging parents, and for all workers who need to take time off for any number of reasons. This is how we retain talented Millennials and experienced senior employees.

Implications of the Revolution in Work and Family

We are in the midst of a revolution in gender roles, both at work and at home. And when it comes to having children, the outlook is very different for those embarking on adulthood's journey now than it was for the men and women who graduated a generation ago. I recently published research, conducted under the auspices of the Wharton Work/Life Integration Project,¹ comparing Wharton's Classes of 1992 and 2012. One of the more surprising findings is that the percentage of Wharton graduates who plan to have children has dropped by about half over the past twenty years. It's worth noting that these percentages are essentially the same for both men and women, both in 1992 and in 2012. The reality today is that Millennial men and women are opting out of parenthood in equal proportions. This change in Wharton students' plans for parenting is part of a larger trend: a nation-wide baby bust that has implications for families, for society and for organizations.

The context for major life decisions about careers and families has changed for young business professionals. Where do we need to go from here—as a society, in our organizations, as individuals, and in our families—in the midst of what surely is a time of revolutionary change in gender roles, family structure, and career paths? What do the radical shifts in young people's values and

aspirations about careers and family life tell us about what we need to do to ensure a brighter future for them and for subsequent generations?

There are a few imperatives on which I don't think many will disagree: we need to continue replacing the human population, and children will still need caregivers to lovingly attend to them, educate them, and support them, both financially and emotionally, as they grow. We must continue to build a society that is ripe with opportunity and choice for both men and women. And for those people who want to become parents, it behooves us as a society to make it easy enough for them to foresee how they can realize this wish. We need our organizations and social institutions to cultivate an increasingly adaptable and productive workforce that can both compete in the global economy and raise the next generation.

The percentage of Wharton graduates who plan to have children has dropped by about half over the past twenty years

Our current capacity to meet these challenges is cause for serious concern. Yet there are reasons for hope, too. We observed that young people are not including children in their future plans for a complex web of reasons. So there is no one solution; partial answers must come from various quarters. In this chapter, I'll offer recommendations based on what we found and what others have learned. I'll begin with ideas for action in social policy and education, and then describe what organizations can do. I'll next describe a model for empowering individuals to create sustainable change, with a particular emphasis on the challenges and opportunities faced by men who are aiming to lean in at home and win in their careers, as so much is already written by, for, and about women. I'll close with a few thoughts about new conceptions of family life. But first, a quick review of our major findings.

Highlights of What We Discovered

We found evidence of increased freedom and possibility as both men and women feel less constrained by gender role stereotypes. But we also observed significant challenges for Millennials who value parenthood but don't see a clear path toward it.

The Millennials in our study reported that work is consuming more and more of life. And both their family and career aspirations were lower than those of their Gen X counterparts. They described pressure to conform to a narrow set of career paths, a finding that runs counter to what's being observed in the careers of MBA students,² who are moving toward

entrepreneurial ventures. I suspect that this shift among MBAs is in part a reaction to the limited options for meaningful and flexible work that many young people encounter in the standard post-undergraduate tracks. By their late twenties, young adults may come to realize that they want something more from their careers and they are able to assume greater control over their decisions than they were at the age of twenty-two.³

We observed, as others have,⁴ the constraining effects of economic pressures on whether to have children (for men) and when to have them (for women). We also saw that men's plans for having children are shaped by their anticipation of future conflicts between work and family life, and that as their expectations of such conflicts have grown over these past two decades, their family ambitions have plummeted.

At the same time, we found that today's young people, and especially women, more so than in the past, planned to invest their energy in the social sphere, by addressing societal problems and by forming networks of friends and fellow professionals. While young women continue to value parenthood, many are expecting to find fulfillment through other means. Young women who highly valued their health were disinclined toward parenthood. And the increasing proportion of women identifying as agnostic is another factor linked to reduction in plans for children. Further, young women now expect to be respected, want more time for their personal lives, and are more knowledgeable about what it takes to advance in their lives beyond the home. All told, there is a greater freedom for women to pursue paths that are uniquely meaningful to them, ones not prescribed by tradition or inherited norms. They're not locked into motherhood and seem better prepared now to forge their own paths.

Yet women we surveyed in 2012 were also more willing to accept either unequal career involvement in their relationships with life partners

or no children at all because, as a number of them reported, they are aware (more than their Gen X counterparts seemed to have been) that someone needs to be with children when they are young. While much has been written about Gen X women opting out of their careers, we found that Millennial women are planning instead to opt out of motherhood. As many have decried, however, the so-called opting-out phenomenon may not actually be a choice, but rather an indication that we are providing neither the sustainable career pathways nor the childrearing supports women, and men, require to pursue rich and full work and family lives.

Young women now expect to be respected, want more time for their personal lives, and are more knowledgeable about what it takes to advance in their lives beyond the home

While gender-stereotypical differences between women and men about family and dual-career relationships persist, today's young men expect to see women as peers in the workforce, see engaged fatherhood as a way of contributing to society, and are increasingly cognizant of the impending difficulties in resolving conflicts between work and family life. They want flexibility as much as or more than women do.⁵ Men's new awareness of and interest in the fullness of family life is a boon to women and children both.

Our study showed that men and women are now more aligned about deciding who in a dual-career relationship should “lean in” to their careers and when they should do so. And because they expect greater parity in career opportunities and commitments, Millennial men are increasingly motivated to experiment with new models for how both partners can have more of what each wants in life. Indeed I could write an entire book, with new material cropping up daily, about the young, highly educated men who are writing about being stay-at-home dads or about their experiences with paternity leave. Twenty years ago there was wide divergence between men and women; now there's more agreement about what it takes to make long-term relationships work. This convergence of attitudes promises greater collaboration and mutual support.

So, what does all this mean for what we should do now?

Strengthening the Infrastructure of Support through Social Policy and Education

As a commonwealth, we need to focus on what children in our society need: nurturing. How can they get it if the new norm is that both parents work and that we, unlike other developed countries and even many in the developing world, do not provide governmental and social supports for families? At present the US government spends less and less on our children.⁶ Our social policies must evolve to catch up to new realities: women are in the workforce outside the home, men are conflicted about how to have rewarding careers and rich family lives, and children—“the unseen stakeholders”⁷ at work—still need love and attention to thrive. Student debt is crushing the dreams of too many young people. They need relief from the astronomical and unsustainable cost of higher education. Our nation's youth are eager to serve society, but we don't provide a structure with incentives for national service. Indeed, those who want to pursue socially significant work anticipate that they will not be well remunerated; we as a society are not valuing service. What follows are actions we can and should pursue now.

– Provide World-Class Childcare

Children require care, yet the United States continues to rank among the lowest in the developed world in the quality of the early childhood care we provide.

Just as bad, the K–12 education we offer also falls short of our aspirations and of global norms. A massive overhaul could start with labor market compensation practices, which are now based on the principle that the closer one is to diapers, the lower one’s pay. A more forward-thinking approach would be at least to reduce this ratio, with all the training and licensing requirements that would be needed to justify much higher rates of pay for those who care for our youngest citizens, arguably our most precious resource. Although this has not been a panacea in European countries, it does support the desires of our young people to become parents and also have careers.

– **Make Family Leave Available**

Family leave, including paternity, is essential for giving parents the support they need to care for their children. Right now, only 11% of US employees receive paid family leave from their employers.⁸ The one public policy that covers time off to care for new children, the Family and Medical Leave Act, laudable though it is, still excludes 40% of the workforce. And millions who are eligible and need leave don’t take it, mainly because it’s unpaid, but also because of the stigma and real-world negative consequences.

We need to expand who’s eligible for FMLA and to make it affordable. Family and medical leave insurance funds such as the ones established in California and New Jersey and elsewhere, where employees pay a small amount into an insurance pool and can then draw wages while on leave, would make a huge difference in the lives of parents and children.⁹ Such laws alter the frames of reference for decisions about flexible work policies and practices, making them more normative and legitimate, and as researchers Shelley Correll, Joan Williams, and others have observed, this helps to reduce the flexibility stigma.¹⁰ I talk about this later, under “Changing Organizations.” Many Millennials value parenting but can’t see how to make it work. Flexibility without penalty will help.

– **Support Portable Health Care**

Given the increasing rates of interfirm mobility in our labor markets and the rising costs of health care, working parents benefit greatly from health care policies and practices that don’t punish them for taking time off or moving. The Affordable Care Act is a step in this direction. It will help families obtain needed care while avoiding crippling debt as both parents might now have to navigate careers in which they move from job to job. Our data revealed that if young people are to plan for children, they will need more support than they currently expect to receive.

– **Relieve Students of Burdensome Debt**

Skyrocketing interest rates on student loans and the increasing cost of higher education result in debt burdens that are too onerous. Our findings indicated

that too many young people simply can't envision a future in which they can afford to support children. This must be changed.

– **Revise the Education Calendar**

The standard school day is based on an outdated schedule. Other industrial and Western countries have children in schools for longer days and for a greater part of the calendar year. This provides much-needed support for working parents and, of course, greater enrichment for our children. The data from our 2012 sample indicated that though young people value parenting, they are struggling to envision how to make it work. This is another front on which the public sector can provide help.

– **Require Public Service**

The increasing emphasis on careerism doesn't mean that young people don't also want to do work that helps others. They do, despite their expectation that they will not be well compensated for it. But how do we as a society channel that enthusiasm and idealism? We could require a year of public service for post-secondary school youth, as is the case in some European countries. Professors of graduate students regularly observe that those who have served in the military (in the United States or abroad) are, as a rule, better organized, more serious about their studies, more conscious of their responsibilities as leaders, and generally better prepared to make decisions. Requiring some sort of service may improve our workforce and help all of us recalibrate what's really important.

– **Display a Variety of Role Models and Paths**

This might be an antidote to our finding that career paths have narrowed because students believe they must earn money quickly and that only a few career paths offer that option. The more that boys and girls hear stories about the wide range of noble, and economically viable, roles they can play in society, the easier it will be for them to choose freely the roles they are best suited for and want to play as adults. Young adults would benefit from opportunities to explore as wide an array of career alternatives as possible.

– **Teach Young People How to Lead Their Lives**

In both primary and secondary schools, boys and girls can be taught how to discover who they really want to be, and they can start to practice the skills they will need to fulfill their aspirations. In college, an increasing number of courses teach young men and women how to think about what's important and what success in life means to them; about their roles and responsibilities to society and in the different parts of their lives; and how to integrate them in creative ways, including how to harness the power of new technologies for communication while maintaining room in one's life for meaningful

in-person interaction. Placing greater emphasis on such training would enable young people to make more informed choices and would likely strengthen their resolve and their success in pursuing their aspirations. We have seen that religion has become less important in the lives of these young people, but it has not yet been supplanted by another lens through which we can view what really matters in life.

Changing Organizations

Frustration at not being able to pursue a career and a family—a condition many young people reported—may compel unfulfilled employees to leave an organization. This, too, has to change, and it can. Organizations have many possible routes for helping Millennials, as well as others, while adding to the bottom line. Smart organizations have already recognized that they benefit from doing so through increased productivity, engagement, health, and retention of talent.¹¹ The best interests of companies competing in the marketplace for talent are served by demonstrating a true embrace of work arrangements customized by and for each individual—Millennial or otherwise.¹²

Naturally it's easier for anyone to try something new if there are role models in the organization who've shown by example that there are various ways to succeed, if there's demonstrated commitment from top executives to trying new ways of contributing to the organization's goals while devoting real attention to the other parts of life, and if there are stories being told of others who are similarly engaged in experimenting with flexible means for achieving results.

Millennials want work with meaning, but they also want and need more flexibility—without which they can't imagine a rich life beyond work—and greater control over how they spend their time.¹³ And they are not alone in these desires. Gen X women who have opted out are also calling for greater flexibility.¹⁴ Others are as well. Here are ideas for actions employers can take that embrace these realities and support employees' development as valued assets to businesses:

- **Set Clear Goals Pursued by Flexible Means**

Establish clear and measurable goals and expectations and give as much flexibility as possible as to where, when, and how the work is conducted. Recognize that employees' compensation is not just in the paycheck but, especially for Millennials, also in the control of their time.¹⁵

- **Declare That It's Not for Women Only**

We don't need more initiatives that serve only to ghettoize work and family considerations as “women's issues.” Men may be even more affected by

conflicts between work and family.¹⁶ Frame non-work needs and interests, and all other family arrangements, as affecting not only mothers, but also fathers and single people.

– **Provide Support for Childcare**

Organizations should offer both regularly scheduled and emergency backup care. More important, for all businesses to be able to afford it, private-sector leaders should encourage government sponsorship of excellent childcare for all Americans, just as we have state-provided kindergarten and just as other first-world countries provide these types of family-friendly supports.

– **Make Work Meaningful**

Connect work to valued social benefits, whether this means providing more direct feedback from customers and clients about the value of a firm’s services or products, or undertaking other initiatives to serve some charitable aim.¹⁷ Compared to the past, young people nowadays want to have a positive social impact through their work.

As we’ve seen, young women who want jobs that will allow them to serve others are less likely to plan to have children. If their jobs were more fulfilling—that is, if they resulted in greater social impact and made more use of their talents—these women could pursue their career and social goals in one and the same role. They might not feel the need to split time between work and civic engagement, because working hard in their careers would mean progressing toward the goal of positive social impact. Being better able to pursue their career and social goals might give them room to have children, if they so desired. And of course, young women and young men are not the only ones who want meaningful work; we all do.¹⁸

– **Show How Children Can Benefit from Having Working Parents**

As journalist Lisa Belkin has pointed out, Millennial women have been inundated with messages about “opting out” and the difficulties of juggling career and family. What these conversations are missing out on is this: careers can enhance family life, and family life can enhance careers; there is a way to weave both into a rich, strong tapestry.¹⁹ A focus on the positive spillover effects of working parenthood may mean that fewer women will feel they must choose between personal and professional success and fewer men will allow fears of work-family conflict to inhibit their plans for fatherhood.

Young people need more positive examples. They need to hear loud and clear about executives such as John Donahoe, CEO of eBay, who leaned back to share in the care of his children; or Richard Fairbank, CEO of Capital One, who had his young children go to afternoon kindergarten in order that they would be able to stay up late enough for him to see them, and who coached

and played every sport in which his eight children participated, all while pursuing a high-powered career. We need to let ambitious young people know that Double Dutch (jumping two ropes at once) is not only possible; it's fun.

– **Learn to Manage Boundaries and Change the Culture of Overwork**

We're still at the start of the digital age, and we're just beginning to learn how to harness the power of technology and live in a hyperconnected world. Many people, not just Millennials, feel overwhelmed, and they need help, which smart businesses can provide, mainly by experimenting with what forms of communication work best and for what purposes.

Young people in our study expected to work fourteen more hours per week more than their 1992 counterparts, and they associated these longer work hours with greater conflict between work and life. How to break this cycle? Reduced hours would help to retain Millennials and allow them to live rich lives outside work.²⁰ One avenue is through regulation. Another is through the encouragement of norms about boundaries between work and the rest of life. In too many workplaces and industries, long hours are still seen as a badge of honor. Changing these traditions can be accelerated by such programs as those described by Harvard professor Leslie Perlow, which give teams the tools for organizing their work so that members can have predictable time off.²¹ Then tell the stories of successful alternatives to the standard model to make a range of such alternatives legitimate and culturally acceptable. End the glorification of the work warrior. Of course, saner work hours are better for all employees, not just Millennials. They are not the only ones experiencing the strain of overwork.

– **Fight the Flexibility Stigma**

Many organizations do provide “family-friendly” programs of one sort or another. Yet employees in non-standard work arrangements aren't seen in the same way as those who are,²² to the detriment of much-needed innovations in how, when, and where work is accomplished. Too often those who manage workplace policies designed to be friendly to families inform parents about eligible leaves, then directly or indirectly question their dedication and commitment to the firm when they take advantage of those policies. Sharing the stories, far and wide, of admirably successful alternatives to the standard track must be part of the solution. We must create new norms and fight the flexibility stigma. To this end, slow careers may be a significant part of the solution.

– **Slow Careers**

The slow movement (applied most famously to food) is about appreciating the value of basic human needs for connection and reflective living. Three decades ago, in 1980, organizational psychologist Lotte Bailyn wrote about the “slow burn way to the top,”²³ the benefits of which include normalization of

alternative career paths; specifically slowing down during prime childrearing years without career penalties, and then ramping up again as children mature. Employers should demonstrate that it's acceptable, even desirable, to off-ramp and then on-ramp—for young men and women during the childbearing years, for older workers when they need to care for aging parents, and for all workers who need to take time off for any number of reasons. By providing models and encouragement for alternative paths²⁴—and perhaps organizing work according to a series of projects rather than based on static positions—organizations can signal to employees that their job security is not affected by their having children. This is how we retain talented Millennials and experienced senior employees, and truly support our young families. Creating a variety of possible career paths is also a way of attacking the flexibility stigma.

Giving Individuals the Tools and Support to Choose the Lives They Want

Societal and organizational assistance is essential, but individuals, too, can be empowered and taught how to find solutions that work for them and also how to gain the support they need to achieve the lives they want to live. The central observation of our study is that not all young people today feel compelled to plan for children. For some, this represents an unfortunate constriction of their life goals—they want children but don't see how they can manage it. For others, not having children is what they truly want, at least at this phase of their lives, and thus represents a new liberation from outdated and constraining gender stereotypes.

In either case, it's critical that we focus on what can be done to help young people pursue their true interests with passion and confidence. If they are helped to see how they can realistically bring a sense of purpose to their careers and find the time, space, and support in their lives for all their aspirations, possibly including children, without having to suffer the unbearable conflict between work and the rest of their lives that many of them now foresee, then perhaps more of those who want to be a parent at some point will actually plan to become one.

Providing this kind of help begins with the recognition that one size cannot fit all. Solutions customized by and for individuals to meet their specific needs and interests must be the order of the day. Fortunately, there are proven methods now available that are applicable not only to the problems facing Millennials but for people at all life stages. Let me tell you about one such method.

In the 1990s the Wharton Work/Life Integration Project researched best practices for how people effectively pursue the ideal of aligning their actions with their values, in all parts of their lives. Out of this field research evolved three simple principles:

- Clarify what's important to you—your values and vision.
- Recognize and respect all domains of life—work, home, community, and self.
- Continually experiment with how goals are achieved.

At Ford Motor, where I was head of leadership development between 1999 and 2001, we successfully implemented a systematic process, Total Leadership, grounded in these principles. We designed a series of exercises that culminated in practical, individualized experiments designed to produce “four-way wins”: improved performance at work, at home, in the community, and for the private self (mind, body, spirit). Our goal was to help individuals overcome the fear and guilt that inhibited them from taking action to make things better for themselves as individuals, *and* for their families, *and* for our business, *and* for their communities. There was no *or* in this equation; it was all *and*.

Here's how it works. You articulate your values and vision for the future and then identify the most important people in the different domains of your life. You clarify mutual expectations in dialogue with these stakeholders, strengthening trust in the process. You think like a scientist and design experiments intended to produce four-way wins. Then you implement a couple of these experiments, measure their impact in all four domains of life, and, finally, reflect on what was learned from trying something new.

The Total Leadership process is grounded in these principles: clarify what's important to you, recognize and respect all domains of life and continually experiment with how goals are achieved

The key is that for each experiment, there are consciously intended benefits at work, at home, in the community, and for the private self—and some way to measure progress toward these benefits in each of the four domains. This is different from standard flex-time approaches where you ask your employer to give you something you want.

The usual result of such experiments is that people shift some of their attention from work to other parts of their lives and—in what seems paradoxical—they see improved performance at work and in the other domains because of greater focus, with less distraction, on the people and projects that really matter. They feel a greater sense of meaning and purpose, greater support for pursuing goals that matter, and more optimism about the future. Whether or not the experiments succeed, after reflecting on what works and what doesn't, they generate insights about how to create change in their lives that is sustainable, because such changes are actively and intentionally planned to produce benefits for all

the different stakeholders in all domains of life. The most critical outcome is greater confidence and competence in their ability to initiate positive change. There's a shift in how they think about what's possible. They are less afraid to try new ways to make it all work. And this is why this model is not only sustainable, but also contagious! And because it's entirely individualized, it's applicable to any life circumstance; this is not just for Millennials.

With students (undergraduates, MBAs, and executives) and in a wide array of organizations since 2001, we have found that, when given the chance, people are eager to take up the challenging task of experimenting with new ways to braid together the strands of their lives. And they're able to muster the courage and support to do so because they believe that the purpose of their initiatives is to make things better not just for themselves, not just for their families and communities, but for their organizations, too. This not only helps them overcome fear and guilt, but also buffers them against the flexibility stigma, because experiments are undertaken with the intent of achieving demonstrably improved performance at work. This is neither a perk nor a favor the company is doling out. Just the opposite: it's a boon to firm performance.

This approach directly addresses the needs we observed in Millennials to have work that is meaningful, to lead social lives that are rich, and to have flexibility and control in weaving a coherent tapestry. And of course this isn't the only proven approach to have emerged in the past decade.²⁵

So instead of first thinking about workplace flexibility as a program that one might want to somehow take advantage of, what is needed is a fundamentally different mind-set, with the individual asserting control and thinking, "This does not have to be a zero-sum game." The biggest hurdle to adopting this kind of method is the common construction "work/life balance."

As I've been arguing for decades, this term is retrogressive because it compels one to think automatically about conflict and trade-offs rather than encouraging creative thinking about practical ways of making life better in all its different parts.

Men Leaning In at Home

Much has been written already about how to help women succeed at home and at work, but men must be as much a part of the story as women. That's why I'm devoting this section to men. However you slice it, it's essential to have men's partnership in creating new alternatives—whether as stay-at-home dads, dads with extensive paternity leaves, or dads sharing care—and also in increasing their ownership of domestic responsibilities.

My subversive mission in creating the Total Leadership model was to provide the language and tools that men could use to address directly their

particular challenges in integrating work and the rest of life without feeling they were doing the “women’s work” of “finding balance.” This is critical still, especially in light of how, as we observed, gender role stereotypes linger in this period of transition.

The key words in this model were not *work/life*, *work/family*, and certainly not *balance*, but rather, *leadership*, *performance*, and driving change to produce *results*—words that convey the idea that this business is not for women only. And it worked. This language makes it easier for organizations to gain acceptance for using this approach to help people—men and women, at all career stages and all levels—learn what they can do personally to create meaningful, sustainable change that increases their productivity at work and their commitment to their work, and improves their lives beyond work.

Men today expect to make bigger contributions to their households than their fathers did,²⁶ and the anticipation of conflict between home and work has increased. Just as women need support from their organizations and their families to surmount the hurdles of fear and tradition that keep them from achieving, men, too, need help getting past the roadblocks that keep them from engaging more fully as caregivers and homemakers. Breaking the mold of deeply rooted gender stereotypes won’t be easy, because men face substantial barriers at work, in their homes, in their communities, and inside their own heads.²⁷ But for their fulfillment, and for women to advance in the world of work, men must advance in the world of home. The good news is that when men find smart, creative ways to dive in at home, they also perform better at work.

Men today expect to make bigger contributions to their households than their fathers did, and the anticipation of conflict between home and work has increased

Traditional gender stereotypes are prisons for men, too, and hold many men back from trying new approaches to work and family life.²⁸ Like women, men are penalized for requesting or enacting flexible schedules. Men may wonder, “What if I’m just not a good dad? What if I’m perceived by my friends as unmanly because I’m doing ‘women’s work’? What if my children see me as a poor role model because I’m not the breadwinner?” There is a whole new industry of stay-at-home dad (SAHD) bloggers; websites, books, and articles by and for SAHDs; and gatherings where they explore in nuanced and poignant detail what they are struggling with, and reveling in, as they try to weave a new fabric that combines breadwinning and caregiving.²⁹

So how does a man garner the courage to act, despite these worries and real-world impediments, and get his boss and coworkers to encourage him to have breakfast with his family, leave work in time to pick up the kids at school, take

paternity leave, and be truly focused on his family when he's with them instead of constantly checking his digital device about work matters? How can a man ask for the help he needs to sustain his involvement with his family and his work? And how does he enlist his family to support him in taking a more active role at home so that they see it as a benefit, not a nuisance, to them? In short, how can we help empower men so that they can foresee both manageable and, indeed, rich family and work lives even in unsupportive work environments?

First, think about what really matters to you and figure out what's not working and what you wish you could do to ameliorate the situation. In what ways are you failing to act in accordance with your values? What if your spouse or partner is unhappy with your lack of engagement and availability? If you're a father, do you feel that you're missing out on your kids' childhoods? Are you distracted by work when you're with your friends or at home and distracted by concerns about your family when you're trying to work? Asking these kinds of questions often produces these kneejerk reactions:

- There is no solution that will work because my boss would never go for changes.
- I can't ask for something that's just for me and my family because it's selfish.
- I know I'm not happy, but I don't see how things can improve, short of my leaving the job.

To get to the next step, it helps to find a peer coach (or two)—someone preferably outside of your immediate work circle—to talk to about what you're thinking. I have never seen anyone voice a problem for which someone else, with a fresh perspective, could not find new ways of seeing possibilities for positive change.

Then talk to those who matter most to you about what they really expect of you, how you're doing, and what you could do better. More often than not, what we think others expect of us is greater than (or a bit different from) what they actually expect of us. For example, you might think that being at work until very late is seen by your coworkers as a sign of your commitment and great performance when it is actually viewed as an indication of your inefficiency—as in, “Why can't you get your work done faster so that you don't need to be here this long into the night?” Find out exactly what the people who matter most to you need from you. Once you know more about what's actually expected, you're ready for the next step.

Try an experiment, a small change for a brief period (a week or a month) and keep front of mind the benefits not to you—you will not forget those, I promise—but to key people at work and to people you care about in other parts of your life.³⁰ An experiment is time limited and has measurable outcomes. The proof will be in the pudding, and your colleagues, family, and friends will be the judges. Make it clear that after the agreed-upon duration, if the experiment

is not working for them, then you will return to the status quo, or try something else. No one has anything to lose, and all have something to gain. More often than not, when approached with this goal—to make it a win for all concerned—people around you might surprise you with their reasonableness.

When you invest intelligently in being a better father, or a better friend, or a better marathoner, then you will see how this makes you more confident in your parenting skills, friendships, or your physical condition, for example. The increased confidence spills over into other spheres; you become less distracted at work, more energetic, and have a clearer focus on business and family results that matter. As you grow more confident, you become less anxious about what

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others might think of you as you do more at home or spend less time at the office. Although the interventions can be fairly simple, the results can be dramatic—productivity usually increases at work because employees are happier and more focused on results that matter while retention increases because employees are more committed to an organization that respects and supports what is most important in their lives.

For employers, helping men be more active at home, helping all employees be able to engage in the things that matter most to them, makes good business sense. It's wise to encourage people to engage in dialogues with important stakeholders and to experiment with small changes that can enrich their families, enhance their engagement with their community, and improve their health—all while enhancing the bottom line. By making it easier for men, and women, to live more whole, fully integrated lives, employers indirectly contribute to paving the way for the women in their lives to give more of themselves to their work and careers. And, of course, children win, too. We as a society are all the beneficiaries.

Reimagining Family Life

I don't believe that companies should be in the fertility planning business, but they should care about their employees being happy, if only so they can be more productive and so the good ones don't quit. And while it is essential to consider what businesses can do, in the near term it will be difficult to come up with organizational changes that increase the willingness of young people to become parents. Governmental policy changes can be glacial, and societal norms often evolve slowly.

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For those who do want to have children, there is a growing literature that can inform families about how to thrive when both parents are engaged as breadwinner and caregiver.³¹ Jessica DeGroot, for example, has led the Third

Path Institute's research on models of shared care, providing tools, inspiring examples, and support for families committed to the egalitarian ideal.

Men and women today are more likely than the previous generation to share the same values about what it takes to make dual-career relationships work. One implication of this finding is that there is greater solidarity among men and women and therefore more flexibility about the roles both men and women can legitimately take in society. There is now a greater sense of shared responsibility for domestic life. Young men are realizing they have to do more at

home than their fathers did, and today's young men want to do so. The Families and Work Institute's research on the "new male mystique" affirms this trend, as do Brad Harrington's New Dad research at the Boston College Center for Work and Family and Michael Kimmel's decades-long studies of masculinity.

Of course the sharing of care can happen either in series or in parallel, with costs and benefits linked to both options. A clear pattern we observed is that young people are forestalling the arrival of children. Perhaps this foretells a "slow family" movement to coincide with slow-burn careers—a variety of family life models that enable both partners, at different stages of their lives or simultaneously, to engage more or less, depending on their needs and interests, in their families and in their careers.

With more available and legitimate choices for family life, stronger support from organizations, wiser social policy, and greater confidence in their ability to create meaningful change, young men and women can flourish in all the roles that matter to them—at work, at home, and in their communities—in ways we've not yet seen.

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For information, visit www.worklife.wharton.upenn.edu.

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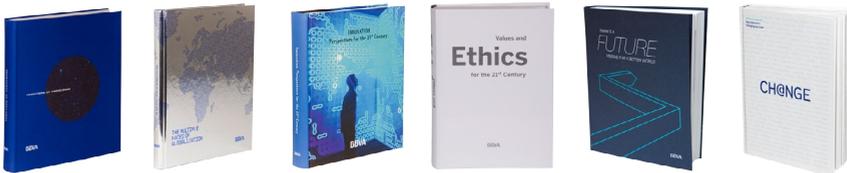
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