

Recommendations for action to advance women's careers and promote dual careers

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Project „Women's Career Paths: Couple Dynamics and Institutional Frameworks during the Rush Hour of Life“

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1. Introduction

Due to the continuing underrepresentation of women in senior management positions, the initiators of the research project entitled “Women’s Career Paths: Couple Dynamics and Institutional Frameworks During the Rush Hour of Life” decided to carry out research on the influence exerted by couple relationships - both those in which children are present and those without children - on the career development of women and men, and to examine how leadership tasks can be made compatible with the demands of couple relationships (in which children are present). In this chapter, we will develop recommendations based on the findings of our research. Our suggestions are aimed at people with personnel responsibility, legislators, providers of local infrastructure, and of course at couples themselves.¹

Over the past decades, women have fully caught up with men regarding levels of academic and job qualifications. In fact, in some areas, young women have even overtaken young men in their formal qualifications. Similarly, the employment and career aspirations of women have increased continuously over time (cf. chapter 1). Today, employers are therefore able to resort to a pool of highly qualified and motivated female employees, which is all the more relevant when considering the daunting shortage of skilled workers at hand. In the battle for talent, it is therefore a strategic advantage if employers take women into equal consideration when filling (internal and external) skilled and senior job positions and in competence development of senior employees in companies. In fact, several studies have shown that companies can profit massively from generating more gender diversity in top positions (for an overview, see Terjesen et al. 2009). Companies with a mixed gender management are more responsive towards the market and their clients (Accenture 2008), they are more innovative than others (Dezsö/Ross 2008), take less risky decisions and control the company more effectively (Adams/Ferreira 2009; Nielsen/Huse 2010). As a result, these companies are more profitable and generate higher capital returns than companies without women in leadership positions (cf. e.g. Accenture/Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen 2011; Catalyst 2004; Kotiranta et al. 2007; McKinsey 2007; Smith et al. 2006).

Yet data available for Germany show that here, women are still rarely found in leading positions. After some stagnation, their percentage has risen only slightly

¹ We would like to thank the members of the advisory board of the project “Women’s Career Paths: Couple Dynamics and Institutional Frameworks During the Rush Hour of Life”, whose recommendations and critical advice we have taken to heart. The members were *Dr. Heidi Danzer*, Human Resources Policy Officer for Women and Families, BMW Group, Munich; *Prof. Dr. Ulrike Detmers*, professor for Economics at Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences, partner and member of the board of the Mestemacher Group, Gütersloh; *Kerstin Dübner-Gee*, president of the Munich Dual Career Office of the Technical University of Munich; *Dr. Susanne Spülbeck*, executive proprietor of the *blickwechsel*, Institute for Organisational Ethnology, Training and Consultancy, Cologne; *Simone Schönfeld* and *Dr. Nadja Tschirner*, managing directors of Cross Consult, Munich.

(Holst/Busch 2010; Lindstädt et al. 2010; Krell 2010). When women do manage to attain higher positions, they tend to occupy middle positions and rarely ever reach the top. In 2010, for example, amongst the 200 largest companies in Germany (excluding the financial sector), only 3.2 % of all executive board members and only 10.6 % of supervisory board members were women (Holst/Schimeta 2011). In light of the significance of equal opportunities and equality as core values of our society, ones legally anchored in the Basic Law, these facts are politically highly relevant.

Getting more women into leadership positions requires – this is one of our central findings – that we take into account the life styles and the private lives of highly qualified women and men. The family circumstances of managers and young leaders have changed considerably over the past decades. Today, the majority of highly qualified and ambitious women live with an equally highly qualified partner. Therefore, their life styles usually reflect a dual career partnership in which both partners pursue a professional career. This means that women more often than not take their partners' professional aspirations and demands into account when assessing their own career paths.

Today, career-oriented men tend to live in a dual career couple (DCC) relationship with an equally highly qualified partner more often than was the case a generation ago. In the future, such partnership constellations and life styles will increase even further among well qualified men, as a result of rising qualification levels of women and growing educational homogamy. Employers will therefore need to adapt to significantly changed circumstances regarding the private lives of young men in senior positions: In the future, fewer men will be able to rely on a female partner at home who unconditionally supports their professional career by disburdening them from their housework duties – as this was the case in the traditional male breadwinner model. Today, men also consider it their duty to take their partner's professional aspirations and individual career decisions into consideration and to do their share of household duties and care work.

All this means that employers will be dealing soon with a growing segment of the labour force that pursues egalitarian life styles and couple arrangements. For highly qualified men and women who are partnership oriented, it is not merely their own income and career chances that decide whether or not they will take a job, but also the career chances of the partner. To attract and maintain highly qualified employees therefore increasingly requires that employers create conditions that allow couples to pursue two careers and to make these compatible with family obligations.

In the following, we will explicate recommendations for action on the basis of the research results of the project "Women's Career Paths" (cf. passage 2). The recommendations are intended to promote women's career development and the compatibility of two professional careers in couple relationships (passage 3). Our recommendations address people with personnel responsibility as well as members

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of staff and works councils in businesses, associations and in administration. We also call upon legislators, local governments and providers of local infrastructure responsible to introduce suitable measures. Last but not least, we will make suggestions as to what couples themselves can do to enable dual careers (cf. passage 4).

In this context, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that with globalisation, demands for the mobility and constant availability of executive employees will continue to increase if we do not search for solutions that will provide people in leadership positions with a sense that they have a high quality of living.

2. The most important research results

Despite the convergence of men's and women's levels of qualification, women are disadvantaged on the job market regarding their positions, earnings and promotion prospects when compared to their male colleagues. This discrepancy is especially high in leadership positions: Here, the share of women has been stagnating at a low level. Reasons for this can be found not only in the nature of the labour market, but also in the different life styles and couple constellations of women and men. Most male leaders have a partner who will provide them with the freedom to concentrate on their job and who herself either does not work at all or works part time. By contrast, highly qualified women often live in dual career couple relationships in which both partners pursue professional careers. These couples face much higher demands regarding the organisation of their work lives and private lives. Against this backdrop, the DJI project has looked into the question of what kind of influence the partnership exerts on the career development of women (and men) and how couples manage to pursue two careers at once. For this, 47 highly qualified women and 39 of their (male or female) partners were interviewed in qualitative one-on-one and couple interviews. They were asked to describe their professional and relationship biographies so far and to comment on the interplay between both spheres.

To begin with, our findings show that women and men turn their jobs into a significant issue in their couple relationships. This can mean that, for example, the career decisions of one partner will be discussed extensively before any steps are taken. Consequently, couples will only take decisions that are accepted by both partners and the consequences must be perceived as compatible with the career interests of the other partner as well as with the needs of both the partnership and the family.

Our results show furthermore that couples who start off as dual career couples in their professional careers do not at all assume that this arrangement will be kept up over longer periods of time. In fact, in many couple relationships, the professional career of the male partner will take precedence over that of the woman as soon as the two start a family – and often even before. This carries grave consequences for the careers of women: Women take parental leave more often and for longer stretches of time than their partners. Upon returning to their job, they sometimes relinquish the more demanding position they once held. Or – when the couple moves in order to allow the other partner to climb the career ladder – women will lose contact altogether to their former place of employment, where they had been in the process of working their way up. A chain of several disadvantageous events and strategies can lead to dual career couples involuntarily turning into a male one-career-only-model over the course of their working biographies. Dual career couples will most likely be able to pursue two careers at one time if it is central to their conception of themselves as a couple that both partners are successful in their jobs. In practice, this succeeds when couples follow one of two rather different strategies.

The most important research results

One of these entails that both partners pursue a “male” career path by subordinating their private life to the primacy of the job. In this case, women often receive little practical support from their partners and solve the compatibility problem through extensive outsourcing of care and housework services. Another strategy entails that both partners accept career limitations and almost equally share housework, care work and compatibility tasks, as well as using external services. This way, they create the conditions that are needed for them to alternate taking work-intensive career steps.

The co-ordination of two careers is partly hampered by external conditions, and partly by intra-couple processes. First and foremost amongst the external conditions are the high expectations regarding the availability of both specialist staff and managers. These expectations are based on the ideal of an employee who is completely liberated from any duties outside his or her job. Other stumbling blocks include sector- and job-specific expectations of mobility that ignore the fact that accompanying partners, forced to move for their partner’s career, will also need to find adequate jobs. In addition, the institutional logic of careers demands the highest professional commitment in exactly those phases of life when many couples wish to start a family. All of the above circumstances mean that couples will perceive the pursuit of two careers on the one hand and the wish to start a family on the other as competing aims in their personal life planning.

The fact that this conflict of aims will often be decided at the cost of the woman’s career is deeply related to the way couples view questions of gender, relationships, and parenthood. Many of the couples we interviewed did consult one another when a career step for one of them came into question. However, some of them blocked out the question of what consequences taking this step would actually entail for the professional and private situation of the other partner. Instead, traditional patterns of behaviour and gender roles often prevailed. Partly, our couples had taken on these patterns of behaviour from their parents, who had also lived according to them. Interestingly, this was not only true for couples who ended up prioritising the man’s career over the course of the years. Even people who experienced stable periods of success as dual career couples often oriented themselves based on role models from their family or environment.

Overall, our results confirmed the well-established findings that women in dual career partnerships take on larger shares of “compatibility management” (Behnke/Meuser 2005) than their male partners. This not only applies to the organisation of everyday life, but also to the biographical synchronisation of both career paths. Women anticipate to a much higher extent what it would mean for their partner and, if they have any, for their children to take the next career step. Women tend to be more ready to cut down on their working life and be present in the family through their spatial mobility or immobility, respectively, during the family phase. As a consequence, it is the women who balance out the uncertainties of both partners’

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professional careers. Their own career paths are therefore determined to a much higher degree by planned or unplanned family events than are those of their male partners.

3. Recommendations for decision makers in business and politics

3.1 If you want to promote women, you will need to take couple relationships into account

Recruiting and retaining highly qualified women and men in their company will become increasingly difficult and important for employers. Businesses will only succeed in this when they take into account the changed couple and family context in which women and men (wish to) live. Therefore, employers will increasingly need to take into account not only the linkages between career decisions of people in managing positions who are also in a couple relationship, but also managers' need for reliable time slots for their relationship, housework and care work.

Recommendations for people with personnel responsibility

Employers would benefit from introducing policies to support dual careers to allow for this altered situation. All such measures should be transparent and clearly regulated.

- The creation of a service point such as the 'relocation services' that take care of the needs of new non-local employees could serve to increase the popularity of individual businesses and other employers for prospective employees. This could include searching for a flat, providing relocation support, finding a suitable nursery or school, or advising on local networks.
- In addition, businesses could fund the (external) further training of the new employee's accompanying partner, or indeed make internal further training measures available to them.
- Most support is needed regarding the job search for the accompanying partner – be it in the same company or another local business. In most cases, employers would be well advised to join forces with other employers to create regional networks that can accommodate dual career partners according to their qualifications.
- This will enlarge the local pool of qualified job candidates and assures that the accompanying partner finds a new job that suits him/her.
- In economically underdeveloped regions unable to offer a variety of jobs, employers could create positions especially for dual career partners.
- If employees are relocated or sent abroad, the topic of dual careers should be broached early on, and partners should be involved in any such considerations.

3.2 If you wish to support mothers, you need to support fathers as well

More often than not, ambitious women who work a job often want to have children as well, if they aren't mothers already. They will therefore look for opportunities that allow them to combine demanding leadership positions with being a parent. Likewise, many of the fathers we sampled showed a great interest in spending more time with their children and strove for a better way to balance pursuing a career and being a parent.

So far, due to traditional gender stereotypes alone, parenthood is mostly a barrier to career development for women only. Our findings show that care work and housework are defined as female tasks within relationships, and that this one-sided double burden hampers the professional development of mothers. Apart from this, in their job environment, being a mother is often a trap for women: If they continue with their job once they have started a family or once their family has grown, they will all too easily be perceived as a bad mother. If they cut down on their working time, this will often be used to insinuate a weaker commitment to their job on their part. So far, fathers are not confronted with this double bind situation.

In order to promote gender equality and give fathers more freedom to live their parenthood actively, the compatibility of parenthood and careers needs to be improved in several ways. Employers, legislators and providers of local infrastructure are called upon to improve the situation.

Recommendations for legislators

- “Daddy months“ should be extended in order to support a gender-equal division of parental leave.
- Parental leave entitlements should be transferable to third parties. This would significantly increase parents' options for action, and childcare tasks could be shouldered by several and/or different people.

Recommendations for people with personnel responsibility

- It would greatly bolster the career advancement of women if fathers were to make use of their entitlement to parental leave and their right to stay home if a child is ill to the same degree that women do. Businesses could support such a trend by propagating “active fatherhood”, e.g. through the anchoring and targeted communication of these values in the business culture. A way of making active fathers visible as role models would be to portray them in business newspapers or online.
- During and after parental leave, programmes that make it easier for parents to keep in touch with, and to re-enter, their jobs are particularly important. Best

practice strategies already exist within this field.² These programmes will be successful if, amongst other things, managers are being prepared for them and if they are supported in taking enough time to keep in touch with the company.

3.3 If you want to enable parents to go on with their careers, you need to improve the care infrastructure

The career development of many parents, particularly mothers, is seriously hampered by a lack of sufficient childcare facilities. For couples who are on the move for professional reasons, the non-solution of having waiting lists for childcare places is utterly counterproductive. It is absolutely vital that parents can quickly and efficiently access affordable, high-quality all day childcare facilities and all-day schools.

Recommendations for legislators and those in charge of local infrastructure

It is imperative that public day-care is established area-wide. The legal provision established by the federal government to date, i.e. to increase supply to cover 35% of all 1- to 3-year-old children by 2013, will not be sufficient in the long run to cover increasing demand.

Opening hours of many childcare facilities are unable to cover the external care needs of even those parents who work a standard 8-hour workday, plus time for dropping off and picking up children. School holidays are rarely ever covered by the opening times. This is why the opening hours of institutions urgently need to be extended and should also cover the holidays. In addition, it would help if parents could arrange for care times on an individual basis.³

It would also make sense to offer overnight facilities for children when parents need to go on business trips.

Childcare problems are oftentimes exacerbated by the kind of mobility that is habitually demanded of dual career couples. The latter are constantly forced to establish new childcare networks. Changing schools, if couples have school-aged children, is often made difficult by the federal structures in Germany. Such bureaucratic barriers urgently need to be overcome.

Recommendations for people with personnel responsibility

- Apart from the expansion of public childcare, businesses should build up their own childcare facilities wherever possible. Workplace nurseries or nearby company crèches could be a solution. Yet small and medium-sized businesses often lack the organisational and financial means to run a company crèche. Instead, they can buy childcare places for their employees at nearby nurseries. Businesses can also partly deduct childcare costs from their taxes. This applies to

² See e.g. <http://www.eff-portal.de/eff-Navi/content/Modelle/Wiedereinstieg/Wiedereinstieg-index.htm>

³ According to a survey of the German Chamber of Commerce (DIHK), only 31 % of German childcare institutions follow this practice (DIHK 2008).

children up until school-entry age, but is so far not widely used because most businesses are not aware of this regulation.

- Access to company crèches should not be hampered by long waiting lists. Opening hours should permit parents to work longer hours.
- It is already difficult for working parents to find suitable and stable care arrangements; however, “emergencies” pose particular challenges⁴ for parents (cf. chapter 4.3). Showing at least some consideration, if not support, for employees who are unable to find an immediate solution to such emergencies, is the least businesses can do.
- Another way of supporting fathers and mothers is to establish parent-child offices, and to provide rooms for supervised play or other children’s rooms on the company’s premises, where children of employees can be looked after for short periods of time without previous notice.

3.4 If you want to support women, men and couples, you have to change the framework conditions for pursuing a career

The institutional framework for careers is a key stumbling block for women in couple relationships and dual career couples. The ideal of the person in a managing position who is always available is not quite compatible with care work or a sustainable work-life-balance. This problem is even more severe in the case of managers who are simultaneously single parents. According to our studies, highly qualified women and men experience the challenges of their work life as so all-embracing that notions of career, relationship, family, keeping a circle of friends, and having some spare time for themselves appear to stand in strong competition with one another. The framework conditions of careers hence give rise to compatibility issues. These can lead to a halt in, or even the abandonment of, a career for a senior employee when starting a family - and this goes especially for women (but sometimes also for men). Therefore, the logic that underlies standard careers has to be transformed fundamentally. In particular, the development of models for flexible working hours appears to be crucial for this process.

Recommendations for people with personnel responsibility

- High efficiency and job effectiveness ultimately do not depend on an employee's around the clock availability, but - rather on the contrary - can be increased by a meaningful reduction of working hours. Hence no employer or senior employee should expect employees to work regularly past 6pm or on a weekend. Time slots

⁴This includes sudden acute illnesses or accidents of the children and unforeseeable extensions of working hours, but also planned business trips for which the parental absence cannot be covered by the day-care institutions. In other cases, children are unable to attend their normal care institution, e.g. because they are ill, because parents are asked to pick their children up from day-care as soon as the lightest symptoms arise or the children hurt themselves in the slightest way, because nurseries close during vacation, or because private childminders are on vacation or ill. Likewise, sporadic events such as participating in a keep-in-touch programme or other relevant professional activities during parental leave can pose a problem.

and days should be designated when even people in managing positions can be sure that these periods are fully at their personal disposal. This way, companies do not only gain more satisfied employees, but also healthier ones, who have at their disposal resources for regeneration that allow them to maintain and expand their employability. Such practices can also prevent employees in a managing position from suffering a burn-out.

- As long as the work management actually allows for such practices, employees in managing positions and skilled employees should be allowed to participate in home-office solutions. Such schemes can allow for working in a more focused and structured manner, can enhance the proximity to customers, and can facilitate the organisation of employees' private lives. According to our research, however, the visibility of employees and networking with colleagues can be essential resources in the development of careers, such that home-office solutions should not become standard practice. People who no longer (regularly) work on the premises of their company would be well-advised to participate in video conferences or regular meetings at changing venues, in order to maintain their visibility and chances to develop their personal network.
- Successful careers can be developed in many ways, and not necessarily in a streamlined fashion. In particular, women often attain higher positions only via detours or after a phase when they dedicated time to the family (see also Chapter 3). That is why it appears crucial to offer qualified staff promotion prospects off the beaten trail of mainstream careers. In order to facilitate such alternative career development, it is important to remove time restrictions when it comes to implementing a particular career step. For the time being, relatively rigid time windows exist regarding the timing of specific career steps and the length of time between steps (an observation that appears to be particularly true in academia). Such restrictions pose a challenge to the biographical freedom of choice of staff and demand the most intense commitment in exactly the same phase of life that is often shaped by the necessities of starting a family. A way out of this dilemma is offered by instances of personnel development that respect the specifics of life cycles, ones that aim for a balance between the company's interests and the personal needs of staff related to their phase of life (see Graf 2008).
- A strategy that could allow for people in managing positions (or those aspiring to one) to take on family responsibility is to provide management training to qualified part-time employees of both sexes, as well as to offer managing roles also in part-time positions. In instances where such options have already been realised, it can be beneficial to develop them further as well as to link them with a more positive connotation. According to our findings, it is possible to fill a number of leading positions with employees who work part-time. Depending on demand and organisation of work, several different models may be appropriate, such as a part-time responsibility that is close to a full-time commitment, a shortened monthly or yearly employment, or job-sharing (for examples, see BMFSFJ 2010). A number

of employees in managing roles, women especially, already anticipate that they will no longer be able to fully satisfy the requirements of their jobs once they are responsible for a child, and aim for a less demanding position. It would be important for companies to distinguish between the temporary wish of reducing the work load in particular phases of life from the desire to ultimately end a career. Part-time employees should therefore not be excluded from management training opportunities.

- The requirements for mobility in everyday life at work should be reduced. A number of skilled and senior employees travel extensively for their work, with a significant number having to work in foreign countries over extended periods of time. The degree to which such extensive travel and extended stays abroad can be reduced by resorting to video conferences should be systematically investigated. Needless to say, such steps would at simultaneously be accompanied by a reduction in costs for the companies. Information about any absolutely necessary international travel should be communicated early in order to give the family time to make appropriate arrangements. Nonetheless, deployments that at first seem rather inconvenient for all partners involved can sometimes be transformed into a win-win situation. Companies should be made responsible for implementing suitable solutions here.

3.5 Implementing gender-equitable pay

Women in Germany earn on average 23 % less than their male colleagues (BMFSFJ 2009). In managing positions, this gender pay gap climbs to as much as 28 % (Busch/Holst 2010). This difference can only partially be explained by disparities in education, experience or duration of employment. More important seems to be the fact that careers and jobs that are primarily taken up by women are often to some degree less appreciated and remunerated than jobs typically held by males. Such instances of compensation discrimination are noticeable even within companies, meaning that even women doing exactly the same job as their male colleagues still earn less than the men (Hinz/Gartner 2005; Heinze/Wolf 2010).

Companies have to be aware of the fact that lower salaries for women, but also the withholding of bonus payments and social services or the failure to take women into account in regard to management training, have implications for women's career decisions: In couple relationships all these disadvantages result in the prioritisation of the male career.

Recommendations for people with personnel responsibility

- Lower earnings prospects make it difficult for women to stand up for their own career within their couple relationship as forcefully as their partners and male colleagues can. Existing pay differentials therefore undermine some businesses' attempts to encourage women into top positions. It is therefore vital not only for reasons of fairness and due to legal provisions but also for these strategic

reasons that women receive equal pay for equal and equally valuable work on each step of the career ladder.

- Employers, works councils, and other internal company actors can do a great deal to help realise the equal pay principle in a company (cf. Ziegler et al. 2010, pp. 327ff.). This entails a regular, systematic evaluation of the work and pay valuation and pay policies in companies. Companies can scrutinise their remuneration structure and identify any causes for internal pay gaps between women and men with “Logib-D” (www.logib-d.de), a wage test provided by the Federal Ministry for Families.⁵ Furthermore, the so-called “eg-check” (www.eg-check.de), whose development was supported by the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, allows companies to review to what extent their compensation structure meets the legal standards of non-discrimination. Here, even seemingly gender neutral demands and criteria can be identified that disadvantage women and employees with family duties. Both diagnostic tools offer different starting points for solving gender-specific pay gaps in companies.

3.6 Binding minimum quotas and target quotas for women in leading positions

Despite the proliferation of voluntary pledges in the industry, the proportion of women in leading business positions has not increased significantly over the last few years (cf. Holst/Schimeta 2011). Highly qualified women continue to hit the “glass ceiling” that denies them access to the top management. This has led both the business sector and politics to come to the realisation that binding target quotas and time targets are needed to achieve progress in this area.

Recommendations for legislators

- Experiences from Norway, Spain, Denmark and other European countries have shown that for the time being, legal quotas represent a viable means for bringing women onto the boards of publicly listed and state-run companies (cf. amongst others, Storvik/Teigen 2010; Körner 2010; Deutscher Juristinnenbund 2010). Consequently, this strategy should also be pursued further in Germany. The fulfilment of a women’s quota for company boards and possibly also other leading positions should be attached to sanctions, if possible, to increase implementation pressure. In the light of existing reservations vis-à-vis a strict target quota, one could also consider the possibility of laying down sector-specific minimum participation quotas for women (cf. Sachverständigenkommission Gleichstellungsbericht 2011, p. 138).

⁵ This test allows one to draw only limited conclusions about possible pay discrimination because it does not account for the unequal valuation of occupations. First and foremost, the test provides information about the extent to which any pay differentials in a business can be related back to personal and workplace characteristics.

Recommendations for people with personnel responsibility

- Equal opportunity policies in leadership positions give businesses a competitive edge in the struggle for talent and contribute to their economic success in the long term. As long as there is no legal regulation in this matter, businesses should follow the example set by Telekom, Daimler, Airbus and other companies, and pledge to fulfil a voluntary target and strict implementation programme to increase the share of women in top management. As the early experiences at Telekom show, this also creates a more equal opportunity environment in middle management, because junior employees are built up systematically along the “talent pipeline” (Deutsche Telekom AG 2010).

3.7 Enhancing business support measures through a corresponding business culture

Every organisation and every business has a specific blend of implicit fundamental convictions, values and attitudes. Together, these shape the collaboration and team spirit of employees and leaders. Managers, staff councils and works councils can influence this blend by explicitly committing themselves to certain values and declaring these as binding for the company. They should live by them and create framework conditions that mirror the implementation of these values and that help employees realise these values themselves.

Recommendations for people with personnel responsibility

- The implementation of a transparent, commonly shared business culture that is geared towards equal opportunities, diversity and work-life balance contributes to employees’ readiness to co-operate, their job satisfaction, co-operation without losing momentum, lower staff turnover, and the company’s appeal for prospective employees and clients. In the end, all this will contribute to the company’s economic success. A bundle of such measures already exists, such as the “TOTAL-E-QUALITY“ programme or the audit berufundfamilie (audit workandfamily) by the Hertie Foundation.

For the establishment of a gender-equal business culture, it is important that board members and top managers set an example in a top-down manner and become role models. This entails:

- that no important emails are sent after 6pm and that no replies are expected in the evenings or during weekends.
- that people with personnel responsibility clearly communicate both internally and externally the rules according to which dual earners and dual career couples are supported and the family responsibilities of mothers and fathers are to be accounted for in the company. These can be turned into a trademark of the company (“employer branding strategy”).

- that employees are informed of the fact that they may use the new opportunities without creating disadvantages for themselves, and that these opportunities are thereby filled with meaning in a bottom-up manner. These employees may, for example, be introduced as role models within the company to use the “exposure effect”, e.g. in a company newspaper.
- that the effects of support measures are documented and monitored regularly in the sense of family and equality controlling:⁶ amongst the elements that should be documented are the income development of women and men, the gender ratios when it comes to supporting talented junior employees in the company and the gender ratios on several levels of leadership, the gender of high potential employees who leave the company, the number of successfully supplied dual career jobs for partners, the number of fathers and mothers who take parental leave, the economic benefit of family-friendly measures in the face of costs generated by losses and fluctuation that are themselves caused by a lack of certain measures, employees’ productivity and image factors, and
- that seniors and colleagues are being sensitised through seminars to matters of equality, family friendliness and dual career couples’ issues.

3.8 The implementation of “holistic” concepts

In the preceding passages, a number of strategies were recommended to support businesses when helping women in relationships climb the career ladder. Several challenges were addressed that are faced by couples who wish to pursue dual careers. It is important that these measures are not introduced in an isolated but rather in a co-ordinated manner.

Recommendations for people with personnel responsibility

- What is needed in this regard are “holistic” concepts that cover several areas of action. Amongst these are family friendly measures for mothers and fathers, job-searching support for accompanying partners, consideration for long-distance relationships, equal opportunities regarding the recruitment as well as the equal pay of managers, consideration for couple relationships in light of heightened mobility demands for employees in leading positions (issue of foreign postings) as well as measures for gender equitable career promotion.
- Mentoring has proven to be an effective strategy for preparing women for leadership tasks and for supporting them when they take on leadership positions. Mentoring can be organised in-house or within a network of businesses (cross-mentoring). In either case a female (junior) manager will be assigned to an experienced leader for career advice and networking.

⁶ The choice of data and benchmarks to be evaluated naturally depends on the strategic equality goals of each individual business. In principle, equality controlling can be integrated into all target-oriented leadership systems such as management by objectives (MbO), quality management and the balanced score card (Müller/Sander 2009; Becker 2005).

- Likewise, mandatory monitoring reports on equality issues as well as target quotas for various management levels can help women climb the career ladder. Indirectly, all measures mentioned above contribute to the fact that couples no longer need to assume that the career investments of men will pay off earlier than those of women. Such assumptions had so far served to legitimate the prioritisation of male careers in couple relationships.
- Employers should be able to use all support measures according to their individual needs (cafeteria system). These should be aimed not only at externally recruited or already established senior staff but also offered to those who are still on their way up. Many barriers in women's career development take effect in the first couple of career years. According to today's career logic, any missteps in this phase while setting the course will have very long-term consequences for women's career development.

4. Recommendations for dual career couples

Pursuing two careers and possibly having children as well is an ambitious endeavour. Couples who successfully manage both pursue several strategies, as our results show. These are

- It is important that both partners decide on the common goal to pursue two careers, and that they view the career ambitions of both partners in their relationship as equally legitimate.
- Partners will appreciate when they receive mutual recognition for their career goals and when they provide support as well as, if possible, practical advice to one another.
- Flexibility, a willingness to compromise, and the ability to work under pressure each are skills that couples need for the long-term compatibility of two careers.
- Partners should begin to jointly agree upon career steps early on, e.g. while still studying at university.
- Couples should not shy away from seeking professional advice for their career planning and should make use of offers such as workshops provided by universities.
- It is recommended that before any partner takes a career step, couples bear in mind the possible consequences this step will have for the other partner, and that they strive to create win-win situations beneficial in terms of their careers whenever conflicts of interest arise. This is particularly important when mobility is at stake. Accepting an offer at a place where no realistic career options exist for the accompanying partner forces couples to embark on long-distance relationships, or, if no support measures for the other partner exist with the new employer, to relinquish the career of the other partner.
- Long distance relationships are normally only an option for couples without children. Couples with children value the presence of both partners at the same place more highly. This leads to a higher risk of one partner either accompanying the other or choosing not to move, even if this is detrimental to his or her career. Often, this “tied mover” or “tied stayer” is the woman. She might thereby set the long-term course for relinquishing a career of her own. Couples in which both partners wish to pursue a successful career need to counteract such risks consciously.
- To become parents while having two managing positions requires a large amount of family management skills. For example, it is important to be able to rely on two care networks and to create care redundancies.
- Dual career couples should build up networks where they can exchange thoughts on their problems and solutions.

Recommendations for dual career couples

- The couple needs to keep its autonomy vis-à-vis both partners' employers.
- Empowerment: Couples can do much to create a professional and social environment that bolsters their career aspirations. When choosing an employer, dual career couples can check out the business culture regarding employee friendliness, gender equality and family friendliness. The mobile partner should communicate the job needs of his/her partner to the new employer early on so that the couple can make full use of available support measures.
- Also, the business location can be of interest for the couples, especially when they plan to move. Here, it is recommended that couples look into the services that the area can offer, e.g. child care facilities. Dual career couples may prefer to live in a metropolitan area, because these can offer a broad job market in reachable distance as well as a good traffic infrastructure. Couples should at times question their employer's high demands for mobility and availability. Especially highly qualified employers may have enough leverage to reach e.g. a temporary reduction of their business travels or their standard working hours with their employer. Both partners can bargain for concessions from their employer and use these to assure a work-life balance in their active family phase. By doing so, they can even act as role models and contribute to the overall transformation of the career culture in their company.
- Couples should plan communication with their employers strategically in light of the business culture at their company. It may in fact be easier to change jobs than trying to change a company's business culture.
- In general, senior managers should lobby for their own working hours and that of their colleagues to exceed those agreed on only as an exception. This is the only way to avoid the kind of health problems that have been proven to be caused by long-term overtime working.
- Women need to force their partners to take on more responsibility in terms of compatibility management: traditional gendered practices continue to encourage women to take on ultimate responsibility for the children, while men often view their breadwinner model as an absolute necessity. Such attitudes hamper not only the everyday management of couples, but also have long-term negative consequences for the careers of women. Questioning traditional gendered practices cannot start early enough from the perspective of women. It should be part of the everyday life-styles of couples in the form of consistent and lasting negotiations about the scope for decision-making and about options for action.
- Practically speaking, this may mean that couples will take decisions that only pay off in the long run, but that do so in a sustainable fashion, e.g. by consciously investing into the career of the partner who has worse career chances.

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