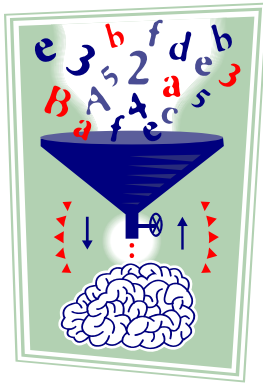


Brain Drain

By JoAnn R. Hines

What ever happened to employee loyalty? You know the type: people who went to work for a company at a young age and then stayed there throughout their entire career. I am sorry to report that those days are long gone. The mantra has become to stay with a company for three years and then move on. In fact, today if you haven't changed jobs several times throughout your profession it's considered a detriment to your career.



One of the biggest problems in corporate America today is what I call the **Brain Drain**. It is as simple as it sounds – these employees are tapped out. Their brains have been drained. It is amazingly apparent when you look at the number of women who are leaving corporate America to start their own businesses. Why do these talented women leave feeling disenfranchised? The answer is complicated and a result of the employer not understanding the real issues at hand.

Women in the working world have all been taught to work hard, be good at your job and you will get ahead. (Yes, my mother told me this too). The problem is that teaching methodology is simply not true. Hard work will be just that: hard work. Without a game plan in mind, it's difficult to move ahead even with good results.

Companies have yet to realize their directives for women in corporate America. On one hand, companies say they want women at the top. On the other hand, they stymie their potential and their ability to move up the corporate ladder. So, what can companies do to rectify this dilemma? They can brand themselves by addressing the progress of the female employee --from the top down.

We all have heard diversity policies and EEOC mandates, but how does this materialize in the real working world. It doesn't. Executives at these companies need to walk the talk and not spout PC rhetoric. I've seen reams of paperwork purporting the facts, but when it comes to implementation that's a different story.

Take a look at the senior management team. How many women are on it? Any? What are the plans to improve the odds? Doesn't it strike you as strange that women make up more than 50% of the workforce yet only X % at senior levels? The diversity message simply isn't being practiced.



When an executive discharges PC rhetoric they are really saying, "I can prove that we have a plan." What they are not saying is how or when they intend to implement it. The truth is that they haven't reached the heart of the real issues. The majority of women

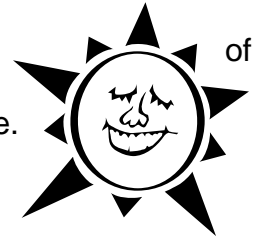
don't want a handout or a token position. They want their hard work and commitment to count for something besides a paycheck. Yes, money is important but it's not the spirit of the real issues that companies don't understand.



Many personal issues are different for women than they are for men: maternity leave, flex time, telecommuting, and time off for elderly parent care or sick children. The company policy covers many of these issues. Exercising one of these perks is not supposed to be detrimental to one's career. The reality of the message may be different. "Yes, you will have a job when you come back from maternity leave but don't count on that promotion."

Over the years, I have been told by senior executives that women don't make it to the top because they need special treatment (listed above). The truth is that the brightest and most talented resources don't need special treatment. What they need is an accurate understanding of these issues and why they are relevant in modern society. Women do have more of these responsibilities than their male counterparts do, and it's up to them to figure out how to make it work.

That doesn't mean "having it all." It means companies understanding the importance of these issues to the working woman. The fact remains that women reap the benefits of hard work and a job well done. Executives need to understand what makes the working woman tick. (It's not about the money.)



We spend the majority of our day working and it's important to enjoy what we do and feel fulfilled about our work commitment. Family needs and issues are just a part of the equation. Until companies realize that women will continue to leave in corporate America in droves for opportunities that allow them to enjoy what they do and feel fulfilled.

Best Regards,

JoAnn



JoAnn R. Hines
Chief People Packager and Packaging Coach

"We Package the People, not the Products"

Women in Packaging, Inc.

4290 Bells Ferry Road, STE 106-17

Kennesaw, GA 30144

Phone: 1-770-924-3563, Fax: 1-770-928-2338

coach@packagingcoach.com <http://www.packagingcoach.com>

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