



## **What is happening to America's work ethic?**

It is changing from working hard to working smart. Americans have always placed great stock in hard work, but lately there is growing evidence that working harder may not mean working longer. Therefore, employers should be more sensitive to the changing nature of the workforce and have strategies in place to promote a healthy and happy work/life balance.

Recently, 400 employers participated in a survey of work/life initiatives. The survey explored the motivations for corporate investments in work/life strategies and examined more than 100 different work/life initiatives including childcare, elder care and time off policies. The survey concluded that America's corporations see work/life initiatives as a strategy to keep valuable employees, enhance recruiting results and increase competitiveness. Dana Friedman, author of the survey, said these companies have focused on "creating a supportive environment to make them employers of choice."

To be an employer of choice companies need to realize that America's work ethic is changing from working hard to working smart. It is more than simply a work/life issue, it is an American social value, which translates into "work smart but don't forget your other life obligations."

For some employees, a work/life initiative is critical. This is especially true in families where there are two working parents. An example of one benefit employers can offer is flextime, which can be very therapeutic. There could be a very strong need in someone's private life that has to be taken care of during the workday. By offering flextime, there is a feeling on the employee's part of security, support and being needed, which in turns brings out the best in a person.

Our own survey and experience during the executive search process confirms that the work ethic has changed. With a very tight labor market, all ingredients must be present in order to secure the best.

Should employers provide comprehensive financial education (i.e., retirement education, financial advice, and credit counseling and debt management) to all employees?

In a recent research study conducted by the National Institute for Personal Finance Employee Education at Virginia Tech University, they concluded that financial counseling for employees can reduce a company's cost, improve its tax situation and boost the bottom line. They further point out that there is a direct correlation between basic financial training and an individual's productivity, absenteeism rate and overall demeanor and wellness.

It is clear from this study that stress about financial matters affects not only an individual's personal and family life but also his or her work life.