We Need to Reimagine a More Family-Friendly Workplace



Child care as a benefit boosts productivity and enables a more diverse workforce.

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I started five businesses from scratch, and I can tell you the quality of talent that I was able to recruit early on made all the difference in whether I succeeded or stumbled.

What I've learned over the years is that recruiting the best and brightest isn't just about cushy office furniture or amenities like free coffee, a stocked fridge or a downstairs gym. Today's talent are seeking employers who offer a child care education fund or even a Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

account to help pay for family support services.

I see a small number of big businesses, such as Starbucks and Best Buy, incorporating child care into their list of employee perks. But, smaller businesses can also up their perks game by offering child care as a benefit. This creates a working environment where parents feel supported and encouraged to advance in their careers.

Lifting the constant financial and emotional burden of working parents will no doubt raise the bar on the caliber of employees you attract and retain.

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Family benefits not only foster loyalty, but these pro-family policies can also be profitable by boosting productivity. The availability of paid child care plays a key role in allowing parents with children to remain in the labor force. In each year from 2016 to 2018, more than 2 million parents of children age 5 and younger had to quit a job, not take a job, or change their job because of child care challenges – disproportionately affecting women. American businesses, meanwhile, lose an estimated $12.7 billion annually because of their employees' child care challenges. Nationally, the cost of lost earnings, productivity, and revenue due to the child care crisis is estimated at $57 billion annually.

Lack of child care is also one of the primary factors that prevent us from creating an equitable workforce and eliminating the wage and gender gap. Just take a look at the millions of mothers who have lost or left their jobs due to child care burdens caused by the pandemic.

Since March 2020, Black and Latina moms have stopped working, either voluntarily or due to layoffs, at higher rates than white moms. Many are single moms who need child care but haven't been able to access it during the pandemic. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, single moms had higher

rates of unemployment than their childless counterparts in the second and third quarters of 2020.

Experts forecast that loss of skills, tenure and income among women of color will shape the future U.S. economy. One reason is that insufficient child care could impact their ability to re-enter the workforce, their wages, their long-term economic outcomes and the overall economic recovery.

Like many single mom of color, I also struggled with chasing the “American Dream” due to child care challenges. In fact, my success as a C-level executive was slowed due to lack of adequate child care for my son. In 2004, for example, I was passed for a vice president of sales position because I couldn’t make it to work at the required 6:30 a.m. time due to lack of before-school care for my son. I struggled throughout much of my career with this challenge, especially being in technology, a primarily male-dominted industry.

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In an era where women are projected to make up 60% of the workforce in the next five years, employers can leverage existing technology to provide fully managed child care benefits, giving their workforce the flexibility and family support needed to gain employee productivity and increase ROI.

As entrepreneurs and company leaders, we can do better. We have the power to completely change the course of child care in the US while dramatically transforming our company cultures by redesigning the workplace to be more family friendly. This *is* the future of work.

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