

WORKING WOMEN

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[Assignment: In a carefully planned essay, present your view on some aspect of women in the workplace. You might touch on how the contemporary workplace is changing and what further changes need to be made.]

(1) "Women are flooding into the job market, boosting economic growth, and helping to reshape the economy drastically." This quote from Business Week accurately describes the increasingly valuable contributions women have been making to the contemporary workplace. Right now almost 55 percent of all women work and today there are as many women in their twenties and thirties working as men in the same age group. And yet women are still not always seen as equals. This is illustrated in the numerous problems women face in the working world. Three of the most pressing problems are getting maternity leave, finding adequate day care, and receiving comparable worth pay.

(2) Unfortunately, a woman is sometimes discriminated against in the job market simply because there is the possibility of her getting pregnant and having to take considerable time off or even leave her job. A personnel manager faced with the choice of hiring a man or woman if both are equally qualified is in a considerable dilemma. There does not seem to be an easy solution. And yet since it has been established how valuable women are in the workplace, a compromise must be found. The problem is that work patterns and corporate ladders have traditionally been based on male standards. But because of the influx of women in the work force, these standards can no longer apply. So the compromise must be to fit the needs of women into this scheme. It may take time to adjust but it must happen.

(3) Another need that must be addressed is the lack of adequate day care. It has been proven that good day care consistently increases the productivity, decreases absenteeism, and raises the morale of the working parents. It is estimated that at least 8 million children need day care. However, there is only enough space for 2 million children in day care centers. Although many companies have started day care programs, this wide gap shows that not enough has been done. The companies that have not yet developed programs should learn from those that already have. The mentioned benefits clearly outweigh the costs. And the company that offers a day care program automatically displays an interest in family values, thereby attracting the best workers. The demand for day care is not expected to decline making this an important issue to the working woman's future.

(4) Probably the most important issue in the contemporary workplace is that of comparable worth.

Comparable worth goes beyond the principle of equal pay for equal work. Although some injustices in this area still exist, most people would agree that equal pay is fair and just. The major problem at the root of comparable worth is that most women's work has traditionally been undervalued by society. One reason for this is that a woman's pay has always been considered a supplement to a family's income. Another reason is that the skills involved in jobs traditionally dominated by women have been unjustly seen as less valuable than the skills used in male dominated professions.

(5) It logically follows that the key to correcting the comparable worth predicament is to change the attitude that a man's skills are more valuable than a woman's. That, however, is not easy. In order to accomplish this change in attitude we must first accept the intrinsic value and quality of every person. Only then will we be able to see that these issues are not just women's issues, but matters of concern to everyone in the contemporary workplace.