

Taking the Lead

by Kimberly Farrell

The Domestic Question

Making the right choice at home may go a long way toward determining your success at work

In the past when men exclusively dominated the “C-Suites,” it was not uncommon to find a spouse that worked exclusively inside the home. Why was this? Often, ambitious men understood early on in their careers while still single that choosing a compatible mate included the compatibility of career goals.

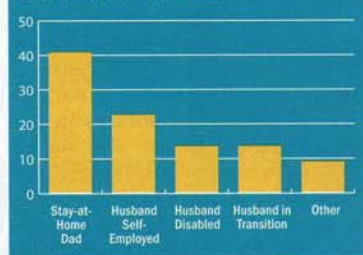
Some career men knew that with travel, work demands and the level of responsibility a successful executive experiences, it was best for him and the family to have someone at home caring for the family. This is why I have often heard women complain about senior-level men not empathizing with their domestic responsibilities because their spouse stays at home. Today, women, too, are making that choice.

A growing number of married executive women have a very different lifestyle situation today than other women who work outside the home. A subset of women participating in the WIN Leadership research project said that having a successful career is not a chal-

lenge for them. What reasons did some of the respondents cite for the harmony in their work and personal lives?

- Husband is a stay-at-home dad (40.9%)
- Husband is self-employed (22.7%)
- Husband is disabled (13.6%)
- Husband is in transition (13.6%)
- Other (9.1%)

Women citing harmony in their lives had husbands with domestic part-time or work-from-home careers



* Numbers do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses and rounding

As women achieve higher levels of responsibility within pharma organizations, they are often reassessing their relationship choices and the division of


responsibilities domestically, and either outsourcing or delegating the responsibilities with generally less value attached to them—chores such as cleaning, shopping, laundry, cooking and gardening.

The biggest challenge these women cited was navigating the social-cultural issues that both they and their partners experience (see “For More Information” sidebar for suggested additional resources).

The lessons senior-level women in the industry learned along the way can prove invaluable for today’s early-stage professional woman.

One key issue is to determine the type of career you want early in life and explore your preferences during the various chapters of your life. Whether you plan to be single or married, want children or not, ask yourself: Will my relationship support these preferences during each stage of my life?

Secondly, you will need to decide if you want a career with unlimited upward mobility. If this is your preference, consider how a long-term dual career family might create competing priorities between you and your partner. Discuss if you will have children, who will be the primary caregiver, if your partner would consider staying at home with the children and if you would be comfortable with that.

Women can have it all, including harmony in work and in life. They just need to begin early in their lives, looking at how their personal choices might impact their career, and how their career might impact their personal relationships. 

Kimberly A. Farrell is the CEO of Unlimited Performance Training, Inc. She specializes in the development of women leaders. She can be reached at Kimberly.Farrell@UPTraining.org

For More Information

www.ccl.org/leadership

When navigating your impact on others as a career-ambitious woman, a great program to consider is the week-long session on leadership with the Center for Creative Leadership. There are many regional locations and a variety of dates to attend their intensive workshop. I found the 360 degree feedback an excellent way to get objective feedback on my leadership behaviors so I could make a strong plan for my professional and personal development. This program is not for the overly sensitive person. Feedback is in abundance.

www.fatherhood.about.com/od/stayathomedads

To support your stay-at-home husband, try this website that discusses ideas like how dads can start a stay-at-home dad playgroup, or tips on how to engage kids in chores with dad.

BLOOMIMAGE, GETTY IMAGES

