

OFF-RAMPS AND ON-RAMPS provides a proven roadmap to help companies stop the female brain drain, and to help women achieve their full potential with rewarding and balanced lives.



“ THIS BOOK PROVIDES A VITAL

roadmap for how employers can more efficiently and thoughtfully utilize the female workforce—and build a better society as a result. If taken to heart, the book can prove more beneficial than GPS and MapQuest combined.”

— ALAN B. KRUEGER
Bendheim Professor of Economics
and Public Affairs, Princeton University

IGNITING A MEDIA FIRESTORM about why nearly half of high-achieving women don't have children, Sylvia Ann Hewlett's bestselling book, *Creating a Life* was the subject of a "60 Minutes" interview and *TIME* and *People* cover stories, and was named one of the best books of the year by *BusinessWeek*.

Now, in *Off-Ramps and On-Ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success*, Hewlett uncovers the reason why the glass ceiling remains largely unbroken: the very structure of the career track doesn't give women a chance.

Increasingly, today's professional careers mostly advance professionals with no gaps in their resume, who can survive workweeks lengthened by global hours and 24/7 blackberry culture, and who can intensify their efforts in their thirties. These heightening demands are out of touch with the reality of women's lives. According to Hewlett's study of 2,400 women, two-thirds of highly qualified women "off-ramp"—voluntarily leave their careers to devote themselves full time to family. Others "take scenic routes"—reduced-hour or flexible work. These women want to return to full-time work and advance their careers, but today's career model excludes them. The trend is increasing just when today's talent shortage makes qualified women more valuable than ever.

The good news is that pioneering companies like American Express, British Telecom, Booz Allen Hamilton, Cisco, Citigroup, Ernst & Young, General Electric, Goldman Sachs, Johnson & Johnson, Lehman Brothers, and Time Warner are reengineering jobs to create a more sustainable career model for women. At these companies Hewlett has driven a second generation of policy and practice that reinvents the work week, encourages on-ramping, and ends the stigma of off-ramping.

Hewlett tells the instructive stories of these companies and the inspiring stories of brave women who found fulfillment from their careers after off-ramping. Hewlett also includes her own personal story as a mother who off-ramped and on-ramped, and as the daughter of a courageous woman whose livelihood was saved by an on-ramp at a time when few women worked at all.

New from



**HARVARD
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a conversation with **SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT**

Why do so few professional women return to full-time careers after off-ramping to raise families?

It's not that women don't want to return. It's that the stigma of taking time off and the rigidity of today's outdated career track makes re-entry near-impossible.

Why do the consequences of this urgent problem extend far beyond the individual lives of women who off-ramp?

Companies today are suffering from a talent shortage that will only get worse as more baby boomers retire and as companies expand globally. One of the best resources of untapped, highly qualified talent is women who have left the workforce. As CEOs in the book point out, finding ways to better access female talent is necessary for competitive strength and economic survival.

What new trends in the workplace are accelerating this problem?

Workweeks in many professional careers have lengthened to seventy hours or more. Blackberrys and global hours have helped make work dominate professional lives 24/7. Few women with family responsibilities can sustain these extreme hours. What's worse is that the demands of one's career peak in one's thirties, exactly the time when family responsibilities tend to peak. When such demands are expected in order to get to the next rung on the career ladder, few women will have the chance to advance to the highest levels.

What needs to change?

The problem is not the women—they are increasingly qualified and ever more committed—the problem is today's career model, which derails large numbers of talented women. My survey findings in the book show that the dynamics of today's careers simply don't mesh with the priorities of women's lives. Companies seeking to recruit, retain, and reattach women need to:

- Provide arc-of-career flexibility that enables women to “ramp down” and then “ramp up” without losing traction
- Combat the stigma that all too often undermines time off or alternative work arrangements
- And help women claim and sustain ambition

What is the goal of the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force that you cofounded with Carolyn Buck Luce and Cornel West?

We persuaded thirty-four of the world's largest and most respected companies to become stakeholders in an effort to fully realize female talent over the life span. The mission of the task force is to identify, develop, and promote a second generation of corporate policies and practices that support women's ambition, work, and life needs. We wanted to put the ideas from this book into practice and prove that they can make a difference.

What are some of the most innovative second-generation work policies?

The consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton found innovative ways to “chunk out” high level work so it can be handled part time. Financial services firm Goldman Sachs created an on-ramping program to recruit alumnae and other women and men who had left the workforce to take time off. Lehman Brothers, also in financial services, created a “virtual workplace”

where professionals can work from home with just as much productivity as at the office and without the stigma. There are many other examples of innovative work policies being created today that will better access female talent.

How can companies lessen the stigma that prevents many women from enrolling in such alternative work initiatives?

One of the most effective ways of combating stigma is to “walk the talk” at the top. When a senior executive takes a scenic route and shouts it from the rooftops—letting everyone in the office know they've done so—it can have a transformative effect on what is possible for everyone else. It's also important that the policies be positioned as strategic imperatives that improve a company's bottom line rather than personal accommodations that reluctant managers give in to.

What kind of future could be on the horizon if second-generation on-ramping policies succeed?

If the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force is a measure, the private sector is already taking action to make the workplace an environment where life and work needs can flourish. With jobs and careers becoming more extreme by the minute, messing with today's outdated career model has huge potential—to burnish our competitive edge and restore hope and greater productivity to women's lives.

six strategies for

RETAINING FEMALE TALENT

The world's leading companies are reengineering work to retain female talent with such pioneering strategies as:

Establish a Rich Menu of Flexible Work Arrangements

To battle the high rate of attrition among women, **Ernst & Young** aimed to create a more sustainable culture of flexibility with such policies as compressed workweeks, flextime, reduced-hour schedules, job sharing, telecommuting, and short-term seasonal arrangements. Participants are judged on quality of work rather than hours billed so their careers won't be handicapped. Ernst & Young estimates that 82 percent of their employees now use some form of flexibility, and women's retention rates are now equal to men's, yielding savings of \$10 million a year.

Create Arc-of-Career Flexibility

Booz Allen Hamilton created an innovative Adjunct Program that offers part-time contract work to women (and men) who need to ramp down. They reengineered high-impact, part-time work into "bite-size" chunks that could be handled better by telecommuters or part-timers. The program is intended to keep high-performing women who otherwise would quit in the loop, so that when the time comes to ramp up, they will return to Booz Allen full time.

Reimagine Work Life

Time Warner expanded their benefits program to recognize that many of their employees, particularly minorities, have care-taking responsibilities outside the nuclear family of spouses and children.

Help Women Claim and Sustain Ambition

In just ten years, **General Electric's Women's Network** helped propel women from 5 to 13 percent of top officer positions, and the number of women in first-tier management positions increased 79 percent.

Tap Into Altruism

Hewlett's research shows that women prioritize giving back to society over high income or other work motivators. Reflecting this new understanding, **Cisco Systems** developed a Leadership Fellows Program to create one-year nonprofit work opportunities.

Combat Stigma and Stereotypes

To reduce the stigma of working at home, **Lehman Brothers** rooted their remote work initiative in a strategic business imperative. Employees don't have to give reasons for entering the program. They just need to prove its feasibility in their jobs. To further reinforce the program's legitimacy, Lehman Brothers measures productivity, which is often higher than for office employees.

about the AUTHOR

SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT



Sylvia Ann Hewlett is an economist and the founding President of the Center for Work-Life Policy. She is also Director of the Gender and Public Policy Program at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University. In the 1980s Hewlett became the first woman to lead the Economic Policy Council.

She is the author of five acclaimed books, including *When the Bough Breaks*, *Creating a Life*, and *The War Against Parents* (co-authored with Cornel West). Her articles have appeared in *Harvard Business Review*, the *New York Times*, and the *Financial Times*.

She has taught at Cambridge, Columbia, and Princeton universities and held fellowships at the Institute for Public Policy Research in London and the Center for the Study of Values in Public Life at Harvard. She has appeared on “60 Minutes,” “The Today Show,” “Good Morning America,” “Charlie Rose,” “NBC Nightly News,” “Oprah,” “The View,” and NPR—and has been lampooned on “Saturday Night Live.” A Kennedy Scholar and graduate of Cambridge University, Hewlett earned her PhD in economics at London University.



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Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success

Sylvia Ann Hewlett

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