



Copyright Notice

The material contained in this article is protected by U.S. Copyright and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.



Title: *A BALANCING ACT FOR GEN X WOMEN* , By: Gutner, Toddi, Business Week, 00077135, 1/21/2002, Issue 3766

Database: *Academic Search Premier*

Section: BusinessWeek Investor

Hers

A BALANCING ACT FOR GEN X WOMEN

Contents

Many baby boomers focused solely on work in order to succeed; younger *women* want more time with family

[The New Traditionalists](#)

Jill Nelson, 33 and single, has a different attitude toward her job than a woman a generation older might have had. An institutional sales representative for Pfizer, Nelson looks forward to a long career with the pharmaceutical company. But unlike many baby boomer *women* who felt they had to make big personal sacrifices to achieve success, Nelson is more interested in a well-rounded life. "Do I want to be CEO of Pfizer? No," she says. "But I do want a stimulating position that will let me balance my work and my family."

Nelson's views are reflected in a recently study of Generation Xers by Catalyst, a New York group that seeks to advance *women* in business. The research began in 2000, but was updated after September 11. Of the 1,300 professionals aged 26 to 37 who responded, 70% were *women*. The study found that **Gen Xers** are neither slackers nor frenetic job hoppers, but traditionalists at heart. "It's a generation that values company loyalty and wants work-life balance," says Catalyst President Sheila Wellington.

In fact, nearly half of the young professionals surveyed would be content to spend the rest of their careers with their current companies. In addition, over 70% rated companionship, a loving family, and enjoying life as extremely important. By contrast, less than 20% said earning a lot of money and becoming an influential leader were extremely important goals (table).

Many of their predecessors--myself included--who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s defined success as rising through the ranks and, ultimately, landing the top job. "They had one chance at the brass ring, and they didn't believe they could jump off and then get back on," says Myra Hart, a professor at Harvard Business School. "To them, it was a distinct choice."

That choice came at a high price. Another recent Catalyst study showed that only 67% of top executive *women* with MBAs were likely to be married, compared with 84% of men with the same work success. When it comes to children, nearly 75% of the men have kids, while only 49% of the *women* do. These

women "had to go singlemindedly to get into the game and couldn't have gotten ahead unless they let everything go," says Nancy Evans, editor-in-chief at iVillage.com. "They felt responsible to succeed on behalf of all **women**." When I was 33 and single, I was working nights and weekends to build a career. It took a husband and two preschoolers to make me realize, at 40, that I had to find a better balance of work and personal satisfaction. I did it by reducing my work hours, taking a salary cut , and dialing back my ambitions.

The baby boomer **women** who have achieved senior positions in their fields made a big impression on **Gen X women**--but it wasn't always positive. "The sacrifices those **women** made are transparent. The younger **women** can see the toll it has taken, and they're opting for a better path," because the rewards don't seem worth it, says Mary Lou Quinlan, head of Just Ask a Woman, a marketing company that helps companies better understand female customers.

Rather than landing the top job, **women** in their 20s and 30s want to have more control over their lives. That means different things to different people, but popular options include starting businesses or working for companies that offer flexible hours.

That's certainly the case for Carolyn Regan, 31, a human resources manager at public relations firm Weber Shandwick Worldwide in Boston. "I was holding myself up to how others see me as successful, using external factors like title and money," says Regan, a mother of one who recently reduced her workweek to four days. "I love my career, but there are other things in life I want to take advantage of."

No doubt there will be an economic and career price to pay for **women** who pare their working hours and career goals. But for them, satisfaction comes in answering to their own values, not Corporate America's expectations.

The New Traditionalists

The following shows what percentage of Generation Xers rated various values and goals as being extremely important to them

To have a loving family	84%
To enjoy life	79
To obtain and share companionship with family and friends	72
To establish a relationship with a significant other	72
To have a variety of responsibilities	22
To earn a great deal of money	21
To become an influential leader	16
To become well-known	6

Data: Catalyst

PHOTO (COLOR): HOME FIRES: Pfizer's Nelson is looking for a well-rounded life

PHOTO (COLOR)

~~~~~

By Toddi Gutner

hers@businessweek.com

---

Copyright of **Business Week** is the property of McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. and its content may not be

copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

**Source:** Business Week, 1/21/2002 Issue 3766, p82, 1p

**Item:** 5848527

[Top of Page](#)

---

Formats:  [Citation](#)  [HTML Full Text](#)

◀ 1 of 2 ▶ [Result List](#) | [Refine Search](#)  [Print](#)  [E-mail](#)

 [Save](#)  [Add to folder](#)

 [Folder has 0 items.](#)

© 2003 EBSCO Publishing. [Privacy Policy](#) - [Terms of Use](#)