

“Returnships@Sara Lee”

Flex Options National Teleconference, November 12, 2009

Transcript

Background: On November 12, 2009 the Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, hosted an informative teleconference featuring the [Returnships@Sara Lee program](#). Mark Demich, Sara Lee's Vice President, Organizational Development and Global Diversity, and Kathy Bayert, Senior Manager, Organizational Effectiveness, provided a comprehensive overview of this unique and highly publicized program. Demich and Bayert answered questions from participants.

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Moderator: Michael Williams
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1:00 pm CT

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question and answer period. If you would like to ask a question at that time, please press star then 1 on your touchtone phone.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. Now I would like to turn the meeting over to Mr. Michael Williams. You may begin.

Michael Williams: Thank you. Hello everyone and welcome to our fourth Flex-Options

Teleconference for 2009. This one is entitled "Career Flexibility: ReturnShips at Sara Lee." I'm Mike Williams, an economist in the Women's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor and I'm the co-team leader of our Flex-Options project with Ms. Frances Jefferson, who couldn't be with us today. She is our Denver, Colorado Regional Administrator.

Before we introduce our speakers today, I'd like to share a little bit of quick information about our Flex-Options project. About six years ago, the Women's Bureau launched Flex-Options basically to help women business owners to create more flexible workplaces by providing them with resources such as mentoring, networking, teleconferences--like the one we're having today--discussion groups, and flexibility workshops. Now over those five to six years, we've expanded the project and we offer those resources to all types of organizations, regardless of who the owner is.

Since the inception of the program, we've had over 900 employers who have over 1 million employees to formally participate in our program. And they've established flexible work arrangements for their employees in the form of various programs and practices.

Additionally, we've joined with business leaders across the country to host more than 400 workplace flexibility workshops. We've also had roundtables and other types of events similar to those. Our bi-monthly teleconferences have drawn over 3,000 participants. If you're new to this Flex-Options project or if you'd like to learn more about the project, please visit our Web site at www.flexoptions.org. I'll repeat that again; www.flexoptions.org.

We have many useful resources on that Web site. We have a 40-page Flex-Options guide that's in its second edition, loaded with tools and templates that you can use to help create more flexibility in your workplace. It gives great definitions of different types of flexible work arrangements and it is online at that same Web address that I just gave.

Now it's my pleasure to introduce our national contractors who have partnered with us on this project since 2003. We have with us Mr. Karen Kerrigan, who is President and CEO of Women Entrepreneurs, Inc. in Washington, D.C. and we have Ms. Linda Roundtree, President of Roundtree Consulting in Renton, Washington.

Now I'll turn it over to Linda and she'll introduce our speakers. Go right ahead, Linda.

Linda Roundtree: Hey, Mike, thank you very much and welcome to everyone in the audience. It is my pleasure to introduce both of our speakers today and I'll introduce them both at the same time and then let them speak to you.

Our first speaker is Mark Demich. Now Mark, is VP of Organization Development and Diversity and Inclusion. Mark is responsible for the Sara Lee Corporation's approach to organization effectiveness, employee engagement and global diversity and inclusion.

Before joining Sara Lee, Mark was chief running officer at Consec Banker's Life and Casualty. Additionally, he was the Director for Training and Development at the Forum Corporation and Senior Manager of Change Management at Anderson Consulting.

Mark serves on the board of the People's Resource Center, which is a social service agency that focuses on providing food, clothing, English as a second language and job training assistance in their county.

Mark's education and corporate experiences span the globe from Australia and Asia to Europe and Central and North America. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Education from Wheaton College and a Master's Degree from Harvard University. So we're really pleased to have Mark join us today.

And I also want to go ahead and introduce our second speaker, Kathy Bayert. Kathy is the Senior Manager of Organization Effectiveness at Sara Lee and she's responsible for designing and implementing their strategic initiatives that are aimed at building a high performance culture.

Kathy joined Sara Lee in February of this year as a participant in the pilot program--Returnships at Sara Lee--that we'll learn about today. She is actively involved in designing the next phase of the Returnships program, so she'll be able to talk to us about that as well as about her personal experience being one of the participants in the program.

Prior to joining Sara Lee, Kathy spent six years out of the paid workforce, focused on raising two young children and being actively involved in her community. Previous to that, she worked as a principal consultant in organizational and change strategy for IBM Business Consulting Services. And she also served as a campaign manager for several political campaigns in Texas and started her career as a political consultant.

She received her MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and her undergrad degree in organizational communications from the University of Texas at Austin. And Kathy is also involved in

volunteer work in her community with *Dupage Public Action* to deliver shelter at their summer interim housing site and in their local school system.

So Mark and Kathy, we are delighted to have both of you join us today. And I'll turn it over now to you, Mark. Thanks.

Mark Demich: Linda, thank you and thank Michael as well. It's a privilege for us to be on the call and to have some time to share with you our experience with Returnships at Sara Lee.

Just to give you a brief overview of the flow of our conversation today, I wanted to talk to you about the background, the objective of the program, the design of it and some of the initial activities and impressions around the program.

And then we'll turn it over to Kathy. Kathy will take us through the lessons learned from the first cycle or go around from an organizational standpoint as well as from a personal standpoint--since she came to us through the Returnship program.

That's kind of the flow and then obviously after that, we're happy to take questions and go back and forth with questions and answers. So let me go through just a bit about the background of Returnships at Sara Lee. This idea was really born out of the experiences of our CEO--Brenda Barnes.

Some of you may know that when Brenda was the head of the North America for Pepsi Co., she left that position to return home and raise her children for about six or seven years. And during that timeframe, met a variety and quite a large number of women who had chosen the same career path she had--in

terms of leaving the workforce at a certain point in their career, focusing on their family and then trying to integrate back into the workforce after that.

She had seen that scenario firsthand. Obviously, some of it was at a different level than maybe the masses, but she had met a lot of women in that same boat. And so this was kind of born out of her experience. Our diversity inclusion strategy at Sara Lee has focused a lot of attention on women in leadership because we know who our consumers are--over 85% of the people who buy our products are women. So we know that from a diversity and inclusion standpoint, we have a large emphasis attracting and attaining women within our workforce.

But women who were leaving at the mid-career level were either not returning at all or weren't easily able to return because of that work gap in their resumes--whether it be a return to us at Sara Lee or a return elsewhere.

So the whole intent around Returnships at Sara Lee was to attract experienced, mid-career individuals who've been out of the workforce, but who desire to return to the workforce and most likely desire to return into a flexible work arrangement as opposed to jumping back on the high career track they may have been on.

It didn't negate that, we were still open to that and we still have a few Returnship individuals who have joined and are happy to be working full time. The intent was to make it flexible. But we were really going after that kind of mid-career woman or individual. We didn't restrict it to women, but we knew that demographically that was where the bulk of our candidates would come from.

And so it was really meant as an attraction tool for us. So let me go through some of the basics--what it is, who we were aiming for and why. What Returnships was designed for?

We initially conceived them as four to six months kind of internships for experienced individuals. It could be similar to an internship. In some cases, they were full time positions that we split in half between two individuals.

In other cases, they were not intern type positions or internships, per se. They're actually solid project work, pretty senior level project work that individuals could complete in a condensed work week, less amount of hours, and different stop times. We specifically targeted our corporate functions, so things like marketing, R&D, legal, finance. We knowingly excluded our direct sales force because of the demands of those positions.

As I described before, we were looking for mid-career individuals--someone with about seven-plus years of experience, at least a Bachelor's degree, and were likely out of the workforce at least three years or more. And generally, we found that most individuals that we interviewed had advanced degrees--although that wasn't a requirement.

And again, the rationale was basically to attract and retain mid-career senior individuals, specifically women, but individuals who might have had some difficulty coming back into the workforce but had fantastic experience that we want to take advantage of.

So let me go through one or two other things around the design of this program. An idea came to us from someone outside the Returnships Program. They suggested that we view the Returnship program as a product offering. We have a group called Consumer Insight, which is much focused on new

product development and marketing strategies. They bring to us the insight around who our consumers are, what they spend, where they spend, and how they shop. And they often run focus groups around product design and product marketing.

So we asked the Consumer Insight Group to actually put the same rigor into the design of this program as they would put into a new product or product launch. They went out and when they described the program to candidates, they found a swath of individuals in the greater Chicago area that they thought fit that spec. They brought them in and had focus groups--had kind of product taste tests, if you will, around the concept with these consumers. These consumers were likely individuals who would be candidates for Returnship positions in the long term, but for now, there were just to help with the design the program.

Some of the women in the focus groups were saying things, like, "If this program is going to be successful, then the whole team, the group that I'm participating in, needs to know about the program, the intent of the program and how I fit in." So it was critical that their manager allowed them to demonstrate the skills they had while also accommodating the schedule, if it was a flexible schedule. They were very clear around the fact that this could fail if the role and the expectations and the actual outcomes of that position were not clear to all involved--the team, as well as the individual.

Structured feedback needed to be a part of this four to six-month time period. There are some other comments as well. But those four rose to the top from the multiple focus groups we ran. So that helps us in the design of the program itself. And so Kathy will tell you more about some of those specifics in terms of the individual experiences around -- kind of feedback around clear expectations and what did and did not work in some of those areas.

But once the Consumer Insight Group helped us design the program and we then started to watch it, the demand for this was huge. I was talking to a few individuals--Linda Roundtree being one and Nancy Chen, Women's Bureau Chicago Regional Administrator being another, who are in the audience today--about the fact that we did not intend this program to be national or to go national with it. We were basically focusing on our corporate offices as a pilot-- the greater Chicago area.

Brenda Barnes was interviewed on the NBC *Today Show* about a year ago on women's issues in general. As part of that conversation, she talked about the Returnships program. And that alone basically launched the program.

I think it was Linda Roundtree who said, when the media calls, you pay attention. And the media called immediately following Brenda's interview. And so while we were targeting our corporate functions and wanted specifically to stay within the greater Chicago area, which we did in terms of the jobs and candidates, we had inquiries from across the country.

Once our Web site was up, once it was known, once the media picked up on the program, we had about 9,500 views on the Returnships Page on www.saralee.com. Almost 3,000 of them went to that page directly, so that means they didn't go to the Sara Lee home page, they went to the Returnships Page first. Seven hundred of those expressed interest in a position that was listed and 400 actually completed the application process.

And Kathy will tell you more about this but of those 400, we brought 11 on in Returnship roles. For a pilot, it's a relatively small number--about a dozen. That was partly the intent--to focus on a pilot and make sure we got some of the processes right, to make sure we got some of the kinks worked out before

we went bigger and broader, and to build it more into our regular sourcing strategy. But the demand for this was huge.

And so we were thrilled with that. We had to accommodate a bit more in terms of follow up to the individuals who actually completed the application process. But we did find amazingly qualified individuals. And I'm not just saying that because one of them is sitting in the office with me.

But as some of you probably know more than I about this, most of these individuals that applied had seven or more years of experience. Many of them had Master's degrees from places like Kellogg, University of Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, and Michigan – big name schools with significant degrees and experience.

And one of the other benefits we noticed with most of these women who were out of the workforce was the experiences they had while out of the workforce—things like running the school boards, managing park district campaigns, and working in the non-profit or the political world. A lot of that experience is what we wanted in-house as well--not just the standard corporate experience with position, but some of those other leadership skills that were obtained while out of the workforce. These experiences were really an advantage to us to get in-house.

So at this point, I'm going to stop talking and have Kathy talk about the pilot program itself and some of the lessons learned from there. So, Kathy?

Kathy Bayert: Thank you, Mark. As Mark mentioned, there were 400 applications submitted. And out of that, 11 returnees were hired. One individual chose to leave the program within the first month. This left us with a cohort group of ten

persons to go through the pilot program--seven of which worked a flexible schedule, either a reduced schedule or flexible hours.

We created for this group a very high touch onboarding experience. We had a luncheon with Brenda Barnes, our CEO, the returnees, and their managers. We conducted business segment overviews for each of the business segments within Sara Lee that were led by a senior female executive in those businesses, generally the CFO. They walked us through the business segments, the brands, the strategies and all the information so it was a very high touch way to learn about the business.

We provided access to everyone for technology training. If for whatever reason, they felt their skills were rusty in a certain area or they had a special software they needed to learn, we gave them access to the training to build those skills. And we also conducted two workshops around career aspirations so that people had a sense – an opportunity to start thinking about their career in new ways.

And our first round of Returnships ended in early October. And out of those ten, four returnees transitioned into regular, for the most part, flexible roles. Four have been extended while regular roles are identified and we're very close to completing on two of those and expect to complete the other two by the beginning of next year.

And of the two returnees who are not continuing with Sara Lee, one chose to take a position in another industry and another one was not invited to continue.

So let me tell you a little bit about what worked about the pilot program and then I'll tell you a little bit about what didn't and then what our plans are going forward.

What worked is we had a high level of interest from our target population. There were a lot of people in the community who were very excited about the opportunity and it created a lot of buzz and I would say a lot of positive goodwill for Sara Lee.

We had a great pool of high-quality applicants that had lots of corporate experience as well as a lot of experience in their communities when they were out of the workforce. We also found a deep pool of candidates in our local area around our corporate headquarters.

I think one of the other things that worked about the program was the high level of interest and commitment to it by our CEO, Brenda Barnes. She's been very involved from the onset and has kept the commitment alive at the senior levels of the organization.

The cohort approach, where we brought a group in together worked really well for the candidates. We received a lot of positive feedback that they liked having that kind of peer group who had similar work experiences, even though they may have had different skills and backgrounds. But reentering the workforce is a new experience where when you walk around the halls, you're not going to find that many people who have been out for a significant period of time that you could relate to.

So this is a nice benefit for the candidates returning into the workplace. And generally, the positions that we identified were at the right level to target this mid-career professional who had off-ramped. In many respects, it was a very

successful program in that we found a group of people who were out of the workplace who we were able to successfully return back to the workplace.

But there were a few challenges that we encountered along the way. And I think those are just as important as the successes. While we had a lot of strong senior – CEO level equipment, there was not as much commitment at the senior executive levels. Her direct reports agreed in principle, but we faced a few more challenges in terms of actually putting it into practice. And namely that was finding the roles--the jobs that we could bring people into.

And as a result, we mandated that each group needed to find x number of roles that we could use as a returnee position for this pilot program. And there was a little bit of resistance to the idea of flexibility initially. As soon as several of the hiring managers saw the quality and caliber of applicants, they quickly realized they wanted that person on their team and then they would adapt and make a flexible schedule.

Although cohort-hiring was helpful for the candidates, it was not as successful for the businesses as a whole. It's more difficult in the way we do hiring at Sara Lee to hold a bunch of roles until you have enough and you can bring people in that. So that cohort hiring did not work very well from the business standpoint.

And there continues to be some cultural constraints around flexible work, which is something that Sara Lee is targeting in other ways. But it was something that we encountered as we launched the program and got it going.

We learned a lot from the pilot and at the end of the session, we held some feedback sessions with both the candidates and their hiring managers to get a

sense of what worked, what didn't work, and what they would have liked to have seen that we didn't have as part of the program.

And for the most part, everyone was very positive about their experience, including the hiring managers. They felt like they had great candidates and they were able to get to work right away on very significant projects, as Mark mentioned before.

But as a result of that feedback, we've made some fairly significant changes going forward. Initially we intended to have one to two more rounds of this cohort hiring. But because of the difficulties we experienced in the business and because of the way that we hire candidates into Sara Lee, we've decided to forego the cohort.

And what we've transitioned to immediately is integrating the Returnships idea into our normal recruiting process. And we've accelerated that ahead of where we thought we would be. So basically any return – any candidate out of the Returnship pool who is interested in a position at Sara Lee can apply to any of the open jobs available.

We're going to try to track them and flag them because our intention is that we'll continue to give that pool of candidates a high touch experience. So we're going to be having some networking lunches for individuals who've been out of the workforce for a while, as well as continue the high touch onboarding experience that we've provided for the last group.

And at a senior level, our executives have committed to a certain number of roles, not specific roles but they will hire a certain number of candidates from the Returnship pool as well as other diverse pools. And that's a three-year commitment that they have made going forward.

And finally, we are upgrading our Returnship Web section on the Sara Lee career Web site and creating kind of a micro site that will have information for this pool of candidates that might bring unique ideas on resume writing and career transitions. We expect to launch it right around Thanksgiving time.

So that's really the highlights for the program and where we're going forward. As a participant in the program, I wanted to give you a little sense of what my personal experience has been. I'll tell you a little bit about my background and then tell you about my experience with Returnships at Sara Lee.

As Linda mentioned, I do have an MBA from Kellogg at Northwestern and worked as an organizational and change strategy consultant for five years, working with a lot of Fortune 500 companies. I left consulting about seven years ago now, when my first child was born and decided to stay at home full time.

I always had intended to return to work at some point in time when my children were older but wasn't really sure how I was going to make that happen. It wasn't clear to me that there were a lot of companies that would take you back after a significant gap in your resume. So I was just beginning to explore a little bit of consulting or contract work to get my foot in the door, when I learned about the Returnship program.

I was very excited to see it and felt like they had written it just for me. There was a position that matched my skills and as my husband was leaving on a business trip, I threw the idea at him. And on his trip home, he happened to sit next to a woman from Sara Lee who was working on the Returnship Program. So he walked in the door and said, absolutely, I think it's a great idea that you apply.

So I'm thrilled to be here. It has been a very smooth transition back for me. I feel like I'm able to contribute at the level that I was contributing when I left the workforce almost seven years ago. I have found the work to be engaging, interesting, and very exciting. I will say the one challenge has been learning how to navigate the politics in an organization again. You don't find as much of that out on the playground. But I knew I was finally back in the swing of things when my son stopped asking me when I was going to stop working.

So I'm happy to be back and happy to be here as part of this program. Now, I think we're going to turn it over to Karen for questions – for any questions you all might have.

Karen Kerrigan: Great. Thanks, Kathy and thank you, Mark. Those were such wonderful presentations which I'm sure will spark questions from our audience today.

First, can I call in (Teresa), our operator, just to give our participants a quick overview of how they can ask a question?

Coordinator: Yes, if you would like to ask a question, please dial star-1. One in queue, to withdraw your question, you may dial star-2. Again, star-1 to ask a question. One moment for our first question.

Karen Kerrigan: Okay, while we're waiting for that, I was wondering, I think it was great that Brenda appeared on national TV and this helped give the Returnship Program an immediate national profile. So perhaps you didn't have to implement the marketing plan or the outreach plan that you had.

Was there a specific marketing plan or an outreach program that you had to reach the audience that you were looking to contact?

Mark Demich: There was, yeah. It was actually fairly robust. Again, we used our consumer insights and our marketing team to help us put that together. Although we focused it very locally, we were going to meet with local press--for example, (Crane) Chicago, Chicago Tribune, as well as some of the smaller community press and business organizations like the Chambers or Commerce from some of the western suburbs of Chicago.

We even had a plan for some of the senior women to go to their local PTO organizations and school boards to meet the women that were leading those organizations basically and start to, you know, spread the news that way.

So those were some of the highlights but it was very focused locally. And then we were going to push it through the local media, through some of local connections, local school boards, Chambers of Commerce, etcetera, We were going to drive them to our Returnship Web page and still drive everyone through that technology.

That's where we anticipate we're going to do this for the next group. Just because of the fact that we don't intend to have a national campaign unless Brenda's talking about it again for some reason, which she may, as a by the way and say yeah, you know, we've made these types of changes to it.

So that may happen, but we do have a more regional or locally based strategy this time to focus on some of the local communities around our headquarters area.

Karen Kerrigan: Great, thanks, Mark. (Teresa), are there questions?

Coordinator: Yes, we have a question from (Marzee Bedford-Billingsford), your line is open.

(Marzee Bedford-Billingshurst): You're talking about making it a regional program and not a national program. I'm really curious. One of the things that seem really beneficial is how-to manuals. We always use best practices. I know so many women at all different levels that are in that same position. They are afraid to go back to work or just don't even know where to start. And it seems like there would be a real niche from producing something that would help women all over the country. Is that something you might think about doing?

Kathy Bayert: I know there are a number of Web sites that are geared toward onramping women. And there's a Web site that I learned about the Returnships program www.youonramps.com. And there were actually a couple of women who had been out of the workforce and decided to start their own company to onramp and wrote a book about it.

In doing research for this program, I found a number of Web sites that tend to be more regional, but they are targeting flexible work arrangements for returning – mostly moms but returning parents.

Mark Demich: One of the ones that we consulted with and used was www.integratedmom.com. And then the other one that called us recently, I think was called 9 to 3?

Kathy Bayert: Yeah, Home by 3.

Mark Demich: Home by 3. At Sara Lee, that choice to stay regional was because of the positions that we said we thought were most relevant--our corporate functions. Most of our non-corporate function positions are either in production plants.

So you know, producing all hotdogs (Ball Park Franks) or producing the Hillshire Farm meat or their direct sales, which require 100-plus percent travel.

So we do anticipate at some point making our program more national to all of Sara Lee. And in fact, we have two countries internationally, Spain and the Netherlands, that want to implement this in calendar year 2010. So we're looking at how to help our international offices. But in terms of us producing a How-To Guide, we probably would not do that, aside from what's on the Web site. Our Returnship Web page will info on interview skills, resume writing, among some other things. And then we'll link to some of the other resources Kathy mentioned.

(Marzee Bedford-Billingsford): Great.

Mark Demich: Does that help?

(Marzee Bedford-Billingsford): Yes, it does, thank you.

Karen Kerrigan: Yes, thanks for the question. Kathy, it's Karen again. Did you have any trepidation about going back into the workforce? In terms of the program or position, how was it written that it spoke to you or appealed to you?

Kathy Bayert: Well, coming from an organizational development background, a lot of companies are big enough to support that kind of skill set as a group, you know, as a specialty. And coming out – I worked in consulting before. I was aware that there were a handful of companies in the local area that would be large enough to support that as an organization – an internal group within their organization.

And just reading through the skills, it felt like it mapped to my skill set and my level of experience and the fact that they were 20 minutes from my house was an added bonus.

Karen Kerrigan: Yes, that helps.

Kathy Bayert: This was more than I could have hoped for in terms of a match to what I consider not a very common skill set, at least if you look at some smaller companies. And one that happened to be so close to where I lived and where my kids go to school.

Karen Kerrigan: Right, thanks. (Teresa), is there another question?

Coordinator: Yes, we have a question from (Patricia Early), your line is open.

(Patricia Early): Hi, I had a question over a comment that you made about the challenges. You had said that you had a strong commitment from the CEO level but you experienced some resistance from the managerial level. And that seems to be a problem that exists with flexibility all over. We recently did a Department of Labor Region 10 (Seattle) study of employers in our area and that was one of the comments that seemed to come up all the time. How did you specifically address those challenges?

Mark Demich: Thanks. There were two things. One is it is still an ongoing challenge, as you would expect or would probably imagine. But it's becoming less of a challenge, but nonetheless, it's still a challenge. We did two things. (1) We said one of the ways to change culture is to change how someone behaves and then secondarily that might change their mindset and their kind of – their perspective as opposed to trying to change their perspective first.

So we literally forced it. Kathy was right in saying that. Brenda said to her direct reports, by our next senior leadership team meeting, which was about two months away in the design phase, you will each tell me five roles that are open to have a Returnship candidate. And you will tell me in front of all of your peers.

So initially, it was very much a forced thing--just to get enough roles that we could then winnow back down to about a dozen. So we had maybe 40 or 50 roles that we looked at. It was definitely a force. Our CEO said, "I as a CEO am telling you, you will provide you these roles by this time" – and they did. And then we then narrowed it down to appropriately 12 that made the most sense.

The second thing we started to do was to make flexibility very visible. So one of the things we're now doing for the 80 to 100 open positions at Sara Lee is to make these positions open to a flexible work arrangement as defined by our policy of which we have three different levels of flexibility. The manager of that role has to say yes or no. But as part of the position description and the tracking mechanism we use online, there's a column that announces that this role is open to a flexible work arrangement.

And every quarter, I sit down with Brenda and her direct reports to do an update on a variety of things. One of them is I bring that jobs report and say here are all the open jobs. The ones in green are open to flexibility and the ones in red or not. And then those senior leaders, Brenda and I look at those and say, is that mix good enough because in some ways, there is a good rationale for a position to not being flexible. More often than not, that's not the case. But in some cases it is.

So now we've made it visible. With all those open jobs, this percent is open to being flexible, while this other percent is not. And the percent not open is meant to decrease quarter by quarter by quarter, when it becomes more visible. So that's one way we've dealt with it.

We have started to see that the managers who had experimented with flexibility are now starting to become our advocates for it--particularly around the Returnship individuals. When we brought Returnship individuals in for job interviews where initially the manager said, "I really don't think this can be flexible," they changed their tune when they met the candidate and saw their credentials and potential. When the candidate said, "I can only work a flexible arrangement," the manager called back and said, "If I need to change my position description to make it flexible to get that person, I'll do it."

So the more skilled people we have taking flexible work, the much easier it is to start seeing that kind of ripple effect throughout. The last is not programmatically, the first two are the more programmatic side of things. So, yeah.

(Patricia Early): Thank you.

Mark Demich: Thanks.

Karen Kerrigan: Thank you for that answer, Mark, that was great. (Teresa), is there another question.

Coordinator: From (Kimberly Bell), your line is open.

Karen Kerrigan: Hello, (Kimberly).

(Kimberly Bell): Hi, there, can you hear me?

Karen Kerrigan: We can.

(Kimberly Bell): Great. Thanks so much for this case study, it's just great to hear. I am a leadership and/or development professional and I, too, took time off and ramped up 75% for 2 ½ years and now I'm full time. So I share that perspective. I have two questions for you. The first one is I thought it was really interesting that you really focused on an external talent pool versus current employees who had been on maternity leave, etcetera.

So I was kind of curious as to why you went that path and if and how you address flexibility for current staff? And then the second one is just kind of a continuation of the question of culture change. It's just difficult to change culture. There's clearly the kind of perception culture piece. But I'm wondering about if you've tackled any of those things kind of systemically-- like how you specifically evaluate a person whose say, working 75%; how you teach managers how to do that; and or how do you – what's the criteria via a high potential or to be on a critical session plan if you're part time, things like that? If you've tackled any of those.

Mark Demich: Yeah, thanks. The answer is yes, but I'll come to that one in a second. I'll go back to your first one. In terms of our current employees, either those anticipating maternity leave or on maternity leave or just in general employees who may want a flexible work arrangement, one of the things that the project team struggled with initially is this very question.

So at the same time that we launched externally the Returnships Program, we relaunched internally our flexible work arrangements. Brenda stood up during one of our quarterly town halls and talked briefly about Returnships. She then

talked more in-depth about flexibility at work, what our approach is to flexible work arrangements, why it's important, and why it's a win for us-- particularly for women who are the bulk of our workforce. Therefore, it's important to us because this is our consumer base.

So she spent quite a bit of time, A, during that town hall meeting and then B, doing follow up through communications and kind of HR policy rewrites which focused on how we can make our current work environment open to more flexibility.

This may sound a bit odd, but we implemented flexibility internationally in our Hungarian facility before we did it in the United States. It's now coming back over the ocean this way. Our Hungarian operations have a very specific initiative around maternity leave and women returning following maternity leave. Probably the reason they're focused on that is because maternity leave is three years.

So it's six months here – I mean, six weeks here in the states. But they've put in some things around remaining engaged with women who are on maternity leave. For example, women on maternity leave still get invited to corporate and company functions, they can still hold onto their BlackBerries/PDAs, still maintain their www.saralee.com Web site, and they still receive newsletters via mail, etc. These types of things, even in a minimalist way, keep women connected to Sara Lee so that when maternity leave is over, they still feel a bond with their work family. These ideas were mainly driven from our European practice.

In response to the second question you asked, "How do we evaluate someone in the Returnship program who may be working less than the standard number of hours weekly?" During the Returnship period itself, which could run from

six to nine months, there are at least two formal feedbacks during those times. We use the standard Sara Lee appraisal form, competencies, goal setting, etc., so that it's meant to mirror the same process used for all employees.

And then at the end of that period, if the Returnship individuals choose to revert to a regular employee, it falls into a regular performance management system. We then provide our managers the same level of rating information that we do regularly--the expectations, goals, and the rating scale.

There are no accommodations for individuals who aren't working a full-time job. They are rated according to the same scale. Their goals may be different but they're rated on the accomplishment of those goals..

So it's a mirror as much as possible. I don't know if that helps or if you were looking for something more specific.

(Kimberly Bell): No, that was helpful, thank you. I think sometimes it's difficult just to get the highest rating, say 20%,--how it is at our company. When you're up against full time people, it can be difficult to get the best rating.

Mark Demich: Yeah, I would say that's probably still true here as well, at least in terms of perception. We've been fairly direct or very direct in saying that someone's performance potential is based on accomplishments and goals. So regardless of how many days a week you work or how many goals there are, you must be rated on your accomplishments. Kathy Bayert, who you you've heard speak today, works only three days a week.

So her goals are appropriate for three days a week as opposed to five. She's rated on accomplishment on those goals, accordingly to the accomplishment of those goals as opposed to, you know, was she here on Friday, was she here

on Monday, did she do overtime. We can't eliminate some of that bias in the manager's judgment.

But in terms of the goal setting and the accomplishment of the goals and the rating of the goals and all that, it's all around meeting the KPIs there.

(Kimberly Bell): Yeah.

Karen Kerrigan: Okay, thank you, Mark and thanks for that question, Kimberly. (Teresa), is there another question?

Coordinator: There are none.

Karen Kerrigan: Okay, I was wondering, do you see the program moving towards more of a rolling type of program? Where you're taking applications on a rolling basis?

Kathy Bayert: Yes, in fact, it's going to be integrated into our regular recruiting process. So any time a returnee is interested in looking for a job, they can log onto the Returnship Web site at Sara Lee and we'll have a link directly to all of the open jobs that we have available at that time.

And we're going to try to accommodate the returnees as they are hired into positions. The on-boarding is still going to be the same as it was for the pilot group. It will still have that high touch – might not get a lunch with Brenda in your first week, but we'll make some arrangements that get that group acclimated back to the workplace and start on a path here at Sara Lee.

Karen Kerrigan: On the phone we have a variety of different types of participants in terms of the organizations that they represent, small, mid-size, large companies. Do you think, Mark or Kathy, that this is a program that can be adopted by small

and mid-sized firms? And if so, how would you recommend that they scale and implement and market such a program?

Mark Demich: I think it definitely can be applied, at least in concept and philosophy, to companies regardless of the size of the organization. I think where the size of the organization comes into play is around the level of kind of programmatic support and onboarding. So for example, instead of having potentially, a cohort lunch with business leaders every month or so, as we have done, that might not be possible in a smaller firm.

But instead, you may assign someone as a mentor to one or two returnees that have come on board. And that mentor/coach relationship with an existing employee and new returnee might be the basis of all their kind of onboarding and how to navigate the organization and the policies of the organization.

So there's ways to provide, I think, the level of support and integration that maybe a bigger company provides in a more programmatic way. You can maybe do that more in an individualized way to the matching of someone when they join.

Kathy Bayert: And I think one other thing that any size company could do is to start to educate their hiring managers about how to look at a resume of someone who's returning to the workforce. And I know here at Sara Lee, they coach the hiring managers to read the resumes from the bottom up. So you saw a progression of someone's skills instead of getting stuck at that gap at the top.

So it's an element of beginning to educate hiring managers that the gap doesn't mean that someone isn't going to have the skills or talent that you need in your organization.

Karen Kerrigan: Yes, that's a very, very good suggestion – excellent. (Teresa), did we have any other calls that came in?

Coordinator: Yes, we have a call from (Nancy Palmer) from Palmer Career Consulting.

Karen Kerrigan: Good afternoon.

Mark Demich: Hello.

(Nancy Palmer): Good afternoon. And I really didn't have a question but rather a comment. I am a career counselor who has specialized over the past 12 years in working with back to work moms and I run a Web site called www.jobsandmoms.com.

And I just wanted to send my sincere kudos to Sara Lee for taking this initiative on. I think it is fantastic and I wish other companies would do the same. I think just a very simple thing that any company that's interested in doing this could do is to be more transparent on the Careers page on your Web site to let returning moms know that you're interested in speaking with them. The level of talent that is on our playgrounds throughout this country is truly extraordinary.

Karen Kerrigan: Yes, indeed. And the Web site again is www.jobsandmoms.com...?

(Nancy Palmer): www.jobsandmoms.com. And also in reference to the person who asked the question about a guide for back to work moms, I have the web address – it's www.backtoworktoolkit.com, which is a very extensive guide on this issue. And it includes – you could take a look at it – interviews with a number of recognized experts on the subject.

Karen Kerrigan: Wonderful, thanks for providing those resources. And Mark or Kathy, you might have some comments. Are you all being called by other companies or organizations to share your expertise?

Mark Demich: We are.

Karen Kerrigan: I thought so.

Mark Demich: Two of our three largest customers--large national restaurants or grocery store chains – have called and said to their sales person from Sara Lee, we heard about this, we'd like to do something internally, are you willing to share it?

You bet we're willing to share this with them. And so we're really excited when our customers call and say, come talk to us about this. And then yes, some of the organizations, whether they are associations or government agencies as appropriate, have been calling as well.

I would say there are one or two other companies that we're aware of that we kind of benchmarked against. One is Goldman Sachs, which has a similar program, though from what we could determine their program was very heavily focused on kind of education and training and preparing women to come back into Goldman Sachs.

Ours is a little bit more focused on the actual job itself and then preparing women while they're in the job. I think Goldman was a little bit more developmental. And then once that development had occurred, what are the jobs that are available.

But that would be another place when those of you that are asking are there other places doing it, I would look to them – they did one. And then British Telecom, I think was doing something as well.

Kathy Bayert: And Honeywell had one targeted to women engineers that launched about the same time as Sara Lee's. And I googled that Returnship as a word recently and somebody had compiled a Top 50 list. I didn't get a chance to look at it but I think there are more and more. And Newsweek just ran an article about the power of women as consumers and the impact that's going to have on the economy going forward.

So I think it will begin to awaken a lot of people's recognition to the fact that not only are we a buying power but we're a working power too. And that's a good perspective to have within your company.

Kathy Bayert: Indeed.

Mark Demich: Companies offering programs similar to Returnships should just make it transparent on their Web sites. One of the things we did do on the Returnships Web page was to state very early on that if you're a woman who's left the workforce for whatever reason and are looking to return, we want you, we want you experience. I think you see this within the first or second sentence on the Returnship page.

I always tell this story – and Kathy is sitting in the room obviously with me – but it was interesting when the recruiting started and I had read Kathy's resume. We did read from the bottom up and we saw the Kellogg MBA first, which, you know, set the right tone for the whole resume. When we got to the top, what she listed for her last six or seven years of experience was CEO of the Bayert family and described things she'd done.

And the recruiting manager looked at me and said, if that's a woman that's willing to put that on her resume, we want that woman. And so I think you're right, just being transparent and saying, that's the experience and those outside experiences are valuable to us. I think you're right, companies would get a whole lot of play from that and a whole lot of really talented individuals, beyond goodwill, just talented individuals.

Kathy Bayert: Well, I know Mike Williams will want me to ask if, (Teresa), if there is another question?

Coordinator: Yes, we have a question from (Patricia Early) from the (Twiga Foundation). Your line is open.

Kathy Bayert: Okay.

(Patricia Early): Hi, thank you. I forgot to ask this question when I was talking to you before. You had mentioned that you had targeted this program for mid-level people coming back into the workforce. And as you know, there are a lot more seniors who have been out of the workforce and then returning back to work, especially women. I think there's 140% more women seniors coming back into the workforce since the 1960s.

Has your program addressed this at all or have you looked at this issue as possibly another area that you need to address?

Mark Demich: That's a great point. To be totally candid, we had not and have not looked at that as a pool that we would necessarily target. It doesn't mean we shouldn't, so you're right, that's a good flag for us.

Partly in this new approach of rolling application, we're not looking at cohorts. A, we don't restrict, so we wouldn't say to someone, you know, based on how long you've been out, we don't want you in. And so if there's anyone, senior, mid-career, junior, is free to apply. But we haven't specifically targeted seniors. That might be a good call for us to rethink that.

We specifically looked at mid-career. The rationale behind that was we found that our women are moms, particularly when they would leave and stay out for a while had difficulty coming back in. So we thought, that's mid-career age, mid-career pool, so we'll look for that. And we knew that from our diversity inclusion demographics, we wanted to build up our kind of senior manager, director level pool of women within Sara Lee and that's around that kind of mid-career. So that's why we targeted that.

It's not restricted, per se, that's why it was targeted. But it's a good flag for us so thanks for bringing that up.

(Patricia Early): Thank you.

Karen Kerrigan: Thank you. Okay, it's after 3:00. I'm going to turn it over to Mike Williams, from the Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. And this is Karen Kerrigan signing off and reminding everyone to check out the www.Flex-Options.org site. And I'll thank Mark and Kathy for your really terrific presentations, I've learned a lot and very inspired by the program and what you've shared today.

Michael Williams: Okay, actually I had a question or two and they're very quick questions that I'd like to sneak in to either Mark or Kathy. I think it was Kathy that mentioned there was one person who left the program within the first month. Are you at liberty to say why that person left.

Kathy Bayert: She realized she wasn't ready to be back in the workforce.

Michael Williams: Okay.

Mark Demich: She actually came to us and said, I decided I don't want to come back to the workforce. It's like this, so she left.

Michael Williams: Okay.

Mark Demich: Actually, quite candidly part of the design was to allow that kind of "test the waters" from both ends, both from the candidate's end and from ours. So we were fine with that.

Michael Williams: Okay. And you both mentioned a list of, I think, Web sites and one was your www.onramp.com, is that right? And you mentioned www.integratedmoms.com. Am I stating these correctly or...

Kathy Bayert: Yes.

Michael Williams: www.youronramp.com. Another one was www.integratedmoms.com, is that .org or com?

Kathy Bayert: I think that one's .com.

Mark Demich: As you close, I'll look it up right now. I think it's .com, I think it's www.integratedmom – I think it's singular.

Michael Williams: Okay. And then there was another called (Home by 3).

Kathy Bayert: (Home by 3).

Michael Williams: Now is that the number 3 or the letter three?

Kathy Bayert: The number 3.

Michael Williams: The number 3, okay. And then there was another called
www.jobsandmoms.com.

Kathy Bayert: Yes, that was one of your – the people on the call.

Michael Williams: Okay, great. Well, that's really all I had to ask. I just wanted to get a little clarification on those Web sites. But we'd certainly like to thank Mark and Kathy for their presentations concerning Returnships at Sara Lee. And thanks to our two contractors--Linda Roundtree and Karen Kerrigan--for putting this conference call together. And thanks to the audience for joining us today.

This is our fourth Flex-Options conference call for 2009. It's actually our last call for 2009 and our next call will be January 14, 2010. So you may want to write that down on your calendars to, like a "Save the Date" kind of thing. And we want you to continue to visit our Web site, which is www.flexoptions.org. And there are plenty of free resources there that you can use to help your company design flexible work arrangements.

And I think Karen mentioned there will be transcripts of this call and previous conference calls that we've had on that Flex-Options Web site. Go to the Flex-Options Home Page and click on "Project Events" and you should find a listing of all the conference calls that we've had.

So once again, I'd like to thank everyone for participating in the conference call today. Have a pleasant afternoon. This concludes our conference call. Thank you and good bye.

Coordinator: This concludes today's conference call. You may disconnect at this time. Thank you.

END

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