

2011 Year in Review

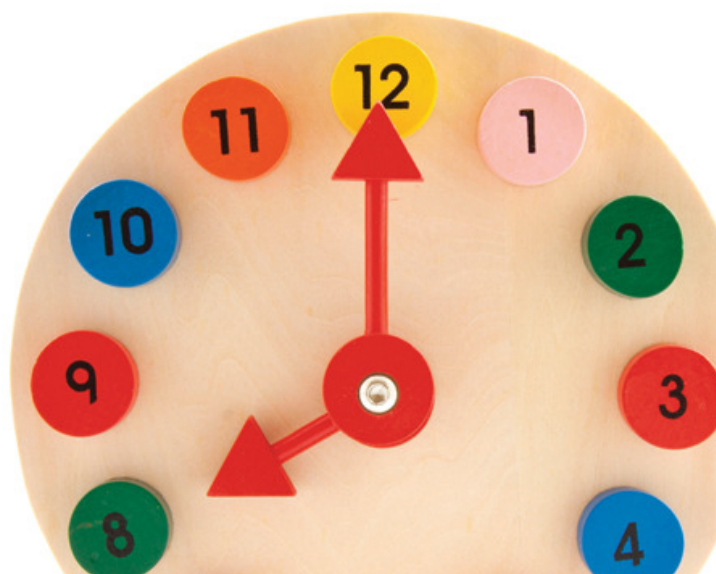
All that confidence busily sprouting roots this time last year has well and truly vanished. HR is under the cosh and woe-betide any benefits professional who is not cutting costs and speaking fluently about the business case.

It's tough being a working parent and even tougher if you're a carer as well. And yet beneath the gloom progress continues. The female leadership debate has genuine momentum; the benefits of flexible working have become mainstream; eldercare is firmly on the agenda; and even the Government is on board (in spirit if not in practice).

If you're as passionate as we are about the potential of combining work+family successfully then it's no bad thing having to work hard for your clients. If truth be told we wouldn't have it any other way.

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Winners & Losers

These days there's no shortage of corporate champions. The big 4 accountancy firms continue to do some great work. And now, not that far behind, the legal profession (or at least parts of it), have made unlocking female talent a core goal. **Baker & McKenzie**, one of the trailblazers for what's possible in the law, demonstrated in one of our regular webinars (www.myfamilycare.co.uk/services/life-transition-coaching/info/seminars-webinars.html) just what is possible and how much effort it requires.

Staying in the law it was good to see Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury make headlines by hinting at positive discrimination in the overwhelmingly male-dominated judiciary. Elsewhere the usual suspects (**Centrica**, **BT**, **Shell**, **IBM**, **Cisco**, **P&G** et al) made headlines in all the right ways. As long as large, successful businesses like this are setting the agenda progress looks assured.

And the losers?

Well, a few to choose from. Let's start with **Simon Murray**, erstwhile chairman of **Glencore** who opined he didn't hire women because "they're going to get pregnant". The formidable Mrs. Murray hopefully had a few words to say in private.

Then there's **Judith Woods of the Telegraph** who was appalled that our deputy PM managed to combine his job with occasionally doing the school run. Also spare a thought for **Eversheds**; a regional law firm that is by no means the worst at supporting its female talent in trouble this year for discriminating in favour of women solicitors. And finally the **Fawcett Society** which led the campaign against the Government's austerity measures on the basis that they had a disproportionate effect on women only for the claims to be rubbished later by the CIPD (www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/_articles/workauditrelease131211.htm).

Flexible Working

As UK PLC becomes an ever more flexible place to live and work the debate is much more about culture than policies. Encouragingly flexible working is no longer the preserve of the service sector - even large call centre operators such as **American Express** and **Sky** have embraced the potential of flexibility.



So what were the headlines in 2011?

Opportunity Now's **Top 50 Employers for Women** continues to grab the headlines. (www.bitcdiversity.org.uk/awards/on_awards_2011/the_times_top_50_employers/index.html). It's great to see no less than 14 My Family Care clients featuring. And the **Top Employers for Working Families** awards has established itself as the benchmark of benchmarks. It was nice to see a few different names (**Allianz**, **Dell** and **Jaguar** for example) appearing.

Elsewhere the **Office for National Statistics** provided proof of how much more efficient modern technology and flexibility have made us. We are now just as productive as we were in 1991 but we work 2 hours less per week to be so!

And finally, and somewhat bizarrely, the **CIPD** managed to find a link between lack of flexibility and the London riots! (www.hr magazine.co.uk/hro/news/1019942/urban-unrest-makes-strong-argument-flexible-cipd)

Female Leadership

Thanks to the **Davies Report** and the efforts of **Helena Morrissey** (mother of 9, boss at Newton, founder of the **30% Club** and proud recipient of a CBE) and her ilk, female leadership has been one of the HR topics of 2011.

There are no less than 14 bodies that claim to be the champions of our future female leaders but it's definitely the 30% Club whose voice currently carries most weight.

Have women always lagged men in the leadership stakes? Not according to the **BBC** which produced findings showing that it was our female Neanderthal ancestors who went out to forge a living whilst the men stayed at home (www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-12093345).

And what about the Davies Report?

It was a good piece of work. Sensibly, it avoided calling for quotas but left the threat of them hanging around. And even if its call for 25% of directors at FTSE businesses to be female by 2015 is unlikely to be fulfilled there have already been a few hopeful signs of progress.

It didn't receive universal acclaim ("we've been here before" was the view of serial HRD Kathryn Riley) but this time it feels different. Even the executive search firms promised to do their bit with a new code of conduct (www.mwmconsulting.com/Executive-Search-Firms-Launch-Voluntary-Code.html).

Prize for the best commentator of the year goes to the **Economist** - simply the best international summary of the prospects for talented women everywhere (www.economist.com/blogs/newsbook/2011/11/special-report-women-and-work). The Economist's Schumpeter column was also spot on illustrating the runaway successes of women in the BRIC (singular intentionally) countries. Fast growth and cheap childcare are the best ways of smashing down male barriers to entry!

The **Equality and Human Right Commission's** "Sex and Power" Report is always interesting - this year's figures revealed that there are still 6,000 too few women in the 26,000 "power" positions that exist in the UK (www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/sexandpower/). It also contradicts one of the Davies Report's claims about gender being mainly a business issue.

We expect female leadership to remain firmly on the agenda in 2012 but there are siren voices out there. Leading academic and occasional MFC contributor **Catherine Hakim** released Honey Money "The Power of Erotic Capital" in September. Her central tenet being that talented women who choose to make no compromises for family have every chance of success. The male libido and women's sexuality being the equalising factors in the battle to reach the top.



Government & Legislation

The Government came in for plenty of flak in 2011. “Austerity measures have hit women particularly hard” goes the theory even if latest findings from the **CIPD** called those claims a load of baloney (our words not theirs). We could have told them that.



If people working flexibly really are the ones employers want to get rid of, then flexible working cannot be such a good thing. The public sector lost the link between performance and flexibility a long time ago - it needs somehow to re-establish the link as a matter of urgency. The report by **Lancaster University** and **Working Families** into attitudes of modern dads illustrated how badly misplaced some of the public sector flexible working initiatives are (www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/nov/04/fathers-happier-more-housework-study).

Elsewhere the Government has had quite a good year. Changes to the default retirement age took effect in October; changes and enhancements to paternity leave were well received in April; and the **OECD** reported small but definitive improvements in the gender pay gap. Meanwhile we wait for the follow up to the **Modern Workplaces Consultation** (where we are optimistic); and the whitepaper on the funding of social care following the **Dilnot** recommendations (where we are not).

In some ways the Coalition has a head start when it comes to **work+family**. Both Cameron and Clegg are young working fathers with talented career wives. And yet, for all the progress, the environment for working families will not make significant progress until the benefits system for families is fixed and the legislative framework for employee benefits is simplified. Despite the best efforts of IDS and his chums those challenges remain firmly in place.

Childcare

The simple truth about the childcare market is that it's quite good and very expensive. The **Daycare Trust's** annual review is the best place to understand the cost side of the equation (www.daycaretrust.org.uk/pages/annual-review.html); whilst our own review (www.myfamilycare.co.uk/news/uk-broken-childcare-sector-ben-black-2011.html) is the easiest way to understand the market as a whole - warts and all.

Major news on the childcare front this year included the simplification (finally) of rules allowing parents to access free nursery care; and the painfully slow ending of **Childcare Link** - now replaced by a badly malfunctioning **Open Family Services** (www.openfamilyservices.org.uk).

Elsewhere there was a brilliant report from the **IPPR** making the business case for free universal childcare (www.ippr.org/publications/55/8382/making-the-case-for-universal-childcare); and **PWC's** annual Absence Management Report indicated that 21% of all absences still related to family issues and care breakdowns (www.ukmediacentre.pwc.com/News-Releases/Absenteeism-costing-UK-business-32-billion-a-year-with-workers-taking-almost-double-the-number-of-sick-days-as-US-counterparts-says-PwC-1076.aspx).

It was all quiet on the childcare voucher front but there will be plenty of potential change in the air when **Iain Duncan-Smith's** universal credit finally arrives in 2013.

Eldercare

Whilst the increasing costs of caring for an ageing population is one of THE challenges the UK will face, it still doesn't receive the airtime it deserves in corporate HR circles.

The **Dilnot Commission** recommendations were the major talking point, suggesting a number of sensible and, in the grand scheme of things, affordable ways of fixing the funding gaps. But despite widespread approval a long watering down process looks likely (www.wp.dh.gov.uk/carecommission/files/2011/07/Fairer-Care-Funding-Report.pdf).



Meanwhile, the bankruptcy of **Southern Cross** and the appalling standards of nearly 50% of all homecare highlighted in the **EHRC Review** made the headlines.

(www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/80_older_people_and_human_rights.pdf)

The true scale of our future social care costs were laid bare by OECD which suggested the UK bill would be the 27th highest out of 29 developed nations surveyed. High divorce rates and the family unit doing less being the main causes - Italy would be bust if the family unit didn't work so well (www.oecd.org/document/23/0,3746,en_2649_34629_47659479_1_1_1_1,00.html#notes).

Various employers continuously and cautiously explore ways to support their working carers with **BT**, **UBS**, **KPMG**, **Centrica** and **Simmons & Simmons** all receiving plaudits in the year.

And finally the imminent launch of the **Good Care Guide** (a trip advisor type service for the care industry) was leaked to the press. It's a project that My Family Care has been closely involved with alongside **Ofsted**, **United for All Ages** and the **CQC** (www.goodcareguide.co.uk).

My Family Care in 2011

So how did we do as a business in 2011? Overall we got a B (possibly becoming a B+ on review!). On the downside we didn't win all the business we pitched for; although we still believe we should have done. Take up of our eldercare services continues to be slower than we would like; **Pfizer's** closure in Sandwich was painful for our team based there; and our childcare business has a number of challenges to deal with as the childcare market moves more on line.

On the plus side

- We won some great new clients including **Bloomberg**, **Macquarie**, **Freshfields**, **Simmons & Simmons**, **Hogan Lovells**, **Serco** and **Barclays Wealth**
- We completed a comprehensive rebranding/repositioning exercise - we now look as joined up from the outside as we feel on the inside
- Backup Care bookings grew by a brilliant 52% to 64,000 (up from 27,000 2 years ago)
- The booking success rate was again 98%; and
- We started rating all the feedback we receive using a net promoter score, currently running at a fantastic 80. And if you want to know more about net promoter scores, see here: <http://bit.ly/cQRaWA>

Wishing you all best in 2012

For more information please call 0845 676 7690 or email enquiry@myfamilycare.co.uk