

WORK AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Work is an increasingly important part of our lives. The average working American spends the majority of his or her waking hours on the job. Some of us live and breathe our work. Others of us work to pay our mortgages. Either way, the workplace has become an important source of social capital for millions of Americans – a center of meaning, membership, and mutual support. More than ever, we find our close friends and life partners on the job, we serve our communities through work-organized programs, and we use the office as a forum for democratic deliberation with people different from ourselves. Countless studies show that a workplace with strong social capital enhances workers' lives and improves the employer's bottom line.

At the same time, growing numbers of us feel that work, with its grueling hours and traffic-snarled commutes, is taking over our lives and depriving us of time with family, friends and community. Recently, nearly two-thirds of American employees said they wanted to work less, an average of two hours a day less if possible.¹ And press accounts have begun to document the dizzying decline of down-time, as voicemail, email, pagers, and cell phones have created the expectation that frazzled workers should be constantly on call.² The workplace plays a dual social capital role – nurturing it in some ways, draining it in others. Social capitalists simply cannot re-engage citizens civically without working through employers and job-based communities to ease the acute tensions between our personal, professional, and civic lives. To do so, however, will require a wholesale shift in the way we think about work.

As the new millennium dawns, we call on workers, employers, and policy makers to lead a mass social movement to change the outdated laws, norms, and assumptions that have allowed our work culture to undermine our civic culture. Two decades ago we began to recognize that our private lives affect our professional lives.³ Now we must recognize that the structure of modern work profoundly shapes our communities. People cannot compartmentalize their private, professional, and civic lives. The job-related decisions that employees and employers make have serious consequences for society as a whole. The norms and structures of private employment are a public issue. Since the beginning of the century, America has moved from a single-minded focus on the needs of employers to a broader focus on the needs of employers *and* workers. We now need to think even more broadly. We need to focus on the needs and interdependence of employers, workers, and *communities*. We must recognize in fundamental ways that people are more important than the work they do.

Periodically, throughout our history, we have had an unemployment crisis. Now, amid unparalleled prosperity, we have an employment crisis. Worker anxiety, strain, and disgruntlement have become pressing political issues, in part because the American workplace is undergoing changes of a magnitude not seen in more than a century. These changes, both structural and demographic, have the potential to destroy social capital, but they also have the potential to reinvigorate it. Proponents of work-based social capital strategies must figure out how to turn the new economy and the new way of work to advantageous ends.

Unlike churches, schools and arts institutions, most employers are not inherently interested in building community, because they see it as outside the scope of their objectives. Instead, most employers focus on generating financial capital, not social capital. There is, however, a compelling “business case” to be made that employers would benefit by assuming a larger role in civic revival. Social capital helps employers in myriad, measurable ways.

The Role of the Workplace in Building Social Capital

The workplace plays a central role in nurturing social capital and can do more. Places of employment – what could be called “work-based communities” – are composed of tens of millions of Americans, many of whom found their primary communities elsewhere fifty years ago. Today, nearly three-quarters of adult men and nearly six in ten adult women are employed at least part time.⁴ The dual earner couple with kids, an anomaly two generations ago, is now the most common family type in the labor force.⁵ In fact, over three-quarters of women with school-aged children are employed.⁶ Two-thirds of working men who are in couples with children have an employed spouse.⁷

The American workplace generates social capital in three broad ways. First, the job is where people build trusting relationships based on mutual assistance. Second, workplaces act as recruiting grounds for individuals and community organizations that are building social capital outside the office or factory walls. Third, employers contribute as organizations – by sponsoring volunteer teams, by donating money to worthy causes, and by instituting “work-life” programs to make it easier for employees to meet family and community obligations.

Workplaces as communities. Because record numbers of Americans are employed, the workplace has become the forum where many people meet their closest friends. White-collar, pink-collar, and blue-collar workers alike put in long hours together, eat meals together, and sometimes travel on business trips together – creating fertile soil for friendships. Surveys in the 1980s found that nearly half of employed Americans had at least one close friend from work. Nearly one in five said that at least half of their closest friends were co-workers.⁸ And nine out of ten people feel a part of a community at work and look forward to being with co-workers each day.⁹ Studies have found that the workplace, more than neighborhoods or even voluntary associations, provides the prime location where Americans discuss important issues, including politics.¹⁰

The workplace is an especially important source of social capital in an increasingly fragmented and diverse society. As growing numbers of people lack the comfort of a nuclear family, a religious or fraternal community, or even a tight-knit neighborhood, the job site has become a place to build stable, caring, long-term relationships. One study even suggested that, for some Americans, the workplace often serves as a sanctuary from the stresses and strains of marriage, child rearing, and household maintenance.¹¹ In addition, workplaces are among the most integrated settings in our lives. They are more diverse, on average, than our neighborhoods, houses of worship, and voluntary organizations. It is on the job that one is most likely to encounter, and work closely with, someone of a different race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, social class, political ideology, or regional heritage. In short, American workplaces represent the ripest venue for “bridging social capital,” in which people connect

across social divides. This is the form of social capital that is scarcest and perhaps most important as the nation expands and fragments.

Workplaces as Networks. Besides affording a place to build friendships, the workplace offers useful networks for life outside the office or factory wall. Recent surveys suggest that the workplace is an important but under-appreciated source of volunteer labor. Roughly one in ten Americans were recruited by a work colleague to give time to a good cause, and places of employment were second only to houses of worship as organizational sources of volunteers for non-profit groups.¹² A recent in-depth study with several hundred workers concluded that Americans, especially young adults, “increasingly find their voluntarism at the *site* of their work organizations and perform them with co-workers outside of work.”¹³

Workplaces as Community Institutions. Workplace social capital is valuable both in its own right and as a potential resource for building community and promulgating civic values elsewhere. Beyond serving as organizational networks, businesses often give back to their communities through formal philanthropic initiatives. Corporations gave away an estimated \$11-billion in 1999, or 6% of all charitable giving.¹⁴ Equally important but harder to quantify are the countless hours that corporate executives, non-profit leaders, and small business owners spend annually serving on the boards of community organizations, spearheading fund-raising drives, and populating the boards, commissions, and task forces that do so much of America's civic work. More than 90% of corporate executives surveyed recently said that they encouraged their employees to become involved in community service. Fully 50% of executives said they had made service a part of their corporate mission statement, and 90% said volunteerism builds teamwork, improves morale, and attracts better employees.¹⁵

Over the past 20 years, American businesses have contributed in yet another way: through “work-life” programs aimed at freeing employees to take care of family and civic obligations. The programs – everything from flexible leave time to on-site child care and elderly care assistance programs – were created because corporations recognized that stressed-out employees are not productive employees. In a recent survey, two-thirds of employees said it was fairly easy to take time off from work when they needed to take care of a family or personal issue; and nearly half said they had some flexibility in determining their workday schedule.¹⁶ In addition, many employees got direct help in meeting family needs: 25% said their employer provided information and referrals for elder care; 20% said their employer offered a child care referral service; and 11% said they had access to day care at or near the place of work.

Changes in the Social Organization of Work

As the workplace has become an important community for growing numbers of Americans, the American economy and economic institutions have been undergoing revolutionary changes over the past three decades. These changes are multifaceted, and their effects on our nation's stock of social capital have yet to be understood or assessed. The “new way of work” has the potential either to decimate or to revive norms of reciprocity and patterns of participation. Whether the net result is positive or negative depends largely on how we as a society mitigate the problems and channel the opportunities that these structural and economic changes are creating. In short, we need to grapple with the fact that the choices we make in our work lives, and the choices imposed

on us, have social (as well as personal) implications. The movement of women from voluntary community work to paid employment, the proliferation of free-lance jobs, the computerization of office workstations, and the lengthening commutes hastened by suburban sprawl – these developments and others affect not only the individual involved but the larger social fabric, as well.

Women in Paid Work

The most notable change in the American workplace over the past generation or two is demographic. Since 1970, roughly one-third of homemakers have moved from kitchen to office, as millions of women discarded their mothers' lives of domestic labor and community volunteering in favor of a paid career outside the house. The movement of women into paid employment has dramatically affected both their lives and the patterns of family and community care.

For many of these women, work is a choice, from which they derive economic, psychological, and emotional rewards. Working women gain access to new and important stocks of social capital, especially professional networks and co-workers. However, for many women work is not a choice. Growing rates of divorce, single motherhood, and late marriage, to say nothing of the rising living costs, have created economic demands on women that were far less pronounced a generation ago.

Whether out of choice or necessity, joining the paid workforce places new strains on these women's time, and by extension on the families and community organizations that traditionally have relied on unpaid female labor. Entering the paid workforce has not kept women from serving civic organizations, in roles such as scout leaders and Chamber of Commerce committee members. But the nation has not devised suitable remedies for the time bind that is squeezing waitress mom, corporate mom and soccer mom alike. And while men strive to pick up some of the slack – taking kids to the doctor, attending PTA meetings, and so forth – family needs still seem to exceed available time. The time crunch has been exacerbated by the aging of workers' loved ones. In any given week, one in seven workers is caring for an elderly relative or friend.¹⁷ In fact, the Families and Work Institute reports that one in five American workers belongs to the “sandwich generation” – simultaneously caring for children *and* elderly relatives.¹⁸

The Service and Information Age

One hundred years ago, the economy was dominated by farmers, factory workers, and shop owners. Today, the fastest growing segments of the economy are in personal services and technology. In principle, these lines of work afford greater flexibility, in terms of work hours and location, than did the assembly-line or office jobs of old, and that flexibility holds both advantages and disadvantages for building social capital.

In part because the nation is moving toward an economy based on services and information technology, our labor force is increasingly characterized by temps, free-lancers, contract workers, and telecommuters who may set their own schedules and agendas, but often lack job security, worker benefits, and long-term ties to a physical plant. The Labor Department estimates that up to

5.6 million Americans are “contingent” workers, doing short-term contract projects, temping, or working “on call.”¹⁹ While still a small minority of U.S. workers, this contingent work force is expected to grow as employee benefits become increasingly costly and information-and-technology services become a larger share of the economy.

At-home workers are leading an even more important revolution in the social organization of work. A quickly growing number of people – more than 10 million and counting – officially perform at least some of their job at their residence, either because they are self-employed or because they need not do their regular work at an office. And the vast majority of these at-home workers are in traditional families (married couples with offspring), from whose ranks the most dedicated civic volunteers have traditionally come.²⁰ That at least some people in this category are able to escape the office is a good sign for building social capital in the broader community.

A similarly dramatic change is under way among “flexible” workers, those who work full time but set their own schedules. This group now constitutes more than a quarter of the labor force, up from less than one-sixth a decade ago.²¹ Not surprisingly, those who could opt for flexible schedules are concentrated in executive and management roles and are far rarer among administrative personnel, service workers, and blue-collar laborers. The unequal distribution of flexible scheduling has troubling implications regarding who can and cannot actively participate in rebuilding social capital.

Sprawl

The rising demand for “flex time” and “flex space” among workers is a partial consequence of the suburbanization and “exurbanization” of the population since World War II. Like so many of the everyday problems identified in this report, what looks like a private struggle to find time to spend with family and neighbors actually reflects deliberate choices we've made as a society. For example, largely to make homeownership more affordable, we have chosen to pave highways and build spread-out housing developments far beyond the core cities, and in the process we have created a car-based culture that deprives us of quality time with our families and precludes the sort of casual interaction that characterizes tight-knit urban neighborhoods. Each additional 10 minutes of commuting time cuts all forms of civic engagement (such as attending public meetings and volunteering) by 10%.²² As Americans have become fed up with the unintended consequences of suburbanization, many civic and government leaders have begun seriously to explore innovative ways to replace sprawl with “smart growth,” including everything from creating town centers in new communities to rehabilitating the housing stock in distressed older ones.

As the homogeneous corporate employment of old yields to a more flexible one, social capitalists must ensure that trust, camaraderie, and civic engagement do not suffer. Over both the short and long term, therefore, we must engage in a nationwide project of fundamentally rethinking the institutions that govern work so that they reinforce social capital in our families, our networks of friends, and our communities.

A Historical Precedent

This is not the first time in the nation's history that changes in the structure of our work lives have forced us to rethink our assumptions about the relationship between employment and the imperatives of family and civic life. In the last third of the 19th century, during the industrial revolution, nearly one-third of the American work force moved from rural farm communities to industrial urban jobs. At the same time, America experienced an influx of immigrants eager to settle in its newly bustling cities. These mass migrations from farms and foreign lands to factories disrupted old patterns of social engagement without spontaneously creating opportunities to connect in new ways. Then, as today, a booming economy created enormous optimism and opportunity, but also left unorganized workers vulnerable to exploitation.

Progressive-era reformers identified this social capital deficit and set about creating organizations and championing laws to buffer individuals from the excesses of industrial life. Often times, these efforts were conducted in concert with labor unions, whose ranks swelled with isolated workers seeking economic protections and the rewards of belonging to a community.²³ Equally important, through powerful rhetoric and organizing, this generation of remarkable social and labor leaders touched off a shift in the way everyday folks thought about industrial work. Where employment (say, of women or children) was once considered a private matter, it became, thanks to reformers, an issue of public concern and democratic deliberation. The Progressive reformers told us that, though a child's baling hay on the farm was a family decision, thousands of children stitching garments in an urban factory was most certainly a community issue.²⁴ Delivering a powerful message that the private norms and public laws that until then had governed employment no longer made sense, these reformers set out on a mission of cultural and political change, promulgating new norms and laws that would resonate, or "click" with everyday Americans. By the 1910s, thanks to a collective cultural "click" it seemed sensible and right to impose limits on child labor, worker hours, and unsafe practices in factories, and to create protections such as workmen's compensation and the minimum wage. The Progressives even had their own version of flextime for civic activities. By the early 1900s, roughly half the states required employee leave on election day so workers could cast their ballot.²⁵ The cultural and legal transformation continued until the New Deal a generation later.

Today, we need a similar legal and social revolution in the way we fit work into our lives. We need to recognize that the proliferation of dual earner couples has strained community organizations relying on volunteer labor. We need to acknowledge that sprawl and lengthening commutes have deprived family members of time with one another and with neighbors. We need to appreciate that home-based work and contingent work might have an impact on social capital. Most of all, we need to accept that the effect of this new social organization of work is a public question, not a merely private one.

Building on a Solid Foundation

We are mindful that cultural “clicks” do not happen overnight. It took decades for U.S. society and laws to catch up to the realities of the industrial revolution. Just as our Progressive Era forebears did, we first must identify the nature and magnitude of the changes going on beneath our feet. We then must devise workable ways of adjusting to them, and build broad public support for those changes.

Already, some far-sighted employers, policy entrepreneurs, and political leaders have taken small, yet bold steps to take make work and community more compatible. Each of these efforts, aided in some cases by technological advances, has the potential to move America toward the ultimate goal of realigning work with social capital.

In the business world, some cutting-edge companies subsidize volunteer time for individual workers and sponsor team-based service projects in the community. Other companies have focused on building social capital within the office walls – for example, by reconfiguring the physical layout to encourage social and work-related interaction and by eliminating “executives-only” areas that hinder the productive flow of information between layers of the corporate hierarchy. Many employers are also becoming friendly toward flexible work patterns, allowing employees to set their own hours and take “personal days” for family reasons. At least one quarter of Fortune 500 companies say they allow employees regularly to telecommute from home.²⁶

At the government level, policy makers have begun to introduce legislation that would ease the time bind on working families. The signature piece of legislation to date is the Family and Medical Leave Act, a 1993 law requiring large employers to let most workers take up to three months of unpaid leave to recover from health problems, to care for a new child, or to look after an immediate family member in need. Recently, the Clinton Administration rewrote federal labor regulations to allow states to provide up to 12 weeks of unemployment insurance to new parents who want to stay home with their children, although no state has followed through with legislation to provide such coverage. Other proposals at the federal and state levels have included offering income-tax credits for people providing long-term care to aging or sick relatives; requiring that contingent workers receive pay and benefits commensurate with their contributions; and requiring employers to allow working parents to take unpaid time off for children's medical appointments, teacher conferences, and so forth.

Challenges to Work-Based Strategies for Building Social Capital

As the nation begins to invent new ways of living and working, considerable challenges still remain between the lofty promise of workplace-based re-engagement and its realization.

The first challenge is to provide a compelling economic rationale to employers. Privately, many employers may be sympathetic to calls for increased social capital, even as they are understandably skeptical about whether such efforts serve the corporate bottom line. The business of business *is* business, after all. A few tantalizing studies from a variety of academic disciplines suggest that social capital building is a profitable endeavor. Studies have shown that workers’

levels of social capital are an important predictor of employee satisfaction, which, in turn, predicts productivity and “good citizenship” toward one’s fellow workers. A recent study by the Families and Work Institute concluded that on-the-job social capital, far more than salary and fringe benefits, determined how satisfied, committed, productive, and loyal employees were.²⁷ In addition, compelling evidence suggests that employers benefit in significant and measurable ways when they help employees meet family and community obligations – such as by subsidizing child care, offering paid parental leave or flextime, and training supervisors to be supportive of work-family conflicts. In study after study, these policies have proved cost-effective by reducing employee absenteeism, discipline problems, and stress, and by increasing productivity, satisfaction, tenure, and willingness to “go the extra mile” for the company.²⁸ Helping employees to develop strong networks outside the workplace can also benefit companies as they search for new customers and markets. Finally, strategies to build social capital within the workplace will also help to build human capital (such as skills and knowledge), making the effort a low-cost investment in the firm’s productivity.

Of course, to many small and community-rooted businesses, the important link between social capital and the bottom line is old hat. As a Saguaro participant and small business owner observed: “Because we are not accountable to stock analysts, exchanges, and detached and distant shareholders driven only by bottom line, and can take a longer view, we remain accountable to the most important people: our customers and local communities. We have to see those people at the market, at church, at the movies, etc. Axiom: Every small business must build trust among, and have and maintain close ties to, actual and potential local customers and suppliers. Unlike large businesses, small and micro businesses do not need government to tell them to do what they already do.”

A second challenge to building social capital through job-based strategies is the uncertainty, anxiety, and distrust that often mar workplace relations. Corporate mergers and acquisitions – which escalated throughout the 1980s and reached an all-time high in the late 1990s – caused real disruptions in the work environment. The recession-inspired downsizing wave of the late 1980s and early 1990s shattered the illusion that bonds of reciprocal loyalty between employer and employee protected white-collar jobs. More recently, the “dot com” frenzy of Internet start-ups and shut-downs has begun to have some of the same effects: anxiety and insecurity among workers and a shared assumption that no one should or can stay in one job for too long. Ironically, parental benefit policies *themselves* may increase overwork among non-parent employees, who are often expected to fill the void created during parents’ absences.²⁹ Although studies show that non-parents are usually glad to help their colleagues, proponents of flexible work must take care, both in their discourse and their policy proposals, to recognize that all citizens, not just parents, are necessary to rebuilding the nation’s stock of social capital. Because of transformations in the economy, and in the demography of employment, the workplace grounds are shifting, and may thus be difficult places to plant seeds of community.

Finally, some of the most promising strategies to regenerate social capital in the workplace may face substantial political hurdles. Traditionally, and particularly in recent decades, the federal government has been reluctant to impose programs on business that are designed to achieve socially desirable ends. Small businesses and non-profit organizations, which together make up the vast majority of employers, would likely find government attempts to impose new rules or

requirements on them especially burdensome. That is not to say that all business regulation is impossible. Congress in 1977 passed the Community Reinvestment Act, which required banks and thrifts to do business in under-served urban areas; in 1990 the Americans With Disabilities Act was passed; and in 1993, Congress passed the Family and Medical Leave Act, which afforded benefits to employees of middle-and-large-sized firms. The political battles over policies were intense, and the laws took years of concerted grassroots lobbying and the right set of political circumstances to be realized. Any legislation requiring employers to take part in shoring up social capital would likewise face a long, uphill, and not necessarily successful political battle. Voluntary strategies are more likely to succeed in the short term.

We call on all employers to commit themselves to building a more civic America. Although workplace attempts to rebuild social capital will need to consider employers' economic interests, workplace transformations, and political limitations, these obstacles can and must be overcome. Building social capital is a means to the ends that both employers and employees value: trust and teamwork among co-workers, cooperative relations between workers and management, and a more efficient and productive labor force.

Principles of Building Work-Based Social Capital

Good workplace approaches to re-engaging Americans ought to be guided by several principles:

Principle 1: Bridge Occupational Divides. Programs to encourage deeper civic involvement should be designed by and for all levels of the hierarchy – top executives, mid-level managers, receptionists and mailroom clerks, and part-time and contract workers. Ideally, projects should ensure that the well-paid and powerful work side by side with those struggling to ascend from the occupational bottom rung. It is a sad reality that the higher up you go in many organizations, the less racial and gender integration you find. It follows that social capital building that crosses functional divides will bridge cultural divides, as well.

Principle 2: “Legitimize” Social Capital From the Top. Workplaces offer a splendid opportunity to create bridging social capital, but no effort to engage the firm or its employees can realize its full potential without the unwavering support of the top person. Organizations take on the values of their leaders. Top officials ought to provide both the financial resources to facilitate workplace engagement and the political capital to ensure that civic values become a true corporate goal. Top executives provide instant legitimacy to projects that are novel, risky, or otherwise do not conform to standard operating procedures.

Principle 3: Make Social Capital Pay. Employers, including those in the non-profit and government sectors, well understand the logic of the market. Market incentives motivate and channel action in the economic sphere. Likewise, incentive structures motivate and channel action in the civic sphere. Thus, firms and agencies should provide tangible, meaningful opportunities and rewards for employees, departments, divisions, and branch offices to become socially and civically engaged. Efforts to increase America's stock of social capital should be actively encouraged, rather than greeted with apathy or suspicion. If employers make social capital pay, they will be rewarded with more engaged, more committed, healthier, and better networked employees.

Principle 4: Boost the Civic Potential of the “New Workforce.” As they make policy decisions, employers and legislators should ensure that the growing ranks of non-traditional employees are included so they can contribute fruitfully to their professional and geographic communities. It is ultimately up to employers and policy makers to design norms and regulations that will effectively govern the new economy while not harming social relations.

Guided by these principles, we recommend that employers, employees, and government policy makers focus on making economic institutions the engines of civic renewal.

Recommendations: Building Social Capital Through Places of Employment

We have developed nine recommendations, falling into three broad categories. These categories are building social capital within the workplace; helping employees to build social capital in their families and neighborhoods; and putting firms at the center of civic renewal. Our recommendations involve both voluntary measures and legislative measures. Some will be quite easy and non-controversial to implement; others will require a longer period of planning and building political support. Happily, many recommendations will be mutually reinforcing.

Recommendations for Building Social Capital Within the Workplace:

Much as we like to complain about our jobs, most of us actually enjoy the social environment at work. Important social capital building is taking place every day at people’s jobs. The challenge is to find ways to expand the opportunities for forging meaningful and lasting connections, and to leverage that energy for civic ends. We ask employers to think of themselves not merely as administrators at places of economic enterprise, but also as managers in places of civic enterprise.

Recommendation 1: Create Workplace-Based Civic Associations. Employers should encourage employees to form office-based chapters of national voluntary organizations, such as the Red Cross, the League of Women Voters, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Just as the United Way collects funds under the stewardship of workplace-based committees, so too might non-profit civic associations recruit members, hold meetings, and sponsor projects under the auspices of an employer or a geographic cluster of employers (such as high-technology zones). Many major voluntary associations have had trouble finding members in recent years because traditional recruitment networks have frayed and the sons and daughters of yesterday’s volunteers now spend much of their time at work. Allowing civic groups in the office door will help today’s harried workers to participate in their community through networks and physical spaces that are convenient for them. Using job networks for civic organizing furthers our “Recycling” principle.

Recommendation 2: Use the Workplace as Civic Forum. Offices, factories, and other institutions almost invariably have conference rooms and other large public spaces that go unused for part of the day. We urge firms to think creatively about how to use those spaces for civic events. For example, a company might introduce a Friday speakers' series where community leaders discuss their social and political work or lead employee discussions of pressing community and national issues. During election season, candidates for public office might be invited, on a non-partisan

basis, to speak to employees or to debate one another. Companies and agencies could let workers reserve rooms for meetings of civic organizations with which the worker is involved.

Recommendation 3: Turn Workplaces Into Sites of Civic Education. Recent research suggests that people are far more likely to take part in community work if they have civic skills – the ability to organize and run meetings, speak in front of large audiences, write persuasively, and so forth.³⁰ Many professional people learn such skills in the course of their jobs, but such on-the-job learning should not be limited to managers. Just as companies now frequently sponsor health and exercise classes to improve employees' physical fitness, so might firms sponsor courses to improve employees' civic fitness. Such courses might cover everything from public speaking and letter writing to community organizing and event planning. To build social capital within the workplace, employees willing to share these civic skills could teach co-workers, in keeping with our “C2C” principle. Furthering civic skill-building, many successful companies are switching to horizontal, team-based structures, which allow organization and leadership responsibilities to be distributed to more workers than under old-fashioned hierarchical structures. Of course, developing speaking, writing, and organizing skills would benefit not only America's civic infrastructure, but employees' job performance, as well.

Recommendations for Helping Employees to Build Social Capital in Their Families and Neighborhoods

Over the past generation, more and more employers have instituted policies and programs to help employees become better family members and better citizens. We applaud those farsighted employers that have understood the moral and business case for helping employees to manage their multiple obligations. We urge all employers to follow the lead of these companies. At the same time, given competitive pressures and a lack of education about the value of such programs, we also believe that the necessary revolution in the social organization of work could be catalyzed by state and federal legislation.

Recommendation 4: Expand Leave Benefits for Parents. We endorse changing labor regulations to allow new parents to collect unemployment payments during unpaid parental leave. We urge all 50 states to pass the required legislation to turn that concept into a reality. We also recommend that the Family and Medical Leave legislation covering leaves of absence in family emergencies be expanded to cover certain classes of non-emergencies, such as taking one's child to a routine medical check-up. Of course, we also endorse state proposals, such as one that passed in Massachusetts in 1998, that achieve the same ends.

In addition, we back proposals popular with organized labor to provide flexibility to employees facing crises. For example, we recommend that state or federal legislation be introduced that would allow workers to reduce their work hours by a set amount over a period of months without losing benefits or seniority. We support creating “leave banks,” in which workers can donate their unused sick leave to fellow employees who have expended their own allotment of days off.

Recommendation 5: Give Time Off for Community Service. Several companies – including Timberland, Brinks, Hasbro, Stride Rite, and Sony Music Entertainment – have instituted policies allowing employees days off with pay to volunteer in their communities. The Home Depot's “Team Depot” initiative organizes employees around charities the company supports, providing

community service, building parks, or offering other assistance. Many other companies have instituted volunteer leave as part of the “America's Promise” campaign for kids. These initiatives are a terrific start, but they are only a start. We recommend legislation requiring employers to grant unpaid leave to employees who wish to serve their communities (say, up to 48 hours per year). We also endorse allowing employees who work overtime to convert their overtime pay into time off. We recommend that if an employee takes a personal, vacation, or “comp” day to serve the community, only a half-day should be deducted from the time ledger. And we urge companies to allow employees flexibility when they need to leave early to attend a PTA meeting, for example, or to arrive late because they are busy planning a community event. For example, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City provides 58 hours a year of employee “banked” time that can be used as desired for public purposes. In any given workplace, diverse teams should decide what sorts of civic work qualifies for such programs.

Recommendation 6: Institute a System of Individual Work Contracts. Flextime, whether for family or civic purposes, is only a first step – one that has not been fully incorporated into the everyday work culture. A recent study suggested that, while many companies formally allow flextime, most have not made the necessary structural and attitudinal adjustments to allow employees to take advantage of such programs without worry. Corporate leadership is vital to ensuring that these programs are designed to succeed. And so we urge chief executives to create a culture in which it is clear to all that they will be evaluated on the quality of their work, not simply on the regularity of their “face time” while recognizing that some face time is integral to many jobs.

Ultimately, however, we would like the nation to move beyond the limited promise of flextime and usher in a radical new way of organizing our work lives. Where feasible, each employee should be allowed to negotiate an individual work contract with his or her employer that would cover the number of hours of work expected per month, with the specific work schedule left up to the employee to the extent possible; such employees would retain full benefits. Companies should make it as easy as possible for employees to work from home, except in cases where the employees’ work ties them to a physical plant or must be done in concert with others. We hope that such flex-contracting becomes a cultural norm and that businesses explore how technology can make this radically more flexible type of scheduling possible. Government might play a role in providing some venture funding for businesses to explore the development of such technologies.

These changes do not have to occur wholesale. Smaller victories toward this larger vision of radical flextime work are important. For example, an early version of flex-contracting is already in place. In Philadelphia, a Teamsters local negotiated a contract in which some soft-drink company workers are allowed to compress their workweek so that they toil longer hours on fewer days. For example, some workers are allowed to work their traditional 40-hour week in three consecutive 13.3-hour days, with the other four days off. We hope that non-unionized workers and organized labor will be able to negotiate such contracts with employers with increasing ease.

Recommendation 7: Provide Incentives for Community Service. There are all sorts of creative ways that employers can reward good works by employees and encourage them to do more. In Oklahoma, for example, the family-owned First Bethany Bank and Trust N.A. ties its charitable

budget to the number of *hours* that employees donate to non-church charitable causes. As the number of hours volunteered goes up, so does corporate giving. The bank also considers volunteer hours as a factor in employees' merit raises. Such incentives should be extended and expanded by all good corporate citizens to their employees and communities. Good community citizenship could be made a factor in "employee of the month" determinations and in decisions about who serves on grant-making boards within companies. Employees who organize and coordinate office softball or other sports teams should receive something tangible for their efforts – a gift certificate to a bowling lane, or a charitable contribution in his or her name to a favorite cause. We applaud employers that rally behind the good works of employees. Such support not only enlarges our stock of social capital, but it also enhances the sense of community spirit within the workplace.

Recommendations for Putting Firms at the Center of Community Building

Many businesses have long recognized the value of giving back to their communities as "good corporate citizens" or practicing "business social responsibility." We call on non-profit groups, government agencies, and large and small businesses to redouble their efforts to be good, active citizens of their communities in the following ways.

Recommendation 8: Put Social Capital Formation at the Center of Corporate Giving. Because companies give away billions of dollars a year, they have enormous leverage in urging grant recipients to build community ties as they provide community services. For nearly two decades, private philanthropies, notably the Ford Foundation, have successfully used their grants as leverage to get non-profit groups to recruit more racially diverse boards and staffs. We suggest a similar strategy for corporate grant makers by including as a criterion for support a grant recipient's commitment to increasing community participation and strengthening relevant social networks. This recommendation flows from our "Social Capital Impact" principle.

Recommendation 9: Forge Community-Building Partnerships with Other Sectors. "Public-private partnerships" became all the rage in the 1980s, as exemplified by the proliferation of adopt-a-school programs, urban redevelopment coalitions, and other initiatives. Although there has been little systematic research on the extent to which such partnerships have succeeded or failed, we endorse such partnerships in principle, and we urge that the financial and human capital of businesses be focused on expanding opportunities for participation among people currently excluded from civic affairs. Bridging the social chasm between the well-to-do and the excluded should be a major goal of public-private partnerships. Business people and professionals from the non-profit and government sectors can serve as advisors and "vouching agents" for nascent community organizations, allowing them access to networks and resources that would otherwise be out of reach. Numerous studies over the years have documented the critical importance of networks and connections – that is, social capital – in economy-wide growth and company success. Social and civic entrepreneurs who aren't connected will be severely handicapped as they try to reach their potential. Conscious efforts to reach these people redound to everyone's benefit. Likewise, such partnerships benefit people of privilege by expanding their circle of relationships and allowing them to understand the community from different vantage points. These recommendations follow our "Bridging" principle.

Businesses have always had an important role in civic affairs. In many ways, the recommendations above represent merely a new twist on old ideas. But the experience of the late 1980s and early 1990s reminds us that we should not take employer social responsibility as a given. Businesses that provide incentives and resources for community building should themselves be rewarded. Local chambers of commerce, civic organizations, grant-making foundations, and universities should create award programs for especially community-minded businesses and promote these businesses' achievements. As they have already begun to do (for example, with Paul Newman's line of food products), individual consumers should make a point of patronizing stores, restaurants, manufacturers and other concerns that are exceptional corporate citizens – even if that means paying a little extra for a cheeseburger or a bar of soap.

Concluding Thoughts

Strategies that build social capital “inside the workplace” will surely lead to friendships “outside the workplace” and vice versa. Within each of these general approaches lies a great variety of potential ideas, concepts, projects, policies, programs, and initiatives that firms can pursue. We have suggested several among the many. Even as the range of social capital building opportunities is virtually limitless, some are likely to be more fruitful and realistic than others, given the economic and political constraints on different firms and agencies and the varying values and needs of different communities. How a firm might best engage itself and its employees, then, is ultimately a matter for internal deliberation and community consultation.

NOTES:

¹ James T. Bond, Ellen Galinsky, and Jennifer E. Swanberg, *The 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce* (New York: Families and Work Institute, 1998), p. 8.

² See, for example, Katie Hafner, "For the Well Connected, All the World's an Office," *New York Times*, 30 March 2000.

³ For an overview, see Ellen Galinsky and Arlene A. Johnson, *Reframing the Business Case for Work-Life Initiatives* (New York: Families and Work Institute, 1998); and Dana E. Friedman and Arlene A. Johnson, *Moving From Programs to Culture Change: The Next Stage for the Corporate Work-Family Agenda* (New York: Families and Work Institute, 1996).

⁴ These percentages refer to adults 20 years and older who were employed in the civilian labor force as a fraction of the entire population of 20+ adults. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 2000.

⁵ Galinsky and Johnson (1998), p. 2.

⁶ Galinsky and Johnson (1998), p. 1.

⁷ Figure includes married and partnered men. Source: Galinsky and Johnson (1998), p. 1.

⁸ Stephen R. Marks, "Intimacy in the Public Realm: The Case of Co-workers," *Social Forces*, 72 (3), March 1994, 843-858.

⁹ Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg (1998).

¹⁰ Marks (1994); Diana C. Mutz and Jeffrey J. Mondak, "Democracy at Work: Contributions of the Workplace Toward a Public Sphere" (Unpublished ms., April 1998).

¹¹ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997).

¹² Virginia A. Hodgkinson and Murray Weitzman, *Giving and Volunteering in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector, 1996). The 1994 and 1999 volumes reached similar findings.

¹³ Maria T. Poarch, "Civic Life and Work: A Qualitative Study of Changing Patterns of Sociability and Civic Engagement in Everyday Life" (Ph.D. Diss., Boston University, 1997), p. 246.

¹⁴ Ann Kaplan, *Giving USA* (New York: AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, 2000), (<http://www.aafrc.org/CHAR.HTM>).

¹⁵ Points of Light Foundation, *Corporate Volunteer Programs: Benefits to Business*, Report 1029, Fact Sheet (Washington, n.d.).

¹⁶ Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg, (1998), p. 10.

¹⁷ Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg (1998), p. 15.

¹⁸ Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg (1998), p. 15.

¹⁹ This estimate is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Contingent and Alternative Employment Arrangements," December 21, 1999, at <http://stats.bls.gov/news.release/conemp.nws.htm>

²⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Work At Home in 1997" (at <http://stats.bls.gov/news.release/homey.nws.htm>).

²¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Workers on Flexible and Shift Schedules in 1997 Summary," 26 March 1998 (at <http://stats.bls.gov/news.release/flex.nws.htm>).

²² Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 213.

²³ See Foster Rhea Dulles & Melvyn Dubofsky, *Labor in America: A History*. 4th ed. (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1984), p. 196.

²⁴ See, for example, Irwin Yellowitz, *Labor and the Progressive Movement in New York State, 1897-1916* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965).

²⁵ Milton Brooke, ed. *Growth of Labor Law in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1967), p. 298.

²⁶ Associated Press, "Telecommuting Takes Hold Despite Manager Resistance," 3 July 1997, citing a study by the consulting firm KPMG.

²⁷ Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg (1997).

²⁸ Galinsky and Johnson (1998).

²⁹ James T. Bond, Ellen Galinsky, Michele Lord, Graham L. Staines, and Karen R. Brown, *Beyond the Parental Leave Debate: The Impact of Laws in Four States* (New York: Families and Work Institute, 1991), p. iv.

³⁰ Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).