

# Human Resource **Executive**<sup>®</sup>

A new book discusses  
the implications  
when business professionals  
confront life choices.

**Work/Life**

## Body and Soul

Co-author Stewart Friedman enjoys a family moment with wife Hallie and, front from left, Lodie, Harry and Gabe.

While organizations across the country have made great strides to introduce family friendly policies at their workplaces, the notion of making allies between work and family still has a long way to go. So says the recent book, *Work and Family—Allies or Enemies?* by Stewart D. Friedman and Jeffrey H. Greenhaus. Friedman, currently on leave from the Wharton School's Work/Life Integration Project at the University of Pennsylvania to serve as director of the Leadership Development Center at Ford Motor Co., and Greenhaus, professor of management and William A. Mackie Professor of Commerce and Engineering at Drexel University, argue that companies must go beyond simply offering work/family policies. Instead, they must create programs that recognize the "whole person" to celebrate employees' lives beyond work—or risk losing the war for talent.

Based on comprehensive data gathered from approximately 860 working alumni of Drexel's and Wharton's business schools, the authors also conclude that HR must help clarify workers' goals professionally as well as personally. They advocate worker autonomy—enabling individuals and work groups to mold their jobs to fit into their lives—and say that having more time isn't necessarily the answer to balancing work and life. Rather, they argue employees need to be psychologically



available to their families, and HR, as the leader in this area, must ensure companies continually refocus work to help them achieve that goal.

Friedman and Greenhaus recently discussed their book as well as HR's need to help workers integrate their personal and professional lives with Senior Writer RK Miller.

**Human Resource Executive: The title itself is provocative. Why did you choose it?**

**Greenhaus:** It is clear that the major finding was that work and family can conflict with one another—can be enemies—but also can enrich, support and be allies.

**Friedman:** Everybody knows there is this competition between the two domains at all kinds of levels, and we wanted to identify the ways in which it is, indeed, conflict-ridden, but at the same time give ways of understanding how the two domains can be alliances.

**One of the themes throughout the book is the psychological impact and interference of work on home and home on work. Can you**



Co-author Jeffrey Greenhaus with daughters, Joanne and Michele, and wife, Adele.

with your kids or thinking about your kids when at work ... those factors have an impact that can be negative both personally and professionally. The time you spend at work, in and of itself, does not have a direct bearing on the emotional health and development of your kids. It's really how you mentally focus on what you are doing and figure out ways of managing the boundaries and movement from one world to the other.

effectively integrate work with the rest of their lives by helping them to qualify what's important and to focus on results. They must recognize and support the whole person, which really means, as a manager and a company, realizing that virtually everyone has some other stuff that they do which can be a real asset to the business. Even if there is no direct impact in terms of employees developing coaching skills by working

## "Managers in organizations do well to help their employees effectively integrate work with the rest of their lives

**elaborate on this issue?**

**Greenhaus:** When you first think of work/family conflict, you think of time pressures. You think of having to miss out on family activities or work activities because of the crush of time. We also found, however, that as important or even more important than the time-scheduling issues was psychological conflicts—the preoccupation that you experience with family members when you are really thinking about work or the distraction at work when you're still concerned about a stressful family event. Or your inability to switch gears, and your tendency to act toward family members as you would act toward work colleagues. The implication is that people have to learn how to manage the boundaries between their work and family lives. They have to learn how to not bring the stress that they experience in one role to the other role. They have to learn that behaviors that might be very useful in one role—being tough, demanding, objective, analytical—may not be appropriate to the family role.

**Friedman:** To the extent that you are thinking about work when you are

**If you left work early to go spend some time on the sidelines of your kid's soccer or baseball game, that doesn't necessarily mean you'll be actively involved in that sport.**

**Greenhaus:** Exactly. And we make a distinction in the book between behavioral availability, which is physically being there, and psychological availability. In the example that you gave, the parent who goes to a child's sporting event is behaviorally available but psychologically may be back to work.

**And kids can sense that?**

**Greenhaus:** Yes. What we found is that people who are more or less obsessed with their career to the point of crowding out family life have less satisfying family experiences.

**How can employers help with this issue? What would HR do to help workers become more psychologically available?**

**Friedman:** Managers in organizations do well to help their employees

with their kids' soccer team and applying those skills to their supervisory roles at work, the enriched sense of value that employees have by contributing to the development of their families and communities makes them feel better about themselves and better able to contribute to the organization. It's self-esteem enhancement. Companies can do a lot for their people and the bottom line—their customers, their shareholders—by simply acknowledging that and continually experimenting with how work gets done. Companies need to trash basic assumptions about geographic location or face time, about fixed schedules, and really open up new ways of thinking about how to leverage virtual communication to get things done. The companies that really invest in that and [look for] ways to invest in the whole person will see benefits there and, most importantly, they are going to see a benefit in the war for talent.

**Greenhaus:** Part of it is providing the kinds of benefits that we think of when we talk about family friendly organizations, such as accessible day



care, flexible work hours, opportunities to telecommute and the like. Beyond that, it's giving individual employees and work groups the authority to design and structure their jobs in ways that they can accomplish their goals, but also meet their other personal or family obligations. This kind of approach that we advocate for employers requires a change in culture. If organizations start focusing not so much on the number of hours a person is at the worksite, but rather on what the goals of the individual and group are and measure people's performance against those goals and not against their physical presence ... and give employees and workgroups considerable input into how they make their job work ... then it can be a win/win situation. The organization will get higher performance and the employees can fit their work into the rest of their lives.

**Is this part of giving employees more autonomy?**

**Friedman:** Totally. The extent to which people have control, authority or autonomy in terms of how they get their

not as pronounced if women work for family friendly organizations. For women and men, they need to know what is important to themselves. It may very well be that for a certain period in one's life, being more psychologically involved with the family is the right and comfortable thing to do, even if it does produce family penalties.

**Friedman:** It takes a commitment on the part of the individual, the family, the couple, the company and society to invest in the whole person and to realize the traditional career models—built around single-earner males with moms at home raising the kids—only works for a minority of people now. It means challenging the way work gets done. It means realizing the traditional career paths and career models are outmoded.

**If an HR department wanted to actively introduce more women into its ranks, it would be a good idea, then, to introduce more family friendly policies.**

**Greenhaus:** Or else what's left is a lot of bright, talented women who get frustrated over their lack of success in their careers.

**You also write in your book that**

**“Leadership is no longer just about leadership at work. ... Leadership is about changing the world.”**

work done, where they get it done, with whom they get it done, that creates all kinds of value for them as people and is beneficial for the organization.

**You write that working mothers, as opposed to working fathers, suffer from more stress and career blocks. Why?**

**Friedman:** Traditionally, working moms get the short end of it. If you're a woman who is also a parent, you're at the bottom end.

**Greenhaus:** However, the mothers who tend to experience what we call family penalties are women who have reduced their psychological involvement in work in order to be effective parents and spend more quality time with the kids. One of the most interesting findings is that the family can produce a career penalty for women but a career bonus for men.

**How can women overcome that?**

**Greenhaus:** Through choosing the employer wisely. The family penalty experience by mothers of young kids is

**Friedman:** They lose good people and they lose output on a per-unit, per-time basis. It's certainly something that most companies have woken up to. The great opportunity and the great struggle is finding new ways to organize work in careers that make sense for their whole lives. The consequence is becoming painfully obvious to too many companies: You lose the war for talent. And you don't capitalize on your assets.

**How does HR help workers make allies of work and family?**

**Greenhaus:** By providing resources. Resources are time, through flexible work schedules, and providing opportunities for individuals concerned about work/family balance to interact with others who are equally concerned to get the kind of support they need. Even more effectively, maybe it involves support groups in the workplace or giving people the opportunity to speak with EAP counselors if there are some work/family [problems]. In a broader sense, it means giving people and groups enough authority and control over the place of their work, the time of their work [and] the methods of their

**women are better adapted to future leadership positions. Why is that?**

**Friedman:** There is a lot of anecdotal evidence ... that seems to indicate that women are better able to handle what I call “interruptability.” My own belief about this is that's because women over time have been forced to deal with lots of interruptions [when] raising kids. You can't say, “Hold on, I'll see you at 4 p.m. for that diaper change.” You've got to just do it, no matter what else you are doing. That's what it's going to take to be successful in moving rapidly and flexibly across more permeable boundaries between work, home and community.

**What happens when a company doesn't support life beyond work?**

**Greenhaus:** It could mean [employees] will leave their current employer and find work in some other organization which is more friendly to the family life. It could mean they won't leave because the money and benefits are good, but they turn off and are performing at a level lower than what they could if they had more flexibility.

work to both do a good job and satisfy the organization's goals on the one hand, but also to meet their individual needs. It means changing the culture of the organization to accept the fact that people have other life commitments and to give them enough responsibility and authority to integrate both their work and their family.

**Friedman:** There are so many areas for opportunity for the HR executives in organizations to really make a difference from how you structure rewards and how you help them structure their careers. Innovation is the key—innovation in how you set up compensation systems that allow for diversity and that account for time of life and how the days are structured. As prime movers of, and lead thinkers on, cultural transformation, HR needs to be in the lead by demonstrating how work can be accomplished in innovative ways with increased business results and enriched [employee] lives. It's making the case both by doing it and by teaching others how it can be done. Leadership is no longer just about leadership at work. Leadership goes beyond work. Leadership is about changing the world.

