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So are employers reluctant to hire women?

Following on from last week's blog about the misleading survey, new research has come to light regarding employer's attitudes to women with children. At first glance, it appears that a [survey conducted by workplace provider Regus](#) indicates a worrying new trend: employers appear reluctant to employ working mothers. In the study, they cited concerns such as mothers having lack of commitment and flexibility or fearing that returning-to-work mothers will possess out-of-date skills.

I agree that on these statistics alone, the results do not look good. A similar survey last year revealed that 38% of employers intended to recruit working mothers, whereas this year the figure has dropped to 26%. And looking at this in context with the percentage of firms intending to increase their workforce (43%), the figures do not make for encouraging analysis.

Yet, the natural cynic in me urges me to look again at these results. I am no statistician, but surveys like this can give us misleading results if interpreted in a vacuum.

Yes, it is *likely* that some employers hold prejudices regarding working mothers, but those questioned were asked on *principle* rather than reality and experience.

I'd like to think that if an employer happened to interview a working mother with excellent prospects, skills and experience (how else would she have reached the interview stage after all?!) that, based on their knowledge of her work history, they would actually recruit her (depending of course on the other candidates). Of course, following such an argument it is also likely that if an employer was faced with a choice of two excellent candidates – one a working mother, and one a single man, there is the worry that the employer would opt for the male candidate, perhaps convincing themselves that it was due to his skills rather than age-old prejudices.

But I digress. The survey and its results assume one very important and significant factor. You get the impression that the 'employer' is male. The reality is that the potential employer could, just *maybe*, be a woman, even a mother (heh, ridiculous, I know...), Or, if the employer is male, could be a father. Of course, that doesn't automatically mean that such employers would therefore look fairly on working mothers, but I do think these results need to be taken in context.

Furthermore, the study also reveals some encouraging statistics. For example, a superb 67% of employers interviewed believed that companies who overlooked working mothers are missing out on a highly talented section of the workforce and 51% believed that working mothers actually offered skills that were otherwise difficult to find elsewhere.

Clearly, basing conclusions on a couple of knee-jerk reactions isn't always the way to go.

By PRinHR's Annie Makoff

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