Building a better workplace

10 Drivers for Women's Success at Work

THEMOMPROJECT

Welcome

We are pleased to present the results of our inaugural research report, *Building a Better Workplace: 10 Drivers for Women's Success at Work.*

This research focuses on what factors matter most to working mothers, with the aim of providing corporations with actionable solutions to improve their attraction and retention of this large and critical segment of the workforce. For our research, we chose to focus specifically on hidden yet critical success predictors, including non-traditional benefits, workplace environment and leadership support to uncover the top 10 factors that determine a working mother's job satisfaction.

To uncover the 10 most important drivers, we surveyed more than 1,000 working mothers from diverse backgrounds, some currently in the workforce and others not, and asked them to rate what matters most to them at work. We combined a survey instrument and qualitative interviews to surface themes that might otherwise go undetected. Our ultimate goal is to understand the discreet concerns and desires that have the greatest impact on workplace recruitment, engagement and longevity.

At The Mom Project, we believe that revealing hidden success factors is key for top employers seeking to recruit and retain the best talent. This approach goes hand-in-hand with our mission to change the way women define career structures by providing real work opportunities that are in balance with their personal goals. We believe this two-fold approach, listening to and engaging women, will help employers find and keep substantially higher numbers of talented and accomplished women in the workforce.

We invite you to read our full report here and to visit TheMomProject.com to learn how we can help your company find and serve professional women nationwide.

Regards,

Allison Robinson
Founder, CEO
The Mom Project

Pam Cohen, Ph.D
Principal Research Scientist
The Mom Project

The math is simple but disturbing.

More than 60 percent of college graduates with bachelor's degrees are women and yet, according to a 2004 study by the Center for Work-Life Policy, 43 percent of women in professional roles end up leaving their careers, typically at the stage when family life becomes increasingly complex, involving all types of relationship, family and eventually, eldercare issues.

The pipeline is so leaky that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women's workforce participation has been on the decline since 1999.

Why?

It is well-documented that gender imbalance is an ongoing challenge for management teams and boardrooms across the country. With this research, we dive deep into something that will impact 86 percent of women by the time they are 44 — motherhood. To that end, we chose to hone in on the discrete factors that influence a woman's decision to keep working after becoming a mother in order to explore what employers can do to attract and retain this critical segment of the workforce. The benefits of understanding these unique motivations are imperative to retaining women's experience, intelligence, empathy and drive, all of which helps fuel our economy.

Simply put, when a woman's singular work life equation does not add up at one employer, her personal answer is clear: Find a new role — and most likely, a new employer —that better supports what she cares most about in her work and personal life or leave the workplace altogether.

To ascertain the variables in solving that equation, The Mom Project surveyed 1,041 working mothers, asking them to share what hidden workplace factors beyond the standard measures of salary, benefits and job relevance are at play when deciding to stay or leave a job.

Our researchers fielded a Talent Engagement questionnaire to women with diverse backgrounds, some currently employed and others not. We included qualitative interviews designed to surface topics that might have otherwise gone undetected. Our goal was to understand which discreet yet significant factors matter most, which criteria have the greatest impact on job longevity and engagement, and whether or not women are open to new job opportunities if certain critical conditions aren't met.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Overwhelmingly, women (83%) say they would be willing to leave a job for a role that better supports their desired workplace criteria. In a marketplace competing for the attention and engagement of working mothers, the importance of meeting the criteria they care most about cannot be stressed strongly enough.

- The ideal work week for most women is not 9 to 5. A mere 9% of those surveyed say they want to work what is commonly considered to be full time (40 hours), with the majority preferring an alternative 20-30 hour work week. Women say they are concerned that signing up to work full time (40 hours) will actually result in more than a full-time commitment (40+ hours).

- Three quarters of women (75%) surveyed rank their manager's understanding and overall organizational support for flexible work as the most important criteria in choosing a new job or position (controlling for equal work for equal pay).

- The majority of women surveyed (88%) consider flexibility to be as, if not more important than salary. For some (42%), flexibility outranks salary all together.

- While working mothers consider Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability efforts an important value in life, it is significantly less important than factors such as flexibility, respect and minimal travel, when it comes to their career choices.

Demographics

Our sample was drawn from The Mom Project community, a network of women who have expressed an interest in redefining career structures to provide women with work opportunities that are in balance with their personal goals.
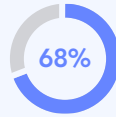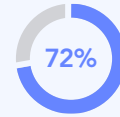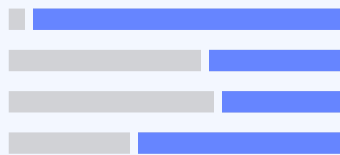
97%
identified as being mothers

68%
Of women not currently working, the majority (68%) reported being out of work less than three years.

72%
The majority of respondents (72%) report being active in the workforce, in either a part-time or full-time capacity.

Of those identifying as mothers:

60% have two to three children living at home

40% have one child living at home

94% hold a minimum of a Bachelor's degree

40% have completed an advanced degree

38% work as an individual contractor

62% are employed at a manager level or above.

Total sample size was 1041. Percentages are rounded.

Methodology

The Mom Project Employee Satisfaction Questionnaire combined quantitative survey collection and qualitative interviews. A wide variety of organizational characteristics were presented to respondents, who were asked to rate on a 10-point scale how critical each is to a potential job's overall attractiveness. One-on-one interviews followed, employing a semi-structured approach and asking respondents to respond to broad open-ended questions regarding their experiences, likes and dislikes within the selected topic area without unnecessarily restricting the conversation.

An analysis based on Grounded Theory was performed to evaluate the measurement model and assess which questionnaire items best "fit together" to define predictors of workplace investment. There were no pre-conceived notions of what characteristics were likely to emerge given the topic; the data came together to create the story. Once groupings were tested, a label was used to describe the concept or theme. In an average study, 8 to 12 themes (or predictors) are formed. In this case, 10 predictors of workplace investment were identified.

A more detailed discussion of the research design and methodology can be found on page 16.

Identify critical performance outcome

Perform qualitative research

Analyze using Grounded Theory method

Customize questions based on research and analysis

Create The Mom Project Employee Satisfaction Questionnaire

Field questionnaire

Analyze data to form groups that define drivers of reputation

Assign labels to reputation drivers based on definition

Assess causal relationships between drivers, index and outcomes

Model produces awareness ratings and opportunities for each driver of performance outcomes

10 Critical Findings

In rank order of impact on job longevity & enjoyment

1 Flexibility

While flexibility is the number one wish for most women working today, their desire goes beyond standard idea of only shifting work hours. Today, the notion of flexible work includes the ability to (in rank order):

- Work hours that are convenient (rather than standard 9 to 5)
- Work remotely
- Control number of hours worked
- Work hours needed to get the job done (regardless of whether or not it results in a 40-hour week)

> **What matters?**
> **Having the flexibility to do school drop off and pick up.**

Women surveyed (88%) consider flexibility to be as important, if not more so, than salary. For some, (42%), flexibility outranks salary all together.

The ideal workweek for most women does not mirror a traditional 40-hour week. Only 9% of women report wanting to work what is now considered to be full time (40 hours), while about 3% want to work a 40+ hour week. In fact, among women who would like to work full time, concerns center around the worry that working 40 hours a week might actually result in even more work hours.
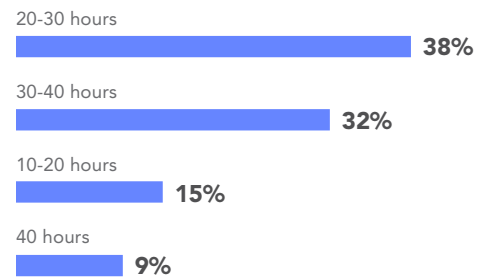
Flexibility *(continued)*

"I would like to work 20 to 40 hours a week. My ideal would be 40, but not with the plus tacked onto it."

More than a third (38%) of women surveyed would prefer a 20- to 30-hour work week, followed closely by those who would rather work 30 to 40 hours a week (32%). Only 15 percent indicated a desire to work just 10 to 20 hours week. (The sweet spot for working mothers is an overall mean of 27 hours per week.)

Women surveyed say they prefer a workweek that features set days per week combined with flexible hours within those days in order to accommodate family schedules. Respondents added that they want to get the job done and have no problem putting in the time, but need flexibility on what hours they work.

66

The biggest thing for me is not having to be at my desk at a certain time.

In addition to hours, flexibility also encompasses the ability to work from alternative locations as needed, including home or mobile office. Notably, among Millennial women surveyed, the idea of "work life balance" was seen as a dated concept. Instead, the approach that resonates is work-life integration, realizing we can do anything but not everything.

Preferred work week duration

20-30 hours
38%

30-40 hours
32%

10-20 hours
15%

40 hours
9%

66

Flexibility is being able to be home if I'm needed.

Doctor appointments fall on me, and being able to do the things for the family if and when I need to [is what i need].
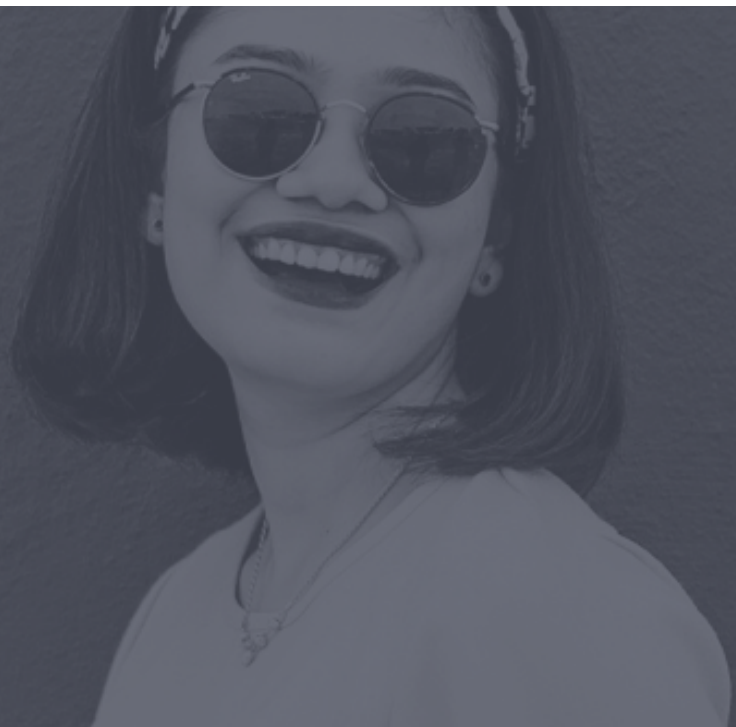
> "I really love the idea that life doesn't stop happening just because you're at work. If you value your employees like that, employees will give back 200%."

2 Respect

To working mothers, it's critical that leadership and organizational policies respect their need for flexibility. A majority of women (75%) ranked their manager's and organization's support for having the flexibility to balance work and professional life as the most critical criteria in job selection in terms of feeling respected at work.

Written policies aren't enough; leadership needs to visibly support efforts to create work-life balance and demonstrate a genuine understanding and respect for the need for flexibility. Women report that feeling respected in the workplace and understood for their need to balance between family and work has a significant impact on their overall workplace satisfaction and desire to stay at an organization.

Working mothers who currently work part-time, report the lowest levels of respect at work.

"And you get the stigma of 'oh, you're only part time.' Just 'maintain [her]' is how I've been treated after going part time. I feel like I'm split in two."

"Leadership has been very supportive of me transitioning into part time. But since going to part time it's almost like I'm just not involved. [It's] almost like they forget about you. 'Don't bring her in on it because she's only part time.' It's pretty demoralizing. It makes me think I should go back to full time. Now I feel like I'm only a warm body in a seat."

3 Benefits

Benefits and competitive salary, as well as maternity leave and childcare are considered an absolute imperative by women as they have children. And yet, while the need for both benefits was statedly abundantly in our qualitative discussions, they did not surface as the top priority, likely as a result of the women's belief bias against the benefit's existence. (The concept of an employer providing childcare is so foreign to women surveyed that most didn't hold employers accountable for this benefit.)

4 Recognition & Development

Women want to be recognized on both a personal and a professional level. While both rank important, a manager's genuine care and interest in a woman's well-being and responsibilities outside of the organization as a mother outranks even their desire for personal advancement within the organization.

5 Leadership

Women seek an open dialogue with leadership at work. They want leadership to be accessible and to feel comfortable going to leaders with questions or concerns. Slightly less important, but still noted by women surveyed is a desire to be included and informed about upcoming events. Also, women surveyed say they appreciate leaders who show up to support them at events.

> "If you're really opening it up for employees to be engaged in their career, then senior leadership needs to put in their time."

6 Off-Hours Events & Travel

Women are protective of their time and want to be respected, not judged, for how they choose to engage during off-hours. While willing to participate in non-work hour events on occasion, it's important that these events be considered optional and treated as such by management without unspoken preferences or consequences attached to them. It's equally important that leadership not assume women are not able or unwilling to participate.

Working mothers survey say they also prefer roles with minimal travel involved.

"A deal breaker is having a great salary with no flexibility or acknowledgment of my life as a person outside of the office."

> **66**
>
> **Management doesn't understand— 'Why can't your husband get the kids?' 'Why can't you go to happy hour?'**
>
> **They make all these assumptions on what I can and can't do.**

7 Clear Expectations

Women want a strong sense of what is expected of them by the organization in a given role. They look to managers to provide timely and useful performance-based feedback facilitated through regular check points regarding work priorities. Ultimately, women seek to maximize their productivity at work to allow them to support their personal life as well. Having a clear understanding of role expectations and performance metrics helps direct this focus, say women surveyed. Another critical factor for women is understanding how their role fits into overall organizational priorities, again emphasizing their need to belong and feel a part of the organization and its greater mission.

> "I want clear objectives."
>
> . . . .
>
> "People think saying, 'Oh you're doing a great job' is positive, but I'd rather know the real plusses and minuses so I can advance."

8 Culture & Collaboration

Women are attracted to a work culture that values diversity, collaboration, accountability and empowerment. It's important for an organization to not only hire people from diverse backgrounds, but to help them to fit in and succeed.

"It's about being open. I want to work in a culture that doesn't create implicit pressures."

Women seek the ability to collaborate in order to get jobs done but also the knowledge and assurance that the employer will effectively handle people who do not deliver in their role. Finally, women want to feel empowered to speak to people at any job level regardless of organization chart or ladder.

"Paid time off with my child trumps a bonus"

— The Mom Project Survey

> **I like to feel like I'm learning from my leadership.**
>
> **Challenge me, but don't micromanage.**
>
> **I need independence.**

9 Resources & Environment

Having access to the resources needed to do your job well and having the autonomy to effectively perform your job are equally important to women at work. While an enjoyable physical workspace is appreciated, it's considerably less important than having the right resources and sufficient information to do your job correctly. (The expectation of a physically enjoyable workspace may be less critical to some women in comparison to the flexibility of being able to work from different work-spaces.) Women want to feel like they have challenges, oversight and feedback, but also sufficient autonomy to get the job done.

10 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) typically encompasses an orga-nization's commitment to social responsibility, support of local com-munities, and support of volunteer work, among other issues. Women surveyed ranked CSR as the lowest concern among those presented. While working mothers sampled may consider CSR an important value in life with regard to other situations, it is significantly less important to them against other characteristics in the context of a personal work-place investment.

Many women surveyed say they feel that unless a corporation is particularly egregious against environmental or socially responsible concerns, it lives lower down on their list of imperatives. Often times they cited being sustainable and socially responsible at home, even as they did not feel the need for their workplace to do the same. The ex-ception seemed to come from women who were working in or actively seeking employment at non-profits.

Call to Action

When it comes to integrating home and work lives, working mothers are masters. Women want the opportunity to succeed in their career and be there for their families, not to mention their relationships, their friendships, their communities and themselves.

In a marketplace desperate for the best talent, experts have long spoken of the need for flexible work arrangements and a career lattice versus the career ladder for women; however, research shows that this conversation is only beginning.
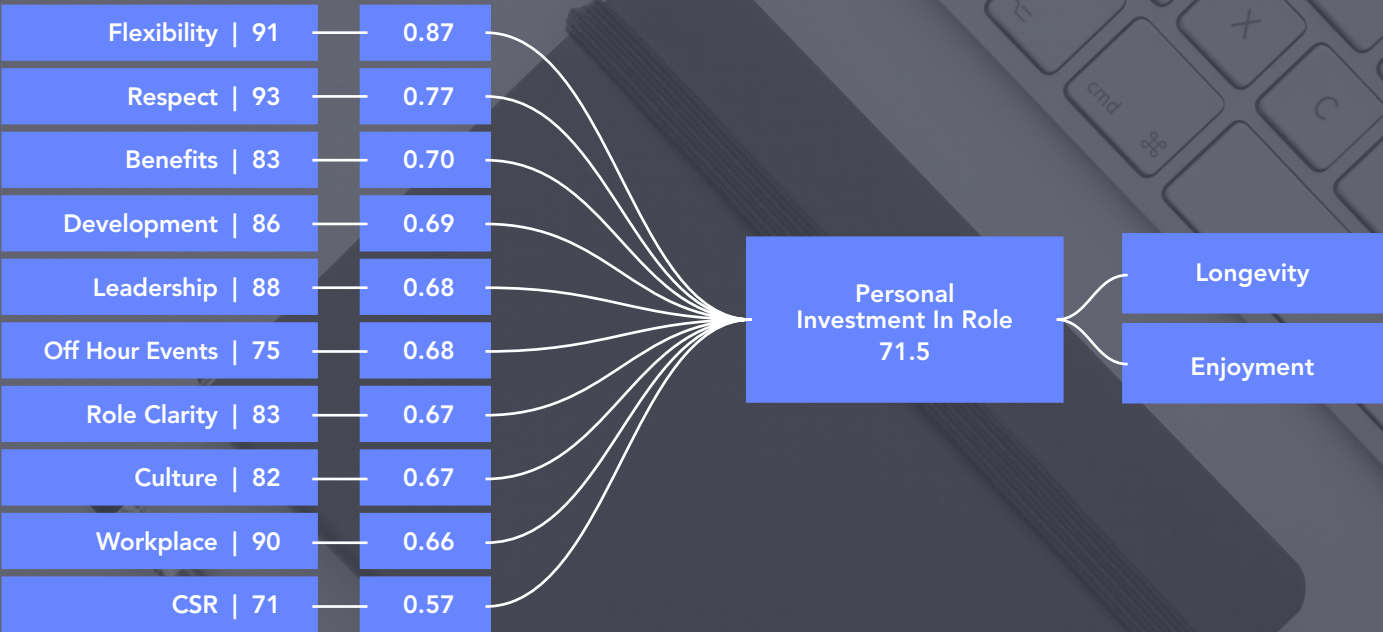
Outcomes

In a marketplace competing for the attention and engagement of women who are mothers, the importance of meeting the criteria they care most strongly about cannot be stressed strongly enough. Women will leave jobs for roles that better support what they care about most in their work and won't be happy in those that don't meet these criteria. Overwhelmingly, women we surveyed report that they would be willing to leave a job for a role that better supports the criteria they care strongly about (83%). If they remain in a role that is not meeting their criteria, only 19% indicate that they expect to remain happy. This suggests that even if women stay in jobs that don't meet critical criteria, they will either be actively looking for or at least be open to opportunities that better serves their workplace influencers.

Model

The Mom Project Employee Satisfaction Questionnaire results formed the basis for an ongoing predictive model that identifies, first, what matters most to mothers in the workplace, and then through measurement and predictive analytics, understands the current and expected effect of a change in any of these characteristics on critical performance outcomes such as willingness to stay at a job as well as predictors of long term happiness and workplace engagement.

In so doing, we can measure across time how these characteristics change both in definition and importance as well as how they impact bottom line performance. This will allow employers to understand where to invest resources in order to have the biggest returns on employee engagement and critical performance outcomes. In future applications, this model can be adapted and customized by companies to create models segmented by industry, function and role.

Flexibility	91	0.87
Respect	93	0.77
Benefits	83	0.70
Development	86	0.69
Leadership	88	0.68
Off Hour Events	75	0.68
Role Clarity	83	0.67
Culture	82	0.67
Workplace	90	0.66
CSR	71	0.57

Personal Investment In Role 71.5

Longevity

Enjoyment

SCORES
Importance ranking on a 100 point scale

IMPACT
The Impact a 1-point-change in Predictor Score will have on Outcome (Personal Investment in Role)

OUTCOME
Personal Investment in Role encompasses Willingness to Stay in Role (longevity) and Ability to Enjoy Current Role Regardless of Criteria Being Met (enjoyment)

Complete Findings Summary

Ranked in order of Impact

% = Overall Score 0-100 of how women rank criteria when considering a new job or position.

Impact = The expected effort of a 1-point score change in the overall driver score on the outcomes longevity and job enjoyment

Flexibility
91% | IMPACT: 0.87

- That leaders of the organization support work/life flexibility (~95%)

- That I have flexibility to work at times of the day/eve that are good for me (~91%)

- That I have flexibility to work from a remote location (~90%)

- That I have the flexibility to work the number of hours I need to get my job done, but it doesn't have to be a set number of hours (~88%)

Respect
93% | IMPACT 0.77

- That my manager supports my efforts to balance my work and personal life (~95%)

- That the organization understands the need for flexibility in work hours and location and respects it (~95%)

- Being paid what I feel I'm worth (~92%)

- That my life outside the organization matters to leadership (~86%)

Benefits
83% | IMPACT 0.70

- That my salary is competitive for my role (~91%)

- That the organization provides paid family leave benefits (~86%)

- That the organization's benefit plan is excellent (~83%)

- That the organization provides childcare benefits (~73%)

Recognition & Development
86% | IMPACT 0.69

- That my ideas are valued (~89%)

- That I feel like I belong at the organization (~86%)

- My manager genuinely cares about my well-being (~85%)

- That there is opportunity for advancement within the organization for me (~82%)

Leadership
88% | IMPACT 0.68

- That I can go to my manager with questions or concerns (~89%)
- That I have confidence in our leaders (~88%)
- The leaders at the organization demonstrate that people are important to the company's success (~88%)

Off-Hour Events
75% | IMPACT 0.68

- That attending non-work-hour related events is optional (~78%)
- That I not have to travel much if at all for work (~74%)
- That I have a choice of whether to attend non-work events sponsored by work/clients (~72%)

Role Clarity (Clear Expectations)
83% | IMPACT 0.67

- That I have a strong sense of what is expected of me in my role (~91%)
- That I understand how my role contributes to the organization's priorities (~86%)
- My manager provides me with timely and useful feedback on my performance (~83%)
- My manager and I have regular 1:1s or check-ins regarding my work priorities (72%)

Culture (Culture & Collaboration)
82% | IMPACT 0.67

- Department collaborates well to get jobs done (~83%)
- That I can speak freely to people at any level of the organization (~83%)
- The organization is inviting for people from diverse backgrounds to fit in and succeed (~82%)
- When it is clear that someone is not delivering in his/her role we do something about it (~81%)

Workplace (Resources & Environment)
90% | IMPACT 0.66

- That I have access to the resources that I need to do my job well (~90%)
- That I have enough autonomy to perform my job effectively (~92%)

Corporate Social Responsibility
71% | IMPACT 0.57

- The organization's commitment to social responsibility (~73%)
- The organization supports the local community (~71%)
- The organization supports volunteer work (~69%)

Detailed Research Design & Methodology

The study utilized a combination of quantitative survey collection and qualitative 1:1 interviews. Survey questions were designed using analyzed data from a preliminary study followed by secondary research available through academic library resources. Grounded Theory techniques, often used in social psychology to build hypothetical models of a concept, were used to build a model addressing the concept "What Matters Most to Working Mothers." Secondary research questions were built from the ground up. There were no pre-conceived notions of what characteristics were likely to emerge given the topic; the data was left to explain itself. This methodology has been applied in academia to understand individual or collective behavior in a society and is extremely well suited for researching respondent opinions.

A wide variety of organizational characteristics were presented to respondents; they were asked to rate on a 10-point scale (used to encourage discrimination between levels of importance) how critical each characteristic was to a potential job's overall attractiveness. A statistical analysis was performed following the fielding of the questionnaire to evaluate the measurement model and assess which questionnaire items best "fit together" to define predictors of workplace investment. Once groupings or categories were tested, a label was used to describe the concept or theme. In an average study, 8 to 12 themes (or predictors) are formed. In this case, 10 predictors of workplace investment were identified.

Qualitative research was also performed through one-on-one interviews using a semi-structured approach to the discussions and Grounded Theory method with in vivo line-by-line coding for analysis. The semi-structured approach uses an interview guide wherein key topics are covered. The respondent is asked mainly to respond to broad open-ended questions regarding their experiences, likes and dislikes within the selected topic area without the interviewer unnecessarily restricting the conversation. The interviewer takes notes writing verbatim what has been said capturing the voice of the respondent and allowing topics that might have otherwise gone undetected to emerge.
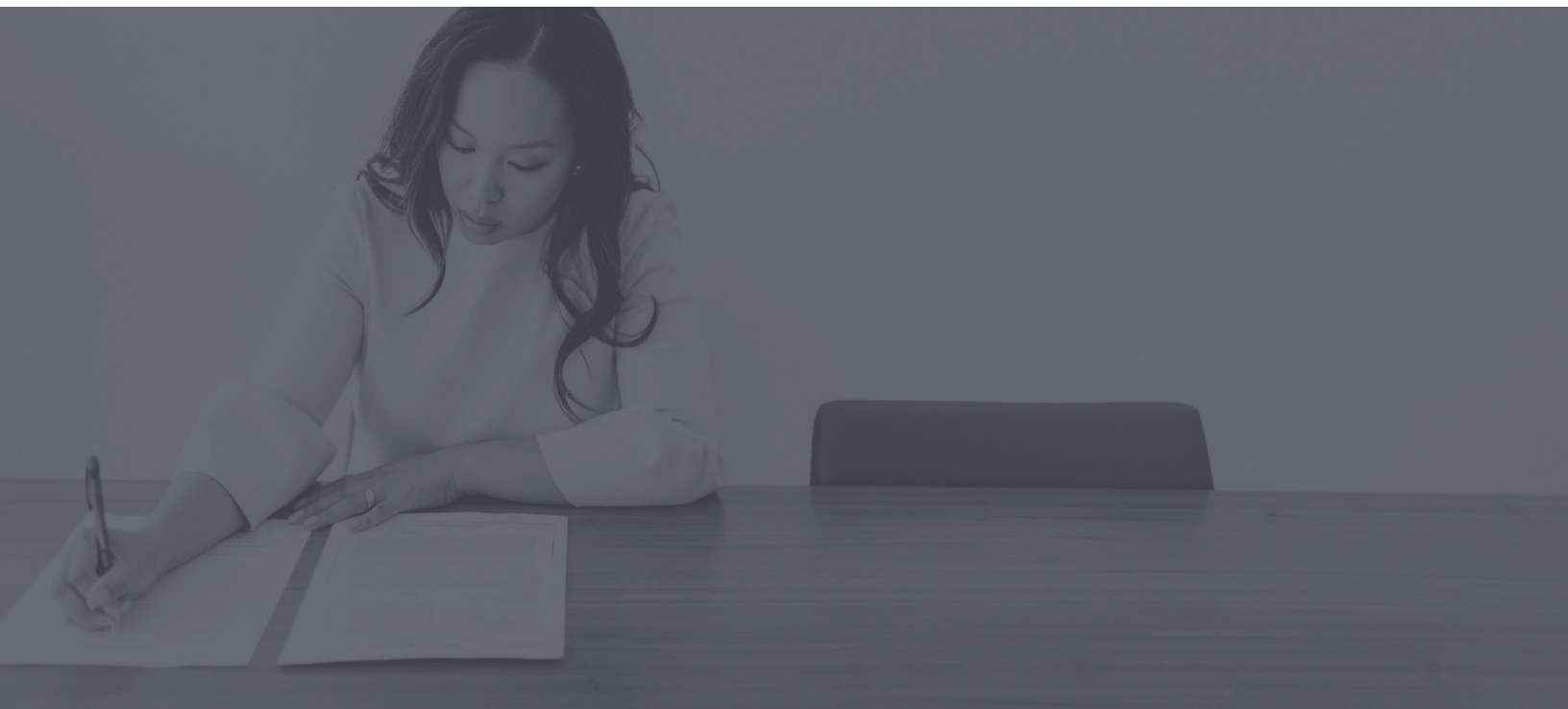
In vivo line-by-line coding was used to process the interview data. In this method, each line of text is treated as a unique and stand-alone statement, allowing the coder to pick up on unique ideas that would otherwise go unnoticed. (In traditional research methodologies, automatic coding systems are used, and data are quickly categorized into pre-labelled groupings using algorithms that search for frequency of response and pre-defined ideas.)

The in-vivo process picks up on subtle nuances and tones of each statement, such as sarcasm or enthusiasm, that otherwise go undetected, or worse, are miscoded as a tone other than what it represents, by an automatic coding system. As each line of code is read and recorded, stories can emerge rather than be forced. We analyze not only what people are saying, but how they say it and, critically, how their minds are processing and responding to information about what an organization is doing. Beyond picking out what people are talking about, using this microlens process allows us to pick out what is triggering their unique responses and how they are being influenced by what they see an organization doing or saying. The last step in the in-vivo process is to review the whole and stand-alone identified statements and start to find patterns of how these statements holistically group together. Coders identify the themes that start to emerge from the ground up and see patterns and threads that then join these together. These statements can then be moved around, like pieces of a puzzle, to form robust themes that, only then, can be labeled for the concepts they represent.

THE MOM PROJECT

The Mom Project is the career destination for moms. Through our digital marketplace and community we connect professionally accomplished women with world-class companies for rewarding opportunities. The Mom Project is changing the way women work and redefining career structures by providing women with real work opportunities that are in balance with their personal goals. This evolution will keep more talented, professionally accomplished women in the workforce.

Visit us today at www.TheMomProject.com