

Women in Business: A Study of Work Friendly Practices for the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce

A research study conducted by

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Executive Summary

A study of work friendly practices for women was conducted by the students in the Small Business Management class at Texas Woman's University (TWU). The first part of the project was a series of focus groups. The second part of the project was a web survey. This paper presents the results of the web survey. The project was guided by Dr. Pushkala Raman, Associate Professor of Marketing, School of Management, TWU. The leaders for the project from the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce were Ms. Marilyn Gilbert, Executive Vice-President, Marketing, and Ms. Pennie Blossom, Director, Member Programming and Area Councils.

The objective of this project is to find out what women want in their ideal workplace. The results of a web survey of working women in Tarrant County are reported in this paper. The results from the survey will form the basis for a Women in Business award for "best places to work for women" and will be distributed through collaborative partners to individuals or businesses interested in nominating a company or themselves. Once those nominations are submitted to the Chamber, a WIB judging panel will determine the finalists, and after site visits, winners will be selected for each category.

The objectives of the survey are to:

1. Determine the relative importance of the seven work place factors to working women.
2. Determine the relative ranking of the seven factors as desired by women in their ideal workplace.
3. See if there are any differences in the rankings between women based on certain key demographics.

The target population for the survey included all currently employed females in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, and Tarrant County in particular. Partners in sample acquisition and survey distribution were the Fort Worth Star Telegram, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce. The final sample had 430 complete responses.

Survey participants were asked to rank and rate seven workplace factors. The most important factors that all women definitely want in their ideal workplace are compensation and leave, organizational ethics, and work flexibility. Training and mentoring and facilities are the second set of factors that women would like to have. Wellness initiatives and community involvement are nice to have factors but not necessary factors. Some demographic differences were observed in the rankings.

Based on the results, three kinds of awards are recommended. The number of awards will depend on the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce's resources. One overall award for the best workplace for women should be created. Best in Practice awards for outstanding achievement in a single factor should also be made. Special recognition should be accorded to organizations that create a good work environment for specific groups of women.

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Background

In November 2010, the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce's Women Influencing Business (WIB) committee and students at the Texas Woman's University's (TWU) School of Management teamed up to spot the best workplaces for women. The project started in January 2011 when the students in the Small Business Management class at TWU conducted a series of focus groups. They talked to working women in Tarrant County about what they look for in their ideal workplace. The project recognizes that women want certain things and procedures in the workplace that are different from men. This objective of this project is to identify those factors. Much of the traditional perspective on the workplace has been from the male point of view. In making accommodations for women, the practice has been to add on, rather than change processes and features of the workplace. This project stops to ask women directly what THEY desire, what they value and cherish.

The student team from the Small Business class at TWU submitted a report with the findings from the focus groups to the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce team in May 2011. This report identified compensation, training and mentoring, community involvement, flexibility, ethics, physical facilities, and wellness initiatives as the key elements that women desire in their ideal workplaces.

The focus groups were followed by a web survey. The objective of the survey was to rank and rate the various factors that the focus group participants talked about. The results from the survey will form the basis for a Women in Business award for "the best places to work for women" and will be distributed through collaborative partners to individuals or businesses interested in nominating a company or themselves. Once those nominations are submitted to the Chamber, a WIB judging panel will determine the finalists, and after site visits, winners will be selected for each category.

The remainder of this report summarizes the research objectives, survey methodology, the results and conclusions.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the survey are to:

1. Determine the relative importance of the following work place factors to working women:
 - Wellness Initiatives
 - Ethics
 - Compensation
 - Training and Mentoring
 - Facilities
 - Community Involvement
 - Work Flexibility

2. Determine the relative ranking of the above seven factors as desired by women in their ideal workplace.
3. See if there are any differences in the rankings between women based on:
 - Race
 - Age
 - Stage of Life
 - Type of industry
 - Size of organization (as in number of employees)

Methodology

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was developed by Dr. Pushkala Raman, an Associate Professor of Marketing at Texas Woman's University. The questionnaire was shared with Ms. Marilyn Gilbert and Ms. Pennie Blossom of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce for feedback and comments. The online survey was hosted on the Psychdata website (www.psychdata.com). The survey was pretested using fifteen members of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce staff. Results of the pretest were used to make suitable modifications. A copy of the final questionnaire is available in Appendix 1.

The research instrument has three significant parts. The first section assessed the **sample demographics**. The first two questions were used as filter questions. The desired respondents were females who are currently employed in the DFW metroplex. Demographics of age, race, marital status and stage of life were considered important because the focus group results indicated differences in how these women evaluated work friendly practices. Details relating to size of organization (number of employees,) type of industry, and nature of respondent's work were also relevant to the project.

The second section asked respondents to indicate how important each factor was in describing their ideal workplace. A 10 point scale was used, ranging from 1= not at all important to 10= extremely important. The third section asked respondents to rank the aforementioned seven factors in order of priority. Table 1 summarizes the seven factors and their components.

Table 1: Workplace Factors and their Components

FACTOR	COMPONENTS
Wellness Initiatives	Healthy snacks Gym membership Ergonomic chairs Space for walking
Compensation and Leave	Equal pay Healthcare coverage for self Family healthcare coverage Child care for children under 5 years Family leave for personal issues Maternity leave
Community Involvement	Opportunities for employee to be involved with local community Company participation in projects benefitting local community
Facilities	Natural lighting On-site child care Private rooms for breast feeding Clean bathrooms Safe parking Paid parking
Work Flexibility	Ability to work from home (telecommute) Up-to-date technology Trust employee to get the job done
Training & Mentoring Programs	On the job training opportunities Funding for further education Mentors from within organization Same sex mentors Same race mentors
Ethical Practices	Anti-discrimination policy Ethical management Implement sexual harassment policy

Survey Distribution

The web survey was made available for ten days. Initially, it was distributed by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce to its members, and the members of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Black Chamber of Commerce. A copy of this e-mail is reproduced in Appendix 2. The request for survey participation was also included in the newsletter of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. The survey was also distributed by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram to its readers. A copy of the Star-Telegram's e-mail is included in Appendix 3.

Population and Sample

The target population for the survey included all currently employed females in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, and Tarrant County in particular. The distribution of the survey to members of the Chambers of Commerce in Fort Worth and the readers of the Fort Worth Star Telegram ensured that the best attempts were made to get a sample that was representative of the target population.

Justification of criteria for inclusion

- The survey was limited only to women because the objective of this survey is to find out what **women** want in their ideal workplace.
- The end objective of this project is to decide on criteria for awards to be made to organizations in Tarrant County based on how closely their respective workplaces meet with women's expressed ideals. Hence, the survey was limited to respondents who either worked in or lived in Tarrant County.
- The last criterion for inclusion was women who are currently employed. Any woman who has been employed for some length of time would have been able to contribute to the survey. However, it was necessary to ensure that the opinions expressed reflected the most recent experiences. Hence, the decision was made to include only those respondents who are currently employed.

Response rate

A total of 595 people accessed the survey. After filtering out males, females who are not currently employed, people who do not work or live in Tarrant County, and incomplete responses, 430 complete surveys were obtained.

Results

Individual Demographics

Tables 2 through 5 summarize the sample demographics. Major highlights of the sample demographics are:

- A majority of the participants are between 45 and 65 years (61%.) See Table 2 for details.
- A significant number of survey participants (42%) hold a bachelor's degree. See Table 3 for details.
- Approximately 70% of survey participants are currently married.
- The majority of the sample was non-Hispanic white (83%.) See Table 4 for details.
- Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated that they were responsible for the care of elderly relatives.
- A little less than half the sample (43%) had children living at home. The distribution of children living at home by age is presented in Table 5.

Table 2: Age Ranges

Age Range	Percentage of Sample (%) (n = 430)
18 to 24 years	0.9
25 to 34 years	17.2
35 to 44 years	16.1
45 to 54 years	33.3
55 to 64 years	28.4
65 years and older	4.0

Table 3: Levels of Education

Highest Level of Education	Percentage of Sample (%) (n = 430)
Some school	0.7
Completed high school	4.9
Associate's degree	7.2
Some college	19.9
Bachelor's degree	42.1
Master's degree	19.4
Doctoral Degree	5.8

Table 4: Race

Race Category	Percentage of Sample (%) (n = 430)
White (non-Hispanic)	83.0
Black or African American	3.8
Asian	0.9
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	9.2

Table 5: Stage in Life: Age Distribution

Age Range of Children living at home	Percentage of Sample (%) (n = 430)
Under 3 years	4.9
3 to 5 years	4.2
6 to 14	3.0
15 to 17 years	3.7
18 years and above	4.2

Workplace Demographics

Tables 6 through 8 summarize details of the organizations where survey participants are employed. Key issues arising from this analysis are:

- A third of the survey participants described themselves as independent contributors. Another third indicated they are in some sort of supervisory position where they manage people.
- An overwhelming majority (83%) of survey participants had worked for 10 years or more. This excludes summer jobs and internships.
- Fifteen percent of survey participants work from home on a regular basis. Of the participants who telecommute, 44% worked from home for all five days of the week. See Table 6 for details.
- Company size was assessed by the number of employees at the site where the survey participant worked. Approximately 60% of survey participants work at a site with less than 100 employees. See Table 7 for details.
- Survey participants indicated the primary industry of their employing firm. The details are presented in Table 8. The industries of education, healthcare and professional services were among the significant employers. Thirty-seven percent of the participants worked for privately held companies, 23% for publicly held companies, and 28% for non-profit organizations.

Table 6: Telecommuting: Number of Days spent working from home

No. of days worked from home	Percentage of Telecommuters (%) (n = 61)
1 day	26.2
2 days	11.5
3 days	13.1
4 days	4.9
5 days	44.3

Table 7: Number of Employees at Work Site

Number of Employees	Percentage of Sample (%) (n = 430)
Less than 100	58.6
100 to 500	16.3
501 to 1000	5.9
Greater than 1000	18.0

Table 8: Industry Distribution

Primary Industry	Percentage of Sample (%) (n = 430)
Manufacturing	4.9
Professional Services	13.3
Education	18.0
Retail	3.4
Government	6.4
Healthcare	11.8
Other	42.2

Relative Importance of Workplace Factors

Seven factors emerged from the focus groups as key elements that women desired in their ideal working place. Each factor had several components. Survey participants were asked to rate the importance of each component. A 10-point scale was used, ranging from 1= not at all important to 10= extremely important. Table 9 summarizes the average importance of each factor component. Higher numbers indicate greater importance.

How to read Table 9

- Scores of **9 to 10** indicate a very **high level of importance**. These are factors that women **definitely want and value** in their ideal workplace.
- Scores of **8 to 9** indicate factors that are **important**. These are factors that women **would like to have** in their ideal workplace.
- Scores of **7 to 8** represent factors that are **somewhat important**. These are features that women consider **nice to have**, but are willing to do without.

Note: These averages are for the entire sample. Certain groups of people may have different importance ratings. These sub groups will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Table 9: Average Importance Rating of Workplace Components

Key Factor	Individual Component	Average
Wellness Initiatives	Ergonomic chairs	6.9
	Space for walking	6.1
	Healthy snacks	5.2
	Gym membership	5.1
Compensation & Leave	Equal pay	9.8
	Healthcare coverage for self	9.6
	Family leave for personal issues	9.1
	Family healthcare coverage	8.7
	Maternity leave	7.9
	Child care for children under 5 years	6.0
Community Involvement	Company participation in projects benefitting local community	8.4
	Opportunities for employee to be involved with local community	7.8
Physical Facilities	Clean bathrooms	9.7
	Safe parking	9.6
	Paid parking	7.6
	Natural lighting	7.5
	Private rooms for breast feeding	5.8
	On-site child care	5.6
Work Flexibility	Trust employee to get the job done	9.8
	Up-to-date technology	8.6
	Ability to work from home (telecommute)	8.0
Training & Mentoring	On the job training opportunities	9.0
	Mentors from within organization	8.5
	Funding for further education	8.3
	Same sex mentors	5.7
	Same race mentors	4.2
Ethics	Ethical management	9.8
	Implement sexual harassment policy	9.2
	Anti-discrimination policy	8.9

Summary of Table 9

The organization that wants to be welcoming to women must offer equally pay to men and women, provide health coverage and leave for personal issues. In addition, if it can offer family healthcare coverage, the organization would really appeal to women.

In terms of facilities, the organizations must have clean bathrooms and safe parking. These are things that were expressed by the focus group participants as well.

A key sentiment expressed in focus groups and survey participants is, “trust me to get the job done.” These women do not appreciate being questioned repeatedly about progress on a job or

having someone hovering over them. Telecommuting is an option provided by most workplaces. What the women wanted was trust from management to do the job once it had been assigned. They felt that they were being allowed to telecommute- and then someone was constantly breathing down their necks to see if it was done. The message from the women was, “Back off. Trust me to do the job. If I mess up, then start the close monitoring.” Participants also said they wanted the latest technology to make telecommuting easier (connectivity, PDAs, etc.).

On-the-job training was considered a necessary feature of the ideal workplace. Women also appreciate having mentors and funding for further education. Considering that women often give up many of their younger years to start and raise a family, they may miss out on higher education. Hence, companies that provide these opportunities are more attractive to women.

Ethics of the corporation and colleagues was very important to the women in the focus groups and in the web survey. This sentiment was expressed across the board and crossed age, race and stage in life barriers.

Ranking of Workplace Factors

Survey participants were asked to rank the seven workplace factors in order of priority starting with 1 being the most important. The figures in Table 10 represent the average rank for each factor. A lower number indicates a higher rank. The factors are presented in decreasing order of rank starting with compensation as the most important factor.

Table 10: Rankings of Workplace Factors

Workplace Factor	Average Rank
Compensation & Leave	2.22
Organizational Ethics	2.74
Work Flexibility	2.87
Training & Mentoring	4.25
Facilities	4.64
Wellness Initiatives	5.39
Community Involvement	5.88

The most important factors that all women definitely want in their ideal workplace are compensation and leave, organizational ethics, and work flexibility. Training and mentoring and facilities are the second set of factors that women would like to have. Wellness initiatives and community involvement are nice to have factors but not necessary factors.

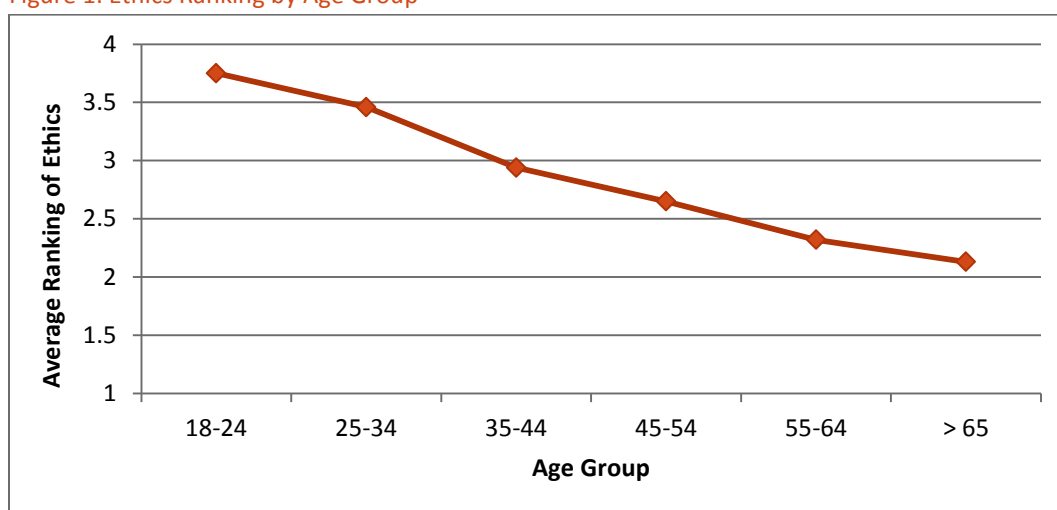
Demographic Differences

The focus group results indicated that working women may want a different mix of workplace factors based on their stage in life, age, race, type of industry and size of the organization. To test this, comparisons were made between the workplace factor rankings. The results are discussed in this section.

Differences by Age Group

Workplace ranking differences by **age groups** were observed for **ethics, training & mentoring** and **work flexibility**. As one might expect, work flexibility was most important to the 26 to 34 years age group. These are the people who are most likely to have young children and pre-schoolers and would therefore need more flexibility in their schedules. Training and mentoring was more important to the 18 to 24 year olds and the 25 to 34 year olds. People in these groups are relatively newer to the job and would, therefore, benefit more from training and mentoring programs. Organizational ethics becomes more important as one matures. The results, shown in Figure 1, clearly indicate that ethics are very important to more mature women. This may be because older women hold more senior positions and are in a position to know more about the workings of the organization. Younger women are probably more occupied with finding their places, acquiring new skills and learning to navigate corporate waters, and busy with their families.

Figure 1: Ethics Ranking by Age Group

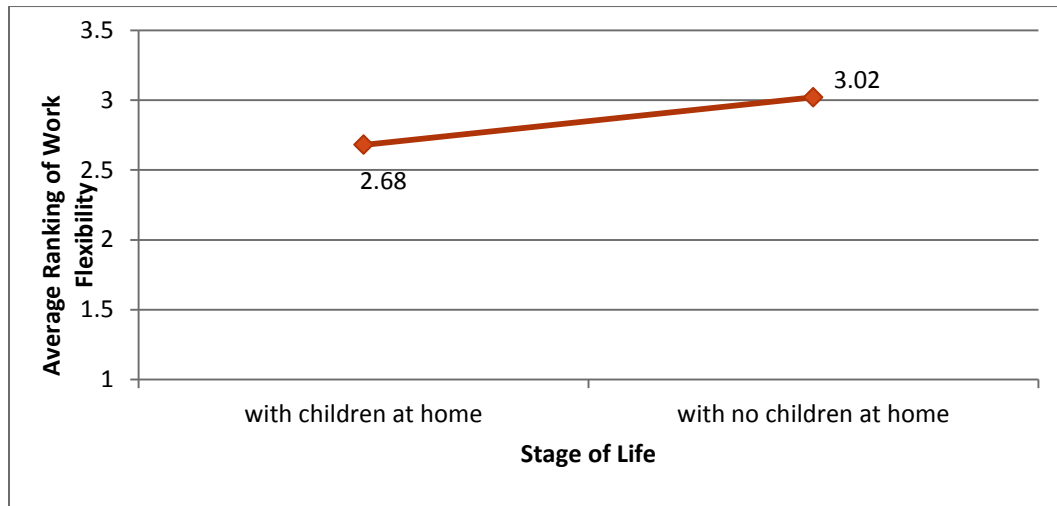


Note: Lower numbers indicate a higher ranking (greater importance).

Differences by Stage of Life

Working women with children still living at home ranked work flexibility higher than the rest of the sample. Figure 2 shows the average ranking for work flexibility.

Figure 2: Work Flexibility Rankings by Stage of Life



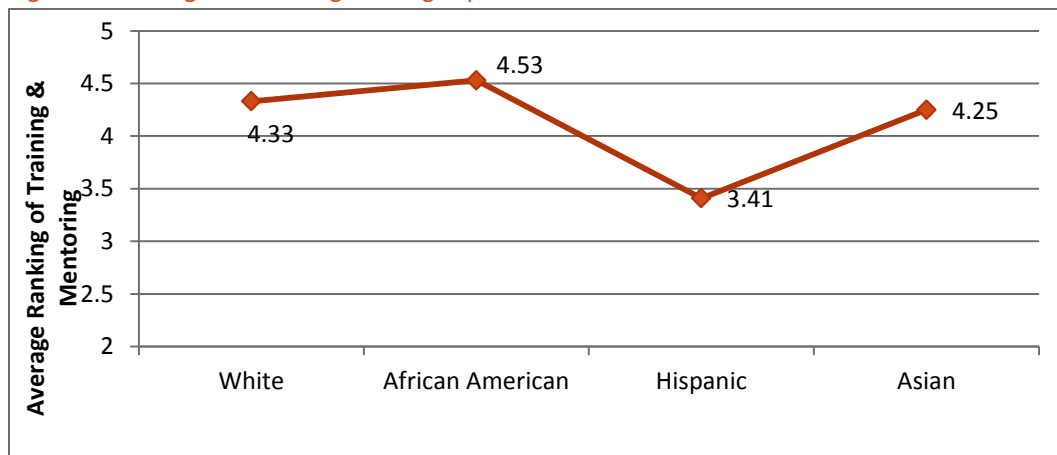
Note: Lower numbers indicate a higher ranking (greater importance).

Differences by Race of Participant

Some differences between the races were observed in the importance and rankings of workplace factors. However, since the individual numbers of the different race categories are very disparate (see Table 4), significant conclusions cannot be drawn.

Workplace rankings were computed for one ethnic group, Hispanics. The sample size was 37. The rankings of the workplace factors mirrored that of the overall sample as represented in Table 10. However, Hispanic women tended to rate training and mentoring higher relative to the sample average. The contrast is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Training & Mentoring Rankings by Race



Note: Lower numbers indicate a higher ranking (greater importance).

Differences by Organization Type and Industry

No significant differences were observed in the workplace factor rankings based on the type of industry or the size of the firm. Size was defined as number of employees.

Recommendations

Three kinds of awards are recommended. The number of awards will depend on the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce's resources. One overall award for the best workplace for women should be created. Best in Practice awards for outstanding achievement in a single factor should also be considered. Special recognition should be accorded to organizations that create a good work environment for specific groups of women.

Overall Award

The WIB award for best workplaces for women should be based on the following:

1. An employee (women only) survey to assess how well the organization does on the seven workplace factors used in this survey. The School of Management, Texas Woman's University can assist in the survey creation. The factor weights should be different since the survey clearly indicates that some factors are more important than others.

FACTOR	WEIGHT
Compensation & Leave	0.20
Ethics	0.20
Work Flexibility	0.20
Training & Mentoring	0.15
Facilities	0.15
Wellness Initiatives	0.05
Community Involvement	0.05
TOTAL	1.00

2. Follow up site visits to the top three qualifiers. The objective of the site visits is to talk to select employees and obtain a firsthand impression of why they think their organization deserves the award.

Best in Category Awards

In addition to the overall award, separate awards can be created for “best of category” winners. These can be used to highlight workplace initiatives that are dear to women. The recommended Best in Category awards are:

- Best in Facilities
- Best in Wellness Initiatives
- Best in Community Involvement

The above three factors were identified by women as “nice to have” features in their ideal workplace. If organizations can be encouraged to focus on these factors through recognition for their efforts, it would be a worthwhile attempt. Further, a Best in Practices Community Involvement award would also fit well with the objectives of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce with respect to promoting neighborhood communities.

Awards targeted to specific groups of women

A separate award should be made for organizations that create the ideal workplace for young working women. This award would recognize organizations that can provide the necessary work flexibility and on site facilities that mothers of young children look for. The criteria for this award will assess organizations’ capabilities in the work flexibility and facilities factors used in this survey.

A separate award should also be made for organizations that create the ideal workplace for Hispanic working women. This award would specifically recognize organizations that put into place strong mentoring programs for Hispanic women. Hispanic women reported in the focus groups and surveys that they look to mentors to help them succeed in the workplace. The award would fit in with the changing demographics of Tarrant County. Potential collaborations with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce could be considered for this award.

Appendix 1

Web Survey Questionnaire

Questionnaire is available in a separate file.

Appendix 2

E-mail to members of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce

Subject: Women's Research Initiative Focuses on Work-Friendly Best Practices

Dear Chamber Member

We need your valuable input for a survey we are conducting. The Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce's Women Influencing Business (WIB) committee and students at the Texas Woman's University's School of Management are teaming up to spot the best workplaces for women.

The project started early this year when the students in the small business management class at TWU conducted a series of focus groups. They talked to working women in Tarrant County about what they look for in their ideal workplace. Some of you may have participated in these focus groups. The responses ranged from compensation to training, community involvement, mentoring and ethics.

The team is now ready to launch a survey. The objective of the survey is to rank and rate the various factors that the focus group participants talked about. The results from the survey will form the basis for a Women in Business application for "best places to work for women" and will be distributed through collaborative partners to individuals or businesses interested in nominating a company or themselves. Once those nominations are submitted to the Chamber, a WIB judging panel will determine the finalists, and after site visits, winners will be selected for each category.

We invite you to participate in the survey and let your opinions be heard. The survey is available at <https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=142361>

We thank you for your time!

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Appendix 3

Survey invitation to readers of the Fort Worth Star Telegram




Star Telegram invitation.pdf - Adobe Reader

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Women's Research Initiative Focuses on Work-Friendly Best Practices

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Click here to participate in survey.