

Job Content ... Women's Choices

Gender and ICT Professions Workshop
Brussels, 29 September 2003

Research & Consultancy in
Work & Employment
22 Northchurch Terrace
London N1 4EG, UK
Juliet.Webster@btinternet.com

Expectations of the Work

- Very rarely accurate or well-informed
- Vague: "I remember thinking, 'I don't know whether I am going to do electrical engineering or computer science.' I honestly didn't know. As it turned out, on my first day it ended up being computer science. I was doing software engineering and I went into a software engineering group. So I kind of fell into it."
- Even for the young, stereotype of nerdiness

Research & Consultancy in
Work & Employment
22 Northchurch Terrace
London N1 4EG, UK
Juliet.Webster@btinternet.com

Attitudes and Preferences

- Some like interpersonal work:
“... it is using the technical skills, but I am not a techie because I have business management responsibility as well. I love my job. I absolutely love it. This is the best job I have ever had.”
- Others love technical work such as coding - “women can be geeks”, development work is “creative work”
- Not all want to go into senior jobs

Research & Consultancy in
Work & Employment
22 Northchurch Terrace
London N1 4EG, UK
Juliet.Webster@btinternet.com

Frustrations

- Many like the work but not the working conditions, particularly if parents.

Research & Consultancy in
Work & Employment
22 Northchurch Terrace
London N1 4EG, UK
Juliet.Webster@btinternet.com

“On the work-life balance issue, my son (he is 7 and three-quarters now) came running in the kitchen the other day and said ‘Mummy, mummy, mummy, there is fantastic news.’ He had been watching the news and they had been talking about flexible working and he had listened to every word, he had picked it all up and he came in and said ‘They are going to introduce a law in April and it is called ‘flexible working’ and it is so that all the mummies and daddies can spend more time with their children. Isn’t that wonderful, mummy?’ And he gave me a big hug and I just thought ‘Oh gosh, it is so hard’. And of course it is only for children under six anyway. And of course at this level [of seniority] you have got no hope whatsoever of getting any flexible work or time or anything. You would just be sacked ...

**Research & Consultancy in
Work & Employment
22 Northchurch Terrace
London N1 4EG, UK
Juliet.Webster@btinternet.com**

... There are no part-time workers here. All the women who go part-time are soon edged out. There is just no tolerance of it whatsoever. It is when you get past a certain level, you are playing with the boys. They are all serious about their work, they are all doing long hours and they expect you to be the same. My boss’s boss here, he works through the night. He has got a family, he has got a wife and children, though I think he is pretty much separated from them. They live in a different part of the country, and he is one of these people that only needs a few hours sleep a night. So he works through the night, and will be sending emails at midnight. You can send him an email at any time and he will respond back. It is just that culture of ‘you must be available at all times’. It is very difficult.”

**Research & Consultancy in
Work & Employment
22 Northchurch Terrace
London N1 4EG, UK
Juliet.Webster@btinternet.com**

Frustrations

- Many like the work but not the working conditions, particularly if they are parents.
- The inevitable path to management - is there an alternative?
- Dealing with organisational politics in order to survive male hostility
- Sexism is alive and well in some places

Research & Consultancy in
Work & Employment
22 Northchurch Terrace
London N1 4EG, UK
Juliet.Webster@btinternet.com