Susan hands over the revised financial analysis to her boss, wishing she could go over it one more time, but she is late. She jumps in the car, rushes over to the kindergarten graduation, and slides into her seat 20 minutes after it started, as her daughter finds her in the crowd, smiles at her, and starts singing a song. After she and her daughter enjoy cookies at the reception, Susan heads back to the office and her daughter attends her afterschool child care program and is picked up by her father later that day. When Susan sees her daughter the next morning, they talk about how the program went.

It’s 6 p.m. and Mara is in front her computer when she sees a calendar invitation display for a 7 p.m. conference call to prepare for a sales pitch taking place in two days. On her calendar she also sees the time she blocked with a trainer—the same time as the call—to help her condition for the upcoming triathlon. She picks up her mobile phone, calls the organizer of the conference call, and explains she can’t make 7 p.m. work tonight but can do it early the next day; they reschedule for 8 a.m. the next day and Mara makes it to her training session on time.

Jana opens a new file on her computer and begins editing the photo, hoping it doesn’t require as many changes as she thinks it does. She had promised these photos to her client by the next day and she still had to get through half of them. She finishes the photo and gets through five more when she hears a cry on the baby monitor. “The boss says it’s quitting time!” she thinks as she smiles and saves the file. She goes upstairs to greet her bright-eyed toddler and they head to the park. Later that night, after the baby and her husband are asleep, Jana finishes up the files, and drops them off to her client the next day.
Each one of these women has something in common—they figured out a way to make their work and their life fit—for today, at least! When it comes to women and work, there is hardly a topic more popular than “work-life fit” and in fact, the issue, for the most part, is truly no longer a woman’s issue, as you will read in this chapter. As we prepared the topics to address in this book, we felt it would be incomplete without a discussion of work-life fit. However, it is a topic on which so much has been written, presented, dissected, and discussed that at times we questioned what we might possibly add to the subject. But that information overload is exactly why we decided to include it. Most people who struggle with work-life fit don’t have the time to read five books, check blogs, and hire a professional life coach. So whether you are trying to figure out how you can “have it all,” or if you have seen how others do it and question whether their approach is one that would work for you, this chapter offers various perspectives when considering how you are going to fit the demands of your work life with the “rest” of your life.

The Issue

Work-life fit is often labeled as an issue for working moms, and though work-life fit is just as important to working dads and childfree adults, it is still very much an issue for the 71 percent of women with children under 18 years who work outside the home. Why? Let’s let the numbers tell the story:

- **More workers are seeking a better fit between their careers and their personal life.** According to a survey by the Families and Work Institute, in 2008, 49 percent of employed men with families reported experiencing minor or major work-family conflict, a significant increase from the 34 percent reported in 1977.

- **The issue continues to be a challenge particularly for working moms.** When asked in general how they feel about their time, 40 percent of working moms said they always feel rushed, compared to 24 percent of the general public, 25 percent of stay-at-home moms, and 25 percent of working dads. (It is worth noting that in the same study, there was no difference in stress or happiness between working moms and stay-at-home moms). Additionally, 62 percent of working mothers said they would prefer to work part time, presumably to give them more time for childrearing and household duties.

- **Workers increasingly feel as if they need to choose between career and home.** In the Families and Work Institute’s 2008 survey, 41 percent of respondents agreed that employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives, compared to 33 percent in 1997.