

Dealing with Changing Family Structures

Introduction Paragraph

Three to four sentences that tells what the case is about.

Answer Case Questions

1. What effects have the changes in family structure had on businesses thus far? Think of the products that have been designed for couples with no children and for individuals living alone. Think also of the working woman phenomenon. What does that mean in the long run for businesses?
2. Couples are having fewer and fewer children, and are beginning to have children later. What effect will these changes have on schools and businesses?
3. What is the significance of the fact that two of three of the married couples with no children at home are over 50? What market opportunities does that create?
4. What is the relationship between the breakup of the family and poverty in the United States?

Summary Paragraph

Do not summarize the case. Instead tell me what you learned from the case as it relates to management.

List your references

Site your references. Remember at the very least the case study itself is a reference.

Double check for errors in spelling and grammar before submitting your case analysis for grading.

Actual Case

Economic and social changes have had a dramatic impact on the nature of the family. It used to be that a "typical" family was one with a mother, father, and two kids. Only 11% of all families now fit that description! In 1970, 40% of the families consisted of a husband, a wife, and children. Today, about 28% match that description. To show you how significant that change is, let's look at another figure. Since 1970, the number of "families" has increased by 22 million, but there has also been a decrease of over 1 million in married-couple families with children. The number of single-person households has increased by about 9 million since 1970 and now accounts for 23% of all households.

Today, couples with no children are the largest group of American households (30%). These are mostly older couples (two of three are over 50). About 4% of American households consist of unmarried couples living together. If we were to add up all those people who live alone with those married couples without children (including those who live together without being married), we find that 57% of all households fall into a category that might be called new-style family.

Think what that means when communities are trying to get more money for schools. Some 57% of the voters have no children in school and could resist the increase. Think also, of how many schools are closing because of declining enrollments. Family changes are affecting all kinds of institutions in society.

Think also of the economic potential of two-income families with no children. These young urban professionals are stereotyped as driving fancy sports cars, living in elaborately decorated apartments, and enjoying the good life. There is some truth in that image. On the other hand, such couples tend to work long hours and seem to have no time for starting a family.

The tensions of having two-income families plus the social changes that have happened over the last 25 years or so have led to divorce and the phenomenon called the single-parent family. The number of households headed by a woman with one or more children has doubled since 1970. There are about 6 million such families, and most of them live in poverty. Another 800,000 single-parent households are headed by a man. These are the statistics. What do they mean for business?