

# Newsday

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## Companies honored for wiggle room

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Six Long Island employers have received the Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility at the 13th annual work / life conference sponsored by the National Association of Mothers' Centers. The Jericho-based organization has just become the "host" for the Long Island region for the award, part of When Work Works, a national project on workplace effectiveness and flexibility from the Families and Work Institute and other organizations.

Dawn Davidson Drantch, director of employee relations and counsel at one honoree, the Alcott Group, a human resources outsourcing firm based in Farmingdale, said, "Alcott recognizes that its employees spend more time at work in a given week than they do at home. When employees cannot accomplish life's tasks because of their jobs, they become resentful and unmotivated," which is why the firm allows for flexibility, she said in a release.

Allowing employees to have some wiggle room for issues related to child care, elder care and



Dawn Davidson Drantch, left, and Dana Friedman

their own health has increased slightly over the past 10 years, but too many employers still equate face time to productivity, as opposed to results, said Dana Friedman, who made the award presentation Friday and led a panel discussion on the subject.

Still, despite tough economic times, employers are not expected to pull back on their willingness to allow employees to alter work hours or attend a child's school event, said Friedman, executive director of the Early Years Institute, a Plainview-based nonprofit that promotes quality learning environments for young children.

Studying research conducted in earlier decades, he said, "we were

shocked how many employers were offering flexible work arrangements in the middle of a recession. It's an alternative, it's what you can do when you don't have cash." During tough times an employer has to rely on fewer people to do the same work and can't give raises. What they can give is flexibility."

While the Alcott Group has no formal policy, an estimated 10 out of 30 employees based in Farmingdale have taken advantage of altering start and end times, said Drantch.

Doreen Herold, 44, a benefits administrator, said she just became a full-time employee last year, after having worked part-time as her children, now 14, 17 and 19, were growing up. Still, she said, she can come in at 7:30 a.m. and leave at 4 p.m., dropping her children off at school, and beating them home in the afternoon. She said that because of such allowances she has not even thought of looking for a different job since joining the firm 10 years ago.

Other local award recipients were the Child Care Council of Nassau Inc.; Deloitte; KPMG; Yes Community Counseling Center; and Albrecht, Viggiano, Zureck & Co.