

IN DEPTH: EXECUTIVE CAREERS

Executives climb corporate ladder with help of the 'nanny advantage'

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Young, upwardly mobile professionals quickly learn that climbing the corporate ladder will test their skill, drive and stamina. Add the stress of raising a family to the long hours and jam-packed schedules, and the challenges become even more daunting.

One solution to the career track-young family dilemma is to hire a professional nanny. There's a diversity of childcare providers: babysitter, au pair, parent/mother's helper, nursery nurse and governess. A career nanny is a dedicated professional who is capable of taking care of all the children's needs.

Nannies are not just babysitters, nor are they just surrogate moms for jetsetters. More and more career professionals are turning to nannies, not only because of the convenience but because they feel that in-home childcare provides a more nurturing and secure environment for their children.

The parents have peace of mind, and children gain a feeling of security and stability by having one-on-one attention and a healthier environment.

The reasons that professionals hire nannies vary. The situation may call for a live-in nanny if the parent travels or frequently gets called out on emergencies. If there is a new baby and parents can't take full maternity leave or need an extra set of hands for twins, they may hire a short-term baby nurse to provide 12- to 24-hour expert care.

Some parents may need a nanny to be there only during the workday (accommodating their employer's schedule). If the children are in school, an after school nanny may fit the bill. A temporary nanny can be hired to be there for school vacations and the occasional school holidays or when the child is ill.

The International Nanny Association recommends that a nanny should be at least 18 years old, a high school graduate or equivalent and be in good health. However, for the most professional care, more should be expected. A nanny should have verifiable references and a patient and nurturing personality. She should be someone who genuinely likes caring for children and has chosen this career path even when other employment options are available.

A nanny placement agency should:

- Refer nannies who are experienced or have special training in childcare.
- Have a diligent screening process.
- Run background checks.
- Personally interview all nannies.

An agency selected to provide a nanny should provide written reports:

- Statewide criminal background check. Driving history.
- Proof of work authorization.
- Social Security trace.
- Reference checks.

The agency can also provide assistance with an employment agreement -- detailing job duties, compensation and related issues -- so that all parties understand what's expected.

Well-qualified, full-time nannies earn between \$400 and \$500 per week. Nannies with special qualifications such as a degree in education or nursing, or extensive experience may require higher salaries. A nanny's experience and skills determine the actual salary. These figures assume that a full-time nanny works no more than 50 hours weekly and is caring for no more than one or two children.

Executives can make their lives more relaxed, flexible and rewarding by bringing a nanny into their home. Nanny popularity has grown largely because nannies frequently become part of the extended family. When that right match is made, parents no longer have to wrestle with the career/child-rearing track. They can have both -- with peace of mind.

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