

Solving the child minding equation

By JOANNA TOVIA

THERE'S no getting around it. Trying to work and be a parent is a struggle. But for companies who want to support working mums and dads, there is help at hand.

WeeWunz business partners Nicole Mills and Sheila Ghosh interface between companies and childcare providers.

Their mission is to come up with the best possible childcare solution for the working parents employed at a company.

"We take over the headache," Ms Ghosh says. Ms Ghosh, mother of four, and Ms Mills, mother of two, came up with the idea of starting WeeWunz after spending two years trying to get their children into childcare.

"Companies are now realising they have a social responsibility to their employees," Ms Ghosh says.

And companies who do the right thing by the working parents in their employ stand to benefit in more ways than one.

As well as building a positive image for themselves, companies who care about their staff's family responsibilities attract and keep loyal and productive staff.

Ms Ghosh says working parents whose children are in childcare either on-site or nearby can put in longer hours. Rather than having to wait until a childcare centre opens before dropping kids off and travelling into work, they can wave goodbye just before work and pick them up soon after.

And those whose children have access to vacation care, occasional care and after-school care will take less time off — parents usually get three to four weeks holiday a year, while school children get nine to 10 weeks — so without such care, the gap can be difficult to bridge.

Ms Mills says their initial research showed a "one-size-fits-all" model of on-site childcare provision was not always the best fit at all.

"What we found was clear — not all companies needed their own childcare facility, but they still wanted solutions for their staff, some of which they were losing because the childcare equation was not being answered effectively," Ms Mills says.

When a company hires WeeWunz to solve its childcare woes, the first step is to find out what staff want.

Ms Ghosh says it can come as a surprise to business owners what a broad range of



Kid friendly . . . Nicole Mills and Sheila Ghosh make life easier for working parents

childcare working parents require — the help of extended family members means part-time care is all that is sometimes required.

"Childcare is such an individual choice — what works for one family doesn't for the next," Ms Ghosh says.

WeeWunz is not linked to any childcare operator and Ms Ghosh says this allows them to provide objective advice.

"A lot of people pretend to be consultants but are representing a particular operator," Ms Ghosh says.

If an on-site childcare centre does prove to

be the best option for a company, WeeWunz handles the process of tendering for outside operators. They also make sure the chosen operators continue to meet high standards over time.

Sometimes it makes sense to pool resources with several other companies when it comes to childcare.

"There are solutions for any sized business," Ms Ghosh says.

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