Coming back with confidence

>> What great line managers do

Delivered by The Talent Keeper Specialists
Next 90 minutes – 5 themes

- Keeping in touch
- Easing the transition
- Flexible working
- Performance and feedback
- Career progression
John’s story of Shared Parental Leave

“I suspect there’s a concern in men’s minds that they may be viewed as ‘strange, unusual or different if they take shared parental leave. I took it out of necessity.

I had three people who offered to be my buddy whilst I was away and I didn’t want to dissuade them so said yes. The support was there for the first month and then it disappeared. I think people think ‘that’s that, leave him to it’.

**It’s really something how quickly the world moves on in just three months.** The organisation is not great at equipping people when they come back. The natural inclination is ‘out of sight, out of mind’ and my return felt like an after thought; I had to drive it. There was an expectation that I’d ‘slip back in’ but career momentum gets broken by having three months out.

There should have been a contracting meeting on day one of my return, with my line manager, to help me re-integrate and get clear on what both our expectations were of each other. **It’s made me 100 times more empathetic to maternity leavers.**”
Benefits - manager

1. Employee feels **valued** and supported which enables honest conversations

2. Employee feels comfortable being **proactive** in disclosing concerns and seeking help (not floundering quietly)

3. By showing support you build social capital – supportive actions on your part lead to increased **commitment**

4. Performance and **productivity** rises as we gauge the adjustments that need to be made to give a constant, comfortable stretch

>> Ultimately it’s about having a confident, engaged colleague who wants to deliver for you, the rest of the team and the business.
Benefits – returner

1. **Retention** - If I’m wavering about whether or not to return, you taking an interest tips the balance

2. **Engagement** - When you show me you care, I look forward to coming back (and seek ways to make flexible working work for everyone)

3. **Confidence** - I feel credible and capable when you remind me of my past successes which helps me get on the front-foot and take charge of my development

4. **Performance** - When you treat my return as a transition, my confidence builds and I take on greater challenges more quickly

>> In a nutshell, when you feel valued and supported, you believe you can deliver and you do.
Benefits – for the business

1. **Retention** - We hang onto our people who might otherwise move to a competitor offering a better experience (especially around flexibility)

2. **Cost-saving** - We save money through increased productivity and removing the need to re-recruit

3. **Engagement** - We engender good feeling among our people

4. **Employer brand** - We have a good story to tell about gender diversity and supporting our people

>> The bottom line is, we keep good people, do better work and save money too.
Cost of losing an employee

Figure 1 - The cost of labour turnover

Source: Oxford Economics/Haver Analytics
Taking extended leave

Line managers have a vital role to play in fuelling:

- Engagement
- Confidence
- Performance

before, during and after extended leave.
## Engagement

### Before leave

- **Do**
  - Have a wrap-up conversation over lunch or coffee that focuses on her as a person as well as final handover details.
  - Highlight KIT days
  - Encourage contact with other recent returners who could be another source of useful insights/support.

- **Say**
  - How would you prefer me to stay in touch (phone, e-mail, text, Whatsapp)? How often? What would you like to know about whilst you’re away?
  - Have you considered KIT days? Other returners say they found them useful.
  - Would you like me to put you in touch with someone who has recently returned from maternity leave? They may have some helpful advice.

### During leave

- **Do**
  - Send a personal card to remind her you’re looking forward to her coming back. This is one human reassuring another in a possibly uncertain time.
  - Send invitations to away days, team lunches and any other activity your colleague would like to know about.
  - Remind options for KIT days
  - Share praise or recognition

- **Say**
  - I hope it’s all going OK – (my experiences of becoming a parent were…)
  - We’re missing your X…..
  - You might be interested to know….
  - It would be great to see you and have you involved even if just for a part of it.

### First 3 months back

- **Do**
  - Value her fresh perspective and invite her to share ideas and insights – she’s got a different view on things having been away.
  - Notice your colleague’s successes and evidence of her strengths in action.
  - Have regular 1:1s.

- **Say**
  - I’d like to get your views on…
  - You have a fresh perspective – what do you think about….? 
  - I’ve seen frequent 1:1s make a significant difference to how quickly people settle back in. Let’s book them in for the next six weeks.
  - You did a great job with….
KIT Days overview

• Keeping In Touch or KIT days

• No legal right or requirement. Both employer and employee must agree to them.

• Employees can have up to 10 KIT days during maternity leave without bringing statutory maternity pay or leave to an end.

• They can be taken at any point during maternity leave except for the two weeks immediately after the baby's birth. They can even be taken before baby is born.

• Any part of a day worked on maternity leave (even just an hour) counts as a whole KIT day. A KIT day might include working from home.

• No law exists about how much an employee should be paid when doing a KIT day. Best practice is to top up SMP to the employee’s regular equivalent.

• 71% of women say they want KIT days yet less than half use them.

• 20 Shared Parental Leave In Touch days or SPLIT days in addition to KIT days.
KIT day best practice

**Purpose**

- Reconnect with colleagues
- Raise visibility more broadly (e.g. with clients)
- Get up to speed with what’s happening in:
  - the team
  - the broader business
  - the wider industry
- Knowledge/skill update
- Discuss role-shaping and how flexible working could work in practice
- Agree handover arrangements from cover
- Ensure voice is heard in planning the team’s activities in next period
- Plan activities for the first month, agreeing what ‘success’ looks like
- Agree support needed to make a smooth return
- Boost confidence and sense of self-efficacy

**How to**

- Simply being in the building
- 1:1 with line manager
- 1:1s with direct reports
- Taking part in a team meeting
- Industry conference
- Planning meeting
- Other team/celebration event
- Shadowing
- Formal training course
- Strengths-based coaching session
- Attending client meetings
- Doing an aspect of her job
"I asked for KIT days which were not organised and I would have liked a few more meetings when I was off that were prompted by my manager and not me. I would have preferred a more structured phasing back into it as I was really nervous and felt that I was left to it."

"I made full use of the KIT days and during the month leading up to my return worked one day a week. This was of benefit in several ways: I familiarised myself with the latest issues and went through all the e-mails accrued over a year. I was able to try out my newly agreed working hours and did all my team’s annual appraisals which meant I was well versed in their work and priorities when I started back properly."

"My line manager was great – he encouraged me to keep in touch and gave me the opportunity to be involved in team decision-making whilst I was on maternity leave. He also promoted me shortly before I went on maternity leave, which I took as a sign of great support."

"Despite offering to do several KIT days and my colleagues suggesting this to my line manager because they felt I would add a lot of value, my line manager did not make this happen. I feel disappointed as I would like to have had some input, particularly on a couple of big projects as I will need to deliver and implement plans when I return which have been developed in my absence."
Flexible working is....?
Have you ever?
7 step pitch for flexible working

How we encourage returning career breakers to approach flexible working requests

#1 Find out if your organisation has a flexible working policy

#2 Keep an open mind about what it’s possible to achieve

#3 Consider your boss’s perspective and the rest of the team

#4 Seek support, find allies

#5 Separate what you need from what you would like

#6 Create a solution (to a problem)

#7 Discuss your proposal, be prepared to negotiate
Confidence

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First 3 months back

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**Say**

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- You have a fresh perspective – what do you think about…?
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- You did a great job with….
Transitions – real examples

### Terrific

- Before I come back, you ask what support I might need
- You talk to me about KIT days and are proactive about encouraging me to come in
- You offer a phased return
- You greet me enthusiastically on day one and have the practicalities sorted
- You arrange for my cover to stay for a reasonable handover
- We develop a plan for the first 90 days, so I’ll know what and how I’m doing
- You acknowledge it’s a big deal and encourage me to leave early in the first week
- You ask about my child(ren) and share your experiences

### Terrible

- You moved office and didn’t tell me
- You forgot I’m coming back today
- You dumped a complex piece of work on me and gave me unrealistic timescales on day one
- We didn’t have a 1:1 for 6 weeks
- You told me a phased return would be disruptive
Performance

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**Do**

- “The X you were working on has been recognised as…”
- “Because of what you did, X positive thing has happened…”
- “There’s an opportunity coming up that I thought you would be excellent for, would you like to have a chat about it?”

**Say**

- “You are really delivering and what I’ve noticed in particular is…”
- “Please let me know when you would like to talk about a bigger stretch…”
- “Is there anything I can be doing to support your broader development…?”

**Line Manager**

- Have you considered KIT days? Other returners say they found them useful.
- Would you like me to put you in touch with someone who has recently returned from maternity leave? They may have some helpful advice.
Praise me, guide me...

...just don’t leave me in a feedback vacuum.
Make feedback count

Great managers offer praise, guidance, encouragement and ‘quick win’ opportunities to build confidence and ramp-up performance.

#1 Remember the ratio
No less than 3:1 praise to critique

#2 Helpful mindset
Ensure all your feedback is about making a helpful difference to the receiver

#3 Give it regularly
Don’t wait until formal reviews or 1:1s if it would be helpful for the person to hear it now. Seizing the first right moment builds confidence and openness.

#4 Be selective
Focus on the positives and the one thing that will make the biggest difference right now if improved.

#5 Explore impact
Whether offering praise or critique be clear on the impact the person had.
Fuelling career progression

Great managers keep their team comfortably stretched and help put them in touch with growth opportunities.

1. Ask about her career aspirations.
2. Be an advocate, champion her internally and externally.
3. Encourage her to share her own ideas about how she can progress.
4. Ask what support or practical help she would like from you.
5. Make introductions, signpost events that would raise her profile.
6. Highlight internal and external mentoring options, identify possible mentors and mentees.
7. Highlight relevant resources to fuel her success (books, podcasts, articles, courses)
8. Provide positive feedback on her approach (behaviour) and the impact she has.
9. Share praise you hear from other colleagues about her style or her output.
10. Nominate her for internal and external development programmes.
11. Recommend her for stretch assignments.
12. Encourage her to explore speaking opportunities at conference and in the media.
What are you taking away?

- Keeping in touch
- Easing the transition
- Flexible working
- Performance and feedback
- Career progression

1. What will you take from today to fuel your returning colleagues’ engagement, confidence and performance?

2. How and when will you get started?
Tips for success

1. Remember that a capable, confident employee before a break can be that way again – with your help.

2. Think of a return to the business as a ‘transition’ and act accordingly.

3. Be proactive about KIT days.

4. Adopt a mindset of ‘how can we make this work?’ when exploring flexible working requests.

5. Make feedback count and notice when she’s ready for a stretch.
References & Resources


- [http://talentkeepers.co.uk/part-time-penalty](http://talentkeepers.co.uk/part-time-penalty)

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