

20 THINGS You Can Do To Retain Moms in Creative Leadership

- 1 #ClockOutConcept – Create a hashtag for brilliance that happens off the clock and outside the office. This combats the dangerous habit agencies have for valuing availability over creativity.
- 2 Implement and promote a variety of flexible work options, including workforce exit and reentry opportunities, and support women returning to positions of equal pay and status. Flex-time is also proven as a great tactic to retain millennial employees.
- 3 Enable telework and make it a company policy that flexible work schedules should not affect anyone's opportunity for advancement. *Ernst & Young*
- 4 Explore the idea of job sharing to retain valuable employees, especially during transitions where full-time work may not be an option. Offering a very skilled employee 50% of the time is often more valuable to a client than a lesser-skilled employee being at their beck and call. *IPA*
- 5 If you have a hard stop at the end of the day – whether you're a parent relieving a nanny or a pet owner with a dog to walk, or a triathlon to train for, or a life to live – take a page from the smoker's playbook. They don't announce, cigarette in hand, "I'm going to go take a smoke break..." They just get on with it. Once you've alerted management to your schedule, live by it without apologizing for it every time you leave. *Jen Stocksmith, VaynerMedia*
- 6 Host exit interviews and ask departing women why they're going and what the agency could have done to retain them.
- 7 Substitute the term "Family Leave" for maternity leave. Include paternity leave in your benefits, as well as paid leave for employees who need to care for aging parents or other family members.
- 8 Don't assume that your employees with kids won't want to travel or to take on a big client. The key is to ask, let her make the choice, and to revisit regularly as her home situation may change over time.
- 9 Set up a Mother's Room where breastfeeding moms can pump. Let the women who will use the room decide how to outfit and decorate it. *Colle + McVoy*
- 10 Read up on "the motherhood penalty" and train all employees to avoid this bias about the productivity of mothers at work. (HINT: women don't get less productive after giving birth and men don't get more productive after becoming Dads.)
- 11 No matter what your paid leave policy, use presumptive language like "See you in 12 weeks." Otherwise, well-intended wishes like "take as much time as you need" leave the onus on the new parent on how soon they should come back and makes them feel their choice may reflect poorly on perceived dedication at work.
- 12 Offer the most generous maternity and paternity policies possible. For every month of paternity leave taken by a new Dad, his partner's future earnings increase \$7,000. *FCB*
- 13 Meet with pregnant employees before their maternity leave to jointly draft a "job plan." Like a birth plan, this is how you both envision and hope the coming months pan out for the employee. Make it clear this is a flexible, living document; the goal is to show your commitment to retaining your employee and co-imagining how it may play out.
- 14 Consider extending return dates for new moms. Many babies don't sleep through the night until four months of age. Demanding women back to work by eight weeks can set them up for a sleep-deprived nightmare, possibly leading to a mass exodus of skilled employees.
- 15 Promoting a woman just before she departs for maternity leave is a powerful indicator that you value her contributions and hope to welcome her back.
- 16 Extend paid maternity leave. When Google increased their paid maternity leave from 12 to 18 weeks, the rate at which new moms left the company fell by 50%. "It's much better for Google's bottom line to avoid costly turnover and to retain the valued expertise, skills, and perspective of our employees who are mothers." *Susan Wojcicki, CEO*
- 17 Support access to childcare, either by providing services, preferably on-site, or referrals. Consider joining forces with other agencies in town to make this affordable and available to all. *Mullen Lowe*
- 18 Create a Parental Leave policy where primary caregivers would not have to travel for the first year of their children's lives. *Accenture*
- 19 If new parents must travel on agency business, pay a nanny's plane ticket, meals and hotel room. *KKR Investments*
- 20 Feature a bulletin board in the agency where people can post photos of their extended families, whether human or pets. *Swirl*

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