

The world is **changing**

Whitepaper

Transforming support for working parents is fast becoming a business imperative. The opportunity to reduce rising attrition costs and stem the flow of lost talent means change impacts bottom line performance. But what does the right support look like, how do you identify the different needs of your employee population, and how can this be done cost-effectively?

April 2017

Introduction

Transforming support for working parents is fast becoming a business imperative. The opportunity to reduce rising attrition costs and stem the flow of lost talent means change impacts bottom line performance. But what does the right support look like, how do you identify the different needs of your employee population, and how can this be done cost-effectively?

The cost factor becomes ever more challenging when considering that true success around the parental transition means supporting a wide population of men, women, their line managers and the broader team.

The size and nature of this population extends still further when you include those who may be thinking of starting a family in the next 1-3 years. Recent Talking Talent research highlighted that 35% of high potential women in their 20s and 30s who don't have children see the transition into parenthood as a barrier to their career progression.

These are the silent attritors, largely unrecognised by business, for whom maternity even now is a key consideration. If employees don't receive the support they need from their employer, or see that it won't be available in the future, the study showed that they look elsewhere for a career path that doesn't hold maternity and parenthood as such an obvious barrier.

The impact on business of this loss of talent is felt on the bottom line. The full cost of attrition by key employees can be conservatively estimated at 2-3 x base salary: the drop in team productivity, impact on client relationship and revenue, recruitment cost, new employee package, time for new starter to reach full efficiency, morale of team, it's a heavy price to pay for losing high talent. It's a cost that significantly outweighs the investment needed to support that person or the broader population.

There is no simple checklist for change; embedding new ways of supporting employees regardless of gender and career stages means a decisive shift in culture, attitude and strategic approach. Get it right, and businesses will differentiate themselves from the competition, retain talent, especially female talent, and enhance their brand equity. This brand equity can extend to becoming an employer of choice for working parents, creating momentum in the marketplace, helping to attract new talent and enhancing the talent pipeline further.

50%

of **working parents** said they wanted greater personal coaching and development around the transition to becoming a working parent.

When Talking Talent surveyed 2,500 leading females...

68% of working parents said maternity was a key career pinch point.

57% of working parents stated inflexible/long hours stopped them progressing.

WHO NEEDS SUPPORT - AND WHEN?

There are a number of different populations that need support around the parental transition – working parents, would-be working parents, their line managers, and the wider team. Although times are changing, women currently still make up the majority of working parents who are juggling home and work commitments and providing the greatest attrition risk.

Employers do need to take note however that new legislation gives both working parents of a child under five the right to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave, making it more likely men and women will share the future load. Overlay increased rights to request flexible working and an increase in women as main breadwinners and there is potential for the future landscape to evolve significantly for many organisations and employees.

The role of the manager, the key stakeholder, is critical to making the transition a success. They need to be able to deliver a consistent, quality-led approach which offers support and progression for the individual whilst also achieving commercial success. Their work will also include managing the implications for the broader team and communicating the broader vision and business rationale. To do this, managers must be supported and challenged in equal measures; enabling them to overcome unconscious biases, understand the commercial rationale and develop the skill sets needed to manage working parents to the benefit of employee and organisation alike.

The support for a working parent extends beyond the transition and into advanced career planning and subsequent progression. It's often in years 1-5 post-maternity, for example, that women will look to leave an organisation, when they feel their career has lost all momentum, or they are unable to achieve the balance they need between home and work life. The support offered at this time is as essential as at any other stage of the transition.

WHAT DOES THE RIGHT SUPPORT LOOK LIKE?

It involves proactively responding to parent's needs by providing support before the transition, throughout and well beyond the return to work. This means engaging employees earlier, discussing options and plans from the point they are considering starting a family (if known) and providing consistent, on-demand support for an extended time .

Ideally, support should involve a combination of a coaching-led approach, rich in house policy and practise and strong on-going communications. For many organisations the policy and practise is in place , even if it's not always well understood, the bigger challenge is its effective and consistent implementation. Coaching is proven to increase retention rates and maintain performance pre- and post maternity. Through coaching, the employee can:

- fully explore the transition implications, personally and professionally
- consider what they want from the next few months and years – and what this means for them and the business
- learn to effectively meet the challenges transition can create
- plan practical, pragmatic steps that will enable career progression and bring commercial benefit.

57%

of female working parents said they wanted more management support, and **35%** found management behaviour a barrier to success.

WHERE TO START: MAPPING THE PROCESS, THE POPULATION AND THEIR NEEDS

Providing this cohesive, long-term support is a challenge for many organisations and not just for reasons of cost. The first hurdle can be identifying who the ‘stakeholders’ for the parental transition are and understanding their needs and the best way to support them.

This simple mapping tool from Talking Talent will help you identify the groups that needs support, at which stage of their journey it is required, and what form it might take. This is an essential first step to putting together a parental transition support plan, and also a business case for introducing a support strategy.

THE ‘STAKEHOLDERS’	STAGE OF TRANSITION TO WORKING PARENT	THE SUPPORT THEY NEED
<p>CONSIDERING A FAMILY</p>  <p>Women and men across the organisation, typically 20s-30s</p>	<p>This group are difficult to identify and many are at a career crossroads, evaluating the support available.</p> <p>There’s a potential ‘flight risk’ if managers are ill-equipped to handle early conversations, or if other employers can demonstrate better support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on the options available • An understanding of the business’s ethos and approach to maternity, paternity and adoption transition • Certainty they will have confidential support when they need it • Assessment of the implications for their current career path
<p>BECOMING A PARENT, AND RETURNING TO WORK</p>  <p>Maternity, paternity and adoption transitioners</p>	<p>They need to re-establish themselves in the business, and need confidence that their current needs and future aspirations will be met.</p> <p>This stage is about ‘making it work’- engaging them, dealing with early challenges and then helping them hit and exceed their previous performance levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear process and plan for staying in touch and then reintegrating into the organisation • Understanding and applying for flexible working • Setting of boundaries and expectations • Help with building self-confidence and re-establishing themselves • Consideration of the impact on wider team of changing working patterns • Definition of future career aspirations
<p>SURVIVAL TO SUSTAINABILITY</p>  <p>All working parents, 20s-50s</p>	<p>They want to achieve long-term career success, and positively manage their work and home lives.</p> <p>This stage has the highest risk of attrition. Retaining staff and developing the female pipeline depends on strong strategic career planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core issues identified and resolved • Help with making flexible working a success • Definition of a sustainable long term career path • Support with networking and profiling • The confidence to positively and pro-actively manage their work & home lives, in order to perform at their best
<p>MANAGING THE PROCESS</p>  <p>Line managers at all levels of the organisation, and in all locations</p>	<p>The line manager plays an instrumental role throughout the process, driving the new culture, turning policy into practice and delivering the approach consistently</p> <p>Key to maximising performance, retaining key talent, progressing women through the organisation while still achieving P&L targets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Just in time’ learning that isn’t a burden or distraction from core responsibilities • Understanding of best practice • Help with overcoming conscious and unconscious biases • Ability to make flexible working a success while achieving commercial goals • Identification of challenges and opportunities, handling stakeholder concerns

A SHIFT IN THINKING: INCLUSIVE CONTINUOUS SUPPORT

Once this is mapped out, the challenge is how to cost-effectively provide ongoing support to such a broad, complex population before, during and after parental leave. Many organisations simply lack the budget for a comprehensive coaching programme whilst requiring greater expertise and specialist knowledge to run sustainable in house programmes for their working parents. In addition the nature of these programmes need to recognise the different learning methods employees and managers have; allowing access to information in different styles, at different times, allowing participants to work through the support at their own pace.

The key may be to shift the organisation's mindset away from providing coaching to a small number of individuals as a one off-investment and more towards providing continuous, inclusive support to a changing population that can 'opt in' at any stage of their career journey.

Market leading online tools can be used to cost-effectively open resources and support to everyone. Talking Talent Online is a online coaching programme, designed to provide ongoing and consistent support when – and how – working parents and their managers need it. Built on its bespoke, leading edge coaching models, it's much more than just a place to find policies, practice and generic advice.

Anyone within the organisation can 'opt in' to use the platform and explore their options, mapping out their own transition journey. Users can personalise their experience and customise the way they spend their time on Talking Talent Online, depending on the stage they're at and their individual needs.

Employees can explore options through tailored interactive content including videos and self-assessment programmes, gaining information on topics including flexible working, networking and career planning. For line managers, there's best practice guidance, case studies and self-assessment around areas such as managing the transition for individuals, team impact and unconscious bias.

Organisations can make Talking Talent Online bespoke to fit their brand, culture, messaging and policy, with videos of chosen personnel offering a strong on-going platform to reinforce key messages. With all content being updated annually it allows content to move forward in line with the MI the platform provides.

The MI highlights where employees and managers need the most support and which areas are of most interest and focus, allowing content to be dynamically adapted to suit. The case for protecting your talented working parents has long been established and it is hoped that online portals like Talking Talent Online provide the opportunity for more businesses to find an effective solution to supporting the transition and beyond. The online portal provides scalable, cost efficient support for broad populations and small groups alike, allowing more organisations to take steps to improve their talent pipeline, reduce attrition costs and increase productivity. The benefit is felt by the employee, the manager and ultimately the organisation.

If you'd like to experience Talking Talent Online, visit our website to watch our video or book onto a webinar demonstration.



UK Head office

102 Crowmarsh Battle Barns,
Preston Crowmarsh,
Oxfordshire,
OX10 6SL

T +44 (0)1491 821850

www.talking-talent.com