



A MINI GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

Pre-Leave Leadership

Wondering what to expect when a team member goes on leave? This mini guide covers what's ahead, practical steps you can take, and research-backed best practices to support both your team and your soon-to-be parent.



Pre-Leave *Planning*

PRIOR TO YOUR DIRECT REPORT GOING OUT ON LEAVE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO SET ASIDE DEDICATED TIME TO DISCUSS A TRANSITION PLAN. AS BEST PRACTICE, WE RECOMMEND HAVING THIS CONVERSATION AT LEAST ~6 – 8 WEEKS PRIOR TO THE EXPECTED LEAVE START DATE.

Here are a few questions to proactively think through in support of a smooth transition:

- Will your direct report be on leave during an annual review or goal-setting deadline? How can you proactively have those conversations in advance of leave, and align on expectations?
- What are some ways you can advocate for your team member while away?
- What key meetings, projects, and people manager responsibilities does your direct report own today?
- Of those key responsibilities, what is top priority and requires minimal disruption?
- Who from your team – or outside of your immediate team – can potentially provide coverage for priority areas during the leave period?
- Consider: do certain responsibilities provide “stretch” opportunities for other team members, or support performance development / goals for another team member?



Pre-Leave *Planning*

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Here are a few questions to proactively think through in support of a smooth transition:

- What are the top 1 - 3 priorities that need to happen prior to my employee going out on leave?
- Who needs to be made aware of the transition plan?

What are the expectations for the return?

E.g.:

- Continued ownership of current clients, meetings, etc.
- Timelines for transition
- New opportunities your team member may be interested in exploring
- Travel (as applicable)

What are your team member's communication preferences while on leave?

E.g.:

- What they would like to be copied on, if anything?
- What they would like to be updated on, if anything?
- How would they like to receive information? (e.g., email, text, call)



ONCE YOU'VE REFLECTED ON THESE QUESTIONS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU SET UP TIME WITH YOUR EMPLOYEE TO TALK THROUGH AND ALIGN ON EXPECTATIONS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE.

HERE IS A SUGGESTED AGENDA FOR THAT MEETING:

Suggested timing: ~6 - 8 weeks before employee's anticipated leave date

Duration: 45 minutes

1. Pre-leave priorities (and where you can offer help)
2. Align on expectations during leave (performance reviews if applicable, transition plan, etc.)
3. Communication plan (with clients, direct reports, etc. - and how you can support)
4. Communication preferences during leave (what they want updates on, if anything, and how best to reach them)
5. Align on return expectations (timing, re-assumption of key responsibilities, etc.)



Delivery

AS BEST PRACTICE, WE RECOMMEND YOU SHARE A CONGRATULATORY EMAIL WITH YOUR TEAM MEMBER AND SHARE IN THIS JOYFUL EXPERIENCE WITH THEM! IN ADDITION, YOU MAY WANT TO SHARE THE NEWS WITH THE REST OF YOUR TEAM ON BEHALF OF YOUR DIRECT REPORT.

IMPORTANT: PLEASE BE SURE TO OBTAIN PERMISSION FROM YOUR TEAM MEMBER PRIOR TO SHARING THEIR NEWS.

Below is a sample email template you can use once you hear from them:

Hi _____,

Congratulations on the arrival of your little one! I hope you're enjoying this time with your newest family member. Please know that I'm here to support you in any way as you navigate this exciting journey. If you're comfortable with it, I'd be honored to share your wonderful news with the rest of the team. Just let me know what you're comfortable with.

Take care and enjoy every moment.

Best,



In case of *complications*

WELCOMING A CHILD INTO THE WORLD DOES NOT ALWAYS GO AS PLANNED. YOUR TEAM MEMBER AND/OR THEIR CHILD MAY EXPERIENCE COMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES DURING LABOR AND DELIVERY (EX. PRETERM BIRTH, NICU STAY).

THESE CHALLENGES – WHETHER EXPECTED OR UNEXPECTED – CAN FURTHER ADD TO THE EMOTIONAL OVERWHELM THAT A NEW PARENT MAY BE EXPERIENCING.

Below are guidelines on what to say to a team member who has experienced labor and delivery complications:

Do:

- Validate the parent’s emotional and lived experiences. This might sound like, “It’s okay to feel however you feel. I’m here to listen.”
- Offer support – as specific as possible. Rather than, “Let me know how I can help,” try a more specific offer of support such as, “Can I send you dinner on Tuesday night?” This takes the pressure off the parent to identify what they need help with and ask for it.
- Express empathy and compassion. You are not expected to have the answers or fix things. Instead, practice showing empathy and compassion. This might sound like, “I wish this hadn’t happened to you,” or “I don’t know what to say and I’m sad this happened to you.”
- Listen. Be an active listener if they come to you to talk. Allow them space to be heard.



In case of *complications*

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Below are guidelines on what not to say to a team member who has experienced labor and delivery complications:

Don't:

- Ask too many questions. More than likely, the parent has already asked themselves all the questions you are thinking of. “When will the baby come home,” “When will you know the results...”. Piling on questions can make the parent feel more overwhelmed than they already are.
- Try to make them feel better with clichés or platitudes. Avoid statements like “Everything happens for a reason,” “Just stay positive,” or “This too shall pass.” While well-intended, these statements may come off as invalidating or dismissive of the parent’s experience.
- Try to find the silver lining. Avoid “At least” or “It could’ve been worse” statements. These statements can be invalidating and further the guilt the parent may be experiencing. Examples of what not to say include, “At least you get to sleep while your baby is in the NICU,” “At least everyone can leave the hospital”, “It could’ve been worse – I know someone who...”



In case of *complications*

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Below is suggested language you can use to let your team member know you are thinking about them. It is key to keep this simple while emphasizing you are there to support them:

Hi _____,

Your colleagues and I at [COMPANY NAME] are thinking of you and your family. Please know that I'm here to support you in any way that I can as you navigate this time, and don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything at all.

Please take care of you.

Best,

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Get in touch with team Josie:



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