

Ripple Effect Coaching

Smoothing the On-Ramp: Navigating the Return from Maternity Leave for Optimal Employee and Employer Satisfaction

In Brief:

Women hold many challenging and diverse roles in the workplace and are indispensable members of corporate teams. With an extended maternity leave now available, and many women delaying starting families until they are established in their careers, a difficult situation has developed. Companies want to attract, hire and retain the best employees, yet they are struggling to manage the absence and subsequent return of these employees when they start their families. Corporations are losing both productivity and loyalty from these stellar employees who are opting out of the workforce because they are not receiving the support they need to balance their new responsibilities with their career goals. Companies and the workforce in general are suffering with this loss, a situation that is far less than ideal with the current labour shortage in British Columbia.

"I have found that organizations that provide proactive support to women as they return to work from maternity leave have employees that are not only more effective, but are more loyal and engaged as well."

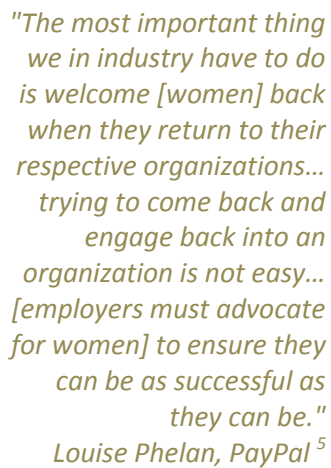
*Michelle Robindell
Ripple Effect Coaching*

Corporate coaching gives employees and employers the support, strategy and tools they need to ease the reintegration of employees after maternity leave, increasing effectiveness and engagement.

The Reality of Opting Out

Studies from the top schools in the United States show that when women start families their employment rate drops dramatically.¹ Well-educated women that hold top jobs across the continent are leaving work not because they want to but because they are not receiving the support and flexibility needed to balance career and family. Companies are losing some of the most effective and productive team members because provisions have not yet been put in place to optimize these women's strengths while simultaneously meeting the demands of motherhood.

Companies and researchers consistently find that a supportive, flexible and proactive approach to an employee's return from maternity leave creates positive outcomes for both employers and employees:



*"The most important thing we in industry have to do is welcome [women] back when they return to their respective organizations... trying to come back and engage back into an organization is not easy... [employers must advocate for women] to ensure they can be as successful as they can be."
Louise Phelan, PayPal⁵*

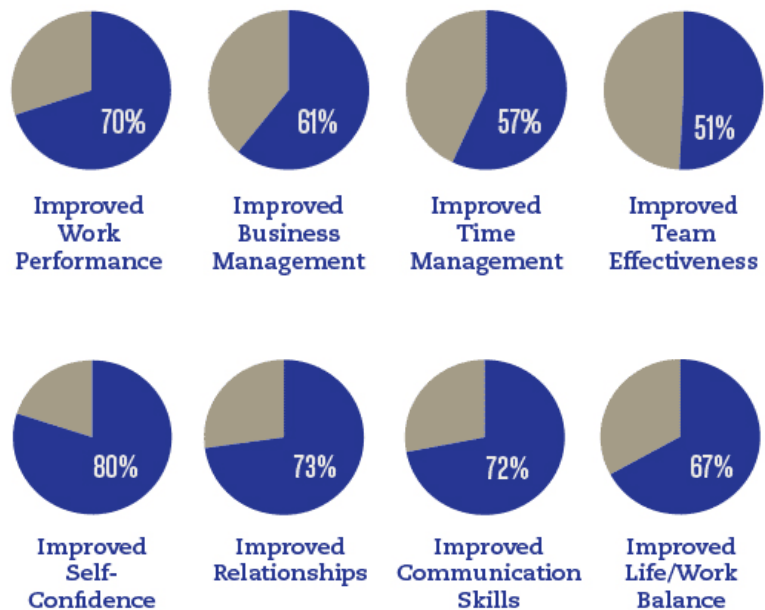
- Nora Spinks, CEO of the Vanier Institute of the Family in Ottawa, reports that happy, relaxed employees that feel valued and respected are more committed, engaged, innovative and productive.²
- Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre has found mothers who work in family-positive workplaces are less likely to be stressed, are more satisfied and committed to their jobs, are more likely to agree with company policies, are more likely to trust management, are absent fewer days and work more hours in a week.³
- André Nowakowski, a partner in the labour and employment law department with Miller Thomson LLP in Toronto, asserts that flexibility in work hours and effective communication between employer and employee are the leading factors supporting women returning to work.⁴

What is Corporate Coaching?

Corporate coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that supports them in maximizing their professional and personal potential. A corporate coach helps accelerate the employee's ability to re-focus her attention and effectiveness, optimizing success with both her career and her family. While it is a client-focused process, the ripple effect of coaching means it leads to positive outcomes for the department and, depending on the role of the individual, ultimately the entire organization.

Corporate coaching has shown dramatic and consistent results with an 86% return on investment and 96% of companies reporting that they would repeat the process.⁶

Productivity and engagement in the workplace see dramatic improvements following the coaching experience⁶:



¹ Stone, P. (2007). *The rhetoric and reality of "opting out"*. Contexts, Vol. 6, Number 4, pp 14-19. American Sociological Association.

² Spinks, N. (September 2010) *Creating supportive work environment is a win-win-win-win for employees and their families, coworkers and colleagues, customers/clients and the community*. CBC TV News.

³ Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre. (2010). *How to be a Family Friendly Workplace*.

⁴ Smith, B. (March 2011). *What to Expect When Employee's Expecting*. Benefits Canada: 12-15.

⁵ *Women returning to work need support, says PayPal's Phelan*. (July 2013). Retrieved August 21, 2013 from: <http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/women-returning-to-work-need-support-says-paypals-phelan-29461510.html>

⁶ *ICF Global Coaching Client Study. (2012) Retrieved August 21, 2013 from: <http://coachfederation.org/need/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=747&navItemNumber=565>*



Michelle Robindell, CPCC, CHRP, of Ripple Effect Coaching has experience supporting women through the challenging transition of returning to work after maternity leave. She trained with the Coaches Training Institute (CTI) in 2009 and has worked in corporate environments for over 15 years. She has a BA in Psychology from Simon Fraser University, a Management Certificate in Human Resources from the BC Institute of Technology, and holds Certified HR Professional (CHRP) and Certified Professional Co-Active Coach (CPCC) designations.



www.ripple-effect-coaching.com

Example Case:

Jennifer Lewis worked as an engineer for WLE Ltd. She was considered a rising star – she had progressed through several levels in her eight years at the organization. She possessed excellent project management skills, was an effective communicator and consistently demonstrated her strength as a leader. She enjoyed her work and was committed to the success of the organization.

Upon getting pregnant, Jennifer created a detailed transition plan and provided a thorough knowledge transfer to the employee who was temporarily promoted into her role. She took a full year leave but when she returned to work she was unsure, distracted and feeling guilty about her desire to return to work rather than stay home.

She wanted to be just as effective as she was prior to her leave, but she struggled to effectively manage her time and her once strong relationships with her colleagues had suffered with her year away. She simply wasn't as productive or engaged as she had been before she left.

Fortunately, her manager recognized her need for support and reached out to a specialized Corporate Coach to work with her. Together, Jennifer and her coach identified where she was struggling and made an action plan to address her specific needs. Within months, WLE Ltd. was happy to see that Jennifer was once again a highly productive, engaged employee, with new tools in her tool belt, a better ability to manage her time, more confidence and improved communication skills. She was once again setting an excellent example for her colleagues and was an important element in WLE Ltd.'s ability to meet its goals.

Ripple Effect Coaching can help *your* employee(s) be more productive and engaged. Contact Michelle Robindell today at michelle@ripple-effect-coaching.com or **604-418-7821 to arrange a consultation to learn more.**