

7 POSITIVE CHANGES IN THE WORKPLACE OVER 7 YEARS FROM SEVEN

SEVEN is celebrating 7 years of positive change at work. As part of our 7th anniversary, we are sharing our perspective on 7 positive changes we have seen impact the workplace. We believe these changes can positively enhance organisations like yours – now and in years to come.

POSITIVE CHANGE # 1 OF 7 Strategic Management of Maternity & Parental Transitions

In our first 7x7x7, we look at how organisations are moving to a more strategic and gender neutral approach to managing maternity & parenting in the workplace.

THE PARENTAL TRANSITION

Becoming a parent is a complex professional and personal transition – typically occurring at the steepest incline in an individual’s career trajectory. How this transition is managed, by the line manager and the organisation, has a significant impact on the successful navigation of the change and also on the long-term retention and recruitment of talent.

In 2015 SEVEN conducted research on ‘Managing Maternity in Ireland’ and found that only 11% of organisations are considered to excel in handling the maternity transition – among a sample of some 124 maternity returners. This tells us there is a real opportunity for organisations to do better in this area and differentiate themselves from their competition.

Take a moment to reflect on your organisation – is it in the top 11%?

HOW ORGANISATIONS ARE HANDLING THE TRANSITION:



So what is currently happening when people return to work after having a child? Traditionally this transition has been only partially supported – the focus has been placed mainly upon the point of departure with limited on-going connection during leave and minimal adaptation post return.

We have seen this traditional approach is being challenged and we can identify three mind-set shifts that are evolving and creating an impact in more progressive organisations:

THREE MINDSET SHIFTS...

FROM:

OPERATIONAL PROBLEM

SKEWED SHORT-TERM ATTENTION

GENDER ISSUE

TO:

STRATEGIC CAREER MANAGEMENT

CONTINUED CUSTOMISED SUPPORT

CO-PARENTING FOCUS



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1. The first mindset shift is a move from seeing the parental transition as a short-term operational problem to be solved to one where it is considered a strategic talent and diversity management opportunity.
2. The second shift requires managers to move away from taking a 'hands off' single point of contact approach – often pointing to HR and 'delegating' the issue – to continued customised support – before, during & after the transition.
3. The final shift is more fundamental – towards gender neutrality. Maternity leave has traditionally been gender biased given current legislation and organisational policies. It is the mother that takes leave, is assumed to be primary carer and the parent whose career goes on hold. It really is time now to take a more gender-neutral and inclusive approach – where both parents are considered and included.

These shifts are beginning to materialise in progressive workplaces and in our opinion there are three main drivers for this change:

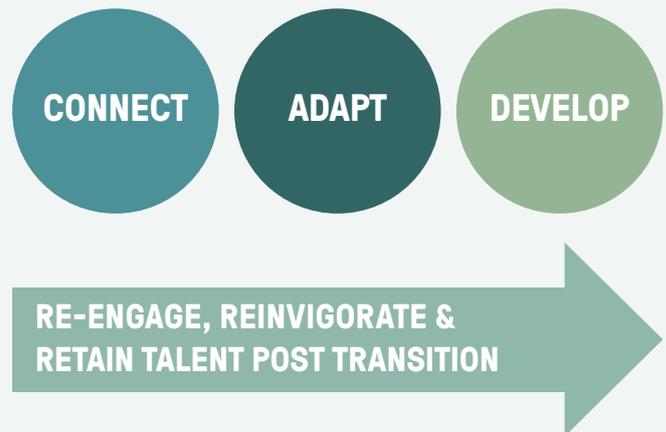
- **EMPLOYEE PULL:** The increasing generational expectations to work at organisations that respect work-life balance and inclusion.
- **LEGISLATION:** The emergence of shared parental leave in the UK and other jurisdictions.
- **COMPETITION FOR TALENT:** Organisational policies that are moving beyond local legislation in order to better meet the needs of parents. For example, Facebook now offer 16 weeks Parental Leave to all Full time employees and Arthur Cox have introduced a 'Shared Parenting Leave Policy' in order to facilitate Fathers/ Partners to share the untaken weeks of 'Maternity leave' traditionally allocated to the Mother/Partner.

WHAT CAN ORGANISATIONS & MANAGERS DO?

When we distilled the wisdom of those who have navigated this transition – through our research, our coaching and our workshops - the recipe for successfully managing the transition boiled down to three main themes:

- Supportive managers who **connected** with parents throughout their transition.
- Flexible mindset and approach that **adapted** to the needs of the parent.
- A continued unbiased focus on their **career development**.

THREE MANAGERIAL POINTERS...



A key tool for organisations that want to excel in this area is the provision of maternity/parental coaching to those navigating the parental transition. This is a real differentiator in terms of maximising the support and positive experience of new parents.

We recommend a dual approach where both the Managers and the Maternity/Parental Leavers receive coaching sessions. Typically the programme involves coaching 6 - 8 weeks pre-leave, 6 weeks pre-return, 6 - 8 weeks post return and 12 months later to maximise long-term support. More and more organisations are now including this coaching as part of their strategic approach to managing the parental transition – maximising the reengagement and retention of talent post-leave.

EXPANDING THE TOP 11%

We have seen much positive change in how organisations manage maternity and parenting transitions, but it is an area on the cusp of even greater change. We ask you to consider what you can do in your organisation to better leverage the parenting transition for your employees so as to maximise their career potential and the value they bring to your organisation.

