

Having a Parental Leave Policy Makes Good Business Sense

I have been a small business owner since 2005. When I started a new law firm over 13 years ago, we had one employee and one part-time employee. Since then, I have re-started several law firm businesses and am now at a comfortable size of 11 employees. I have learned many things about management and business over the years. Without a doubt, I believe the most important thing to understand about running a law firm is the fact that our most valuable business assets are our people. I have invested money in furniture, software, and tenant improvements in Class A space, but all of those “things” pale in comparison to the people I employ.

One of the best ways to embrace your most valuable assets is to take care of your people when they need it the most. Starting a family is a joyous and frightening time. I believe that we, as attorney-employers, should embrace those times and do what we can to make it as easy as possible for our people. That is why I have committed to paying my employees’ maternity and paternity leave. The money you invest in paying for your employees’ leave, you will see returned to you ten-fold back in loyalty, gratitude and happiness which make for a much more profitable business in the long run. Plus, you have time to prepare for it financially. My employees are excited to tell me about their upcoming family, and I usually can plan at least 6 months in advance. That’s not the case for other types of leave. For example, if one of my senior attorneys had a heart attack suddenly and had to be out, the financial hit would be much more difficult because of the sudden, unexpected event. Why wouldn’t you be excited and grateful to support your employees for a happy event that you can plan?

I have compensated many employees over the years for maternity and paternity leave (full salary and benefits covered for 12 weeks leave) and in one year, I had three people out on leave by happenstance. I have paid for leave when I had only three employees and I had to borrow money to cover the overhead. I know that those decisions were the best decisions for me and my firm, both financially and morally. It has given me great joy to be surrounded by people who are happy and love the work we do, which translates into a successful career and practice.

The model policy created by the OWLs workforce is a good start. I encourage you to adopt it and expand on it, and join many of us who are building great places to work, both for our employees and ourselves.

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