

1ST QUARTER 2021

HR Edge

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How HR Can Support Working Parents

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, working parents have been forced to contend with their children's changing school routines. Unfortunately, these routines vary by school, with little universal guidance. On top of that, many schools continue to go back and forth between virtual and in-person learning. The uncertainty surrounding school routines and their impact on working parents will undoubtedly continue to have ripple effects in the workplace.

Accommodation Considerations for Employers

Although the specifics will vary, consider the following methods for accommodating working parents:

1. **Expanded remote work opportunities** — Telework allows employees to work entirely remotely. It can be a way for working parents to get kids to school without having to worry about an additional commute. It also allows parents more time to spend with their young children or kids who must be at home due to virtual learning.
2. **Flexible scheduling** — Employers set designated "core" hours that an employee must be working and otherwise let employees work whenever they like. Alternatively, an employer may instead allow employees to work any combination of days or hours to complete the 40-hour work week.

3. **Generous time off policies** — Some employers have generous policies related to paid time off (PTO). Consider implementing a PTO bank policy where employees can use their time off for any reason (as opposed to having sick days and vacation days).

4. **Robust EAP offerings** — Employee assistance programs (EAPs) can be tailored to a workforce to provide employee resources. Offerings may include mental health resources, therapist appointments, financial counseling and other wellbeing programs. EAPs can help connect employees with the resources they need to improve a given situation, even if it's their overall well-being. For working parents, this could be the lifeline they've been searching for.

5. **Transparent and frequent communication** — Depending on the team size, managers could have open discussions with working parents about needing to take time off or flexing their schedules. Such conversations show employees that their well-being is just as important as their performance.

The absence of workplace guidance related to working parents' circumstances may force some employees to resign or take extended leaves to accommodate their families. Plan for these situations now, and prevent turmoil later.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, many working parents struggled to balance work and home life. The pandemic has made those tough situations even tougher.

A study of working parents across the United States and five European countries revealed just how tough pulling double duty is during the pandemic:

60%

of working parents have no outside help in caring for and educating their children.

PARENTS NOW SPEND AN ADDITIONAL

27 HOURS

each week on household chores, child care and education on top of their pre-pandemic household responsibility. That's nearly the equivalent of working a second job.

ABOUT 50%

of working parents feel their work performance has decreased as a result of managing additional responsibilities.

Source: Boston Consulting Group

The Impact of Employer Branding

An organization's reputation could be good, neutral or bad, but how this reputation is viewed can be altered through branding. When it comes to branding, people often think of consumer branding first. While that type of branding is important for business, there's another type of branding that can improve the bottom line.

Employer branding specifically focuses on recruiting and retaining top talent — and employers know that having the right people is especially important in today's competitive job market. Generally, this is driven by the unique set of benefits employees receive in return for the skills, capabilities and experiences they bring to an organization—and how effectively this is formally or informally communicated. Furthermore, employer brand strategy has experienced significant shifts during the pandemic, and is now more recognized as a core component of workplace effectiveness.

Workers care about employer branding, so you should too. Consider these statistics:

84%

of job seekers say the reputation of an organization as an employer is important when applying to jobs.

9 out of 10

candidates would apply for a job when the employer brand is actively maintained.

A strong employer brand reduces employee turnover by

28%

What is Employer Branding?

An employer brand is the employment market's perception of the organization as an employer. The employer brand answers the simple question of, "Do I want to work there?" Every organization has a unique employer brand—whether it's formally managed or not. Branding encompasses a variety of components, including both intangible benefits (e.g., workplace culture, values and mission) and tangible benefits (e.g., salary, benefits and other perks). A strong employer brand speaks to the organization's mission statement, taking their outlined values and principles and turning them into an external-facing message.

Stakeholders' perceptions of the employer may even be neutral if not much is known about the organization. As an employer, an organization should be actively monitoring and managing its employer brand both internally and externally.

Why is Employer Branding Important?

In a tight recruitment market with skill shortages and increased competition for talent, employer branding can be leveraged to promote organizational culture and values. It's important to reinforce that the organization provides a great place to work. Employer branding is critical to winning candidates, while securing and retaining the strongest talent. As organizations excel with their reputation, an effective employer brand can also have a positive bottom-line impact.

LinkedIn research explored the benefits of investing in employer brand and found that it:

- 1. Decreases recruiting costs** — Organizations with positive or favorable employer brands can get up to twice as many applications as companies with negative or unfavorable brands. This can make a great impact on how efficient a recruiter or HR professional can be, especially when battling skills gaps and other factors. When top candidates want to work for an organization, recruiting costs can drop by about 43%.
- 2. Decreases retention costs** — When organizations fail to invest in their reputation, it can end up costing them an average of \$5,000 per employee. Additionally, almost 50% of workers said they wouldn't work for an organization with a bad reputation, even with a big increase in compensation.

Get Started Today

As the employment market continues to evolve, employers should monitor and evaluate how their reputation and employer brand resonates in today's market. The world and workplace will continue to change, and employers should be prepared to adjust accordingly and communicate efforts in a timely manner to those whom it impacts. Employer branding influences the quantity and quality of applicants an organization attracts, while also having a positive impact on current employee productivity, retention and overall job satisfaction. If employers don't manage their brand, others may define it. To prepare for the good, the bad and the unknown, consider an employer brand strategy today.

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Understanding Generation Z

Generation Z—those born between 1995 and 2010—are beginning to enter the workforce. They are the biggest group of the world population and account for 24% of today's workforce. Generation Z is different from even their millennial predecessors, and their increased arrival will challenge organizations to change general business practices. Many of them grew up during the recession, and thus far are thought to be career oriented. Generation Z is realistic, resourceful and desires to have more control over their careers.

Especially as recruiters start their post-COVID-19 plans, it's important to understand this generation to develop strong recruitment and retention strategies. Generation Z hopes to live out their values in the professional world—and contribute to organizations they feel aligned with. General values of Generation Z include:

- Increased activism about social issues
- A higher level of independence from previous generations
- A realistic outlook about their future
- Interest in access to goods or services, rather than possessions
- Increased reliance on technology, and a tremendous belief in the benefits of it

How to Win Over Generation Z

Generation Z does not just create opinions about organizations due to the quality of their products or services, but is also interested in their ethics, practices and social impact. To attract and retain Generation Z, employers will need to evaluate current practices and ensure that not only are they good global citizens, but that their impact is visible to both potential job candidates and current employees.

As they enter the professional world, Generation Z's ideal work values include:

- Opportunities for professional development
- Upward mobility
- Flexible work arrangements
- Independence
- Expanded benefits
- Community involvement
- An ability to utilize advanced technology
- Contributions to broader goals that advance social and environmental causes

Not only are these topics important to Generation Z, but they will influence their employment decisions. While not all of these attributes of a job may be feasible to offer to employees, employers can consider how to strengthen their employment offerings in a way that resonates with the next generation of the workforce.

Contact Brady, Chapman, Holland & Associates for more human resources trends, industry insights and proactive strategies to maintain a competitive edge in today's workplace.

Some unique facts about Generation Z include:

AT **42%**

less than half of Generation Z credit their college education for preparing them for the working world.

32%

of Generation Z feel they are the hardest working generation.

21%

of Generation Z feel prepared to be managed by another person.

56%

feel optimistic about their professional career.

Source: Workforce Institute