

EXACTLY HOW TO GET FLEXIBILITY AT WORK, AND THE RESEARCH TO SUPPORT IT.

A worksheet by The Fifth Trimester's Lauren Smith Brody, for Vivvi

Flexible work has been proven (since long before the pandemic) to help employees be more productive, more committed, more creative, and more satisfied in their work. That all sounds fantastic but... kind of abstract, right?

What you really need to know is:

"How do I convince *my* boss that this is the best way for *me* to work right now?"

This worksheet, based on a method I've taught thousands of parents, answers that question. We've also included statistics and research to help support your case.

PART ONE: DO YOUR RESEARCH

The first step in any negotiation is convincing yourself. So, do a little sleuthing to see what rights you may already have, and how pushing for more will be beneficial to your organization's 3R's (recruiting, retention, and reputation).

The official flexibility policy at my employer is...

If I've seen a precedent set for this kind of flex at my employer, those colleagues worked flexibly by...

Our top two or three competitors offer these plans for flexibility:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In comparison, our plan is:

Better, and here's how that's impacted our recruiting, retention, and reputation:

or

Worse, and here's how that's impacted our recruiting, retention, and reputation:



PART TWO: BUILD YOUR PLAN & YOUR CASE

Remember, you aren't creating a problem here; you're solving one. To make a case that will be mutually beneficial for you and your employer, understand the deliverables of your job description, anticipate management's concerns, and show how your plan will actually let you do *better* work.

Officially, the five requirements of my job description are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Three things I do that go above and beyond that are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If I worked flexibly temporarily during the pandemic, one way I contributed to team morale and our evolving work culture was

If I worked flexibly temporarily during the pandemic, one way I helped support our business' bottom line was

I can imagine my boss or team worrying about

and here's how I can solve for that:

Here's my plan A:

And here's my backup plan B in case plan A doesn't work for my employer.



I will propose a trial period of _____ weeks/months so my boss and I can check in and tweak accordingly, because what I need may evolve over time.

PART THREE: FOLLOW THROUGH

No matter how your negotiation shakes out, here's how to keep your eye on the big picture of your career as a working parent.

IF YOU GET A "NO"...

Two or three other colleagues who have been similarly turned down (or have similar needs) are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We can meet for coffee or Zoom on ___[date]_____ to compare notes and come up with a new approach.

In the meantime, something else my manager could grant me that would keep me from being resentful about this "no" is

In the meantime, something I could do for *myself* that would keep me from being resentful about this "no" is

And, since I'm thinking bigger-picture about my career right now, here are three people outside of my office whom I'll reach out to for a networking coffee or Zoom this month.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

IF YOU GET A "YES"...

I will recap the conversation in writing.

I will pay it forward by helping my colleagues who have less privilege than I do advocate for the flexibility they need, too.



And, since I'm thinking bigger-picture about my career right now, here are three people outside of my office whom I'll reach out to for a networking coffee or Zoom this month.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH + THOUGHT STARTERS

What "counts" as flexibility? Think about what would be most impactful to you, and what's possible for your job.

- Total time spent
- Schedule
- Location
- Fluidity of duties between colleagues
- Cultural integration of personal into professional (i.e. picking up your child from school in the middle of the day, doing a workout mid morning)

The case for flexibility (internalize these benefits before you negotiate)

- **It's possible.** In Oct. 2019, 44% of companies offered no flexibility at all ([Owl Labs](#)). By March 30, 2020, 62% of American workers were working remotely. ([Gallup](#))
- **It's motivating:** 97% of workers want flexible options ([FlexJobs](#))
- **It's productive:** Flex work from home increases productivity by 13% ([Stanford](#))
- **It's healthy:** 86% of workers believe that flex work reduces stress ([FlexJobs](#))
- **It breeds loyalty:** Remote work reduces attrition by 25% ([Owl Labs](#))
- **It's not all or nothing:** The highest engagement and focus comes from a partly remote schedule ([Gallup](#))

6 steps to negotiating successfully

- 1) Do your research (internal/external)
- 2) Come with a plan (or plans) not an "ask"
- 3) Manage up: anticipate concerns and approval process
- 4) Offer yourself as an A+ guinea pig
- 5) Suggest a trial period
- 6) Renegotiate so this becomes an ongoing career development conversation, not a one-time ask

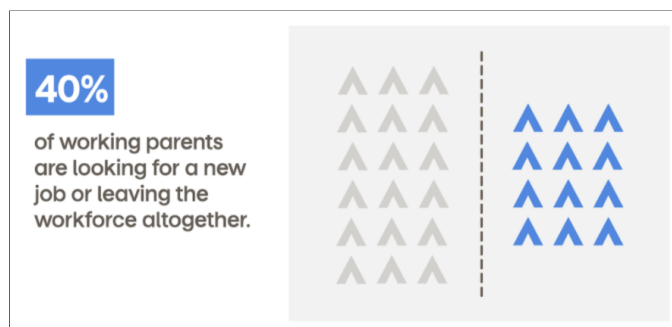


Here, a handful of statistics and points to prove ROI of support for parents and caregivers.

Losing women is expensive: For employees earning more than \$100,000 per year, attrition costs 213% percent of their salary (recruiting costs, lost billing while replacing her, potential higher salary for new employee) (Center for American Progress). Nearly one-third of college-educated new mothers leave or downshift within a year of having a first baby. Further, low morale has been proven to have a direct impact on motivation (International Business Research) and therefore on productivity (decrease of 24%-56%) (National Social Science Journal; see fig. 3). Who else will experience a drop in performance because of the loss of one parent employee? Who on her old team will have to take on more work? Are these workers more susceptible to attrition themselves in a domino effect of financial losses?

Retaining women drives profits: This Catalyst report showed a 35% higher return on equity and a 34% higher return to shareholders at Fortune 500 companies with high representation of women in their leadership teams. Organizations with 30% female representation in leadership experience a 1% net margin increase -- the equivalent of 15% higher profits, according to a report by the Peterson Institute for International Economics). This McKinsey study showed that achieving gender equality in the workforce would increase the US GDP by 26%. Access to paid leave, specifically, is estimated to “increase mothers’ labor force participation by approximately 20 percent during the first year following their child’s birth.” (Center for American Progress)

The labor market is about to tip female: The current Covid-19-driven “she-cession” accounts for 2.8 million fewer women at work in the US than pre-pandemic (13 million fewer worldwide according to the International Labor Organization), offering a saturation of highly qualified female workers who are eager to reenter the job market -- but *only* for jobs that promise a higher level of support for parents. Simultaneously, in 2021, 59.5% of college students identify as female (a trend that’s been moving that direction for a while but got a big boost from Covid as more men dropped out over this time). The competition to recruit these women -- particularly in historically male industries -- will be fierce.



Download our [Caregiving Playbook](#) for more statistics and advice on how to support working parents.

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