

## Mat Leave Not Mat Left

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As a manager, I've groaned when a valued team member announced she was pregnant. As a human resources professional, I've talked many other managers through their "what am I going to do?" concerns.

It's not easy committing to delivering bottom-line results and then finding out that one of your top performers won't be there for twelve months.

Regardless of who is filling your shoes, when you're on maternity leave, your team is likely experiencing some hardship. The person filling in for you needs to be trained and needs extra support. Your manager and colleagues are reluctant to call you with questions.

It's ultimately up to you to decide how much you want to stay in touch. Equally, it's up to you to keep communication lines open. Your colleagues don't have time to initiate the contact with you, but they will welcome your efforts to stay in touch.

The challenge will be to stay connected without being sucked into doing work that you're not getting paid for. Having said that, if you want to do a little work from home, go ahead. Talk to your boss about banking the time so that when you're back full-time you can have some flexibility to take some paid days off when you need to get the baby to the pediatrician or be at home when he's sick.

### *Why stay in touch?*

- **Don't let change pass you by**

In today's fast paced environments, organizations undergo a lot of change in a year. If you don't stay in touch with what's going on while you're away, it will be even harder to re-integrate when you return.

- **Don't be a casualty of "out of sight, out of mind"**

Make sure your manager and other senior leaders know you're committed to your career and that you would like to be considered for new positions if opportunities arise while you're away.

- **Stay engaged**

If you have been a career-focused woman, being at home can be very isolating and stressful. Staying connected to work can help keep your new role from being all-consuming.

### *How do I stay in touch?*

- **Attend important staff meetings**

Leave the baby with a sitter and dress for the office.

- **Peruse your mail**

Ask a colleague to send your mail to you once every two weeks. Read it. Pay particular attention to information about organizational change and other large initiatives.

- **Log-in**

Ask that important e-mails about organizational changes and initiatives be sent to your home e-mail address. Think about what issues are important to you and ensure you offer your feedback and comments if appropriate.

- **Be available**

Offer to be available in case the team needs or wants your help or input. Let the team know what times work best and how to reach you.

- **Attend company functions**

Christmas Party, Recognition Awards, Family Fun Day, Employee Appreciation Day are good ways to reconnect with co-workers.