

BOSTON COLLEGE

CENTER FOR WORK & FAMILY

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING SERIES

In this Issue:

- Business impact of shifting gender roles, changing family structures, and increased desire for work/family balance by fathers.
- Best practices from leading employers who recognize that by offering equitable parental leave policies they increase employee loyalty and commitment.
- Solutions and strategies for addressing the common roadblocks to implementing and increasing usage of paternity leave.
- PowerPoint presentation for senior leaders with highlights from this executive briefing including business strategies for improving employee loyalty, retention and job satisfaction.

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Defining Paternity Leave: *Shifting Roles, New Responsibilities in the Family and the Workplace*

The role that fathers play in families has undergone a dramatic shift in recent years. More and more men are looking for ways to share in the care of their children. In fact, in a 2000 study conducted by the Radcliffe Public Policy Center, 96% of men and women surveyed agreed that fathers and mothers should share equally in the caretaking of children. This shift is due to a number of factors, including:

- Changing gender roles.
- Expanding numbers and types of “non-traditional” families.
- An increasing emphasis on work/family balance.

For today’s father, it is not enough to serve as the coach of his daughter’s soccer team or to see his son perform in a school play. Fathers want to be involved in their children’s lives from the outset, to “bond” with their children in their earliest days of life. Research demonstrates that such early involvement has beneficial effects for children.

- Children with fathers who are actively involved during the first eight weeks of life manage stress better during their school years (*Shields, 2002*).
- Greater paternal involvement with five-month-old male infants has been positively correlated with greater social responsiveness and higher scores on infant development scales (*Yogman, Kindlon, & Earls, 1995*).
- A 26-year longitudinal study found that paternal involvement with young children was the single strongest parent-related factor in adult empathy. Fathers who spent time alone with their children more than twice a week were found to raise the most compassionate adults (*Koestner, Franz, & Weinberger, 1990*).

Employers are increasingly recognizing that the desire and responsibility to take time off to care for a newborn or newly adopted child is no longer simply that of the mother.

- A 2000 survey by the U.S. Department of Labor found that about a third of new fathers took some leave to care for a newborn or newly adopted child.
- A 2000 Oxygen/Markle Pulse Poll found that two-thirds of men and nearly three-quarters of women surveyed believe that new fathers should take more than two weeks off after the birth or adoption of a child.

As a result, more employers are making paternity leave available to employees in some form, and leading employers are exploring ways to improve and expand on their current paternity leave policies.

WHAT IS PATERNITY LEAVE?

“The stated mission of Deloitte is to help our clients and our people excel. The firm competes on the basis of intellectual capital; therefore the people of Deloitte are a critical asset of our firm. A winning strategy in the marketplace will require aligning our focus on our people with our business strategy. To be true to our mission and achieve our ultimate goal, we must foster a work environment that attracts, retains, and inspires commitment of the best talent as a competitive advantage. We believe that our two-week paid parental leave accomplishes this.”

– KATE DAVIE WOOD, SENIOR MANAGER,
FLEXIBILITY & CHOICE,
DELOITTE & TOUCHE USA LLP

Paternity leave is the time a father takes off work upon the birth or adoption of a new child. Paternity leaves can be paid or unpaid. While paid paternity leave appears to be a growing benefit, many employers still do not offer any dedicated paternity leave. In such instances, new fathers who wish to take paternity leave use accumulated vacation time and sick days after the birth or adoption of a child; others may be able to negotiate time off directly with their immediate supervisors.

Many new fathers are eligible to take leave through the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Employees who work for companies that employ at least 50 employees within a 75-mile radius are covered by the FMLA. Under this federal law, both male and female employees who have worked for their employer for at least 12 months (or 1,250 hours) can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year. The limitation of the FMLA, however, is that fathers rarely take advantage of it because:

- It is unpaid.
- It is not considered a widely acceptable option in the majority of corporate cultures.

In 2004, California became the first state to offer paid family leave — eligible male and female employees can take up to six weeks of leave, at partial pay, to care for a newly adopted or newborn child.

Parental Leave

- Some employers choose to implement parental leave as opposed to paternity leave. In this case, both new mothers and fathers are offered the same paid/unpaid leave policy (although new mothers who have recently given birth may also be eligible for short term disability leave).
- Parental leave is often implemented in work cultures that strive to be equitable and fair. However, it is important that these policies still market themselves to men, who may be less likely than women to take advantage of a parental leave policy unless it is very explicit, particularly when a policy is relatively new.

Employers may also have personal leave policies which new fathers may be able to utilize. Personal Leaves of Absence (PLOA) tend to be unpaid and extended personal leaves are rarely job guaranteed.

For **Pearson Education**, providing paid employee leave extends far beyond the traditional maternity leave. Pearson's two week paid leave policy is called “Parental and Serious Illness in the Family Leave.” By not only covering new mothers and fathers, but those employees who have seriously ill family members, the company treats its employees as whole people, respecting both their work and family obligations. Pearson believes that the payback has been well worth it, in terms of both employee loyalty and productivity.

Factors to Consider When Setting Up Paternity Leave Policy

Type of Leave

- Unpaid Paternity Leave—can go above and beyond the 12 weeks offered by the FMLA.
- Paid Paternity Leave—can be combined with extended unpaid leave.
- Parental or Family Leave—worth considering if equity is a key driver for offering leave, and/or if company wants an "all-in-one" policy to include all types of parental leaves.

Length of Leave

- Paid paternity leaves typically range from one to three weeks.
- Maximum length of unpaid leaves generally range from 12 to 24 weeks, and sometimes can be combined with a personal leave.

Paid Reimbursement

- Ranges from unpaid to 100% paid leave. Naturally, participation rates tend to be much higher for fully paid leaves.

How Leave Can Be Taken

- Generally, leaves are specified to be taken by a certain time in the new child's life (e.g., by the first month, six months or year).
- Leaves can be set-up to be taken all at once or incrementally (typically in one week periods, although some employers allow one-day increments).

Employee Eligibility

- Typically ranges from no prior service requirement to 12 months prior service.
- Over half of the employers surveyed that offered paid paternity leave did NOT have a minimum prior service requirement.

(Center for Work & Family National Roundtable Paternity Pulse Survey, 2004)

WHY FOCUS ON PATERNITY LEAVE?

Employers are finding that more fathers desire some form of leave upon the birth or adoption of a child.

Shared Care

Increasingly, couples are finding ways to balance the responsibilities of parenting and work so that both parents can remain actively engaged in their children's lives and their careers.

- The number of women in dual-earner couples who report that their spouses take greater or equal responsibility for the care of children is increasing (*Families and Work Institute, 2002*).
- In a survey of 8,000 women, 80% of those surveyed believed men and women should be equal partners at home (*Shields, 2002*).
- In the past 25 years, men's time engaged in family work on workdays has increased significantly, while time devoted to free-time activities has decreased significantly (*Families and Work Institute, 2002*).

Jessica DeGroot, founder of ThirdPath Institute, refers to this phenomenon as Shared Care (www.thirdpath.org). Shared Care parents follow similar principles, including:

- Redesigning work around family commitments.
- Adjusting solutions as the needs of their children change.
- Maximizing the use of parental care and care provided by extended family.

Attitude Shift among Younger Workers

Family issues resonate strongly with Generation X men. Young fathers expect to take an active role in their family life and make employment decisions based upon this expectation.

- In the 2000 Life's Work study, men between the ages of 21 and 39 indicated that the most important job characteristic was "having a work schedule that allows me to spend time with my family" (*Radcliffe Public Policy Center, 2000*).
- 70% of men aged 21 to 29 and 71% of men aged 30 to 39 said they wanted to spend more time with their families and would be willing to sacrifice pay to do so (*Radcliffe Public Policy Center, 2000*).

Changing Composition of Families

In 2000, less than a quarter of American households consisted of traditional nuclear families (*Belefante, 2004*). It can no longer be assumed that a working father has a stay-at-home spouse to take care of his children. Businesses must expand their definition of family to better reflect the rich and diverse portrait of households today.

- Gay couples with children are a growing population. According to 2000 Census results, there were over 60,000 male couple households with children and close to 96,000 female couple households with children (*Belefante, 2004*).
- More fathers are raising kids on their own. The number of single-father households rose 62% in the last decade (*US Census Bureau, 2000*).
- The percentage of families where both parents work is on the rise. In 1977, 49% of fathers had wives who also worked outside of the home. In 2002, 67% of fathers were part of a dual-earner marriage (*Families and Work Institute, 2002*).

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The Importance of Fatherhood

In addition to demographic and social changes, significant research indicates that children's development and overall well-being is enhanced when their fathers are involved throughout childhood. Paternity leave can be instrumental in solidifying the father-child relationship.

- Research has indicated that fathers play a unique role in socializing their children's emotional expressiveness and regulation. Fathers tend to play with their children in a more physically robust and stimulating manner than mothers (*Vollig, McElwain, Notaro & Herrera, 2002*).
- Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior, and avoid high-risk behaviors such as drug use, truancy, and criminal activity compared to children who have uninvolved fathers (*Horn & Sylvester, Fatherhood Initiative*).
- A 16 year longitudinal study found that fathers' play with their toddlers strongly predicted their children's attachment quality and ability to handle negative emotions at ages 10 and 16 years of age (*Grossman, Grossman, Fremmer-Bombik, Kindler, Scheuerer-Englisch, & Zimmerman, 2002*).

WHY MORE EMPLOYERS ARE OFFERING PATERNITY LEAVE

In a 2004 National Work & Family Roundtable Pulse Survey, employers indicated that the top business reasons for offering paternity leave are:

- Maintaining competitive practices (27%)
- Recruiting and retaining talent (23%)
- Equity and fairness (23%)
- Providing new father/child bonding time (14%)
- Becoming an Employer of Choice (14%)

For **Bristol-Myers Squibb Company**, the decision to offer one week paid paternity leave to new fathers was a natural fit for their overall work/life strategy. When the leave policy was proposed five years ago, it received no push back from senior management. The company believed that providing paid paternity leave was critical to remaining competitive and equitable to both male and female employees.

When **Deloitte & Touche USA LLP** first introduced its paid parental leave policy in 1994, the policy had a five year service requirement. Over time, the firm decreased the service requirement from five years to three years (or one year and designation as a "manager") to one year for all employees. In 2002, Deloitte removed its service requirement entirely. Deloitte employees consider the two-week paid parental leave offered to them to be a standard benefit, and this past year 52% of the leave takers were men.

Positive Impact of Leave Policies on Employee Job Satisfaction, Retention and Loyalty

There is clear evidence that paternity and parental leave policies improve employee loyalty, retention and job satisfaction. As a result, they have become an important component of the benefit plans offered by many companies:

- **KPMG** estimates that its paid parental leave policy has strengthened its recruiting and retention initiatives.
- Employers such as **Pearson Education, Deloitte & Touche USA LLP** and **PricewaterhouseCoopers** believe that their parental leave policies have been key components to increasing company loyalty and employee good will.
- **Marriott** offered fathering classes to its employees in the mid-nineties after company research showed a link between involved fathers and their children's success at school. Marriott estimates that for every dollar it spends helping employees with work/life issues such as fatherhood, the company saves four dollars due to lower turnover and absenteeism.

Negative Impact of Work/Family Conflict on Job Performance

Employees who felt that their supervisors supported their personal and family needs were much more likely to report high levels of job satisfaction (70% who experienced high support vs. only 19% of those who experienced low support) (*Families and Work Institute, 2002*). Conversely, when employees' personal and family needs are not supported, they experience counter-productive stress associated with work/family conflict.

- Men living in dual-earner couples with children report significantly higher levels of interference between their jobs and their family lives than women in similar situations (*Families and Work Institute, 2002*).
- James Levine, founder of the Fatherhood Project, refers to the term "Daddy Stress" to describe the problem today's fathers have managing conflict between work and family. This conflict has increased as men have taken on more household responsibilities and increasing numbers of women have entered the workforce.

"I am quite pleased to be working for an organization that provides financial assistance for costs incurred during the adoption process. Moreover, the parental leave program enabled me to spend some quality 'bonding' time with my new daughter. As for the balance between work and personal life, that is always a challenge given the demands/needs on both sides. However, I seem to be managing just fine, especially the one or two days a week that I work out of my home."

—SALES REPRESENTATIVE/FATHER,
ASTRA ZENECA

COMPANY & WORK GROUP TRAITS ASSOCIATED WITH FATHERS' LEAVE TAKING

Company-Level Traits

- Strong caring ethic
- Reported to be "father friendly" by personnel officer
- Strong support for equal employment opportunity for women
- Top managers appear in favor of leave

Work Group Traits

- Co-worker support for taking time off work for child care
- Emphasis on performance vs. long hours

Other Factors

- Men's orientation toward shared parenting
- Partner's reported willingness to share leave
- Perception of no economic loss

Based upon research conducted with over 200 of the largest Swedish corporations (Haas, Allard & Hwang, 2002).

WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS DOING TO MAKE THEIR LEAVE POLICIES A SUCCESS?

In addition to offering paid paternity/parental leave, some leading employers are taking further steps to support their new parent employees:

- **PricewaterhouseCoopers** is putting the final touches on its new, glossy, 50-page parenting booklet, which will be introduced with the company's new three-week paid parental leave policy. This booklet, which will be made available through the company's intranet site as well as its National Leave Center, is full of helpful advice on preparing for and returning from leave, and is interspersed with employee testimonials. Topics range from "when should I tell my Partner (supervisor) about the leave?" to advice on which day to return to work (according to new mothers, it's Wednesday, not Monday). It also contains useful information about the firm's benefits and programs to support working parents.
- **KPMG** has introduced a baby kit to be sent home to all new parent employees. The kit includes items such as a bib and T-shirt, as well as parenting brochures and information on KPMG's work-life resource referral program. The company believes that the kit is a great way to recognize the new babies of its employees, and that the information provided in the kit is helpful to new parents who might not otherwise access these resources.
- In addition to offering one-week paid paternity leave to its new fathers (and same-sex female couples), **SAS Institute** offers numerous parenting classes and workshops that are attended equally by both male and female employees. Topics are geared to parents with children of all ages and range from "Breastfeeding for the Expectant Father" to "Choosing a College."

SWEDEN: A CASE STUDY IN EQUITABLE PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Sweden's parental leave policy is derived from a strong emphasis on gender equality. Swedish couples share 13 months of parental leave between them, with the State paying 80% of lost wages per month. Leave can be taken all at once, or in increments until the child reaches eight years of age. Except for the two months of leave granted to each parent (Swedes refer to the time designated to the father as pappa months), leaves can be transferred for use between the parents.

While other European countries offer fathers the right to take parental leave, Sweden is unique in that policy makers have been interested in promoting men's use of parental leave as a way of constructing a new, more nurturing role for men and to ensure children's emotional security and well-being (Haas, Allard & Hwang, 2002).

In 1975, only three percent of Swedish fathers took leaves. In 2002, however, over 70% of fathers took leaves. Nevertheless, Swedish mothers still take the majority (84%) of parental leave days. (Haas et al., 2002).

Sampling of Paternity/Parental Leave Abroad

- In Great Britain, first-time fathers who have worked at their firm for at least 26 weeks can take up to eight weeks of paid paternity leave during the eight-week period immediately following their child's birth/adoption.
- In Canada, parents can share up to 50 weeks of partially subsidized parental leave during the first year of their new child's life.
- In Denmark, new fathers can take two weeks paid paternity leave and 10 weeks partially paid parental leave. Additionally, either parent can take a partially-paid child care leave (up to 52 weeks until the child's 8th birthday.)

ROADBLOCKS TO IMPLEMENTING / INCREASING USAGE OF PATERNITY LEAVE

Employers that offer paternity leave face challenges on a number of levels. Identifying these barriers is the first step towards increasing the success of any policy.

For example, numerous societal barriers exist that may prevent men from taking advantage of paternity/parental leave policies, such as:

- Belief that taking time off goes against the “bread-winner” mentality.
- Traditional gender attitudes towards work/home responsibilities.
- Myth that taking time to bond with children shows poor work ethic.

The chart below details some common roadblocks to implementing and increasing usage of paternity leave, and some strategies for addressing these roadblocks.

ROADBLOCKS	STRATEGIES
<p>Upper management does not perceive paternity leave as a strategic tool.</p>	<p>Track paternity leave utilization rates by creating a designated payroll/or charge code and communicate this code/process to HR and management. Tracking utilization rates closely will provide hard numbers on who takes paternity leave, how successful the policy is over time, and how it can be improved.</p> <p><i>Expert Advice:</i> Mindy Fried, Sociologist and author of <i>Taking Time: Parental Leave Policy and Corporate Culture</i>, strongly recommends that employers that are serious about improving their leave utilization rates track usage in a number of areas, including length of leave, department level, and position type (e.g., manager/non-manager).</p> <p>Survey your employees' needs through email, interviews and focus groups.</p> <p><i>Specifically, Fried recommends that employers conduct interviews or focus groups to understand the cultural dynamics behind leave-taking practices. "Do employees have trouble getting approval for leave even though the company has a policy? Is there an unspoken yet clear message that employees shouldn't take time off? These are questions that are important to answer as they will ultimately affect the success of any leave program."</i></p>
<p>Managers discourage paternity leaves, believing that they hurt productivity and are not well accepted within the company's culture.</p>	<p>Educate managers on how to plan for a leave (i.e., what needs to be done to help employees and co-workers make a smooth transition during and after a leave).</p> <p>Encourage top-level managers to serve as role models to other employees by taking leaves themselves, and by discussing the leave policies in meetings and other leadership communication forums.</p> <p>Consider offering flexible leave plans, where employees can space out their leaves according to their work/family responsibilities.</p> <p><i>In Action:</i> At PricewaterhouseCoopers, new fathers can take their three-week paid parental leave throughout the first year of their new child's life, and they have the flexibility to take it in one-day increments. Thus, a new dad might choose to take two weeks leave early on, followed by scheduling several Fridays off at a later point in the year.</p>

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Paternity and parental leave policies offer a number of advantages to both employers and their employees. First and foremost, they provide new fathers with valuable time to bond with newborn or newly adopted children, establishing at the outset an involved role for fathers in their children's lives. And, as research overwhelmingly indicates, children with fathers who are actively involved in their lives are more likely to manage stress better, do well in school, and become compassionate adults. Employers benefit through improved employee good will, retention and loyalty. Employees feel that their employers are more open to and supportive of their personal and family needs, and as a result are more satisfied with their jobs and loyal to their organizations. Leading employers recognize that child care leaves are no longer just for mothers, and that paid paternity leaves make the most sense for everyone.

“Men are more likely to take advantage of paternity leave if it’s paid and that’s a smart investment for companies to make. Offering support during one of life’s most exciting (and stressful) periods breeds increased loyalty among dads – and other workers, even if they don’t actually use the policy.”

JAMES A. LEVINE, ED.D., DIRECTOR, THE FATHERHOOD PROJECT,
FAMILIES AND WORK INSTITUTE, NYC AND AUTHOR,
WORKING FATHERS: NEW STRATEGIES FOR BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

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About this Series

Written for an executive level audience, the Boston College Center for Work & Family Executive Briefing Series addresses topical and strategic issues of particular relevance to the current business climate. The series highlights research findings, data trends and best practices in a concise format, aiming to foster action-oriented dialogue within organizations. Each issue features an accompanying PowerPoint presentation that captures key points and includes a section for practitioners to customize and add organization-specific data.

About the Center

Since its founding in 1990, The Boston College Center for Work & Family has been a national leader in helping organizations create effective workplaces that support and develop healthy and productive employees. The Center provides a bridge linking the academic community to the applied world of the work/life practitioner and has three main focus areas: research, membership, and education. The Center is committed to enhancing the quality of life of today's workforce by providing leadership for the integration of work and life, an essential for business and community success.

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