

REINTEGRATION AFTER MATERNITY/PARENTAL LEAVE - A SMOOTH RETURN TO THE OFFICE!

Company name : Advanzia Bank S.A.

Activity sector : Activités financières et d'assurance

Company category : PME

Description of the action

Advanzia Bank has a pre- and post-parental/maternity leave approach aimed at informing parents before the leave starts and welcoming them back into the workforce after the leave ends. We aim to align needs and expectations in close collaboration with our employees by keeping open communication channels and offering as much flexibility as we can to facilitate a smooth transition back to work for (new) mothers and fathers.

Context

Parents are faced with a variety of challenges – from dealing with the drastic changes that come with welcoming a new baby/child into their lives, to organising childcare and coming to grips with the seemingly conflicting need of balancing a fulfilling work life with being a good parent to their child(ren).

At Advanzia we want to support our employees in finding quality of life and reaching a happy balance between work and family as much as we can. Working parents are valuable and devoted employees and having a flexible and personal reintegration practice is a way for the bank to recognise and promote this part of our diverse workforce. A respectful, flexible and personal reintegration practice is a win-win for Advanzia and our employees.

Objectives

Supporting parental talent – a flexible and smooth transition following maternity and parental leave.

Approach

The Advanzia HR Team takes the following approach to ease people into the parental/maternity leave, and to ease them back into work life. All steps of the process are done in close collaboration with the employee's line manager:

Before the leave starts

At an early stage, following the information that HR receives about an employee wishing to take the leave, HR reaches out to the employee with clear information about all maternity and the parental leave aspects.

One month before the leave starts, HR meets with the employee to go through practical information (administrative aspects, payroll, work equipment, last physical day in the office before the leave) and address any questions to prepare and facilitate a smooth transition from a work life to maternity or parental leave.

During the leave / before the return

One month before the maternity or the full-time parental leave ends, HR reaches out to the employee to initiate the return to work with the aim to make it as smooth as possible. We provide their holiday balance and propose to use some of their remaining days to extend their leave (following discussion and agreement with their manager). The latest internal newsletter is shared so the employee has the opportunity to get up to date on the latest developments and news at Advanzia.

The employee is also informed that HR will have a close follow-up upon their return through two catch-up meetings.

Back at work

HR organises a catch-up meeting during the first week of the person's return, as well as another meeting one month later to check up on the employee, ask how they are feeling, how the reintegration is going, and see if they have any open questions. The goal is to see if they are keeping the balance between their new life and work life, and if there is anything we can do to help.

Any request to go part-time for the first year is reviewed and, in most cases, accepted. A very popular option is working up to 80% for one year. After a year, the situation is re-evaluated and potentially extended by aligning the needs of both the employee and Advanzia.

Impact

The feedback from employees benefiting from our maternity and parental leave has been very positive. They appreciate the proactive and personal approach, and the regular meetings in which we initiate a dialogue about what works for the employee as well as the bank.

Looking at the statistics (2020-2022), we see a preference for full time parental leave that has increased by 116% over this period, equally between male and female employees. Part-time parental leave (35%) initially taken by male employees is now also taken by female employees. When it comes to gender split, 56% of all parental leave was taken by male colleagues, and 43% of leave taken by female colleagues, who are taking their parental leave (first parental leave) right after their maternity leave. Male colleagues are more and more choosing the full-time parental leave option, which they decide to take when the child reaches the age of increased interaction. We support this split and it shows the inclusive nature of Advanzia Bank's culture! We can also see that the parental leave is taken at all hierarchical levels, including management. This is also a testament to the equal, caring and inclusive environment Advanzia creates for our staff. All parents, regardless of gender or hierarchical position, have the confidence to take the opportunity to raise their children with flexibility *and* be successful at work.

« To do »

Place trust in your employees and provide as much flexibility as we can within the framework of the existing guidelines (e.g. flextime and core time regulations).

Be open to reassess and adapt guidelines based on employee feedback, keeping in mind a fair, transparent and consistent approach for all staff.

Use friendly and enthusiastic language in all verbal and written exchange - show empathy, understanding and goodwill at all stages of the maternity and parental leave.

« Not to do »

Treat parental or maternity leave as a pain point or purely administrative process.

Underestimate the impact of an email, a phone call, a meeting to ask the employee how they are doing.