

TOP TIPS PRE LEAVE

Self-Reflection

You may feel like a different person a year from now. Write down what you love about your job, what you would like to change, what your day to day feels like, where you see yourself in 5 years time. Keep it somewhere safe. This isn't to guide you in your future but to remind you and set expectations before returning and hopefully will make you feel less anxious towards the end of your leave.

Confidence

After your leave you may feel like you have forgotten how to do your job and feel lacking in confidence. Carry on your self-reflection journal and include your biggest achievements, why are you good at your job? what do people come to you for? What feedback have you received? To read this upon return will be invaluable.

Transparency

Gain clarity on what level of communication you would like throughout your leave and be transparent with your

workplace about that. Also be mindful to let your workplace know if your requirements change.

Do you want to be contacted on a regular basis?

Are there particular things you would require your workplace to share with you? Or not share with you?

Expectations

Understand the expectations from your workplace throughout leave and upon your return so there are no surprises. The more communication and understanding you have before going on leave the better.

No promises

It's easy to believe you'll feel the same as you do now but a life changing period really can change your outlook and decisions. Allow yourself space to change your mind.

Retain written evidence

As well as you changing, many of your team may change. File any key emails (do not send them to your personal email) discussing projects, promotions or any future agreements.

Coach/Mentor

Speak to someone who has been there, whether a colleague, a friend or ideally professional support. Ask them everything! It is also worth asking your workplace to find out if they will pay for a coach throughout your leave and upon return. Many organisations are happy to do this.

Buddy

Find a buddy in your team who you feel comfortable to contact during leave or upon your return. It will feel reassuring to have someone you feel comfortable talking to who can also keep you in the loop.

Be Proactive

We know pre leave your focus will most likely be on your upcoming arrival but assigning some time to be proactive about your leave will give you a stress free leave and a smooth return.

Hand Over

If you are fortunate enough to have the time to handover to someone it will be beneficial to have handover notes prepared and to allocate some time with them. If your replacement keeps things in order, this can only bode well on your return. You can also use these same notes on your return.

TOP TIPS PRE RETURN

Communication

This has to be the most important piece of advice. The more we communicate, the more others know what we need and we know what others need from us.

Communicate to your manager/team before returning about your expectations and your needs. Ask questions to ensure you know what their expectations are. If you ever find yourself thinking 'I wish my manager had discussed this with me' then take the control into your hands and book in a call and have those chats. It may seem like the wrong way around (and we agree, it is) but if it will make you feel better then it is worth it!

Reflecting on skills & achievements

It is very common to feel a lack in confidence or imposter syndrome when returning to work. Spend some time reflecting on your career to remind you why you are good at your job and why you are valuable to your team.

Think about your qualities, your strengths, your achievements, small or large. Some will find this easier to

Establishing boundaries

do alone writing it down, others may like to discuss with a friend, partner or even ask a colleague to help you out and remind you!

Take some time to establish what blend you would like in terms of work and home and what boundaries need to be in place to achieve this. Remember there is no pressure as these decisions can change once you are in the flow of work but it is so useful to understand your initial boundaries straight away. This means you can communicate childcare arrangements with the workplace, set up arrangements at home, and know what you need to get done and when to be able to get your desired blend.

Integration

Ensuring that your first day is not the first day in a year you've spoken to your team makes your return much less intimidating. Whether this is through keeping in touch days, a sociable lunch, popping in to say hello or calling some of your colleagues. Many clients comment on how much more relaxed they felt after having those chats and how the first week was made so much more comfortable because of it.

Phased childcare

Many parents feel concerned about leaving their child. If this is you then don't let your first day of work be their

first day of childcare. Make a plan that they will start a couple of weeks before you head back, perhaps even phasing them in. This takes one element of stress out of your first day back to work. Also it gives you some free time in those weeks leading up to returning for some self-care.

Buddy

If you haven't done already then request a buddy in your team/department, preferably someone who has taken parental leave in the past. They can act as your go to person when you need to chat to someone who understands the business and your needs.

Hand over

Even though you have done this job before, don't be too proud to take any handover/updates the business are willing to give. In fact - request it! This will remind you of things you may have forgotten and hopefully increase your confidence for the areas you remember.