

Successful Returners

A SCORECARD FOR
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



Returning from parental leave or any long-term absence due to ill health, secondment or sabbatical, necessitates a transition for both the individual and the organisation. Supporting this is critical as getting it wrong can be distressing and costly for both parties. In our experience, the organisations that get this right protect and reinforce the investment they have made in their people well beyond their absence.

As specialists in supporting returners, we have seen what works – and what doesn't. Our aim is to help your organisation identify and assemble the key components so that all returners rapidly regain their confidence and effectiveness and quickly release their economic potential back into the business. Longer term, our clients see more diverse talent rising through the ranks, as well as an increase in those who continue to have a fulfilling career.

We believe that creating the conditions for strong returners requires attention in three areas:

- Operational processes and policies
- The individual's transition
- Organisational culture

The Scorecard

How does your organisation perform in relation to best practice in each of these three areas?

We have set out overleaf the specific standards that leading professional services businesses are implementing and invite you to consider what may need attention within your organisation so that it meets/exceeds the standard, making it more attractive to existing and future talent.

Mark your organisation according to the following values:

- 0** sub-standard
- 5** good
- 10** progressive

On completion, enter your organisation's overall score here:

My organisation score is

Less than 75: Your organisation is below par on many of the basics leading professional service firms are offering their returners. [Click here](#) to find out more about how The Tall Wall can help.

75–150: Your organisation has many of the fundamental building blocks in place, but there is much room for improvement if you are to be considered market leading. [Click here](#) to find out more about how The Tall Wall can help.

More than 150: Congratulations, your firm is progressive when it comes to supporting returners. [Click here](#) to find out more about how The Tall Wall can help you maintain your market leading position.

Operational Processes and Policies

ITEM	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE	SCORE		
Market-leading returner policies in place	Frequently reviewed and revised policies above and beyond the statutory minimum, to include: ill health, pregnancy loss, adoption, surrogacy, IVF, shared parental leave, secondments and sabbaticals.	0	5	10
Progressive returner policies in place for Partners, Directors and transaction leads	Consideration given to the specific challenges encountered by Partners, Directors and senior client facing professionals, for whom time out can undermine their client relationships and individual P&Ls. A clear plan of how to retain client relationships/practice is devised with the returner's line manager and other stakeholders. A specific Equity Partner policy is in place to reflect the potential impact on their profit share.	0	5	10
Relevant information that is easy to access	All policies, forms, guidance, support etc. are centralised, easy to navigate and accessible whilst on leave. A named point of contact for returners throughout the transition – especially prior to exit, just prior to return and post-return.	0	5	10
Early and coordinated identification of returners	MATB1 or equivalent triggers a HR and Line Manager to instigate an early and coordinated programme of support encompassing everything from a health and safety review to providing early returner coaching and/or mentoring.	0	5	10
Support for Line Managers in this aspect of their role	Line Managers offered specialist training to build awareness and skillset around their vital role in the returner's journey.	0	5	10
Open and honest communication throughout the transition	Line manager instigates pre-exit, pre-return and post-return conversations with the returner. Best practice in each of these conversations is documented and understood.	0	5	10
Returner cover in place if applicable	Line Manager and returner to consider whether maternity (or equivalent) cover is required at least 3 months before exit. If cover is not required, then a handover plan is agreed and implemented.	0	5	10
A coordinated return to work plan as standard	Returners are offered an onboarding plan that includes business updates, tech training/updates and team updates.	0	5	10
Return to work basics in place	This needs to feel effortless for the returner. Clear ownership for the co-ordination of key aspects of the return to include: communication of exit and return date; payroll changes; desk and IT provision on day one of return; staff pass reactivated; relevant working from home support to ensure agile workers are not disadvantaged (e.g. IT, headset, office-standard chair etc).	0	5	10
Reduced chargeable hours/ utilisation targets	Returners are given a chargeable hours/utilisation grace period of 1–2 months post-return, reflecting the time they may need to “get up to speed”.	0	5	10
Promotion criteria reflects time out of the business	Promotion criteria make allowances for returners who may not have, for example, 2 years of continuous service prior to nomination or whose absence cuts across key promotion milestones.	0	5	10

The Individual's Transition

ITEM	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE	SCORE		
Returner coaching is made available	1:1 confidential, external coaching offered pre-exit, during absence and post-return to the business.	0	5	10
Returner buddy system in place	All returners offered an internal buddy 3 months before exit from the business, continuing through to their return.	0	5	10
Specialist support given to senior client facing professionals	Coaching and/or mentoring to minimise the impact on client relationships and/or business plan.	0	5	10
Appropriate adjustments are available for a phased return	Discussed, agreed, honoured and observed.	0	5	10
Specific planning in place for ill-health returners	Line Manager and HR discuss with the individual how they would prefer to be treated on return, especially by the wider team – e.g., act like nothing has changed or frequent wellbeing check-ins? There is a clear understanding between Line Manager and returner as to how much the returner is capable of taking on in the transition period post-return.	0	5	10
Clarity on role of returner	Line Manager support is critical to a strong return to the business. Line Managers act in concert with the returner to ensure their role expectations are clear and well identified. These expectations are positively communicated and enforced upon return.	0	5	10

Organisational Culture

ITEM	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE	SCORE		
Flexible working is in the DNA of the firm	A wide range of professionals are encouraged and supported to work flexibly. It is not just “something working mothers do” or something for “less committed” professionals.	0	5	10
Business development and client relationship activity is inclusive	BD and client relationship building takes into account returners (and other staff and clients) who may be working flexibly/remotely. The firm’s emphasis is on much more than just the traditional after hours/pub/sporting event culture.	0	5	10
Parents’/carers’ network in place	Parents and carers have access to a community at work that is funded and promoted.	0	5	10
Shared parental leave is promoted	Enhanced shared parental leave benefits are shared widely and shared parental leave is taken, even at more senior levels.	0	5	10
Secondments and sabbaticals are celebrated	Positive reinforcement and policy access to reinforce the positives of this type of absence from the business.	0	5	10



If you would like to find out how we can enable your talented women to maximise their full potential for your organisation, please get in touch.

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