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# How parent-friendly is your company?

**AND WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?**

By Emily Howe and Danetha Doe



What follows is a summary of key points from a discussion organized March, 23 2018 in San Francisco, CA by Emily Howe of Portola Advisors and Danetha Doe of Money & Mimosas in conjunction with LUCY and Healthline Media and featuring an interdisciplinary panel of leaders from Visa, McKinsey & Company, TravelBank, and Fox Rothschild.



### *THE DISCUSSION*

This powerful event focussed on giving the audience -- primarily leaders in Human Resources -- concrete ideas for improving company culture, retention, and bottom line --- by making the workplace more parent-friendly.

***"A parent-friendly workplace is not only the right thing to do -- it improves your morale, retention, and bottom line!"***

The panelists had business experience in the corporate, tech, Fortune 500, legal, media, consulting and start-up worlds. Their diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise fostered a robust conversation about how to lead workplace change to make real improvements for working parents. Panelists shared the latest facts from research and California law, as well as heartfelt personal stories about what really works --- and what doesn't. The audience left inspired and armed with actionable commitments to improve their working environments.

# Achieve a parent-friendly workplace

- Go beyond lactation rooms and "bring your baby to work" day.  
While such parent-friendly amenities are certainly nice as additional offerings, they should supplement strong and consistent workplace policies that prevent discrimination and cultural biases against parents and pregnant women.
  
- Focus on deliverables --- not "face-time".  
Companies that focus on deliverables and setting strong managerial expectations are better at retaining top performing parents than companies that focus on "face-time." Be careful not to reward or recognize (via verbal accolades, departmental awards, or high performance review ratings) the act of keeping long hours at the office. Reward working smart, not working late.
  
- Mandate a ramp-on, ramp-off program for parental leave.  
Create an official process for ramping off parents and transitioning them back into company life. Don't let this happen manager-by-manager; make it a company-wide process. And, don't emphasize the hours worked, but rather the projects/duties/clients the individual will be responsible for during those times.
  
- Offer benefits for expecting and new parents -- or outsource it!  
The set of benefits that pregnant women and new parents need to balance careers with parenting vary widely (from lactation consultants and new baby safety classes to family wills & trusts). Most companies don't have in-house providers, beyond the basics. The good news is you can simply outsource these benefits to a company like LUCY who focusses solely on providing a wide and diverse set of customized offerings for your employees who are parents.

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Disrupt the parenting pay/promotions gaps.

Scan your own company salary and promotions information for differences in pay/promotions between parents and non-parents, and between working women without kids and working moms. Also, ensure you are providing equal opportunity for parents and non-parents to work on high visibility initiatives or high-prestige "stretch" projects. Track your disparities in retention of parents vs. non-parents. Pro-actively mitigate your risks before you end up with major retention issues --- or in court or in the media!

Proactively ask expecting/new parents what they need.

Some employees may not know the options that are available to new/expecting parents and may feel uncomfortable asking. HR business partners should regularly meet with employees who are ramping off or transitioning back to discuss any challenges and brainstorm solutions.

Keep competent, legal counsel who specializes in employment law.

Ensure that your human resources lead has regular meetings with your legal team to ensure that all patterns and risks are known and to make sure that any legal risks and recommendations are translated into company policy and disseminated throughout the organization.

Don't assume new moms won't come back from maternity leave.

Treat new mothers like you treat new fathers: like they are most likely coming back to work. McKinsey & Co's Women in the Workplace 2017 report --- the largest ever US study on women in the workplace found that "opting out" is a myth. "Women are not leaving their companies at higher rates than men, and very few plan to leave the workforce to focus on family."

Ensure your leaders set good examples with parental leave.

Encourage employees, especially leaders and highly-visible/well-loved company employees, to take ample time for parenting leave --- and to showcase it proudly. Leading by example is a key way to change hearts and minds towards accepting parenting leave. This is especially powerful for paternity leave, which is less commonly taken and still has an additional stigma.



# Emily Howe

**CHANGE MANAGEMENT.  
GENDER EQUITY & INCLUSION.**

For 15+ years, Emily Howe has helped clients achieve their gender equity, diversity, and inclusion goals as well as undergo broader enterprise-wide transformations by using change management, strategic planning, and leadership development.

Emily received her BA and MA degrees in Gender and Cultural Studies from Simmons College. Emily is Prosci certified in change management and is on the board of the Association of Change Management Professionals, Northern California.



[www.portolaadvisors.com](http://www.portolaadvisors.com)



# Danetha Doe

**ENTREPRENEURS. LIFESTYLE.  
THE FUTURE OF ACCOUNTING.**

Danetha Doe is creator of Money & Mimosas, a money mentorship program for entrepreneurs, bossbabes, + influencers who want the champagne life.

Selected as one of the Top 40 under 40 accounting professionals by CPA Practice Advisor in 2015, Danetha was featured on Huffington Post Live with Suze Orman and named a "next-generation accountant" by Xero and Quickbooks. She was also selected as a cash flow expert by Wells Fargo.



[www.moneyandmimosas.com](http://www.moneyandmimosas.com)