

THEMOMPROJECT

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The Return-to-Work Report

Driving Successful Transitions

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Welcome

We are pleased to present the results of our research, *The Return-to-(Paid)-Work Report, Driving Successful Transitions*.

"The Return-to-(Paid)-Work Report" was an easy name to select. Women who are out of the workforce are still working hard, predominantly taking care of children, sometimes older family members, maintaining households and often doing many other kinds of unpaid work. What we've heard again and again is that in returning to the workforce, they're looking to help out financially at home, but they're also looking for more personal fulfillment and a feeling of being valued outside of what they do at home; being acknowledged as a professional by being paid for their valuable time.

This research focuses on what factors matter most to women returning to work after absences of varying length, with the aim of providing corporations with actionable solutions to improve their attraction and retention of this large and critical segment of the workforce. For our research, we chose to focus on hidden yet critical success predictors, taking into consideration the reasons women cited for re-entering the workforce as ways for corporations to attract such motivated talent, and also factors they consider to be paramount for person investment in their new roles, helping corporations to understand the top four factors that will make a huge difference for short- and long-term workplace engagement.

To uncover the four most important drivers, we surveyed more than 950 mothers from diverse backgrounds who had applied for The Mom Project return-to-work opportunities, and asked them to rate what matters to them at work. We combined qualitative interviews and a survey instrument to surface themes that might otherwise go undetected. We then narrowed the analysis to be focused on mothers who were currently out of the workforce. The majority of these women had been out of the workforce between less than a year to three years, and the next largest group had work gaps from between three to five and, finally, five to ten years.

In completing this research, we spoke with women who had been placed in new jobs through our return-to-work program and asked them to tell us more about their experiences in a series of one-on-one interviews. The results are in the Voice of Women Returning to (Paid) Work section.

Our ultimate goal for this and other research to follow is to understand for women re-entering the workforce, what drivers have the greatest impact on employee recruitment, training success, engagement and retention.

We invite you to read our full report here and to visit TheMomProject.com to learn how we can help your company find and serve professional women nationwide.

Regards,

Allison Robinson
Founder, CEO
The Mom Project

Pam Cohen, Ph.D
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The Mom Project

Key insights

- Applicants said that financial considerations contribute strongly to their desire to return to work (83%). However, about 75% said that they were returning in order to use existing work skills and also, in equal measure, to learn new work skills.
- The overwhelming majority of women consider it be extremely important (~83%) that they work for an employer who both understands and respects their work-life integration priorities.
- These women also stressed that it was very important that they felt like they belonged at the organization and were made to feel welcome (~77%). Along that vein, they also wanted to know there was opportunity for advancement in the organization.
- The women re-entering the workforce overwhelmingly report having felt marginalized and underappreciated in their efforts to find work due to the gap in their employment, despite often having worked in mid- and high-level roles prior to taking time off for family reasons. They expressed frustration, and often a diminished sense of confidence, having been ignored by potential new employers despite having had strong professional backgrounds prior to their leaves of absence. They are seeking validation and support in their new employers, and an opportunity to show their value while using and updating their professional skills.



There is an excellent pool of highly qualified candidates available and eager to return to the workforce

Over 88% of re-entering employees hold a bachelor's degree or higher. About 39% of these candidates have been out of the workforce for under a year, and another 29% have been out between 1-3 years. About 95% of these candidates said they had been looking for a role for a while, but 10% said that they hadn't been looking and became interested in when they learned about return-to-work opportunities through The Mom Project.

Why are they returning, and what will it take to keep them in the workforce?

Most of the candidates reported that they re-entering the workforce for financial reasons, but also in equal measure that they wanted to use their existing skills and learn new ones as well.

To understand the factors involved in what motivates women to re-enter the workplace, and what they need in order to be optimally engaged,

The Mom Project sent surveys to everyone who applied to the return-to-work program (n=950). Approximately 50% responded, and the analysis then focused mainly on those re-entering the workforce who were currently not employed (n=175). We asked them to share with us their reasons for re-entering the workforce and what they felt they needed in order to be successful.

Our researchers fielded the return-to-work survey to women with diverse backgrounds, some currently employed and others not. We included qualitative interviews designed to surface topics that might have otherwise gone undetected. Our goal was to understand which factors matter most to women returning to the workforce, and which may have the greatest impact on accepting an opportunity, personal engagement in a role, as well as short- and long-term retention.

In addition to other critical factors, women applying to the return-to-work program reported that they would benefit most from receiving assistance in refreshing their work skills (72%), receive career mentorship (68%) and then management or leadership training (63%).

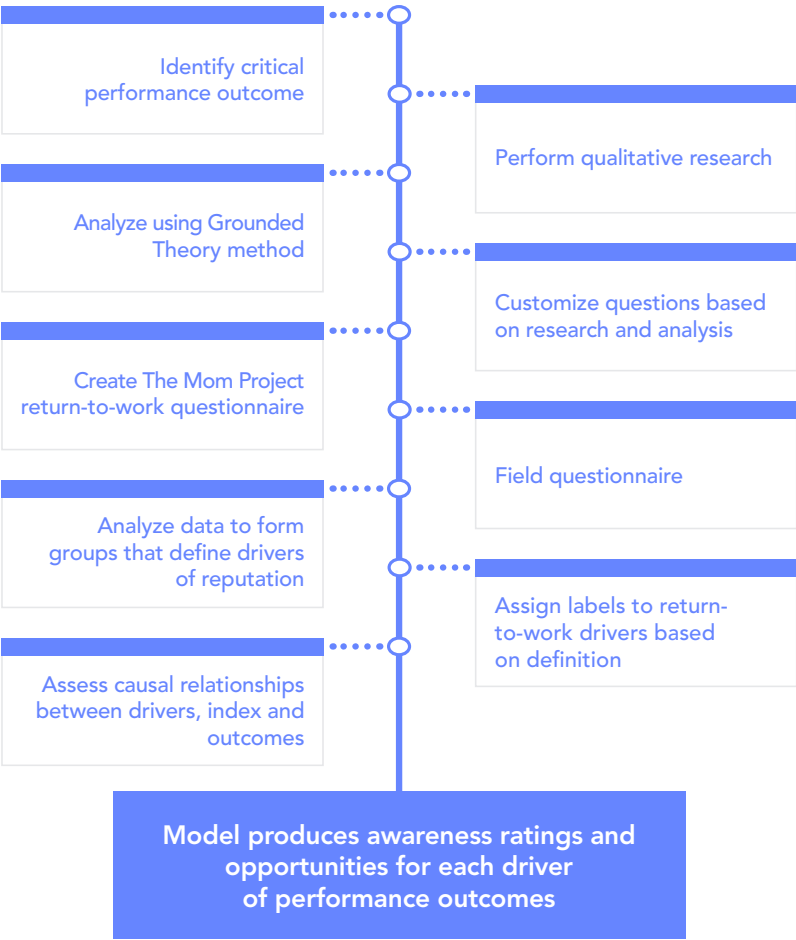


Methodology

The Mom Project return-to-work research began with qualitative interviews to uncover areas critical to women re-entering the workforce. For the interviews, one-on-one conversations using a semi-structured approach allowed respondents to discuss broad open-ended questions regarding their experiences, likes and dislikes within the selected topic area without unnecessarily restricting the conversation. A survey instrument was designed to empirically test identified drivers. A wide variety of organizational characteristics were presented to respondents, who were asked to rate on a 10-point scale the importance of various identified factors to their return-to-work experience.

An analysis based on Grounded Theory was performed to evaluate the measurement model and assess which questionnaire items best “fit together” to define predictors of return-to-work success. There were no pre-conceived notions of what characteristics were likely to emerge given the topic; the data came together to create the story.

Once groupings were tested, a label was used to describe the concept or theme. In this case, four themes making up return-to-work interest and success—Validation, Support, Respect, and Benefits—were identified through a combination of the qualitative and quantitative results.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Our sample was drawn from The Mom Project community, a network of women who have expressed an interest in return-to-work opportunities that are in balance with their personal goals.

87%

identified as being mothers

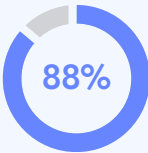
Of those identifying as mothers:



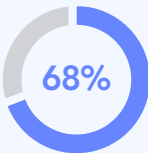
75% have two to three children living at home



20% have one child living at home



Over 88% hold a bachelor's degree or higher.



Of women not currently working, the majority (68%) reported being out of work less than three years.



The majority of currently non-working respondents (95%) said that they have been looking for opportunities for a while before finding the return-to-work program.



Why return to work?

Four Critical Drivers

1. Validation

Validation for women re-entering the workforce comes from several places. They want to know they are valued for their skills where gaps in paid work may have left them feeling ignored and left behind. They want to know that they are valued for the contributions they can make in a company as individual contributors. And in re-entering the workforce, they want to show family members, employers, friends and themselves the complexity and value they bring to the tables as both mothers and professionals.

- Being validated as an earner
- In re-entering the workplace I am a stronger worker
- Showing myself, family, and others that I can be both a mother and a professional
- My experience and skills are still relevant
- Working for an employer who cares about my prior work experience

"It was the first time in my job search I felt validated and met people who cared about my work experience even though hadn't used it in the last 6 years."

"A lot of people would call me and initially go through my resume and ask about the gap in work experience, and wouldn't call me again."

2. Support

Women re-entering the workforce want to know that their new employers are sincere about welcoming them back to the workforce and see the need for their skills and experience. They report how helpful it is when employers let others in the organization know that they are supportive of the returning cohort, and where they don't feel they have to hide the gap they had in paid work. They also appreciate the opportunity to learn as they work, and to go through training programs, both formal and informal, that help them brush up on existing work skills and to learn new ones.

- Working for an employer who welcomes returning moms to the workplace
- Working for an employer who gives me the opportunity to do meaningful work
- Working for an employer who supports my training and updating my professional skills

"It mattered to me that people at work were comfortable with the gap I'd had in working because I'd stayed home for my twins."

"They've given me some interesting more complex projects ... it really makes me feel like I belong here."





3. Respect

Working for an employer who shows respect for work-life integration priorities is paramount to women re-entering the workforce. This means that women know they don't have to hide having responsibilities outside the workplace, and that they are given support and respect in managing work and family obligations. Women re-entering the workforce report that having that kind of respect from an employer allows them to truly focus on their work while still being present for their families.

- Working for an employer who cares about my work-life integration priorities
- Working for an employer who cares about my life outside of work
- Working for an employer who acknowledges my contribution

"People were very kind to us and talked to us like, 'You are valuable and we want to put you back into the workforce.'"

"After I started, we met some people from The Mom Project when they were in town, and we got lunch with them, which was really nice. And we had another lunch here with the executives that went really well. Overall, I had a great experience."

4. Benefits

Re-entering workers report wanting to receive competitive pay for their work as well as competitive benefits such as opportunities for healthcare programs and 401k plans. They also value highly flexible working arrangements, paid time off, and opportunities for advancement as they get comfortable and thrive in their workplace.

- Competitive pay
- Healthcare
- Advancement Possibilities
- Training
- Flexible Arrangements
- 401k/Retirement
- Paid Time Off

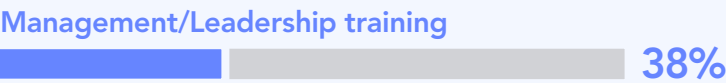
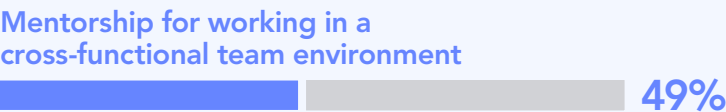
"It's being able to manage my kids, my family, and work. And everyone here is very understanding when I need time off or need to leave early. So far it's been a great experience for me."

"I really wanted to help out at home financially, and to have my children see me being a professional in a paid job!"



Tools for return-to-work success

Candidates re-entering the workforce were asked where they would benefit from assistance in this program. Refreshing work skills and bridging resume gaps were rated as being most strongly needed, followed by career mentorship, management and leadership training, and then mentorship for working in a cross-functional team environment and training in current business tools.





Voice of Women Returning to Work *Païd*

Most people who applied for and were hired into the program said that they had been looking for some time before they found and applied for the return-to-work program.

“I want to do my job and they want me to do my job, and I appreciate that they value moms coming back into the workforce.”

People talked about feeling really validated and excited that they were being recognized and valued as someone in the workforce:

“I wanted to feel like a professional again, and have something that was just for me.”

“I sound like a teenager but I was just getting rejected all the time. I had the first call and wouldn't hear from them and wasn't able to track them down again after that.”

The return-to-work program participants generally described the process as being very straightforward and very positive:



"It was pretty painless. I happened to see The Mom Project when I was doing some analysis online and saw a couple jobs that I thought were interesting."

"After finding The Mom Project, everything happened so fast for me. I applied online I worked with two ladies who were very helpful. They kept telling me, 'Don't worry—you're going to get this job.' And they kept pushing to get me the interview."



The Mom Project return-to-work program opportunities are viewed by participant as being the bridge between being a parent and coming back as a thriving part of the workforce. The program is seen as being very helpful as women work to overcome obstacles associated with returning after a gap in their employment, and participants talk about feeling very supported:

"I am really amazed about the idea of the program, and how you are helping to smooth the transition for people like us, who want to go back into the workforce."

"Overall for me it's been a great experience, I'm very grateful for hooking up with The Mom Project and hopefully other people could benefit from it as well."

And of the program, the participants were overwhelmingly energized and happy about the experience, and learning on the job. They also talk about feeling very supported:

"As a cohort its been really good to be interacting with the other participants ... It's nice to see other people are still navigating themselves through and we share tips."

"I like the sessions they have been hosting. They had a returnee from the previous year. They had her come in to talk about her experience. It was nice to meet her."



"I think it's a great program, I think a lot of people have a lot of good knowledge. Nothing beats the school of hard knocks where you can learn things from experience."

“This has been just an amazing opportunity for me. I feel happier at home and happy at work.”





THE MOM PROJECT

The Mom Project is the career destination for moms. Through our digital marketplace and community we connect professionally accomplished women with world-class companies for rewarding opportunities. The Mom Project is changing the way women work and redefining career structures by providing women with real work opportunities that are in balance with their personal goals. This evolution will keep more talented, professionally accomplished women in the workforce.

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