

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

JUNE 2021

WEPS IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 2

Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination

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CASE STUDY: JMMB GROUP DEVELOPING A GRADUAL REINTEGRATION POLICY FOR NEW MOTHERS

LESSONS LEARNED

- Implementing a new policy successfully amid a pandemic proved it can operate at any other time.
- Women employees will want to stay at a company that treats them well and provides a gradual re-entry into the workplace while caring for a newborn baby.
- Communicating consistently with employees regarding the company's family-friendly vision and following through with policies to support it ensures that the company can attract top talent and retain its existing talent.
- A gradual reintegration policy opens areas for professional development for both female and male employees with positions, and for internal employees to operate in a higher role during the maternity leave and the reintegration period, and new candidates gain a chance to operate in entry-level positions.
- Finding ways to fill candidates in roles throughout the company requires creativity to make sure all areas are covered. Having leadership aligned with each reintegration plan ensures a smooth transition.

CONTEXT

JMMB Group is a financial group serving over 325,000 clients in the Caribbean, with locations in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic. JMMB Group has headquarters in Kingston, Jamaica.

In 1992, JMMB Group, co-founded by Joan Duncan and Noel Lyon, became the first money market broker in Jamaica. The

Group operates with a core value of love, grounded in Joan Duncan's desire for her company to treat all clients and employees with mutual respect, and to recognise diversity and embrace differences to achieve genuine togetherness. This core value of love and respect is embedded within all of the company's policies and activities. Over the course of 29 years, the core values have remained and underpinned JMMB Group's growth as it diversified its business lines to become a full-service financial services group, expanding beyond the shores of Jamaica.

In 2020, JMMB Group was comprised of 881 employees. Women made up 57 percent in the C-suite, 62 percent of managers, 64 percent in revenue-producing roles, and 71 percent in entry-level positions.

JMMB Group is a people-centered company, it treats all female and male employees fairly and maintains generous family-friendly policies. The company offers three months of paid maternity leave for mothers and a paternity leave plan of 15 days for fathers. Employees with children have access to subsidized childcare and on-site daycare facilities and lactation rooms in certain locations.

The company supports health and well-being initiatives for all female and male employees; this includes offering a certain number of hours of free counseling services at a local counseling center. Employees may visit counselors for personal or professional issues; all sessions are confidential so that employees can take advantage of this provision and remain anonymous to the company.

In 2019, JMMB Group created a gradual reintegration policy for female employees returning from maternity leave. Following maternity leave, female employees are still adjusting to managing a new baby/child and the expectations of work; thus, the gradual reintegration policy allows women returning from maternity leave to gradually increase working hours each month. This policy was implemented at the group-level in 2019; the first location to roll-out the policy in early 2020 was the Dominican Republic. As of 2020, JMMB Dominican Republic had 174 employees, with women representing 43 percent in the C-Suite, 63 percent of managers, 55 percent in revenue-producing roles, and 68 percent in entry-level positions.

In March 2020, JMMB Group signed the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) at the group-level, with plans to further its gender equality mandate and encourage partners to support its actions and be inspired to do the same.

ACTIONS

JMMB Group’s gradual reintegration policy applies to all female employees returning from maternity level at all levels of the company and within all roles. Initially, JMMB Group’s leadership

team was cautious in rolling out this policy, given the necessary costs and restructuring associated with its implementation. Once the policy was implemented, all leadership remained on board with the plan and its strong connection to the vision of the company. In 2020, during the first year of the policy’s roll-out in JMMB Dominican Republic, JMMB Group realized it can build upon lessons learned and offer recommendations to ensure a smooth roll-out of the policy in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

At JMMB Dominican Republic, Denisse Pichardo, the Country Chief General Services, Culture & Human Development Officer (CHDO), explained, “Once the policy was approved at group-level, I was ready to begin running it right away. In the Dominican Republic, we have an incredibly supportive Country Chief Officer. He is the father of three children, and he has always been very respectful and sensitive to [inclusive work arrangements].”

The timeline for the gradual reintegration policy covers the first four months when the mother returns to work. The work day increases by one-hour each month until the child is six months old. Following this transition period, the employee returns to a full-time work schedule.

Gradual reintegration policy timeline	
Baby age	No. hours of work per day
4 months	4 hours
5 months	5 hours
6 months	6 hours

JMMB Group’s Culture and Human Development Team (CHDT) monitors measures taken each time it receives a pregnancy notification from a team member, then the team member and their leader are informed of the policy. The CHDT supports team leaders with detailed implementation of the policy, according to the role of the team member; this includes establishing the support structure to cover the time of maternity leave, re-entry process and establishing targets for the period. Progress is monitored on an annual basis to measure success of the initiative.

In addition, short-term vacancies that are available because of maternity leave and half-time position that are available during the gradual reintegration offer an opportunity for internal candidates to fill the role in a higher level than they currently work. Employees who gain the chance to temporarily work in a leadership role can demonstrate their capabilities in this role and be considered for a similar position if available in the future. For instance, JMMB's Dominican Republic CHDO stated, "We had an employee who filled in for a management role that

was vacant for maternity leave. She proved to everyone that she was a high performer during this time. We are now waiting for another manager spot to open up and this employee will be the highly considered candidate to receive the position."

Open entry-level positions in the company become opportunities for newly recruited candidates to try out the role and equally be considered based on performance for an open position in the future.

Targets for the gradual reintegration policy	Year
Policy communicated throughout the entire organization and in all territories	May 2021
Policy modified to include specific instructions for implementation	May 2021
Team leaders trained in implementation basics of policy	May 2021
100% of women who are eligible have benefited from this policy throughout the year	March 2022

Key performance indicators
Number of women who have taken advantage of the policy / Number of women who qualify for the policy
Policy communicated to all team members through at least 3 different channels
All team leaders are trained in policy implementation and its implications
Performance of women and teams that have applied for the policy (according to adjusted targets for period)

Donna Duncan-Scott, JMMB Group's Executive Director of the CHDT, explained, "The company's vision which defines the company we want to be, sets the platform for our policies. Even the leadership team recognizes that there is an elevated level of enrolment in who we say we want to be; our policies are consistent with that [vision]." Donna also stated, "The company

is creating internal communication around JMMB Group's Vision of Love, giving employees the chance to see all our company programmes demonstrating core values. The goal is to re-engage the culture of the company and ensure employees know the benefits they can access."

TIMELINE



CHALLENGES

While rolling out the gradual reintegration policy for the first time, there were some roles that were a challenge to incorporate into the reintegration framework. For instance, a cashier who works specific hours each day requires creativity to manage, and leadership must be aligned to ensure a smooth transition between employees.

"The COVID-19 Pandemic impacted our internal processes; as we went digital in all possible aspects [of work], our team dynamics, through the implications of team members rotating and working from home, and even our work schedules, having to adapt to government regulations. It also affected our team members at an individual level, from having some [employees] being affected directly by the virus, as well as having others struggle with assuming new responsibilities at home, as all services, including children's education closed down."

During the pandemic, all female and male employees were able to shift to remote and/or flexible working arrangements, wherever possible. The company also implemented a wellness portal to address new needs emerging from the pandemic for

employees and their families, including resources for health and well-being.

The gradual reintegration policy was able to support mothers who had few alternatives for day care and/or lacked social support systems due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. JMMB Group also gave working mothers the opportunity to discuss the best options with their team leaders and arrange a working schedule and environment that was both safe and convenient for both mother and baby/child.

At the group level, JMMB Group sees a challenge down the road in finding the best way to implement the gradual reintegration policy for mothers who give birth to more than one child during their time with the company. The company plans to set a specific number of times the policy can be utilized for working mothers.

JMMB Group's Executive Director of the CHDT explained that, "In Jamaica, it is quite common for mothers to have up to three children or more. We are hoping to create an administrative element for this policy to make it [streamlined] for new mothers to go on leave and for leadership to be trained to implement the policy."

Filling different vacant positions that have specific hours each day, such as cashier

Align with leadership on the best plan to ensure a smooth transition and find creative solutions, such as hiring temporary workers to fill the position.

Finding ways to work a regular schedule around a new baby amid the pandemic and lockdowns

Women have the opportunity to discuss options with team leaders and arrange a working schedule and environment that is both safe and convenient for both mother and baby/child.

Identifying a policy that fits working mothers who have multiple children

JMMB Group is still evaluating parameters on the number of times that the gradual reintegration policy can be accessed by working mothers. Steps are being taken to creating an administrative element to streamline the process so leadership can assure a smooth transition.

RESULTS

Following the first year of implementing the gradual reintegration policy in JMMB Dominican Republic, the CHDT has received positive feedback from employees benefitting from this policy. Given the policy is still relatively new, the CHDT hopes to measure more specific results in coming years. JMMB Jamaica is hoping to implement this policy soon, building upon lessons learned and recommendations from JMMB Dominican Republic.

“A gradual reintegration after maternity leave is a game changer for women, their families and, therefore, society as a whole. It recognizes the mother’s stage in life [with a newborn] and supports her in the transition, integrating harmoniously into various aspects of her life. It respects the biological role that women have and supports them in being able to thrive in their career and goals they have chosen for themselves. This policy communicates, ‘we journey with you’ and ‘we stand for your greatness,’ both important values and promises we make to our team members and clients. This results in happier, more engaged and more productive team members.”

Communicating consistently with employees regarding the company’s vision and following through with policies to support it ensures that JMMB Group attracts top talent and retains existing talent. In 2020, no women resigned from the company, and JMMB Group believes that its supportive family-friendly and flexibility policies implemented amid the COVID-19 pandemic are related to this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For companies who plan to implement a similar policy, both Donna and Denisse emphasized that supporting women and working mothers is incredibly important. Families are the backbone of society and if the family is not taken care of companies have a responsibility to support employees with family-friendly policies.

“There are always reasons to drop the initiative, such as costs of logistics. As a company, we need to find some way to balance it all out. Even last year [amid the COVID-19 pandemic], it was so evident how much the traditional work lifestyle is not working for women, how much we [women] are stretched thin with work, family and caretaking responsibilities.”

ROLE OF WEPs

"The WEPs has made us more engaged with setting more intentional and challenging goals that target gender equality in the workplace. It holds us accountable for our commitment."

Denisse Pichardo,

JMMB Dominican Republic,
Country Chief General Services, CHDO

1 
PRINCIPLE

**High-level
corporate
leadership**

2 
PRINCIPLE

**Treat all women
and men fairly
at work without
discrimination**

3 
PRINCIPLE

**Employee health,
well-being and safety**

4 
PRINCIPLE

**Education and
training for career
advancement**

5 
PRINCIPLE

**Enterprise
development,
supply chain and
marketing practices**


6 
PRINCIPLE


**Community
initiatives
and advocacy**

7 
PRINCIPLE


**Measurement
and reporting**

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