

2025

Leave of Absence Employee Experience Report



This employee experience report is part of the 2025 State of Leave and Accommodations Report. If you would like a holistic view of leave and accommodations trends from both employers and employees, please download the full report today.

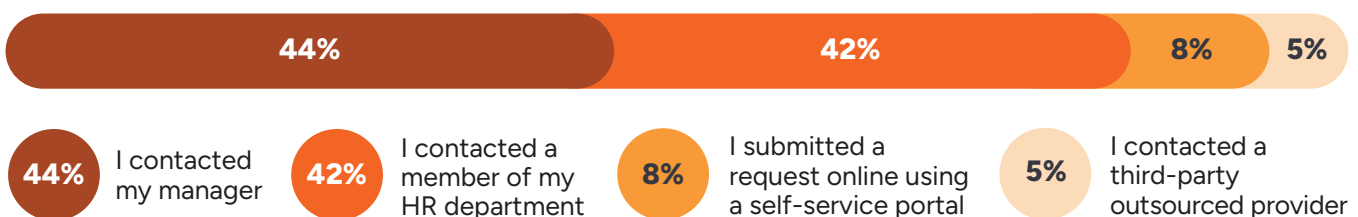
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Introduction

With leave rates on the rise, it's getting more difficult for HR to keep up with the administrative work of compliance and still deliver a supportive employee experience. But how an employer handles a leave of absence has a big impact on their relationship with that employee. For this report, we surveyed 600 full-time employees at companies with a workforce of 500 or more, who had also recently taken a leave of absence. We wanted to know how things are going for employees who need to take time away from work.

Among many other insights, we found that managers and supervisors are not only a key part of an employee's overall experience with a company—and they have an outsized impact on leave experiences as well. Close to half of the employees we surveyed (44%) report requesting leave from their manager. To make sure the right processes are followed for every request, it's important that organizations conduct regular trainings to keep managers up to date on what to do if an employee asks for leave.

For your most recent leave of absence, how did you request your leave?



Poor Leave Experiences Impact Loyalty and Retention

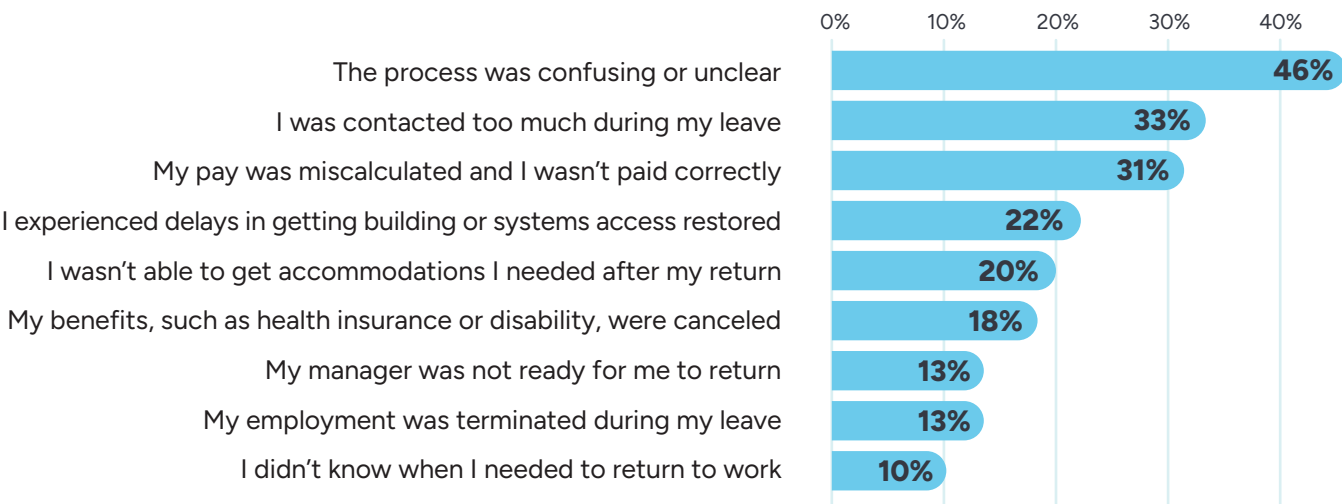
Whether it is to welcome a new child, recover from surgery, or manage serious mental health challenges, employees request leaves of absence at stressful times in their lives. If they have that stress compounded by confusing processes, issues with pay, or too much communication during their leave, it will damage their relationship with their employer.

A poor leave experience most often leads to a loss in company loyalty (51%), as well as a lack of motivation (42%) after they return to work. These experiences have an outsized impact on retention as well. Of those who reported a bad experience during their leave, 36% of respondents decided to look for a new job, and 14% quit altogether.

What impact did your poor leave experience have?



What caused you to feel that you had a poor leave experience?





Getting Pay Right During Leave

Nearly a third of respondents said that pay mistakes contributed to their poor leave experience. Here are a few self-reported anecdotes respondents shared with us.

My pay was miscalculated not by a small amount, but oh so large.

They made the process very difficult to get paid.

It was very confusing and I didn't get paid at all.

I was not paid for three days of my leave due to miscalculation.

It was a very unclear experience, and it was hard for me to receive my pay.



Good Leave Experiences Boost Motivation and Productivity

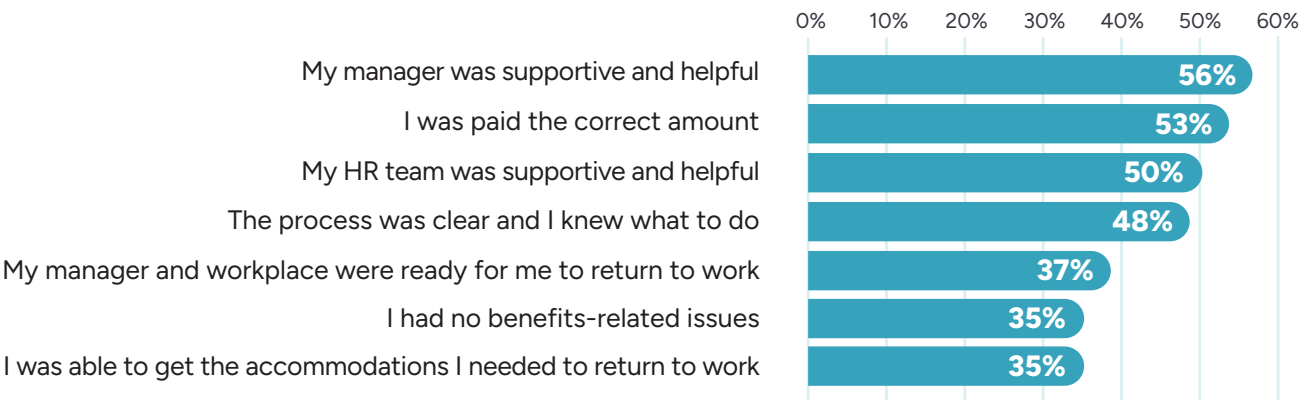
We've seen earlier that bad leave experiences can be devastating to employee-employer relationships. But a good leave experience can have the opposite effect. Employees that are given the time away from work to manage life's challenges are more motivated (55%) and productive (50%) when they return. Nearly half (47%) report increased workplace loyalty, and even a willingness to encourage others to come work with them (41%).

To ensure a good experience, just getting the basics right can go a long way. Having a clear process and making sure employees are paid accurately are key drivers of a positive experience. It's also important to have a work culture that is supportive of employees taking leave, and that those values extend to HR and frontline managers.

What impact did your positive leave experience have?



What caused you to feel that you had a good or positive leave experience?









In Their Own Words

In our survey, we gave the respondents an opportunity to share their experiences with their leave of absence. Many of the responses fell into several broad areas of focus that shed light on the current employee experiences with leave. It also highlights areas that employers can focus on to improve their own process to drive employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention.









The Importance of the Leave Process

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Good Experiences

-  The process was simple and smooth, which makes it much better and less stressful. It lets you know your boss and your company have your back and best interests in mind.
-  The process was flawless and helped with the mental stress of the circumstances.
-  The process for obtaining a leave of absence was well-streamlined. It was an easy process to apply and receive my leave. I was kept up to date on any information I needed to provide before and during my leave.
-  The whole process was easy and everyone was super helpful. It helped me feel confident taking my leave.
-  I just had overall support and it was easy and a breeze to take the leave of absence when it was needed due to a family emergency and a death in the family. They showed me nothing but respect.
-  My leave reason was not something I hope anyone has to go through but I am glad my workplace handled it right.

Bad Experiences

-  It was a very difficult process and not done efficiently by my employer.
-  It was a really confusing process.
-  I wish the person who guided me knew the policy and interpretation.
-  Nothing was in order in the process. It seemed like what should have been asked up front, early on, was instead requested towards the middle or end.
-  HR could have more clear, concise instructions on the forms I needed to complete beforehand. Instead, they contacted me while I was on my leave to fill out some forms they forgot I needed to fill out.
-  My HR department was not very helpful with paperwork, and I had to figure that out on my own.
-  There is a lot of red tape you have to get through at work. I really wish it was all approved much faster.
-  The paperwork process was horrible and paperwork kept getting lost. And then I would have to get it and fill it out again. Awful.



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The Impact of HR, Managers, and Third-Party Administrators (TPAs)

Good Experiences

-  I had a great leave experience. The most memorable part was how kind HR was. I genuinely felt like they cared about me. They took the time to explain everything so well and were extremely patient.
-  My manager was totally understanding about my new family situation.
-  My boss and those in the HR department were understanding and respectful.
-  My company's HR department and my supervisor made the whole process feel less stressful.
-  I left to take care of a family member in another state. I was given enough time off and returned to work when I could. HR and my manager were very kind and helpful when I requested my leave.
-  My manager was super empathetic and helpful.
-  My leave of absence is a spur of a moment call. It's when my health knocks me to the ground. When my manager is supportive, it is less stressful.
-  My leave experience was smooth, with clear communication and support from the team.

Bad Experiences

-  My supervisor wasn't very sympathetic, which didn't help the situation.
-  It was horrible, HR suggested quitting my job.
-  My illness was a horrible experience, and my interactions with the third-party provider as well as my manager's response made the whole thing much worse.
-  My HR department leaves most of the work of planning a leave on the employee. I wish they would help us in our time of need.
-  I wish it was easier to speak with HR to answer questions.
-  My manager and HR kept calling me, asking when I was coming back to work.
-  Third-party companies contracted by my company are confusing and do not have detailed processes laid out.
-  I had to deal with a third-party for my leave. It would have been nice to have an in-house leave person to deal with instead.



The Importance of Return-to-Work Programs

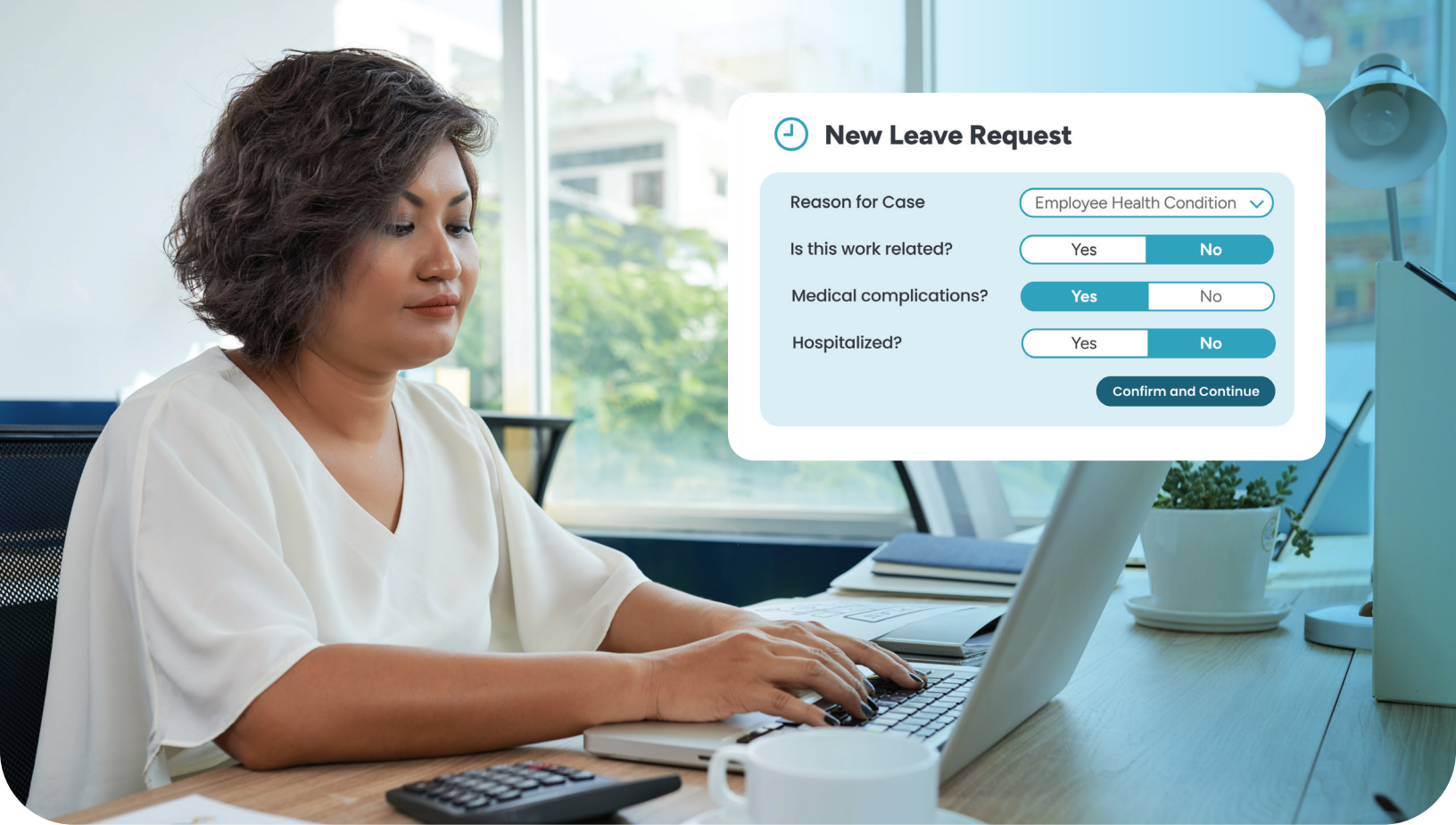
Good Experiences

- 👍 During my leave I was able to recuperate and get myself physically ready to go back to work.
- 👍 The other staff knew when I was returning from leave and were supportive.
- 👍 I felt like a needed team member who was wanted and cared for.
- 👍 I had a very good experience with no issues and when I returned it was totally normal. I wish everyone got this and all workplaces had these policies to help those that really need it sometimes in life.
- 👍 I felt at ease not worrying about getting fired for being human.
- 👍 The process of requesting leave was simple and quick, it felt good to get back to work when it was over.

Bad Experiences

- 👎 I didn't feel fully recovered enough to return to work.
- 👎 My manager contacted me multiple times during my leave of absence but couldn't tell me when to return to work.
- 👎 My return was delayed because they lost my paperwork. They mailed the paperwork to me and I filled it out and dropped it off. They then somehow misplaced it, so I had to refill it out. It delayed me a couple of days getting back to work.
- 👎 I would have preferred to have had additional accommodations after returning to work.
- 👎 I could have used better return to work information. I kinda just got thrown back out there.
- 👎 My return was delayed a few days due to paperwork issues.





New Leave Request

Reason for Case

Employee Health Condition 

Is this work related?

Yes

No

Medical complications?

Yes

No

Hospitalized?

Yes

No

Confirm and Continue

Employees Want Modern, Streamlined Experiences

Good Experiences



It was simple and worry-free. I was also able to submit all the documentation and observe my leave progress for the duration online.



I think my company's online portal was very useful.



It couldn't have gone more smoothly. Once I put in the request, everything was handled within an hour, and I felt respected and valued.

Bad Experiences



It would have been nice to handle my leave online and not over the phone.



I think the leave process would be easier if I could apply from anywhere. Then you could get your leave status more easily with mobile notifications.



I wish the request process could be clearer and easier to apply.



My workplace should use an HR software to automate the process.



I would have liked a more streamlined processes for submitting and tracking leave requests.

Conclusion

If your organization is struggling to provide positive employee leave experiences, it's never been a better time to look at the many ways technology can help. In the 2025 State of Leave and Accommodations, the top change HR managers reported wanting to make to their leave programs was improved technology. Employee respondents in this report confirmed that streamlined, modern processes were key to good leave experiences.

From automated notifications to text messaging and self-service portals, AbsenceSoft can provide the tools your HR team needs to improve the leave experience—for employees and HR teams.



To see AbsenceSoft in action, [schedule a demo](#) with a CLMS-certified specialist today.

For in-depth articles, webinars, and guides on everything leave and accommodations, visit our [Resource Center](#). Our in-house experts have curated a wealth of resources to help you improve the way you manage leave and accommodations.

