

# Employee Return to Work Checklist:

Covering the Basics for Leave Managers  
and HR Teams



# The Growing Importance of Return-to-Work Processes

More companies are offering new and innovative paid leave programs to attract talent every year. With more employees requesting and going on leave, having a streamlined and supportive leave process is critical for a great employee experience. One part of the process that is particularly important to focus on is how employees return from their leaves of absence.

In a recent survey, we asked employees who had recently taken a leave of absence about their experiences. At least one in 10 reported problems with their return to work, including:

- delays in getting access to buildings and systems
- a manager who wasn't prepared for their first day back
- restoring benefits and proper pay rates

## How Return to Work Preparation Impacts Leave Experiences

### Negative Experience

*"It was just horrible. They canceled my benefits. They also kept calling during my scheduled time off. Then, when I got back, **no one was ready for my return.**"*

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*"It felt unfair that the pressure was on me to continue to **return before my leave was officially over.** I should not have been contacted as often as I was (or at all), while I was out."*

### Positive Experience

*"My company **had a clear plan** for returning to work."*

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*"When I got back to work from my leave, my teammates and manager welcomed me back right away. This made me feel really good, to be **back as part of a team.**"*

Once an employee goes out on a leave, it's easy to lose track of them. Especially with longer leaves, such as parental or bonding time, employees can become "out of sight, out of mind." That's why it's important to have a clear policy and process in place for an employee's return to work.

## There are many benefits to improving your return-to-work program, including:



### Improved employee experience, satisfaction, and retention

With a clear process for returning to work, employees don't struggle with added stress during a challenging time in their lives. By making it easy for them to know what to expect and that the organization will be ready for their return, you are showing employees that you value both their time and experience.



### Ensuring compliance with laws and regulations

With FMLA, ADA, and state leave laws, it's important to understand what protections employees have while out on leave. If someone needs more leave than what they initially requested and received, it's important to have a process that helps them fully understand their options under federal laws, state programs, and company policies.



### Saving on recruitment costs and avoiding complaints

It's important to make sure your return-to-work process brings employees back to work at just the right time. For employees, it can boost morale, help people recover by "getting back into the swing of things," and help them feel valued. In addition, when people come back from leave the right way, you don't have to recruit and train their replacement. You can avoid complaints and workers' compensation requests by making sure everyone – the employee, the manager, and their colleagues, are all healthy and prepared for the return to work.

# Employee Return to Work Checklist

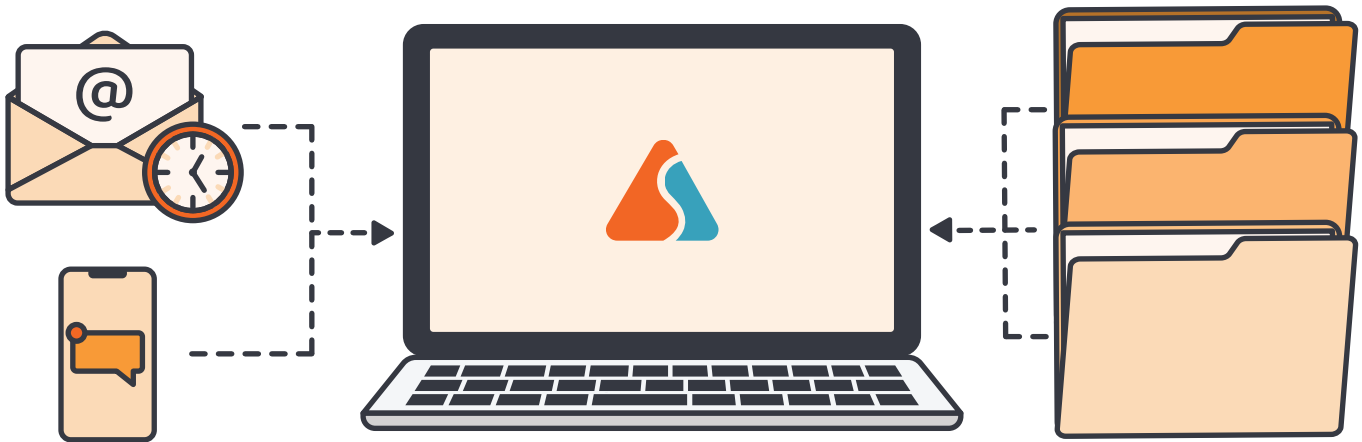
**If you are ready to create or improve your organization's return to work program, here is a quick checklist to review.**

- ☐ Communicate all expectations of your process to the employee, including the expected time and date of return, before they return to work. You can use text, email, or mail, or a combination of the three to make sure you communicated what they need to do in writing so they can refer to it later.
- ☐ Take the time to fully identify the essential functions of the employee's role by reviewing their job description. You can talk to the manager or supervisor if you need to.
- ☐ Understand any restrictions or limitations the employee may have before they return to work, even if they are temporary.
- ☐ Reach out to the employee to discuss, evaluate, and finalize any accommodations they might need before returning to work.
- ☐ Review any relevant leave of absence guidelines and laws, depending on the kind of leave they are taking.
- ☐ Notify the employee's manager or supervisor of the date the employee will return to work. Make sure they understand any restrictions or limitations the employee has. Communicate any requirements the manager needs to fulfill.
- ☐ Notify IT and any other department of the date the employee will return to work to ensure all required access and permissions are restored.
- ☐ Request, gather, and store any necessary medical releases.
- ☐ Keep the employee notified of any relevant updates to the organization or their role before they return to work.

# How Technology Helps

Looking at the checklist above, it's easy to see how much time it can take to ensure a smooth return to work for every employee that goes on leave. Leave technology like AbsenceSoft can help streamline your return-to-work process, giving each employee a smooth, streamlined experience without spending hours your HR team doesn't have. With AbsenceSoft you can:

- Automate communications to go out at certain times throughout the leave process
- Quickly create and send custom communications
- Track time taken and return to work dates
- Use the guided interactive process to determine and track accommodations
- Notify managers, employees, IT, and others automatically via email or text
- Centrally record and store medical releases and other important documents



To learn more about how AbsenceSoft can improve your return-to-work program, **[schedule a demo today.](#)**