2020 Innovative Initiatives Case Study

MassMutual

Challenge

Early in the pandemic, MassMutual recognized the added stress COVID-19 was creating for employees, especially working moms and their families. The company learned that the biggest stressors female employees faced was the ability to effectively balance their work and personal lives, whether it was caring for elderly loved ones, helping children with school, or taking time for themselves while still maintaining commitments at work. Recognizing that work–life balance is an ongoing issue for women in the workplace, it quickly became clear that the pandemic was compounding the problem.

Action

MassMutual took a holistic approach to alleviate stress for its employees. New and enhanced programs were introduced at the company, with many focused on addressing mental health for female employees navigating the “new normal.”

- Increased the number of available Employee Assistance Program (EAP) sessions from six to 10. Brought wellness offerings into the home, providing ways to keep employees’ “minds and bodies healthy,” including online fitness classes, webinars dedicated to dealing with stress, meditation programs, as well as virtual yoga, stretch breaks, 5Ks, and more.
- Provided employees with up to 80 hours of additional paid time-off related to COVID-19, not limiting it to those who got the virus or were taking care of children or loved ones, although those circumstances applied.

Results

MassMutual saw a 40% increase in EAP use in Q2 and Q3 2020. Furthermore, its Well-Being Pulse Survey results and All-Employee Engagement Survey results showed favorable trends and positive feedback in how the company supported employees during the pandemic. With a benchmark of 92%, 98% of employees who took the survey said MassMutual responded effectively to the pandemic. 80% of MassMutual's self-identified women have taken COVID time off, compared to 67% of self-identified men. COVID time off usage by employees with and without children is at the same level of 73%. These numbers indicate that the additional benefit proved helpful to most.
What advice would you give other 100% Talent Compact Signers as they continue to support and advance women in their organizations during COVID-19?

MassMutual provides the best flexibility for all our employees, and managers continue to work closely with their direct reports to provide them with time off during the pandemic to address personal-life challenges associated with this time of remote work and overstretched responsibilities. We suggest other organizations consider providing additional leave for employees to allow them to be successful in their current roles while taking care of situations that may arise at home. We believe it’s best to retain strong talent by meeting their needs instead of forcing them out of the workforce with stringent workday policies.

We’ve done an amazing job at addressing mental health and physical wellbeing during the pandemic. Consider increasing your EAP or similar programs so your employees can receive the help they may need during these difficult times. We know that the pandemic is leading to a surge of mental health issues across America, and it’s important for workplaces to provide these types of resources.

Inclusive Benefits & Leave Programs: We also emphasize with employees that the benefits are completely inclusive. All benefits provided during this time were designed for any employee to use, regardless of their family makeup. In addition to the time-off/general leave, we expanded our Caregiver Leave program by offering two weeks paid leave to attend to a loved one experiencing a serious health condition.

Manager Mindsets: While our benefits continue to evolve, especially as our work life gets back to “normal,” we will challenge our managers to focus on providing their teams with flexibility so they feel supported and can be successful.

What has it meant for MassMutual to be a Compact Signer?

Becoming a Compact Signer allows MassMutual to align to BWWC’s goals and contribute towards the Women's Pay Equity goals the City of Boston set forth. The goals of the BWWC guide MassMutual in our efforts to support women across employers/industries. We are able to share tactics to help drive systemic change, not only in MassMutual but with the Council as well. We share best practices and help push for broader change that allows women more equity in Massachusetts and beyond.