

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND WHEN SOMEONE IN MY TEAM MAKES A REQUEST FOR A CAREER BREAK?



Jim Day, You HR Consultancy's HR Manager, recently set sail to fulfil a lifelong ambition to travel around the world. You HR describes the process followed to address this request for a career break:

In November 2018 Jim commenced working with You HR Consultancy. At interview stage Jim had informed You HR that he was taking part in Level 1 training and was planning to take part in the Clipper Round the World Race in August 2019. Jim discussed with You HR that it had been a long held ambition to take part and so the process began to progress this request as a supportive employer.

In managing this request, You HR needed to confirm whether a Sabbatical or Career Break (see below) was appropriate to be applied and address the business consequences relating to Jim's prospective 'extended absence'. You HR followed best practice and it's policy in discussing the request in detail with Jim, reviewing its resource requirements in managing the absence and it's future personnel requirements during and post Jim's return.

You HR looked at whether Jim was eligible to apply for a break and worked through the systematic process stages. You HR conducted a review of Jim's portfolio of work commitments that would require resourcing to ensure client delivery was maintained, backfilling options explored and finally reviewed the overall delivery structure within the team. Detailed discussions progressed and the terms and conditions of his career break were agreed.

You HR then supported Jim's desire to take on this personal challenge and agreed to a Career Break and wished him 'bon voyage' when he finally set sail in August 2019.



Best practice for organisations to follow :

- It is good practice to ensure that different groups of staff are not discriminated against when considering all requests for career breaks/ sabbaticals – e.g. part-time employees must be given the same consideration as their full-time counterparts. All applications must be considered fairly and equally.
- Have a policy and process in place to cover Career Breaks/ Sabbaticals or any other type of flexible working entitlement you offer;
- Have a process that details how to apply, the timeframe for making a request and who is responsible for what in the process;
- Consistently apply an equitable eligibility criteria for all requests;
- Discuss all requests on a case-by-case basis and ensure your employee gives details of their request in writing, including their anticipated length of break;
- Agree how it will affect terms and conditions of employment, e.g. will continuity of employment, benefits and entitlements be preserved, will the employee return to the same job afterwards;
- Ensure communication and engagement during the absence period / flexible working, is maintained;
- Any agreement reached should always be detailed in writing.



Career Break v Sabbatical: Spot The Difference

- There is no employment law specifically dealing with taking a sabbatical or career break. It is at employers discretion;
- Both relate to periods of time that is taken out by an employee from employment;
- A **Sabbatical** is an agreed amount of time off employment. The usual elements of a job, such as being paid and pension contributions, may be suspended for the duration of the sabbatical. The employee has the security of returning back to the job at the end of the sabbatical;
- Employees on a **Career Break** will usually have their normal employee benefits (pay/ pension contributions) unpaid during the duration of the break;
- A **Career Break** is when an employee normally resigns from their job often with agreement they can return, assuming nothing has significantly changed in the meantime.

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) definition, "sabbaticals usually involve the employee taking a period of time and these can vary in length, and are dependent on wider company policies, and the personal agreement made between an individual employee and their employer. A sabbatical is normally over and above an employee's normal annual leave entitlement."

Business Benefits:

- ✓ Allowing their employees to grow
- ✓ Increase retention of employees
- ✓ Offered as a benefit / reward
- ✓ Help bring new skills and motivate employees
- ✓ Improve confidence, communication and planning skills in workforce
- ✓ Realise the importance of the individual employee in absence and presence
- ✓ Potential financial savings
- ✓ Ability to plan resource requirements and grow aspiring leaders as part of succession planning



Employee Benefits:

- ✓ Feeling valued and rewarded when a request is granted
- ✓ Commitment and sense of security with employer is strengthened
- ✓ Benefit to individuals mental wellbeing
- ✓ Helps improve family relationships
- ✓ Develop new life skills
- ✓ Improved adaptiveness to change and planning skills
- ✓ Reflect and develop long term goals
- ✓ Improved motivation and productivity
- ✓ Enhancing career aspirations
- ✓ Improved confidence



For SME or NfP employers needing advice, support and guidance relating to managing all flexible working requests You HR Consultancy are able to offer your organisation the support it requires for all it's people matters.

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