

Hiring

Hiring Pregnant Women

by Christina Bielaszka-DuVernay

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Would you hire a pregnant woman?

If you're British and said yes, then you're decidedly in the minority among your peers. A recent survey by the UK-based Employment Law Advisory Services (ELAS) found that only 5% of managers would offer a job to a pregnant candidate. Fifty-two percent said that when making a hire, they assessed the likelihood of a candidate's getting pregnant, taking into account her age and whether she had recently married.

On this side of the pond, last year the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission saw a 14% increase in pregnancy-discrimination complaints and received 20,400 pregnancy-bias inquiries at its newly established call center.

I understand managers wanting to avoid the costs and inconveniences of hiring someone who in several months' time will be on leave, whether for 12 weeks and unpaid — standard terms in almost all U.S. states for women who work for companies with more than 50 employees — or for much longer and at partial pay (UK law allows women to take up to 52 weeks, with some pay). But at the

same time I wonder how many managers consider that, in passing over pregnant candidates, they might be missing out on long-term value in the form of intense employee loyalty?

The manager who hired me did so when I was eight months' pregnant, and my company treated my leave the same as anyone else's (paying me a certain percentage of my salary for a certain number of weeks), although it wasn't bound by law to do so.

The effect on me as an employee? I was in **l-o-v-e**: with the job, with my boss, with the organization. I worked at work, and then I went home and worked some more, wherever I could wedge it in: in the evening between feedings, on weekends, and during holidays. I even pulled a few all-nighters for big projects, compensating for the caffeine intake by giving my infant a bottle instead of nursing him at his next feeding. And rarely, if ever, did this feel burdensome. I was just paying my boss and my company back.

My story has a happy ending. What about yours? Please share your stories, from both sides of the interview table:

- Have you ever passed over a candidate who was pregnant? Do you have regrets or do you think you made the right choice?
- Did you ever hire a pregnant candidate against the subtle or not-so-subtle advice of colleagues?
- Were you passed over for a job or promotion because of pregnancy?
- Were you hired when you were obviously pregnant? What effect, if any, did that have on your workplace performance?
- And the big one: Do you believe that different countries' maternity-leave laws affect whether pregnant women get hired in the first place?

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