

## CASE STUDY:

# The NICU Mom Who is Paying Her Benefits Forward

## Johanna Sim

- Milton, New Hampshire, 36 years old
- Talent Program Manager at Bobbie
- One 15-month-old son

### HER JOB:

She is the project manager for the people team of this rapidly growing organic baby formula company.

### PARENT SUPPORTS SHE HAS USED:

- NICU leave
- Maternity leave
- Return-to-work program
- Flexible work location and time
- Babysitting service membership

## Johanna's Story

Jo thought that getting pregnant would be the hard part. Living in rural New Hampshire, she had to drive an hour, daily, to and from the fertility clinic while working full-time. But that nerve-wracking time and the happy pregnancy that resulted were, "an extremely supportive journey," thanks to the culture and flexible work policies of her employer, the baby formula company Bobbie.

Then, one evening around 27 weeks, Jo went to throw in some laundry, and her water broke. Almost overnight, she and her husband became parents to a medically complex little boy. Also overnight, Bobbie put into place a NICU leave policy so that Jo could have the extra time she would need in addition to her maternity leave, not instead of it. "We were living in a new reality, but I never felt any pressure about my role or my pay," says Jo. The eight months away from work that followed were a full-time job. As a medical mom she was often woken



during the night not just to feed her baby, but by calls from nurses about life-threatening events. And once Baby R. came home, Jo spent the days of her maternity leave chasing every bill, and every lab culture, therapist and provider so that her son could get the best ongoing care.

These days, Jo is back at work, more capable and engaged than ever. And, even with a baby with ongoing medical needs whom she lovingly calls, "my biggest direct report," she is proud to have, "returned ready to show up as the full, professional version of myself." In this new season of life, Jo has led new talent initiatives, managed Bobbie's parental leave program, and shared her story widely, elevating Bobbie as a brand and further fueling its mission to serve its new-parent customers. "I never thought anything related to my life would go viral," Jo says. "But this is part of my identity now and my work. I'm so, so proud." →

**"When my boss shared the new policy, I pulled over my car and cried with relief. I knew we could keep our house. I knew I could keep my job. I knew I would still have time to bond with my baby."**

### She grew her skills while on leave.

Jo says that all of those insurance calls while on leave elevated her skills. “If I could get the state to reimburse our driving miles to the NICU, I can get people to meet their deadlines,” she says. “I just feel like I can really do anything now. I’m unstoppable.”



### She’s more engaged than ever.

“I was texting with my boss about how appreciative I was for all the support,” recalls Jo. “I said, ‘Consider me retained,’ and she was like, ‘that’s not even the point—it’s the right thing to do.’” But doing the right thing didn’t just retain Jo, it made her more committed than ever. Now, back at the job on Bobbie’s people team, Jo sees the impact of generous family leave from the recruiting side, too: “Our recruiter is always sharing that family benefits are the number-one question people are asking. It’s what draws them to apply, and it’s part of our pitch.” The cost of losing an employee like Jo would be at least 33% of her salary. Additionally, employees like Jo who find greater meaning in their work also generate an additional \$9,078 per worker per year.

### She’s bringing lived expertise and perspective to her job.

“Ironically or unironically, I manage our parental leave program,” says Jo. Having gone through it, she’s keenly aware of nuances in policy, making sure, “every little detail is cared for”—a complicated task with a largely remote workforce in states with different leave laws. She also now oversees manager training and rolled out a leadership development framework to empower all of her colleagues to lead authentically, too. “My generation has stripped away hustle culture,” says Jo, who sees ambition as intrinsically tied to values. “Who we are being as people for our people is at the forefront. Being a leader isn’t just things like hitting a sales goal. It’s who you are every single day.” Research shows that when employees know their specialized skills are valued, they experience a 3.5% increase in their productivity, and a culture of authenticity yields a 14% increase in productivity, too.

### She inspired a PR jackpot.

With Jo’s permission, Bobbie has shared her story in the media to normalize NICU leave and the unintended result has further developed their thought leadership. Glowing coverage at the time included Fortune, Forbes, CNBC, YahooFinance, and a more recent “Take Our Leave” open-sourcing of the full policy has garnered even more press. Thought leadership like this has been shown to have a 14x R.O.I. And the estimated industry value of that earned media coverage is \$345,000.

## Calculating the employer’s estimated R.O.I. on benefits she used in the past year

#### INVESTMENTS

16 weeks of paid maternity leave (calculated using the midpoint of a company salary range): **\$30,769.23**

16 weeks of NICU leave: **\$30,769.23**

Premium babysitter service membership, estimated: **\$150**

**One-Year Investment** **\$61,688.46**

#### RETURNS

Retention savings: **\$33,333.33**

Meaning-driven productivity increase: **\$9,078**

Specialized skill and authenticity-driven productivity increase: **\$17,500**

PR and thought leadership value: **\$345,000**

**One-Year Savings** **\$404,911.33**

**5.6x R.O.I.**