

The Hidden Cost of Getting Leave Wrong



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Today's Agenda

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- 2 Challenges Leave Managers and Programs are Facing Today
- 3 Key Drivers and Trends Impacting Requests
- 4 Leave Compliance Challenges in 2026
- 5 Accommodations Compliance Challenges in 2026
- 6 Improving Compliance with the Right Technology

Meet Your Speaker



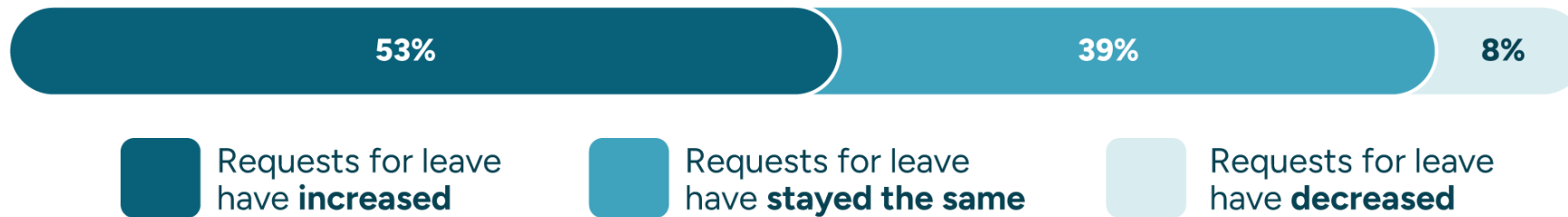
Seth Turner **Founder and Senior Advisor** AbsenceSoft

Seth Turner founded AbsenceSoft 12 years ago after many years in the leave management space at Mercer and Reed Group. Seth and the founding team built AbsenceSoft to give HR the tools to manage leave and accommodations with confidence and care. The platform blends compliance across the FMLA, ADA, PWFA, and 200+ state leave laws into a deeply human approach. Today, he is a thought leader and frequent speaker at conferences, webinars, and in the press, sharing practical strategies for program design, process improvement, and the significant business impact that comes from managing leave and accommodations the right way.

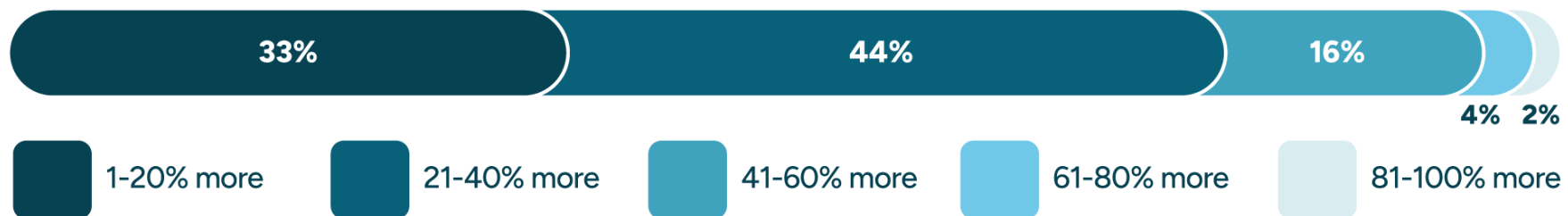
Challenges Leave Managers and Programs are Facing Today

Leave Requests Continue to Rise

Has the number of requests for employee leaves of absence changed in the past year?

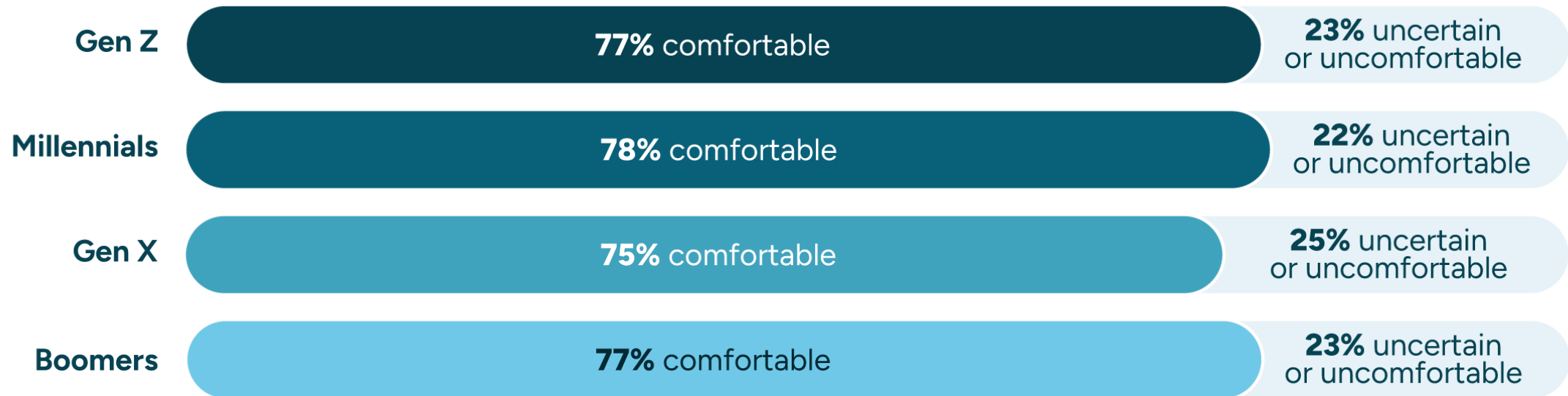


What increase in leave requests has your organization seen in the past year?



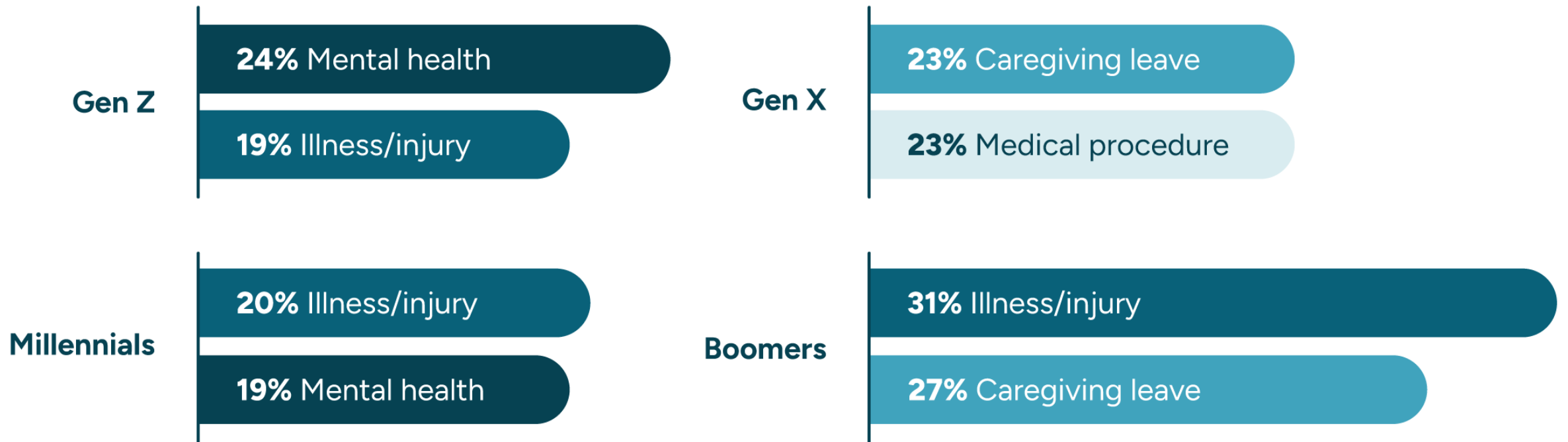
Workforces are Comfortable Asking for Leave

Every generation is comfortable asking for leave:



Generational Needs Drive Leave Case Complexity

The reasons for leave differ across generations:



Key Leave Management Challenges in 2026

41%

Ensuring compliance with FMLA



38%

Managing intermittent leave & reduced schedules



35%

Tracking & reporting leave usage



32%

Delivering a positive employee experience



32%

Communication guidelines with employees on leave



32%

Accurately calculating payroll for employees on leave



31%

Calculating eligibility for leave entitlements



26%

Managing state leave policies with a distributed workforce



Key Employer Goals for Leave Programs

61%

Employee well-being and work-life balance

55%

Better retention and less turnover

51%

Better employee experience and support

The Human Cost of Getting Leave Wrong

The Business Impacts of Bad Leave Experiences

Poor Retention

50%

decided to look for a new job or quit instead of returning



Reduced Motivation

42%

were less motivated after returning



Lower Productivity

22%

felt less productive after returning



In Their Own Words: The Impact of Bad Leave Experiences



"I would have changed everything about my leave. It wasn't that good and I would quit the job if given the chance."



"I wished it seemed as if they cared and not immediately like I was causing a problem or met with a sense of disbelief. I quit."

Caregivers in Particular Pose a Retention Challenge

40%

of caregivers leave the workforce due to caregiving demands

FAMILY AND PARENTAL LEAVE BENEFITS

IBI Leave Benchmarking Survey



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BENEFITS
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The Business Impacts of Good Leave Experiences

More Motivation

55%

were more motivated
after returning



Productivity Gains

50%

felt more productive
after returning



Loyalty Boost

47%

felt more loyal to their
employer



In Their Own Words: The Impact of Good Leave Experiences



“The process was so smooth that I believe and trust my company more now.”



“I honestly can say that my leave experience was handled with empathy and professionalism. I am grateful for the company I work for and I think they could be an example for other companies looking to revamp their leave policy.”

Paid Leave Benefits Can Drive Recruitment and Retention

74%

of employers who offered
paid leave benefits saw
improvements in recruitment
and retention

**FAMILY AND
PARENTAL LEAVE
BENEFITS**



IBI Leave Benchmarking Survey



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The Risks and Costs of FMLA Non-Compliance

Paperwork, Pay, and Process Issues are Common

47%

reported paperwork
and deadline issues



44%

had issues with pay
and benefits



32%

said the process was
confusing or unclear



21%

experienced
problematic delays



Top Compliance Issues Employer Struggle With

38%

of employers struggle with tracking intermittent leave

35%

of employers report issues tracking leave usage overall

31%

of employers report problems calculating eligibility

16%

of employees who took a leave recently report lost hours or responsibilities, demotions, or getting let go

Managers are a Risk Factor

52%

of employees
requested leave by
asking their manager
in 2025

AbsenceSoft 2026 State of Leave and
Accommodations

89%

of managers do
NOT have basic FMLA
competency



IBI Leave Literacy Survey

FMLA Compliance Risks

Missed deadlines

Not adhering to the 5-day notice requirement, risking DOL complaints

Eligibility errors

At scale, manual calculations can easily lead to mistakes

Intermittent FMLA tracking challenges

Sporadic absences get lost when volume is high

Incomplete documentation

Teams might miss follow-ups and inadvertently create audit exposure

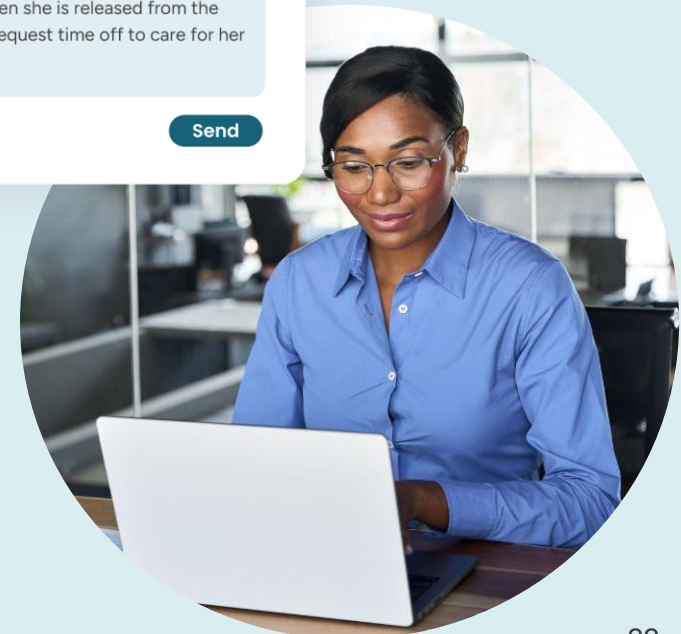
Requests fall through the cracks

When HR teams are overloaded with request volume, they may not be able to open, track, or respond to cases in a timely manner

To: HRteam@company.com
CC: Manager@company.com
Subject: Request for FMLA Leave

Hi HR Team,
My mother has recently become ill and will need extensive home care when she is released from the hospital. I would like to request time off to care for her beginning next month.

Send



Costs for Getting it Wrong

**\$10,000 -
\$50,000**

Award for **minor**
FMLA violations

**\$80,000 -
\$300,000**

Award for **severe**
FMLA violations

\$1 million+

Award for **egegius**
FMLA violations

According to BlueStone Law
<https://bluestone.law/fmla-lawsuit-settlement-amounts>

State Leave Compliance Costs

Managers Don't Understand State Programs

17%

manager literacy on state paid family leave, even in states with established programs

60%

of managers do not receive formal training on multi-state requirements, directly causing administrative errors

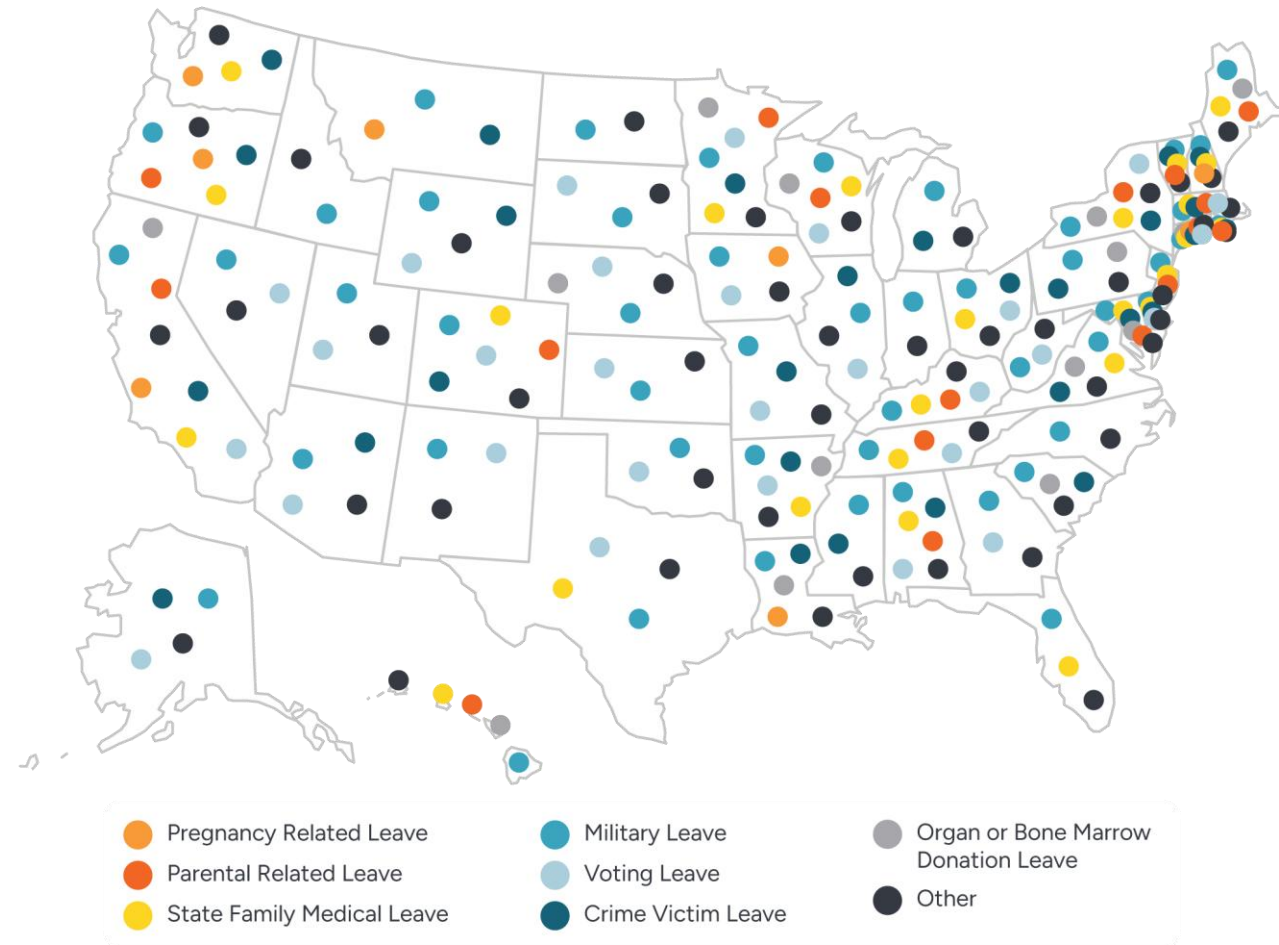


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The Evolving Landscape of State Leave Laws

- Mandatory paid leave programs have been enacted in **13 states and the District of Columbia**. Three states have upcoming programs but are not yet effective.
- An **additional nine states** have voluntary systems that provide paid family leave through private insurance.
- Most of these state laws provide parental and family caregiving leave.



How HR is Managing State Leave Laws Today

41%

are managing state
laws manually

1 in 10

report struggling without a
solution implemented

State Leave Law Compliance Challenges

Tracking multiple state laws

Managing employees across states means juggling different eligibility rules, benefit amounts, and notice requirements

Missing state-specific deadlines

Each state has unique timelines for approvals, denials, and documentation that are easy to miss at high volume

Calculating overlapping entitlements

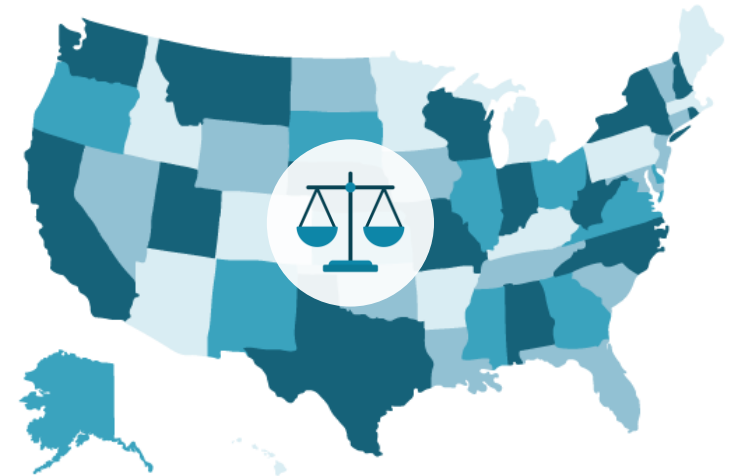
Coordinating FMLA, state leave, and company policies for the same event creates complexity and calculation errors

Staying current with rapid changes

New state laws pass constantly, and it is a challenge to manually keep up with updated forms and requirements

Inconsistent employee experience

Without centralized tracking, employees in different states get different levels of support and communication



The Cost to HR Teams Themselves

HR teams could burn out

Caseloads are compounding, and the people managing the crisis risk becoming part of it

Costly compliance mistakes could happen

Missed deadlines and skipped steps become inevitable when volume outpaces capacity

The human side of HR could disappear

When every hour goes to admin triage, there's nothing left for the work that actually matters

Experienced HR professionals could walk out the door

Chronic overload pushes the people who know the most out of the roles that need them most

How Technology Helps Get Leave Right

What Employees Say Would Make a Better Experience

45%

wanted self-service portals and text messaging

46%

want to manage the entire process from a mobile device

27%

want faster decisions and follow-up

“Definitely would be easier to do everything from my phone, through a company website portal, or something instead of filling out paperwork.”



Key Technology: A Compliance Engine

Intelligent technology + legal advisement power an engine that **calculates eligibility instantly for more than 200+ leave laws**

Supports **process-based compliance** with:

- The right forms and notices pre-generated and attached to communications, for every applicable law
- Automation to ensure the notice is sent with the right information within the right time windows
- Centralized storage of every communication, interaction, and decision easily retrievable in the event of an audit



Personalized Leave Intake

- Employee self-service portal allows employees to request leave, from any device at any time
- Employees are walked through entering every piece of information needed to reduce burden on HR
- Each request goes directly into a centralized platform
- Even if an employee calls or emails directly, HR can use the platform to open a case in seconds with pre-filled employee data



Instant Calculation of Eligibility & Entitlements

- Eligibility and entitlements are automatically and instantly calculated
- Integrations with HR systems of record ensure decisions are based on accurate and current data
- Calculations account for different entitlements, locations, and any custom policies that apply
- Automate the communications of decisions via text and email
- Track and decrement time automatically as leaves are requested and approved

Reason for Case

Pregnancy/Maternity Illness or Injury

Bonding Voting Leave

Military COVID 19

Expected Case Dates

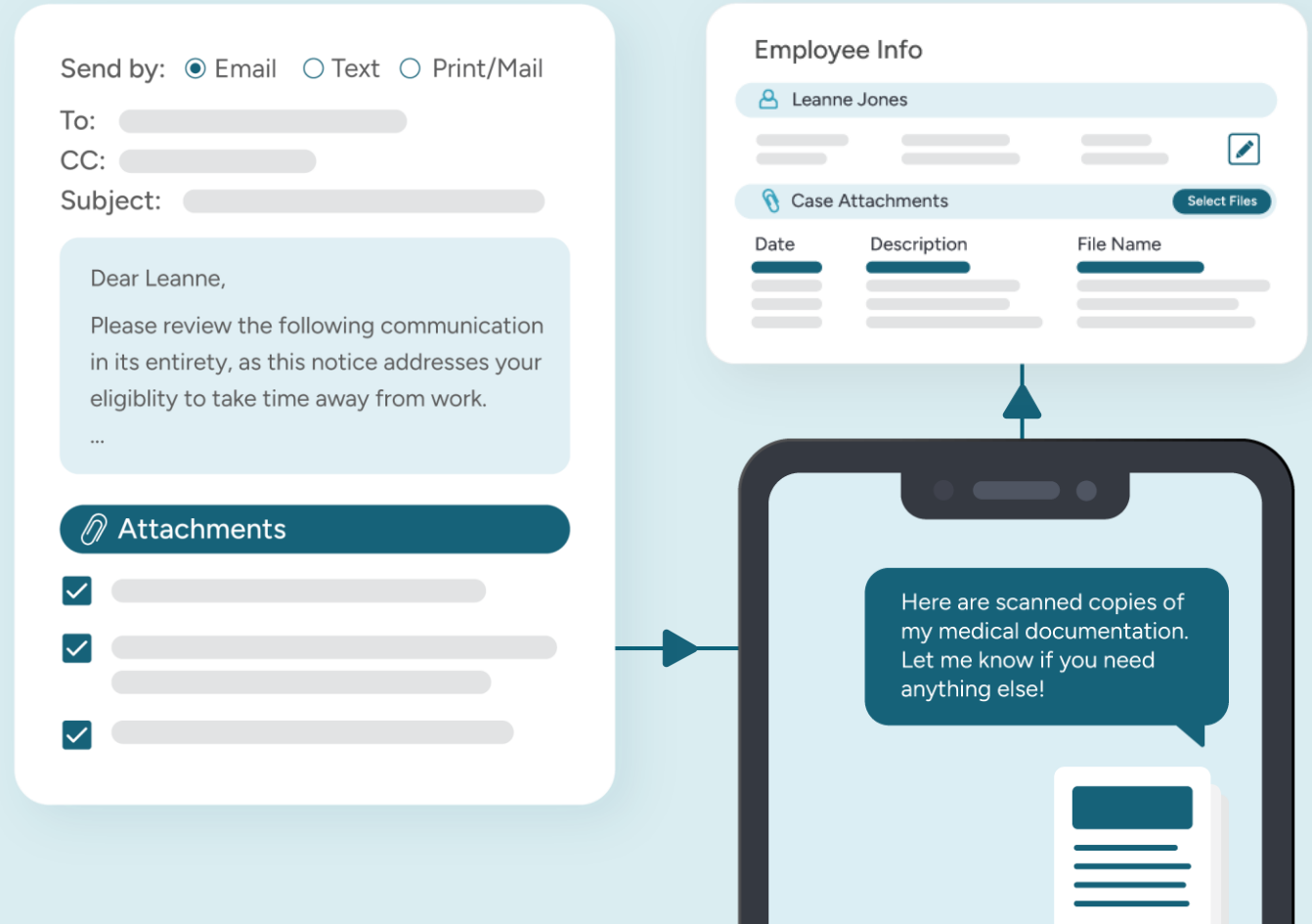
June 3 to Aug 19

[Calculate Eligibility](#)

Policy	Eligible
Family Medical Leave Act	Yes
Oregon Family Leave - Pregnancy/Maternity	Yes
Oregon Paid Leave	Yes
Oregon Paid Leave - Job Protection	Yes
Oregon Family Leave	Yes
ABC Company Parental Leave	Yes

Modern Communications and Simplified Paperwork

- Automatically send communications to employee via email and text through the leave process
- Forms are instantly attached to pre-generated communications based on employee eligibility and entitlements
- Incoming faxed medical forms can be automatically attached and stored to cases
- Employees can text completed forms and documents that are attached to each case
- Platform securely and centrally stores all paperwork, retrievable instantly



Standardizing and Automating Return to Work

- Schedule automated notifications via text and email about return to work to be sent prior to an employee's return
- Automate notifications and communications to IT, managers, building managers, and more
- If forms and medical certifications are required, automatically generate and send a packet prior to return to work
- Employees can text or email digital forms to streamline return to work processes, and incoming faxes are automatically attached to cases
- System automatically tracks return to work dates and deducts from remaining entitlement

Case Activity

9/06	Text Message
7/23	HR Communication
7/19	Mgr. Communication
7/18	HR Communication

Good Morning Tiana,

Just a reminder that we have you scheduled to return to work on Monday, September 15. Please reach out if you have any questions!

Thanks,
Lisa

Questions?