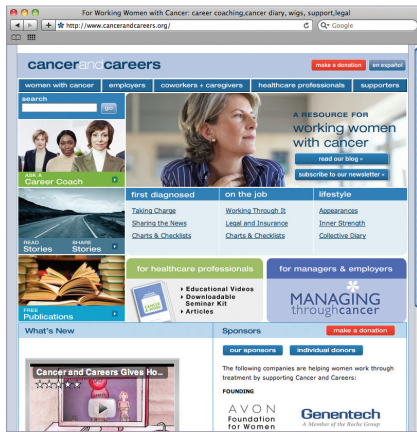


ADVICE FOR COWORKERS OF EMPLOYEES WITH CANCER

BEING AN EFFECTIVE POINT PERSON



One way to help a coworker who has to take time off for a cancer-related surgery or treatment is by being their “point person” or liaison. You’ll be the link between your coworker and others in the office.

“When a point person is designated, the person taking leave doesn’t have to communicate frequently with a dozen different people,” says Anne Pasley-Stuart, president and CEO of Pasley-Stuart HR Consultants in Boise, Idaho. “That’s important because it’s essential for the person who’s ill to conserve energy. Energy becomes a precious commodity when someone is recovering from surgery or undergoing treatment for cancer.”

According to Pasley-Stuart, the role of a point person is frequently assigned by a supervisor or manager. “It’s not unusual, however, for a member of someone’s department or work team to volunteer for the role,” she notes. “Often, it’s someone who has been touched by the same problem in his/her own life, who understands the challenges and difficulties his/her coworker is facing.”

If you have some advance warning before your coworker goes on leave, be sure to ask several questions:

- **WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL ISSUES ON YOUR PLATE RIGHT NOW?**
- **WHERE ARE WE IN TERMS OF WORKFLOW?**
- **WHO ARE THE PROBLEM CUSTOMERS OR CLIENTS?**

“You need to know who, what and when,” says Pasley-Stuart. “You have to know where, too—where the files you’re going to need are kept, so you don’t waste time looking for them. If you need to represent your coworker on certain issues, you need to be thoroughly briefed.”

EASING THE TRANSITION

When your coworker comes back to work, he/she will probably want to jump right in and demonstrate he/she can do everything he/she did previously. To ease the transition make a list of things to go over and schedule a debriefing session upon the person’s return to get them up to speed. Realistically, though, it may take a while for your coworker to get back into the swing of things.

CONSIDER YOUR LIMITS

Finally, before volunteering to be a point person, ask yourself if you’re willing to commit to the job for as long as necessary. It’s important work helping someone at a catastrophic time in their lives, but don’t take on more than you can handle. The role you’re assuming may last quite some time—or at least longer than you may have initially envisioned—and you’ve got to be willing to hang in there.

