returnity

for our moms,

for one day when we're moms,

for women everywhere

Catalina with her mom, Claudia

Taylor with her mom, Carol

preface

Looking back, it's not a surprise that our thesis brought us here. We grew up with working moms who made sure we knew that a woman could have both a family and a career. This journey has taught us that it wasn't always as easy as they made it look. They navigated pressures at work to do it all and feelings of guilt when they couldn't be at home, all to selflessly provide a better future for us.

Thank you to Carol and Claudia, for all you did to make this possible.

Through this process, we had the opportunity to work with an incredible group of working moms who opened up about their late nights, morning rushes, awkward moments, and all the ups and downs of motherhood. These women guided us along the way and grounded our work through their voices and experiences.

Thank you to our thesis moms, for your trust and willingness to welcome us into your lives.

Even though neither of us are moms, bringing this thesis into the world together has had a lot of parallels to parenting. We built a strong partnership, had many sleepless nights, and endured 9-months of "labor," all while working full-time outside of school.

Thank you to this partnership, for the dedication to our work, and to each other.

To all these extraordinary women,

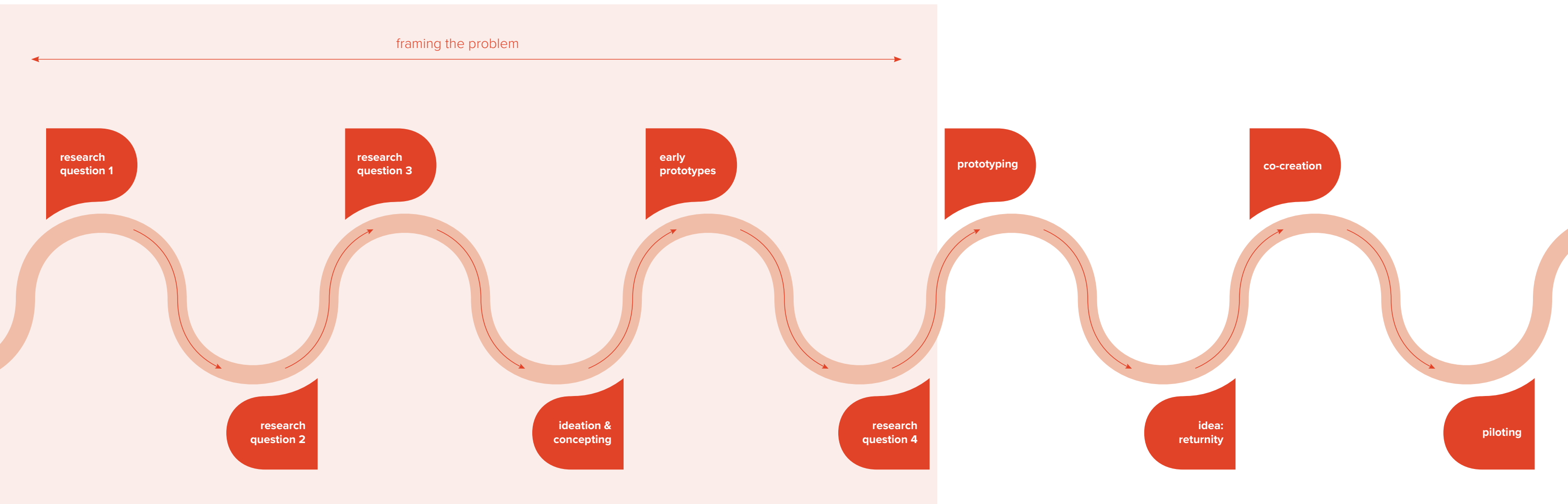*CATALINA + Taylor*

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intro
duction

Our journey began in the Spring of 2018. Catalina was working full-time outside of school for a workforce development center and Taylor was starting a new job with a social enterprise focused on reducing unconscious bias in the workplace. In our jobs, we both witnessed firsthand the challenges people face at work when they belong to minority groups. Talking through our experiences together, we realized that the voices we were hearing from the most were those of women. From this, we built our partnership.

The intersection of our backgrounds and experiences opened up so many questions we wanted to explore: How are women affected by bias in the workplace? How does this impact their opportunity for leadership positions? How do women see themselves as leaders?

To get answers to these questions, we started reaching out to women we knew and from there built relationships with a cohort of women that would be with us throughout our entire journey.

Together we identified that being a mom greatly impacts a woman's career and her ability to access leadership roles. Through more research we found that companies have not been designed to meet the needs of working moms. That's why we built Returnity with the hope of enabling companies and working parents to build an equitable workplace together.

our process

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framing the problem

context

Traditional boardroom[1]

In 2019, women make up 51% of the workforce.[2] However, there are still significantly fewer women in leadership positions than men. Women currently hold only 23% of C-Suite roles in the U.S. and of the companies on the Fortune 500 list,[3] only 24 of them have female CEOs.[4]

Impact on women

The average woman makes 80 cents for every dollar a man makes.[5] This means that over the course of a 40-year career, the wage gap costs a woman about $430,480.[6] Beyond the financial costs, there are additional challenges that women face. 1 in 3 women experience sexual harassment in the workplace.[7] And 42% of working women say that they have faced discrimination on the job because of their gender.[8]

Impact on companies

Companies that lack diversity struggle to retain talent, have lower employee satisfaction, and show decreased creativity and ability for innovation.[9] Workers experiencing unfairness and discrimination often leave their jobs, costing businesses in the U.S. an average of $64 billion dollars annually.[10] However, companies with more women in leadership showed twice the profit of companies with no women leaders.[11]

A missed opportunity

Gender equity in the workplace isn't just good for women, it's good for business. In fact, if women were totally equal to men at work, $28 trillion could be added to the global economy by 2025.[12] So, what's stopping us?

Only

23%

of C-Suite roles in the U.S. are held by women

[2] "Quick Take: Women in the Workforce-Global." Catalyst, 31 Oct. 2018, www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-workforce-global/. [3] "Women in the Workplace 2018." McKinsey & Company, Oct. 2018, www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/women-in-the-workplace-2018/. [4] "These Are the Women CEOs Leading Fortune 500 Companies." Fortune, 7 June. 2017, www.fortune.com/2017/06/07/fortune-500-women-ceos/. [5] "Pay Equity & Discrimination." Institute for Women's Policy Research, iwpr.org/issue/employment-education-economic-change/pay-equity-discrimination/. [6] Zalis, Shelley. "Equal Pay Day 2019: How To Close The Wage Gap For Good." Forbes, 2 Apr. 2019, www.forbes.com/sites/shelleyzalis/2019/04/02/equal-pay-day-2019-how-to-close-the-wage-gap-for-good/#70baa64f1154. [7] Chatterjee, Rhitu. "A New Survey Finds 81 Percent Of Women Have Experienced Sexual Harassment." NPR, 22 Feb. 2018, www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/21/587671849/a-new-survey-finds-eighty-percent-of-women-have-experienced-sexual-harassment. [8] Parker, Kim, et al. "42% Of US Working Women Have Faced Gender Discrimination on the Job." Pew Research Center, 14 Dec. 2017, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/12/14/gender-discrimination-comes-in-many-forms-for-todays-working-women/. [9] Lorenzo, Rocio, et al. "How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation." BCG, 23 Jan. 2018, www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation.aspx. [10] Burns, Crosby. "The Costly Business of Discrimination." Center for American Progress, 22 Mar. 2012, www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/reports/2012/03/22/11234/the-costly-business-of-discrimination/. [11] Blumberg, Yoni. "Companies with More Female Executives Make More Money-Here's Why." CNBC, 2 Mar. 2018, www.cnbc.com/2018/03/02/why-companies-with-female-managers-make-more-money.html. [12] Feloni, Richard. "If We Closed the Gender Gap by 2025, the Global Economy Could See a $28 Trillion Windfall." Business Insider, 8 Mar. 2019, www.businessinsider.com/closing-gender-gap-could-add-as-much-as-28-trillion-to-global-economy-2019-3.

[1] Chapman-Harris, Richard. "A Manifesto for Modern Leadership." *The Guardian*, 31 July 2013, www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2013/jul/31/manifesto-for-modern-leadership.

research question one

What current barriers exist for women to access leadership positions?

Activities

We started by wanting to understand how people were talking about gender bias and women leadership, so we participated in 12 facilitated discussions and attended affinity groups and diversity and inclusion trainings. This led to more in-depth one-on-one interviews with 5 subject matter experts and 2 working women. To include more voices and perspectives we conducted a survey about women in leadership with 49 respondents. Finally, we did secondary research to supplement our learnings.

Learnings

Racial and gender biases have a significant impact on women in the workplace, and women in leadership positions typically experience more instances of bias because they are often the only woman at their level. We began to identify a range of internal and external barriers women experienced that affected their ability to access leadership positions. These were:

1. **Self-doubt** about their own leadership abilities
2. **Lack of role models** limiting the paths they can see themselves following
3. **Lack of support** from colleagues, superiors, mentors, and even other women

The Gaps

At this stage, we recognized the need to scope our problem further. Previously, we thought we needed to do this by focusing on a specific demographic of women. We realized that another approach could be to narrow in on a specific stage of life or period in a women's career.
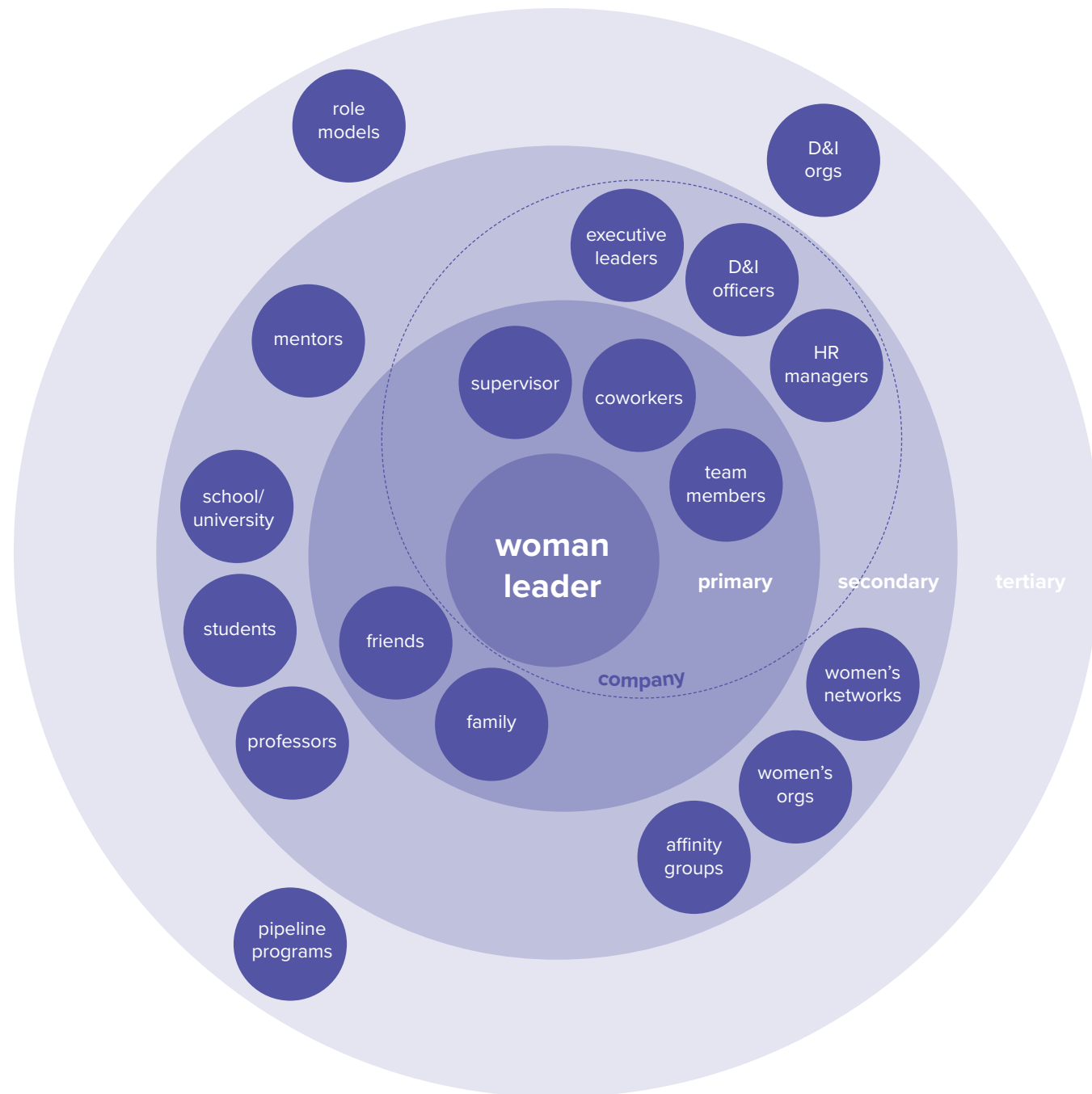
Problem Statement: Bias in the workplace creates internal and external barriers to women gaining leadership positions.

"I constantly feel like I have to prove that I'm qualified."

- Martha, working mom

stakeholder map

research question two

What specific moments or periods during a woman's career are the most challenging and have the greatest effect on her ability to access leadership positions?

Activities

We started by creating a stakeholder map to identify all the people surrounding a woman leader. We then interviewed 13 key stakeholders including working women, HR managers, executive directors, and leaders from women's organizations. From these conversations, we began to develop a hypothesis that the stage of life we should focus on was motherhood and therefore, interviews started shifting to emphasize motherhood. To validate what we were hearing, we sent out a second survey specifically for working mothers and received 28 responses.

Learnings

Across the board, women expressed that a pivotal moment in their career was when they had their first child. This appeared to be a root cause for why women were not able to access leadership positions later in their careers. Here were some of the themes we heard:

1. Women are worried about what taking a break to have a child will mean for their career.
2. Working moms feel like they have to 'do it all'.
3. Working moms often feel conflicted by competing desires to do well at work and be present with their children.

Unmet Needs

1. Working moms need to know that they are not alone and hear that other moms feel the same way.
2. Working moms need to feel like their needs and goals are supported and valued.

The Gaps

At this stage, we identified that working moms needed to feel supported, but we were still exploring what types of supportive relationships and conversations were necessary such as working moms with their partners, with other moms, or with coworkers and bosses.

Reframed Problem Statement: When a woman does not have support after returning from maternity leave, the chances she will have to leave her job or scale back at work are higher, affecting her potential for leadership roles.

"Having children has completely changed my career. It's affected every decision I've made."

- Mai, working mom

2%

of women plan to leave the workforce for family reasons.

43%

of women end up scaling back at work after having a child.

research question three

What types of support do working moms need to have a successful transition back to work after having a child?

Activities

Secondary research showed that only 2% of working women plan to leave the workforce for family reasons; however, 43% of highly qualified women scale back at work after having a child.[13] Through journey mapping, we were able to compare two different experiences of a woman transitioning back to work after maternity leave, one where she left her job and another where she was able to stay. We then held our first workshop to validate our learnings and begin to ideate potential concepts. Following this workshop, we tested 3 initial prototypes with 14 working moms.

We've included more details about these activities and our learnings in the following pages.

13 Ferrante, Mary Beth. "The Pressure Is Real For Working Mothers." Forbes, 27 Aug. 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/marybethferrante/2018/08/27/the-pressure-is-real-for-working-mothers/#3ff4e9b92b8f.

journey maps

Unsuccessful transition back to work after maternity leave

Experience of Carly, working mom

positive

neutral

negative

returning from leave

after 3 months

maternity leave

Took full maternity leave so had to come back full time right away.

pumping at work

"Pumping was really awkward. I found a closet and just sat on the floor to pump."

first day back

"My first day back, I was a wreck. I was in tears and said, 'I don't want to do this.'"

conversation with manager

"We are worried that you having a kid is limiting your work here."

leaves her job

Successful transition back to work after maternity leave

positive

neutral

negative

returning from leave

after 3 months

maternity leave

Eased back in working part-time.

conversations with boss

"I was very vocal and demanded what I needed instead of asking."

promoted to chief of staff

Stayed at her job and now shares what she learned with other new moms.

designing mother's room

"I worked with the office manager to set up an actual pumping room with Wi-Fi and a chair so moms could work and pump".

advocating for other moms

"It was a fight. We all fought for it really hard. I had to advocate for other moms who wouldn't speak up for themselves."

ideation workshop

With a group of working moms, we began our workshop with a storyboarding activity to validate some of our learnings from interviews. We then did a concepting activity to generate ideas based on skills, interests, and needs of working moms. Then we tested an early prototype and developed two additional prototypes together.

early prototypes

Through early prototyping, we wanted to answer the question: **how might we strengthen support for new moms as they transition back to work after maternity leave?**

1

Mothergoods

A welcome kit for news moms returning to work that includes all the essentials for her to feel supported in her transition.

Goal: to learn what a new mom might want when she transitions back to work.

2

Works for Her

A maternity clothing exchange subscription for new moms returning to work.

Goal: to learn what helps a new mom feel confident as she transitions back to work.

3

Ally Program

A workplace initiative that provides each new mom with an advocate to support her during her transition.

Goal: to learn how a new mom might want to be supported by colleagues during her transition.

Learnings

Through journey mapping and prototyping, we identified that the area where working moms need support the most is within the workplace. Here are 3 key learnings:

1. **Lack of information**
   Companies often don't know what working moms need and the responsibility to ask for support often falls on them.
2. **Support from boss and colleagues**
   Not all working moms feel comfortable advocating for themselves. They want support and understanding from their boss and other colleagues.
3. **More than just for moms**
   Working moms don't want to feel singled out. When men talk about their needs as working dads, it helps moms too.

Based on these learnings, we realized the need for our intervention to be a tool for companies to support moms. Up until this point we were very focused on the transition for moms after maternity leave, but began to challenge this assumption to encompass the full working parent experience.

The Gaps

At this stage, we felt that we really understood the needs of a working mom but now needed to do additional research on what motivates companies and how we could get company buy-in to facilitate an intervention.

card sort activity

We developed this probe based on all the types of support companies could provide for working parents. We used this as a tool for working parents to identify what was most important to them and for companies to prioritize based on what was most feasible.

Geraldine, working mom, participating in card sorting activity

research question four

What barriers do companies face in providing for the needs of working parents?

Activities

To understand how companies are thinking about parent-friendliness in their workplace, we conducted interviews with 4 HR professionals. Since we were beginning to include the full parent experience we interviewed working dads as well. We also developed a card sorting activity to help us learn how working parents and companies prioritize areas of support for working parents such as schedule flexibility, childcare benefits, and lactation support.

Learnings

We learned that a way to increase company buy-in is through demonstrating the cost of not retaining working parents. Many companies are already thinking about how to better support working parents, but often don't know where to start. Key barriers for companies are:

1. Limited budget
2. Limited number of staff
3. Physical space
4. Lack of knowledge and information

Hypothesis

If companies want to retain working moms, then they need to become more parent-friendly.

Final Problem Statement: Workplaces aren't designed to meet the needs of working moms, which affects their opportunities for leadership positions.

Losing an executive employee costs a company up to

213%

of their annual salary [14]

[14] Boushey, Heather, and Sarah Jane Glynn. "There Are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees." Center for American Progress, www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2012/11/16/44464/there-are-significant-business-costs-to-replacing-employees/.

proto
typing

How might we support companies to better support working parents?

Activities:

Using all our learnings up to this point, we developed three prototypes. We then conducted a prototyping workshop and one-on-one testing sessions with 10 total participants. Our 3 prototypes were:

1

2

3

Working Parent Assessment

Company Assessment

Online HR Platform

prototyping workshop

Micii, Janitza, Georgina, and Regina, working moms, testing prototypes

prototype one

Working Parent Assessment

We developed a short assessment for working parents to rate their company in parent-friendliness and to describe their company's available support. We first tested it in paper form and then created a digital version using Google Forms.

Hypothesis

If working parents have a way to anonymously give feedback to their employer, then they will feel like their needs are heard.

Learnings

1. Our hypothesis was confirmed. Working parents expressed that giving feedback to their company in this way would allow them to communicate more openly.

2. The assessment also created a space for parents to learn more about what their company provided and opened up a conversation between parents.

3. A gap we identified was that parents also wanted to be able to communicate their needs to their employer through this assessment.

prototype two

Company Assessment

We developed a parent-friendliness assessment for employers that would give companies a score based on the support they provide for working parents. We created a digital version using Interact as well as a paper version.

Hypothesis

If companies are given information about their lack of support for working parents, then they will want to make improvements.

Learnings

1. Our hypothesis was partially confirmed. While companies do want to know how well they're supporting working parents, they also want the assessment to take into account their limitations.

2. Companies want more than just information, they want personalized data and clear next steps so they can make informed decisions.

3. Companies don't want their score to be immediately public.

prototype three

HR Platfrom

We created an online HR platform similar to Paycom or Justworks but for family benefits. Companies could pay for an annual membership that would then provide their employees with the family benefits and support they need at work. We created a wireframe that included an employer facing element where they could see all the types of support they should consider for working parents. We also created a wireframe of an employee facing element where they can access all their policies and benefits.

Hypothesis

If we make it easy for companies to provide support for working parents, then they will be more likely to implement changes to become more parent-friendly.

Learnings

1. Our hypothesis was confirmed. Both companies and working parents were excited by this concept and had many ideas about how this could be incorporated into current HR platforms.

2. This could be used in combination with our other prototypes although is not feasible within our thesis timeline.

design criteria

Based on all our learnings from prototyping, we developed the following principles to guide the development of our intervention.

Working parent focus
Working moms and companies want to consider the full working parent experience.

Data-driven approach
Companies need data to understand how well they're supporting working parents to make informed decisions.

Inclusive of all perspectives
Working parents need a way to anonymously communicate their needs to their employer. Employers need a way to evaluate themselves. Both of these perspectives need to be incorporated into one solution.

Action-oriented
Companies need clear next steps to make improvements.

Customized reporting
Companies want next steps that take into account their limitations and the needs of their current employees to help them prioritize.

Conversation starter
The intervention should be a starting point for companies rather than a one-time solution.

Low barrier to entry
The intervention should provide a low stakes and easy entry point for companies.

Inviting personality
The intervention should be a corporate solution without a corporate feel.

returnity

what is it?

Returnity is a data-driven service that enables companies and working parents to build an equitable workplace together. The service includes an evaluation of current policies combined with employee feedback to provide a customized roadmap for building a parent-friendly workplace.

What do we mean by...

a data-driven service? Combining a digital data-collection tool with in-person consulting

evaluation of current policies? Inviting employers to take inventory of the support they offer

employee feedback? Hearing directly from working parents about their wants and needs

a customized roadmap? Providing information and tools for companies to take action

Who's involved?

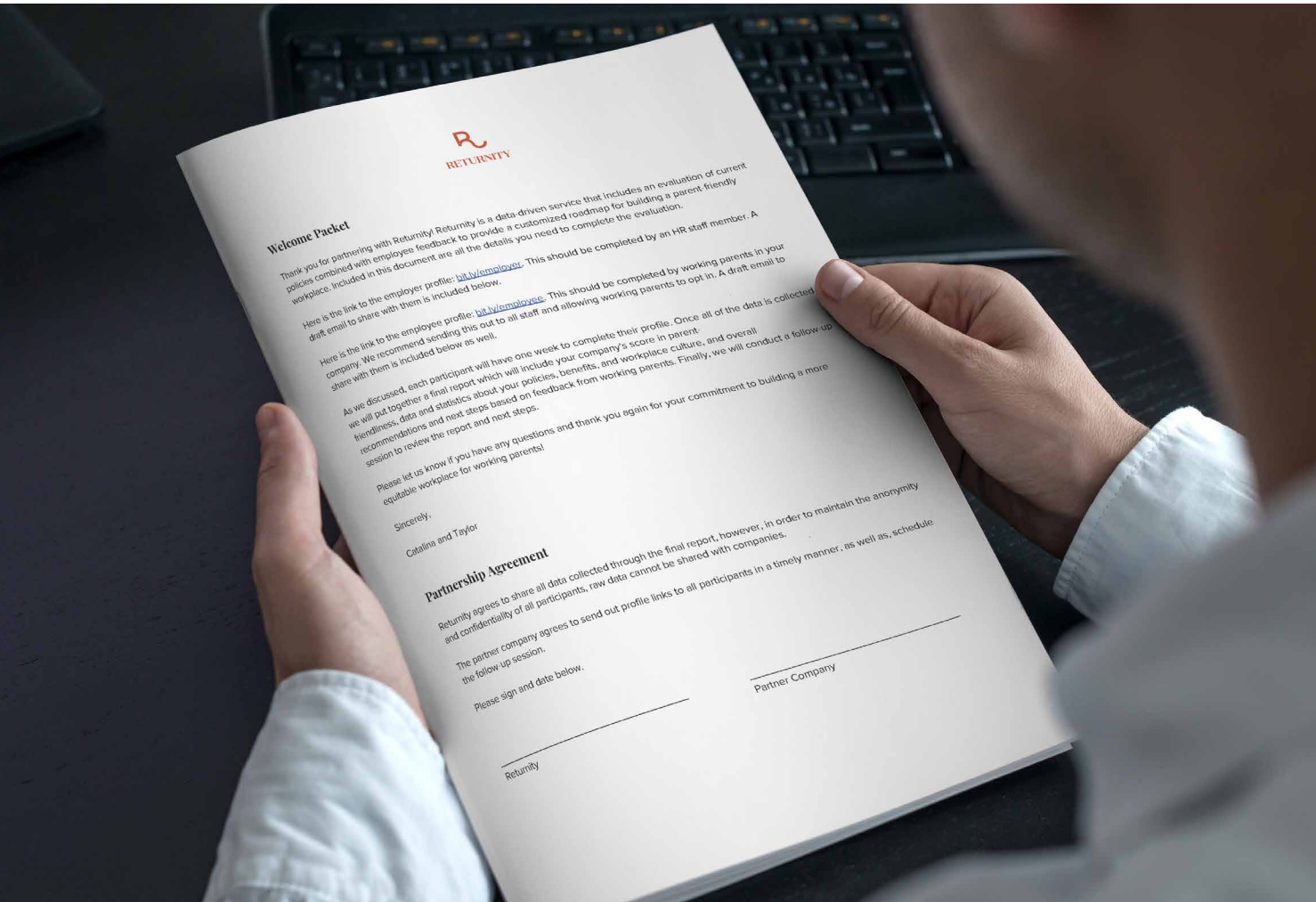**Employers**, specifically HR professionals and decision-makers

Employees, specifically working parents

Returnity got its name from the combination of four terms:

Maternity, Paternity, Returning, and Eternity.

When we think of company support for parents, we often think of maternity and paternity leave. Returnity helps companies think of the entire parent experience after a parent returns to work.

how does it work?

2 Employer Profile

An HR or leadership team member completes the employer profile to evaluate current family policies and benefits.

1 Partnership

Returnity partners with a company and together they establish an agreement for timeline, data privacy, and deliverables.
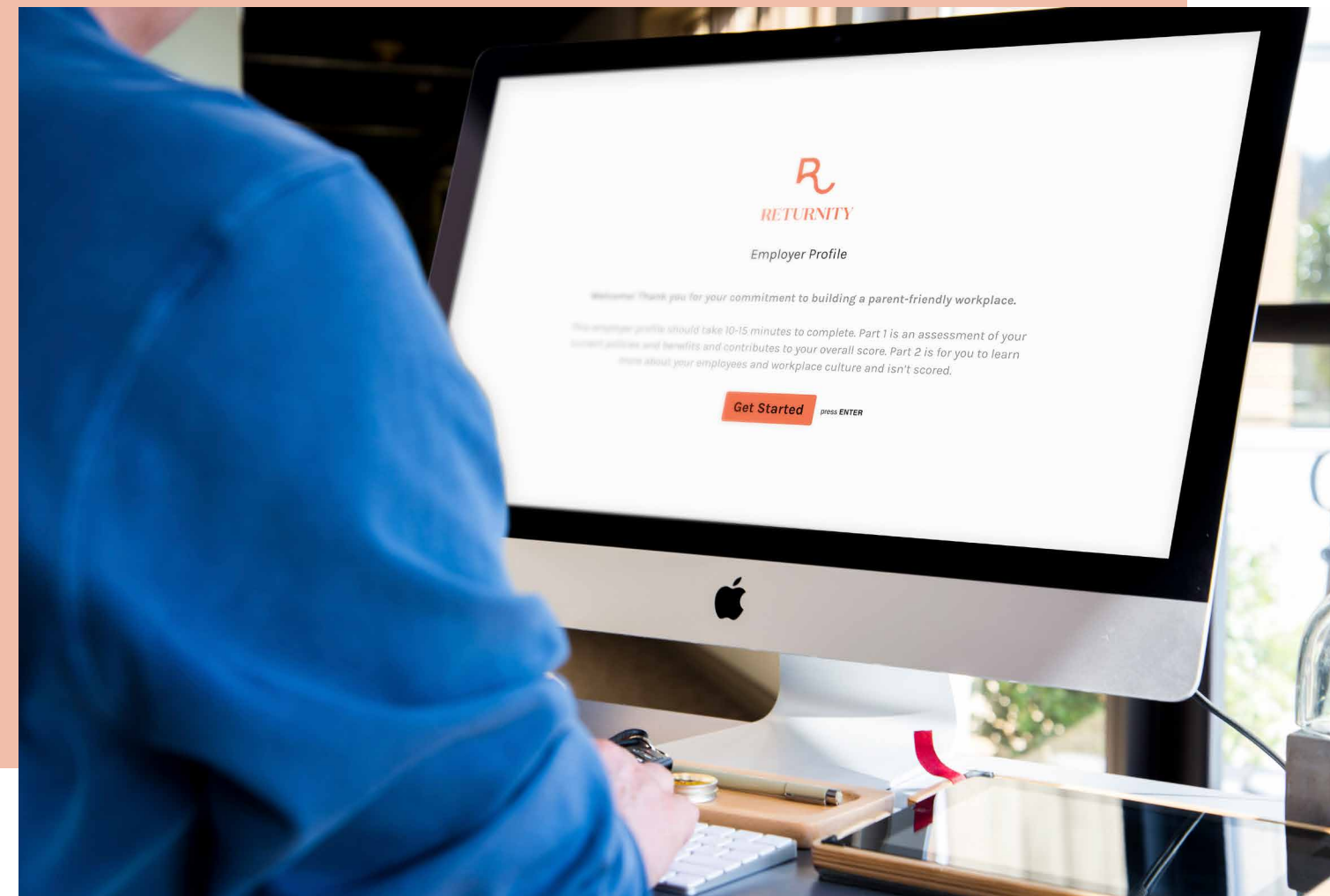
3 ## Employee Profile

Working parents complete the employee profile to evaluate workplace culture and how they feel within the company.
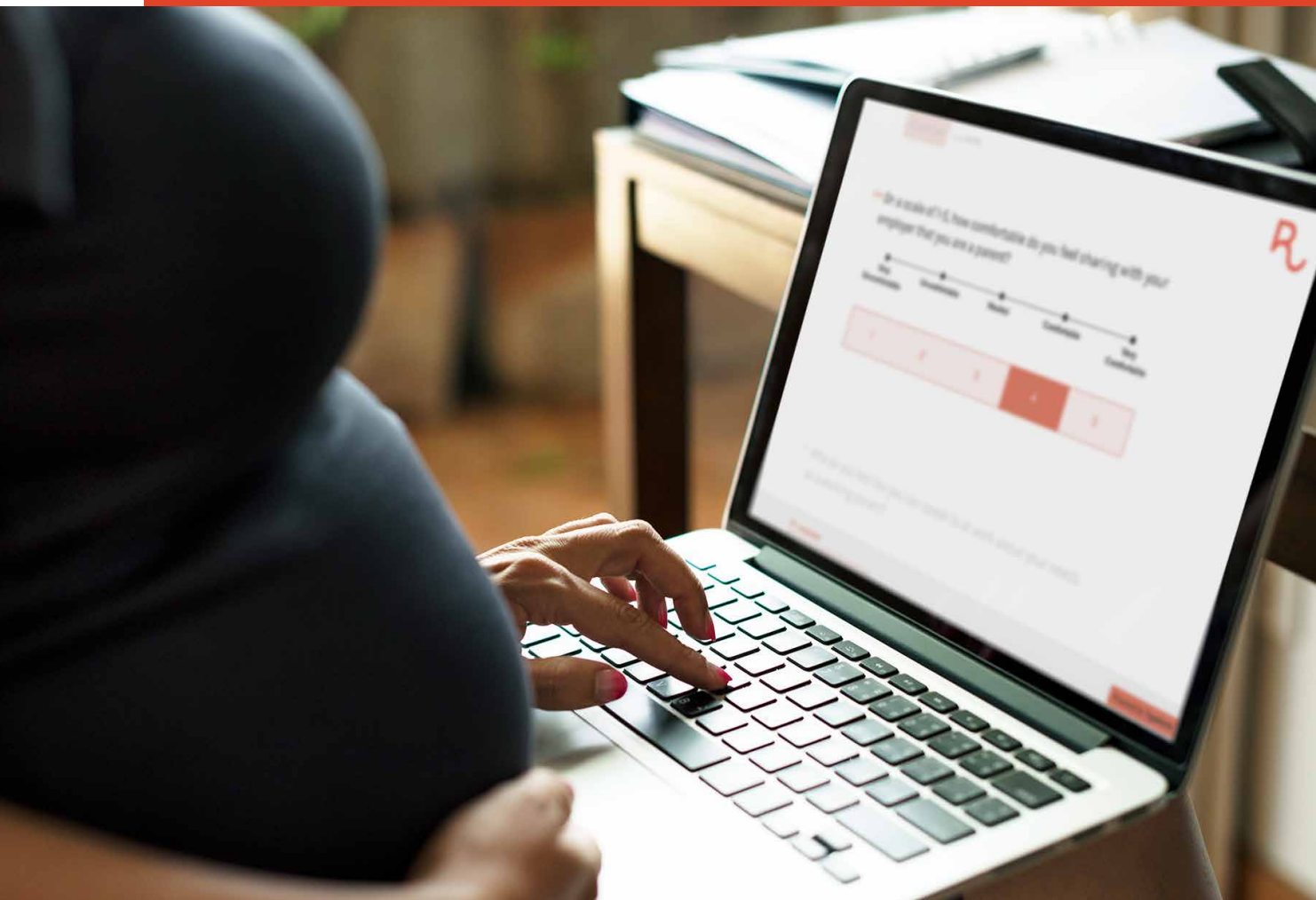
4 ## Customized Report

Returnity analyzes the data from both profiles and provides a customized report that includes a score in parent-friendliness and next steps for how to improve.

5 **Debrief**
Returnity facilitates a debrief session to review the report and discuss next steps for implementation.

the goal

The goal of Returnity is to open up conversations so that companies take action towards becoming more parent-friendly.

theory of change

Returnity is a data-driven service that enables companies and working parents to build an equitable workplace together.

So that...
they increase ability for employers to evaluate current policies, benefits, and support for working parents; increase ability for working parents to provide feedback on workplace culture; increase access for employers to collect data about their parent-friendliness; increase access for employers to gain insight on how working parent feel within their company; increase access for employers to get concrete steps to become more parent-friendly; and increase ability for employers to compare themselves to other companies of a similar size, budget, and industry.

So that...
they increase employer awareness of all the various ways that workplaces can support working parents; reduce anxiety working parents feel in expressing their needs at work; increase employer understanding of how well they are supporting working parents; increase ability of working parents to have their needs heard; improve employer's ability to set goals and create an action plan to make improvements and better support working parents; and increase employer awareness of how parent-friendly they are compared to other similar companies.

So that...
they improve employer understanding of what it means to be a parent-friendly workplace; increase ability for working parents to talk about family needs at work; increase employer attention on the needs of working parents; reduce working parents feelings of isolation and pressure to do it all alone; and increase employer's desire to make improvements and better support working parents.

So that...
they increase communication within the company about how to better support working parents; improve understanding of bosses and coworkers of the needs of working parents; increase engagement of working parents in advocating for better policies, benefits, and support; and improve policies, benefits, and support available for working parents.

So that...
they improve workplace culture around supporting working parents; increase working parents' feelings of being supported by their employer; and improve ability for working parents to take advantage of policies, benefits, and support available to them.
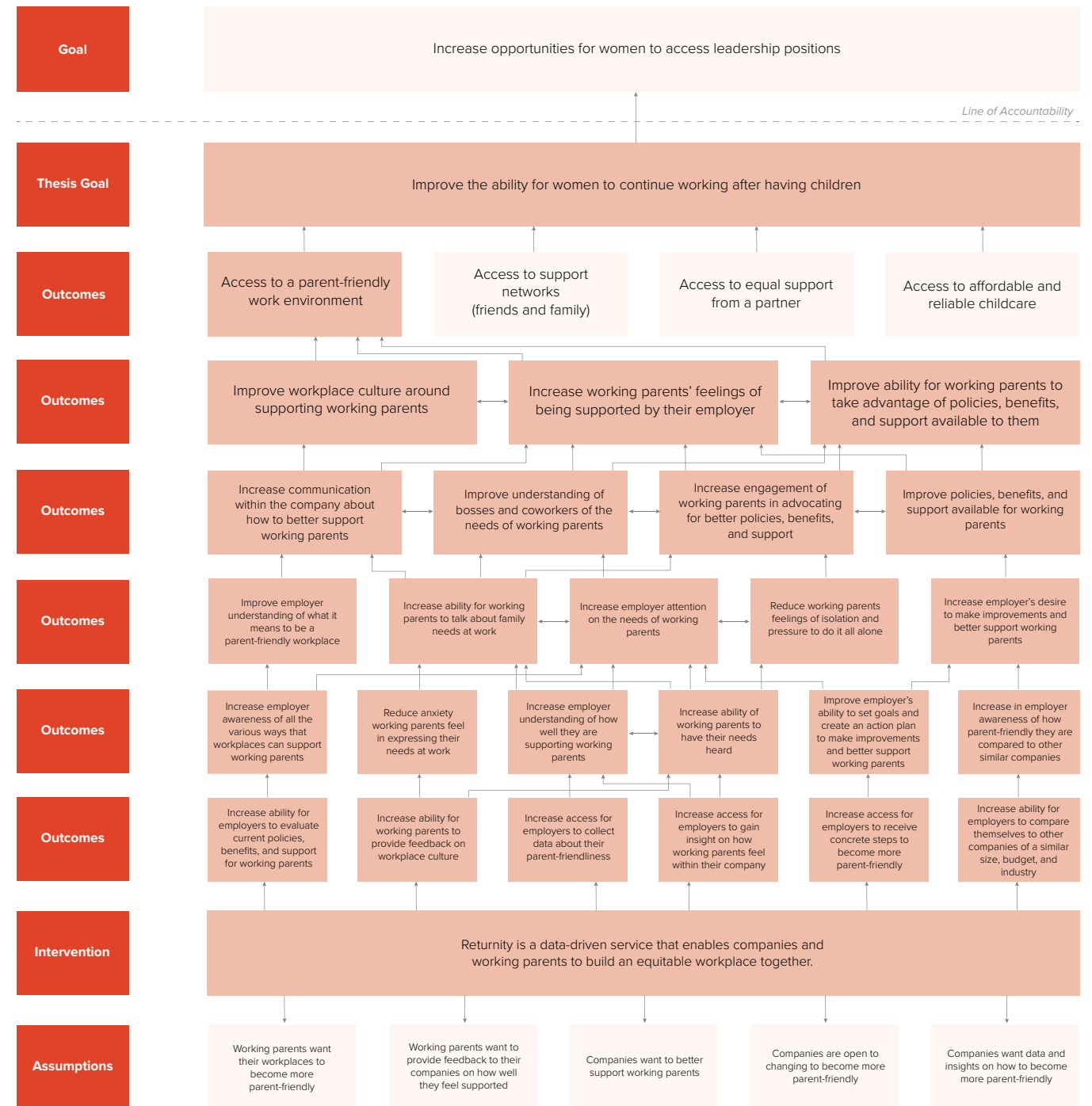
So that...
women have access to a parent-friendly work environment.

So that...
women have the ability to continue working after having children.

So that...
there are increased opportunities for women to access leadership positions.

sustainability & scalability

Low input for high output
Returnity is a low-cost tech solution that does not require significant labor to implement, but has the potential for a large impact when companies take full advantage of the data and recommendations provided.

Increase capacity through tech
Traditional consulting services are time and resource intensive. Returnity utilizes technology to optimize the process of collecting feedback and evaluating companies, so more time can be used for in-depth analysis and customization of next steps.

Universal
Returnity is adaptable for any company or industry across the U.S.

Replicable
Returnity is not a one-time service. Companies are encouraged to re-engage with Returnity over time to see progress and improvement.

Measurement baked-in
As more companies partner with Returnity, the more intelligent our data becomes to measure the impact of our solution.

competitive analysis

personalized data

general focus

working parent focus

standardized data

õfficevibe

Cleo

Culture Amp

Werk

CATALYST

PIPELINE

Roz, HR professional, Mari and Micii, working moms, participating in co-creation workshop
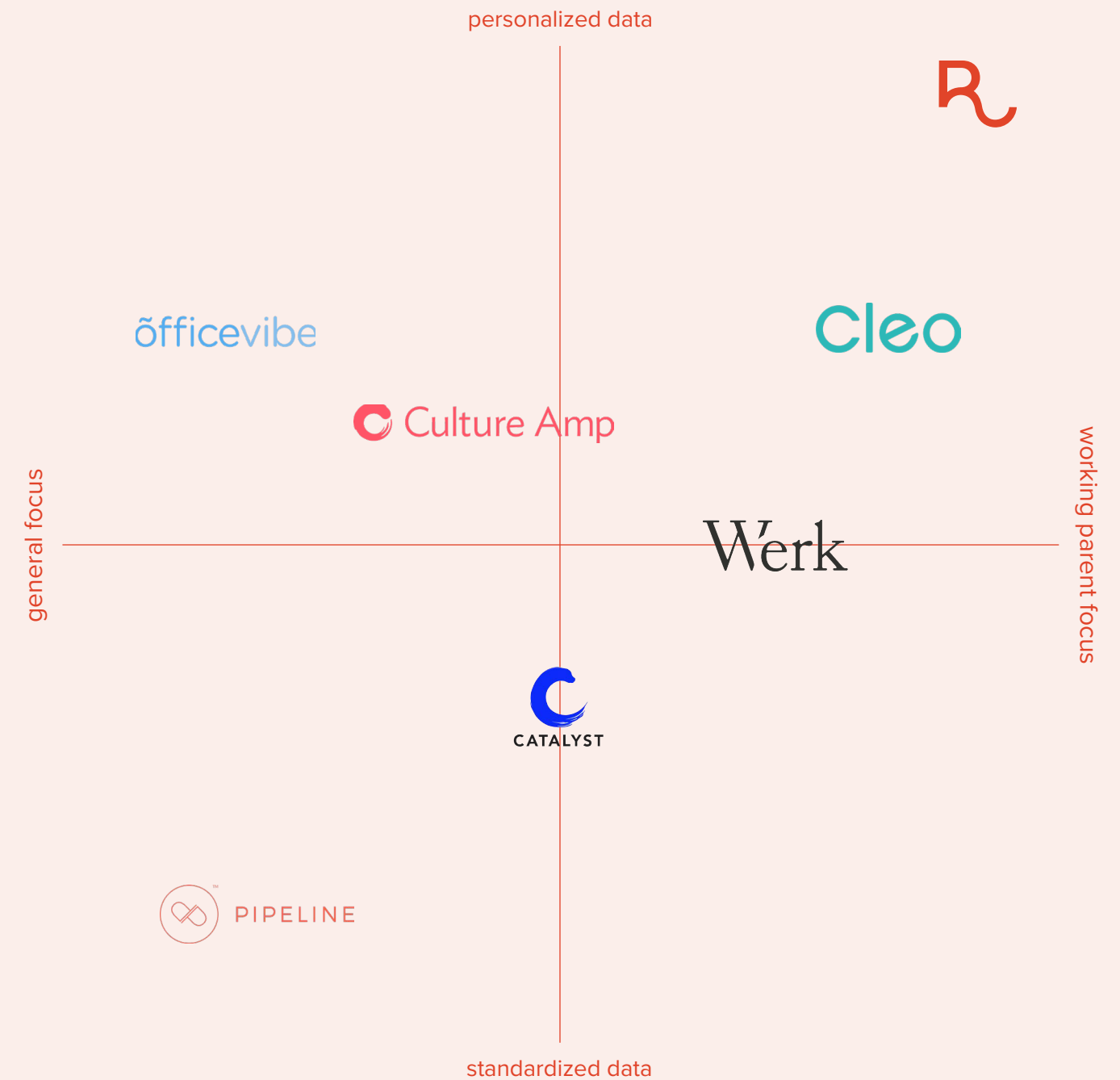
how was it built?

The idea for Returnity came from our community and then we co-designed the entire intervention together. This began with a co-creation workshop with working moms and HR professionals, which led us to our fully developed MVP for testing.

co-creation process

This was our process for building Returnity:

1. We facilitated a co-creation workshop with our community. The first goal of this workshop was to create a list of categories to define parent-friendliness in the workplace (see 8 categories on the next page). The second goal was to rapidly ideate all the potential questions and data points to be included in the evaluation. The third goal was to co-create the personality and brand identity of Returnity.

2. We synthesized all our learnings from the workshop to develop the full evaluation, which included the employer profile and the employee profile.

3. We created a scoring rubric to assign value to each question. Each profile is out of 50 points, totaling to 100 possible points.

4. We built an MVP of the two profiles using an online survey platform.

5. We constructed a method for cleaning and analyzing the data from the online platform.

6. We designed a report template that enabled us to share all the synthesized data from the two profiles through data visualization and storytelling.

7. We developed a conversation guide to facilitate debriefs with companies after they received their report.
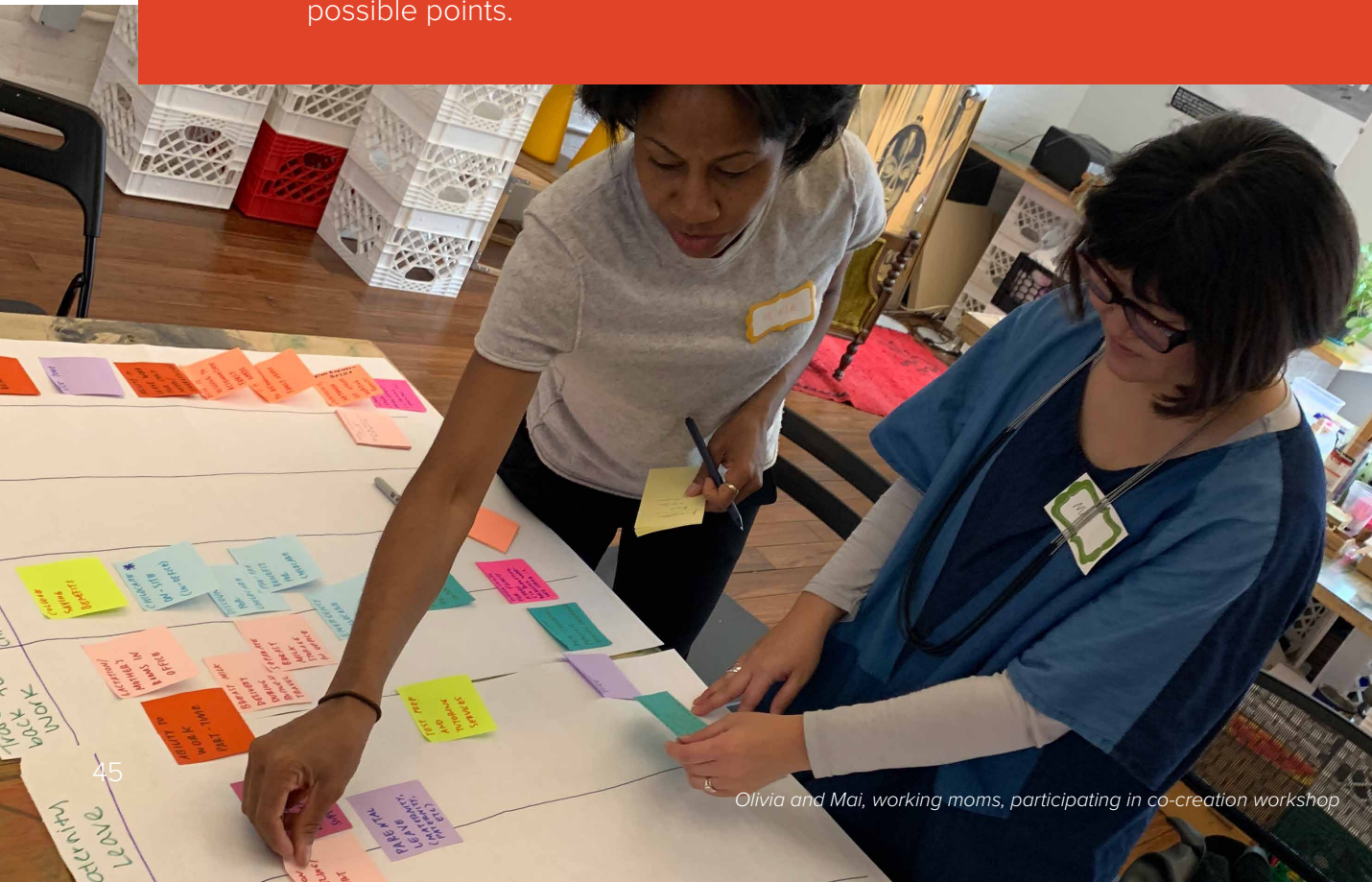
Olivia and Mai, working moms, participating in co-creation workshop

Eight Categories of Parent-Friendly Workplaces

These 8 categories represent the various types of parental support that create mutual benefit for both working parents and companies. These categories are the foundation for the questions within the evaluation, the scoring rubric, and the final report.

Schedule Flexibility
Working parents often have to scale back or leave their jobs due to lack of schedule flexibility. When parents are able to adapt their schedules to meet their needs, they are able to be fully present throughout the work day.

Leave Policies
In addition to parental leave, working parents use sick and vacation time for family-related needs. Paid leave is an investment that companies make in their employees, and the return is threefold: extra effort, motivation, and loyalty.

Lactation Support
Working mothers often feel uncomfortable breastfeeding or puming at work, affecting their productivity and sense of belonging. Companies that create better spaces for lactation allow for mothers to continue working normally.

Child Care & Education
Managing child care is a constant burden for parents, pulling them away from work. Companies that offer employees support for their children at all stages of life find working parents more engaged and less stressed at work.

Health & Wellness
Working parents struggle with finding balance to take care of their needs. Studies show that when workplaces provide comprehensive benefits, there is an improvement in employee health, morale and performance.

Professional Development
Working parents can be overlooked for advancement opportunities, and have limited time and resources for continued education. Companies that offer professional development for employees foster growth and opportunities for innovation.

Inclusivity
The definition of family continues to change, and families today have different needs than they did in the past. When policies are inclusive of all employees, companies attract and retain diverse talent, and create equal opportunities for everyone.

Workplace Culture
Policies and benefits are only half of the equation. Creating a parent-friendly culture allows employees to take advantage of support available to them, and be their full selves at work. This fosters collaboration, teamwork, and a positive environment.

Employee Profile

This is a sample from the employee profile which consists of 25 total questions. The profile is divided into 3 parts: an assessment of workplace culture, feedback on current policies and benefits, and then demographics. Pre- and post-evaluation questions are included as well to measure the impact of the evaluation. On average, the profile takes about 15-20 minutes to complete.

℞ RETURNITY

Employee Profile

Welcome! Thank you for your interest in completing an employee profile.

Please take this opportunity to provide honest feedback about how you feel as a working parent in your company. All responses will be kept anonymous and help us provide an in-depth report and recommendations.

[Get Started] press ENTER

Ok, let's start with some questions about your company's **culture** for working parents.

[Continue] press ENTER

On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable do you feel sharing with your employer that you are a parent?

Very Uncomfortable — Uncomfortable — Neutral — Comfortable — Very Comfortable

1	2	3	4	5

Who do you feel like you can speak to at work about your needs as a working parent?

Choose as many as you like

- A Supervisor or Manager
- B Human Resources
- C Coworkers
- D Other
- E None of the above

On a scale of 1-5, rate how much you agree with the following statement: **My office space offers sufficient privacy for my needs as a parent.**
i.e. taking phone calls, scheduling appointments

Strongly Disagree — Disagree — Neutral — Agree — Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5

How often are you expected to work outside of normal office hours?
i.e. evenings, weekends

- A Every day
- B A few times per week
- C A few times per month
- D Rarely
- E Never

On a scale of 1-5, rate how much you agree with the following statement: **I feel respected as a working parent in my company.**

Strongly Disagree — Disagree — Neutral — Agree — Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5

On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied are you with your company's support in the following areas:

[Continue] press ENTER

Schedule flexibility options

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5

Parental leave policies

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5

All other leave policies (i.e. sick, vacation)

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5

Family benefits within your health insurance policy

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5

Breastfeeding or pumping at work

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5

Child care benefits

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5

Benefits for your child's education

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5

Professional development

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

1	2	3	4	5

Employer Profile

This is a sample from the employer profile which also consists of 25 total questions. The profile is divided into 2 parts: a scored section on policies and benefits offered to employees, and a section to identify priorities and areas to improve. Pre- and post-evaluation questions were also included to measure the impact of the evaluation and the profile takes about 15-20 minutes to complete.

℞ RETURNITY

Employer Profile

Welcome! Thank you for your commitment to building a parent-friendly workplace.

This employer profile should take 10-15 minutes to complete. Part 1 is an assessment of your current policies and benefits and contributes to your overall score. Part 2 is for you to learn more about your employees and workplace culture and isn't scored.

[Get Started] press ENTER

What types of **schedule flexibility options** do you offer your employees?

Choose as many as you like

- A Ability to work remote
- B Ability to work part-time
- C Ability to leave work for child needs/emergencies
- D Ability to work unconventional hours
- E No options available
- F Other

What types of **health and wellness benefits** do you offer your employees?

Choose as many as you like

- A Mental health support
- B Gym membership
- C Transportation discounts
- D Flexible Savings Account (FSA)
- E No options available
- F Other

What types of family benefits are included through the **health insurance policy** provided to your employees?

Choose as many as you like

- A Children covered through health insurance policy
- B Spouse covered through health insurance policy
- C $0 copay for children covered through health insurance policy
- D Breast pumps covered through health insurance policy
- E No benefits available
- F Other

Do you offer any of the following **additional types of support** for your employees?

Choose as many as you like

- A Adoption support
- B IVF support
- C Support for freezing your eggs
- D Infertility support

What types of **lactation support** do you offer your employees?

Choose as many as you like

- A Lactation or mother's room in office
- B Lactation counseling or doula services
- C Breast milk delivery during business travel
- D Separate breast milk storage fridge in office
- E No benefits available
- F Other

What types of **child care benefits** do you offer your employees?

Choose as many as you like

- A Emergency childcare
- B Discount or supplement for childcare costs
- C Childcare on-site (in-office)
- D Pre-tax benefit for childcare
- E No benefits available
- F Other

New York State Paid Family Leave (PFL) currently requires employers to provide 10 weeks of paid parental leave to full-time employees at 55% of their weekly wage. Does your parental leave policy meet PFL requirements for both primary and secondary caregivers?

- A Yes
- B Yes, and we also provide additional parental leave
- C No

Which of the following describes your **annual leave policy** for full-time employees?
(including holidays, sick, vacation, admin and all other types of leave)

- A Unlimited leave
- B 35+ days
- C 25-34 days
- D 15-24 days
- E Less than 15 days

What types of **professional development options** do you offer your employees?

Choose as many as you like

- A Workshops around family needs (i.e. budgeting, balancing work-life stress)
- B Trainings for career advancement
- C Mentoring program
- D Financial support for continuing education
- E No benefits available
- F Other

piloting

We piloted Returnity with 4 companies which included 51 total participants. These companies represented a range of industries, sizes, and levels of commitment to parent-friendliness. For these initial pilots, we reached out to companies within our network.

We conducted these pilots in two stages. First, we tested with Superior Metal & Wood and Institute for Community Living (ICL). We sent them the evaluations and asked them to complete them within a week. Once we received the results from the evaluation, pre and post surveys, and the feedback sessions, we incorporated our learnings into the second iteration of the evaluation for the next stage of piloting. We then completed pilot tests with the School of Visual Arts (SVA) and International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) following the same process.

We've included key results from each company followed by learnings from the pilots overall on the following pages.

4
company pilots

51
pilot participants

Here are some of the key findings from the four company evaluations we completed in the pilot tests. These include elements from each company's eight-page report. Total scores are out of 100 points.

Company One

Medium-sized mental health service organization

"There is a difference between the support I feel from my supervisor and the support I get from my company overall." - Working Parent

53% of parents are satisfied/very satisfied with the company culture for working parents
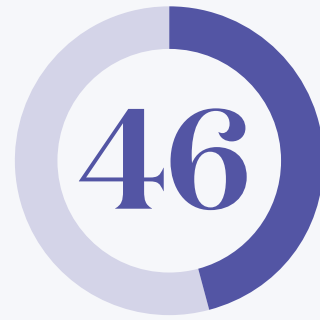
41

Company Two

Medium-sized academic institution

"This reminded me how far we have to go, and I hope my company implements the suggestions we make here." - Working Parent

77% of parents are satisfied/very satisfied with the company culture for working parents
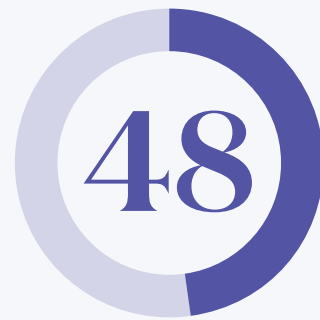
46

Company Three

Medium-sized manufacturing company

"We are a very family-focused business." - HR Professional

60% of parents are satisfied/very satisfied with the company culture for working parents
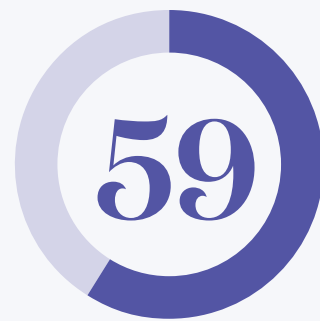
48

Company Four

Small international non-profit

"This made me realize that there are additional benefits that we could offer to make our organization more parent-friendly." - HR Professional
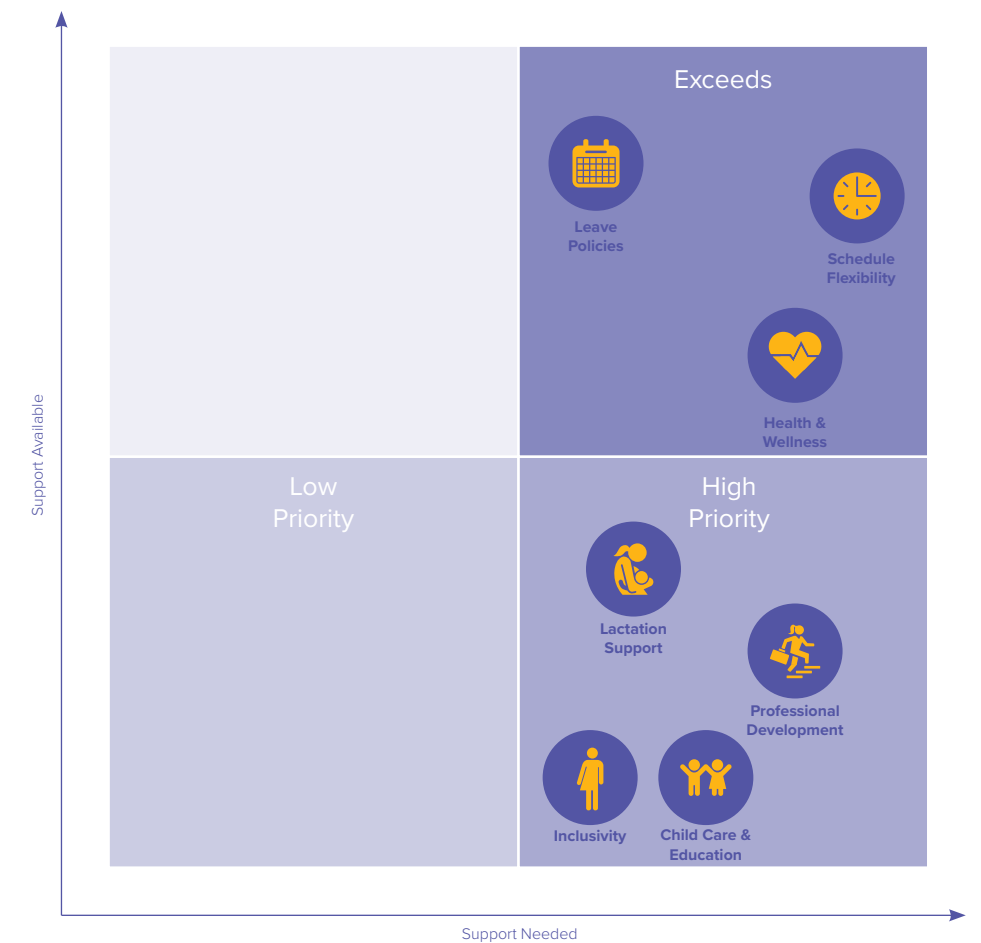
100% of parents are satisfied/very satisfied with the company culture for working parents
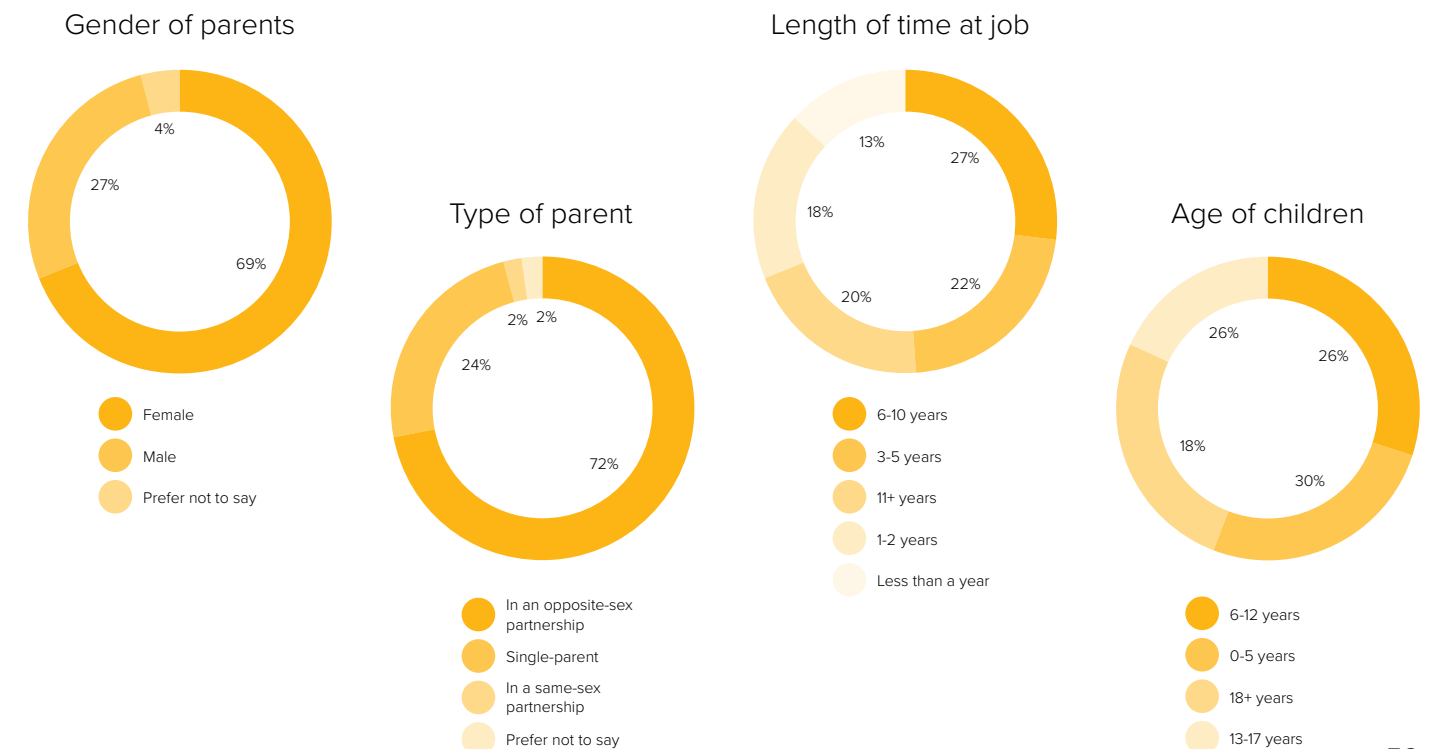
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Opportunities for Growth

This is a matrix of the support each company offers compared with what's important according to working parents. This helps companies prioritize where to direct their efforts, and see where they are exceeding in support for working parents.

These represent an average of the four companies that participated in the pilot. Overall, these companies are exceeding in the areas of leave policies, schedule flexibility and health and wellness. Areas where they can improve are in lactation support, professional development, inclusivity, and child care and education.

Support Available

Support Needed

Exceeds

Low Priority

High Priority

Leave Policies

Schedule Flexibility

Health & Wellness

Lactation Support

Professional Development

Inclusivity

Child Care & Education

Demographics

This is the breakdown of the 45 working parents that completed our Employee Profiles.

Gender of parents

4%
27%
69%

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Type of parent

2% 2%
24%
72%

- In an opposite-sex partnership
- Single-parent
- In a same-sex partnership
- Prefer not to say

Length of time at job

13% 27%
18%
20% 22%

- 6-10 years
- 3-5 years
- 11+ years
- 1-2 years
- Less than a year

Age of children

26%
26%
18%
30%

- 6-12 years
- 0-5 years
- 18+ years
- 13-17 years

measuring the impact

Our pilot tests had two main objectives:

1. To understand if there is buy-in from both companies and working parents for Returnity
2. To understand if our intervention is effective in achieving the outcomes that we have identified

M&E Approach

Using the digital data collection tool we were able to monitor the number of companies that engaged with Returnity and the number of participants that completed the profiles. We were also able to calculate the scores based on the scoring rubric that we created for both profiles. Since our intervention was already formatted similar to a questionnaire, we were able to include our pre- and post-survey within that same structure. Finally, we hosted facilitated debrief sessions and invited both HR professionals and working parents to participate based on what company's felt most comfortable doing.

Monitoring

Key question: How do companies and working parents participate and engage with Returnity?

Quantitative Indicators:

1. Number of partner companies
2. Number of participants
3. Percent completion for employers
4. Percent completion for employees
5. Scores out of 100 possible points
6. Completed pre and post surveys
7. Number of attendees to a debrief session

Debrief session after a pilot test at ICL
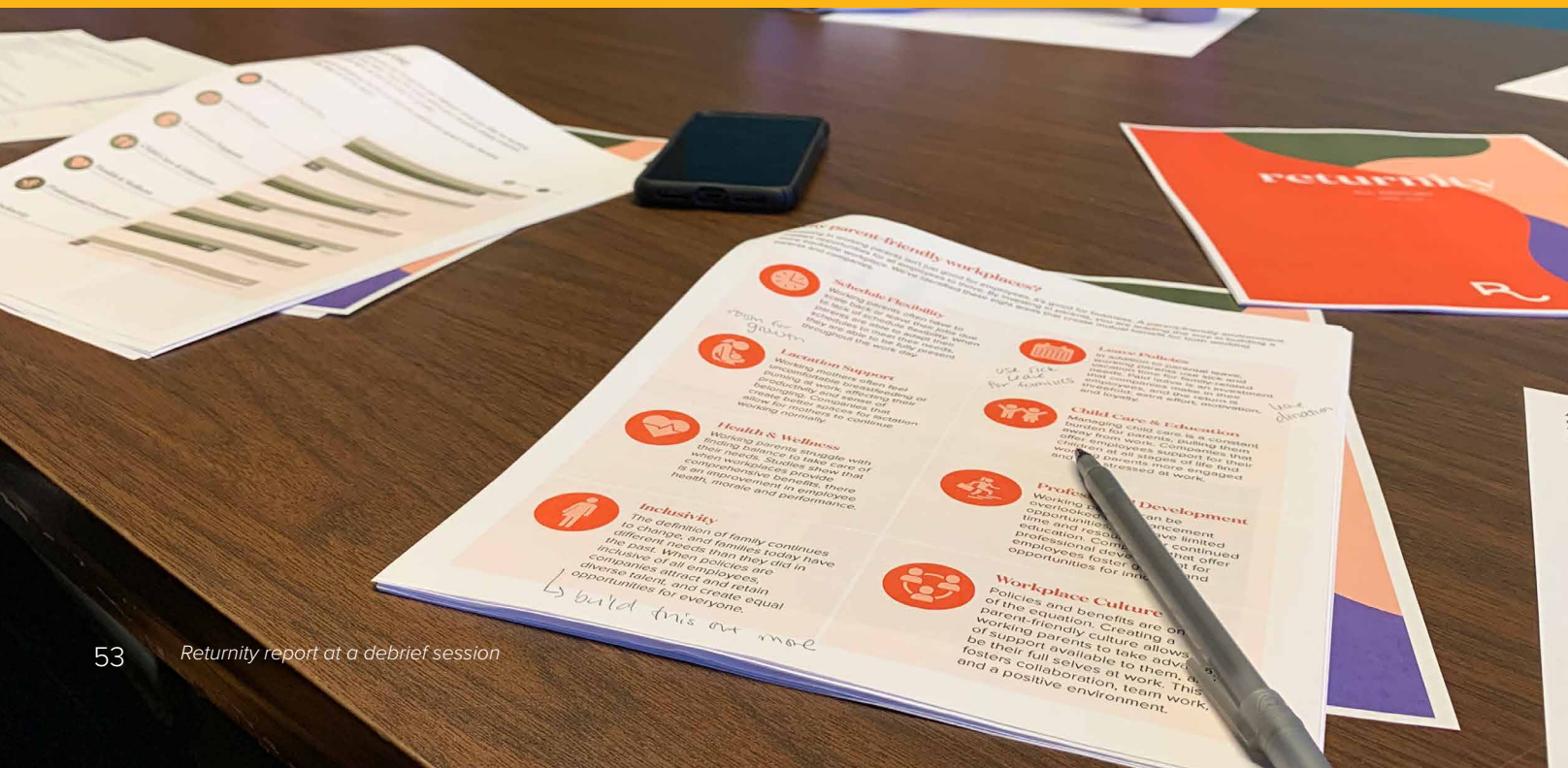
Evaluation

Key questions:

1. How does taking the evaluation impact employers' awareness and level of priority of parent-friendliness?
2. What types of conversations and plans for implementation are a result of the evaluation?
3. How does taking the evaluation impact employee's feeling of support and level of knowledge about parent-friendliness?
4. How do working parents feel completing the evaluation?

Quantitative Indicators:

1. Percent decrease in employer ratings of their company's parent-friendliness to show an increase in awareness
2. Percent increase in level of priority in employer ratings on their support for working parents
3. Percent increase in feelings of support working parents would feel if companies implement improvement
4. Percent increase in how knowledgeable working parents feel about support available to them

Qualitative Indicators:

1. Conversations as a result of the evaluation
2. Plans for implementing changes based on learnings from the evaluation
3. Feelings of support expressed by working parents

Limitations:

1. For pilot testing we only required that companies provide 5-10 working parents to complete the employee profile, however they could send it to more if they desired. Some pilot data is based on a limited sample of working parents while other data is more robust because the company shared the profile with more parents.
2. We were able to complete two debrief sessions within the timeline of this project, however two additional debriefs are scheduled in the upcoming weeks.
3. For debrief sessions, one company chose to have their HR professional and working parents present, while the other company chose to do the debrief with only working parents.

pilot learnings

Returnity responds to a need for both companies and parents.

100% completion of employer profiles
84% completion of employee profiles
Scores ranging from 41-59 out of 100 possible points
100% completion of pre- and post-surveys
2 completed debriefs with 6 total participants

All of the companies that we reached out to for piloting were excited by the opportunity to participate. Companies requested to see the profiles in advance and shared that they felt at ease sending it to their staff due to Returnity's welcoming language and design. In fact, in one pilot, the company saw such immense value in receiving the data that they chose to send it out to their entire staff rather than just the 5-10 working parents we asked for.

92%
overall completion rate

"I feel deeply appreciative that my organization would choose to take this on, that makes me feel really supported."

Returnity helps working parents to feel more supported by their companies.

From pre- and post-surveys, there was a 13% increase in feelings of support that working parents would feel if their companies implemented their suggested improvements, compared to the support they currently feel.

In our pilots, working parents expressed feeling valued through their company's commitment to improving parent-friendliness. One working parent said, "I feel deeply appreciative that my organization would choose to take this on, that makes me feel really supported. A desire to participate in something like this and take it seriously means a lot to me."

Returnity builds awareness of what it means to be a parent-friendly company.

From pre- and post-surveys, there was a 13% decrease in employer ratings of their company's parent-friendliness. This shows an increase in awareness that their companies aren't as parent-friendly as they initially thought.

In our pilots, employers expressed that completing Returnity helped them better understand how well they are supporting working parents. One HR professional said: "It made me realize that there are additional benefits that we could offer to make our organization more parent-friendly. But it also helped me realize that we do have a very flexible and supportive environment already."

Returnity helps company's place more priority on supporting working parents.

From pre- and post-surveys, there was a 17% increase in level of priority that employer's place on supporting working parents.

In our pilots, employers were able to see all the different types of support for working parents that exist, which moved them to want to consider new areas of support that they hadn't thought of before.

17%
increase in level of priority placed on parent-friendliness by companies.

Returnity increases working parents understanding of what they want and need.

From pre- and post-surveys, there was a 19% increase in how knowledgeable working parents felt about support available to them. This shows an increase in level of awareness around parent-friendliness.

In our pilots, working parents learned that there were resources available to them that they did not know about before completing the profile. One working parent said, "It was helpful to think about what do I need, what do I want, what am I entitled to. It made me realize that I had additional questions. I found it really helpful to go through that exercise."

Returnity opens up conversations within companies between HR professionals and working parents.

During the debrief in one of our pilots, the data and information provided in the report sparked questions from both HR professionals and working parents that led to open and honest discussions.

For example, one working parent realized that they did not know about a leave policy available for working parents, which led to the HR manager explaining the policy in more depth. This caused them to realize that some of their policies aren't as accessible as HR intended them to be.

Returnity inspires companies to take action.

As a result of our pilots, all employers expressed wanting to make improvements as a result of what they learned through Returnity. Because Returnity provides a range of recommendations that vary in cost and level of resources needed, companies found it feasible to move forward on next steps.

One employer said, "a next step for us is to take an inventory of the lactation spaces across our various locations, since now I've realized that I don't know if all our offices have one." Another company wanted to hold a follow up meeting and said, "let's sit together again in a week or so and prioritize what we would like to address."

For the upcoming months:

Building partnerships
Returnity plans to continue pilot testing, and currently has three additional companies lined up. We also are looking to expand our network and partner with more interested companies in the future.

Iterating on our evaluation
One aspect of Returnity we would like to continue to improve is the scoring of the evaluation. We are hoping to partner with an expert in scoring logic to build on our current version.

Increasing our reach
Returnity plans to grow our online and social media presence, and begin to promote our services to more companies.

For the future:

Building our database
As more companies partner with us, Returnity could become a tool for long-term data collection that provides information on how this is affecting women in leadership, and overall industry trends as more companies get involved.

Creating a larger system
Over time, Returnity will be able to compare companies of similar size, budget and industry and provide case studies of companies that have successfully implemented changes. One idea we're exploring is to have a way for companies to pledge their commitment to parent-friendliness and potentially receive a certification. We're also considering the idea of providing membership to an online HR platform that would support companies more long-term after completing Returnity.

Launching a movement
Our hope is that Returnity could create a movement of companies leading the way in thinking about the future of work, how families are changing, and how this impacts women.

closing thoughts

Catalina and Taylor

our reflections

In order to build trust with others, we first had to trust ourselves
Since we aren't working moms, building trust with our community was essential for the work to be rooted in their experiences. This would not have been possible without us first understanding our role in this process and how to work together and rely on each other.

Finding the right questions to ask comes from listening
From our community, we learned not to over-plan our research, in order to leave space for spontaneity. This often opened opportunities to discover things we would have never thought to ask and helped us challenge our assumptions. With each other, we navigated different communication styles to create an environment where we both felt heard.

Although collaboration takes time, it makes the work stronger
This journey taught us what co-creation really looks like in practice. When we felt unsure of what to do next, we turned to our community knowing they would guide the next steps. Although this process was not linear and often took longer, it guaranteed that everyone felt confident in the work and that their voice was represented. This also held true within our partnership.

Working with real problems means working with real people
We knew going into thesis that by partnering with working moms, it was going to be essential to adapt to their schedules, needs, and realities. We quickly learned that working within constraints and limitations forced us to be more creative with our thinking. This translated into our partnership where we had to find balance between work, school and our personal lives to be able to bring our best selves to the work.
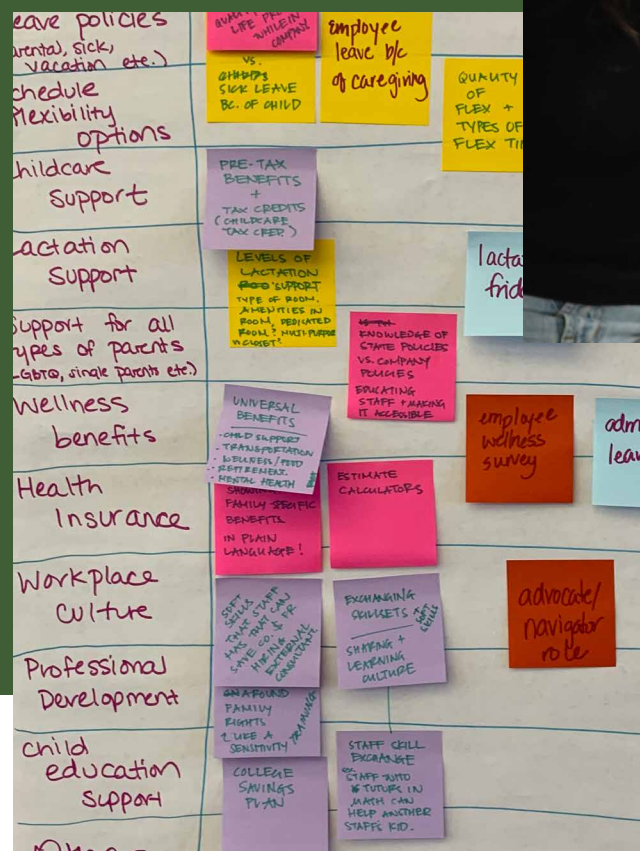
special thanks

Returnity would not have been possible without the support of so many people:

Cheryl Heller, Chair, Design for Social Innovation, for creating this space for us to learn.

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Our Pilot Test Companies, ICL, SVA, Superior, and iEARN, for your time and commitment to building parent-friendly workplaces.

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Our Family and Friends for your constant support and patience over this past year.

Our final co-creation workshop

Catalina Cipri

Taylor Sokolowski

"Women will have achieved true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation."

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg