



Flexible work arrangements typically occur within a modest and predictable range - adjusting a start and quite time here, working from home a day or two there or reducing a schedule by 20%. Change we can live with.

But for 650,000 US employees a year - and their managers - a much more extreme form of flexibility is required. Diagnosed with a range of cancers, many of these employees will walk into a manager's office one day with an unexpected announcement: *"I have cancer."* As the shock wears off, talk turns to how to begin treatment and, most often, to continue working at the same time. Employees will have questions about job security, flexibility and even career impact.

What is a conscientious manager to do? Few companies prepare their managers, HR staff and employees for this challenge. *Cosmetic Executive Women*, leaders of the US cosmetic industry, have long fought cancer individually and as an industry. They thought systematic and effective guidance for companies was needed. Their foundation *Cancer and Careers* partnered with us to assess what managers, HR and staff needed to succeed -- and to design a solution.

In a series of compelling focus groups, interviews and design discussions with cancer survivors, their managers and HR, many needs emerged - chief among them was what we call "extreme flexibility." Integrating demanding treatment regimens and ongoing work requires far more than a one-time schedule change. Managers may be asked to support a sequence of part-time, disability, work from home, full-time with some work-at-home, and part-time - all in a 4-month period. This is extreme flexibility.

The **Managing Through Cancer Pioneers** initiative was launched to support this and other best practices in companies. Early Pioneers *Rodale, Johnson & Johnson, RSM McGladrey, Liz Claiborne, Novartis and Estée Lauder Companies* customized the robust Pioneer website to provide specialized guidance to their managers, HR professionals and staff. The site also identifies erroneous assumptions that weaken outcomes. Among the Pioneer principles and insights are:

Work, not disability is often the first choice. Many cancer survivors told us that their first challenge after diagnosis was convincing their HR professionals and manager to allow them to continue working rather than take disability. According to surveys, roughly 70% of those diagnosed prefer work over disability; as one of them said to us, *"I can't spend a year only being treated and thinking about dying."*

Work status should be discussed early. Employees diagnosed with cancer say their first concern is with job security - and yet few report that their managers or HR teams address this issue clearly. While absolute security cannot be granted, especially in these difficult times, job status and FMLA protections should be thoroughly understood and addressed by both HR and managers.

Managers should take the lead in structuring work. HR has a vital role to play in providing managers with options and support for dealing with necessary flexibility. But the best outcomes occur when the manager is able to collaborate directly with the employee to create schedules that

work throughout the rapid changes of treatment and recovery. MTC's website provides targeted resources for "extreme flexibility."

Opportunities for development continue. Understandably, even supportive managers can take the short-term view of helping an employee with cancer through initial treatment and recovery. But employees are often focused on future career opportunities as well. It is important that regular development opportunities continue during treatment - a period that can be two years or more.

The Pioneers program exists to develop and share tools that make Managing Through Cancer more effective and satisfying. And it strengthens the flexible workplace. Please contact us to learn more about this initiative.

If you would like to receive occasional updates on the Manager Through Cancer Pioneers program, click "Reply" to this email and write "send updates" as the text.

Best regards,
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