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More Than Compliance: The Evolution of Leave Management

Why the future of HR depends on a smarter, more human-centered approach to leave



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Introduction: Leave Management Is Now Business Critical

HR has been quietly undergoing a major glow-up.

Once seen as the department of paperwork, policies, and polite reminders, HR today is leading strategic conversations around culture, retention, DEI, and business continuity. It's no longer just about managing people; it's about empowering them, guiding teams through change, and creating workplaces where trust and performance go hand in hand.

And as HR's role has expanded, so have the expectations. Supporting employees through life events like a parental leave, a medical emergency, or the unexpected loss of a family member has become a defining moment for organizations. How you handle leave isn't just a compliance issue anymore; it's a reflection of your values, your operations, and your ability to show up when it matters most.

In this guide, we'll explore what the modern era of leave management looks like through the latest data, one organization's real-world experience, a cost breakdown, and a practical evaluation checklist.

Because when leave is managed well, everyone wins: HR gets efficient leave management support, employees get clarity and care, and the business gains trust and resilience.

Let's dive in.





Leave as a Business Accelerator: How Strategic Leave Management Drives Organizational Success

Gone are the days when leave management was simply about tracking absences on spreadsheets and ensuring that the bare-minimum of compliance has been met. Today's forward-thinking organizations are discovering that leave management is a powerful business lever that directly impacts growth, retention, and performance.

The evidence is compelling: companies experiencing significant growth maintain an impressive 86% retention rate for employees returning from leave, compared to just 71% for organizations on the decline. This 15-percentage point difference represents more than statistics, but real people choosing to stay with companies that support them through life's pivotal moments.

But the benefits don't stop at retention. The data clearly shows that employees at thriving companies are more likely to hit their objectives and key results (OKRs) after returning from leave. In stable organizations, 74% of employees either "always" or "often" achieve their performance goals post-leave, while declining companies see only 59% of returning employees consistently meeting expectations.

Perhaps most tellingly, organizations seeing significant growth report an average of three times the number of employees taking leave compared to companies in decline. Rather than viewing this as a challenge, these successful companies recognize it as a sign of a healthy culture where employees feel secure enough to take necessary time away.

20% reduction in weekly hours spent managing leave

% Employees Likely to Hit OKRs Returning From Leave

Vendor

74%

Spreadsheet

60%

The Technology Advantage

The most striking revelation? Companies using specialized leave management vendors rather than spreadsheets see dramatic improvements across multiple metrics:

- **33% more** paid parental leave offered
- **Higher retention rates** for employees returning to work
- Increased likelihood of employees **achieving their OKRs post-leave**
- **20% reduction** in weekly hours spent managing leave

These aren't just coincidental correlations. When HR teams are freed from the administrative burden of manual leave tracking, they can focus on creating thoughtful reintegration experiences and maintaining meaningful connections with employees during their absence.



The Mid-Size Company Challenge

Interestingly, companies with 500-1,000 employees face unique struggles. Despite being large enough to experience substantial leave volume, they're the least likely to use specialized leave management vendors. This hesitation to invest in modern solutions directly impacts their ability to retain talent, particularly within the first year after an employee returns from leave.

A Strategic Imperative

The message is clear: leave management isn't just an administrative function—it's a strategic imperative. As one HR leader put it, "When you treat life events that employees navigate like an afterthought, or worse, an inconvenience to your business, you see that direct-line negative impact to your business."

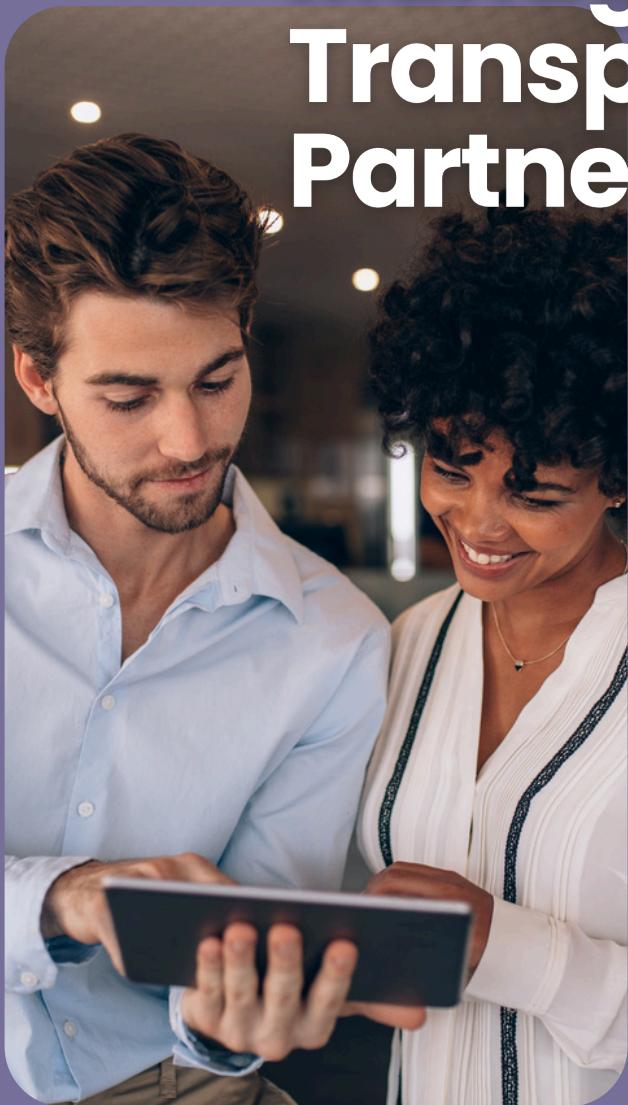
Leave is here to stay, and its complexity is only increasing. Organizations can either "stick their head in the sand" and face the consequences (turnover, legal exposure, inefficiencies, and reputational damage), or they can embrace leave management as one of the most impactful elements of the employee lifecycle.

In today's competitive talent landscape, companies that invest in creating supportive, streamlined leave experiences aren't just being nice, they're being smart. The data proves it: better leave management correlates directly with stronger organizational performance, higher employee satisfaction, and sustainable growth.

The question is no longer whether your organization can afford to invest in modern leave management...it's whether you can afford not to.

CASE STUDY:

How Varo Bank Masters Leave Management Through Transparency and Partnership



For Corey Glover, People Operations Analyst at Varo Bank, managing employee leaves of absence is about building trust through open communication and creating a supportive experience for employees during critical life moments.

"When I joined here almost three years ago, leave management wasn't working," Corey explains. By partnering with Tilt and implementing a transparent, employee-focused approach, Corey has transformed leave management at Varo into a seamless process that supports both employees and the business.

Varo®

The Foundation: Building Trust Through Visibility

"It helps me take my own PTO when I need it because whenever my backup comes into play, they're able to see the same documentation I am."



Corey Glover, People Operations Analyst
Varo Bank

Corey believes the cornerstone of effective leave management is open communication and complete visibility into the process.

"What I really enjoy about the Tilt platform is I can see pretty much everything," Corey shares. "It helps me take my own PTO when I need it because whenever my backup comes into play, they're able to see the same documentation I am. They can go into the platform and see what I've touched, what communication I've had with the employee, and what communication Tilt has had with the employee."

This transparency extends to managers, who have appropriate access to the information they need without compromising employee privacy.

"The platform not only shows the activity track so you can see all the communication, but it also gives you a full calendar, which is what our managers are really looking at," says Corey. "Their main concern is, 'Hey, how long are they going to be out?' By pulling up the manager view of the platform they can clearly see the information they need to be successful."





Creating a True Partnership, Not Just Another Vendor Relationship

What sets Tilt apart in Corey's experience is the partnership approach that goes far beyond typical vendor relationships.

"It's a partnership. I'm not just handing the entire process over," Corey emphasizes. "It's important to me to make sure that leave is running smoothly like it should, and together with Tilt it truly is."

This collaborative approach proved especially valuable when dealing with sensitive situations.

"We had an individual who was going through a mental health situation," Corey recalls. "Tilt's leave success manager was the empathy queen, because she was able to guide that individual through everything that needed to get done in a really tough moment."

"It's a partnership. I'm not just handing the entire process over, it's important to me to make sure that leave is running smoothly like it should, and together with Tilt it truly is."

Varo's Payoff: Better Employee Experience and Business Insights with Tilt

The impact of this approach has been profound for both employees and the business:

1. Better employee support: "No one asks about leaves anymore at work because they (Tilt and the employee) obviously are doing a good job working together. So it's never a question of, 'I don't understand what's happening?'"

2. Faster issue resolution: "This week, we had a payroll situation. Being able to reach out to my Customer Success Manager, and them to be able to get on it immediately has been mind-blowing to me."

3. Data-driven insights: "It also helps giving this information to my leader, who then provides it to the board so they know how money is being spent, how people are taking leave, any kind of trends."



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Corey's Tips for Leave Management Success

Based on his experience at Varo and his partnership with Tilt, Corey offers these recommendations:

1. **Prioritize open communication** with both employees and vendors
2. **Secure sensitive information** in one centralized system
3. **Be proactive** with reminders and guidance
4. **Focus on the employee experience**, especially around pay concerns
5. **Stay flexible** to accommodate complex situations

"I'm an over-communicator, especially in the leave world," Corey admits. "An employee taking a leave may have a whole team under them, and now that team may have to report to somebody new who has no idea what's going on. So it's pure communication and being able to pivot as needed. I couldn't imagine doing this effectively, for every leave, without a leave partner like Tilt."

The Bottom Line: Leave Management That Works

For Corey and Varo Bank, successful leave management isn't just about checking boxes; it's about creating a system that truly supports employees during critical life moments while giving the business the visibility it needs.

"Having that open door policy, that builds the trust," Corey concludes. "And then also just knowing that I can have the autonomy to do a few things in the system that I need to do has been a godsend for me." Through partnership with Tilt and a commitment to transparency, Corey has transformed leave management at Varo into a supportive experience that builds trust throughout the organization.

Don't Just Buy Software. Choose a Partner.

When employees are navigating life's most important (and sometimes most challenging) moments, you need more than a tool – you need a partner. Tilt's built for humans, ready to scale, and genuinely invested in your success.

STRATEGIC VALUE & ROI

- **Do they support complex, evolving leave types (like FMLA and military leave)?**

Today's leave landscape isn't one-size-fits-all. A modern platform should handle nuance without creating chaos.

- **Can you access real-time insights to make smarter decisions?**

Reporting shouldn't just be for compliance. The right tool helps you track usage, spot trends, and advocate for better benefits.

- **Do they prioritize compliance and data security?**

You're trusting them with sensitive data. Make sure they take that seriously – with certifications, audits, and best-in-class protection.

CONTROL & SCALABILITY

- **Can you customize policies, workflows, and comms to fit your org?**

You shouldn't have to choose between automation and control. The best platforms give you both.

- **Does the platform adapt as your organization grows or changes?**

Whether you're scaling, adding locations, or navigating M&A, your leave solution should flex with you – not slow you down.

- **Is it a single source of truth for everyone involved in leave?**

Consolidated data reduces friction, improves accuracy, and streamlines collaboration across teams.

TRUST & TRANSPARENCY

- **Is the leave experience visible to everyone who needs to see it?**

From employees and managers to HR and payroll, the right solution keeps everyone in the loop – no black boxes, no follow-up emails, no guesswork.

- **Do employees feel supported – not just processed?**

Leave is often personal and high-stakes. A partner that centers humanity builds confidence, not confusion.

- **Do customers describe them as a true partner, not just a vendor?**

Look at testimonials, case studies, and reviews. Trust is earned – and the right partner should be proud of what others say about them.



Evaluation Checklist:

Your Guide to Choosing the Right Leave Management Partner

USER EXPERIENCE

- **Is it user-friendly and built for high adoption?**

If your people don't want to use it, none of the other features matter. Simplicity = adoption = ROI.

- **Do they communicate proactively and support you when it counts?**

A partner shows up before you even know there's a problem – and sticks with you when things get tricky.

Want a partner who checks every box?

- **Book a demo with Tilt.**

Conclusion: The Future of Leave Is Here

The days of viewing employee leave as a burdensome compliance exercise are over. As we've explored throughout this guide, forward-thinking organizations like Varo Bank are transforming leave management from an administrative headache into a strategic advantage.

The New Leave Management Equation

What Corey and other progressive HR leaders have discovered is simple but powerful: when you invest in thoughtful, transparent leave management processes, you create a ripple effect of positive outcomes:

- Employees feel supported during life's most challenging and celebratory moments
- Teams maintain continuity with clear visibility into schedules and responsibilities
- HR professionals gain proactive insights to help drive the business forward
- Organizations build lasting trust that translates directly to retention and performance

- The numbers tell the story clearly: organizations that treat leave as a strategic priority (not an afterthought) see higher retention rates, better post-leave performance, and sustainable growth.
- The 15-point retention gap between growing and declining organizations isn't just a statistic; it represents real people choosing to stay with companies that showed up for them when it mattered most.

From Spreadsheets to Success

If there's one lesson to take from this guide, it's that the tools you choose matter. Organizations using specialized leave management solutions are often able to offer more generous leave policies, achieve better outcomes, and do it all while spending less time on administration.

The right solutions empower HR to support their employees through these significant life moments with a human touch. It's the backbone of a relationship built on trust.

"I don't know what it is about everybody at Tilt, but everybody's so empathetic," adds Corey. "Letting employees know hey, Varo supports you and I know what you're going through. Giving employees that kind of confidence only adds to the trust."

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Corey Glover, Varo

A seamless leave of absence experience doesn't happen by accident, it comes from intentional investment in systems and partnerships that prioritize both compliance and care.

Your Leave Management Journey

Whether you're just beginning to reimagine your approach to leave or looking to optimize an existing program, remember that excellence in leave management isn't just about following regulations; it's about creating experiences that reflect your values and strengthen your culture.

The path forward is clear: leave management that works for everyone (HR teams, employees, and the business) isn't just possible; it's becoming the standard by which great workplaces are measured.

So ask yourself: Is your leave management approach building trust and driving business success? Or is it time for an evolution?

The future of leave is here, and it's about more than compliance...it's your competitive advantage waiting to be claimed.

