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The challenge of RTO for working moms

and how one key office
building amenity can help



Navigating motherhood in the post-pandemic work environment

The rise of hybrid and flexible working post-pandemic has been a game-changer for many working mothers, allowing them to better balance their professional responsibilities with family life. But now, as more employers push for a return to the office (RTO), these women are facing difficult decisions. According to a [recent study](#), 72% of working mothers said they would have to leave their jobs without a flexible hybrid policy in place at work.

Mothers who have recently given birth face a unique set of challenges. Sleep deprivation, childcare arrangements, separation anxiety, and many other factors can make settling back into professional life difficult. **A significant obstacle many new mothers face is contending with inadequate facilities for pumping breastmilk at the office.** Many of us have either experienced firsthand or heard horror stories of when a workplace does not have a dedicated lactation room, such as breastfeeding employees barricading themselves in a file closet or using a general “wellness” room where there is potential humiliation if a coworker walks in. Unfortunately, these unaccommodating conditions have caused some mothers to stop breastfeeding altogether after returning to work.



Breastfeeding and the workplace

With the passage of the [PUMP Act in 2022](#), the onus is on employers to provide mothers with guaranteed breaks and better-quality spaces for pumping breastmilk. As RTO mandates demand more in-office time, employers must find inclusive strategies that help retain female employees and support new mothers. While some companies are investing in mothers' rooms within their offices, one effective solution that employs workplace, design, and real estate strategy to create a win for new mothers, employers, and landlords is offering dedicated and fully equipped lactation suites as a building-wide amenity for tenants.

[Work & Mother](#) is a women-owned startup specializing in lactation suites as a building amenity. The company partners with owners and landlords to plan and implement these facilities to serve multiple tenants, ensure regulatory compliance, support marketing efforts, and, once built, provide ongoing management and tenant engagement.

The end product is a fully serviced building amenity that adds value for all stakeholders:

- **Building owners and landlords** add a highly marketable, in-demand amenity to the building, showing a proactive sense of social responsibility while conserving TI dollars that would otherwise be directed toward mothers' rooms within individual tenant suites.
- **Tenants or employers** benefit from a built-in solution that addresses legal obligations and conserves spaces within their office footprint. Providing access to a high-standard amenity supports RTO efforts, constitutes a meaningful step in fulfilling ESG and DEI goals, and ultimately helps minimize the turnover of female employees.
- **Breastfeeding employees** get access to a high-quality, private, and dedicated space for pumping breastmilk, bookable through an online system for peace of mind. These employees will enjoy the convenience and comfort they usually only experience at home.





As the flight-to-quality trend continues, **we believe buildings offering these centralized lactation rooms will appeal to tenants focused on implementing an inclusive workplace strategy.**

Leveraging mothers' rooms to maximize ROI

Additionally, maximizing ROI is crucial for tenants moving into higher-cost buildings, many of whom compensate for an increased cost per square foot by occupying a smaller footprint. However, it is critical that employees are made aware of valuable amenities such as mothers' rooms. This requires a consistent and comprehensive [communication strategy](#). If employers don't proactively communicate the availability of building amenities, employees will feel frustrated in a smaller office without understanding the range of benefits, which can result in higher turnover. For this reason, employers must work to "sell" these amenities to their employees just as building owners and landlords sell them to prospective tenants.

A triple win

As RTO strategy continues challenging employers and employees, companies must find effective solutions to demonstrate the value of in-office time. **For working mothers returning to the office after childbirth, centralized, user-friendly lactation suites can only make the back-to-work transition easier.** But as we've seen, it's not just the mothers who win; it's also organizations that need to retain talent and building owners who seek long-term value. Bringing all these interests together is a triple win—and another step toward making workplaces work for all.



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