

PNB MetLife Gives Maternity Benefits to Women Staff Opting for Surrogacy

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New Delhi: In a first, PNB MetLife India Insurance has rolled out maternity benefits this year for women employees who opt for surrogacy, granting them four weeks of leave — the same as for adoption. The leave policy is a part of a larger diversity and inclusion initiative across the company.

“It makes absolute business sense. We keep talking about the digital age and providing options to people and customers. The nature of the workforce is changing and we need to provide these options to them,” said Ashish Srivastava, director, human resources. One-and-a-half years ago, the company introduced adoption leave, after which it decided to provide more options to employees, including maternity benefits for women who opt for surrogacy.

The company wants to move beyond ticking boxes in diversity. “We are not only talking about diversity and inclusion, but are making it real,” said Srivastava. The company provides 12 weeks of maternity leave, five working days’ paternity leave and six weeks off in



case of a miscarriage.

“Diversity and inclusion are not just buzzwords for us but an integral part of MetLife’s values and culture globally. In India, too, the key drivers of our D&I strategy are around talent and our commercial opportunities. We must ensure that we attract, retain and engage high-calibre global talent to deliver our business strategy,” says Tarun Chugh, MD & CEO of PNB MetLife.

The initiative gets a thumbs-up from experts who track diversity and inclusion initiatives. “I am amazed that an organisation has seen a demographic pattern in its

people. You never know which career enabler becomes a magic bullet for women,” said Saundarya Rajesh, founder-president of AVTAR Career Creators. She, however, raises a red flag that young women are putting careers first while their biological clock is starting at them.

Another diversity expert, who did not wish to be identified, said when organisations go out of their way to provide enablers, it invariably builds their employer brand. “The important thing is to sustain such initiatives,” she said.

PNB MetLife is also looking at in-

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creasing the number of women employees. It has about 11,000 employees, of which 25% are women. The company has asked its vendors to give at least one diverse resume out of three. “In alignment with MetLife’s focus on customer centricity, the more diverse backgrounds and experiences we as employees bring to bear in serving our customers, the more successful we will be in developing the products and services and meeting their needs,” says Chugh.

To meet the challenge of making the initiatives percolate down the organisation, the company is putting in place diversity champions to communicate and disseminate the schemes. Initially, the diversity champions are all women. However, in three months, the company aims to prepare a pool of male diversity champions, too.