

ABC Corporation is a major consumer products goods company in Toronto. Since the headquarters of this company are in the United States, there are very few opportunities for advancement for people who are in Caitlin's position who want to remain in Canada. There are 20 category managers, but only 5 director positions who report directly to the Canadian CEO. This company has a forced ranking system, where they are only able to assign 5 category managers a "1" ranking.

In Canada, women are given a year long parental leave. The first 12 weeks are covered by the employer and the government of Canada covers the remainder for a portion of the individual's salary. Both men and women are allowed to partake in this leave, splitting up the time in any way they wish (both parents taking several months consecutively, concurrently, or one parent taking the entire year). Upon their return, the mother or father is guaranteed their position at the same level.

At ABC, not only does this entail holding a job, but also the organization must hold the performance ranking of the individual for the year following their return. This is because the law states that the individual must remain at their same ranked level until they are able to endure a full performance cycle.

Directors seeking to evaluate the performance of Category managers and give assignments find that their parental leave policies have some unintended consequences that cause difficulty. Most women in the organization do not seem to be taking advantage of the split parental leave, choosing to take the entire year. Further, of the women at the category manager level who have taken the full year in the last ten years, 85 percent of those women have become pregnant for a second time within the following year and a half. This is likely a function of the average age range of category managers (29-35). As a result, for the majority of category managers who take a year maternity leave, they are unable to undergo a full performance cycle and become re-ranked according to their performance for 4 performance cycles (baby 1 maternity leave, work year, baby 2 maternity leave, work year).

Caitlin is a married 33 year-old category manager at ABC. She has been working there since her graduation from the University of Toronto 12 years ago and has moved up the ranks. Caitlin has been consistently a "1" performer and her work in the past year has been exceptional, growing her brand 30% in a bad economy and instituting new and exciting programs and marketing strategies.

After this most recent performance review, Caitlin is informed that she received a "2+" performance ranking. She believes that this ranking does not reflect her actual performance and that it is a function of her age, marital status and the organization's desire to not "take up a 1 ranking for the next year, or more, if I choose to become pregnant."

Pro Position: Argue that ABC Corp has the right to reserve 1 rankings to provide the greatest motivational benefit of such rankings over the greatest number of employees.

Con Position: Argue that ABC Corp should give Caitlin a 1 ranking, despite the chance that it may inhibit their ability to reward performance of other employees in the future.