



## Accenture (UK) Limited

Accenture employs about 10,500 people in the UK and Ireland in consulting, outsourcing and technical support. Over recent years they have used the opportunities offered by flexible working and advances in information and communication technologies to create 'smart working'.

Isabel Naidoo is Talent and Citizenship Lead: *"We are a people management business; talent management is paramount for us. Over recent years we have seen a shift in demand for the way people wish to work for us."*

Originally the main reason for introducing flexible working was to aid the recruitment and retention of women employees. The rationale has now changed. *"We also have to respond to our clients. We want our teams to reflect the client base. These are changing. We must stay ahead of the field. Now the main focus for both us and for our clients is how we can deliver more. We are now in the business of working smarter."*

Smart working involves two separate elements. On the one hand Accenture offers the full range of flexible working options - maternity and paternity leave, reduced hours, breaks from employment and virtual working. On the other they use advances in new information and communication technologies to deliver work more efficiently.

*"We want to make life easier and to do this we are getting people to talk to each other. The key is how do we equip line managers to stop saying 'no' and instead find the area of agreement?"*

Recently Accenture piloted a home working scheme with a particular group of employees which had 80 per cent take up. A key element of the success was ensuring that the technology and tools - file sharing, conferencing by lap top etc - were more than adequate for the task.

*"We use the Telepresence Facility. This helps you feel that you are actually at a meeting unlike the older teleconferencing technology. This makes sense in lots of ways. This has led to a decrease in travel which helps manage costs and prevents harm to the environment. It also leads to improved satisfaction – burdensome travel is reduced and people can work from their own locations. Finally clients are happy."*

One of the changes that Isabel Naidoo is most proud of is the Accenture maternity scheme. This is holistic and starts before women take maternity leave and continues long after they return. It involves a having a buddy, a keep in touch scheme with the opportunity to work for up to 10 days on key projects, returning lunches, workshops and a breastfeeding facility. Maternity leavers receive nine months full pay.

Together this has led to significant changes in a very short period of time. Two years ago only 70% of women were returning after maternity leave. This figure has now risen to 90%. *"This has been a compelling thing. Every single person who has returned from maternity leave feels that Accenture has looked after them. This has really resonated with the business."*

Isabel Naidoo is clear that there will be no going back to a more rigid past in the near future: *"Smart working is at the forefront of our future work. Our role is to unpick the worlds of work. We help liberate organisations stuck in nine to five and enable them to focus on results by looking at the best way of putting the best people in the right places. It is cost-effective in a time of recession and provides added opportunities."*

## Supporting Statement

**Organisation:** Accenture (UK) Limited

**Approximate number of employees:** 9,000 in the UK, 1,500 in Ireland, 180,000 worldwide

**Sector:** Professional Services

**Brief description of nature of business:** Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company. Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments in the following areas: Management Consulting, Systems Integration & Technology, and Outsourcing.

### **1. Why is your organisation a good place for parents to work today? We are looking for evidence (eg, maternity return rate, men working flexibly, extra support for carers, senior level diversity) as well as any programmes or initiatives which mark you out from your competitors.**

Accenture's supportive approach to parents working today can be demonstrated as follows:

- Since the implementation of Accenture's Maternity programme in 2007, Accenture has seen a 30% increase in return to work rate from 70% to 90%.
- In 2007 over 3,800 (35%) of Accenture's UK employees told us they are working flexibly, and 90% of those who apply for a formal flexible working arrangements have their application approved
- Every quarter New/Expectant Fathers Workshop, Pre-Maternity Workshops and Maternity Returner Lunches are run focusing on topics such as childcare options, career planning guidelines, flexible work options, networking and first aid for our new mothers and fathers. This is also open to foster parents.
- Accenture seeks to educate and support our parents and carers with forums to discuss topics relevant to parenthood/caring and access to support they need when they need it. Examples include:
  - Publication of New and Expectant Parents Brochure
  - Working Parents Website
  - Active Family Interest Group
  - Enablement Interest Group
  - 24 hour Counselling
  - Bullying
  - Literacy
  - Understanding Children's Thinking
  - First Aid for Parents
  - 1:1 Parent Coaching
  - Success Measures for Working Parents
- Accenture also holds an annual Bring Your Children to Work Day across the London and Manchester sites and encourages participation at local units. One of the highlights of the calendar year, this event increases in its popularity year after year as Accenture opens its door to families.

### **2. Please describe up to three milestones, changes or initiatives which helped the organisation become the great place for working parents that it is today.**

- Accenture's Flexible Working policy, established in 2001, supports formal and informal arrangements for all employees including mothers and fathers (subject to agreement). The company's standard flexible working options include flexible hours, part-time working, job sharing and home enabled working. Employees may request other flexible working options, and any combination of the above options.
- Since April 2007 Accenture has provided enhanced maternity leave (nine months full pay) and Paternity leave (two weeks full pay). Employees taking paternity leave can arrange to take their time off flexibly to support their personal needs.
- Accenture also offers a leave of absence for up to 12 months following maternity leave, makes provision for a childcare salary sacrifice or to manage nanny payroll through Accenture payroll administration. We also ensure there is time for our mothers to ramp up and down with an administrative week pre and post maternity leave.

**3. What was the driving force behind these initiative(s)? This might have been, for example, a particular business challenge, internal or external; leadership shown by an individual; employee demand for change, etc.**

*"We honestly believe that the organisations that will be successful in the next 10 to 20 years are those that have looked after the diverse nature of their people. Mothers and fathers are part of that."* Ismail Amla, Human Capital Director UK and Ireland

Business challenge - Accenture recognises that the working population is changing, aging and becoming more reliant on women and that there is a need to respond to this by ensuring we attract and retain the most talented people to our organisation. In a 2008 external recruitment survey run by Accenture, flexible working was ranked sixth out of 14 factors (above organisation's reputation/name and social agenda) when participants were asked to list what is important to them in the decision process of joining an organisation. We also understand that those who work flexibly are more engaged; across Accenture as a whole those who worked flexibly scored 5% higher on the engagement scores than those who did not (2007/08 Global Employee Survey)

The benefits of our implementing enhanced policies around paternity and maternity leave have resulted in:

- Increased return-to-work rates (mothers)
- Reduced recruitment and training costs
- More skilled, motivated, and committed workforce (both)
- Ability to attract staff that might have otherwise been unable to work
- Reduced absenteeism and stress
- Improving organisational efficiency

**4. How do you think that your initiative(s) or practice, past or current, have influenced other employers?**

Accenture programmes have resulted in 'industry standard' awards including:

- Nominated in the Working Mother's List of the 100 Best Companies for working mothers for the last six years
- For the third year in a row, Accenture has been named in *The Times* Top 50 Where Women Want to Work 2008
- One of *The Guardian's* top six places for parents to work

Through strong relationships with a variety of organisations Accenture aims to establish itself in the marketplace as a leading thinker on critical business issues. Through BITC networking events, Work Foundation and other external communities we share our experiences and best practice externally. Currently Accenture is working with a UK Government group 'Think Fathers' which aims to support fathers in the workplace.