INTENTIONAL POLICY DESIGN IN PRACTICE

REBOOT REPRESENTATION

The following is an example of how an organization could apply the key design questions to paid sick leave, one of the nine cornerstone policies and practices.

Use quantitative and qualitative data to identify how pain points differ for each group:

- Gather inputs from different types of employees, such as parents, single parents, and caregivers of adult dependents (including different gender and racial or ethnic identities) through various channels such as listening sessions, focus groups, and anonymous surveys.
- Ask employees about the barriers they see to using or getting the most out of today's policies, as well as what they would like to see in the future. What makes them hesitate to use sick time when they need it?
- Make sure to disaggregate data at the intersection of race or ethnicity, gender, and other sub-categories to understand how pain points may affect Black, Latina, and Native American women differently. (For instance, how might pain points affect a Black senior manager at your company who is a single parent?)

Offer employees multiple relevant options:

- Offer sick days that can be used in multiple ways, such as "sick hours" to attend medical appointments during the workday or sick days to care for a dependent who is ill.

Ensure all options are accessible and easy to use:

- Eliminate unnecessary barriers, such as requiring employees to request approval within a certain time frame or the requirement to submit a doctor's note as documentation.
- Be clear about the channels of communication (such as email, Slack, text message, or phone call) that are acceptable for notifying supervisors and HR of an absence, and specify what information employees need to share.
- Make sure that the policy (and any related instructions or information) is easy to find and that there is a single source of truth.
- Give employees access to their sick leave balance so they can keep track without needing to reach out to a supervisor or HR.
- If possible, provide a "buddy coverage" system so employees can take a sick day without feeling that they're letting their team down, because their buddy can cover their workload for the day.
- Do not set expectations that a sick employee should attend meetings remotely.

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Communicate frequently and clearly about the practice:

- Communicate with employees about sick leave benefits throughout the year, not just during open enrollment (for example, send reminders in the fall around back-to-school time).
- Ensure that communications clearly state what sick leave can and cannot be used for (for instance, employee illness or injury, a loved one's illness or injury, preventive care, or caregiving).
- Use various communication channels to reach employees with different preferences, including nudges via email, webinars, in-person town halls, corporate intranet, and employee resource group events or communications.

Promote a culture that encourages adoption:

- Ensure that teams are supportive of colleagues when they are out by establishing a clear plan regarding work responsibilities or assigning buddies to cover certain critical tasks during absences.
- Eliminate stigma by encouraging senior leaders and people managers to role model by being transparent about their use of these benefits.
- Reward senior leaders and people managers who have consistently strong engagement and/or well-being scores (for instance, through pulse checks or employee engagement surveys).
- Train senior leaders and people managers to talk to their teams about why taking time off (especially during illness) is a business imperative—such as speeding time to recovery and reducing the chance of infecting others.

Continuously measure impact through disaggregated data and iterate as needed:

- Analyze uptake across different segments of the population to identify trends (such as team, geography, and employee demographics), and ask employees what is useful about the current policy or what continued pain points they are experiencing.