

Turning Impossible to Possible

As COVID-19 created unprecedented challenges for working parents, **Plante Moran** invested in solutions.



SINCE JOINING PLANTE MORAN NEARLY

five years ago, Tajma Qorri, international tax consultant, has appreciated the ongoing support one of the nation's largest certified public accounting firms has provided to her as a working parent. But when the pandemic hit last spring, both Qorri's job and her children's school went remote. By the summer, an overwhelmed Qorri approached her supervisor about taking a leave of absence.

Millions of other American mothers reached a similar breaking point—and dropped out of the workforce due to

COVID-19. In fact, according to the National Women's Law Center, women's participation in the labor force fell to just 57% in January, its lowest rate in more than 30 years.

For Qorri, however, there was another option. Her supervisor temporarily reduced her hours, which allowed her to keep working with considerably less stress. "I can help my kids with virtual school," she says. "But I'm still very engaged with my team, providing great client service, and moving my career forward."

The arrangement was possible because of Plante Moran's Work from Home Remedies program. Created last year to address pandemic-related challenges workers faced, the program includes financial support of up to \$2,000 in reimbursement for continuous learning and dependent care, up to \$600 for home-office upgrades (in addition to company-provided technology), free meal deliveries, reimbursement for at-home gym equipment, and enhanced scheduling flexibility.

Plante Moran has emphasized work-life balance since its inception. Founder Frank Moran, a philosophy student turned accountant, made it a priority to support staff members holistically—as professionals, parents, and individuals with outside interests—a value that remains integral to the company culture today.

For example, in October, Plante Moran encouraged all staff—or "PM-ers"—to take part in a long "recharge weekend" that sent the entire company offline for three days. The cost to the firm was significant, but leadership sees ongoing investments in mental health as key to its success, especially when it comes to retaining valued staff who are parents.

"Our goal is to keep our talent with the firm for the long haul," says Plante Moran group managing partner Terri Pollock. "We often equate it to a highway: Sometimes staff need to get out of the fast lane. When the time is right, they shift back."

And for PM-ers like Qorri, that sentiment provides the staying power they need. ■

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