

# The Emerging Intersection Between Caregiving Employees, DE&I, and Corporate Culture

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*The aging of our population and the associated increased demand placed upon our workforce has placed workers and their employees at a crossroad. The landscape of caregiving has expanded as more employees are now balancing professional obligations while tending to caregiving duties for aging parents, children with special needs, or other family members. Employers are just beginning to recognize the impact this will have on their organizations and its culture as our population continues to age and the pace of life continues to accelerate. This rapidly evolving challenge has given rise to employee caregivers as an emerging constituency under the auspices of DE&I. For around 12% of the workforce, encompassing half of the 53 million US caregivers, this juggling act extends far beyond the individual employee, influencing the wider diversity context, organizational dynamics, and the financial performance of companies.*

*The size of this challenge is even more pronounced when evaluating its impact on specific groups within the US workforce. Diverse communities encounter amplified caregiving challenges. Minority groups, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those in rural areas provide more care and report poorer physical health. Each community exhibits unique characteristics. For instance, 60% of family caregivers are female; 36% of all Hispanic households have at least one family caregiver; African American caregivers often serve as the primary caregiver for a care recipient; and LGBTQ+ employees are more inclined to be providing and receiving care from non-family members. These groups typically earn less than their counterparts, limiting their options for tailored caregiving support solutions like geriatric care management services costing between \$100 to \$300 an hour.*

## Why Caregiving Matters in DE&I Initiatives

Caregiving obligations disproportionately impact a broad variety of demographic segments, particularly women and individuals from minority communities. Balancing these duties can hinder career advancement, influencing diversity within organizations.

**Gender Equality:** Women, often shouldering a larger portion of caregiving responsibilities, encounter

disruptions in their career paths due to these commitments. According to a report by the Center for American Progress, “Regardless of age or parental status, women were a staggering five to eight times more likely to experience a caregiving impact on their employment in 2022.” This disparity contributes to gender gaps in the workplace, affecting promotions and leadership positions having an impact on careers long after their caregiving journey

has completed. Unpaid family caregiving reduces an employee's lifetime earnings by 15 percent. This not only impacts their financial resources today but serves to reduce the caregivers retirement income in the future.

**Inclusive Culture and Support:** Inclusive workplaces prioritize understanding and accommodating diverse needs, including those related to caregiving. The proliferation and development of DE&I initiatives in many of our organization has provided the foundation needed to support those who care. Developing a culture of caring that recognizes the diverse needs of all workforce constituents represents a tremendous opportunity for organizations to embrace both the employee and their families. Providing flexible work setups, caregiver support initiatives, and resources not only nurtures inclusivity but also bolsters a more diverse workforce.

**Intersectionality:** The convergence of caregiving responsibilities with other aspects of diversity—such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation—amplifies challenges for individuals from marginalized groups in balancing caregiving with their professional commitments due to systemic inequities.

**Retention and Talent Growth:** Offering robust support for caregivers aids in retaining diverse talent. Companies with policies supportive of caregivers attract and retain employees from varied backgrounds, significantly contributing to a more heterogeneous workforce.

**Health Equity:** Recognizing caregiving challenges via inclusive policies enhances the overall health and well-being of employees. Addressing these challenges contributes to fostering health equity within the workforce.

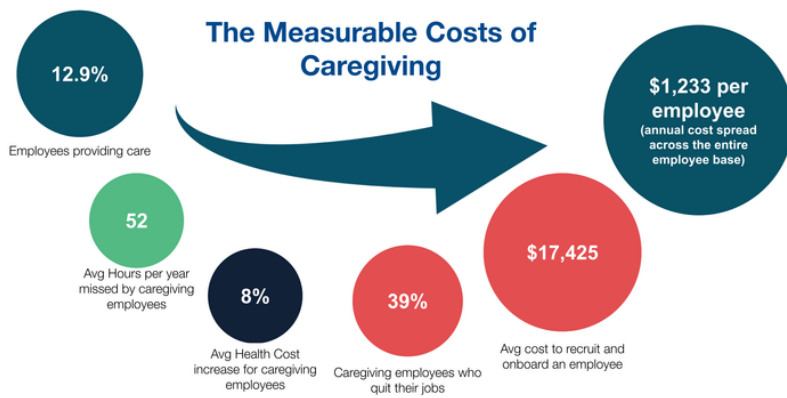
**Leadership and Representation:** By supporting caregivers in their career paths despite caregiving responsibilities, organizations cultivate diverse leadership representation, ensuring individuals with caregiving experiences have opportunities for advancement.

## **Why Employers Should Care**

Employee caregiving is a secret to many. In fact, employers significantly underestimate the impact of caregiving on their financial performance because employees caring for loved ones fear disclosing this responsibility to their bosses. A 2020 Harvard University study revealed that 44% of caregiving employees keep their caregiving role secret from their employers, dreading negative career repercussions. This stigma and lack of trust are a costly oversight for employers, leading to expenses categorized into three main areas: Attrition, Lost Productivity, and Intangible costs.

**Attrition:** The juggling act between work and caregiving prompts 38% of caregiving employees to depart from their jobs, take leave, or reduce work hours, affecting both their income and career progression while also impacting their employer's financial standings. Employers often miscalculate the impact of caregiving on their workforce, neglecting the expense involved in replacing staff. SHRM estimates that on average, the cost to recruit, hire, and train an employee exceeds \$17,000 per position in the US. Given the fact that employee caregivers are generally mid-level and your highest paid and experienced cohort, this replacement cost may in actuality be significantly higher.

**Lost Productivity:** A 2022 Johns Hopkins study discovered that approximately 23.3% of employed family caregivers reported absenteeism or presenteeism each month due to caregiving responsibilities. This caregiving-induced productivity decline generated a 33% reduction in work productivity, amounting to an estimated annual loss of \$5,600 per employee, primarily stemming from reduced on-the-job performance. Productivity dips were more pronounced among caregivers of older adults with substantial care needs and varied based on sociodemographic factors and available caregiver support.



**Intangible Costs:** The third category, intangible costs, proves challenging to quantify. Consider the departure of organizational knowledge due to attrition or the negative perception of the organization resulting from such turnover. A striking statistic underscores that over 30% of employee caregivers fall within the 50-64 age bracket—a cohort comprising seasoned employees with invaluable institutional knowledge. Losing them would significantly impact organizational strategies and financial performance.

In addition, failing to acknowledge the demands of caregiving on employees elevates litigation risks. Family Responsibilities Discrimination (FRD) is rooted in stereotypical assumptions regarding how employees with family responsibilities will or should behave. Surprisingly, over two-thirds of FRD lawsuits that reached trial favored the employee—a notably higher success rate compared to other employment discrimination cases.

### Embracing Change for a More Inclusive Future

Organizations dedicated to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) must acknowledge the pivotal role of caregiving in cultivating an inclusive workplace. Investing in caregiver-centric policies, establishing robust support systems, enabling flexible work setups, and nurturing a culture that embraces caregiving responsibilities are vital steps toward fostering a diverse and equitable work environment.

Efforts to cater to the needs of caregiving employees go beyond mere legal compliance; they are about fostering an environment where every individual feels valued and supported. These initiatives not only

contribute to a more inclusive workplace but also significantly enhance employee satisfaction, retention rates, and the overall prosperity of the organization.

Tackling DE&I concerning family caregiving entails recognizing and rectifying disparities, advocating for inclusive policies and services, and comprehending the diverse needs of caregivers and care recipients from various cultural, social, and economic backgrounds.

Key strategies include:

- **Training and Awareness:** Organize training sessions or workshops to enlighten both employees and managers about the challenges faced by caregivers. Educate them on inclusive practices and the varying needs of caregivers.
- **Resource Networks and Support Groups:** Establish employee resource groups or support networks explicitly tailored for caregivers. These platforms facilitate the exchange of experiences, mutual support, and advocacy for caregiver-friendly policies.
- **Career Development and Advancement:** Forge pathways for career growth and progression for caregivers. Offer mentorship programs, flexible advancement opportunities, and ensure that caregiving responsibilities don't hinder career prospects.
- **Policy Review and Revision:** Regularly assess company policies to ensure they are inclusive and supportive of caregivers. Solicit feedback from employees and adapt policies to meet evolving needs.
- **Normalize Discussions About Caregiving:** Encourage open dialogues about caregiving responsibilities in the workplace to diminish stigma and foster a culture of empathy and support.
- **Leadership Support and Role Modeling:** Ensure visible support from leadership for caregiver-friendly policies and practices. When leaders prioritize work-life balance and acknowledge caregiving responsibilities, it sets a positive example for the entire organization.

Implementing these strategies empowers companies to cultivate a more inclusive and supportive environment for employees managing work alongside caregiving responsibilities. This, in turn, helps diminish inequities in the workplace.

## Finding Solutions

Developing solutions for caregiver support at the workplace has yielded mixed results so far. Currently, only 12% of employers offer services specifically aimed at assisting working caregivers, a seemingly low figure that might be attributed to several factors. Primarily, many employers do not perceive caregiving as a significant issue due to hidden costs and employees' reluctance to disclose their caregiving challenges to their bosses. Harvard's Caring Company report released in 2022 indicated that 44% of employee caregivers hesitate to share their struggles with their employer. However, an overwhelming 72% expressed willingness to do so if presented with viable solutions.

Moreover, the existing solutions tend to revolve around limited options like paid time off (PTO) or modified Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counseling, which are more reactive to incidents rather than addressing the daily caregiving needs over time. Unfortunately, these options do little to actually simplify employees' lives and can even contribute to increased productivity loss in the workforce.

To effectively address this issue, successful solutions must cater to both employee needs and employer interests. They should aim to mitigate productivity loss, enhance employee mobility, reduce workplace

## About LyfLynks

LyfLynks presents an affordable life support platform solution catering to the varied needs of family caregivers while concurrently reducing attrition, absenteeism, and presenteeism. Our platform seamlessly integrates a mobile app, a 24/7 member care center manned by live member care advocates, and a network of vetted service providers. We simplify, and organize caregiving while assisting and anticipating the needs of those who care.

Acknowledging that family caregiving involves not just immediate but also extended family members, LyfLynks is crafted to streamline communication among the recipient's care stakeholders.

We prioritize service quality by meticulously reviewing potential providers and collating comprehensive ratings from end users. Through our rigorous assessment of service providers, their credentials, and LyfLynks' meticulous coordination and monitoring, we deliver substantial time savings for caregivers and immediate cost reductions for employers.

stress, and bolster the capacity of staff members. Simultaneously, these solutions should demonstrate a commitment to innovative support systems that embrace employees and their families.

Critical characteristics of viable solutions include being engaging, user-friendly, easily accessible and able to evolve as caregiving needs change over time. The caregiving journey typically spans over four years, during which the needs of both care recipients and caregivers change significantly.

Employers are presented with both a formidable challenge and a remarkable opportunity. Creating and nurturing a supportive work culture for those with caregiving responsibilities can lead to cost reductions and a substantial return on investment. Furthermore, it fosters employee loyalty, trust, and a strong belief in the companies they work for.

In essence, integrating caregiving support into DE&I initiatives isn't merely a forward-thinking strategy; it's an ethical necessity. Embracing caregiving employees within the DE&I framework propels companies towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future. It signifies a step towards a workplace where every individual, irrespective of their caregiving responsibilities, can flourish and contribute optimally to the organization's success.



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