

EPISODE 124

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:03] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to The Mentor List.

“To turn you into the best version of you that’s around.”

“To seek support when you need to, a liaison to be supported.”

“To really have a point of difference.”

“What is precious? What’s really important? Then putting some boundaries there.”

[00:00:18] ANNOUNCER: *The Mentor List* specialises in interviews with top business minds; gather their advice for your career. This is *The Mentor List!*

[00:00:32] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to *The Mentor List*. This is our specialist mini-series called *Diversity Matters: Leaders in Conversation* with your mini-series host Richard Elstone, a prior guest on the show and well-known expert and coach in getting execs ready for making a move.

I hope you enjoy this episode of *Diversity Matters: Leaders in Conversation*, here on *The Mentor List*.

[00:00:54] ANNOUNCER: Hello, and welcome to today's Mentor List Talent webinar and welcome to *The Mentor List*. We are a collaboration of business services and professional growth and we're dedicated to connecting the very best minds here in Australia.

Today, we're very excited to introduce our speakers in support of such a great initiative today. A little bit about *The Mentor List*: So, we started back in 2016, based on the fundamentals of leveraging and learning from the lived experience. And so, this saw us launch our podcast back in 2016, which then eventuated into our Mentor Marketplace that has helped and placed many mentors and mentees. This also evolved into our Mastermind Groups which we had the pleasure of supporting some of Australia's most established and successful leaders, here in Australia. We've also got some advisory services and consulting and strategy, which we help our clients with. So, moved away from just the professional development and growth and into,

sort of, those business services products and that includes The Mentor List digital arm. But more so than pertinently, we're here today through Mentor List Talent which is all about targeting diverse initiatives to support women in leadership, women in technology, and more specifically - and relevant to this webinar - return-to-work mums.

So, I'll just do a little bit of housekeeping and then you won't hear from me. We'll introduce Claire and Sharon very shortly. We do have a couple of poll questions which you'll see, sort of, pop up in the GoToWebinar. So, we will be asking a couple of predefined survey questions and looking forward to your responses, and we'll actually get some feedback and context on those responses toward the end of the webinar. So, they're all multi-choice and very easy to answer.

We do want to have an interactive session here today and we do encourage your participation. There is a chat function here in the GoToWebinar set up so you can ask us any questions and we'll have some time set aside towards the end of the webinar where we'll provide some context or answers on those. We are also recording today's session so we'll send out the shared recording with yourselves and some of the participants that have registered and haven't made it today.

Today you'll hear from our guest speakers, so we've got Claire Rogers and Sharon Daly here. I'll just do a very brief introduction from Claire and then I'll hand over to Sharon. So, previously, Claire was the Chief Executive of World Vision Australia. That is the country's largest not-for-profit organisation, and extensive global and local experience in the financial services division of ANZ, including a stint as the Head of Digital Banking. She was also the Chairman of Ridley College here in Melbourne from 2009 to 2016, where she guided them to achieve a business model shift again in that online delivery. She's also assisting several digital and new business startups to achieve scale, and Managing Partner of our very own CEO Mastermind Advisory Services. If that wasn't enough, Claire is also Director of Melbourne Business School and MLC Methodist Ladies' College, here in Kew, Melbourne. Also, a member of the Chief Executive Women and the AICD Scale investors, an angel investor network focused on female founders. So, a very impressive professional resume.

What probably doesn't get included in the CV is she's also married and with two children, Lochlan and Madeleine, ages 21 and 17. So, very much looking forward to hearing Claire's perspective on this topic today.

Just to introduce Sharon quickly, and then I'll hand over as well: Sharon has 18 years of experience in the recruitment industry, both within agency and talent acquisition. Sharon's professional experience includes six years as an assistant to senior execs, 10+ years recruitment within technology - and that's across Europe, Australia, Asia - and she's also more recently become the Managing Partner and Founder of Mentor List Talent. The Mentor List Talent is all about being driven to challenge diversity and to support mums returning to work, an area which we all feel has been neglected and under-served for far too long. So, without further ado, I'll just hand over to Sharon to continue the webinar.

[EPISODE]

[00:05:01] SD: Thank you, David, for the introduction and welcome to Claire also, and welcome to all of you joining us today for this very important topic. I want to start by telling you a short story and please bear with me, there is a method to my madness here. I guess it gives you more insight into how Mentor List Talent came to be as well.

If you can picture, I was a researcher, one of four supporting 17 account managers and this was for technical recruitment into the Japanese market. So, I was supporting 17 account managers who were all male. I was accustomed to hearing, at the time, that women couldn't really make it in the technical world as an account manager. And, sure enough, I would see women come in as account manager for the technical recruitment world and they wouldn't succeed. And I was watching on and seeing this happen. But I guess what the guys didn't realise is the environment that was being created around these conversations.

So, if you can imagine, if 16 of those guys suddenly turned on one of those guys saying that they wouldn't be successful and we're having these conversations in that environment, do you think that guy would thrive and be successful? I don't think so. So, no one would survive in that kind of environment.

Anyway, I grew tired of watching this and decided to become an account manager myself. The rule then, for recruiting into the Japanese market, was you had a grace period from six to 12 months where you got to make your first placement because it was a slower process, and all the rest. So, I became an account manager and I actually made my first placement within the first six weeks, and I made five placements within four months which was unheard of for this market and, in particular, for a technical account manager as well.

So fast forward, I was then flown to Japan on a business trip, I trained and managed a team of researchers and, sure enough, became a successful account manager in the technical world as a woman. So, what I'm trying to say is that the moral of my story here is not that I was a successful account manager, it was the fact it changed the environment for more women to come in and thrive, which is exactly what happened. It is possible to reprogram unintentional mindsets and stereotyping to create a better outcome.

So, where Mentor List Talent came from is I wanted to help and encourage the same hope in other women. There are a lot of fantastic support groups out there for women in tech, women in leadership and - relevant to today's topic - mums returning to work. However, there was no real avenue to connect these professionals directly to opportunities with progressive organisations where they can actually thrive. That's where, I guess, Mentor List Talent has come from and came to be.

On that note, we will now cross over and speak with Claire on her experience as a return-to-work mum, twice over, a real-life success story. So, Claire, what were the key challenges you faced when returning to work for the first time after having your first child?

[00:08:43] CR: Yeah, thanks, Sharon, and welcome, everyone. I do encourage you to use the chat. We're going to explore some content here but if there's things you want to know, pop those questions in the chat and we'll try and tackle them.

Actually, some of my challenges were before I had my first child, when I became pregnant and there was a challenge in my head. I mean, we look back now and think, "How could I possibly have thought this?" but I did think, "Oh, maybe that's going to be the end of my career, having a child." And thankfully, we've come a long way since then, in the last 20 years, but it still crossed

my mind and it's, in fact, the challenge was me and my mental frame, to think about how to make it possible to come back to work.

The other thing that was happening for me at the time was I was actually working in London. My management team were back in Australia. I was running a business and very successfully on behalf of the ANZ Bank and I'd been headhunted, or I was being tapped on the shoulder, to go work for another bank in London to do that job and they were offering quite a lot more money. So, being slightly unplanned in this context, I decided that what I would do is talk to my boss first about the fact that he wasn't paying me enough money. And then, secondly, "By the way, I'm pregnant and we need to talk about what might work after I come back to work". To his credit, he was quite a forward-thinking guy. He immediately agreed to the pay rise. And secondly, he said, "Don't worry, what we're going to do is set you up at home. You're going to be able to work the hours you want to and you just send us a bill for how many hours you can do, until you're ready to come back in the office."

So, what I learned from that experience, the challenge was my mental frame; what I thought was possible was limited but, when I asked for what I needed, I actually was given what I needed. And so, I learned to ask for what you need. So, then when I came back to work with a child, the support he'd provided was good but, at different times, it needed to be pivoted and he was really supportive. I didn't get everything I needed but it was a really important lesson to ask for what you need.

[00:11:07] SD: Definitely. It sounds like you had to, kind of, take charge as well, to create the environment as well as the organisation, as well, Claire?

[00:11:17] CR: Yeah. I was working in a very conservative market in London. It was challenging for women in Australia but what I discovered was that the women in the UK were far more conservative. So, I would share the arrangement that I had at home and they would say, "Oh, no, I couldn't possibly do that! You have to be in the office to get the job done." So, in actual fact, it was the women who had limited thinking and I actually found that it didn't stop me doing my job. We got a heap of stuff done - as we've all learnt during COVID, by the way, working from home isn't is eminently possible and not a substitute for some face-to-face contact - but there's an awful lot of the job that you can get done from home.

So, what I had to learn was that my perspective, even though it's sometimes was an outlier, didn't mean it was wrong.

[00:12:08] SD: Definitely. Another factor, you know, when you're chatting to mums as well, that mums tend to get 'mummy guilt' as well, going back to work. What do you feel are the main causes for mums getting the 'mummy guilt' going back to work, Claire?

[00:12:21] CR: Yeah, the big area in here is expectations of yourself and the expectations of others, and it can be quite a burden dealing with all those expectations. I remember talking to an older woman at a point where I was feeling a bit of the 'mummy guilt', and she had a son who just had his first child. And he had said to her, "Mum, we're going to do it the way you did it. You were always there for me." And this one older woman reflected back to me, she said, "I worked all the time in my career and brought them up and I always worried that I wasn't there for them. But my son thinks I was there for him." So, she said, what she must have done, almost in hindsight, she found out from her son, was she was there for the important moments.

So, I think that there's always got to be a little radar running, "Is this an important moment that I need to be there for my child?" And then the other measure I use is, "Are my kids flourishing?" And if my kids are flourishing even though I'm at work then we're doing okay. Because, when I'm at work, I flourish as well. So, when mum's doing well, so are the kids, generally. Checking in, "Are my kids flourishing?" is a really important question, managing expectations of self - Don't set the bar so high that it's really impossible to achieve - and just do what your kids need, and you'll be surprised at how irrelevant 'mummy guilt' can be.

[00:14:01] SD: Exactly. I guess, going back to boundaries and what mums do, what women do and in all-around, can you name key areas which you feel restrict mums from their full potential of returning to work again, as well?

[00:14:17] CR: Self-belief, sometimes. I often hear mums say, "I've been out of the workforce, I don't think I've got the skills anymore," or, "How am I going to put my skills together?" You don't lose it, in my experience. You might need to brush up on how you communicate those skills and remind yourself of the stories and the examples of how you've delivered those skills. But I think

focusing on mums returning to work, in my experience I gave this too, but if you give mums the flexibility to manage home and work, they'll deliver in spades for work because they're so delighted to have flexibility and the privilege of making this work, from a balanced point of view.

So, that would be the thing is, ignore the fact - and I know there's lots of literature about the mummy track and getting back on the treadmill of work, and how hard it is - but I think if you just stay with the skills, revise those skills and communicate those skills well, you'll achieve your potential. So, again, there's a little bit in here about self-belief.

[00:15:30] SD: Definitely. I guess a lot of it is about balance, which you've touched on as well. How did you balance workload and being present for your kids at the same time?

[00:15:40] CR: Yeah, so the important area here is not trying to be a supermom. Getting the help you need. I'll tell you a story: I can remember my daughter's second or first birthday, I thought that it was really important that I made her birthday cake. Well, what actually happened, because I was flying around doing a hundred things at once, I did make the birthday cake, but I pulled it out of the oven and dropped it immediately on the floor. And so, I had to go and get a bought cake from the supermarket, over which I hastily put some purple icing and some decorative things. Honestly, my daughter didn't even know the difference.

I think this temptation to be a supermom and a super worker is the real challenge in here because it takes your mental space to do all of those things. What I learned, perhaps a little late, was to get more help in the home, to give up some salary to have, you know, help with gardening or cleaning or the things that, if you're not at work, occupy your time and take you away from your children.

I remember speaking to one leader, manager, who said that she actually spent more on her nanny than her salary in the first instance because she wanted to be able to work and she needed that support. That was the only option for her. Sometimes I think giving up some of that financial, perhaps, reward for the job to have some sanity and some space to be with your kids, I think that's a no brainer. You can also get child care sorted, like home help. We had after school care in the home and if you advertise that right, you can advertise it with responsibilities, like housekeeping responsibilities, and have a bit of a mix for the kids and for the home, and our

kids get a lot of attention. They're sometimes quite happy to hang around at home and do their own thing and the nanny housekeeper can help the house function so that when you're at home you're present with the kids.

[00:18:03] SD: Perfect. I think, as mums, we shouldn't be afraid to ask for help and to do that as well, right?

[00:18:10] CR: Correct. And that's relevant to when you come back to work. It's okay that there are elements of work in home that you need to juggle and it is okay to set boundaries, as long as you do that flexibly with the organisation, and making sure that there's not an area where your boundaries are impeding the organisation. But mostly, it can be done.

When I got my first exec role, I was with a group of men, I was the only female and they had all these meetings at 7:30 and they used to send the papers out at 7 AM. I had to still get to those meetings, which was an issue in itself, but I'd have no chance of reading the papers between 7 and 7:30 because I had to feed Lochlan - this was when he was quite young - and then come to work. So, I asked them, I said, "Could we have the meetings at 8:30 and could we have the papers the night before?" And it was surprising actually, all the men around the table, they actually liked that change but they just put up with it for years. So, I think it is okay to set boundaries provided the business objective can still be met.

[00:19:20] SD: Excellent. Thanks, Claire. And you mentioned earlier around self-belief being one of the things to keep in mind. What do you feel is also the best mindset to adhere to when you are a mum returning back to work?

[00:19:35] CR: Don't try and do both childcare and work at once. I know COVID has thrown this mix up and that sometimes hasn't been— we haven't had the choices that we would normally have, but I actually think it's really important to get the right support for your kids in place so that you can be fully present at work and vice versa, as we've talked about. Work doesn't appreciate the kids encroaching on your time and vice versa. The kids don't appreciate you encroaching on their time with you.

So, I think that it is important to have a structure but also to hold that structure lightly because kids change, they grow up and what they need changes. So, you can just get it settled for that preschool phase and then school appears and that opens up a whole new set of things that you need to do to support your child in getting to school, and support the home and family and getting stuff sorted. So, I think the mindset is putting the effort into setting it up properly so that it works, and being ready to adjust as the kids grow up, so that you can still have the space and the attention to give to the job.

[00:20:51] SD: Definitely. When you look back on when you return to work, I guess, after both kids, is there anything you would change or do differently looking back on it now?

[00:21:02] CR: Yeah, look, I think I'd drop trying to be perfect and get more help earlier. Help, not just looking after the kids, but the garden, washing, meals, you know, all of those allow you to be more present. Maddie and I, we have some routines to create that balance and that separation of time, and I'd encourage you to invest in those. I probably didn't invest in those with Lochlan but we did with Maddie and one of those rituals was getting into comfy clothes after I finished work. And she would come with me and we'd get the comfy clothes out and I'd put them on and that was a real symbolic shift from work to home.

So, I think I'd drop trying to be perfect and harder all together perfectly: Stuff happens and sometimes your family needs you, and sometimes stuff happens at work and work needs you, and negotiating with home and with work - I haven't mentioned him yet but I have a terrific husband in the background who's also been very supportive - but it is a negotiation. And so, being more intentional, I think, about how you're going to make all this work and stepping in early when there's got to be a change is an important thing and I think can't be underestimated.

[00:22:20] SD: Yep. What areas of your life do you feel you have to, I guess, adapt and change the most to ensure both work and family life runs smoothly?

[00:22:31] CR: I talked before about women who get to do this balance are often very, very grateful. They treat time very precious. So, I treated my time at work very precious and I wanted to produce as much as I could so that I could go home and spend this time with the family. And, what I discovered was I was so intent on the work itself, I was forgetting to say

'hello' to people in the corridor. It was all well-intended but, of course, people interpreted it the wrong way and so I had to make adjustments to make sure I was present with the people at work, not just the output of work. Maybe everyone on the line is quite capable in this area and wouldn't fall into that trap but yeah, I had to adjust how I was present at work, just as much as I had to adjust how I was present at home.

I couldn't be always part of the school mums and knowing what was going on in the school mums but I could stay connected to a smaller group of mums who would keep me connected with what was going on in the school. There are some things you've got to let go of, you can't do everything. You can have what you want but you can't have everything. And so, you have to choose what it is that you actually want and lean into that and set that up well and then, from there, then make adjustments, but not trying to do everything.

[00:24:02] SD: Exactly. And on your journey, Claire, did you experience any pushback or resentment?

[00:24:08] CR: Occasionally. Mostly, if I was evaluating it on balance, mostly it was positive. I did take a career break at one point from a terrific job and I can remember the person, my manager, saying, "Well, you'll never get a job as good as that again," and thinking, "Oh, yes, maybe she's right." But actually, she wasn't right. I learnt over time that these things get tested and perspectives are tested, and if there is pushback or resentment, there are ways around it. And, if you work respectfully with people, there are ways around it. So, that's one aspect.

So, yes, of course, there were times when I had challenges or issues of respect but then there are other times where when I set boundaries, I can remember some very senior men coming to chat to me and saying, "We are so thankful that you're doing what you're doing because it gives us permission to do it too." So, in setting meeting time boundaries or just being intentional and getting home by 5:30 so I can hang out with the kids and, you know, even if that meant I had to work later in the evening, those things were respected and gave everyone permission to consider that that's actually okay. Whereas, it hadn't been the culture in the past. A bit of both, but on balance, mostly positive.

I know there are some employment contexts where that's not the case and I would encourage you to think deeply about whether that's the right place for you long term, because it will take a cost. And to look for an environment that actually genuinely supports diversity and women returning to work is an important part of having balance at home.

[00:26:04] SD: One Hundred per cent. If there was one key takeaway, Claire, for all the mums listening in today, to sum up how you tackled life as a mum returning to work, what would it be?

[00:26:17] CR: Get help. Don't try and do it all. The worst thing is, if you run yourself into the ground then you can't support your family, you can't fulfil your job responsibilities and, I think, societally we have, we're not in, like, Asian cultures where it's okay to have a maid or support in the home. And I'm not saying we have to go that far, but culturally, that would be very different for Australia, because we like to, well, respectfully do things ourselves. Getting the right help is as important for the kids as it is for you in returning to work.

I can remember, at one point, I was struggling, I was trying to be a supermom and do everything, and I was speaking to a very senior female executive in the Australian Melbourne market and she said, "Do you have a housekeeper?" And I said, "Well, no." And she said, "Well, I have a housekeeper and they do this, this and this." And it was a pivotal moment for me because I had been trying to do it all. Unfortunately, in the culture in Australia, women don't talk about this so that's why I spend quite a bit of time on this. It's absolutely okay to have help in the home to help you balance it.

I took a career break at one point and I thought I was going to spend hours and hours with the kids but actually, I was telling them, "Oh, just hang on, sweetie, I've got to put another load of washing on." Well, you know, that's not time with the kids. So, someone else doing that work means that I can be present with the kids and fulfil a job.

[00:28:00] SD: Absolutely. Do you have any tips, I guess, for any organisations who want to do more in this area, as well for mums returning to work?

[00:28:11] CR: Yeah, there's been times where I've challenged my peers and I'm wanting to encourage them to support more women coming back into the workforce. I've done a mixture of

lots of different types of working arrangements, including a full break and a career break, through to, you know, just picking up the kids after school on a Friday afternoon. And, encouraging both organisations to lean into those lots of different ways to get work done.

And, COVID's actually probably accelerated this for the women on the line, I think this is the moment for you. Because previously, this face time or being present in the office was much more highly rated even though it was losing some of its significance. And so, this is the moment to really demonstrate what you've been able to achieve in a remote environment and that means lots of opportunity and lots of potential.

But for organisations leaning to this, this is the time for you to be really supportive of how – just like that manager I had way back when Lochlan was born - what can you put in place to support people to do their work in different ways?

[00:29:28] SD: Absolutely, because there is one side of it, Claire, where people say that they're going to help and all this, and then realistically, when people are facing these situations within organisations, the reality is it's not really available but it's saying that it's available. So, that's, kind of, one thing that really has to be tackled, I would say.

[00:29:49] CR: Yeah, it's true. I would say that I never– if you're relying on a policy, at that point, you've probably got a real challenge. If you can build the relationships to support what you need, that's a much better outcome for everybody because everybody wins out of that. So, policies are important, in many parts of life, not just this. By the time you're pulling out the policy, you've probably got some differences of opinion around how things should be done. And so, the more you can lean into it relationally and ask for what you need, explain why it's important, explain what it'll help you do and help you achieve in the organisation, that's, I think, a much more positive route to go down.

And I think my entire career, I can't tell you that I ever pulled out the policy. I always went and just had the conversation with my leaders to say, “To make this work, I need to do X, Y, and Z, would that be okay?” Sometimes they said ‘no’ but mostly, they said ‘yes’.

[00:30:54] D: Probably a good segue to talking about organisational policies to maybe get our first responses from our first poll which was around policies. So, just a quick, sort of, check in with the guys on the webinar, we're just going to run through the poll questions.

You do have a couple more minutes where you can put in your questions if you have any you'd like Claire to answer. Now, we do have one in there at the moment which we'll get to. And then we'll hand back to Sharon, just to close.

I'm just going to bring up the results of the first poll question and it was around policy: "Does your organisation have an appropriate return-to-work mum's policy?" So, I'm hoping you can see that in front of you, Claire. I might get you to talk through the results that you're seeing and maybe if you have any context?

[00:31:34] CR: The large number in, "Yes, it has one but could be better," it's quite relevant to that conversation I had earlier around, remember, you're dealing with people. If they haven't had kids and they haven't had to juggle home and work life, they don't necessarily understand it. And that's why I say relationally, you're going to get along way further than pulling out a policy. That doesn't mean organisations shouldn't be leaning in and trying to reshape policies, because that is important, as an underpinning, if you like. But, from a practical point of view, dealing with how you do work and home-life balance, it's going to be about the conversations you have with the people who can support you.

[00:32:20] D: Thanks, Claire. Okay, the next poll, I'll just bring up, "Does your employer understand your needs as a return-to-work mum?" And, 50%, "yes," and the 20% across "yes, but could have been better," and a little bit of "no" down the bottom. So, Claire, I'll hand back to you for context.

[00:32:37] CR: That's really positive. I think that's showing transition and change and awareness as starting to come through the market and organisations. But, for those who are still sitting in the "little bit" and the "no", back to, there's two paths here: One is, "Have I explained it and asked for it in a way that they understand to be able to give it to me and they're still saying no?" Then, maybe there's a point to evaluate, "Is this the right place to spend my time?" If you haven't yet really communicated what it is you need, I'd encourage you to go and do that

because not everybody understands this stuff, not everybody has had to have someone returning to work in their teams or accommodate that.

It's very similar in some ways, I had someone who had a significant health issue working in my team. And, until he came and said to me- he divided the day into three blocks and, because of his health issue, he can only do two blocks a day. So, if I needed him at night for a function, he needed the morning off to compensate for doing two blocks. He couldn't do three blocks. As soon as he explained it to me, that became very easy for me to manage and to work with him on. But before that, I had no understanding and I would have said, "Why aren't you showing up to this sort or that?" So, it's about giving people enough insight into what it is that you need to then be able to support you to do your job. And he was a fantastic team member, delivered amazing work but we just had to work with that requirement for him to enable him to give me his best.

Go and have those conversations and you'll test that out. And if the answer is not good, then that helps you think about, "Well, in the medium term, I need to be looking for another workplace that is going to value me and support me to bring my best work."

[00:34:41] D: The next one: "Do you see opportunities within your organisation for return-to-work mums?" So, 36% said "Yes, definitely," 16%, "Yes, there's a few," 44%, "Not many," and 4% are "No." I'll just hand it to you, Claire, to comment.

[00:35:00] CR: Yeah, okay, so that's really saying we're seeing a bit more of the policy and the rhetoric, rather than the action. Support networks for you guys, find people who you can share your perspectives and your needs with, and maybe a group of you would be more powerful than a single voice in this context? But also, get some support people around you who can help, just be an encouragement to you in that environment where there aren't as many opportunities.

The other thing I've learnt in my career is tell people what you want to do from a career point of view and don't assume that because you're juggling family and home, that they will discount you. Because, organisations need to know what you want to do, otherwise, they'll assume you're happy in the job that you're in. And so, there are a number of jobs that I went and just said to someone, "Oh, gee, that's a really interesting job. I'd like to do that one day." And, even

when I was working part-time, I did that and it was amazing. I ended up getting to run a marketing department for three days a week, four days a week, three in the office and one at home because I said, "I'm really interested in that job."

And so, I think there's a combination of what you need to do the job, but also what job you want to do. And when people look at you and have a think about you for a job, they're more likely to consider you because they know that you want it. And the family side of it becomes a bit less relevant, and the juggling side becomes a bit less relevant.

[00:36:44] D: Thanks, Claire. And just the final poll question here. "So, within your organisation, is the perspective towards mums returning to work supportive?" So, definite trend here: We've got 42%, saying, "Yes, most people supportive", equally 37%, "Yes, intent is good but needs more work," and dropping down to 16%, "no, really haven't seen much transaction," and 5% saying, "No, not a supportive workplace for returning mums."

[00:37:11] CR: So, I think that's consistent with what I've said earlier that we've got a bit of policy work happening and a bit of intent, but a bit more action and practical delivery is required. And again, the only way to get that is to use your voice to say, "This is what I need." You can choose to do that individually or collectively, but doing it always with the business objectives in mind, not trying to get freedoms that wouldn't lead to a good business outcome. You need to do the business case and pitch the business case and most organisations, if they can see the value, will front up with the support, in my experience.

[00:37:54] D: That concludes our poll questions. We did have a question from a caller, so thank you for sending that through, and it's, "How do I prepare my children that getting back to work for a mum is as important as dad's work?"

[00:38:06] CR: Yeah, great question. We've just always encouraged a conversation around the dinner table that acknowledged women and men in the workplace and, with little ones, there's ways to do that. Things that validate mum going back to work should be part of play at home. We've used that, open conversation, dad saying supportive things about mum going back to work, or focus on how you're going to give them time after work. So, like I was explaining the 'getting into comfy clothes' ritual, when we came home that was really important, that "this is

what's going to change, this is what's not going to change” in talking with the kids. And then, being prepared for times when you are going to have to make a choice between work and home when the kids need you, because it will happen.

[00:39:01] D: Thanks, Claire. Okay, Sharon, I'll just hand back to you to close out the event. I also have one last final poll which I'll launch in a couple of seconds and thanks again, Claire. Over to you, Sharon.

[00:39:13] SD: Thanks, David. As you can see, Claire is a clear example of a return-to-work mum success story and Mentor List Talent are here to ensure there's a lot more of these success stories for mums.

I'll actually share some comments from mums, which shows there is still issues today and it's going to take a long time to fix these issues. I think that was a wonderful question that we had because it does start with kids. If you start educating and telling kids now, the balance of everything and have them grow up with that, then we're changing it already. So, I think that was a fantastic question. Thank you for that.

So, here's some comments: “I joined an organisation and very quickly realised there is a vast difference between flexible working arrangements being available, and flexible working arrangements being accessible and realistic. I came back from maternity leave, going from full time to part-time. There's been a big change in the type of work I'm given. Previously, I used to run large, complex projects and now I'm given small tasks.”

Another comment: “My applications are being ignored and I'm told my skills are outdated. I see the senior leaders in our business filling all the senior roles with who they know. I've seen plenty of people devalue a woman's contribution after they have had children. They rarely get positions of responsibility after having maternity leave, nor are they allowed to find flexible work arrangements that allow them to contribute in a valuable way. It's like people think your skills miraculously disappear when you take maternity leave.”

And, final comment, “My career path was hindered by maternity leave and by me becoming a primary carer and working part-time. My momentum slowed, I became less competitive and opportunities were lost.”

So, you can see it's still a big factor today and it's going to take a long time to get this back on track and to fix this issue. Where Mentor List Talent can come in and support with mums returning to work, we can get you direct access to opportunities within progressive organisations where you can thrive. We will help you with resume guidance, activities, applications, tools, interview guidance, mentors and training content to provide you with everything you need while you're on your journey to that next opportunity and after as well.

We can assist organisations with recruitment services, job share and all the tools and training and educational content around this topic, one-on-one sessions, Mentor List professional development programs and mentors as well.

I would like to thank you all for joining us today. We will continue the conversation around these topics and our team will be in touch. We look forward to supporting this initiative and all of you moving forward as well. So, have a fantastic day ahead.

[00:42:19] CR: Thank you. Bye bye.

[END OF EPISODE]

[00:42:22] ANNOUNCER: Thank you for joining us today at *The Mentor List*. If you'd like to hear more or speak to us about recommending our next interview guest, come on through to mentorlist.com.au. You can also find out more about our suite of mastermind series taking shape in your area, your industry and your discipline. We look forward to welcoming you to one of our events very soon. Stay tuned for another great show.

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