

CASE STUDY:

The Burnout-Proof Attorney & Advocate

Marissa Comart

- Washington, D.C., 36 years old
- Assistant General Counsel, Employment, Etsy
- Julian, 3.5 years old, and Logan, 1.5 years old

HER JOB:

As an attorney at the global marketplace for unique and creative goods, she supports the People team, including HR, benefits and compensation, talent acquisition, and employment law compliance.

PARENT SUPPORTS SHE HAS USED:

- Backup care benefit
- Caregiving reimbursement
- Flex work mode
- ERG membership (and co-leadership!)

Marissa's Story

As an attorney, of course, Marissa knows that when work leaves her desk—marked up, revised, fixed, signed—it has impact. But recently, she realized that she, personally, has impact too. “My Etsy colleague who was about to go on maternity leave reached out to ask my advice,” Marissa recalls. “Most of her friends who’d had kids had stopped working and she told me that seeing me return from my maternity leave and continue to rise here gave her hope, that I was a role model for her.” Marissa offered her best tips and shared that her own boss had done the same for her. And that the company’s Chief Operating and Marketing Officer took full leave, too. “I’m not unique at Etsy. This is just what our culture is,” she says.

Marissa started her career at a law firm on the billable hour, and like many other attorneys, chose to move in-house after having her first baby. She knew Etsy was



family friendly—its benefits and culture are well known—but is amazed that she can actually be more ambitious and impactful than ever. That’s thanks to an employer that meets all of her priorities in working parenthood: living near family, having paid leave and child care, and doing work that feels like it matters.

In the year after having her second son, Marissa has taken on co-leadership of the Parents at Etsy ERG (a paid position), and expanded her work to include projects in government relations and public policy for families, a new passion. (She’s working remotely in D.C., after all.) “In some legal positions, parenting would have been a liability; that would have made me self-conscious and less successful,” she says. “But at Etsy, being a parent is an asset. I bring all of me, and that’s actually what makes me better at my job.”



“In some legal positions, being a parent would be a liability. At Etsy, it’s an asset. I’m as productive and effective as I could ever imagine. That’s because of these benefits.”

The value of visible kids

“I’ll be on a video conference and someone will see Julian’s latest preschool art project on the wall, and it immediately brings a human element to this work,” says Marissa. “Or when I use a vacation day to spend time with my kids, it never crosses my mind not to put up my little baby emoji on Slack. People have their calendars proudly visible. No one’s work is suffering for it. We’re actually better for it.” That authenticity—or, perhaps, the absence of stress from hiding your family—has clear value. Research has shown that hiding your true self at work is detrimental to worker health, and that imposter syndrome causes decreases in productivity and mood that cost businesses an estimated \$3,400 per year per employee.

When work from anywhere pays off

Marissa and her husband lived near Etsy HQ in Brooklyn when they had their first child. With their second, they decided to move to Washington, D.C., near grandparents, and Marissa credits that flexibility of location for two big payoffs:

1) Job growth and meaning: The move to D.C. has given Marissa a window into Etsy’s advocacy on behalf of its community of sellers, primarily woman-owned shops of one. The company often advocates to policy makers on behalf of self-employed entrepreneurs. “I’ve really gotten a lot more exposure to this work that has augmented my own understanding of my employment law work. I love my job. I love this issue. I raise my hand so we can walk

the walk.” Marissa estimates that she spends 5% of her time doing advocacy work now. Employees like Marissa who find greater meaning in their work also generate an additional \$9,078 per worker per year and have lower rates of attrition.

2) Productivity: “Fortuitously, living in D.C. is a child care benefit all on its own. My parents are second parents to my kids allowing me to work more, and more sharply—my toddler wakes up at 4:45 a.m., but twice a week that’s at my parents’ house so I can get rest and show up as my best self. I work remotely primarily so that I can more effectively be a working parent.” Being rested improves decision-making, problem-solving, and creativity. The average worker’s fatigue costs employers \$1,967 annually per employee.

Backup care and care cash save the day...20 days a year

“Any day that I use our child care benefit for coverage is a day when I can sign the contract, take the call, and keep our mission moving forward. Every day is important,” says Marissa. And in those stressful pinches, “a highly experienced, effective, delightful, responsible babysitter knocks on my door and allows me to do my work.” Over the past year, she’s used this benefit on days when school is closed, in between nannies, and even when she’s traveled with family and needed local care to fit in some important work, for a total of 20 days worked that would have been missed.

Calculating the employer’s estimated R.O.I. on benefits she used in the past year

INVESTMENTS

ERG compensation:	\$3,000
Backup care and caregiving reimbursement	\$4,000
One-Year Investment	\$7,000

RETURNS

20 days worked thanks to backup child care (calculated with a day rate based on industry benchmark salary data for employees in Marissa’s role and level at other tech companies):	\$16,461.60
Savings from reduced fatigue:	\$1,967
Added advocacy work:	\$10,700
Increased productivity due to greater meaning:	\$9,078
Savings from reduced imposter syndrome:	\$3,400
One-Year Savings	\$41,606.60

4.9x R.O.I.