



Innovative practices case study

THE CONCENTRIC ELDERCARE PROGRAM

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

to supporting caregivers at **Critical Mass**

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INTRODUCTION

In 2023, Critical Mass, a global **digital** agency within the Omnicom network, launched Concentric, a groundbreaking caregiving support program aimed at addressing the eldercare needs of its nearly **1,900** employees. The program provides 40 hours of paid leave annually for eldercare responsibilities, offering a flexible benefit that reflects the organization's commitment to employee well-being.

Spearheaded by David Greene, a UX Director and leader of Critical Mass's Age Affiliation Group, Concentric has already made a significant impact on employees and the company's culture. This case study examines the origins, implementation, and outcomes of Concentric, offering a detailed blueprint for other organizations seeking to support their caregiving workforce.

PROGRAM ORIGINS

An employee - centered vision

The Concentric Program at Critical Mass emerged from a simple but powerful question posed by an employee in the Age Affiliation Group's Teams thread:

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We're doing all these wonderful things for younger parents—expanded parental leave, mentorship programs, flexible work hours—but what about those of us caring for our parents? What can you do for us?

This question resonated deeply with David Greene, the lead for Critical Mass's Age Affinity group within the **agency's Impact & Inclusion** board. At the time, he had been using half of his annual vacation time traveling to Boston to care for his father, who was living with stage three Parkinson's, COPD, and congestive heart failure. The comment made him realize he wasn't alone—many of his colleagues were also struggling to balance their professional lives with the unexpected and often escalating demands of eldercare.

Reflecting on this experience, he envisioned a program that would provide dedicated time off for eldercare responsibilities without forcing employees to dip into their vacation or sick leave. He presented the idea to executive leadership, and the company embraced it enthusiastically.

"I'm eternally grateful to my company for letting me find this passion," David explains.

"I've always done good work, but I've never done work for good. And this is helping people."

Thus, Concentric was born: a program offering five days of paid leave for eldercare needs, which could be taken either in large blocks or incrementally, depending on the situation.

PROGRAM FEATURES

01

Five Days of Paid Leave

Employees receive up to five days annually for eldercare responsibilities. The time can be used in full days or smaller increments.

02

Simplified Application Process

Employees submit a request through an online form, with minimal explanation required.

03

Clear Branding & Communication

- The program's branding as "Concentric Care" eliminates discomfort in requesting leave. Employees now mark their calendars with "Concentric Time," streamlining communication.
- The program rollout included a town hall meeting to introduce and explain the benefit.

04

Data Tracking for Continuous Improvement

Concentric hours are recorded in the company's time-tracking software, enabling Critical Mass to monitor usage patterns and better understand caregiving needs.

05

Concentric Educational Series

As part of a broader vision, the program includes educational seminars on caregiving-related topics. Partnering with AARP, Critical Mass has hosted four seminars to date. Future plans include sessions led by financial experts and other caregiving professionals.

A PROGRAM ROOTED IN SIMPLICITY & TRUST

One of Concentric's defining features is its simplicity. Employees apply for the benefit through a streamlined online form, and requests are processed quickly through HR. There is no exhaustive vetting process or need to explain personal circumstances in detail.

"We're a professional organization. We trust our people,"

David notes, underscoring the program's foundation in a high-trust workplace culture.

This trust has been crucial to Concentric's success. By removing the discomfort often associated with asking for time off to care for aging parents or grandparents, Critical Mass has made the benefit accessible and stigma free. Employees now refer to it as **"Concentric time"** — a neutral term that signals caregiving needs without requiring an uncomfortable exchange of details.

"The branding was key," David explains. **"You don't have to say, 'I need time off to take my mom to the doctor.' You just say, 'I'm taking Concentric on Thursday.' Done. No questions. Everyone accepts it."**

The branding also reflects the program's philosophy. The program's name is derived from thinking about caregiving as a series of concentric circles with the employee at the center. Programs like parental leave represent the first circle of care — focused on supporting those workers who care for children. Concentric, in contrast, is the next circle of care, extending outward to address the next stage of life: eldercare.

The Concentric program addresses work-life conflict, which has been extensively documented as a key stressor for working caregivers.

(Moen et al., 2016; Kayaalp et al., 2020)

Research shows that balancing caregiving with work responsibilities can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion, poorer job performance, and strained relationships with employers.

(National Alliance for Caregiving, 2020)

Programs like Concentric, which offer paid leave and prioritize trust, align with evidence demonstrating that workplace flexibility and caregiving policies reduce work-life stress and improve job satisfaction among caregivers.

(Allen et al., 2013; Nobel et al., 2017; Schulz, 2020)



SUPPORTING CAREGIVER IN MEANINGFUL WAYS

The flexibility built into Concentric reflects the diverse needs of caregivers. While some employees use their full five days at once—such as when traveling to care for a parent in another city—others use the time more sparingly, taking an afternoon here and there to accompany a parent to a doctor's appointment or navigate post-hospital recovery.

David shares one particularly moving story:

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There was an employee whose mother was in hospice care. He moved back to his hometown, lived in his mother's house, and worked remotely for six hours each day. He used the last two hours of his day to have dinner and play cards with her until she passed. That scenario never occurred to me when I was creating the program, but it's exactly what Concentric is for.

Another employee used Concentric time to assist her father in Florida after a hurricane, helping him clean up and recover in the aftermath of the storm. These examples highlight the program's flexibility and its ability to adapt to the unpredictable nature of caregiving.



EMPLOYEE IMPACT

Employee testimonials reveal the transformative impact of concentric



One employee described how the program helped her care for her mother, who was undergoing cancer treatment

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Before Concentric, I would have had to use my vacation time. Now, I have dedicated time to support her without sacrificing my own wellbeing.

— she said



Another employee, caring for a grandfather, emphasized the mental relief Concentric provided.

“

I didn't have to choose between being there for him and meeting my work obligations. That kind of support makes a huge difference.

— he explained

& MORE

One woman used Concentric time to go back to Jamaica and care for her grandmother. Another traveled to Korea to support her grandfather.

These stories illustrate how Concentric addresses a range of caregiving needs, from routine doctor visits to longterm care. As Greene noted,

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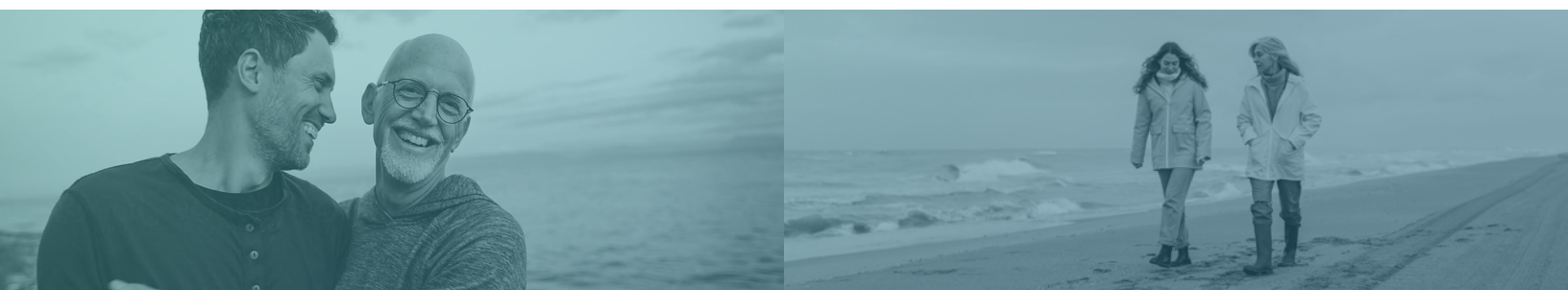
People use the program in ways I never anticipated, but that's the beauty of it—it meets employees where they are.

Concentric educational series:

EXPANDING SUPPORT

Recognizing that caregiving involves more than just time off, Critical Mass has also introduced the Concentric Educational Series—a collection of seminars designed to equip employees with resources and knowledge related to eldercare. Partnering with AARP, the company has hosted sessions led by caregiving experts on topics ranging from navigating eldercare systems to understanding financial planning for aging family members.

The long-range plan is to expand this component to include financial advisors, legal experts, and other professionals who can offer valuable guidance to employees. The goal is to provide a comprehensive support system that goes beyond simply offering time off to empower caregivers manage their responsibilities more effectively.



Measuring success:

DATA & IMPACT

The initial rollout of Concentric was met with enthusiasm, with approximately 10% of employees company-wide opting into the program within its first year. Critical Mass is in the process of analyzing the data further to identify patterns in how employees are using the benefit.

One emerging trend is that most employees are not using the full five days but are instead taking Concentric time in smaller increments. Understanding how and why people use the program will enable the organization to better serve its community.

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For some, it makes sense to use Concentric in big blocks when they live far from their loved ones. But others are using it more judiciously—an hour here, an afternoon there. As an organization, we'd love to understand those profiles better, to better serve the needs of our people.

Critical Mass's time-tracking system allows the company to monitor Concentric usage across geographic regions, providing insights that could inform future program development. This data is an opportunity not only to refine Concentric but also to demonstrate its value to other organizations.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

Concentric's benefits extend beyond individual employees to the organization as a whole. According to Sara Anhorn, Chief Talent Officer at Critical Mass, the program has been a "great business decision."

She explained, "A happier, more cared-for employee who feels like their whole self is seen is going to be more engaged, more productive, and more effective. We've seen a reduction in shadow costs like absenteeism, resignations, and quiet quitting."

The program's impact on retention is particularly notable. Employees who might otherwise leave due to caregiving stress now have the resources to stay and thrive. Anhorn highlighted the financial and cultural benefits: "Each employee loss has its own cost, from training expenses to institutional knowledge gaps. Concentric helps us avoid those losses while fostering a culture of care."

The Participation & Usage

- Total company-wide enrollment is 10%, with participants using 67% of the approved hours.
- Employees often use Concentric time in smaller increments rather than full days, reflecting diverse caregiving scenarios.

Employee Retention & Engagement

- Employees report an increased sense of loyalty and emotional connection to the company.

Tracking & Analysis

- Critical Mass continues to analyze usage data to identify trends, such as geographic variations and differences in utilization across employee demographics to improve the program.

One employee **shared an experience that validates Anhorn's** sentiment:

“

When a company acknowledges that caregiving is a reality and gives you the ability to take time off, it makes you not want to take anything for granted. You want to give back 100% to your company because they've given you the ability to care for your family.

This reciprocal relationship—a company caring for its employees so they can care for their loved ones—has become a hallmark of the Concentric program.

The program's tagline says it all: **“Taking care of those who take care.”**

In gathering data for a separate study on the concentric program, Dr. Mark Szabo made the following observation:

“

After fielding our study, one thing that struck both Dr. (Emily) Peschel and I was how far the Concentric program's emotional impact reached. We obviously saw firsthand the depth of each participant's emotional experience, but that also carried over to those implementing the program. From frontline staff to senior executives, they were visibly moved by being able to support coworkers in this unique way. Their genuine enthusiasm was also a critical part of its success in gaining, and maintaining, traction within the company. Any brand would love to create that level of broad-based emotional connection.

Looking ahead:

SCALING & SHARING THE MODEL

Looking to the broader context, caregiving has become a societal issue as evidenced by the UK's Carers Act, which mandates five days of unpaid caregiving leave for employees. While the Carers Act represents an important step in recognizing caregiving responsibilities, it highlights a critical distinction: the Concentric program provides paid leave, addressing one of the key barriers for caregivers globally.

Research suggests that unpaid caregiving leave can discourage employees from taking advantage of such benefits due to financial concerns and the potential trade-offs involved (Carers UK, 2024; Jackson, 2024; Spann et al., 2020). By offering paid leave, Concentric reduces this burden, ensuring employees can balance their work and caregiving responsibilities without sacrificing income or job security.

In addition to providing direct support, employer-led initiatives like Concentric have the potential to influence national policy. Scholars have highlighted the role of "bottom-up" programs in driving societal shifts and informing government actions (Yeandle et al., 2017). By demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of eldercare leave—both for employees and employers—Critical Mass is contributing to a larger conversation about the value of workplace caregiving policies. Programs like Concentric not only address immediate needs but also serve as a model for broader systemic change, aligning with global trends toward more inclusive and supportive workplaces.

“

Concentric isn't just about helping our own people— it's about creating a cultural shift where caregiving is recognized and supported everywhere.



CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

Critical Mass's experience with Concentric offers valuable insights for other organizations

CHALLENGES

- **Defining Caregiving Scope**

While eldercare remains the focus, defining "caregiving" was a challenge. Initially, the benefit included broader responsibilities, such as caring for siblings with disabilities. However, to secure approval and streamline implementation, it was narrowed to eldercare. Future expansion remains under consideration.

- **Balancing Simplicity and Metrics**

The program's high-trust foundation allows for simplicity but requires ongoing ROI and outcome analysis.

- **Cultural and Organizational Alignment**

Successful implementation depends on a culture that values employee well-being. As David notes, "The prevailing corporate culture must support a program with emotionally charged content. Not every organization is ready to talk about elder care."

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Branding Matters**

A strong brand normalizes caregiving discussions. The name "Concentric" provides a shared, stigma-free language, allowing employees to access benefits without disclosing personal details.

- **Flexibility Is Key**

Eldercare needs vary by proximity; those nearby may need small time increments, while long-distance caregivers often require extended leave. Offering both ensures inclusivity.

- **Trust Drives Success**

A high-trust approach minimizes administrative hurdles and empowers employees, fostering a workplace where individuals feel valued and engaged.

- **Data-Informed Refinement**

Integrating Concentric into timesheets provides insights into usage trends. Critical Mass is expanding data analysis globally to deepen its understanding of program impact.

CONCLUSION: A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

The Concentric Caregiving Program stands as a testament to what is possible when companies listen to their employees and take bold steps to address their needs. By providing paid leave, fostering trust, and reducing the stigma around eldercare, Critical Mass has created a program that not only supports caregivers but also strengthens the organization as a whole.

The company also plans to enhance educational offerings, bringing in experts on topics like financial planning and caregiving strategies. Ultimately the hope is these efforts will inspire other organizations to adopt similar programs. **"This isn't just about one company—it's about creating a cultural shift where caregiving is recognized and supported,"** David said.

“

It's good business. When you retain people longer, training costs go down, institutional knowledge stays, and employees are more engaged. Concentric isn't just about being nice—it's about building a stronger, more resilient workforce.

As caregiving responsibilities continue to grow due to demographic shifts, programs like Concentric offer a replicable model for organizations committed to supporting their employees while driving business success.

"Who doesn't want to help people?" David asks.

"At the end of the day, it's just good business."

ADVICE FOR OTHER EMPLOYERS

The following are best practices for organizations considering similar benefits:

Brand the Program

Clear branding, like "Concentric," removes discomfort and fosters adoption.

Foster a High-Trust Environment

Programs succeed when organizations trust their employees.

Make the Business Case

Highlight ROI through improved retention, reduced absenteeism, and increased employee loyalty.

Start with Cultural Alignment

Ensure the organization is ready to support emotionally charged programs like caregiving.

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A report on their full study findings is forthcoming.

For more information, please reach out to marks@criticalmass.com.

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