



YES
EMMA ISAAC
CEO of a
business
network
for women

IF YOU'RE ever in this position there's no question: accept, accept, accept. It's not a privilege for a woman to work while she's pregnant, it's a human right.

As the founder of Business Chicks – a network for corporate women – I believe the most important thing

is to be honest about your situation as soon as possible. In the early stages this isn't always do-able. Fair bosses should later accept that.

If this is your dream job, then the likelihood is you're also their dream employee. They saw something in you to invite you to join their company, and when they made that offer they did so in the hope you'll be with them for a long time.

Hiring and nurturing you – even through maternity leave – is likely to reward them with fierce loyalty on your part. This loyalty and retention will far outweigh the short-term costs associated with covering your leave.

A few years ago, a pregnant Sydney woman won a landmark case against her employer, the head of a printing company, who fired her just weeks after she revealed she was pregnant, saying she'd "caused a lot of inconvenience". Cases like these are occurring far too often.

Not so long ago, back in the *Mad Men* era, a company would shirk from hiring a woman who was engaged. Imagine if this way of thinking had never changed?

We all know that when your CV is doing the rounds, you can't be discriminated against because of your race, sexual preference, marital status, age or religion. It's also illegal for employers to discriminate against you because you're about to be a mum.

Pregnancy is a normal, healthy physical condition that many women experience, and should not stand in your way of rewarding employment.

You won't be the first woman to keep her career going while starting a family, and with the right support around you (which includes that of your new employer), you'll be able to

SO YOU'VE SCORED YOUR DREAM JOB... BUT YOU'RE 3 MONTHS PREGNANT

You're entitled to keep your baby news a secret but is it fair to an employer to accept the role?

juggle both. Sure, it won't be easy at times, but it's certainly achievable.

With a skills shortage and an ageing population, it would be shortsighted to overlook such a highly skilled and motivated pool of talent.

That time and energy would be better used making corporations pregnancy-friendly: offering benefits such as paid maternity leave, flexible working arrangements and breastfeeding facilities.

Yes, it's a time of great change for a woman and that can often be filled with trepidation, but is there anyone more motivated to keep a job than a woman who needs to support her unborn child?

Of course, it goes without saying that if the job itself impacts on the health of the mother or the baby then that must be taken into consideration. But it's in all employers' best interests to support pregnant women and the gorgeous mum that you'll soon become.



PHOTO:KENNETH WILLARD/TRUNK ARCHIVE/SNAPPER MEDIA



NO
SAMANTHA
BRICK
Writer and
producer

I VIVIDLY remember the day a colleague and I were waiting for an important meeting. It was with a globally known broadcaster and the reality idea we were pitching was potentially worth millions of dollars.

My colleague – four months gone – kept insisting she was "pregnant, not ill". She'd sought out the opportunity to work with me and seemed keen, ambitious, eager.

She was meant to bring the DVD outlining our idea, but as we were summoned into the meeting room the colour drained from her face. She looked up at me and, trying to make light of the situation, said in a girly voice, "Whoops, I've forgotten it. I must be suffering from baby brain." Needless to say the meeting was one of the low points of my career.

When debating this topic you need to focus on one important word; this isn't just any new job, it's your *dream* role. The one you've been waiting for all your life.

A job of a lifetime is one where you want to shine brightly: impress colleagues, exceed targets, meet deadlines, go the extra mile each and every day to demonstrate you deserve the role. Your reputation is everything when it comes to

your career, which is why you would be breathtakingly stupid, not to mention incredibly naive, to accept a new position when you're six months away from giving birth.

Of course, pregnant women have a place in the workforce. As a former TV boss who ran a television company staffed by women, the camaraderie we enjoyed was undeniably special.

We celebrated as our receptionist waved her positive pregnancy stick around the office, we commiserated when the accountant failed at her latest attempt at IVF. As an employer I welcomed children into the office on school strike days. But there's a time and a place...

Thankfully we live in an era that outlaws probing and intrusive interview questions about plans for our own family. Yet I'd be horrified if a woman accepted a new position with me knowing she was 3 months along. In fact, I'd question the motives of such a woman prepared to pull a stunt like that – "forgetting" to mention it at interview stage or brushing over it while negotiating her salary package. If she was ready to put her ambition ahead of her pregnancy, then what else would she be prepared to do?

Yes women can "have it all" – just not all at once. If you've decided to have a family, congratulations. But put the dream job on hold. You're about to take on the most important role of your life: being a mother.

MUM'S THE WORD? These stars took a pregnant (career) pause...

NICOLE KIDMAN stepped down from the lead role in *The Reader* when she became pregnant in 2007. Kate Winslet replaced her – and went on to earn an Oscar – in the part of Auschwitz guard Hanna Schmitz.

BEYONCE KNOWLES' surprise announcement at the 2011 MTV Awards meant her movie *A Star is Born* had to be postponed. Warner Bros. was hoping to start production in February 2012, when the singer would've been 8 months pregnant.

TINA FEY's second pregnancy became public during her book tour for autobiography *Bossypants*. Rather than write a bump into the *30 Rock* storyline, the show's season premiere was pushed back four months. But then, she is the producer!

NAOMI WATTS discovered she was pregnant two weeks into shooting *Eastern Promises*. The movie's costume designer (also the director's sister) only uncovered Naomi's secret when she could no longer fit into her costumes.

SHOULD YOU HIDE THE BUMP? Email grazialetters@acpmagazines.com.au