



SABBATICAL POLICIES

Much research has been conducted in the public sector and amongst tertiary institutions on the value or worth of sabbatical leave to their employees or members of staff. The research suggests that it is common practice to ensure that employees understand that sabbatical leave is a privilege, not a right, and is granted against an approved plan of research. In addition, sabbatical leave is not granted if adequate replacement arrangements cannot be made.

With more and more Employers striving to ensure that the benefits offered are competitive, thereby attracting and retaining the best in the market, it is not surprising that the role of sabbatical leave as an employee benefit in the private sector is being explored by some organisations.

If we look to the international market for insight and guidance on the role that sabbatical leave can play as an employee benefit, we see a similar application of the benefit to that found in South Africa i.e. sabbatical leave is most common as a benefit within a tertiary environment.

Our research reinforces the findings of the research conducted by Nedbank earlier this year, in that South African organisations generally do not have formal sabbatical leave policies and many do not intend implementing such a policy (the financial institutions being the only ones indicating that they may have a need). Other organisations indicated that requests for such leave would be considered on a case by case basis and that it is a small price to pay to keep a good employee. Outlined below we have indicated the most common administration practices found in organisations that provide for sabbatical leave:

- Sabbatical leave is most often taken as unpaid leave.
- Specific criteria are put in place, e.g. a minimum of 10/15/20 year service with the company, a maximum of 6 months sabbatical leave.
- Companies that do grant sabbatical leave, encourage employees to exhaust their annual leave first. Thereafter they would be offered a sabbatical leave.
- Employees who take sabbatical leave would not accrue further annual leave or sick leave during their sabbatical period.
- Some companies continue to pay company contributions towards pension or provident arrangements and risk cover.

Whilst the idea of sabbatical leave may currently not be common practice amongst South African organisations, we see this picture may change with organisations striving to be the employer of choice and as organisations become more globalised.
