

Bulletin Board: Vacation time? Don't call in sick

by Amy_Winter

Are you feeling under the weather, or is it nice sunny weather that's keeping you from work? According to a survey by CareerBuilder.com, 32 percent of employees said they called in sick when they were healthy at least once in the past year. The survey polled 5,989 workers and 2,929 hiring managers/HR professionals. One in 10 workers admitted to playing hooky from work three days or more.

Twenty-three percent of workers admitted to missing work because they didn't want to work, and 27 percent view their sick days as vacation days. Other excuses included desire for relaxation time (15 percent), doctor's appointment (11 percent), sleep deprived (9 percent), and plans with family or friends (9 percent). Fifty-two percent of workers chose Monday, while 24 percent picked Friday.

Most employers, 75 percent, think their employees tell the truth when calling in sick. However, 35 percent have investigated the accuracy of workers' claims. Of the skeptical managers, 67 percent made the employee provide a doctor's note, 59 percent called the employee at home, 16 percent had a co-worker call the employee's home and 14 percent went by the employee's residence. Sixteen percent of employers have fired employees for illegitimate and false claims.

Employers report strange excuses employees have used to miss work:

- Employee got whiplash from brushing her hair.

- Employee said her psychic told her to stay home or something awful would happen to her.

- Employee's roommate locked all his clothes in a shed for spite.

- Employee tasted some dog food because the dog was not feeling well and now the employee is sick.

- Employee had been up all night because his or her favorite "American Idol" contestant was voted off.

- A groundhog bit the employee's car tire, causing it to go flat.

Some managers admit they can be more flexible when determining sick days as long as the employee tells the truth. A majority would consider letting employees use sick days for mental health days.

"Employers are placing a greater emphasis on work/life balance, offering more opportunities for employees to recharge and return to the office more productive," says Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources. "Your best bet is to be honest. If you're a strong employee and you're truthful about the time you need off, your employer is likely to give it to you.

"Lying about it, on the other hand, can have a lasting negative impact on your credibility and job tenure."

For more information, visit www.careerbuilder.com.

I'LL BE AT WORK FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays are in the air, but most employees will be too busy in the office to notice. Four out of 10 workers will not take additional time off during this holiday period, aside from employer-provided vacation days, according to a survey by OfficeTeam, a staffing service that questioned 493 full- or part-time workers.

During the season from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, only 25 percent of workers are scheduling more than a week of vacation. Seventeen percent plan to take one to two days, 15 percent requested three to four days, 13 percent plan to take five to six days and 12 percent requested seven or more days. One percent of respondents still aren't sure.

"With the year coming to a close, employees may have already used up their vacation days," says Diane Domeyer, executive director. "But other professionals sometimes get so wrapped up in work at the end of the year that they only take the company holidays they are granted."

Employees should try to prepare before holiday vacations, since this is the season many companies are finishing projects.

OfficeTeam suggests tips for workers planning to take time off this holiday season:

- Give your boss the vacation dates in advance. This allows him or her the opportunity to find temporary help and resources if needed.

- Tell colleagues about your holiday plans.

- Pick a backup co-worker to take your place. He or she can help make judgments on your behalf.

- Organize your work area. Leave your desk clean and inform co-workers where to find files.

- Contact clients and tell them you are going on vacation.

"Everyone needs time away from work to recharge and avoid burnout," says Domeyer. "For those who are planning to be out of the office, extra preparation can ensure they won't return to an overwhelming amount of work or projects that have fallen off track."

For more information, visit www.officeteam.com.

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