Bulletin Board: Fantasy football scores among employees

by Amy_Winter

Football season is just around the corner. That means it is also time for fantasy football. Participants develop teams with NFL players and receive points based on their players' field performance. According to an estimate by a global outplacement agency, Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc., fantasy footballers could spend up to two hours a day working on their teams, meaning workplace efficiency will probably suffer.

John A. Challenger, the agency's chief executive officer, says the impact on companies is significant, since most fantasy players earn higher-than-average salaries. Players are costing companies money by playing during work hours.

About 13.6 million Americans participate in fantasy football, according to the Fantasy Sports Trade Association.

"There are some people who probably wait until the workday is over to strategize, make trades and manage their teams," says Challenger. "But many are probably doing at least some of their team tasks from the office."

Some employers may want to limit access to fantasy sports Web sites; however, Challenger feels this is pointless and may have consequences among the employees.

"Everyday employers lose money by paying people to take smoking breaks, go to the bathroom, refill coffee mugs and make small talk around the water cooler," says Challenger. "Most employers understand that not every minute of every workday is dedicated to work."

Fantasy football may even prove to be a valuable influence in the office; it could build more friendships among employees.

"Companies that not only allow workers to indulge in fantasy football, but actually encourage it by organizing a company league are likely to see significant benefits," adds Challenger.

For more information visit www.challengergray.com.

MORE CHECKUPS

Employees better watch out for more frequent evaluations by their boss. Almost 39 percent of executives say their companies have "annual" performance reviews biannually or even quarterly, according to a survey by OfficeTeam, a staffing service that interviewed 150 senior executives. The percentage is up from the 29 percent of executives who claimed to have frequent reviews in 2002.

Fifty-eight percent of executives stick to the yearly performance report, while 66 percent answered the same in 2002. Currently, 2 percent of executives don't give performance reviews.

"Many workers are apprehensive about performance reviews, but, with preparation, these meetings present an opportunity to highlight accomplishments, identify future career goals and make a case for a raise or promotion," said Diane Domeyer, executive director of OfficeTeam.

"Employees whose firms do not have a formal evaluation process, or who seek more frequent feedback, should take the initiative to schedule informal meetings with their managers to discuss their progress on the job."

OfficeTeam suggests tips to help prepare employees for reviews:

- List your accomplishments and how you helped the company.

- Bring ideas on what you hope to accomplish and what changes you want to see.

- Provide feedback to your manager.

- Discuss future goals.

For more information visit www.officeteam.com.

QUESTIONS TO HELP KEEP EMPLOYEES

Re-recruiting current employees may be a smart move for managers. If an employee is unhappy, he or she will most likely look elsewhere for a new job. Managers should stay in touch with employees in order to determine their feelings toward the working environment.

Michael Jalbert, president of MRINetwork, says that managers need to believe their top employees are receiving calls and offers from other companies.

"Adopt the policy that no one will work at a company longer than one year without being re-recruited by the boss," he says. "Drop loyalty from your vocabulary and accept that you must continually challenge top talent if you are to keep them."

Jalbert suggests some questions for bosses that might help determine how employees view their positions and whether they will stay:

- If you could make changes to your job, what would they be?

- What elements about your job would you want to keep?

- Does your job make you jump out of bed in the morning?

- What helps create a great day?

- How can we assist in supporting your goals?

- Do you feel you receive enough recognition?

- What can we do to have you stay as an employee?

This question-and-answer method can improve communication in the office.

"We encourage bosses to schedule time when they can introduce these topics in an informal manner - over a cup of coffee or lunch, for instance," says Jalbert. "The key to success is promptly addressing issues that could lead to losing a key member of the team, or making sure that the employee has a full understanding of situations that cannot be easily changed."

For more information, visit www.mrinetwork.com.

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