

Employee Holiday Bad for Business?

Everybody loves a good holiday as much as the next person, but business owners or managers will be aware of the challenges and impact on the company when employees take time off. Who will pick up the slack and should they get paid for it? And then there is the issue of any short-term impact on customer service?

Lets also not forget that a two week holiday is not really a two week holiday in relation to work. It will inevitably turn into a four-week holiday. Who doesn't spend the week before they go away slowing down and moving things from their "To do list" to their "Will look at when I come back" list? Then upon your return you will spend another week working through the mound of paperwork, which has formed on your desk. Now multiply that by every employee in your organisation and then by all the millions of organisations in the UK and we can begin to recognise why there is such massive productivity slumps at holiday times. Add onto that the cost of perhaps having to recruit temps to cover holiday times and we get a clear view of why, in particular small businesses, dread holiday time.

So while business is struggling during the holiday season the government is adding to this by increasing the amount of statutory holidays – from April this year the entitlement was increased to 28 days per year - compared to an average of two weeks in America. Six million people stand to benefit from this by having more time off, however the annual labour cost to business will be around £4.5bn. Nevertheless the responsibility for the problem of holidays should not only lie with the government. It is ironic that the sectors currently being worst hit by the economic climate, construction and manufacturing, are those who traditionally and continue to enjoy seasonal breaks or even close down periods.

By now we can clearly see that there is an argument as to how holiday periods do have an affect on businesses. However it is not simply a matter of taking the decision to reduce or scrap holidays. There is also a case to be looked at which examines the benefit of holidays to the employee and how in turn this may have a positive affect on the business.

More and more research concludes how essential it is that employees use all of their allocated holiday time. The rest time, which employees get during holiday periods, enables them to return to work feeling refreshed and with renewed motivation and enthusiasm. Although absence rates in the UK are at their highest during holidays periods, due to employees wanting to take advantage of the odd sunny day or to extend a weekend, it is important that employers do not take a hard line on holidays and authorising them. Ultimately it is important for all an organisation's employees to have a good amount of time off each year and the employer will benefit from employees coming back with new fresh ideas that may improve the organisation. In-spite of this perhaps the UK government should not have been so hasty in their decision to increase the statutory entitlement from 20 to 28 days without fully appreciating the affect it would have in the business environment.

Summer Stats

- * 58% of employees planned to take time away from the office for a summer vacation
 - * 68% of employees admitted to daydreaming about plans for summer travel while at work
 - * 60% reported they would leave the office for a lunch break outside during the summer months
 - * 63% reported they would leave the office earlier than normal in order to spend more time outside
 - * 24% of employees felt that their productivity levels actually dropped during these sunny summer months
- <http://flexibleworkforce.blogspot.com/2007/08/is-sunny-weather-bad-for-productivity.html>

In the short-term re-energized employees can be encouraged by:

- Keeping office cool and well ventilated
- Encouraging employees to take lunch and tea breaks away from desk
- Ensuring all tasks do not focus around a computer, if this cannot be avoided - encourage employees to take regular breaks