

Thirty-Two Percent of Workers Called in Sick With Fake Excuses in the Last Year, CareerBuilder.com's Annual Survey Finds

- Hiring Managers Reveal This Year's Most Bizarre Reasons Employees Gave for Missing Work -

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Are employees getting away with playing hooky from the office? According to CareerBuilder.com's annual survey on absenteeism, 32 percent of workers said they called in sick when they felt well at least once in the last year. One-in-ten admitted to doing so three times or more. And while some employers said they typically don't question excuses given, others were more skeptical. Twenty-seven percent of hiring managers reported they have fired a worker for calling in sick without a legitimate reason. The survey, "Out of the Office," was completed in September 2006 and included 1,650 workers and 1,150 hiring managers nationwide.

The most popular motivator for missing work was the need to relax, according to nearly half (48 percent) of workers. Twenty-four percent of workers pointed to the desire to catch up on sleep while 20 percent cited personal errands. Other top reasons included doctor's appointments (17 percent), plans with family and friends (16 percent) and housework (16 percent).

One-in-four workers said they consider their sick days to be equivalent to vacation days and treat them as such.

Comparing genders, women were more likely to take a sick day when they weren't feeling under the weather. Thirty-seven percent of women called in sick with bogus explanations compared to 26 percent of men. On the employer side, men were more likely to terminate an employee for an unexcused sick day. Thirty-five percent of men have fired an employee for calling in sick with a fake excuse compared to 15 percent of women.

"Although an improvement from last year, the amount of unexcused absences from the office is significant and can be indicative of employee dissatisfaction," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources at CareerBuilder.com. "Forty-five percent of hiring managers have caught an employee calling in sick with a fake excuse. This begs two questions: Do you have the right employees working for your organization and do you have the right employee management practices in place for your staff?"

Workers who are chronic offenders may be running out of ideas. Forty-one percent of hiring managers said they have received unusual or suspicious sick day alibis. Sixty-two percent did not believe them. When asked to share the most unusual excuses employees gave for missing work, hiring managers offered the following examples:

- 1) Employee was poisoned by his mother-in-law.
- 2) A buffalo escaped from the game reserve and kept charging the employee every time she tried to go to her car from her house.
- 3) Employee was feeling all the symptoms of his expecting wife.
- 4) Employee called from his cell phone, said he was accidentally locked in a restroom stall and no one was around to let him out.
- 5) Employee broke his leg snowboarding off his roof while drunk.
- 6) Employee's wife said he couldn't come into work because he had a lot of chores to do around the house.
- 7) One of the walls in the employee's home fell off the night before.
- 8) Employee's mother was in jail.
- 9) A skunk got into the employee's house and sprayed all of his uniforms.
- 10) Employee had bad hiccups.
- 11) Employee blew his nose so hard, his back went out.
- 12) Employee's horses got loose and were running down the highway.
- 13) Employee was hit by a bus while walking.
- 14) Employee's dog swallowed her bus pass.
- 15) Employee was sad.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online by Harris Interactive(R) on behalf of CareerBuilder.com among 1,650 workers and 1,150 hiring managers, ages 18 and over, within the United States between August 31 and September 5, 2006. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region, household income and number of employees were weighted where necessary to the 'Employee' segment in order to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. The 'Employer' segment was weighted by number of employees to bring them in

line with their actual proportions in the population. Both segments were weighted using propriety algorithms in order to align the online population to be more representative demographically and behaviorally of the total population of online and offline workers.

With a pure probability sample of 1,150 or 1,650, one could say with a 95 percent probability, that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 4 and 2 percentage points, respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies. However, that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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