

One-Third of Workers Called in Sick With Fake Excuses in the Last Year, CareerBuilder.com's Annual Survey Shows

- Employers Share Most Unusual Reasons Employees Gave to Explain an Absence -

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CareerBuilder.com's annual survey on absenteeism shows 33 percent of workers have played hooky from the office, calling in sick when they were well at least once this year. While the majority of employers said they typically don't question the reason for the absence, 31 percent reported they have checked up on an employee who called in sick and 18 percent said they have fired a worker for missing work without a legitimate excuse. The nationwide survey included more than 6,800 workers and 3,300 employers.

Nearly one-in-ten workers (9 percent) who played hooky admitted to calling in sick because they wanted to miss a meeting, buy some time to work on a project that was already due or avoid the wrath of a boss or colleague. Others missed work because they just needed to relax and recharge (30 percent), go to a doctor's appointment (27 percent), catch up on sleep (22 percent), run personal errands (14 percent), catch up on housework (11 percent) or spend time with family and friends (11 percent). Another 34 percent just didn't feel like going to work that day.

Of the 31 percent of employers who checked up on an employee who called in sick, 71 percent said they required the employee to show them a doctor's note. Fifty-six percent called the employee at home, 18 percent had another worker call the employee, and 17 percent drove by the employee's house or apartment.

"It's in your best interest to be up-front with your employer and chances are you'll get the time you need," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources at CareerBuilder.com. "More companies today are moving toward a Paid Time Off system, giving employees more flexibility in how they categorize time away from the office. Employers are also expanding the definition of the sick day with 65 percent stating that they allow their team members to use sick days for mental health days."

When asked to share the most unusual excuses employees gave for missing work, employers offered the following real-life examples:

- Employee didn't want to lose the parking space in front of his house.
- Employee hit a turkey while riding a bike.
- Employee said he had a heart attack early that morning, but that he was "all better now."
- Employee donated too much blood.
- Employee's dog was stressed out after a family reunion.
- Employee was kicked by a deer.
- Employee contracted mono after kissing a mailroom intern at the company holiday party and suggested the company post some sort of notice to warn others who may have kissed him.
- Employee swallowed too much mouthwash.
- Employee's wife burned all his clothes and he had nothing to wear to work.
- Employee's toe was injured when a soda can fell out of the refrigerator.
- Employee was up all night because the police were investigating the death of someone discovered behind her house.

-- Employee's psychic told her to stay home.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder.com among 3,388 hiring managers and human resource professionals (employed full-time; not self-employed with at least significant involvement in hiring decisions); and 6,842 U.S. employees (employed full-time; not self-employed) ages 18 and over between August 21 and September 9, 2008, respectively (percentages for some questions are based on a subset of U.S. employers or employees, based on their responses to certain questions). With a pure probability sample of 3,388 and 6,842, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 1.68 percentage points and +/- 1.18 percentage points, respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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