

CareerBuilder Releases Annual List of the Most Unusual Excuses for Calling in Sick, According to U.S. Employers

More Than One-in-Four Employers Think More Workers are Calling in Sick With Fake Excuses due to Stress and Burnout

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CHICAGO, Oct. 27 /PRNewswire/ -- The work break is taking on a new meaning with workers forgoing just a few minutes away from their desks, in favor of, whole days away from the office to recharge their batteries. CareerBuilder's annual survey on absenteeism shows 29 percent of workers have played hooky from the office at least once this year, calling in sick when they were well. Twenty-seven percent of employers think they are seeing an increase in bogus sick excuses from employees due to continued stress and burnout caused by the weak economy. The nationwide survey was conducted between August 17 and September 2, 2010 and included more than 3,100 workers and more than 2,400 employers.

While the majority of employers said they believe their workers when they say they're feeling under the weather, 29 percent reported they have checked up on an employee who called in sick and 16 percent said they have fired a worker for missing work without a proven excuse. Of the employers who checked up on an employee, 70 percent said they required the employee to show them a doctor's note. While half called the employee at home, 18 percent had another worker call the employee and 15 percent drove by the employee's house or apartment.

"Six-in-ten employers we surveyed said they let their team members use sick days for mental health days," said Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder. "If you need to take some time away from the office, the best way not to cause yourself more stress is to be open and honest with your manager."

"Just not feeling like going to work" is the number one reason why workers said they call off sick with made-up excuses followed by "just needing to relax" and "catching up on sleep." Other reasons included doctor's appointments, needing to run personal errands, and plans with family and friends.

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

1. Employee said a chicken attacked his mom.
2. Employee's finger was stuck in a bowling ball.
3. Employee had a hair transplant gone bad.
4. Employee fell asleep at his desk while working and hit his head, causing a neck injury.
5. Employee said a cow broke into her house and she had to wait for the insurance man.
6. Employee's girlfriend threw a Sit 'n Spin through his living room window.
7. Employee's foot was caught in the garbage disposal.
8. Employee called in sick from a bar at 5 p.m. the night before.
9. Employee said he wasn't feeling too clever that day.
10. Employee had to mow the lawn to avoid a lawsuit from the home owner's association
11. Employee called in the day after Thanksgiving because she burned her mouth on a pumpkin pie.
12. Employee was in a boat on Lake Erie, ran out of gas and the coast guard towed him to the Canadian side.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive© on behalf of CareerBuilder among 2,457 U.S. hiring managers and 3,125 U.S. workers (employed full-time; not self-employed; non-government) ages 18 and over between August 17 and September 2, 2010 (percentages for some questions are based on a subset, based on their responses to certain questions). With pure probability samples of 2,457 and 3,125 one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 1.98 and +/-1.75 percentage points, respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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