

CareerBuilder's Annual Study Reveals This Year's Craziest Excuses for Calling in Sick

- **Number of workers calling in sick when they are not has declined over the last year**
- **33 percent of employers say they have checked to see if an employee was telling the truth after calling in sick, on par with 2015**

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CHICAGO and ATLANTA, Oct. 20, 2016 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- While calling in sick, when you are feeling just fine, is not a new phenomenon in the office, slightly less workers say they have done it over the last 12 months, according to a new CareerBuilder survey. Slightly more than a third of workers (35 percent) said they have called in to work sick when they were feeling just fine, down from 38 percent last year.

More than 3,100 full-time workers and more than 2,500 full-time hiring and human resource managers (of which 2,379 are in the private sector) across industries participated in the nationwide survey, conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder from August 11 to September 7, 2016.

When asked why they called in sick when they were feeling well, 28 percent said they just didn't feel like going in to work and 27 percent took the day off to attend a doctor's appointment. Another 24 percent said they needed to just relax and 18 percent needed to catch up on sleep. Meanwhile, 11 percent took the day off to run personal errands.

The Craziest Excuses for Calling in Sick

When asked to share the most dubious excuses employees have given for calling in sick, employers reported hearing the following real-life examples:

- Employee said the ozone in the air flattened his tires.
- Employee's pressure cooker had exploded and scared her sister, so she had to stay home.
- Employee had to attend the funeral of his wife's cousin's pet because he was an uncle and pallbearer.
- Employee was blocked in by police raiding her home.
- Employee had to testify against a drug dealer and the dealer's friend mugged him.
- Employee said her roots were showing and she had to keep her hair appointment because she looked like a mess.
- Employee ate cat food instead of tuna and was deathly ill.
- Employee said she wasn't sick but her llama was.
- Employee had used a hair remover under her arms and had chemical burns as a result. She couldn't put her arms down by her sides due to that.
- Employee was bowling the game of his life and couldn't make it to work.
- Employee was experiencing traumatic stress from a large spider found in her home. She had to stay home to deal with the spider.
- Employee said he had better things to do.
- Employee ate too much birthday cake.
- Employee was bit by a duck.

Caught in the Act

Though the majority of employers (67 percent) give their employees the benefit of the doubt, 33 percent say

they have checked to see if an employee was telling the truth in one way or another, on par with last year. Among employers who have checked up on an employee who called in sick, asking to see a doctor's note was the most popular way to find out if the absence was legit (68 percent), followed by calling the employee (43 percent). As many as 18 percent of employers went the extra mile and drove past the employee's house.

More than 1 in 5 employers (22 percent) say they have fired an employee for calling in sick with a fake excuse, on par with last year.

Be Careful What You Post

Some workers have inadvertently busted themselves online. More than a third of employers (34 percent) have caught an employee lying about being sick by checking social media. Of those, 27 percent have actually fired the employee, but 55 percent were more forgiving, only reprimanding the employee for the lie.

Not a Day to Waste

Not every employee feels like they can afford to take some time off, however. Nearly half of employees (47 percent) said they come into work when they're sick because they can't afford to miss a day of pay, and 60 percent come in because they're worried the work won't get done otherwise (both more common for women than men, 50 percent of women and 43 percent of men; and 62 percent of women and 57 percent of men, respectively). Further, 16 percent of employees said that while they have called in sick in the last year, they've had to work from home for at least part of the day, if not the whole day, while ill.

More than half of employees (53 percent) say their company has PTO programs where sick days, vacation days and personal days are all lumped together, so employees can use their time off however they choose. Still, of employees who say that their company has those types of programs, more than a quarter (28 percent) still feel obligated to make up an excuse to take a day off. And, overall, 25 percent of employees said they never log every day they take off.

Tis the Season

According to employers, employees most often call in sick during the month of December (21 percent) followed by July (16 percent) and January (14 percent). The most popular day of the week to call in sick is Monday (48 percent) followed by Friday (26 percent).

Despite higher absentee rates during the holiday season, only 8 percent of employees say they have ever faked being sick during this time. Of those who have, most did it to spend time with family and friends (76 percent), while others wanted to holiday shop (12 percent) or decorate for the season (9 percent).

Survey Methodology

These surveys were conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder among 2,587 hiring and human resource managers ages 18 and over (employed full-time, not self-employed; including 2,379 in the private sector) and 3,133 employees ages 18 and over (employed full-time, not self-employed, non-government) between August 11 and September 7, 2016. Percentages for some questions are based on a subset, based on their responses to certain questions. With pure probability samples of 2,587 and 3,133, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have sampling errors of +/- 1.93 and +/- 1.75 percentage points, respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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