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Pressure to Work While Sick Could Spread Swine Flu

Nearly half of employees (48 percent) who responded to a recent Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll said they had reported to work sick in the past 12 months because "they felt they had

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to" or else their work would not get done. Such a finding is of particular concern as organizations take steps to address concerns about an H1N1 "swine flu" pandemic.

SHRM's "Pressure to Work: The Employees' Perspective" poll included responses from 605 full-time or part-time employed United States residents. The survey was fielded for a two-week period ending Jan. 12, 2009.

The top reasons employee respondents gave SHRM for reporting to work sick included the lack of a replacement to cover for them, cited by 48 percent of respondents, and their workload or deadlines, reported by 39 percent. "Clearly, employees feel that in this economic climate it is disadvantageous to let their work go and risk not meeting deadlines," said Evren Esen, manager of SHRM's Survey Research Center. "Today's employees have a hard time completely detaching from their work when they are away from the office. Even if they do take a sick day, over half still stay connected by checking their e-mail."

One out of 10 respondents said they feared they would be subject to discipline for staying home. According to the employee respondents surveyed by SHRM:

- 27 percent said they could not afford to take time off.
- 19 percent said they didn't want to use their leave time.
- 5 percent said they had not accrued enough leave.
- 5 percent said they had used up all their leave.

The lack of leave is particularly problematic during challenging economic times. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 61 percent of private-industry workers received paid sick leave in March 2008, leaving many workers with only one choice-report for work or lose income.

But many organizations try to discourage working while sick. Nearly half (49 percent) of employee respondents told SHRM that their organization tries to create a culture that discourages "presenteeism," reporting to work sick or otherwise distracted.

"Employers need to discourage both the 'hero employee'-and even more so, the 'hero boss'-who try to muddle their way through the day when they shouldn't," said Brett Gorovsky, employment law analyst for CCH, a tax and business law information company, in an April 29, 2009 statement. "Employees are sensitive to the differences between what management says and what it means, and when they see their supervisors coming in sick, they're convinced that's what's expected of them also.

"The bottom line for most organizations is that it's in everyone's best interest for sick workers to simply stay away, even in normal times," Gorovsky added.

But as the H1N1 "swine flu" virus spreads, it becomes even more critical.

The possibility of a swine flu pandemic should be a wake-up call to the many organizations that have not developed a plan to cope with widespread employee illness, according to CCH.

Unlike natural disasters and some terrorist events, an influenza pandemic would be widespread, affecting multiple areas of the United States and other countries. A pandemic would be an extended event, with multiple waves of outbreaks in the same geographic area. Each outbreak could last six to eight weeks. Waves of outbreaks might occur over a year or more.

"A pandemic could affect as many as 40 percent of the workforce during periods of peak illness. Employees could be absent because they are sick [or] they must care for sick family members or for children if schools or day care centers are closed, or they are afraid to come to work," said CCH Workplace Analyst Heidi Henson in the statement. "Lack of continuity planning can result in a cascade of failures as employers attempt to address challenges of a pandemic with insufficient resources and employees who might not be adequately trained in the jobs they will be asked to perform."

Source: www.shrm.org

Top 3 Tips for Hiring in a Soft Economy

Everyone knows we are in the midst of a pretty soft economy. It is not yet clear here in March of 2009 how long it will last. Most bets are it will be a long time. This means a lot of things to business people but it particularly impacts hiring...if you are lucky enough to do any hiring. Pure and simple, a bad hire can put you out of business. Here are 3 tips that help you hire right in a bad economy.

Tip 1 - Define Success in Increments

This means you need to define what success means in a position. That definition needs to have 1 month, 3 month 6 month and 12 month goals. The person you hire has to meet these goals or they are gone. You can not afford to let that person grow into the position. This means you need to learn how to set up these criteria and measure results.

Tip 2 - Retain or Retrain

Do whatever you can to keep your people in house. This means hiring from within or retraining people to handle the position you need to fill. This serves two purposes, it allows people in your business to take on new and higher challenges. It keeps your current employee focused on your business and challenges them during this tough time...

Tip 3 - Create Flexibility

During lean times, it is imperative to remain flexible. This means a couple of things, cross training and using outsourced hiring. Why? During lean times there are still opportunities. When that order comes in the worst thing that can happen is you can not fill that order because you are stretched too thin. This means some people will have to cross train to share the load.

If there is still too much work to do, you need to be prepared to bring in

extra talent. The best way to do this is on a temporary basis. Hire temps to do specific jobs. You can not afford the commitment of hiring someone long term. In a lean economy, you can't know how long it will impact your business.

This has to be balanced against being able to complete jobs on time. When opportunity knocks you need to be able to answer. The solution is contingent workforce or temps. Find a good temp service and use them. The good news in a soft economy, there are more people available with better skills who would love to work on a 2 month assignment.

Final Thoughts

Sometimes a lean economy is the best time to be in business. There will be a number of businesses that will be going out of business. You can take these accounts and win new business. When things get better you will have more business grow faster. Don't make the mistake of a bad hire and becoming one of the ones who goes out of business.

Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Tom_Tassinari

10 Excuses for Missing Work

We've all been there. It's a beautiful day, and you can't bear the thought of going into work. So you call in with some excuse about feeling ill, but you know in your bones that your boss doesn't buy it. The feeling ill excuse is a short-term solution that won't win you any fans at the office -- someone else will have to pick up the slack, or you'll miss deadlines. And it won't help your career any.

Here are 10 excuses -- five smart and five not-so-smart -- to help you save face and your sanity...

Smart Excuses

1. ***I've Earned It:*** No one can argue with performance. Come in two or three hours early -- or stay late -- for a week or two. Then negotiate a day off in advance. "Really work when you're there, so you'll be able to feel good about taking time off," says Andrea Nierenberg, president of The Nierenberg Group, a management consulting and personal marketing practice.
2. ***I'm Playing Golf with a Client:*** For this one to work, you've got to have a job that requires you to meet and court current and prospective clients. Neil Simpkins, an account executive at Oxford Communications, has used this one successfully. One note of caution: Meet the client; don't just say you did.
3. ***I Have a Doctor's Appointment:*** This excuse will get you out of work for a half-day or so. Make the appointment first thing in the morning or late in the day, say around 3 p.m. You can leave the office by 2:30 p.m. and get home (hopefully) by 4 p.m. The shortened day will help you recharge, especially if you schedule it on a Friday afternoon.
4. ***I Have Cramps:*** Before you dismiss this one, think about it: Who can argue? "It's such an embarrassing topic that nobody will ever challenge it," says Jennifer Newman, vice president of Lippe Taylor Public Relations. She has used this excuse -- and

had it used on her -- successfully. "It's one of those things that men honestly have no clue about, and women can sympathize with." One important point: Don't use this one if you're a man. It'll never work.

5. ***I'm Working from Home:*** This is an excellent way to give yourself a break if your company allows it. Although you'll need to do some work, you can generally get away with a shortened day. And you'll eliminate your commuting time.

Not-So-Smart Excuses

1. ***There's a Death in the Family:*** Don't ever use this excuse if it's not true. Your employer will lose all trust in you. "I had an employee whose mother died -- twice," says David Wear, a Virginia PR executive. "He also had the misfortune of losing all his grandparents -- 12 of them -- during a two-year period."
2. ***I'm Too Sleepy:*** When she was a manager at IBM, Marilyn Mobley heard it all. This one still makes her laugh: The employee apparently took Tylenol 3 with codeine instead of a vitamin, because the bottles looked alike.
3. ***I Can't Get My Car Out of the Garage:*** This is another one that Mobley didn't buy. An employee said that a power failure was preventing him from opening his power-operated garage door. "I reminded him that there's a pull chain on it for just such cases," she says.
4. ***I Can't Find My Polling Place:*** Mary Dale Walters, a communications specialist at CCH Inc., couldn't believe this one. A former employee needed an entire day to figure out where she had to go to vote in the 1996 presidential election.
5. ***I Have a Personal Emergency:*** This one is so vague that it rarely works. It could mean anything from fatigue to an appointment with your hairdresser, and your boss knows it.

Don't lie, no matter which excuse you use. "I'm not a believer in playing hooky, because it always comes back to you," Nierenberg says. "Don't lie to your boss, your supervisor or your clients. You're guaranteed they will be the ones you'll run into while you're walking down the street in your jeans.

Source: www.monster.com

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- *Bring out your personal best, keeping focused on your needs, values, and vision.*

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