

More Than a Quarter of Employers Think More Employees Are Calling in Sick With Fake Excuses Due to Stress Tied to the Recession, Finds CareerBuilder's Annual Survey

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

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While the cold and flu season serves as a primary culprit in workplace absences, the economy may be a factor as well this year. CareerBuilder's annual survey on absenteeism shows nearly one-third (32 percent) of workers have played hooky from the office this year, calling in sick when they were well at least once. Twenty-eight percent of employers think more employees are absent with fake excuses due to increased stress and burnout caused by the recession. The nationwide survey included more than 4,700 workers and 3,100 employers.

While the majority of employers said they typically don't question the reason for an absence, 29 percent reported they have checked up on an employee who called in sick and 15 percent said they have fired a worker for missing work without a legitimate excuse. Of the 29 percent of employers who checked up on an employee, 70 percent said they required the employee to show them a doctor's note. Fifty-two 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.

"Longer hours and heavier workloads are common in the current economic climate and employers are becoming more flexible with their time off policies," said Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder. "Sixty-three percent of companies we surveyed said they let their team members use sick days for mental health days. If you need time to recharge, your best bet is to be honest with your manager."

More than one-in-ten workers (12 percent) who played hooky admitted to calling in sick because of something work-related, such as to miss a meeting, give themselves some more time to work on a project or avoid the wrath of a boss, colleague or client. Others missed work because they needed to go to a doctor's appointment (31 percent), needed to relax (28 percent), catch up on sleep (16 percent), run personal errands (13 percent), catch up on housework (10 percent) or spend time with family and friends (10 percent). An additional 32 percent just didn't feel like going to work that day.

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

- I got sunburned at a nude beach and can't wear clothes.
- I woke up in Canada.
- I got caught selling an alligator.
- My buddies locked me in the trunk of an abandoned car after a weekend of drinking.
- My mom said I was not allowed to go to work today.
- A bee flew in my mouth.
- I'm just not into it today.
- I accidentally hit a nun with my motorcycle.
- A random person threw poison ivy in my face and now I have a rash.
- I'm convinced my spouse is having an affair and I'm staying home to catch them.
- I was injured chasing a seagull.

- I have a headache from eating hot peppers.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive© on behalf of CareerBuilder.com among 3,163 hiring managers and human resource professionals (employed full-time; not self-employed; government and non-government; with at least significant involvement in hiring decisions); and among 4,721 U.S. workers (employed full-time; not self-employed; government and non-government); ages 18 and over between August 20 and September 9, 2009 (percentages for some questions are based on a subset, based on their responses to certain questions). With a pure probability sample of 4,721 and 3,163 one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/-1.74 percentage points and +/-1.43 percentage

points, respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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