



HRCI Online Poll

HR Views About Working on Vacation

Introduction

Half of non-essential workers believe there are no company expectations for them to work while on vacation. The other half? About a third of employees remain unsure whether they are expected to combine work with relaxation; and 16 percent believe they, indeed, are expected to work while taking paid time off (PTO).

Once on vacation, however, more than three-fourths of workers bite the bullet and are likely to at least work occasionally, finds an HR Certification Institute® (HRCI®) online poll that captures the opinions of nearly 300 professionals employed as HR practitioners for organizations (see *Table 1*).

Table 1: HR Views About Workers on Vacation

% of Employees Who "Believe" They <u>Are</u> Expected to Work When on Vacation	% of Employees Who "Believe" They <u>Are Not</u> Expected to Work When on Vacation	% of Employees Who "Occasionally" Work When on Vacation	% Employees Who Almost Always or Always Work While on Vacation	% Employees Who Rarely or Never Work While on Vacation
16	50	59	17	24

Vacation Policies Influence Behaviors and Beliefs

Developing a written policy that discourage work on vacation is a good place to start. Only 31 percent of HR respondents said their organizations have such policies. Based on the findings, policy can help to change employee expectations (see *Table 2*) about working on vacation and encourage more employees to take work-free vacations (see *Table 3*).

Table 2: HR Views on Workers' Beliefs About Working on Vacation

Companies With . . .	% of Employees Who "Believe" They <u>Are</u> Expected to Work When on Vacation	% of Employees Who "Believe" They <u>Are Not</u> Expected to Work When on Vacation
A Written Policy That Discourages Work While on Vacation	5	80
No Written Policy or One That Neither Encourages nor Discourages Work While on Vacation	20	37

Table 3: HR Views on Workers' Work Behaviors While on Vacation

Company With . . .	% of Employees Who "Occasionally" Work When on Vacation	% Employees Who "Almost Always" or "Always" Work When on Vacation	% Employees Who "Rarely" or "Never" Work When on Vacation
A Written Policy That Discourages Work While on Vacation	63	10	27
No Written Policy or One That Neither Encourages nor Discourages Work While on Vacation	56	21	23

Still, even with written policy to discourage work while vacationing, 73 percent of employees are estimated to work occasionally or more while taking time off, compared to 71 percent who work occasionally or more when there is no specific policy guidance.

Policy is trumped by more powerful influences – the culture and the examples set by others in the workplace. HR must be sure to incentivize employees to take work-free PTO and develop organizational cultures that promote the many benefits of rest and respite.

Employees Take Vacation Cues From Management

Executives and managers also have a huge influence on whether people work or not while vacationing, the HRCI online poll finds. Supervisors, 46 percent of HR respondents say, have the biggest influence on employee expectations about working on vacation, followed by the C-suite executives (22 percent), self (20 percent), HR (5 percent), other employees (4 percent) and other factors (3 percent).

In addition to policy and getting the word out about the value of work-free vacation time, HR must also extra time working with managers to ensure they are setting the right PTO examples. Managers who continue to work while on vacation send the wrong signals to their staffs that work remains a priority. Managers should be instructed to "lead by example" and turn vacations into culture-building opportunities for staff members to celebrate their excursions with share pictures and activity highlights.

HR Opinions About PTO

How much is the right amount of yearly vacation days for employees? The largest percentage of HR professionals (46 percent) chose 15 days, followed by 37 percent who believe more than 15 days is the right amount, and 17 percent who believe that roughly 10-14 days is sufficient.

When asked how much time they personally spend working while on vacation, 72 percent of HR professionals say they work at least "occasionally" while on vacation – about the same as other employees.

Most often, HR professionals say their vacation work involves reading email (72 percent), responding to an emergency (20 percent) or working on a project (5 percent). For vacations of five days or longer, most HR professionals say they prefer to spend a few minutes each day on work over the span of the entire vacation.

Conclusions

Employees and their vacation habits are confounded by a mixed bag of written company policies, unspoken expectations, shared beliefs, and poor examples set by CEOs, supervisors and others. This, despite plenty of evidence about vacation's power to improve employee wellness and how rejuvenated employees are often more productive contributors.

The data from the HRCI online poll suggests that businesses and HR can do more to make PTO a richer benefit for employees and the organization. It's important for all employees – HR included – to be reminded that PTO is a benefit, not just a perk.

Methodology

HRCI conducted this online poll using SurveyMonkey. Nearly 300 responses were submitted by professionals who identified themselves as "HR professional of an organization." HR respondents represent mostly HRCI-certified professionals and others who were recruited to take the survey through HRCI email and social media outreach. The survey reflects only the opinions of HR professionals about vacation policies, employees' beliefs about expectations by the company to work while taking time off, and time employees spend working while on vacation.

About HRCI

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