

Worried Workers Choosing All Work, No Play

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A new survey finds that a good chunk of employees don't use their workplace-sponsored days off, squirreling them away for rainy days that never come.

Didn't use all of your vacation days last year? You're not alone. More than half of workers don't use all of their vacation time, finds a survey published on April 18 by Hudson, an employment services firm.

The survey suggests that workers are apprehensive about using all of their vacation time allotted in a year, fearful that it will leave them without any room for flexibility should an urgent situation emerge. Of the workers surveyed, 56 percent said they did not use all of their vacation time each year and nearly one-third (30 percent) said they take less than half of their allotted time off.

Other employees balance their need for vacation, as well as extra days in the bank, by limiting their excursions to weekend getaways, noted by 20 percent of workers surveyed.

"Employers are taking notice of the demands of workers who want a work-life balance that allows them to have a personal life alongside their professional one," said Peg Buchenroth, senior vice president of human resources at Hudson.

"Providing a flexible approach to employees' lives outside work is going to help employers retain key individuals who do not feel as if they have

to choose one or the other."

Nearly a third of workers surveyed were less stingy with their vacation days and ended up calling in sick when they were not actually ill, feeling that they had few other options.

Yet the Hudson survey suggests that many workers do have other options, as the vast majority of workers felt that their bosses were fairly flexible when it came to unscheduled events that happened during the workday.

More than three-quarters (78 percent) of the work force rated their employer favorably when it came to allowing them to take extra time for personal matters. Virtually the same number (80 percent) of workers also said their bosses are very or somewhat accepting if they need to stay home when they are under the weather.

The study's numbers suggested a trending away from the once-standard two weeks of vacation each year, with nearly half (49 percent) of employees responding they receive yearly more than 11 days. Nearly the same proportion (51 percent) indicated that their company designated a certain number of days for sick, personal and vacation time, while 28 percent were provided with a bank of time to use as they see fit.

"On top of accommodating workers' personal needs on a day-to-day basis, managers need to make sure employees are taking sufficient time away from the office," Buchenroth said.

"Modern technology makes staying in constant contact very easy, so it takes some effort for people to disconnect. However, the benefit of employees taking that time often comes through in improved job satisfaction and greater productivity."

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