

Reducing Unnecessary Employee Absences

It is important to be fair to employees and respect their need to take time off when they are sick. Coexisting along with fairness needs to be elements of control. Sick leave can be manipulated if it is not closely monitored. Additionally, not giving employees time off when they physically need it can create legal and image problems for your business.

Why do employees take time off if they are not truly sick? This can vary a lot, but the trend seems to be that if people think they can get away with not going to work, they will use the opportunity to their advantage. Frequent absenteeism can also signal various personal problems. (Substance abuse, depression, chronic illness, too many responsibilities, etc.) The employee could have serious domestic problems or circumstances that the employer has no knowledge about. Lastly, employees who do not like their job are more likely to miss work more frequently and take a sick day even when they are able to meet the demands of their job.

There are different ways to prevent unnecessary absences from occurring. The first is to develop a set of guidelines on sick leave. This could consist of such things as whom to call and notify and by what time. The number of absences allowed before pay is withheld will serve as an absolute limit on absences. The policy should also allow for employees to make requests for special circumstances. Another guideline should deal with the types of ailments that are considered severe enough to leave work.

Monitoring and keeping track of all absences as well as reviewing company policies on the matter are excellent ways to show employees that you are serious about enforcing your absence policy. Require doctors' notes and other ways to substantiate that

an illness has occurred. Employees want to give a favorable impression. By placing a value on attendance you can reinforce good attendance. Incentive plans can be used to accentuate the value of attendance. Relate employee bonuses to attendance.

Lastly, promoting a healthy lifestyle can eliminate unnecessary absences. Make sure employees are given enough time to eat lunch and have a snack. Allow employees to take requested vacations and relax. Do not overload employees or have them work very late on a consistent basis. Do allow sick employees to stay home so that they do not get other individuals ill. Eliminate any unnecessary stress in the workplace. By helping employees stay healthy, it reduces the need for sick leave to be taken.

Reference:

(2002). Managing Absenteeism. *Business The Ultimate Resource*. Cambridge: Bloomsbury Publishing.