SHRM Research

Workplace Productivity

POLL FINDINGS

A study by the Society for Human Resource Management



HR: Leading People, Leading Organizations



Workplace Productivity Poll Findings

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Workplace Productivity Poll Findings

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About This Report

In August 2004, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) conducted an online poll¹ of both human resource (HR) professionals and employees to determine opinions about workplace productivity and the impact of presenteeism on productivity and morale. The definition of presenteeism is an employee showing up to work even if sick or otherwise distracted, resulting in a lack of productivity despite the fact that the employee is physically present.

Comparisons of HR professionals' perceptions of employee attitudes with actual employee attitudes show the extent to which HR professionals are in touch with employees in their organizations. The more attuned HR professionals are to employee perceptions, the better able they are to respond to employee concerns. Conversely, the less attuned HR professionals are to employees, the more they may need to determine why their perception of employee attitudes is inaccurate and how to modify it so that they can be responsive to employees.

As with any research, readers should exercise caution when generalizing results and take individual circumstances and experiences into consideration when making decisions based on this data. While SHRM is confident in its research, it is prudent to understand that the results presented in this report are only truly representative of the sample of HR professionals responding to the poll.

About SHRM

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 190,000 individual members, the Society's mission is to serve the needs of HR professionals by providing the most essential and comprehensive resources available. As an influential voice, the Society's mission is also to advance the human resource profession to ensure that HR is recognized as an essential partner in developing and executing organizational strategy. Founded in 1948, SHRM currently has more than 500 affiliated chapters and members in more than 100 countries. Visit SHRM Online at www.shrm.org.

About the Authors

Mary Elizabeth Burke and Evren Esen are survey analysts for SHRM. Their responsibilities include designing, conducting and analyzing surveys on HR-related topics and assisting in larger research projects. Ms. Burke has a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Duke University and three years of survey and market research experience. Ms. Esen has a graduate certificate in survey design and data analysis from The George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

¹ Copies of the HR professional and employee versions of the poll can be found at the end of this summary.

Methodology

oth versions of the poll were developed by the SHRM Survey Program. An internal committee of SHRM staff with HR expertise also provided valuable insight and recommendations for the instruments. For comparison purposes, both employees and HR professionals received similar questions.

HR Professional Sample

The HR professional sample was randomly selected from SHRM's membership database, which at the time included approximately 180,000 individual members. Only members who had not participated in an SHRM survey or poll in the last six months were included in the sampling frame. Members who are students, consultants, academics, located internationally and who have no e-mail address on file were excluded from the sampling frame. In August 2004, an e-mail that included a link to the SHRM Workplace Productivity Online Poll was sent to 2,500 randomly selected SHRM members. Of these, 2,055 e-mails were successfully delivered to respondents,

and 478 HR professionals responded, yielding a response rate of 23% (the number of respondents to each question is indicated by "n" in tables and figures). The poll was accessible for a period of two weeks, and two e-mail reminders were sent to nonrespondents in an effort to increase response rates.

Employee Sample

A sample of 613 employees was randomly selected by an outside survey research organization's Webenabled employee panel, which completed the Workplace Productivity Online Survey over a period of seven days (the number of respondents to each question is indicated by "n" in tables and figures). The employee panel is based on a random sample of the entire U.S. telephone population. All panelist households are provided with a custom-designed Web device so that they can complete surveys online. A response rate of 69% was achieved. All respondents were employed, either full time or part time.

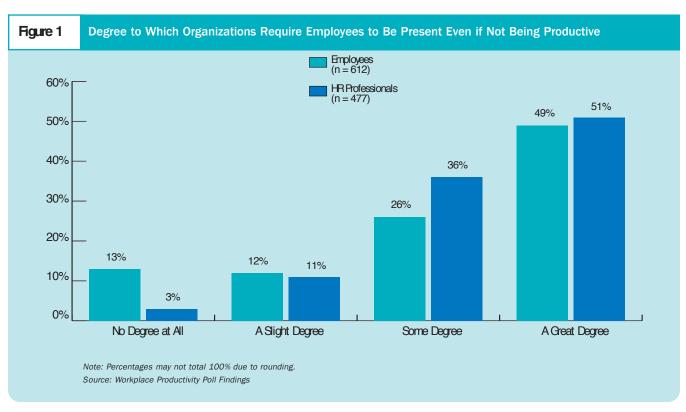
Poll Results

hroughout this report, conventional statistical methods were used to determine if observed differences were statistically significant (i.e., there is a small likelihood that the differences occurred by chance). Analyses by HR professionals' organization size² and employees' industry, gender and age were conducted, and significant differences are noted in this report where appropriate. Other differences were not statistically significant.

Degree to Which Organizations Require Employees to Be Present Even if Not Being Productive

- Approximately half of both employees (49%) and HR professionals (51%) indicate that they agree "to a great degree" that their organization requires employees to be present even if they are not being productive (see Figure 1).
- On average, HR professionals feel more strongly than employees that the organization expects employees to be present even if they are not being productive (see Figure 1).

² The organizations were divided into three categories based on their staff size: small (1-99 employees), medium (100-499 employees) and large (500 or more employees).



How Often Employees Come to Work Even if Sick

- While almost one-third of employees (31%) reported coming to work "all of the time" even if they are sick or not feeling well, only 7% of HR professionals think employees do this. Only 5% of employees said they never come to work if they are not feeling well (see Figure 2).
- Employees from the wholesale/retail trade industry are more likely than those in educational services to come to work if they are sick (see Table 1).
- Male employees are more likely than female employees to come to work if they are sick (see Table 2).

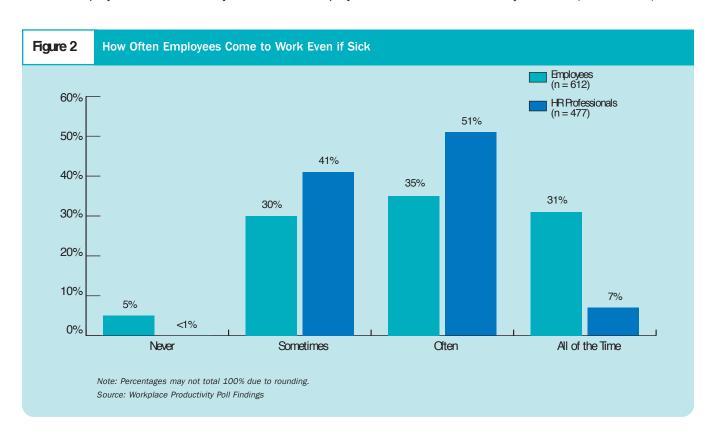


Table	Table 1 How Often Employees Come to Work Even if Sick (by Industry)												
Overall (n = 612)	Construction and Mining/ Oil and Gas (n = 38)	Educational Services (n = 73)	Finance (n = 30)	Government (n = 58)	Health (n = 52)	High-Tech (n = 24)	Manufacturing (Durable Goods) (n = 30)	Manufacturing (Nondurable Goods) (n = 31)	Services (Nonprofit) (n = 25)	Services (Profit) (n = 74)	Transportation (n = 30)	Wholesale/ Retail Trade (n = 58)	Differences Based on Industry
2.92	2.97	2.66	2.70	2.81	2.98	2.67	2.93	2.87	2.68	3.08	3.20	3.10	Wholesale/retail trade > educational services

Note: Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = All of the Time (higher average indicates the behavior occurs more frequently). Sample sizes are based on the number of respondents providing industry; however, the averages shown are based on the actual number of respondents by industry who answered this question using the response options provided.

Source: Workplace Productivity Poll Findings

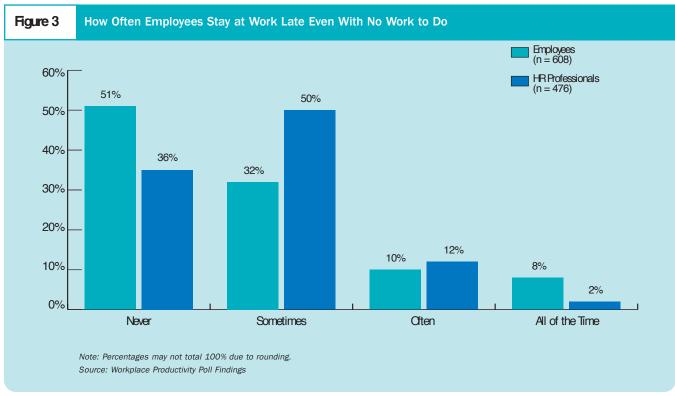
Table 2 How Often Employees Come to Work if Sick (by Gender)

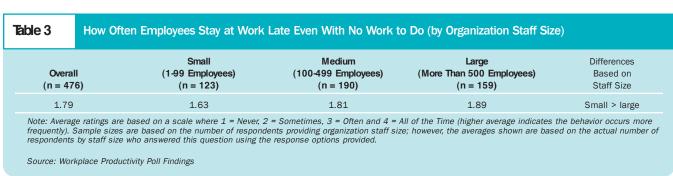
Overall	Female	Male	Differences Based on Gender
(n = 612)	(n = 281)	(n = 332)	
2.92	2.81	3.01	Male > female

Note: Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = All of the Time (higher average indicates the behavior occurs more frequently). Sample sizes are based on the number of respondents providing gender; however, the averages shown are based on the actual number of respondents by gender who answered this question using the response options provided.

How Often Employees Stay at Work Late Even With No Work to Do

- Just over half of employees (51%) indicate that they never stay at work late if they do not have work to do; only 18% of employees say they do this all the time (8%) or often (10%) (see Figure 3).
- HR professionals at small organizations are more likely than those at large organizations to report that employees at their organizations stay late even if they do not have work to do (see Table 3).





How Often Employees Stay at Work Late Even if Not Being Productive

- More than half of employees (56%) report that they never stay at work late if they are not being productive; only 4% say they do this all the time (see Figure 4).
- On average, HR professionals are slightly more likely to think that employees at their organization will work late even if they are not being productive than employees actually report doing so (see Figure 4).
- HR professionals at organizations with fewer than 100 employees are more likely that those at organizations with 100 or more employees to say that employees at their organization will stay at work late even if they are not being productive (see Table 4).
- Male employees are more likely than female employees to stay at work late even if they are not being productive (see Table 5).

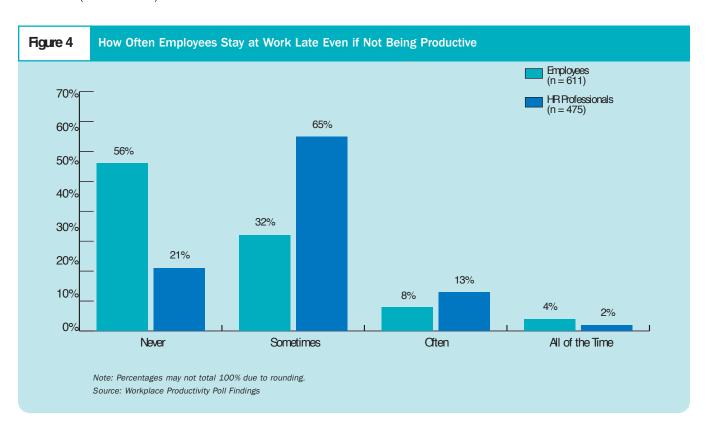


Table 4

How Often Employees Stay at Work Late Even if Not Being Productive (by Organization Staff Size)

Overall (n = 476)	Small (1-99 Employees) (n = 123)	Medium (100-499 Employees) (n = 190)	Large (More Than 500 Employees) (n = 159)	Differences Based on Staff Size
1.95	1.78	2.02	2.01	Small > medium, large

Note: Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = All of the Time (higher average indicates the behavior occurs more frequently). Sample sizes are based on the number of respondents providing organization staff size; however, the averages shown are based on the actual number of respondents by staff size who answered this question using the response options provided.

Source: Workplace Productivity Poll Findings

Table 5

How Often Employees Stay at Work Late Even if Not Being Productive (by Gender)

Overall (n = 612)	Female (n = 281)	Male (n = 332)	Differences Based on Gender
1.61	1.49	1.70	Male > female

Note: Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = All of the Time (higher average indicates the behavior occurs more frequently). Sample sizes are based on the number of respondents providing gender; however, the averages shown are based on the actual number of respondents by gender who answered this question using the response options provided.

Factors That Negatively Impact Productivity

- More than half of employees (59%) indicated that there are no factors that negatively impact their productivity at work because they feel productive at all times.
- Employees and HR professionals agree on the top two factors that negatively impact employee productivity

 poor management (reported by 58% of employees and 61% of HR professionals) and no longer being motivated by the work (reported by 38% of employees and 63% of HR professionals) (see Table 6).
- In general, a higher percentage of HR professionals than employees noted that each factor negatively impacts employee productivity, especially in regards to a lack of accountability on the job (56% of HR professionals compared with 13% of employees) (see Table 6).
- Employees who are 56 and older are more likely than those 55 and younger to indicate that they feel productive at all times (see Table 7).
- HR professionals at medium and large organizations are more likely than those at small organizations to cite poor management as a factor that negatively impacts employee productivity (65% for medium and 66% for large organizations compared with 50% for small organizations). HR professionals from large organizations are more likely than those from small organizations to cite readiness to leave the organization as a factor that negatively impacts productivity (28% for large compared with 14% for small), and HR professionals from medium organizations are more likely than those from small organizations to cite a lack of accountability in the job (62% for medium compared with 46% for small) (see Table 8).
- Employees listed other factors that negatively impact their productivity, including having to do coworkers' jobs, customer negativity, lack of recognition and cyclical workloads.
- HR professionals listed other factors that negatively impact employee productivity, including feeling undercompensated, poor time management skills, wasting time, too much work for too few employees, poor communication and a lack of clear priorities.

Table 6 Factors That Negatively Impact Productivity

	Employees* (n = 252)	HR Professionals (n = 477)	Differences
Poor management	58%	61%	No significant difference
No longer being motivated by the work	38%	63%	HR professionals > employees
Organizational changes (e.g., change in leadership, merger, etc.)	26%	48%	HR professionals > employees
A lack of defined goals in the job	24%	52%	HR professionals > employees
Readiness to leave organization	16%	21%	No significant difference
A lack of accountability in the job	13%	56%	HR professionals > employees
Pressure by management to show "face time"	12%	18%	HR professionals > employees
Other	16%	11%	Employees > HR professionals

*Does not include the 59% of employee respondents who selected "Not applicable; I feel I am productive at all times."

Note: Percentages are column percentages and do not total 100% because multiple responses were allowed. Ordered by percentage of employees who said each factor negatively impacts their productivity at work.

Source: Workplace Productivity Poll Findings

Table 7 Factors That Negatively Impact Productivity (by Age)

	All Employees	35 and Under	36 to 55	56 and Over	Differences
	(n = 252)	(n = 229)	(n = 302)	(n = 82)	Based on Age
Not applicable; I feel I am productive at all times	59%	55%	56%	80%	56 and over > 35 and under, 36 to 55

Note: Includes only factors where there was a significant difference by age group. Percentages are column percentages and do not total 100% because multiple responses were allowed. Sample sizes are based on the number of respondents providing age; however, the averages shown are based on the actual number of respondents by age who answered this question using the response options provided.

Source: Workplace Productivity Poll Findings

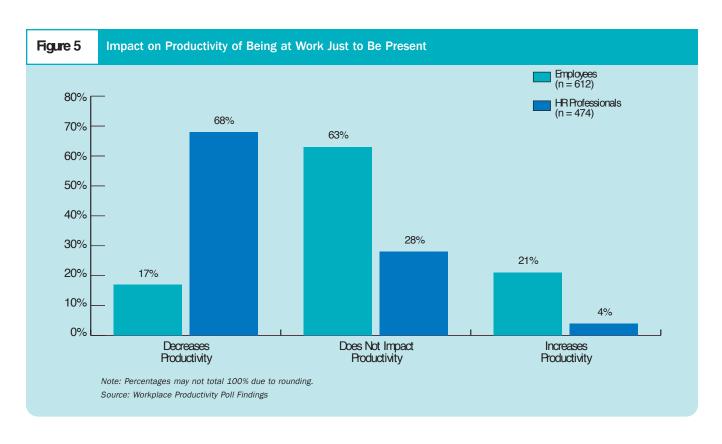
Table 8 Factors That Negatively Impact Productivity (by Organization Staff Size)

	Overall (n = 476)	Small (1-99 Employees) (n = 123)	Medium (100-499 Employees) (n = 190)	Large (More Than 500 Employees) (n = 159)	Differences Based on Staff Size
Poor management	61%	50%	65%	66%	Medium, large > small
Readiness to leave organization	21%	14%	21%	28%	Large > small
A lack of accountability in the job	56%	46%	62%	56%	Medium > small

Note: Includes only factors where there was a significant difference by organization staff size. Percentages are column percentages and do not total 100% because multiple responses were allowed. Sample sizes are based on the number of respondents providing organization staff size; however, the averages shown are based on the actual number of respondents by staff size who answered this question using the response options provided.

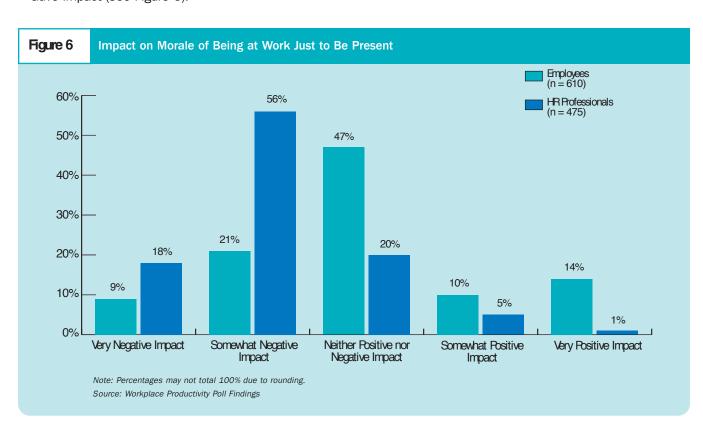
Impact on Productivity of Being at Work Just to Be Present

• Most HR professionals (68%) believe that being at work just to be present decreases productivity at their organizations, but most employees (63%) say it does not have an impact (see Figure 5).



Impact on Morale of Being at Work Just to Be Present

• Most HR professionals believe that being at work just to be present has a very negative (18%) or somewhat negative (56%) impact on employee morale, but almost half of employees (47%) say it has neither a positive nor negative impact (see Figure 6).



Conclusions

mployee productivity— or a lack thereof— can come from many sources. Employees may be ill, distracted by events going on outside of work or simply unmotivated. While some causes of inefficiency may be unavoidable, HR professionals can and should do what they can to minimize factors within their control that may contribute to a lack of productivity.

The number one factor employees cite as negatively impacting their work productivity is poor management. Other factors, such as a lack of defined goals and a lack of accountability, may be interrelated with poor management. Training all employees who manage others, as well as monitoring the performance of managers and morale of their subordinates, are proactive steps HR professionals can take to improve productivity at their organizations. Similarly, HR professionals should take a lead in effectively managing and communicating to employees about organizational changes such as mergers or changes in leadership, as a number of employees indicate that these changes can lead to a loss in productivity.

One surprising finding from this research is that while most HR professionals believe that being at work just to be physically present decreases productivity and has a negative impact on employee morale, most employees believe it actually has no impact on their productivity, and almost half indicate it has nei-

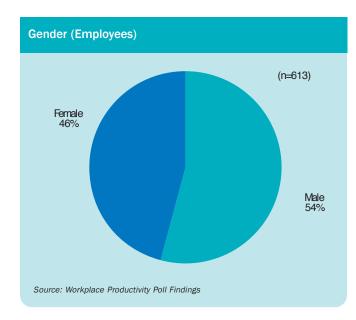
ther a positive nor a negative impact on their morale. This finding suggests that HR professionals may want to focus more on other factors when trying to increase employee productivity or morale.

One cause for concern is the number of employees who report coming to work even if they are sick. Almost one-third of employees report coming to work "all of the time," even if they are sick or do not feel well, while fewer than one out of 10 HR professionals believe this to be true. Sick employees in the office are unlikely to be able to put forth their best effort and pose a special concern since they may be contagious and pass the illness along to coworkers. With the shortage of flu vaccines in the United States during the 2004-2005 flu season, HR professionals should be especially cautious about sick employees coming into the office.

The increasing number of employees with cell phones, pagers and home Internet connections may be helping to ease the pressure some employees feel to put in "face time" at the office. However, the converse of this perpetual accessibility is that employees may never feel they are truly free from work. HR professionals are often in a position to help assure that advances in technology help improve productivity by ensuring employees can be reached when needed while not decreasing morale by eliminating the line between work and nonwork activities.

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Demographics



Age (Employees)	
(n = 613)	
35 or younger	37%
36 to 55	49%
56 or older	13%
Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.	
Source: Workplace Productivity Poll Findings	

Industry (Employees)	
(n = 611)	
Educational services	12%
Services (profit)	12%
Government	10%
Wholesale/retail trade	10%
Health	9%
Construction and mining/oil and gas	6%
Finance	5%
Manufacturing (durable goods)	5%
Manufacturing (nondurable goods)	5%
Transportation	5%
High-tech	4%
Services (nonprofit)	4%
Insurance	3%
Telecommunications	3%
Newspaper publishing/broadcasting	1%
Utilities	1%
Other*	7%
*Includes responses such as graphic arts, security, arch	nitecture and farming.

Region (Employees)	
(n = 613)	
South (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia)	35%
Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)	23%
West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming)	23%
Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont)	19%
Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.	
Source: Workplace Productivity Poll Findings	

Organization Staff Size (HR Professionals)

(n = 472)

HR professionals indicated that, on average, the number of employees at their location was 2,471.

Small (1-99 employees)	26%
Medium (100-499 employees)	40%
Large (500 or more employees)	34%

Poll Instruments

Workplace Productivity Poll Employee Version

Instructions

For the purposes of this poll, you are asked to think about situations that describe the act of being at work just to be present or for "face time" even if you are not being productive. This may cover times when you may show up for work even if you feel too sick, stressed, distracted or unmotivated to be productive.

•	·
1. Are you currently employed outside of your home?YesNo (skip to end of poll)	 4. Which of the following factors negatively impact your productivity at work? (Check all that apply.) Not applicable; I feel I am productive at all times A lack of accountability in my job
2. To what degree do you feel that your employer requires that you be "present" at work even if you are not being productive?	☐ A lack of defined goals in my job☐ No longer being motivated by my work☐ Organizational changes (e.g., change in corporate
☐ A great degree☐ Some degree	leadership, merger, etc.) Poor management
☐ A slight degree☐ No degree at all	☐ Pressure by management to show "face time"☐ Readiness to leave the organization☐ Other (please specify):
3. How often do you: Come to work if you are sick or not feeling well ☐ All of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never Stay at work late even if you do not have work to do	5. In your opinion, what impact does being at work just to be present have on your overall productivity at work?It increases my productivity
☐ All of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never Stay at work late even if you are not being productive ☐ All of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never	☐ It does not impact my productivity ☐ It decreases my productivity
	 6. In your opinion, what impact does being at work just to be present have on your morale? A very positive impact A somewhat positive impact Neither a positive nor a negative impact A somewhat negative impact A very negative impact

Workplace Productivity Poll HR Professional Version

Instructions

For the purposes of this poll, you are asked to think about situations when employees are at work just to be present or for "face time" even if they are not being productive. This may cover times when employees show up for work even if they feel too sick, stressed, distracted or unmotivated to be productive.

 1. Overall, to what degree does your organization expect employees to be present at work even if they might not be feeling productive? A great degree Some degree No degree at all 	 4. In your opinion, what impact does being at work just to be present have on employee productivity at your organization? It increases productivity It does not impact productivity It decreases productivity
2. In your opinion, how often do employees at your organization: Come to work if they are sick or not feeling well ☐ All of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never Stay at work late even if they do not have work to do ☐ All of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never Stay at work late even if they are not being productive ☐ All of the time ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never	 5. In your opinion, what impact does being at work just to be present have on employee morale at your organization? A very positive impact A somewhat positive impact Neither a positive nor a negative impact A somewhat negative impact A very negative impact A very negative impact
 3. In your opinion, which of the following factors negatively impact employee productivity at your organization? (Check all that apply.) A lack of accountability in their jobs A lack of defined goals in their jobs No longer being motivated by their work Organizational changes (e.g., change in corporate leadership, merger, etc.) Poor management Pressure by management to show "face time" Readiness to leave the organization Other (please specify): 	6. How many people are employed, both full time and part time, at your organization's location?

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SHRM Survey Reports

Available to members and the public

- 1. 2004 U.S. Job Recovery and Retention Poll Findings (33 pages, November 2004)
- 2. Employee Trust and Organizational Loyalty Poll Findings (14 pages, July 2004)
- 3. Job Negotiation Survey Findings (41 pages, April 2004)
- 4. Job Opportunities Survey (39 pages, September 2003)
- 5. Job Recovery Survey (28 pages, August 2003)
- 6. Job Opportunities Poll (39 pages, April 2003)
- 7. Job Satisfaction Poll (74 pages, December 2002)
- 8. HR Implications of the Attack on America (23 pages, September 2002)
- Corporate Credibility and Employee Communications Survey (14 pages, August 2002)
- 10. Job Opportunities Poll (30 pages, August 2002)
- 11. Workplace Romance Survey (24 pages, February 2002)
- 12. School-to-Work Programs Survey (16 pages, January 2002)
- 13. HR Implications of the Attack on America: Executive Summary of Results of a Survey of HR Professionals (13 pages, October 2002)
- 14. Negotiating Rewards Poll (14 pages, October 2001)
- 15. Search Tactics Poll (8 pages, April 2001)

Available to members only

- 1. Job Satisfaction Series Survey Report (192 pages, August 2004)
- Generational Differences Survey Report (29 pages, August 2004)
- 3. Employer-Sponsored Investment Advice Survey Report (43 pages, July 2004)
- 4. Human Resources Outsourcing Survey Report (28 pages, July 2004)
- 5. 2004 Benefits Survey Report (67 pages, June 2004)
- 6. Health Care Survey Report (29 pages, June 2004)
- 7. SHRM/CNNfn Job Satisfaction Series: Job Satisfaction Survey Report (52 pages, April 2004)
- SHRM/CNNfn Job Satisfaction Series: Job Compensation/Pay Survey Report (36 pages, February 2004)
- The Maturing Profession of Human Resources in the U.S. Survey Report (48 pages, January 2004)
- Workplace Violence Survey (52 pages, January 2004)
- SHRM Eldercare Survey (40 pages, December 2003)
- 12. SHRM/CNNfn Job Satisfaction Series: Job Benefits Survey (57 pages, December 2003)
- Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study (45 pages, October 2003)
- 14. SHRM Equal Employment Opportunity
 Commission Survey (10 pages, October 2003)

- 15. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Survey (20 pages, August 2003)
- 16. SHRM/SHRM Foundation 2003 Benefits Survey (81 pages, June 2003)
- 17. SHRM Job Satisfaction Series: Job Security Survey (41 pages, June 2003)
- 18. SHRM/NOWCC/CED Older Workers Survey (53 pages, June 2003)
- March 2003 Current Events Survey (28 pages, May 2003)
- 20. 2003 FMLA Poll (20 pages, April 2003)
- 21. 2003 Business Ethics Survey (48 pages, April 2003)
- 22. Employer Incentives for Hiring Individuals With Disabilities (66 pages, April 2003)
- 23. Fun Work Environment Survey (56 pages, November 2002)
- 24. Aligning HR With Organizational Strategy (53 pages, November 2002)
- 25. Recruiter Cost/Budget Survey (30 pages, October 2002)
- 26. 2002 SHRM/Fortune Survey on the Changing Face of Diversity (16 pages, October 2002)
- 27. Workplace Demographic Trends Survey (37 pages, June 2002)
- 28. Global Leadership Survey (36 pages, June 2002)
- 29. SHRM 2002 Benefits Survey Results (57 pages, April 2002)

- 30. A Study of Effective Workforce Management (36 pages, February 2002)
- 31. Human Resource Strategies, Stages of Development and Organization Size Survey (46 pages, January 2002)
- 32. Job Security and Layoffs Survey (76 pages, December 2001)
- 33. World Events Survey— Impact on Global Mobility (4 pages, November 2001)
- 34. Religion in the Workplace (58 pages, June 2001)
- 35. Employee Referral Programs (40 pages, June 2001)
- 36. Impact of Diversity Initiatives on the Bottom Line (41 pages, June 2001)
- 37. 2001 Benefits Survey (59 pages, April 2001)
- 38. 2000 FMLA Survey (51 pages, January 2001)
- 39. Workplace Privacy Survey (51 pages, December 2000)
- 40. Performance Management Survey (43 pages, December 2000)
- 41. Impact of Diversity Initiatives Poll (5 pages, October 2000)
- 42. 2000 Retention Survey (40 pages, June 2000)
- SHRM Cover Letters and Resume Survey (39 pages, May 2000)
- 44. 2000 Benefits Survey (52 pages, April 2000)

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