

PEOPLE BUSINESS HR NEWSLETTER

Is your company prepared for the 2012 Olympics?



With less than 200 days to go before the 2012 Olympics, ask yourself this: is your company prepared?

It is a good idea to begin forward planning in order to avoid the commotion that could potentially be caused by staff requesting time off to watch events.

Some employees are bound to want to book time off work. Some lucky staff members might have tickets to go and watch the events, others will hope to volunteer or participate in locally organised events and some may prefer to watch the events from the comfort of their own living room or on one of the huge screens set to be erected across the country.

Even those who aren't planning to take time off may expect their companies to air certain, popular events in the office.

And what about those who do not wish to request time off but perhaps feel annoyed at those who do? Situations like this should be dealt with by pre-planning where possible, in order to avoid any damage to team morale.

ACAS chief executive John Taylor said:

"Employers need to start planning now to avoid problems later on, check policies and procedures and remind staff how these work in practice."

"If you've been lucky enough to get tickets for the Olympics you certainly don't want to miss out because you failed to book the time off work".

There are a number of things you can do to ensure your business runs smoothly during the Olympics, below are a few examples.

Flexible Working

With pay rises scarce and bonus pools down, this is a great way to thank and engage staff. There is huge goodwill to be gained from accommodating flexible working requests, for example, for popular events, you could offer flexible working so employees can start and finish early.

You could also introduce a 'buddy up' system where two employees would organise to cover for each other to watch certain events. If one of the employees is not interested in the Olympics, they would still have the opportunity to take time off.

Annual Leave

Make sure that the company policy regarding annual leave is clearly communicated, in preparation for a rise in requests. Accommodating people on a first come first served basis may be necessary if you cannot accommodate all annual leave requests.

You may want to think about offering an incentive for people who don't want to see the events and will work. Perhaps you could offer time off in lieu for anyone who does not take time off to watch the events.

On site viewing

Putting television screens up in workplaces, for example in a lunch room area, or allowing online viewing are relatively easy ways to give office based employees access to the events .

If you do show events at work, you will want to ensure that there is cover; you could do this by getting people to draw lots for popular events, so that anyone who wants to will at least be able to watch one game whilst at work. The Olympic timetable is available to download as a PDF document at:

<http://media.ticketmaster.com/en-gb/img/sys/tournament/london2012/oly-complete-u.pdf>

Absence Management

You may want to think about clearly communicating your absence management policy to staff so they're aware of reporting procedures. You may need to remind people that the rules will be enforced strictly to discourage unnecessary absence. Conducting return to work interviews for those taking time off sick is a good way of ensuring that employees follow the rules.

If, having communicated your absence policy, an employee still takes time off sick when there is a key event and you suspect this isn't real sickness absence, arrange a return to work discussion as soon as they return. This discussion would be to establish the reasons for their absence and if you have reasonable grounds to believe their sickness was not genuine, disciplinary action may be appropriate.

Fairness

In addition to careful planning, fairness is critical as not everyone is interested in sports or indeed the Olympics. Those who aren't might appreciate the opportunity to pick up overtime to cover for colleagues. If employees do wish to cover for others, you could think about offering incentives such as gift cards or time off in lieu.

It may also be worth checking employment contracts, policies and procedures in order to make sure you have the right to refuse time off, should it disrupt the needs of the business. It is important to make the allocation of leave a fair process, even if it means picking names out of a hat.

Travelling

You may wish to remind your staff that transport may be very busy during the events and that in some circumstances they might even need to plan an alternative route to work. Mentioning this to employees in advance will give them plenty of time to plan and will reduce people turning up late to work.

Transport Minister Norman Baker, of BT, suggested that employees look into working remotely or even turn to cycling or walking to work in order to avoid congestion at what is bound to be an extremely busy time.

Encourage celebrations

Even if only some of your staff are interested in Sport this is a once in a life time event for the UK and is a good excuse to organise work based parties or events. Decorating the office, having Olympic themed lunches, featuring sporting heroes as part of more general communications are all ways of boosting morale. Why not get a small group to get their thinking hats on to find ways to do this now?

If you would like any advice on amending absence policies or you would like to make a comment about this newsletter please email us at: julie.ware@peoplebusiness.co.uk or call us on 01932 874944. You can also respond at <http://people-insight.blogspot.com/>