

Ever heard of television etiquette in the workplace?

Question: “Our company recently installed a television in the break room. My boss asked me to find something online about television etiquette. I haven’t been able to find anything. Any suggestions on television etiquette in the workplace?” — *Brandy Ludwick*

Comments

Boy, that's a tough one. I would vehemently oppose a television being put in the break room because most people already watch too much tv to begin with and I personally don't watch tv. However, if you must have one, I'd poll the people that would be using it to find out what they would want to see. If there is a consensus then you have your answer. If there's a tremendous amount of disagreement I'd go to my boss and ask for a resolution.

Posted by: Alec | February 22, 2008 at 02:08 PM

Our locations that have a TV in the break room keep the station tuned to CNN, Fox News or some other news channel. The remote is not left out and the TV is anchored high so that manually changing the channel is difficult. Another suggestion would be to restrict which channels can be viewed (using those parental controls) so no potentially offensive content is available.

Posted by: Pat | February 22, 2008 at 02:22 PM

I would say use common sense as the guideline.

Keep the volume at a level that respects those in the break room not watching (or on the phone) and especially those working in the vicinity of the room.

See if your cable provider can help eliminate questionable workplace content by only offering limited number of channels - such as local broadcast networks (ABC, NBC, CBS, PBS), CNN/Fox News/MSNBC, The Weather Channel, maybe ESPN depending on your facility demographic. Having limited choices worked well at a previous workplace of mine, even with 2 sets in our break room on different channels most of the time.

Posted by: Tiffany, Admin. Assist. to SVP | February 22, 2008 at 02:23 PM

We have a TV in the break room, and the remote is left on the table. Rule is, first come first serve, or if you

really want to change it, just ask if anyone minds. Truth is, even though it's on, most people are eating, socializing, or doing other things, and don't mind if the channel is changed. I notice that the TV is mostly watched when something big happens in the news. As not to promote TV watching, we have added other things to the break room that are utilized more...a bookcase, with books that co-workers have brought from home, a chess set that we always keep set up, games, a ping pong table, and a fish tank for those that just like to sit back and relax.

Posted by: Angela | February 22, 2008 at 02:25 PM

Our company has had a TV in the break room for several years. It stays tuned to a financial network as it relates to our business. Sometimes we mute the sound and let captions run across the screen. If someone changes the channel during their lunch or break, it is understood that they are to change it back to the original channel before leaving the room.

Posted by: Lynn | February 22, 2008 at 02:28 PM

We have had a TV in our break room for many years. Our unspoken rules are 1) keep the volume at a minimal level. 2) Those who want to watch it sit in the area by the TV and those who want to socialize sit at the opposite end. 3) First come/first serve re: channels. Generally the TV is on CBS - talk shows, game shows, soaps, news. Just the favored station around here for what's on. We don't have cable, so that eliminates the channel choices and the expense. As someone said before, common sense and sensitivity are key!

Posted by: Holly | February 22, 2008 at 03:25 PM

TV is not needed in the break room. We did this and had to take it out because we would find employees in the break room watching sports, soap operas, etc. It was especially bad on second and third shifts.

My advice.....take it out!

Posted by: | February 22, 2008 at 03:56 PM

As a media educator and office technology specialist, I am aware of the pressure an offensive message can place on a sensitive workplace. I suggest that an education channel be the primary focus in the workplace. This way sensationalism, bipartisanship, racism, and sexism can take a back seat to intellectualism.

Posted by: Carolyn Jones | February 23, 2008 at 01:00 PM

First come first serve. Our agency is open 24/7 and it's a given that you respect the other person in the break room also. Keep the noise level to a minimum, be courteous to the others around you and if your grandmother who attends church 3 days a week would be offended then don't watch it in the break room because others may be offended as well. It seems to work, most times it's on the news channels or DHC, fitness, discovery etc.

Posted by: | February 29, 2008 at 05:50 PM

We have had a TV and satellite access in our break room for around two years now. We go by the first-come, first-served basis. Whomever is the first there can put the channel at what they want. When their break is over, anyone else in the room can change the channel. We have never had an argument about what was on. If you don't like the channel, block it out and read a book or talk to someone. This first-come, first-served works fine for us.

Posted by: Mark | March 03, 2008 at 12:24 PM