5 ways to reduce absenteeism

Say your organization has an attendance policy in place, but you’re still experiencing a high rate of absenteeism. It may be a good idea to get your managers and supervisors together to plan a strategy.

Here’s what others have done in similar situations:

1. **Provide outlets for dissent**

   Not all absenteeism is capricious. When people are denied outlets for their job pressures, they tend to run from them. Managers or supervisors who don’t tolerate complaints force employees to bottle up pressures, which build up over time.

   If you make dissent possible by encouraging people to speak up, hearing them out and, where feasible, acting on what you hear, they learn that they don’t have to escape from the workplace to let off steam.

2. **Cut the drag of boring work**

   You can’t eliminate boring work. But you can try to reduce a person’s need to flee from it. Here are two suggestions to consider:

   - Expand boring jobs so employees can see their tasks through to a worthwhile result. Giving work a beginning, a middle and an end increases at least threefold the satisfaction to be gained from it.

   - Break down boring jobs into smaller pieces so that a variety of tasks can be distributed among more people. Diversifying each person’s job makes the work a little more interesting and a little less boring and time-consuming.

3. **Use incentives**

   Extra pay for showing up is not a radical idea, and it’s relatively cheap. The concept of “well pay” instead of sick pay has proved itself and can be easily adopted.

   For example, for each authorized (paid) sick day people do not use by year’s end, they get paid for a day and a half. Or let employees bank sick time to be used against a future disability. These kinds of arrangements can be a magnet to the workplace.
4. Try gimmicks

They’re only good for the short term, but they’re also reusable from time to time.

Try a departmental contest. For example, the person with the lowest number of absences in a three-month period wins a gift card. Use gimmicks sparingly, but play them up when you do. And make them fun, not work: Don’t ask people to do anything except come to work on time.

5. Explain absenteeism’s impact

Employees may not realize that absenteeism affects everyone. When people feel easily replaceable, they think they won’t be missed. If you tell them why they’re needed, they won’t want to stay away.

Remind them that each employee is in some way a specialist; taking the time to point this out makes each one feel skilled, valued and needed.

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**Sample policy: Absenteeism/tardiness**

The company expects all employees to assume diligent responsibility for their attendance and promptness. Regular and prompt attendance is essential to the success of the company and the satisfaction of our customers.

If you are unable to report to work, you must notify your supervisor or department head no later than 30 minutes before your start time on each day of your absence. If you leave a voice mail message for your supervisor or department head concerning your absence, a personal follow-up call must be made by noon on the same day of the absence.

Failure to properly notify the company of your absence will result in an unexcused absence.