

Post-Vacation Bliss? Not So Fast. Two-Thirds of Employees Feel No Stress Relief Upon Returning to the Office

Leadership development firm Fierce, Inc. releases a new study on workplace vacation policies and opinions, just in time for summer vacation

June 21, 2017 (SEATTLE, WA) - With summer officially upon us, many employees are looking forward to their vacations, but paid time off (PTO) restrictions, lack of managerial support and stress upon returning can all affect that well-planned trip, according to a survey released today by leadership development and conversation experts at [Fierce, Inc.](#) Fierce surveyed over a thousand full-time employees across the U.S. and found some surprising variances in employee experiences around PTO.

While a third of respondents receive 20 or more vacation days each year, one in every five employees receives less than 10 days. Age, tenure and company size all play a large role—the lower the ranks, the less PTO granted.

For those that do take time off, however, the stress of work doesn't stay away long, as returning to the office appears to offset any relaxation that may have occurred. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of those surveyed are either more stressed or have the same level of stress once they return to the office. The main reported cause of this stress is catching up on missed work, followed by having to readjust to a work mindset and needing to resolve major issues that arose while away. In addition, while on vacation, half of all employees check in with the office, with 13 percent checking in daily.

There has been no change in the reported stress level upon returning from PTO since Fierce asked this same question of employees five years ago, indicating that post-vacation stress continues to be a concern. These numbers vary, however, when taking into consideration an employee's current level of job satisfaction. Thirty-eight percent of those unsatisfied with work feel more stressed returning from vacation; just 14 percent of those very satisfied feel the same.

“PTO is a key benefit for any full-time employee, and one that most individuals take to heart as it is an essential component to striking a healthy work-life balance,” said Stacey Engle, executive vice president of marketing at Fierce. “The fact that returning to work is a stressful situation speaks volumes to the lack of support many employees feel both leading up to, and upon returning from vacation. This is an issue all organizations should address to ensure employees are getting the most out of their time outside of the office and returning refreshed and ready to tackle what's ahead.”

Company Support

Being allotted PTO days is one thing, but receiving the support and encouragement to take those days is something else entirely. Over half of all respondents believe their managers support and encourage them to take time off, however, just 40 percent of employees believe the same of their co-workers.

This discrepancy is even more apparent when breaking down employees by job satisfaction and current income levels. Of those unsatisfied with their current job, 57 percent say no one encourages them or supports them taking PTO; just 18 percent of those very satisfied feel the same. Those in lower pay brackets have a similar experience: 45 percent of individuals in households making \$50,000 or less a

year say no one encourages them to take vacation, while less than 30 percent of those making \$100,000 or more say the same.

Impact of PTO on Loyalty

As a key benefit for many employees, just over half (56%) of respondents state that additional PTO would make them more loyal to an organization, with the other half not seeing it as a factor. This shifts, however, when taking age, position and tenure into account. The majority of those who are younger, in entry-level positions or are less tenured are receiving less PTO and claim additional PTO would increase their sense of loyalty to their organization.

“While offering a high number of vacation days isn’t possible for every organization, these results show that for those receiving fewer days, upping this number could make a big difference in overall satisfaction,” continued Engle. “This is a key area where open and honest conversations are key; employees need to feel empowered to ask for what they need, and managers must be open to hearing concerns of these employees. While it may not end in an extra week of vacation, the dialogue and mutual understanding will be beneficial in the long run for the individuals, and the company at large.”

Additional key findings from the study include:

- The majority (45%) say the ideal number of PTO days would be 20 or more days. Those 18-29, however, noted that their ideal number of vacations days is 16-20, less than those in older generations.
- 15% of respondents would like to take unlimited vacation each year, which is up five percent over the 2012 survey.
- Nearly a third of those surveyed (28%) take 3 days or less, and just 11% take 10 or more consecutive days off. Younger individuals are taking shorter vacations, likely due to the lower number of PTO days provided.
- Income also plays a role—44% of those making \$50k or less per household took 3 or fewer consecutive PTO days, while over 80% of those making \$100k took more than 3 days. About a quarter of all surveyed took a full week (5 days) off.

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About Fierce

Fierce, Inc. is an award-winning leadership development and training company that drives results for businesses by improving workplace communication. Fierce creates authentic, energizing, and rewarding connections with colleagues and customers through skillful conversations that lead to successful outcomes and measurable ROI. Tailored to any organization, Fierce principles and methods translate across the globe, ensure individual and collective success, and develop skills that are practical, easy-to-learn and can be applied immediately. Fierce’s programs have been successfully implemented at blue-chip companies, nonprofits, and educational organizations worldwide, including Ernst & Young, Starbucks, Wal-Mart, Coca-Cola, CARE, and Crate & Barrel. Fierce has received numerous industry and business accolades. The company has been honored as an Inc. 500|5000 company six times, named to TrainingIndustry.com’s “Companies to Watch” list twice, and has won numerous awards for top companies to work for in the state of Washington. For more information, visit www.fierceinc.com.

