

Employees May Need More Structure as Workcations And 'Hush Trips' Become More Common

HR Brew | Kristen Parisi | March 30, 2023

They're not inherently bad, but HR may want to include parameters for employees.



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Zoom backgrounds can make it near-impossible to figure out exactly where colleagues are working from these days. And while an employee's latest beach background may look like a photograph, it might actually be...the beach.

A working vacation may be a welcome respite for employees, but can become a headache for managers if it interferes with work. But there are ways HR leaders can help managers head off potential problems.

Buzz words. You've likely heard many new buzzwords over the last few years, like workcation, bleisure, and hush trips. Here's a breakdown, according to Fisher Phillips, on how they differ:

Workcations are exactly how they sound—employees work while on a vacation. They've booked a trip but don't want to use their PTO, so perhaps they're working from the top of a mountain or a Parisian café.

Bleisure mixes business and leisure, when employees tack on a few days to their trip before or after the work portion. Bleisure is nothing new, but nevertheless popular.

Hush trips are nearly identical to workcations, but employees don't disclose that they're working from a different location. Hush trips can become a problem when employees miss meetings or someone walks behind their Zoom camera in a swimsuit.

Employees like traveling. A February survey from Marriott Vacations Worldwide found that 79% of respondents said they're more interested in workcations than they were a year ago.

A January survey from travel company GoCity, found that 29% of respondents plan to work while on vacation this year. "Switching up how and where you work can be a great way of keeping a job fresh and exciting, allowing you to bring your best self to your employer. It can also be a great way to keep your mental health in check," Jill Cotton, career trends expert at Glassdoor told Glamour.

Hush trips and workcations could have adverse impacts on work quality or breed resentment amongst employees if not handled appropriately. "Some employees may feel that their colleagues are taking advantage of the generous work-from-home policies, leading to conflicts," Amy Marcum, HR manager at Insperity told NerdWallet.

HR should have a balancing act of rules and autonomy to keep the process healthy, Courtney Leyes, a partner at Fisher Phillips told Insider. "It's kind of like parenting—whenever you're super strict and nobody can ever tell you anything, people do things on the side."

Kaleana Quibell, VP of well-being and platform partners at Sequoia, told HR Brew that leaders should be aware of the consequences that can accompany employees working from somewhere other than their home, citing potential compliance and cybersecurity issues. For example, if a worker goes on a two month hush trip, there could be tax implications for the employer.

Quibell said that managers can avoid potential problems through open communication with their employees so there aren't any surprises if something goes awry. "It mostly relates to awareness of where the person will be, and then a conversation with the manager or company about time zone requirements," she said.

She noted that many companies leave parameters around workcations to individual managers, but noted that it's incumbent on HR to provide managers with tools to direct employees on their rules. Without any parameters, managers "might be almost overly flexible with their employee base, and then start to see it unravel a bit," Quibell said.

On that note, we'll be working from a beach in Saint Lucia if you need to find us.