

Bed Sharing on Business Trips Is a Nightmare Waiting to Happen

Inc. | Suzanne Lucas | February 29, 2024



Photo: Getty Images

Sure, saving money sounds great. But do you want your employees rested and ready, or stressed out and exhausted?

You may want to save money on business travel, but please, do not ask your employees to share beds under any circumstances other than a major natural disaster that severely limits available hotel rooms.

A TikTokker recently reported that her company gave employees the option to share beds with co-workers on a trip. According to her account of the incident, the request came from human resources and was as follows:

"In the survey you will notice you have the option to share a room with a colleague. Be advised that at present booking status there's only one bed in the room. You can absolutely respond no to this question," the email read.

As an HR person, I'm relieved that the company did not mandate bed sharing, but I remain concerned about allowing it.

Still, I could write this off as one weird company operating on a tight budget -- except I know someone who is an executive in a multibillion-dollar company who was asked the same thing. He said absolutely not and noted his concern that the liability risk outweighed the cost savings.

My Inc. colleague Alison Green frequently addresses this on her blog, Ask a Manager. Just last week, she answered a reader's question about bedsharing on a work trip. She writes,

Sharing rooms can be prohibitively difficult for people who have medical needs that require privacy, or who snore or are paired with someone who snores, or have specific sleeping needs, or who simply need privacy at the end of a long work day.

People need personal space and shouldn't have to snuggle with a snorer (or feel uncomfortable for snoring). Yes, bedsharing offers a cost savings -- but at what cost?

The cost savings aren't worth it

Yes, hotel rooms can be incredibly expensive. Sharing a hotel room with beds for each individual is considerably better than sharing beds, although it's still not ideal. But when you put two people into the same bed, it makes things so much worse.

I'm currently staying in a hotel and sharing a bed with my sister. There are actually six of us in this hotel room, which has three beds. But we are sisters and sisters-in-law, and the "newest" sister-in-law in the family has been married to my brother for almost 24 years. And we certainly would all prefer our own beds.

One of us snores, so she brought earplugs for all. (Very kind.) I have jet lag (we're in California, and I live in Switzerland), so I'm writing this at 5 a.m. while the rest of them sleep. One likes to get up early for exercise. Several want to hold long conversations with their husbands or children.

All of these things are fine, and we're all getting along -- we've just been at the beach and are now at Disneyland. We love each other. But it's still a lot. My mother and aunt are traveling with us and said absolutely not to bedsharing, so they have their own hotel room with individual beds.

All this said, if we had to get up and work each day--negotiate deals, handle difficult clients, or give a presentation--this arrangement would be a disaster. Your employees need the ability to rest at night.

If someone can't sleep because a stranger is sleeping next to them, they will not perform at their best.

What about liability?

There's a general assumption that putting people in single-sex situations will ensure safety, but that is not a given. And even if no harm is intended, a co-worker who spoons a team member in the middle of the night because they are used to doing that with a spouse could be a nightmare for that team member.

But what if a co-worker doesn't accidentally spoon another employee, but sexually assaults them? What if your employees like to engage in ... private activities ... at night? There's nowhere to go.

The costs you save by having employees share beds will be completely dwarfed by one lawsuit. It's not worth it.

And it's unfair to your employees. At a minimum, ensure everyone has their own bed, and ideally, make sure everyone gets their own hotel room. Otherwise, cut back on the travel.