



work happy.
work well.

Employer guide

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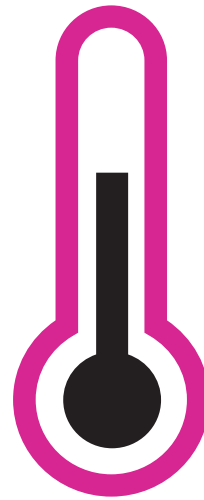
Our job is about much more than simply putting the right bums on the right seats. We like to know how our candidates are faring at work – along with how they're feeling – which is why we've asked a very diverse cross-section of them about their happiness, wellbeing, sickness and productivity in the workplace. The results are surprising, informative, and extremely interesting for any employer looking to improve the wellbeing of their workers.

Understanding employee wellbeing

One of the most important things for an employer to understand is what affects their employees' wellbeing at work. That way, you'll have a much better idea of the steps you can take to keep your workforce happy and healthy.

From our research, we found that contending with an overly heavy workload (42%) and lacking the necessary support from management (40%) made the greatest impact on the wellbeing of UK workers. A lack of support in the workplace gains even greater prominence amongst younger workers, with 52% of 16-24 year olds citing this as having a detrimental effect on their overall health. Interestingly, the working environment is of almost equal importance to employees, with 36% blaming workplace temperatures for impacting their health, and 30% of younger workers calling for a cleaner office. Both of these should be relatively quick wins for any employer who wants to improve the wellbeing of their workers – adjusting office temperatures and having a thorough spring clean is a small price to pay for healthier and more satisfied workers – but the wider issues around heavy workloads and a lack of support from management should be given serious attention if high stress levels amongst staff are to be avoided.

Employers can also help to improve the working environment by displaying a little more optimism and positivity in their management style and approach. Although a great many factors contribute to a person's overall health, optimism helps to foster a happy attitude towards work – something that can work wonders for employee wellbeing. Being optimistic doesn't come naturally to everyone, but you can always help it along: try celebrating your team's strengths rather than concentrating on their weaknesses, and look for the silver lining in any situation – such as the positives you've learnt from what went wrong in a tricky situation. You can also remind yourself and your team of what it is you're all working towards – the things that give you purpose and direction. This sense of commonality can help to build stronger relationships within your team; bringing about healthier attitudes all round.



36%

36% employees blame workplace temperatures for impacting their health



30%

30% of younger workers want a cleaner office

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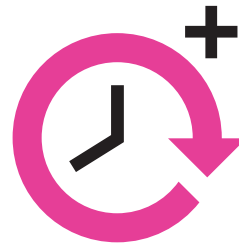
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Caring for a desk bound workforce

With almost two thirds (63%) of office workers spending six hours or more at their desks every day, and nearly half (48%) admitting to not leaving the office all day, employers need to think about encouraging their workers to take the breaks they're entitled to. Getting away from your desk is essential for clearing your head, giving your eyes a rest, and helping you to come back refocused. If your employees are eating lunch at their desks every day (something that 66% admit to doing), they're more likely to be stressed, and as a result, more likely to be unwell.

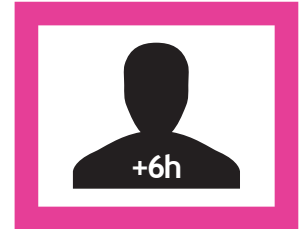
Employers should also consider the impact that working late on a regular basis can have on their workers – with 32% admitting to doing just that – along with the implications of taking work home with them (something that affects 21% of people). There will always be busy periods that occasionally call for longer hours and an 'all hands on deck' attitude, but this shouldn't be a regular occurrence. If it is, time given in lieu could help to combat the negative effects that working longer hours can have on an employee's wellbeing; this is especially important given that 70% of 16-24 year olds, and 50% of legal professionals, said that working longer hours caused them stress.

Since the recession, employees feel under more pressure than ever before to work longer hours and prove their worth; but it's up to employers to step in, take action, and create the sort of working environment that fosters a real sense of wellbeing. Without that, employees are likely to work themselves into the ground, and sacrifice their own happiness, health and overall wellbeing for the sake of their jobs.



32%

32% of employees work late on a regular basis



63%

Two thirds (63%) of office workers spending 6 hours or more at their desks every day



70%

70% of 16-24 year olds, and 50% of legal professionals, said that working longer hours caused them stress



21%

21% of people take work home with them

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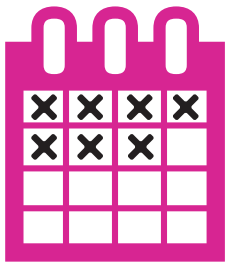
Workplace pressure fuels presenteeism

One of the most interesting finds from our survey was that the common conception of Britain as a sick leave nation is largely untrue. In fact, we found that over half of the people that we surveyed had taken no sick days in the last year – with men taking even less than women. Older workers are also more resilient, with 60% of the over 55s taking no sick days, compared with 37% of 16-24 year olds. It seems telling that HR professionals are the most likely to take sick leave, with 67% taking time off – compared to just 39% of workers within the manufacturing industry. This could perhaps be a sign that HR employees are far more aware of their rights than those in other professions.

The pressure on people to come into work when they're feeling under the weather – whether that pressure is from an employer or self-imposed – is alarmingly high. Nearly half (46%) of the people that we surveyed said they felt under pressure to come into work when ill; with women (53%) feeling under far greater pressure than men (36%). Younger workers feel more pressured than anyone, with 77% of 16-24 year olds believing that they're expected to come into work, even when they're sick. This could of course be a direct result of poor communication in the workplace, and something that should be addressed with not only new starters, but every member of your workforce.

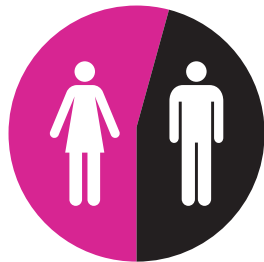
However, it's not only the perceived pressure from employers that's causing a problem: over a third (35%) of workers feel under pressure from their colleagues to attend work when ill. This figure rises to 48% for 16-24 year olds, and drops to 16% for the over 55s; but our research found that 85% of workers don't actually want their colleagues around when they're ill – presumably because they'd rather the germs weren't passed on. It's clear then that employers should not only be sending out very clear communications around the acceptability of taking time off when a worker is genuinely unwell, but setting their own example too. According to our research, nearly a quarter (23.2%) of workers are more likely to take sick leave if their boss does – a figure that rises to 48% amongst 16-24 year olds, who perhaps look to their boss to set the status quo.

Nearly a third (31.2%) of the people that we surveyed believe they are expected to carry on working from home when they're sick. If this isn't the case within your business, you need to improve communication around sick leave amongst your staff. With 90% of people admitting to being less productive when they're ill (and 29% getting through half the amount of work they would do normally), it's unlikely that the quality of any work undertaken will be high. It could even be detrimental to your business.



50%

Over 50% of people had taken no sick days in the last year



53%

Women (53%) feeling under far greater pressure than men (36%) to come in to work when ill



31%

Nearly a third (31.2%) of people believe they are expected to carry on working from home when they're sick



90%

90% of people admitted to being less productive when they're ill

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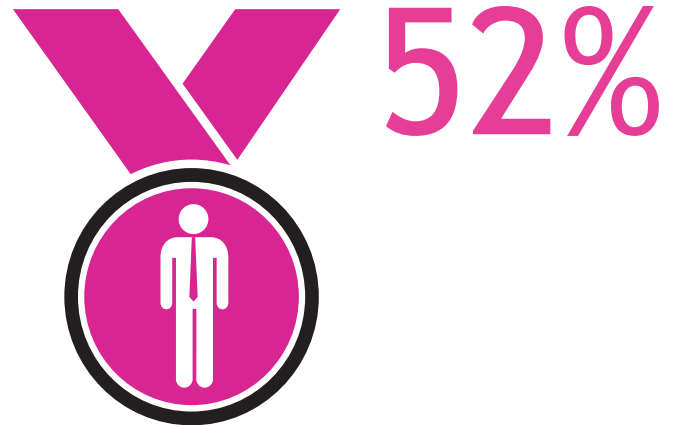
Reducing the need for 'sick days'

52% of the people that we surveyed felt they should be rewarded for not taking any sick leave; this figure jumped to 63% for 16-24 year olds. With a focus on employee wellbeing, we'd strongly advise against any incentive that encourages people to come into work when they're sick. Instead, employers should think about improving the working environment so that people get sick less often, and introducing a few sensible methods that stand a chance of dramatically reducing the age old problem of 'sickies'.

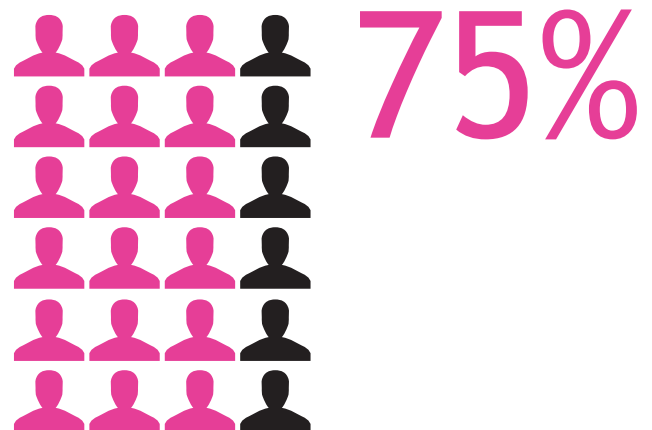
An astonishing 75% of the workers that we surveyed agreed that flexible working – which offers people the ability to adjust their hours on occasion – would prevent them from pulling sickies; as would the freedom to sometimes work from home. The younger workforce was also found to be more receptive to 'nice to have' factors, such as the introduction of a free massage, free fruit, or a free breakfast at work.

Of course, the majority of your employees take time off for legitimate reasons, but that doesn't mean that you can't help to limit their need for sick leave. Lots of employees are forced to take time off for common problems like migraines and back pain, but something as simple as organising regular workplace assessments and offering free eye test vouchers could go a long way towards combating such ailments.

Employees should never be fearful of calling in sick when they're unwell, and by showing them that you care about their overall happiness and wellbeing, they'll be much less likely to take advantage of your good nature on those mornings that a duvet day feels more appealing than work.



52% of people felt they should be rewarded for not taking any sick leave



75% agreed that flexible working and working from home would prevent them from pulling sickies

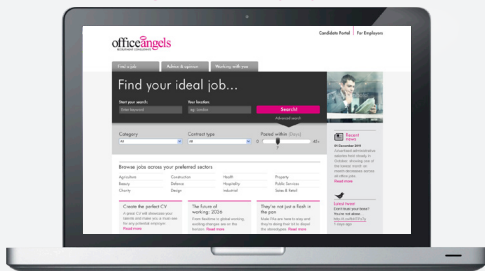
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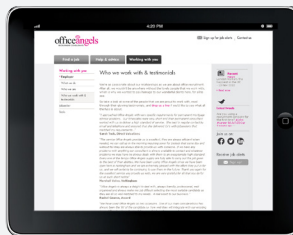
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To discuss the results of our report in more detail, or to get more tailored advice on improving the health of your workforce and dealing with sick leave, call your local Office Angels branch today or visit office-angels.com/workhappyworkwell.

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