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HOW TO REDUCE ABSENTEEISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Andreea BALASOIU

Romanian-American University

Summary

Absenteeism at work is not without effect, especially when its level is high. This situation has negative consequences on the company's performance and productivity, which must be urgently addressed.

Absenteeism from work increased 3.6% year on year, according to a recent study. In addition to illness, this includes dissatisfaction, commitment to the company, and employees' personal situation.

The professions most affected by absenteeism are those in health, transportation, and commerce and services, with a substantial rate increases the absenteeism. For health, still, in the private sector, we are talking about establishments where most employees are women.

The most frequent absences are those lasting less than a week but they are those that have the least impact on the economy, unlike absences of more than six months (5% of total absences) (Fournies, 2018).

Keywords: absenteeism, causes, optimal solutions

Abstract

Absenteeism is a reality that affects many companies, all economic sectors combined. It is a scourge for many companies: the absence of an employee disrupts the company's functioning and generates a high replacement cost. Therefore, we must look at the causes of absenteeism and determine the measures to be taken to avoid it. Also, a report by Randstad sets the average annual cost of absence, per employee per year, at £522. This figure varies depending on the sector, and a CIPD report in 2016 found that public sector absenteeism stood at 8.6 days per employee, in contrast to only 5.2 days per employee (Material, 2017).

Introduction

Each company is more or less confronted with problems of absenteeism. This unsuccessful working time represents a high cost to the company, and its performance can be affected.

Absenteeism is a reality that affects many companies, all economic sectors combined. It is a scourge for many companies: the absence of an employee disrupts the company's functioning and generates a high replacement cost. Therefore, we must look at the causes of absenteeism and determine the measures to be taken to avoid it.

Causes of absenteeism:

The causes can be numerous, and the employer must carefully consider why the employee is absent.

- ✓ Difficulty (carrying heavy loads, stress, working outdoors, etc.)
- ✓ Poor work organization (time constraint, shifted schedules, difficulty in taking time off)
- ✓ Lack of employee involvement in their work
- ✓ Poor management (lack of recognition, dialogue, etc.)
- ✓ Employee's problem (deterioration of health, occupational disease, etc.)

- ✓ The remuneration (insufficient or not adapted)
- ✓ Absenteeism can be for work or personal reasons.
- ✓ At the professional level, the following problems can be encountered:
- ✓ A bad atmosphere or a stressful situation can lead to an unfavorable work environment
- ✓ Occupational diseases: for example, MSDs (Musculoskeletal Disorders) which are constantly increasing
- ✓ Accidents at work

Absenteeism can be linked to the social climate.

So, the absenteeism rate for women is slightly higher than that for men, mainly due to sick leave due to pregnancy and because more of them are the head of a single-parent family. In terms of age category, those over 50 are the most absent (5.5%), and non-managers (5%) are more missing than managers (1.9%).

But personal problems can also affect professional activity:

The family environment especially concerns with childcare. Health problems not related to work, for example, the last influenza epidemic. Finally, the lack of comfort, but any valid reason does not justify that.

As Albert Einstein said, "a problem without a solution is a problem poorly posed". Having now succinctly posed the causes of absenteeism, we can focus on the solutions to be provided.

To find out the absenteeism rate of one or more employees in the company, you should know that the absenteeism rate is a percentage that can be expressed as follows:

- $$\text{Absenteeism rate} = \frac{\text{Number of days of absence (or hours) during a period}}{\text{Number of theoretical days (or hours) during the same period}} \times 100$$

This will allow knowing when the absenteeism rate becomes too high and possibly dangerous for the company.

For example, we consider that an absenteeism rate of 4% is relatively normal, and that a rate greater than or equal to 8% is rather alarming. But it varies from company to company, and each company should consider its own factors to determine if their absenteeism rate is too high.

Consequences of absenteeism for the company

Absenteeism can quickly become problematic for the company and generate many problems:

- ✓ weakened productivity and business performance due to delay, lack of quality,
- ✓ poor customer service.

This can affect work teams and the general motivation of other employees. The company is forced to reorganize the work groups to fill the absences, often at the last minute the workload must be redistributed by distributing the absent employee's tasks to other employees, which is not always appreciated. It should be noted that the average annual cost of absenteeism at work in the UK is estimated at 25 billion euros, or around 3,500 euros per year per employee or around 7% of the payroll.

To limit absenteeism at work one must motivate the staff. Motivating the staff means limiting absenteeism. Setting up an attractive career plan can go in this direction. The attendance bonus is not always attractive and fair. On the one hand, it is costly for the company, and on the other hand, it also penalizes employees who have a justified absence. Thus, to effectively combat absenteeism, it is necessary to pay particular attention to employees. A high absenteeism rate is a significant problem in the company, leading to a decrease in productivity and therefore, profitability.

Regarding the absenteeism in figures

According to an OpinionWay study on work stoppages in France, the absenteeism rate increased by 17% between 2014 and 2015. In 2015, the sectors with the highest absenteeism rate were industry (a rate of 4.1%), transport (4.1%), and manual workers

(6.5%). However, be aware that there is a difference between the generations. Generation Y is the least affected by the phenomenon (only 3% of those under 30 are absent from work against more than 6% for those over 55 (<https://www.opinion-way.com/fr/>, n.d.)).

At the European level, UK employees are the most absent from work. It is estimated that in more than half of the cases, working conditions are responsible for this lack of motivation.

Solutions

Improving working conditions remains a major lever for reducing absences, but let's not forget the prospect of a real career plan that is a source of motivation, especially for those who have just been hired.

Concerning presenteeism: the employee is paid according to his actual working hours. Thus, some companies offer the attendance bonuses, but which have not really proven themselves: they are costly to the company and penalize employees forced to be absent for justified reasons. Support and monitoring of employees, therefore, remains the preferred educational choice. When it comes to combat absenteeism, the company may also resort to a control solution, such as a medical check-up (Kaleta, 2003).

To act, it is necessary to clearly identify the causes but also the means that the company can implement to reduce this absenteeism.

- Improving the layout of workstations (renewing equipment, changing the organization, etc.)
- Implementation of preventive actions against work accidents
- Establishment of professional training aimed at enhancing each person's experience
- Development of versatility (internal training, etc.)
- Use of teleworking
- Establishment of a return to work interview after an absence

Conclusions

The origins of absenteeism are numerous: we must distinguish absenteeism linked to individual health, that related to the work environment or the family environment, but also "comfort" (abusive) absenteeism.

A way of saying that work accidents are not the only causes of absenteeism. Occupational diseases are one of the recurring factors. Professional stress is also on the rise as one of the major absenteeism risks facing companies. The aging of the population also impacts the absenteeism rate, as revealed by a Social Security study, long-term work stoppages are persistent from the age of 55 (Quinley, 2003).

We can see causes of absenteeism related to the family environment, mainly for organizational problems (childcare, daily tasks, business travel, etc.). Finally, so-called comfort or excessive absenteeism is not the most important cause but cannot be eliminated, so it must be prevented.

According to some HR managers' experience, several causes are at the root of absenteeism at work. Poor health is often an external cause. Difficult working conditions, a restrictive or uncomfortable working environment can also be at the origin of the problem. But a bad atmosphere at work is also a reason for employee demotivation. The lack of prospects for professional development is also enough to cause repeated absenteeism.

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