

World Cup Celebration or Morning After Mayhem?

June 2010



Introduction

On Friday, 11th June 2010 at 4pm, the World Cup kicks off with the match between South Africa and Mexico. Predictions about what happens on the pitch over the next four weeks is best left to the bookmakers and pundits!

But what is certain however is that many organisations will potentially face some disruption 'off the field' from employees who take time off or time out to watch their team.

With just a few weeks to go, a survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has shown that only 10% of employers have plans in place to manage absence during the competition. If you have not made any plans, you may want to consider the following.

Some considerations

June 23rd is England's only match scheduled in the pool stages during normal business hours, although many England supporters will probably want to watch other national teams as well. Whilst there will be extensive TV and radio coverage of all matches, this will undoubtedly lead to requests for time off to watch matches or for employers to provide some facilities to allow employees to watch live games in the workplace.

There are also implications for organisations that operate outside of standard office hours and on weekends. The chances of absence on the day of the matches **as well as the day after** are potentially quite disruptive.

IT experts have also cautioned employers about excessive use of bandwidth by those wishing to stream games on their work computers.

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Obligations

Employers are under no obligation to make any special concessions. Many organisations, however, do want to respond positively and will be flexible during the course of the tournament. You may even see this as an opportunity to engage positively with employees in the midst of some fairly tough economic times. So what could you do?

Options

The options will depend on your own organisation's circumstances but might include allowing:

- Some flexibility on working hours
- Swapping shifts between colleagues
- Unpaid leave for the day or half day
- Or access to the game within working hours, and making up the time later.

Pitfalls

Whatever you decide, there will always be potential pitfalls. Not everyone will be interested in the football and so may feel left out or 'put upon' to cover for others.

Innocent banter and team rivalry could lead to inappropriate remarks and be seen by the Tribunals as discriminatory if they get out of hand. Such cases are starting to be reported.

The expectation is that employee absence or lateness on days following matches will increase during this time, especially if England progress to the later stages of the Tournament. An increase in 'sickies' the morning after a game however is really quite probable!

Solutions

Before the World Cup starts make sure your policies on holiday requests, unauthorised absence or lateness, internet usage, alcohol at work and equal opportunities are up to date and communicated to employees.

Make employees aware that inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with through normal disciplinary channels. This may include behaviour outside of the work place if it reflects upon your organisation!

If you are making any special arrangements, then make sure they are available to all employees – being fair and consistent to all reduces the likelihood of tensions, future problems and discrimination claims arising.

Your business needs to keep operating, but this year's World Cup also gives a great opportunity to develop employee morale and engagement. Let's take it!

STOP PRESS

New minimum wage rates will apply from October 2010 but please do note that the biggest change will be a change in the ages. Rates previously applicable to workers aged 22 and above, will apply to those aged 21.

Can We Help?

If you have any concerns or questions about the content of this Factsheet, or any specific concerns about individual employees, please do call us on 01708 758958.

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