

Ten Tips for an Absence Free World Cup

There's no legal requirement for employers to give employees time off to watch World Cup matches but many UK companies have recognised that a bit of give and take to accommodate employee requests could do a huge amount for morale. The group stage England matches shouldn't cause too many problems, but employers need to remember that not all UK workers will follow England and the excitement will mount if England gets through the group stage.

Here are our ten tips for an absence free World Cup

1. Remind staff of your absence policy. If you don't have one already it may be a bit late to write one and communicate it to employees. If you do have one, it's a good time to review it and remind employees what you expect of them and the disciplinary consequences of taking unauthorised leave.
2. If you have a policy, make sure you are tracking absence levels over the period. It should be easy to spot patterns of absence, or absence following a big game.
3. Proactively make some suggestions to employees as to how they could work flexibly over the period of the World Cup. Offer early start/early finish for 4pm kick-offs; or split shifts with a long break in the middle of the day; or perhaps offer flexi-time or unpaid leave. The impact on business could be minimal compared with the morale boost for employees.
4. Remember that not all staff like football and might be annoyed at concessions given to football fans, particularly if they feel that they are left doing the lion's share of the work. Be sensitive to the mood of non-football fans or you might face absence problems from the non-football fans in your team!
5. Shift swaps can provide staff flexibility to watch games. Asda is introducing a shift swap scheme to enable staff to rearrange shifts around different games.
6. Screen matches in the workplace – some organisations are turning conference rooms into screening rooms. Or allow the radio on in the background if it's not too disruptive. Remember though that not all staff like football, so consider offering something for non-football fans too.
7. Duvet days – consider late requests for annual leave – on the day if possible.
8. Internet abuse – remind employees what your policy is on internet use. Matches will be available on line etc so you do need to communicate to staff what your policy is on internet use over the period.
9. Back to work interviews. Don't leave it too late to tackle unauthorised absence during the World Cup. Timely return to work interviews are an excellent way to nip problems in the bud and to demonstrate to employees that absence is taken seriously.
10. Be realistic. Absence will rise during the World Cup. Make sure you are prepared for it.