

HR Insights

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What Employers Should Know About Hush Trips and Workcations

The traditional concept of a vacation often involves escaping the daily grind and relaxing in a faraway destination. However, the landscape of work and leisure has recently been transformed, with remote and hybrid work becoming more prevalent. This shift has led to workcations, where remote employees take vacations while still working, and “hush trips,” which are workcations not disclosed to the company.

This article explains hush trips and what employers should know about remote employees taking them.

Workcation vs. Hush Trip

Even before the rise in hybrid and remote work arrangements, it was common for workers to add paid time off (PTO) to their scheduled business trips. That could include taking some personal time off while already traveling somewhere for work or bringing along their friend and family while they’re traveling.

In the current working arrangement landscape, a different term is becoming more popular: workcation. Instead of adding PTO to a business trip, employees opt to work their remote job from an ideal location that allows them to have fun and explore it before and after their workday. They’re simply working from an enjoyable location that’s not their home. It comes down to using the flexibility of remote work to combine work and leisure seamlessly. According to vehicle rental website Price 4 Limo, 45% of employees have taken a workcation in the past year—and 8% took a hush trip.

A hush trip is like a workcation, but the employee hasn’t told their employer they will be traveling. Hush trips involve employees taking time off to enjoy leisure and

relaxation while still fulfilling their work responsibilities. Essentially, they work remotely, often in a holiday location, without disclosing it to their bosses or colleagues. To hide that they’re not working from home, remote employees often blur their video call backgrounds, use a virtual background or keep small talk to a minimum.

Employer Considerations

Employees often report taking workcations or hush trips to visit friends and family, get a change of scenery and stay productive at work. A location change can spark new ideas and improve work-life balance. In addition to being a mental reset, remote work can be attractive for current and prospective employees. For example, Generation Z and younger millennials tend to value and expect freedom in their roles.

While workcations can be good for productivity and morale, the breakdown of trust between employees and managers (or even their co-workers) can be a negative consequence of hush trips. In addition to the company culture blow, there are potential cybersecurity concerns (e.g., Wi-Fi) and tax implications if employees work long-term from another state or country.

Whether or not an employer supports workcations or hush trips, it’s important to recognize that time off is important for employees. As workcations and hush trips gain popularity, employers can consider ways to set clear expectations for employees and work.

- **Review company policies.** Employers should review and update their company policies to address remote work and if they accommodate workcations. This may include clarifying reimbursement guidelines, overtime policies and other relevant procedures to avoid the risk of policies being violated.
- **Establish clear guidelines.** A remote work policy should outline specifics about what is and isn't allowed when employees are not reporting to a physical workplace. For example, a policy should explain who is eligible to work remotely, where they are allowed to work and for how long.
- **Establish adequate technical infrastructure.** Ensure that remote employees have access to the necessary technical infrastructure and secure connections to perform their tasks effectively. This can help reduce cyber risks while employees log in from the airport, coffee shop or other remote locations.
- **Communicate clearly.** Employers should establish clear communication guidelines for employees on hush trips. Set expectations regarding work hours, availability and project deadlines to ensure smooth operations.
- **Build trust and accountability.** It's not ideal for workers to hide their trips from their organizations and managers. This behavior often happens when there's a lack of transparency in the company culture. Managers and supervisors should work to build trust with their teams so that employees feel comfortable disclosing a workcation trip. Instead of micromanaging workers' day-to-day activities, managers can enable employees to complete their work on the merit of trust and ability.
- **Consult legal counsel.** Employers should be aware of the legal and tax implications of workcations and hush trips, as these may vary depending on the employee's location

and the duration of their stay. Before making any policy changes, it's important to consult local legal counsel to discuss any potential issues or concerns before making changes.

Summary

The concept of hush trips represents an innovative approach to the evolving landscape of work and leisure. By allowing employees to take vacations while working from home, employers can promote work-life balance, improve productivity and enhance employee well-being. However, it's crucial for employers to establish clear guidelines, trust their employees and ensure the necessary technical infrastructure is in place. By doing so, both employers and employees can reap the benefits of workcations, fostering a more productive and satisfied workforce in the long run.

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