



Britain's businesses show World Cup fever the red card

Twice as many bosses will be checking staff absences this year compared to 2006

London 3rd June 2010: World Cup fever may be sweeping the country but according to a survey conducted by BDRC Continental, few businesses are prepared to make concessions for their employees during the tournament. The recession appears to have taken its toll on employers' willingness to get into the World Cup spirit – business owners and managers are significantly less likely to adjust policies and working practices than they were four years ago.

More than half of those surveyed (55%) expect business as usual and don't plan to make any changes to working procedures in honour of the World Cup compared to just under four in 10 (39%) during the 2006 World Cup. The most popular way to enjoy some football magic in the workplace is to bring in TVs and radios: 26% of businesses surveyed plan to allow employees to follow matches this way during working hours. Although nearly half of those surveyed (48%) agree that allowing staff to watch matches together makes for a happier and more motivated workforce, this has declined from 58% four years ago.

Staff that plan to devote all their attention to the tournament will need to book time off – just 12% of those surveyed will let their employees sneak off work to watch England games without deducting the time from their holiday entitlement. This is all very different from 2006, when employers were far more lenient. Four years ago more than twice as many businesses (25%) allowed staff to watch England play

without requiring them to make up the time. The survey shows that 'pulling a sickie' could be a dangerous tactic for some – twice as many business owners are likely to check up on staff absences and to remind their employees about disciplinary procedures during this year's World Cup.

Business bosses who appreciate the beautiful game are significantly more likely than others to allow TV's and/or radios in the workplace. They are also more than twice as likely to offer flexitime, organise facilities for the company to watch matches together and to let staff watch England matches without making up the time. However, they are also more likely to anticipate a loss in productivity and make checks on staff. They are more than three times as likely to say they will be making checks on absent staff during the tournament, and twice as likely to expect employees to call in sick and/or to anticipate an increase in time wasted through watching the action at work and chatting about football when they should be working.

Shiona Davies, Director says "There has been a noticeable change among Britain's business bosses since the survey was last conducted in 2006, with employers less likely to make concessions to allow their staff to watch the action and more likely to make checks on absenteeism. In June 2006 one fifth of respondents (21%) believed that their employees wasted time online or chatting about the World Cup at work. That figure has risen to one third of respondents (33%) anticipating the same this year. And whilst football loving bosses offer more opportunities to enjoy the on-pitch action at work, they are also far more likely to check up on absenteeism throughout the month-long World Cup."

Ends

Note to editors

The survey was conducted via the BDRRC Continental Business Omnibus in May 2010. 500 businesses are interviewed by telephone every month, comprising 300 interviews with small business bosses at companies with turnover £50k-£1m and 200 interviews with financial directors at companies with turnover above £1m. Data is weighted to be nationally representative of the 1.7 million businesses in England, Scotland and Wales. These questions

were asked to all businesses with at least 1 employee from May 3rd – 14th, comprising 483 businesses.

The 2006 survey was conducted via the Business Omnibus during July and August 2006, comprising 481 telephone interviews with businesses with at least 1 employee.

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