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Fixing Excessive Employee Absences: What You Can Do



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Successful HR executives from [Forbes Human Resources Council](#) offer leadership and management insights.



It's Monday, and one of your staff members has called out — again. While it's not all that frequent, the lost days are starting to form a pattern, and not a good one. So what's the best way to handle the issue?

Below, eight successful human resources executives from [Forbes Human Resources Council](#) offer their best tips on how businesses can successfully cut down on excessive employee absences.



From top left to right: Ryan Harris, Catherine Decker, Brett Comeaux, Ashley Wilczek, Sarah O'Neill, Ben Martinez, David Hawthorne, Rick Devine. All photos courtesy of the individual member.

1. Coach Healthy Lifestyles

We've seen a lot of success in driving healthy lifestyles through education, coupled with programs such as wellness, gym reimbursements and flu clinics. We also engage in company sponsored 5K events, healthy cooking education and focus on providing healthy snack alternatives in the office. - [Ryan Harris, Petplan](#)

2. Find The Source Of The Problem

Discover if the issue is internal to work or external. If it's internal, find out what they are really passionate about and what's draining them. Leverage this into the right person and project situation. If external, it's a chance for the company to go over and above to help the employee overcome the obstacle, which will surely impact loyalty, engagement, social capital and employer brand equity. - [Catherine Decker, Outsell](#)

3. Have A Straightforward Conversation

Excessive absences are a red flag. If you hired the right person for the job, they should be motivated by that job. Time for an employee audit! Have a straightforward conversation with your employee about their engagement. If their heart isn't in the job, it's time to go. - [Brett Comeaux, LG Fairmont](#)

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4. Couple Expectations With Flexibility

My experience has taught me that the best solution is to set clear expectations on employee hours and absences. In addition, a flexible environment — where employees do not feel threatened for their job if they have a dentist appointment, need to pick up a sick child, or have an elderly parent to care for — help to eliminate absence abuse as well. Expectations coupled with flexibility work well. - [Ashley Wilczek, Justice AV Solutions](#)

5. Encourage Time Away To Recharge

Our method is to give employees a generous paid time off package (up to 20 days in your first year), and allow them to decide when and how to use that time. By putting the power in the employee's hands to fully recharge and step away from work, we've found that the workforce is much more engaged and passionate about work, in turn, reducing the instances of excessive absenteeism. - [Sarah O'Neill, Digital Trends](#)

6. Create A Place People Want To Belong

People show up to work wanting to belong. It is in our human nature. When I hear people talk about attendance issues, I submit to say their problems are deeper than attendance. The issue is people do not want to be together because they do not feel like they belong on the team. Make sure people feel accepted at

work. The draconian days of an attendance policy are not for the age we live in. - [Ben Martinez, HireVue](#)

7. Hold People Accountable

Set expectations for attendance during the hiring or onboarding process. Train your managers to meet with employees to discuss absences as soon as a trend is evident. Hold a dialogue so both parties can determine the root cause of the attendance issue and decide on a course of action that allows the employer and employee to work together to resolve the issue. Getting the employee's commitment is critical! - [David Hawthorne, Pacific Bells](#)

8. Make Opportunities Clear

Most workers are not connected to their employers. They don't feel a sense of loyalty or trust. This disconnect manifests as low morale, and ultimately in absences and turnover. If employers connect their employees to opportunity, prove that they care about them, show them a clear way forward, and help them realize their ambitions, then a bond of trust and hope ensues. You will reduce employee absence as a result. - [Rick Devine, TalentSky, Inc](#)

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