

How-To Manage Your Employee's Time Off



If you're like most hard-working Americans, chances are you laugh at the idea of working 40 hours a week. The reality is that you probably are the first one to the office in the morning and the last to leave in the evening. You probably even show up on the occasional Saturday morning or Sunday evening because you have no other choice. "Time off" is probably laughable to you but it's vitally important. Not just for you, but your employees as well.

Your company is only as good as the people on the ground and in the trenches. Your expectations are high and your employees take pride in the job they do for their own sake and that of the company. You probably have great relationships with most of them and your culture is one of teamwork and inclusion focused on a greater goal. Even if all this holds true, the number one complaint from employees across the board is not having appropriate time off to recharge so they are able to maximize productivity and efficiency while at work. Such begs the question, how do you balance maximizing productivity while making sure your employees can be at their best each and every day they come to work?

Be Upfront About Paid Time Off Policies

In the modern workplace, employees see paid time off and benefits just as important as a competitive salary. If your competitors offer more attractive PTO perks, you'll struggle to hire and retain qualified people. It's paramount to make sure all employees know and understand PTO policies immediately during the

hiring process. These policies should be clearly stated in the employee handbook and readily available for access upon request.

Forecast and Plan Ahead

If you've been in business for any length of time, you likely have a good idea of when your busy and slow times are. This should directly affect how you manage PTO requests. If your busy time is the winter holiday season and all hands on deck are needed, your PTO policies and labor budgets should reflect that trend. Effectively writing, communicating and implementing these policies up front lets employees plan their time off in a manner that is best for them and also aligns with company needs and objectives.

Set Deadlines for PTO Requests and Approval

While time off is essential for every employee's well-being, it's important that they communicate their requests well in advance so managers can aptly plan for their absence. Communicating these deadlines to all employees at once creates transparency and ensures fairness.

If many PTO requests are made at one time, it's imperative to have a policy in place for the priority in which those requests are processed. Whether your policy is first-come-first serve, based on seniority or some other metric, it needs to be made clear to all employees so that everything is black and white.

Incentivize Employees During Peak Times

It's widely known that employees are tremendously more motivated by incentives than they are reprimand. Budgeting and forecasting for incentives like holiday pay and bonuses is a great way to offer a win-win for your employees without sacrificing productivity. For those that want to take time off, the deadlines and policies have been clearly laid out. For those that are motivated to make extra pay, times like these are a great opportunity to cash in. The key once again is effective planning, policy setting and communication.

Make Your Schedule Rotational

I'll say it again, transparency and communication are your best friends. Not everyone works Monday through Friday 9:00-5:00 on your team or in your organization. No one wants to be "on call" on a Friday night when they could be at happy hour or at their child's soccer game. This time is fleeting and spreading that responsibility equally and fairly amongst your employees ensures that everyone is on a level playing field.

Be Flexible

Any reasonable employer makes time for deaths in the family or illness. That only goes so far however. Circumstances come up in your life. It's unrealistic to expect every single one of your employees to stick to a regimented rotational schedule without any room for variance. Allowing employees to reasonably switch days or shifts goes a long way in building morale within your team knowing that you've got their back and the favor will be returned someday.

It's important that these schedule requests be approved by a superior however. Having an open and balanced conversation with your employees about last minute schedule requests is essential for the health and productivity of the entire organization.

Everyone in the modern-day workforce wants to feel valued for the job they do and compensated accordingly. While higher wages are great, managing time off in a favorable, but efficient manner shows those that work for you that you care on a human level. With proper planning, policy setting and communication, accommodating PTO requests can make everyone of your employees feel valued and empowered. Good news for everyone involved.