



Too Much Information — Half of Canadian Companies Warn Against Excessive Honesty at Work

Sharing Personal Details at Work Can Ruin Reputations and Lower Workplace Productivity

TORONTO, Dec. 11, 2024 — While an honest workplace environment can [boost productivity and employee loyalty](#), there are some issues and topics that are not appropriate for discussion in the workplace that can harm workplace productivity, according to a recent Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

Almost all Canadian hiring managers (99%) say that employees being able to be honest is an important part of being a good manager, with a majority (58%) responding that it is absolutely essential.

A large majority of Canadian companies (84%) say they have successfully cultivated a safe and trusting environment that encourages honest communication. In addition, three-quarters (76%) say they have the right systems and tools in place to allow for constructive criticism to be received well.

In fact, an overwhelming 94% feel that employees can speak openly with someone in the company about their concerns or issues, with managers/supervisors (66%) and peers/colleagues (57%) being the most common points of contact.

However, conversations about employees' personal lives can be more complex.

While three-quarters of hiring managers (76%) believe employees should feel comfortable discussing personal issues with their manager if it impacts their work, half (50%) find it challenging to help employees navigate these issues (e.g., health, relationships, finances) to improve productivity.

A large proportion of hiring managers (42%) also report difficulty helping employees set professional boundaries to prevent personal issues from affecting their work. This difficulty may



stem from a lack of training, as only one-third of hiring managers (35%) say their company provides resources or training on managing employees' personal issues.

The Fine Line of Workplace Honesty

But there are limits to what is appropriate for employees to be honest about at work. Half of Canadian companies say employees can be “too honest” at work, which includes sharing too much personal information about themselves or a colleague (59%), criticizing colleagues or the company (59%), gossiping (53%), using personal insults when giving feedback (43%) and sharing too many details about their personal issues (e.g., their health, intimate relationships or finances) (38%).

Examples of overly honest behavior reported by hiring managers include:

- “They started talking about their marriage issues, which was bad since the person’s wife worked at the same company and it was creating issues.” — 29-year-old female hiring decision-maker from a company with 100+ employees
- “They gave me too much information on their sore belly and resulting bathroom issues.” — 55-year-old female hiring decision-maker from a company with 100+ employees
- “Talked badly about the owner’s family.” — 45-year-old male hiring decision-maker from a company with 10-99 employees
- “They mentioned things about their medical condition that weren’t necessary to share with me.” — 35-year-old female hiring decision-maker from a company with 100+ employees

Too much honesty can have damaging impacts, as nearly two-thirds of companies (62%) feel being “too honest” at work will damage an employee’s professional reputation. A majority of companies also say that employees discussing too many details about their personal lives at work can hinder workplace productivity (59%).

Balancing Honesty and Professionalism

Half of job seekers (51%) agree that employees can be “too honest” at work and that this can ruin an employee’s reputation (63%) and negatively impact workplace productivity (56%).

At the top of job seekers’ list of what employees should avoid at work is sharing personal information about themselves or a colleague (60%), gossiping (51%), sharing details about personal issues (43%) and using personal insults when giving feedback (42%).

When it comes to personal issues impacting their work, however, less than half of job seekers (40%) say they would be comfortable discussing it with their manager.

But a majority of job seekers (76%) say they can receive constructive criticism from their management and set professional boundaries so their work is not impacted by their personal issues (73%).

“While honesty is crucial, the wisdom to communicate thoughtfully is equally important,” said Bill Stoller, Express Employment International CEO. “In a professional setting, discerning what to share and keep private is key. It's important to remember that some personal situations are best discussed with confidantes outside of work.”

Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between May 16 – June 3, 2024, among 504 Canadian hiring decision-makers between May 16 – June 3, 2024.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between May 28 – June 10, 2024, among 505 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodologies, please contact Ana Curic at Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

About Express Employment Professionals

At Express Employment Professionals, we're in the business of people. From job seekers to client companies, Express helps people thrive and businesses grow. Our international network of franchises offers localized staffing solutions to the communities they serve across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, employing 492,000 people globally in 2023 and more than 11 million since its inception. For more information, visit ExpressPros.ca.