



Getting Drunk, Using Drugs, Dating Managers, Swearing Among Most Unacceptable Workplace Behaviours

Canadian Companies Report Employees Don't Know How to Behave Professionally at Work

TORONTO, Nov. 26, 2024 — A significant number of Canadian companies say employees do not know how to behave professionally in the workplace, according to a newly released Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

Half of companies (50%) say employees can be “too honest” at work, and 45% of companies say employees don’t know when or where it is appropriate to be honest in the workplace. For example, sharing too much personal information about themselves or a colleague (59%), criticizing the company or colleagues (59%), gossiping or spreading rumours (53%) and venting about colleagues (50%).

In addition to issues with honesty, hiring managers say there are other actions that are unacceptable in the workplace. This list of behaviours includes getting drunk during work hours (72%), using recreational drugs during work hours (64%), having an alcoholic beverage during work hours (62%), using company resources for personal use (49%), dating a manager or senior executive (43%) and swearing at work (35%).

Being too honest or acting unprofessionally at work can have serious consequences, with almost two-thirds of companies (62%) saying it will damage an employee’s professional reputation.

Interestingly, Canadian job seekers (both unemployed and employed but looking for work) even more strongly agree that employees at their company do not know when and where it is appropriate to be honest in the workplace (56%). They are also more likely to agree on what is not acceptable behaviour in the workplace (e.g., 77% say getting drunk during work hours is unacceptable, as is dating a manager or senior executive (50%)).



However, when it comes to admitting to the unprofessional behaviours they have engaged in at work, the list is much more mundane. Job seekers admit to making personal calls or using social media at work (41%), swearing (32%), gossiping (25%), crying (24%) and using company resources for personal use (17%).

Differences Between Genders and Generations

There are some significant differences in the survey responses, with women and older generations more likely to perceive certain workplace behaviours or actions as unacceptable.

For example, female hiring managers are much more likely than males to say it is unacceptable to share too much personal information (70% vs. 50%), gossip (60% vs 47%), date a manager or senior executive (52% vs 36%) or use recreational drugs during work hours (72% vs 57%).

Boomers and Gen X hiring managers are also more likely than millennials and Gen Z to say that it is unacceptable to get drunk at work (81% vs 66%), take recreational drugs during work hours (74% vs. 55%), use company resources for personal use (69% vs. 43%) and swear in the workplace (44% vs 34%).

The same trends are found with job seekers, with females and older generations more likely to see many unprofessional behaviours unacceptable.

Employers seem to have noticed the generational differences in behaviours, as an overwhelming majority of the companies surveyed (91%) say it is important for younger generations of employees to learn when it is appropriate to share their honest opinions or thoughts in the workplace; 43% strongly agree with this sentiment.

“While workplaces have become more casual and honesty is highly valued, maintaining a level of professionalism is still essential,” said Bill Stoller, Express Employment International CEO. “It’s about striking a balance where openness and respect coexist, ensuring a comfortable and respectful environment for everyone.”

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.

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