

For Immediate Release

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Despite Weak Economy, Desire for Time Off During the Holidays Remains Strong

New survey from The Workforce Institute™ reveals 75 percent of employees plan to take as much or more time off during the holidays this year while more businesses plan to give employees the gift of a much-needed break

CHELMSFORD, Mass., Dec. 16, 2008 — With the grim economic news continuing to pour in, one might expect the average American worker to be too focused on keeping his or her job to think about taking time off this holiday season. But a new survey sponsored by [The Workforce Institute™](#) at [Kronos® Incorporated](#) and conducted by Harris Interactive, finds that the vast majority of employees plan to forge ahead with their holiday time off requests as planned — some even plan to take more time off this year than in the past.

A full 75 percent of respondents said they plan to take either the same amount or more time off than they did last year (59 percent plan to take the same amount of time off; 16 percent plan to take more). Only 19 percent of respondents said they plan to take less time off this year. Of that 19 percent, the top reasons they gave for cutting back on their time off were: to earn extra money (33 percent); because they are facing new restrictions on taking time off than they did last year (21 percent); and because they are saving their vacation time to use in 2009 (20 percent).

“It seems that despite the weakening economy, if you’ve still got a job, you’re likely to take some time off around the holidays,” said Jared Bernstein, director of the Living Standards Program at The Economic Policy Institute and board member of The Workforce Institute. “It’s good news, because compared to other countries, we take much less vacation time, and given all the economic anxiety out there right now, hard working Americans could use some time to kick back with their families over the holidays.”

Employers get into the holiday spirit

This year’s “Working the Holidays” survey also showed an increase in the practice of giving employees the entire time off between Christmas and New Year’s Day. This year, 20 percent of respondents who work full time say their office will be closed between Christmas and New Year’s Day as opposed to 18 percent in 2007. This is a practice that can benefit both the employer and employees.

“As a non-profit, our strong benefits package offsets smaller compensation packages, and more time off is an important part of that,” said Ruth N. Bramson, chief executive officer of the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts and a member of the board of advisors of The Workforce Institute. “This year, with the way the holidays fall on the calendar, it made sense to close for the entire week. Once we evaluated the cost-benefit picture, it was an easy decision. The reality is holidays are a slower time for Girl Scouts activities and employees really appreciate having the time off to spend with loved ones. It is particularly helpful for folks who travel to visit families and now can stay longer or travel at off-peak times. Add to that the money saved by not having to heat and light the offices for those days, we really felt it was a win-win decision for everyone.”

Scheduling time off can be a “bah humbug!” experience

Twenty-one percent of survey respondents who work full time said they have trouble coordinating schedules with co-workers to take time off during the holidays — up from just 11 percent in 2007. The holidays present a unique scheduling challenge, where large numbers of employees are requesting the same days off, but it is critical for many employers — such as grocery stores or movie theaters — to be staffed appropriately to deal with the holiday crowds and still provide excellent customer service.

“Employers may be expecting less trouble finding coverage this holiday season, anticipating that not as many people will be requesting time off because of the economy,” said Joyce Maroney, director of The Workforce Institute at Kronos. “Our survey shows that people are, in large part, not letting the economy affect their plans for taking time off. At the same time, more people are expressing that they have difficulty scheduling vacation time during the holidays, setting up what might be a real logistical challenge for managers in charge of ensuring adequate coverage.”

“This year, again, we were surprised by how few employees use an automated solution for time off requests — just 24 percent this year up from 20 percent last year,” continued Maroney. “Workforce management solutions — whether it’s a time and attendance solution that lets you standardize how employees request time off and keep track of who is working when, or a scheduling solution that enables quick, easy, and appropriate re-shuffling of workers — really can make these problems easier to deal with, resulting in employees feeling they have more control over their own schedules and employers getting the coverage they need to stay on top of the business needs of the season.”

Survey Methodology

This “Working the Holidays” survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of The Workforce Institute at Kronos Incorporated between November 24 and November 26, 2008 among 2,131 U.S. adults aged 18 and over among whom 1,228 were employed full-time or part-time. Results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Harris Interactive

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About the Workforce Institute

The Workforce Institute was founded by Kronos[®] Incorporated in 2006 as a think tank to provide research and education on critical workplace issues facing organizations around the globe. By bringing together thought leaders, the Workforce Institute is uniquely positioned to empower organizations with the knowledge and information they need to manage their workforce effectively and provide a voice for employees on important workplace issues. A hallmark of the Workforce Institute's research is balancing the needs and desires of diverse employee populations with the needs of organizations. For additional information, visit www.workforceinstitute.org.

About Kronos Incorporated

Kronos Incorporated empowers organizations around the world to effectively manage their workforce. At Kronos, we are experts who are solely focused on delivering software and services that enable organizations to reduce costs, increase productivity, improve employee satisfaction, and ultimately enhance the level of service they provide. Kronos serves customers in more than 60 countries through its network of offices, subsidiaries, and distributors. Widely recognized as a market and thought leader in managing the workforce, Kronos has unrivaled reach with more than 30 million people using a Kronos solution every day. Learn more about Kronos at www.kronos.com.

Note to Editors:

Cite survey findings as: The “Working the Holidays” survey commissioned by The Workforce Institute at Kronos Incorporated.

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