

JANUARY 14, 2012

Healthy 'sick' days adding up

Workers are increasingly likely to take a day off, even if they aren't sick in bed, says HR group

By **STEVE MacNAULL**
 The Okanagan Saturday

People are missing work — due not only to sickness — but because they just don't feel like it, or they're looking for another job. "I think it's just a rule of life that 80 per cent are decent workers and are engaged in their jobs," explained Marian Gushue-Geiger, the human resources manager at Kelowna-based B.C. Commissionaires security services.

"The other 20 per cent are not engaged and they are the ones that take up 80 per cent of your time and are the most likely to miss work."

The B.C. Human Resources Management Association just released figures showing that in 2010, absenteeism was up 30 per cent over 2009 and employees are quitting their jobs more frequently.

Initially the group was perplexed.

Why would people be missing work and resigning when they should feel lucky to have a job in this tough economy? The answer is long and complex.

But it all boils down to the fact that even if jobs are scarce and the economy is fragile, the workforce is aging and sicker, employee commitment levels are at an all-time low, employees are burnt out from the do-more-with-less mentality of the new economy and one-in-three workers is

unhappy and considering leaving their employer.

Some of those 33 per cent of workers who are dissatisfied are calling in sick to their existing job so they have time to look for a new one.

"I wouldn't say it's a crisis," said Tim Read, manager of the Southern Interior branch of the B.C. Human Resources Management Association.

"But it definitely is a concern. Absenteeism is on the rise and we want to understand the reasons and come up with solutions."

The solution seems to be "engagement" — one of those buzz words that sounds good, but people don't know what it means, let alone how to attain it.

"I think we need to go back to basics and say thank you to employees and recognize them for a job well done," said Gushue-Geiger, who is also the incoming chairperson of the Southern Interior branch of the B.C. Human Resources Management Association.

"You should also be asking your employees for their input and opinion. They are the ones doing the job so they likely have good ideas on how to do the job even better."

Read said that many recent studies have shown that being appreciated and valued and feeling like they are making a difference is more important to many employees than money.

"I think wages are a huge issue," said Gushue-Geiger.

"It's not a surprise that absenteeism is higher the lower the wages are."

However, she said making \$10 an hour isn't an excuse to be a bad employee.

"Engage that person who is making \$10 an hour by shifting their thinking that they are getting an education, gaining life skills and getting paid for it," she said.

"There's nothing wrong with an employer positioning a job as a learning experience and stepping stone to another career to engage young people."

For instance, Gushue-Geiger says the B.C. Commissionaires operates many ways.

It initially started as a security operation providing jobs for ex-police and ex-military.

But it now also hires many young people who are utilizing a Commissionaires job as a stepping stone to a position in the military or police.

Flexibility is also key in engaging and keeping employees. "Employers have to recognize that employees are their most valuable asset and treat them that way," said Read.

"Every employee is an individual, so employers have to take the time to figure out what motivates and works for certain employees. Giving them the flexibility as individuals to do the job is one way. If an employee has to take some time off to attend to their child or aged parent then that should be



STEVE MACNAULL/The Daily Courier

Employees skipping work for reasons other than being sick is an increasing problem, according to Tim Read.

OK, as long as they make up the time and work at another time."

Offering flexible hours and working from home is also an option, with the provision, of course, always being that the work has to get done.

Read also brings up the term "presenteeism" — which is being physically at work, but not mentally, because the employee is wasting time, distracting others and not getting any tasks done.

The flipside of absenteeism and presenteeism is working too much.

And lots of Canadians are doing that, too.

Technology means that many employees work more than the standard 40 hours a week by doing work and checking in evenings, weekends and while on vacation.



GARY NYLANDER/The Daily Courier

Good pay, recognition and engagement are keys to keeping workers happy, says Marian Gushue-Geiger, human resources manager with B.C. Commissionaires.

Brewery reaches frothy milestone

The 1,000th batch of beer is now brewing at Penticton's Cannery Brewery. The milestone comes just a month after the brewery celebrated its 10th anniversary in November.

The 1,000th batch is Anarchist amber ale, so assistant brewmaster Chuck Hart celebrated the landmark with a cold tall glass of — what else? — Anarchist.

The day the turning point batch was started also happened to be Hart's birthday. We feel absolutely honoured to have so many loyal fans who enjoy our hand-crafted ales and lagers," said co-owner Patt Dyck.

"Without our loyal supporters, we would not be where we are today."

To build hype surrounding the 1,000th batch, Cannery created a baby pool type contest on its Facebook Fan page for beer drinkers to guess the date the batch would be started.

Mike Em was the winner and received a Cannery beer lovers gift pack.

The brewery is located in the historic Cannery Trade Centre at the corner of Duncan Avenue and Fairview Road.



Photo contributed

Cannery Brewing in Penticton hit the milestone of brewing its 1,000th batch of beer. Celebrating the event are employees Lisa Peck, left, Scott Naylor, Chuck Hart, Patt Dyck, Ian Dyck and Randy Holte.

ily homes over 50 acres, tailored to those aged 55-plus. Seventy-two homes are already sold and another phase of 48 homes is just coming on stream now.

Prices start at \$179,900 for a one bedroom condo and \$219,000 for the two bedroom with den model.

It's been a while since McGuire lived in Kelowna, because for the past 13 years he's been selling real estate in the Palm Springs

area, including the luxury developments Andalusia and Rancho La Quinta.

Many new-home developments are on golf courses in this part of California, after all the area is a year-round golf mecca.

Villa Portofino isn't, however.

It's located downtown in Palm Desert at the corner of Country Club Drive and Portola Avenue and within walking distance to plenty of shops and restaurants.



STEVE
MACNAULL
 Valley Views

For more information, you can visit their website at VillaPortofino.com.

A quality vintage

You'll have to be strategic if you want to get your hands on a bottle of the elegantly-oaked 2010 McWatters Collection chardonnay (\$25).

With only 125 cases of this buttery white wine produced by the Summerland-based label, it has extremely limited distribution.

That means it can only be purchased at Local Liquor Market in Summerland or the Park Royal Liquor Store in Vancouver.

The only restaurants to have it on their wine lists are Local in Summerland and Gramercy Grill in Vancouver.

It can also be bought online at HarryMcWatters.com.

Last year the label released its first wine — 1,000 cases of red blend 2007 Meritage (\$25) — which has a little wider distribution through private liquor stores.

Continued on page C2

Selling the sun



Mark McGuire

Originally from Kelowna, Mark McGuire is now a sales manager at Villa Portofino in Palm Desert, California.

Villa Portofino is a luxury gated community of 400 condominiums, duplexes and single fam-

ACT NOW

DON'T MISS OUT!

ONLY 1 HOME LEFT

\$414,900 plus hst

www.dilworthhomes.com

- LOCK & LEAVE LIFESTYLE
- HOME READY TO MOVE INTO
- CLOSE TO ALL AMMENITIES

\$414,900 plus hst

DILWORTH
 Mountain Estates

Showhome #20-971 Monashee Place | 250.717.3569 | www.dilworthhomes.com