

Late For Work: **What it means for employers and employees**

A few minutes late is *'fashionable'*, right? Not when it comes to the workplace. A few minutes can mean the difference of thousands of dollars for employers and cost employees opportunities for advancement and even their jobs. According to a recent article published in CareerBuilder, when asked how often they come in late to work, 1 in 4 workers (25 percent) admitted they do it at least once a month, and 13 percent say it's a weekly occurrence for them. Read on to see how a "little late" can have a "big impact" on productivity.



Employer

What "late" means:

- **Loss in productivity**
 - An employee who is 10 minutes late each day will have taken the equivalent of an entire week's paid vacation by the end of the calendar year.
 - Costs U.S. employers \$9 billion annually
 - Employers are obligated to consistently manage tardiness policies
- **Affects workforce morale**
- **Legal issues**
 - If policies are not documented, communicated and managed consistently legal issues may surface

Why lateness matters:

It is all about lost productivity. According to the Society for Human Resources Management, tardiness costs U.S. employers an estimated \$9 billion annually. Think of it this way: An employee who is 10 minutes late each day will have taken the equivalent of an entire week's paid vacation by the end of the calendar year. That's an extra week of productivity lost on top of the time off already afforded to the employee.



Employee

What "late" means:

- **Credibility and trust compromised**
- **Reduced opportunities for advancement**
- **Unrealized compensation**
- **Fractured work relationships**
- **Termination of employment**

Why lateness matters:

For employee's it is all about making a statement. If you are consistently on time, you are reliable. Reliable people mean more to employers than unreliable people. Unreliability imposes unnecessary stress on organizations. Organizations place less trust and confidence in unreliable people. Conversely, those who are good make a basic statement that reflects well upon them and the organization.

Tips For Employers:

- **Make sure your policies are well documented** – Policies regarding time off and tardiness should be clearly documented down to the unit and job level and easily accessible to all employees at all times.
- **Communicate early and often** – Expectations as they pertain to the use of time should be set from the start of employment and formalized by way of mutual acceptance (sign off). When specific resources are falling short of expectations, have a performance management process ready that ensures such situations also are benefiting from open communication and progressive action.
- **Apply your policies evenly, consistently** – While there are not specific laws that govern lateness, there are lawsuits that spring from situations where employers inconsistently manage it within the organization. Claims of unfair practices can bubble upon whenever similar situations are handled differently. The seriousness and risk of such claims can escalate whenever factors such as gender, race and religion enter into the equation. Exposure to these types of risks can be avoided by making sure your late policies are managed evenly and consistently. Having access to capable Human Resources talent can really make the difference here.

Tips For Employees:

- **Know your employer's policies and how they apply to your job** – Lateness can be generally described within the organization as a whole, but can be very literally defined within specific areas of the organization. It is important to know how the policies and rules as they pertain to time off and lateness apply to your specific situation.
- **Know your needs before you take a new job** – Ask questions about scheduling and if needed, flexibility, during the initial interview. Asking questions later can be perceived as a negotiating tactic by the hiring manager, which could move you down in the pecking order if other candidates are viewed as more viable. If you ask questions and don't like the answers, it may be this opportunity won't work and therefore isn't worth pursuing any further.
- **Mind your "P's & Q's" within the first six months of employment** – There is a lot happening within the first year of employment. Within the first six months, one of the things that is really happening is the employer is trying to gauge exactly what it has invested in when it comes to you. Your employer expects you to be ready, willing and able to learn and start doing your job. If you're frequently late while this is happening, your employer may question your level of dedication to it and your job.
- **Communicate early, openly and honestly when exceptional circumstances arise** – Nothing demonstrates a lackadaisical attitude more than being late and A) not calling ahead to inform your boss of such and B) not considering it a big enough issue to warrant an apology. If you suspect your lateness will be a regular occurrence due to something unusual that is going on in your life, have a timely conversation with your boss. The situation will definitely be perceived differently and you may be able to work out an arrangement that works for everyone.
- **Never assume that being late is OK** – Some people place punctuality very high on their list of expectations of other people and organizations. While one person may shrug lateness off, the next may view it as the ultimate measure of disrespect. For these reasons, it's important to always strive to be on time.

Sometimes perceptions of what late means loosen with time and even with status. This can be especially true for longer term employees, who tend to get comfortable in their work "skin". It also can be true as employees get promoted, as if somehow the normal rules no longer apply to "important people". Remember, late can always get noticed at every level, and its impact can be heightened depending on the situation (for example, if it's coupled with missing deadlines or making customers upset). Plus, if you've elevated to a role of leadership, it's now more important than ever for you to lead by example.

CareerBuilder Reveals This Year's Most Outrageous Excuses for Being Late to Work

According to a recent survey conducted by CareerBuilder, when asked about the most outrageous excuses employees have given them for being late, employers shared the following:

- I thought of quitting today, but then decided not to, so I came in late.
 - My hair caught on fire from my blow dryer.
 - I was detained by Homeland Security.
 - I had to chase my cows back into the field.
 - A black bear entered my carport and decided to take a nap on the hood of my car.
 - My lizard had to have emergency surgery in the morning and died during surgery. I had to mourn while deciding whether to have the lizard disposed of by the vet or bring the lizard corpse with me to work.
 - There was fresh powder on the hill. I had to go skiing.
 - There was a store grand opening and I wanted to get the opening day sales.
 - I had to finish watching "My Name is Earl."
 - All of my clothes were stolen.
 - I was confused by the time change and unsure if it was "spring forward" or "fall back."
 - A Vaseline truck overturned on the highway and cars were slipping left and right.
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