

# FANTASY FOOTBALL COSTS \$6.5 BILLION IN WORKPLACE PRODUCTIVITY

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Fantasy football is a workplace and societal phenomenon. According to a study by outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, fantasy football is played by 22.3 million workers and costs employers upwards of \$6.5 billion in lost time and productivity. Needless to say between the hours spent on fantasy drafts and the 14 to 20 weeks of games, the potential for lost employee hours is significant. Those statistics support the notion that employers should put a stop to this diversion.

Many human resource professionals, however, believe that the game actually benefits the workplace. A recent article by HR Benefits suggests that fantasy football may provide employees an opportunity to communicate with one another who might not otherwise interact - i.e., a sales rep may be able to talk to the CEO because their teams are playing each other, or an accountant may approach the head of marketing with a trade offer.

This blending of work and personal time makes it very difficult for an employer to have a bright line rule regarding use of the internet during work time. So what is an employer to do? Many employers strictly prohibit any use of the internet during work time, but with the advent of tablets and smartphones etc. it is virtually impossible to police.

Why not - instead of a blanket prohibition - focus on performance and productivity? Does it really matter if your employee spent a half-hour making football trades if the result is a happier more productive employee? Instead, employers should focus on developing common sense policies that hold employees accountable while allowing for

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the flexibility of blowing off a little steam through their fantasy league. As long as there is no illegal behavior occurring, it is likely to create a better work environment for everyone; particularly those who have drafted well.

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