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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEWER AMERICANS USE VACATION DAYS; ARE YOU BEING "VACATION SHAMED?"

CHICAGO, May 9, 2017 – Fewer Americans are using their vacation time than ever before, and while many Americans are the most confident than they have been with the economy since before the recession, according to [Pew Research](#), guilt over taking vacation days may cause employee burn-out, according to one workplace authority.

"According to Gallup, only 32 percent of employees are engaged at work. This could be due to companies doing more with less, causing burn-out, stress, and fatigue. Workers need a break from their jobs to become more active, engaged employees," said John Challenger, chief executive officer of global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

Most Americans do not use all their paid vacation time. According to this year's Annual Alamo Rent-A-Car Vacation Survey, less than half (47 percent) of respondents

took all of the vacation time offered to them, choosing instead to spend more time at the office. This is the first time this number has fallen below 50 percent.

Moreover, an average of 19 vacation days went unused in 2015, according to Bankrate.com. The median number of unused vacation days was 7.

“Workers are leaving more than a week of vacation time on the table. Even workers at companies that offer unlimited time off, a trend recently adopted by numerous tech companies like Netflix and VMWare, likely do not participate fully in that benefit,” said Challenger.

One explanation is that workers feel “vacation shamed.” This phenomenon happens when people in the workforce feel guilt for taking vacation time and leaving their coworkers to take on their tasks while they are gone. It can also result from leaders who demand too much from their staff, leaving them no choice but to work through potential vacation days.

“Vacation shaming” seems to happen more often to Millennial workers, according to Bloomberg. Nearly 70 percent reported feeling “vacation shamed,” thinking avoiding vacations makes them stand out to their bosses as more outstanding employees.

Indeed, “vacation shaming” or feeling “vacation shamed” happens, possibly more often, at companies that offer unlimited vacation. Kickstarter ended its unlimited paid time off policy after the company found workers were actually taking fewer days than if they had a stated policy. Other companies, such as Gilt Group, found their workers too were taking fewer days.

“In theory, unlimited time off makes sense from a recruitment and retention standpoint. As long as the project is completed and work doesn’t suffer, workers can take all the time they need for themselves.

“However, in practice, the pressure to maintain high performance or take on new projects to remain visible at the company undermines the offering. This same pressure keeps workers with more traditional vacation policies from taking their time off,” said Challenger.

“Companies typically cannot force their talent to take time off. However, the culture of the workplace needs to be one that encourages workers to take time for themselves.

“Leaders need to build an environment in which taking vacation time is an expected part of the job. They should also lead by example: if managers take their vacation time, it’s likely their staff will follow suit,” said Challenger.

“The key thing workers need to do when they go on vacation is maintain communication. Let your supervisor, customers, or clients know you will be out of the office and whom they should contact in your stead. Check your emails and voicemails at the end of each day and respond to anything urgent. Most importantly, relax and have fun. This will ensure you’re rejuvenated and ready to tackle your job when you return,” said Challenger.

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