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March Madness Brings Mayhem to the Workplace

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Mar. 01, 2018



Employees are mad about sporting events like March Madness, suggests a new survey from staffing firm OfficeTeam. Professionals said they spend an average of 25.5 minutes per day on sports-related activities in the office during the college basketball playoffs. With the tournament spread across 15 workdays, that's the equivalent of six hours per employee.

View a larger version of this infographic:

<https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/management-tips/mad-about-the-college-basketball-tournament>.

Additional findings:

- Male employees and those ages 18 to 34 spend the most time on tournament-related activities at work (36 minutes and 34 minutes on average a day, respectively), such as talking to colleagues and participating in informal competitions.
- Nearly half of professionals (46 percent) are big fans of celebrating sporting events like March Madness in the office. Another third (33 percent) aren't very fond of these activities but still play along. More than one in five respondents (21 percent) would rather focus on work and not celebrate sports.
- Men (64 percent) and employees ages 18 to 34 (55 percent) most frequently said they love keeping up with sports in the office and bonding with colleagues over them.
- Checking game scores and team rankings (62 percent) and an increase in sports talk (59 percent) are the most common workplace behaviors around major sporting attractions, according to senior managers.

“While employers may worry about events like March Madness being a distraction in the office, allowing workers to enjoy sports-related activities for even a few minutes can be time well spent,” said Brandi Britton, a district president for OfficeTeam. “Staff will appreciate the opportunity to bond with colleagues and return to their desks rejuvenated.”

Britton added, “Companies should trust employees to manage their time. Good workers still get their projects done, even if they take occasional breaks.”

OfficeTeam offers four questions employees can ask themselves before celebrating sporting events like the college basketball playoffs at work:

1. **Is this against company policy?** Don't get in trouble for not following the playbook. Know your organization's rules on employee breaks, personal internet use, sports attire and workplace decorations.
2. **What's on my to-do list?** Take quick time-outs to check scores or chat about games with colleagues, if allowed. However, don't fall behind on assignments.
3. **Am I overdoing it?** It's fine to root for your favorite team, but no one likes a poor sport. Remember, it's just a game.
4. **Should I take time off?** If you want a day off to enjoy the tournament, submit your request early. This gives your boss the opportunity to determine if temporary support should be brought in.

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