

Workplace Drinking

How can it be stopped?

Context

A TUC (a trade union in the UK) report has said that few employers have adequate policies for dealing with Britain's growing drink problem.

"A Potent Cocktail" reveals that up to 14.8 million working days are lost as a result of drinking.

It also estimates that the effects of alcohol abuse such as long-term sickness, unemployment and premature death costs the UK economy around £2.3bn a year.

Stress, bullying and long working hours are seen as factors that can lead to workers consuming more alcohol than is good for them.

The document calls for more co-operation between the Government, unions and employers to tackle the problem.

Is this another example of the 'Nanny State' I've heard so much about? What on earth is wrong with, after a long hard week at work, going out before your day off and having a fair bit to drink? That's one of the reasons its there in the first place - to allow us to relax! I agree with Mr Tankard -aren't we allowed to have fun any more because it might just affect our 'productivity'? Everyone's guilty of it anyway, turning up to work once or twice slightly the worse for wear from the previous night.

Owen, UK

The word moderation seems to have left the Modern lexicon. Apart from an outright ban, which would be desirable but completely unworkable, I would suggest that companies including Government departments should encourage people to drink less by putting less stress on people. Education by parents of their children also plays a great part. But there are no parents, they are all out at work. Of course this will never take off. The Pubs have too much profit to lose, so has the Exchequer and the losses are far outweighed by the fact that Government saves on pensions. For the moment let us concentrate on putting cigarettes on the Misuse of Drugs schedule. One step at a time.

Tony, Welling, Kent

So once again we are expected to continue a joyless existence, denied basic pleasures on the off chance that a small number of us will cease to be 100% productive drones oiling the wheels of "the machine". People are individuals, they have their own desires and their own pleasures. While it is reasonable to expect people to be sober while they are at work, what they do in their own time is their business. The day my company tries to tell me what I can and can't do with what little free time I have is the day they will get my summary resignation.

Dave Tankard, UK

What is the problem with a drink at lunchtime? I can see the point if you are operating heavy machinery or driving, but otherwise it's none of the employer's business. If it's not on their time it's none of their business.

Tom, UK

I often drink in the week (last night being just one example). I feel a bit ropery but I'm still here in the office working away! I always work when hangover as i feel it's my fault and I just have to get on with it!

Sarah, UK

Obviously, in some jobs being tipsy during working hours is dangerous and criminally negligent. Thankfully, I do not have one of these jobs. Indeed, having a pleasant buzz during the late afternoon assists my creativity in the office.

Hugh, England

I once worked somewhere where they tried to crack down on lunchtime drinking. Basically it was forbidden. The quid pro quo was that the boss would take everyone down the pub for a couple of hours at 4:30 on Fridays. It was a disaster. Instead of working, everyone spent hours complaining that, without a lunchtime drink, the day would just drag on and on. After about six months the scheme fell into disuse and everyone was happy again!

Paul, UK

Our Premier recently was busted for drinking and driving in Hawaii. There was a lot of public demand for his resignation afterwards but he did not step down. As long as it doesn't effect your job or put people at risk, I hardly see the harm in having a few drinks at work. Can we say moderation?

William Sutton, British Columbia

In the three years I have worked for my current company I have taken a total of three days off "sick" with alcohol-related troubles. In the last six months I have taken four weeks off (on my doctor's advice) suffering from extreme stress caused by my direct manager (on top of several months of low productivity). It's not hard to see which is more damaging to the economy. Alcohol is frequently the symptom of a greater ill.

X, England

The problem is not just within the work place. British people do not know how to have fun unless alcohol is involved - that goes for adults as well as teenagers

Anonymous,

I drank alcoholically for many years, including lunchtimes. This had two effects. The first was that I underperformed for my company and had a harmful effect on those around me and the second was that my personal life became increasingly desperate. I was able to do this because of the tolerance shown to my drinking by both employers and my family and friends. They thought that they were doing the kind thing but were in effect enabling me to continue in my downward spiral. I stopped drinking entirely almost two years ago and now find that I am happier than I have ever been in my adult life. I wish I had done it years ago.

Alcoholic, England

The economic losses indicated are in balance with profound losses of citizenry who are otherwise disenfranchised as they are here in the USA. Any attempt to synthetically reduce (force)workplace drinking will no doubt lead to other unexpected workplace problems that may be even more devastating economically. You have asked the wrong question.

Ken, USA

Most companies have some kind of procedure document which includes being drunk (or unduly influenced by drink or drugs) in the definition of Gross Misconduct. Companies that employ people to drive vehicles or operate potentially dangerous machinery are likely to have clauses requiring those people to be completely sober throughout their shift. So I don't think any further measures are needed in the workplace. As far as out-of-working-hours drinking is concerned, the person who can't handle his job due to a hangover is in the same position as a musician who damages his fingers while indulging in contact sport - he won't hold down the gig for very long if his out-of-work activities prevent him from performing properly.

Phil, UK

I think drinking in work would reduce if our Director hadn't walked around the office offering cans of Stella last Friday afternoon! While I realise this topic is a serious issue, I think it has a lot to do with the mentality of the workers themselves and the respect they have to their job.

Mike, Wales, UK