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MARCH MADNESS SPURS OFFICE POOL PARTICIPATION, FINDS NEW SPHERION STUDY

Few corporate policies and increased online, mobile viewership means greater risk for productivity loss as a result of office pools



FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla., March 9, 2010 — While a recent Spherion study found that 52 percent of HR executives say their top priority this year is cost containment, March Madness and the office pools that precede it may erode work productivity and therefore, jeopardize cost-saving measures. According to the 2010 Office Pool Survey, 45 percent of workers have participated in an office pool before, and 56 percent of those who have participated specifically took part in March Madness pools. Fueling participation in office pools is the fact that 49 percent of workers say their employer doesn't have an office pool policy, and another 37 percent of workers don't know if an office pool policy exists at their company.

The survey also found that of those U.S. workers who have participated in an office pool, 68 percent named "for the fun of participating" as their primary reason, 57 percent cited "office camaraderie", and another 52 percent said "to win money." Further, the survey found that 70 percent of workers who participate in office pools say they have spent less than \$20 in doing so, and 21 percent said they have spent between \$20 and \$49.

Based on Nielsen data indicating a 5.2 percent increase in online video audience from January 2009 to January 2010, an unprecedented number of Americans are expected to turn to online outlets to view March Madness this year. In fact, in 2009 CBS said unique visitors to its March Madness On Demand video services increased 60 percent over the previous year to 7.5 million, and CBSSports.com generated 4.8 million unique visitors streaming through the first day of the second round, up 65 percent over 3 million for the same time in 2008.

"This is an important issue for business owners and HR executives when you consider that office pools can contribute to lost productivity in an environment that requires heightened fiscal scrutiny," says John Heins, senior vice president and chief human resources officer at SFN Group, Inc. "Research has indicated an estimated 40 percent productivity loss each year for American businesses. With growing access to online venues, and the increased use of mobile applications to stream video, workers will have more access to March Madness activities this year during work hours, which may translate to historic dips in productivity levels for businesses. Alongside, some companies view office pools as a form of gambling, which can be a violation of a company's code of business conduct."

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Heins also stated, "It appears that while some companies fear a negative impact of office pools on worker productivity, they may also have positive effect on office camaraderie and employee morale. That being said, employers that fear time wasted should clearly communicate their Internet usage policy throughout the year, as well as policies related to office pools and gambling."

Other results from the survey include:

- Of the 45 percent of workers who have participated in office pools, the following represent the primary types:
 - Super Bowl - 68%
 - March Madness Basketball - 56%
 - Lottery - 34%
 - Fantasy Football - 22%
 - World Series - 16%
 - Other office pools - 16%
 - Baby - 12%
 - Kentucky Derby - 6%
 - Reality TV Shows - 3%
 - Award Shows - 3%
- A full 51 percent of workers have won an office pool, and 49 percent have never won.
- Six percent of workers have spent between \$50 and \$99 on office pools, and four percent spent \$100 or more.
- The following represent the reasons why 55 percent of workers have not participated in office pools:
 - Never invited to participate - 49%
 - I do not want to lose money - 28%
 - It is a distraction from work - 20%
 - Company prohibits participation - 15%
 - Religious conviction - 4%

Methodology

The 2010 Spherion Office Pools survey was conducted online within the United States by Monster - on behalf of Spherion Staffing Services between February 15 and 22, 2010 among a U.S. sample of 825 working adults, aged 20 years and older. Respondents represent those invited to participate in the survey, which includes full and part-time workers. The survey sample was balanced between male and female respondents to correlate with the U.S. working population. All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Monster feels the use of "margin of error" is misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published surveys come close to this ideal. Respondents for this survey were randomly selected from among those who have agreed to receive communication from Monster, so no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Spherion Staffing Services

Spherion Staffing Services is a leading recruiting and staffing provider that specializes in placing administrative, clerical, customer service and light industrial candidates in temporary and full-time opportunities. As an industry pioneer for more than 60 years, Spherion has sourced, screened and placed millions of individuals in virtually every industry through a network of offices across the United States and Canada.

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