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## **MARCH MADNESS FUELS OFFICE POOLS, FINDS NEW SPHERION STUDY**

*Unprecedented access to live streaming on the job and lack of corporate policies  
equal high risk for loss of productivity*

FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla., March 14, 2011 — A recent [Spherion Staffing Services](#) study shows that not having a clear corporate policy on participation in office pools, particularly in regards to this year's March Madness basketball events, could slow workers' productivity, leading to a much more serious issue for employers in today's economic environment. According to the 2011 Office Pool Survey conducted on behalf of Spherion Staffing Services, companies are not broadcasting a clear policy against them. Of the workers surveyed, only 16 percent said their company has a policy against office pools and another 37 percent didn't know whether there was a policy or not. Perhaps more concerning, almost half of the respondents do not think their employer has an office pool corporate policy.

Alongside, this year, CBS Sports and Turner Sports announced that all NCAA basketball tournament games will even be offered for free via live streams on the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch, instead of the pay to view games of last year - providing easier access for viewing these events. With increasing availability of live online updates and streaming on mobility devices, 2011 is expected to be one of the most popular years ever for March Madness as an unprecedented number of Americans are expected to tune in.

Office pools are popular in the workplace. The survey found that almost half (46 percent) of respondents have participated in office pools in the past. Of the remaining 54 percent who have not participated before:

- 48 percent said they were never invited to participate
- 29 percent didn't want to lose money
- 23 percent felt it was a distraction from work
- 4 percent didn't participate because of religious conviction
- 13 percent didn't participate because an organizational policy prohibiting office pools was in place

For those who have played in office pools, not much money was at risk—68 percent played for \$20 or less and only 11 percent played for more than \$50. Half of workers (57 percent) surveyed came out as winners. Of those who played, 62 percent did so "for the fun of participating," 57 percent did it to boost camaraderie and 51 percent just wanted to win money. About a third (31 percent) simply love sports, and six percent participated because coworkers pressured them. A full 71 percent of pool participants were males.

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“The bottom line is that office pools might be illegal. When you combine that with an economic environment where cost-savings are more crucial than ever, the possibility of lost productivity is heightened, making this a serious issue,” says John Heins, senior vice president and chief human resources officer at SFN Group. “Research shows that non-work-related online surfing results in an estimated 40 percent loss of productivity each year for American businesses. It’s becoming easier and easier to get online, and this year workers will have unprecedented access to streaming video, which could mean unprecedented productivity hits for businesses.”

Heins continued, “The key thing for businesses to take away from this year’s Spherion study is that companies have to address the issue instead of ignore it. First, a clear policy has to be made. Second, that policy has to be clearly and effectively communicated to workers. We believe that if workers were more aware that a policy exists and that the company is serious about it, then those policies would become meaningful. If you have a policy, communicate it. If you don’t have a policy, create one and make it well known.”

Other results from survey respondents include:

- Of the 45 percent of workers who have participated in office pools, the following represent the primary types: Super Bowl (63 percent); March Madness Basketball (55 percent); Lottery (28 percent); Fantasy Football (23 percent); World Series (15 percent); Baby (8 percent); Kentucky Derby (5 percent); Award Shows (3 percent); Stanley Cup (3 percent); Reality TV Shows (2 percent)
- Of the 45 percent of workers who have participated in office pools, 57 percent have attended a company sports event, 33 percent have watched or followed sports during work hours, 6 percent have called in sick the day after watching or attending a sporting event

### **Methodology**

The March 2011 Spherion Office Pools Workplace Survey was conducted online within the United States on behalf of Spherion Staffing Services between February 17 and February 28, 2011 among a U.S. sample of 744 workers.

### **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.

Spherion Staffing Services is a division of SFN Group, Inc. (NYSE:SFN). SFN operates a family of specialty businesses providing strategic workforce solutions in professional services and general staffing. To learn more, please visit [www.spherion.com](http://www.spherion.com).