




Careers

How to take a holiday and work without using annual leave

Aussies are taking remote work arrangements to the next level by sneaking away on holidays while on the clock. But experts say there's a better way.

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While there's been a push from many companies to get employees back into the office, others have adopted a hybrid schedule. In this episode, we talk about the future of remote work and how it may fit into your job.

Aussie workers are exploiting remote work arrangements to sneak away on holiday without telling their boss.

Almost half of Australians have taken or are considering a holiday while officially still on the job, expecting if they get caught out, the consequences will be negligible, research from recruiter Robert Half shows.

But experts say the move – dubbed “quiet vacationing” – is bound to backfire, likening it to “reverse wage theft” and cautioning working jetsetting that they could face the sack.

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Workplace relations lawyer Joe Murphy, from Cowell Clarke Commercial Lawyers, says employers are hyper-vigilant towards workers doing the wrong thing.

“Businesses are more clued up and have a multitude of ways to identify quiet vacationing,” Murphy says.

“Keylogging technology, which monitors keystrokes per minute, geofencing and social media are all ways in which employees can be caught out.”



A quarter of Australians are taking secret holidays because they fear their leave application will be rejected – but employers face fines of almost \$100,000 if they unreasonably refuse leave requests.

Trouble in paradise

More than half of those prepared to take their work on holiday say they are simply tapping into the benefits of remote work privileges.

But a quarter feel forced into a secret holiday, fearing any leave application would be refused, the research shows.

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Murphy says workers should be aware that employers face fines of almost \$100,000 if they unreasonably refuse to grant leave requests. He also warns quiet vacationing is not worth the risk, as it could amount to worker misconduct.

He says if an employee is injured while working on holiday, any worker's compensation claim could be refuted.

"If employees claim to be working while they're out surfing or seeing the sights, it's essentially reverse wage theft," he says.

"This type of quiet vacationing can be a matter of misconduct. It's a sure-fire way to destroy trust with your employer who may subsequently question your productivity to your role."

'Not much of a holiday'

Workers should be upfront with bosses when it comes to holiday plans, Robert Half director Nicole Gorton advises.

With their employer's approval, there's no reason why workers cannot work from a holiday destination, she says, so long as productivity is not affected.

She says holidaying in a different time zone to the principal workplace may make work challenging and employees must consider if the vacation destination is geared for work. This includes whether the accommodation has reliable internet.

There could also be difficulties unwinding and enjoying the holiday if employees are still required to meet work obligations, Gorton says.

“All employees deserve and need a holiday to fully recharge ... but it’s not really much of a holiday (if you are working), is it?” she says.

Jovel Celestino has no issues with working while on holiday – but only if her employer approves.

Mixing work and pleasure

Management accountant Jovel Celestino, 30, has no issues with working while on holiday – but only if her employer approves.

When friends holidayed in Bali last year, Celestino asked her then-boss for permission to work remotely from the tourist hotspot. Her request was refused.

“Even if I had to work during the day, at least I still would have been there and I still would have had the evenings (to enjoy),” she says.

“I’m pretty sure I would have been sleep-deprived for the whole duration of me being there but it would still be fun and the vibe would still be there.”

Celestino recently travelled to South America, but, due to the different time zones, did not work while she was away. She believes in some cases, being on holiday could bolster work productivity.

“If I was going to go behind my bosses’ back, then I would rather just not go on the holiday at all,” she says.

“But if (I was allowed to work while on holiday) then I feel like I would be even more motivated to smash out my work as an unspoken thank you to my manager for letting me do it.”

Blurred lines

Remote work arrangements have blurred the lines around where workers can and cannot perform their job, People2people managing director Catherine Kennedy says. But she believes it’s “never OK to be deliberately deceptive to your employer”.

“Are these workers in that (holiday) location just having a change of scenery and still doing their regular work, or are they really on holidays and just clocking on to answer a few emails?” she asks.

She believes most employers would reasonably accept a request to work remotely for one day from a holiday destination, such as where an employee works on a Friday from a

hotel before joining friends and family for the weekend. But she says longer arrangements may require negotiation.

“It’s definitely a case-by-case basis, depending on the sort of work (an employee does), how much collaboration they need to have with other people and how it affects projects progressing,” Kennedy says.

She encourages those worried about having holidays refused to plan how their absence can be managed before making a leave request.

Quiet vacationing

- 45 per cent of Australian employees have already worked or would consider working remotely from a holiday destination without telling their employer
- If found out:
 - 36 per cent believe their employer would likely do nothing about it, as long as their work was done
 - 28 per cent believe their employer would feel trust has been broken but there would be no further consequences
 - 28 per cent think they would receive a formal warning or disciplinary action
 - 7 per cent believe their employment contract would be terminated

Source: Robert Half

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