

# A Plan To Address Today's Moonlighting Employees



Moonlighting is not just a job in the dark anymore. In a precarious labour market that rapidly and frequently shifts more workers are turning to second jobs not just to top of their income but also to hedge their future career bets. The data on the number of employees who Moonlight in Canada is difficult to come by. We know that there has been a pattern of increases in 'Non-standard' employment over the past decade and that since the recession more Canadians are operating under different norms of employment compared to previous generations. There has been a highly reported rise in self-employment since the recession and a corresponding rise in precarious employment (working jobs that are unstable and do not pay full-time, ongoing wages).

Just what is the definition of moonlighting in today's evolving job market? Technically if you look up the term Moonlighting you will find that it refers to holding a second job when a person is already employed, where the second job is worked at night. In the past most workers who moonlighted did so without disclosing their second job to their employer. Moonlighting is not the same as being self-employed or an independent contractor and does not refer to a person who may work two or more part-time jobs. Moonlighting really means working a second job when a person already holds one full time job as a primary and main source of income.

## **The Case For Moonlighting**

The primary benefits of Moonlighting are to the Employee who is earning a second income, gaining new skills and connections and positioning him/herself to have a backup job. However an organization can gain some benefit by having an employee who may be developing new and different skills and an employee who may feel less financial pressure. Moonlighting when well managed should not be a deterrent to an organization.

## **The Case Against Moonlighting**

While an employee may gain some benefits from moonlighting a second job can take a toll. An employee may have less free time to relax and maintain a healthy lifestyle. From an organizations point of view the employee may not be as well rested and as a result may be more prone to illness, injury and absenteeism. Additionally the employee may be less available for additional or last minute work, less flexible for scheduling and may have divided loyalties.

## **Identify Your Position On Moonlighting**

As an organization it is always worthwhile to identify your position on a topic that impacts your workforce. If you have not done so already establish your position and then create a related policy. Keep in mind that in most cases you cannot stop an employee from holding a second job because it is very difficult for an employer in Canada to limit employment and income making opportunities of their employees.

## **Elements Of Your Employee Moonlighting Position**

- Have a clear position on your approach to moonlighting employees that includes a policy statement. This position may vary based on the hours of work and position held by your employees. For example your position may vary for employee's who are part-time versus full-time, contract versus ongoing and based on the level of employment. Many organizations will limit senior management with exclusivity policies where as they may not limit junior employees.
- Consider a policy that indicates your expectation that during the hours an employee is 'on the job' you expect his/her full and exclusive focus on their work for your organization.
- Determine if you want to require an employee to disclose having a second job. Consider this carefully as you may not be able to compel an employee to disclose a second job and gathering more personal information than you really need is not always a useful option. Consider instead a policy that requires disclosure of a conflict of interest related to the nature of additional employment, I.e. stating an employee cannot hold another job working for a direct competitor or if an employee holds a job working for a company that has a business relationship with your organization all conflicts of interest must be clearly stated.
- Determine how you will manage the situation where an employee is not flexible in terms of being able to work additional hours. Depending on the initial job description you may or may not be in a position to require an employee to work additional hours that conflict with a second job.
- Consider how you will address a situation where an employee is working a second job that you believe may harm the reputation of your organization. Although this may be a subjective issue you may consider a policy that indicates an employee who is engaged in activities including holding an additional job that is in conflict with your organizations values and reputation in the community may be subject to review and dismissal.

Moonlighting employees are a growing trend and may well become the norm especially among Millennial employees who often approach employment a temporary gig and are used to the idea of serial employment. However, moonlighting employees need not be a problem once you take the time to determine your position and put in place a few steps to manage the situation well.