[Its Friday, Do You Know Where Your Employees Are?](#)

The weather in Canada is turning to spring and for some employees that means showing up to work and staying all day on a Friday is about to get a little more difficult. Or does it? We often hear it said that more employees call in sick on Friday so they can get an early start to the weekend. What do you think, is it more myth or reality? Do employees miss more Fridays than any other day of the week?

Patterns in Employee Absenteeism

In 2013 a Conference Board of Canada survey told us that the Canadian worker misses on average 9.3 days of work a year. According to a stats Canada report the total days lost per worker in a year was 9.1 in 2013 and dropped to 8.8 in 2014.

The survey revealed a lot more details: missed days equalled 12.9 days for civil servants and 8.2 for private sector workers and 13.2 days for unionized workers and 7.5 days for non-unionized workers; women missed more work than men, younger people missed less than older and employees in big organizations missed more than employees in smaller organizations (especially organizations with 20 or fewer people). Employees in professional, technical and scientific jobs missed a lot fewer days than the average, whereas those in health care and social services missed the highest; 5.8 and 14 respectively.

The reasons employees are absent varies as much as who, how much and when. Certainly many individuals are missing time for legitimate reasons such as illness and appointments but the variation in numbers tell us there is more to this story. According to a 2013 survey from Angus Reid, on behalf of [Kronos](#), 54% of Canadians admit to faking sick time; 65% of those who admitted to faking sick did so because they were feeling stressed, 35 % to take care of a sick child, 13% felt overworked, and 12% claimed to do so because they did not enough vacation time.

The Myth of Friday

Despite searching we could not find much real data that employees are missing Friday's significantly more frequently than any other day of the week. In one 2002 report from the UK (Trends and Sources Of Data On Sickness Absences) from the National Statistics department the data indicated that the difference in percentage of employees absent on Monday-Friday varied by .2%; Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 2% of employees were absent, Thursday 2.1% and Friday, 2.2%.

It may happen that on a great Friday in the middle of summer a few more employees are absent but it does not appear to happen frequently enough to have a huge impact on the workplace compared to other days of the week. Of course what matters to most organizations is not the general pattern across Canada but the trend within their own organization. It is difficult to draw any conclusions regarding patterns of absenteeism within your organization if you do not stop to pay attention.

Tracking Absenteeism in Your Workplace Over Time

The conference Board survey told us that only 46% of organizations they surveyed tracked absenteeism in their workplace. One of the first steps you can take to get a sense of the absenteeism trends in your workplace is to track the data. When you track the data you should be looking for three types of data:

- Organization patterns generally
- Patterns for departments and teams
- Patterns for individual employees

It is important to remember that when you track data you cannot look at a snap shot in a moment of time to draw clear conclusions. To begin to understand and apply big data you need to gather data over time. This does mean that the sooner you begin the better. To see a pattern organizationally you are going to need to track data for 1-2 years, yep, years before you can identify baselines and trends or patterns. Once you have established some baselines you can begin to learn a lot about your organization and then your individual employees.

The Benefits of Data Tracking

Patterns allow you to gain insights into what may be happening. If you see a pattern of absenteeism within a specific department or team this can open doors to conversations about what is happening in that department. If you see patterns with an individual employee that are outside the organizational norm you may open a door to talk to that employee and discover if the employee needs accommodation.

Friday may not be the day your employees are absent or even less productive but if you want to get ahead of the potential problem of worker absenteeism consider taking the time to learn what may or may not be happening before you worry or take any action.