

EMPLOYEES HOLIDAY SHOPPING AT WORK, BUT THE BOSSES HAVE TAKEN NOTICE



In 2010, holiday shoppers broke a record by spending just over a billion dollars on Cyber Monday, the post-Thanksgiving Monday dedicated to Internet deals. This year, the record was surpassed again, hitting nearly 1.25 billion. It's perhaps not surprising that some shoppers are browsing for holiday deals while at work. One could also predict an employer's decision to more strongly enforce company policies regarding Internet usage. According to a recent survey posted by CareerBuilder, numerous employees are planning to hunt for gifts online while on the clock. Approximately half of those who participated in the survey will be using their work computers for shopping, keeping in line with last year's 52 percent. This isn't just the younger workers. While the 25-44 age group made up 57 percent of shoppers perusing the Internet at work, workers over 45 years of age made an impressive 42 percent. Thirty-four percent of employees will be spending more than one hour on the Internet, 16 percent will be spending two or more hours, and four percent are estimating an excess of five hours while at work. These percentages have changed very little from the 2010 survey. Around 65 percent of workers do web searches unrelated to work, while 22 percent admit to performing non-work searches five times a day. Of the employees on social network sites, 56 percent check their profiles, and approximately one in seven workers spends an hour of their workday on the Internet. Sixty-one percent of employees send personal emails from a work computer, with 19 percent sending at least five in a given workday. The companies have clearly noticed this trend and are taking measures. About half of the employers surveyed monitor employees' online activity, including email, while 54 percent block access to certain websites. Thirty-two percent of employers are keeping their eyes on employee social networking and prohibiting them from discussing the company on their sites, and 25 percent have implemented more stringent policies concerning company references on social media websites. It seems that more severe actions from the companies may be necessary. Twenty-two percent of employers have fired an employee for Internet activity not related to work, while eight percent have fired someone for submitting personal emails. And seven percent of employees reported firing a worker specifically for holiday shopping while at work. Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of human resources at CareerBuilder, stated in a press release, "Most companies assume their employees use some of their break time on the Internet for shopping, checking social networks, and other general browsing, but when it starts adding up, workers need to be aware of company policies and any potential consequences. With more companies limiting or restricting online activity, e-shopping season is as good a time as any to be mindful of our Internet usage at work." The survey was conducted by Harris Interactive for CareerBuilder. It included 2,696 U.S. hiring managers and HR professionals and 4,384 U.S. full-time, non-government employees ages 18 and over. The survey was conducted online from August 16th to September 8, 2011.