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Last month, we looked at the upcoming General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and what this means for businesses. This month, with the World Cup on the horizon, we explore some of the things employers should consider in order to prevent the football season from disrupting their workplace.



Simon Crack

Britain is a born-and-bred nation of football lovers and therefore it should come as no surprise that the World Cup means a lot to its people. With kick-off times for the group stages already confirmed for mid-June, fans are getting excited – and workplaces need to think ahead.

For example, there might be a greater number of requests for days off around that time and businesses should handle these requests carefully in order to avoid workplace disputes and low morale among workers. It might be sensible to ask staff sooner rather than later whether they would like any time off – that way you'll have more time to plan.

If employees' requests are unreasonable, allowances cannot be made, or a business runs into the classic issue of too many members of staff wanting holiday at the same time, companies can consider other ways of allowing fans of 'the beautiful game' to keep up with the World Cup at work.

For example, office-based businesses could relax their usual rules about internet access during work time and allow employees to check the scores online, while companies whose operations are based in workshops or garages could allow employees to listen to football coverage on the radio while they work (although this may require a licence).

Just to be absolutely clear, there is no legal requirement to take any of these steps, we are just looking at practical ways of managing potential disruption and loss of productivity. These sorts of flexible approaches can be more effective than imposing a complete ban.

Nevertheless, employers need to strike the right balance between keeping their workers happy and still getting work done, so bosses should be clear about how much internet and radio use is considered reasonable. The World Cup in the workplace may impact other company policies such as those on alcohol consumption in the workplace, or use of social media.

To keep things running smoothly, if employers are allowing a degree of flexibility this should be clearly communicated to staff in an email, memo or on the intranet.

For further information or advice, please call our Business Support team on 01904 528 200 and speak to Jo or David.

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