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A new shape of lawyer

I run a small business and every year a lot of people want to book holiday over the Christmas period. I want to be fair but can't afford to have everyone off at the same time. What is the best approach?

Simon Crack

This is a dilemma which many employers are confronted with and you are more likely to be put under pressure if you have a relatively small workforce to start with.

Most businesses have a holiday year which runs from January to December and will often have to deal with a large number of staff who want to take time off over the festive break.

While many are no doubt keen to spend Christmas at home, for others it may be a case of being caught out by the fact that they have a large chunk of their entitlement left.

This is why it can be beneficial to encourage employees to review their holiday. September is a good time of year, although it is not too late even now so that the remaining holidays can be spread over the next few weeks.

One of the most important steps is to ensure that both your employment contracts and staff handbook set out the rules relating to holidays requests, including how much notice needs to be given and how many people are allowed to be off at any one time. You also need to be clear if any holiday can be carried over to the following year.

Some employers may decide that allowing holiday on a "first come, first served" basis is the simplest system for popular periods such a Christmas, albeit not an ideal solution.

Ultimately it is up to a business to regulate holiday dates, so adopting a clear and consistent approach to requests is the best way to avoid ill-feeling among staff.

You may also consider the option of a compulsory closure period at the end of December, although inevitably there will be businesses for which this would cause too much inconvenience or be simply impracticable

Whether you are an employee or employer, if you would like advice about holiday requests please give our employment team a call on 01904 528 200 and speak to Jo or Gill.

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